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15th Assembly



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Debates and Questions



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Alawa Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5 and 6 students from Alawa Primary School, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL REPORT
Delivering for Territorians

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Clerk has received a ministerial report from the Chief Minister. The report has been circulated by the Office of the Clerk pursuant to Sessional Order 5.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present this ministerial report, Delivering for Territorians. It is important—on our last day of the first sittings of the new CLP government formed eight-and-a-half weeks ago—for me to give an update to our community on the commitments we took to the election that we have already delivered in a few short weeks.

It is wonderful to be joined by the students from Alawa Primary School. Welcome to Parliament House. You are our future, and we hope that you appreciate, understand and enjoy the opportunity that Parliamentary Education Services will give you. If you see us around, please say hello.

Our team has been working extremely hard over the last eight-and-a-half weeks. We are proud that today we will bring the sentencing legislation to its conclusion, which will complete our reducing-crime package.

We took a clear and strong plan to the election. We promised Territorians that if we were elected to govern, we would reduce crime; rebuild the economy; and restore our unique, beautiful and precious Territory lifestyle for future generations, just like the Alawa Primary School students.

Territorians put their faith in us and voted overwhelmingly. We have a strong majority government with 17 seats, which gives us the confidence and mandate to deliver the promises we made to our community.

Since coming to government, we have been working extremely hard to deliver. Under the previous eight years of Labor, Territorians had constant talk, rhetoric and politics. My team and I have said that the hallmark of our government will be action. We want Territorians to judge us on our actions. In four years, Territorians will have the opportunity to decide whether the Territory is a better place. That will be led by action and delivery of our commitments to the community.

One of the first things I did was meet with the Police Commissioner and the Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet. I wanted them to know that community safety is the number one priority of my government.

We then moved through significant machinery-of-government changes. We have entirely restructured the public service, framed around our three commitments to our community of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. In doing that, I was focused on making sure we had smaller, more agile agencies focusing on technical expertise, building capacity in our people and growing our own.

As part of that, we made a commitment to Territorians that Corrections would be a standalone department. We have delivered that as promised. We promised Territorians that we would take youth justice out of the then Territory Families and move it into Corrections, and we have completed that commitment. This is about giving the right people the right opportunities to deliver in their areas of expertise. Corrections has the correctional experts.

Children and Families must now focus on putting children at the centre of everything we do, giving them opportunities, holding families accountable, addressing levels of violence and making sure that our children are safe.

I took on the Police portfolio, completing our commitment to have the Chief Minister as Police minister so that police and our community know that community safety and backing our men and women in blue are the

top priority for my government. I met with the NT Police Association on the second day of my government to reinforce the strength in what police do, what we need to do together and the respect I have for the association's representation of our hardworking police.

We also made sure that when we can, we have given police the opportunity to be back on the front line. Earlier this week I was pleased to report that 63 additional police officers are wearing uniforms out in the community. This is a great result in a short time.

By the end of the day, we will have delivered our entire reducing-crime package, which we promised Territorians we would do. We started by delivering Declan's law, with stronger bail provisions, greater thresholds for judges to discern whether someone presents an ongoing risk to our community, better powers for our police to deal with knife crime and proactive policing to wand people more flexibly and readily to take knives and edged weapons out of our community, making the Territory a safer place. We have greater protections for workers, which we will work through later this evening. We have brought in better laws to give police the powers they need to deal with nuisance public drinking and problem drunks. We brought in legislation for ramraiding and posting and boasting and a range of measures designed to make our community safer. We lowered the age of criminal responsibility.

Ms Uibo: Shame!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We delivered. I pick up on the interjection from the Opposition Leader. We made a promise to our community, and people overwhelmingly said to us, 'Please deliver those commitments'. We delivered in just eight-and-a-half weeks. My government achieved more for the Northern Territory in eight-and-a-half weeks than your government did in eight years of neglect, dysfunction and ruin.

We have picked up the mantle and run with it, because we believe in the future of the Northern Territory. We will fight for this place and for our children and their children to have a Territory that they can be proud of. Although Labor tried its best to destroy every facet of what the Territory we know and love looks like, we will not let the Territory fail like Labor was destined to.

We will deliver a stronger, safer Territory with an economy that allows the kids in the gallery to know that they can be anything they want to be. We will deliver a future for these children where they can have hope and aspiration, achieve home ownership, have a good job, raise a family and have a lifestyle that is the envy of the nation. That is why I am standing here and why there are 17 members of the CLP government. We are united in our commitment to the Territory; make no mistake about it.

We delivered integrity reform by strengthening the processes of the parliament, doubling the time in which to debate petitions and bringing back the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. We have an Independent Speaker running the parliament.

We delivered our comprehensive Corrections plan to deliver the right level of prisoners in the right facilities across the Territory. This was an enormous piece of work, neglected by Labor because it was blinded and driven only by ideology. They did not want to build more prisons because it did not suit their narrative, despite the fact that we desperately needed the space. Worse than that, they inflicted on our police the use of watch houses as prisons because they could not bring themselves to do the basics of government.

It is not fancy or exciting work to build new prisons; it is just part of the job. No-one expects a pat on the back from a Territorian for doing the basics. They are the services the government should provide, just like healthcare, education and everything else. Labor failed to deliver the basics.

Our comprehensive plan will see immediate things take place to alleviate the system, get prisoners out of watch houses and hand our watch houses back to our police. We will have a fit-for-purpose system into the future, not just a continuation of catastrophe after catastrophe as we saw under the Labor government. Once we have dealt with the infrastructure, we can start to build those important life-changing programs so that we drive down repeat offending and connect people who are offending with employment and skills training. We will do everything we can to treat their addictions whilst in prison and turn their life around when they have the opportunity to come back into the community.

Rebuilding our economy is an important part of the Territory story and maintaining and growing our population. We cannot have a strong economy if the Territory is unsafe, and that work has begun with our reducing-crime package delivery.

We committed to Territorians that we would have a dedicated Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations, and the Member for Port Darwin is doing an exceptional job. This is important to refocus and reframe our economic narrative. The Deputy Chief Minister and I had a wonderful meeting yesterday with Indonesian Consul Bapak Bagus, and we are looking forward to strengthening those relationships with our near neighbours soon.

The Territory needs to move back to basics, which is why we have separate departments for Mining and Energy; Agriculture and Fisheries; and Tourism and Hospitality. Under Labor, these were mushed together into a giant agency set up for failure. Labor did not care about the economy. By splitting them, we have given the hardworking public servants the opportunity to hone their craft, deliver on their clear areas of focus and get some runs on the board for the Territory.

In just eight-and-a-half weeks we have delivered our HomeGrown Territory program, helping Territorians and aspiring home owners to achieve that dream of home ownership. We have already had 61 applications, which is up to a $30m investment for people wanting to build their lives in the Territory. If people can get into home ownership, they are more likely to stay; they put down roots for the long haul.

We are so proud of that scheme, which is not just for Australian citizens but permanent residents as well. Migration is critical to our story; it was in the past, is now and will be in the future.

We are extremely excited about the program continuing to grow from strength to strength. This is not just supporting people to stay or come to the Territory; it is critical construction stimulus that we need to make sure our tradies are busy and money flows through our economy. This will be a small contribution by the Territory taxpayer and will leverage hundreds and thousands of dollars of spend by the individual—a great return on investment for the Territory.

Payroll tax reform is well underway. Yesterday the Treasurer and I stood with Pat Whitehead from Plumbing NT and announced that from 1 January businesses under the new $2.5m payroll tax-free threshold will no longer pay payroll tax. That system is phasing in to 1 July next year. We have worked hard to get this out the door. It will make meaningful change.

From 1 January there will be 200 additional small businesses in the Territory that no longer pay payroll tax. This represents thousands of employees and 200 more opportunities for those employers to invest in their business, grow their service delivery for Territorians, employ more apprentices and trainees, put on more staff and contribute more to our economy.

Our work on the Territory Coordinator is well and truly underway. We are excited about finalising that legislative framework. This is a game changer for how we deliver projects in the Territory, and I look forward to having more to say on that soon.

We delivered the extension of the Territory Tourism Discount Scheme, which was promised to Territorians. It has been extended from 1 October.

The Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment is getting on with the job of identifying red tape ready to be slashed.

These are commitments we made to Territorians that we are delivering. Although we have achieved a lot, there is a lot more work to be done.

When it comes to restoring our lifestyle for Territorians, we have already saved Anzac Oval in Alice Springs. It was one of the first things we did, and what a good decision that was. We will now build the Aboriginal art gallery, which Labor failed to do for eight years. The Members for Braitling and Namatjira fought hard for Anzac Oval to be saved, and now it has been. We will have the best of both worlds—an oval and a gallery, which Labor could not and would not deliver.

We have undertaken a lot of work to expand the Harrison Dam hunting reserve. It is magpie goose season, so the hunters are on the dam every morning, as the Member for Nelson is sometimes—less so these days, I hope. We are expanding access into the existing footprint of Harrison Dam to open vast amounts of hunting land. We are also undertaking work to find a brand-new hunting reserve.

We have already stood with Ash and Sally Lawrence, the parents of Skylar Lawrence, a young girl whose life was taken by the disease meningococcal B. We are leaders in this country, along with few other states, who say no more children should die from this awful, tragic disease or be left with lifelong disability. For a

relatively small cost and changes in administration, we can deliver this from 1 January. This should have been done years ago. We have already pushed it to the point where from 1 January our babies and teenagers can get the jab. We have a catch-up program to make sure that any family who wants their children protected from the horrific disease meningococcal B can have free access.

Free swimming lessons are well underway, and we look forward to making announcements about that soon, along with our MVR changes and solar rebates. People are excited about that.

Plenty of work has already taken place. We have reformed the entire public service, reshaped the direction of the Territory, passed significant law reform to get the Territory on a better footing and back our police and delivered key lifestyle and economic commitments, but the work continues. In order to make the Territory a safe place there is more work to do within our court system, with legal service providers and to intervene early.

A huge part of our commitment to Territorians was about getting kids to school, and we are working through what it will look like going forward to make sure that families, schools and communities are held accountable for getting kids to school.

Important work is being done by the Department of Children and Families on domestic and family violence, intervening earlier in a child's life when there is neglect and making sure our kids have the best start in life so that they can have a bright future.

We have a keen focus on getting the Territory back to basics, understanding what our natural strengths are and working hard to deliver jobs and opportunities in those key areas of mining, agriculture, gas, Defence and tourism. These are pillars of the Territory that have been ignored by the Labor government for a long time.

By having standalone agencies, we can have focus. By bringing in the Territory Coordinator, we can fast-track approval times, expedite projects and get things moving, giving confidence and certainty to Territorians that this is a good place to do business.

We have delivered on making the Territory more competitive. This is important because we are competing for workers and projects just like everyone else. If we plan to deliver those for the Territory, we have to deliver a competitive edge.

Our home build scheme is the most competitive in the country. Our payroll tax-free threshold of $2.5m makes us the most competitive payroll tax jurisdiction in the country. These are things we are proud of. These are the initiatives and deliverables that will move the dial and change the shape of the Territory forever.

I could not be prouder to be part of a 17-strong team who all have the heart of the Territory front and centre every day. We have seen from their contributions to debate over the last two weeks that Territorians elected the right people for the job. They elected people with conviction, passion, determination, skills and diversity to see the Territory through this next phase.

We have incredible debt challenges. I acknowledge that the Under Treasurer will give a fantastic public presentation on Monday so that Territorians can understand the state of the Territory. We know that our work is cut out for us, but we are ready and will continue to act on behalf of all Territorians.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I welcome the ministerial report from the Chief Minister. I also welcome the opportunity to hear about the new government's work and its intentions for the next couple of years. Thank you, Chief Minister; we appreciate the opportunity to contribute.

It is important that Territorians see what the government is doing for them across the Territory, not just in the urban areas. The new government has been up-front that its focus will be on the northern suburbs, where it holds the majority of seats. We want to make sure the new CLP government's deliverables will be across the Territory. I acknowledge that the Chief Minister spoke on some of this.

Whilst the new CLP government trashed the reputation of the former Labor government, it also ignored some key deliverables that the former Labor government achieved. It dismisses and ignores the key milestones reached by the former government. A lot of work was done to provide good foundations in infrastructure and other key deliverables that everyone expects their government to deliver. We were strong in areas like infrastructure across the Territory.

We do not want the CLP to use the strength of its numbers—its majority—to simply erase history in regard to the work the Territory Labor government did to move the Territory forward. I will comment on the key deliverables provided by the Labor government.

We do not deny that there has been a change of government in the Territory. We respect the voice of Territorians in deciding that change, but we want to ensure that what we delivered to Territorians is not dragged through the mud and dismissed by the CLP. I will not have enough time to place on record all the former Labor government's deliverables, but I look forward to sharing some work delivered for all Territorians, which is what governments need to do.

I turn first to the economy. Deloitte Access Economics forecasts the Northern Territory economy to grow at an average rate of 2.7% per annum over the five years to 2027–28, which is the strongest growth rate of all Australian jurisdictions. State final demand grew by 2% in 2022–23, and over the three years since December 2019 it grew by 16.3%, which was the highest growth of any jurisdiction in the country.

We developed a strong economic vision for our regions, including the Barkly Regional Deal and regional economic growth plans for East Arnhem Land, Big Rivers and the Top End.

The Labor government took steps to shield Territorians from the full impacts of inflation. To put downward pressure on the cost of living, we provided a range of subsidies, vouchers, concession schemes and grants, including the capped utility price for increases below inflation, saving Territorians hundreds of dollars on power. In 2023–24 the Territory Labor government provided $161.3m in community service obligation payments to reduce the price of power and utilities.

Our annual $200 back to school vouchers supported children and families with the cost of schooling, such as uniforms, stationery, excursions, camps and elective activities. Early childhood service subsidies were paid directly to childcare providers for long day care, three-year-old kindergarten and family day-care services to reduce the cost of living for parents, families and carers.

With the Sport Voucher Scheme, you can receive two $100 vouchers each year, including the Learn to Swim vouchers. My family has been a recipient of that; they are great vouchers. They assist all families by reducing the cost of living and involving kids in sport, recreation and cultural activities.

There was a subsidy of up to $1,500 for stamp duty on electric vehicles, effectively removing stamp duty for vehicle purchases up to $50,000. First-year apprentices could access $1,000 in grants and support through the workwear and gear bonus scheme.

When we were in government, generous home owner assistance for first home owners and builders was an area of focus. The Home and Business Battery Scheme allowed home owners and businesses to save up to $5,000 on the purchase and installation of rooftop solar batteries and inverters to reduce electricity costs and the environmental footprint.

Our NT Concession Scheme assisted eligible Territorians with the cost of living on a range of essential goods and services, providing free renewal of drivers' licences and savings of up to $1,200 per annum on electricity for seniors, $800 per annum for water, $468 per annum for sewerage, $200 per annum for council rates, $150 per annum for garbage services, $154 per annum for vehicle registration and $502 every two years for spectacles for scheme members and registered dependants.

The NT Seniors Recognition Scheme recognises the valuable contribution of senior Territorians to our community, providing them with a $500 prepaid card for Territory residents aged over 65, which can be used for a variety of items. We want to ensure that the CLP government does not forget about our seniors, and we urge it to continue these important cost-of-living measures and initiatives for our Territory seniors.

When it comes to major projects for the Northern Territory, the CLP says that Labor did nothing in eight years, which is outrageous. Our major projects included the NEXTDC data centre, which is getting off the ground in the CBD now; the Danala Education and Community Precinct, which opened last month; and the major works packages that have been awarded to the Darwin ship lift, including a contract for the ship lift operating system. That project will go a long way to establishing Darwin as a thriving maritime services industry hub nationally and internationally.

Defence is a critical part of the Territory economy, and northern Australia is front and centre in the Commonwealth's recently released national strategy. We have a 10-year pipeline of Defence investment in

the Territory, which is billions of dollars of investment that will play a significant role in driving the Territory economy in Darwin and the regional centres, including my electorate which covers RAAF Base Tindal.

The Labor government committed $30m over three years to support the Middle Arm project development, as well as approvals to activate the Tennant Creek–Darwin infrastructure corridor, which will carry gas, oil, hydrogen energy, water, digital communications and electricity.

Other key economy-driving projects included the wonderful Civic and State Square Precinct, which is happening outside of Parliament House, including the Northern Territory art gallery which we can see in the skyline now. Also in the CBD is the exciting Larrakia Cultural Centre. In Alice Springs is the CBD revitalisation program. The preplanning and art design work of the national Aboriginal art gallery project in Alice Springs is well advanced, but the CLP has put the brakes on that so we will be watching carefully. There is the Gove Port Tourism Precinct development; the Gove maritime commercial precinct; and the Barkly Regional Deal project, including an alternative-to-detention facility for young people in the Barkly, a new visitor park in Tennant Creek, entry statements, student boarding accommodation and the justice infrastructure upgrades.

The Labor government invested $186m over three years to accelerate land release through headworks for subdivisions across the NT. Some of this funding included the areas of greater Darwin, Katherine East, Tennant Creek and Kilgariff in Alice Springs.

Since 2016 the former Labor government invested $11bn in infrastructure, with some 99% of all of this money in contracts going to Territory businesses. Since 2016 we upgraded over 2,200 kilometres of Territory roads—key projects that were completed and underway.

I think the Member for Drysdale said that he goes around Darwin and Palmerston and sees nothing that was invested in. He is obviously going around with his eyes closed because he has probably driven on some of these 2,200 kilometres of upgraded roads across the Territory. If he has not, then I suggest he opens his eyes.

The Keep River road project was $58m. It included bridges over Keep River and Sandy Creek. The first $73m stage of sealing 150 kilometres of the Tanami Road in Central Australia is well advanced. The Carpentaria Highway, which the Member for Barkly will enjoy, is 150 kilometres of project works. Stage 1 is nearing completion, and stage 2 will commence shortly. I am sure the Member for Barkly will be there cutting the ribbon, kissing the bitumen or whatever, with the Member for Namatjira as the new minister.

The Member for Drysdale must go an alternative way to the Tiger Brennan Drive overpass when he comes to parliament. I am sure he drives on that road, and he must see it every day on his way to parliament. That overpass was a Labor government project, supporting 150 Territory jobs at the peak of construction. This is the busiest intersection of the Northern Territory, and it will now become the safest. The technology that the Territory company Sitzler has used is the first of its kind in the country.

No other overpass in Australia has been built to the conditions to cover and support road trains. Think about that. The engineers and Territory businesses have designed that project to carry road trains on the overpass. They looked everywhere across Australia; it has never been done before. Tiger Brennan Drive overpass is the first of its kind in the country.

Other projects included the Adelaide River Floodplain Upgrade; the Paru Road upgrade on Melville Island, which I know the Member for Arafura supported and delivered for his constituents; the Kakadu Road upgrade; Outback Way upgrades, including the Plenty Highway and Tjukaruru Road; $112m for upgrades on the Buntine Highway; $60m for Port Keats to Palumpa road; $66m for roads in Kakadu; the sealing of the Mereenie Loop; upgrades to the Santa Teresa Road; the Stuart Highway and Schwarz Crescent intersection upgrade; and the Central Arnhem Road upgrade is coming too, which is great for me as the Member for Arnhem. That is one of the so-called pet projects that the CLP will scrap in the $42m of road infrastructure projects. It has not said what it will scrap. Let us hope for the Arnhem constituents that it is not the Central Arnhem Road. The list in infrastructure goes on, but I cannot read out all of those deliverables.

When it comes to community infrastructure projects, the Richardson Park upgrade is turning it into a community facility for everyone to use. We expect the CLP will honour the new northern suburbs youth and community hub project. I hope the northern suburbs CLP members keep a good eye on this. Make sure your government does not scrap this project for your communities.

In health infrastructure, the Royal Darwin Hospital upgrades to the forensic mortuary, mental health facilities and car park are among key projects delivered. Stage 1 of the Darwin Regional Water Supply Infrastructure Program and the Gove District Hospital fire upgrades are important.

Continuing with regions, there is the Gunbalanya Community Health Centre and the morgue; the Gapuwiyak Barge Landing upgrade; Galiwinku aerodrome upgrades; Kintore Road upgrades; and we have just seen the new Jabiru Health Centre open last month. It is fantastic for that part of the Territory to have a new facility.

Regarding sporting facilities, we delivered well over $100m on sporting infrastructure around the Northern Territory, including a new home for rugby league; a new indoor netball facility in Darwin; and new football oval lighting upgrades in remote and regional communities. There is something for everyone.

Remote communities secured a partnership with the Commonwealth for $4bn over 10 years for new houses in the Northern Territory. This will allow the construction of 270 new homes every year for the next 10 years in remote communities. We fully support the CLP continuing that strong legacy. The Member for Barkly will enjoy getting selfies as the new minister. We welcome that because it will be delivering under a Labor legacy for Territorians in the bush.

Labor built more than 1,278 new homes across the Northern Territory. When you say that we did not deliver, please go to remote communities, especially if you are from urban and northern suburbs areas, to see how it makes a difference for remote Territorians—fellow Territorians—to get a new home. The Member for Barkly is good at getting photos; please go with him, get selfies, meet those families and listen to their stories to understand what a new house can mean for a family, individual or group, especially someone living with a disability in a community. When they get a new house that is purpose built to support them living in their community rather than moving away, you will see the difference being in government makes to lives in the Territory. Please, especially the Deputy Chief Minister, do not forget about remote Territorians.

We improved and upgraded more than 1,700 homes in remote communities. In last year's Dry Season there were 100 homes built in 100 days. This had never been done before, and we are proud of that legacy. We would love the CLP government to continue that good work.

The Member for Mulka is a fierce advocate for homelands, as is the Labor opposition. We included an additional $40m per annum of Northern Territory Government funds for urgent repairs and maintenance to ensure a comprehensive audit of infrastructure needs for homelands was reviewed and delivered. The allocation of funds for homelands, in partnership through advocacy with the federal government, is $100m for urgent upgrades and repairs for homelands, making a difference and improving living conditions in the most remote parts of the Territory.

Regarding Aboriginal Affairs, we signed 13 local decision-making agreements to empower the voices and decision-making for local services back in the hands of Aboriginal communities. There were a further 26 proposed local decision-making agreements in development. The CLP government scrapped the Local Decision Making portfolio, so we hope the new Aboriginal Affairs minister takes his responsibility and the weight of it with the utmost priority for Aboriginal Territorians in remote communities to ensure the 13 signed and 26 that are being worked on will be continued to ensure the voices of remote Territorians are making decisions for communities.

Mr Edgington: We are bringing back local councils—real local decision-making.

Ms UIBO: Real decision making—we would love the CLP to do its job as government because …

Mr Edgington: You sidelined local government.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly!

Ms UIBO: The CLP scrapped treaty, which the Member for Mulka has talked about. CLP members said, 'We do not believe in treaty and will not support it'. Treaty can get stuffed as far as they are concerned. All the work and decades of advocacy from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Territorians has been scrapped under the CLP government.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections.

Ms UIBO: We truly and sincerely hope that the CLP government will honour the voices and decision-making of Aboriginal Territorians when it comes to local decision-making. The CLP should go there, sit in the dirt, look, listen and learn from those Aboriginal decision-makers, then look them in the eye and tell them if you support local decision-making. I would love to see that. You are welcome in the Arnhem electorate to do that with the constituents I represent; tell them if you support their voices in the communities they represent and work hard for and that they will not be flicked away with the written decision.

I also extend that invitation to the Deputy Chief Minister, because I do not think he has ever been in the Arnhem electorate other than Mataranka. I want him, in his new role, to look, listen and learn about the jobs in the Arnhem electorate that are tied to the local decision-making agreement. I also hope the CLP Cabinet gets thorough briefings from the Member for Barkly, the new Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, about the impact of local decision-making, the jobs which come from that, the decisions and the better services received when they are delivered by and for community.

Regarding the Darwin–Katherine electricity system plan to increase system stability moving towards 50% renewable power by 2030, I hope and sincerely wish the new government well to continue on that journey.

Mr MALEY (Agriculture and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I welcome the contribution by the Opposition Leader of the list of all the failures the Labor government had over the last eight years. It took 20 minutes, and there is a lot more to go.

I will say five important words shortly, which will be echoed across the Chamber for the next four years from this side because they will change the Territory for everybody. It will make the Territory a better place to live, invest and raise your family because that is what it is about. The Territory is about supporting your friends and family.

These five words are important: mining; gas; agriculture; tourism; and Defence. Those words will change the Territory for everyone. We will deliver in the fields of mining, gas, agriculture, tourism and Defence because we want the Territory to be a better place. We want the Territory to be a place where you can grow up, have a job, buy a house and raise a family because that is what the Territory was. The Territory was a land of opportunity; unfortunately, over the last 23 years, the Labor government failed Territorians. We just heard the Opposition Leader talk about her failures. We are here to deliver.

We have been in office for eight-and-a-half weeks, and the time for talk is over. Territorians have heard talk for the last eight years, and now it is time for action. The CLP wants to make the Territory a better place. We will make the Territory a safer place, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

The Chief Minister spoke about how this CLP government changed the way government works. We changed the departments to make it easier to do business and empower the public servants to make decisions. I say to the public servants who are listening: we have your back; we will support and empower you to do your job and make it easier to do business. The public servants I am speaking about live here and have families here. They work here, go to sport and want to make the Territory a safer place.

In the first week of parliament, we have already delivered our plan to make the Territory a safer place. We delivered Declan's law, which is strengthening bail, and we are strengthening wanding powers for police to protect Territorians. If you do not live or work in a safe place, why would you live here? Why would you want to stay here if you have become the victim of crime? We have all heard the stories of, 'I am leaving, and my friends are leaving because it is too dangerous to raise a family or to go to work'. There are countless examples of people going to work and getting injured because this Labor government was soft on crime. In my portfolio, prison officers are getting injured at work because the Labor government was soft on crime. Paramedics were injured in Alice Springs in the last couple of weeks; they were bashed while trying to protect people.

We are lowering the age of criminal responsibility because we want to help the young offenders to make a better choice and make better decisions as they move forward in life. The Labor government neglected and failed them. We want to support them. We want them to stop offending and want them to make good life decisions so they can grow up in the community, have families, get a job and live in a safe place.

We have given police more power in relation to posting and boasting and ram raids, sending a message to criminals that enough is enough. If you commit a crime in the Northern Territory, there will be consequences. We have given police more power to do their jobs because the Labor government took that power away, but we want to protect them. We want to send a message that we have their backs, and we will take the handcuffs off the police to let them do their job.

We delivered our Corrections master plan this year. There were eight years of neglect by the Labor government; they knew the prisons were overcrowded to the point they were flowing into watch houses, taking away the opportunity for police to do their jobs of keeping us safe. They chose to do nothing about it, sit on their hands and let the prisons become a complete mess.

A big thanks goes to Commissioner Varley and his team for doing a great job in a difficult situation because the Labor government failed them for the last eight years. Labor failed to support them and give them anything they needed to keep the Territory safe. Our prison system is dangerous for Corrections officers and for prisoners. The Labor government forgot to spend money there, which did not allow prisoners access to rehabilitation and training.

Prisoners under Labor's watch were locked up in overcrowded cells. They thought, 'They will be right, do their time and get out'. That is not how it works. I have been in a court system, and I have seen previous clients come and go because this Labor government neglected to offer decent rehabilitation and training because of the overcrowding caused by them. They neglected to put the money where it was needed; instead, they spent $70m-odd on a road to nowhere to a prawn farm which did not even exist, and yesterday we heard about the $10m water bottles. Their little pet projects did not help the Northern Territory. They let prisoners in to an overcrowded situation which affects them, prison officers and police officers, which affects Territorians because the frontline workers cannot do their jobs.

We may or may not pass mandatory sentencing today; I will not talk about it too much because it is in debate, but we have the polices officers' back. We will support them and frontline workers to make the Territory a better a safer place to do business.

We are focused on our economy. We introduced the home building scheme. If people want to build a home in the Northern Territory, this government will help them; it does not matter where they come from. Come to the Territory, get some money from our government and build your home. People stay once they build their home in the Territory, which allows more schools to be built and businesses to open and make money in new suburbs.

There is no point in coming to the Territory and having a home and a great lifestyle if there are no jobs. If you cannot find a job, you might as well not be here. The Labor government failed to invest and make it easy to do business and live in the Northern Territory—not to mention the staggering crime rates.

The Territory is a great place, and our lifestyle is important. I have been here a long time. For years the Labor government promised hunters at Harrison Dam that it would help them—zero; it was doughnuts. The Labor government did not help the hunters. After just eight weeks our government is opening Harrison Dam. The new area will be approximately one-fifth of the existing area and includes access to waterways and floodplains. It is about lifestyle. People in my community take their family to spend the day at Harrison Dam. They go goose shooting in the morning and have a cook up under a tree—I know the exact shady tree. Living in the Territory is about family, and this is a pastime the CLP supports.

The Territory is a great place. I look forward to the next four years, at the least, of a CLP government supporting the Territory and families by reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister because I am proud to be part of her united 17-member CLP government that is delivering on its promises to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle.

The Leader of the Opposition said that Labor has many plans. Labor had many plans, reviews and strategies over time, which is wonderful except that it did not get to that step of implementing them. It is all talk and no action.

I will show members what a real plan looks like. I am holding a real plan which we took out Territory-wide to the community. We told people that this was our plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle with specific actions. The people overwhelmingly said, 'Yes, please. Finally, we have someone who is listening to us.'

I will give you an example of what we said we would do in the first two weeks of parliament. I quote from our plan:

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

- *Make breach of bail an offence*

…

- *Introduce 'Ram Raids' legislation, using a vehicle as a weapon and 'posting and boasting' on social media will be an aggravated offence*

- *Give police powers to fine, charge and arrest for public drinking in non-exempt areas*

- *Lower the age of criminal responsibility so offenders don't fall through the cracks and can be sent to meaningful intervention programs to turn their life around.*

We have done all of that.

We will bring in new mandatory sentencing for assaulting frontline workers, which will be debated today. That is what we said, and we will do it.

There are so many other elements in this plan that we have already done. Many people have referred to the home builder scheme. We are rebuilding the economy. We are also getting our lifestyle back. I will refer to some of those later. Take this as an example of a real plan. The difference is that we are implementing it.

I recall the election on a Saturday night in August 2024. I went out on the Sunday morning, and what a Sunday morning it was. There was a lift in optimism in our community. I walked around Karama shops, and people were smiling. They said, 'Thank you', 'Wonderful', 'Congratulations' because they finally had a government that listens and acts, that they could trust and that serves them.

I congratulate all 17 members of our CLP team. Along with our Chief Minister, we have the opportunity to be one of the greatest Territory governments. We are united, committed and on track. We will stick to our plan and hold each other to account to make sure we do. I am not sure what the opposition will do. It is all over the place.

The residents of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon welcome these legislative changes. They felt ignored and unsafe over the last eight years. I give credit to the Leader of the Opposition, who said that the CLP will say that Labor did nothing. That is wrong. I acknowledge your achievements. You were fantastic in your achievements, but the residents were pretty fed up with the Gunner–Fyles Labor government that members of the current opposition were a part of.

Let us look at the achievements of the Gunner–Fyles–Lawler governments. They oversaw and achieved a continual decline in our economy and business confidence. The Member for Fong Lim likes a good reference point. I refer him to the CommSec reports. There is evidence regarding that.

They also oversaw a decline in our lifestyle. The Member for Nelson mentioned—I have also witnessed it—that good Territorians have packed up and left because they were so dismayed by living under the former Labor government. I like to say 'former'. It rolls off the tongue well.

They also oversaw a decline in our safety. Crime and antisocial behaviour were the biggest issues for the residents of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon. That is why I was elected. They wanted a government that would tackle it. We have been doing that.

It was not all decline; let us give credit where it is due. The Gunner–Fyles–Lawler governments oversaw an exponential growth in crime and antisocial behaviour. It was magnificent. It skyrocketed unfettered under them. It was unbelievable.

Let us look at the numbers. Over the eight years to August 2024, robbery, extortion and related offences changed by 316.33%; they tripled. Labor should be proud of that—not. House break-ins increased by 100%. Sadly, domestic violence assaults went up by 84%. I feel sad when I hear that. We might talk about that when we debate upcoming legislation.

The residents felt let down by the former Labor government, so they have come to the CLP and put their trust in us. We are here to serve. We will do it.

I want the former Labor government members to be an effective opposition. We need to be held accountable. I want them to hold us to account and ask, 'Did you deliver your plan?' If we do not, they should give us all

the criticism they want. They cannot; I have this music in the background that I cannot get out of my head. It is like Tinky Winky, Laa-Laa, Po and Dipsy dancing around the sun god singing, 'Waa, waa, waa, waa, waa.' Why can they not get back to telling us to implement our plan? That is what the government needs.

We are here for all Territorians. We respect them and are humble. We could not believe the amount of support we got from Territorians while walking around the electorates. When I went around Karama, the people wanted a change of government and voiced it when they went to the election. They gave us the endorsement to get on and do what we said we would.

I am proud of our achievements in eight-and-a-half weeks. Thank you to our Chief Minister and CLP team. It is a privilege to be partners with you. Together we are a united, solid, committed team that will look to grow and make the Territory better. We are here for all Territorians.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I love listening to the enthusiasm from the Member for Karama. I commend him on that enthusiasm. He always raises our plan. The Leader of the Opposition always asks about our plan. Perhaps the Member for Karama could give the Opposition Leader a copy so she can read it. She could download it because it is on the website …

Ms Uibo: I do not think I will waste my time; I would rather a hard copy.

Ms Boothby: We should table it.

Mrs HERSEY: I pick up on the interjection. Perhaps, Member for Brennan, we should table the plan. Lots of Territorians would love to read that.

We are eight weeks in after the election where we took our plan to Territorians, outlining what we would do should we be elected. Clearly it resonated with Territorians, as we are now in government with a 17-strong team that is cohesive, united and already doing the hard work to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Ms Uibo: United for now.

Mrs HERSEY: I pick up on the constant interjections from the Leader of the Opposition who has already had her say.

It is our role to bring the concerns of our members' constituents to the parliament—not our own views but their concerns. It is incumbent on all of us to do this. As elected members in a majority government we are doing this.

We are committed to delivering for Territorians. We will deliver, as we said we would when we took our plan to the election. Territorians wanted action. They voted for this eight short weeks ago.

The previous government forgot about youths, who were ignored. The 10 and 11-year-olds who committed serious crimes were not afforded programs to help turn their lives around, while protecting the wider community. Under Labor these kids were almost certainly destined to a life of further crime and ending up in an adult Corrections facility.

As we on this side know, children are our future. As the Education and Training minister I will make sure that literacy and numeracy improves. We will back our teachers by moving them off short-term contracts and putting them into permanent jobs where they can put down roots and add to the population of our Territory.

We will work with families and have them realise the importance of education. We will bring back truancy officers and expand on school-based policing. This is happening with Declan's law, where principals will now have better support to add to the policies and procedures already in place in a school. If they suspect an edged weapon is in the school environment, they can call the police to wand in and around the school. This is important for safety in schools. There have been 56 incidents in the last year alone.

The swimming lessons are on track to be delivered next year. I am working with the department, along with the swimming alliance, to deliver this program. I will keep the Assembly updated. This is a fundamental skill for students to learn, given the high rates of drowning across the Territory. We have the highest in the nation.

In Alice Springs we are helping restore and create a thriving community by improving sporting facilities like the lighting towers at Jim McConville Oval in a joint initiative with the council; saving the Anzac Oval from the

previous Labor government's disastrous decision to scrap it; and the new multi-sports precinct at Centralian Middle School. Our government will rebuild Alice Springs' reputation and—with the Members for Namatjira, Braitling and you, Madam Speaker—I have complete faith that this will happen. Not only have we saved Anzac Oval, but we will also build the national gallery there.

Along with the suite of legislation that we have been dealing with and honouring our commitment to reduce crime, Declan's law, a positive result, came out of a complete failure of the previous government not keeping the community safe. This legislation is testament to Samara Laverty for the countless hours she has waited, the suffering of losing her beloved Declan and all the other people who have suffered, like Sifat, in our community at the hands of senseless violence.

We are committed to continuing the CLP initiative of the Million Dollar Fish in its 10th season. I remind new members of the Assembly that it went off last year to a young lad from Katherine, and he was stoked. It was a great outcome. He is from a large family. His family suffered tragedy, and it was so exciting for our community. I am sure Keegan still has a smile on his face.

The first home owner grant is the most generous in the country, giving young families support with either a $50,000, $30,000 or $10,000 grant towards getting into the housing market. I was recently with Downes Graderways when they announced they developed stage 3 of Casuarina Park in Katherine. Not only were they excited about the initiative, but so were the young people who have shown a lot of enthusiasm to take up this opportunity. It has had a positive impact on our community, as I am sure it has across many communities in the Territory. There has been a lot of positive chatter about this. Once you put down roots you are more likely to stay. We want Territorians to choose to live here and to add to our population. We want to make the Territory a great place again.

It has only been eight short weeks, and we have done more than the previous Labor government did in eight years. This is an indictment on them and the reason they are now in opposition.

We will continue over the next four years to follow our plan of reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle.

VISITORS
Alawa Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5 and 6 students from Alawa Primary School accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I support the ministerial report by the Chief Minister. This ministerial report goes to the future of the kids from Alawa Primary School in the gallery because those kids will benefit from the work being done by the CLP government.

My contribution is about the economy and the work we are doing to rebuild the economy. It was one of the platforms that the CLP was elected on. We campaigned on reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our lifestyle.

We need to deal with crime so we can grow our economy and develop business confidence for investors in order to come back to the Territory, spend money and develop business here, growing our all-important own-source revenue.

It has been eight short weeks, and on the 10th of last month I was sworn in as a minister of the new government. It is a serious thing to be sworn in as a minister, and I take it seriously. I do not think the previous government members were serious at times about what they were doing for the Territory. I do not know if some of the ministers were taking that oath seriously enough in their commitment to Territorians.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; I find it offensive to make such a serious accusation. As a minister, you either swear or affirm an allegiance to the Crown, so I do not believe it is in good stead for parliamentary process for the Member for Namatjira to flippantly say that. I take that seriously as a former minister of the Crown.

Member for Namatjira, what you are saying has serious ramifications. We are seeing it at a national level with an Australian senator, so please watch what you say.

Madam SPEAKER: We all have the right to freedom of expression in the House. There is a lot of latitude within that. Talking about past and current members, staff—as we have heard over the last couple of days. I think the member's comments are within the realm of acceptable. Politics is politics. We are all critical of one another from one side of the Chamber to the other. I do not see it as out of the ordinary or extraordinary. There is a line there, so I think we can all be respectful of that line.

I take your point and your concerns, but the member may continue.

Mr YAN: I will continue to talk about some things we have done to grow our economy and bring people to the Territory.

I was proud to introduce legislation on the home build scheme. From 1 October, Territorians could access up to $50,000 to build their dream home. This is the most generous scheme in the country. We want people to come to the Territory, build houses, put down roots …

Madam SPEAKER: Please take your seat. Member for Nightcliff, you cannot use a camera in the Chamber.

Mr YAN: We want people to set down roots and call the Territory home. This scheme is a game changer for that.

We are offering grants of $50,000, $30,000 and $10,000 to be used by recipients as part of their deposit when applying for a loan through their financial institutions. This will support Territorians as well as people from interstate, particularly first homebuyers, to get ahead in their home ownership journey. We understand the intricacies of the cost of living. This is about encouraging Territorians to put down roots and build a life in the Territory.

This week we had an update on those home loans. We are up to 61 as of the 23rd. That started on 11 October with 30 and keeps increasing. We are seeing so much uptake and keep hearing from builders that they are getting interest. Instead of one or two inquiries a week, it is one or two a day.

The cost of living is crippling Territorians. This scheme supports people to achieve home ownership aspirations.

This helps boost our population and retains skilled workers. We are all about stimulating construction in the Territory. We saw home builds plummet under the previous government, so we are trying to drive those builds and get them off the ground to support our construction industry and put more houses into the market. The HomeGrown Territory program will get people out of the rental cycle and into home ownership, which is what we need.

This afternoon I will introduce our payroll tax incentives for small to medium businesses. We announced this yesterday. It is the most progressive payroll tax incentive in the country. On average, small to medium businesses will save $22,000 annually, and payroll tax will be eliminated for up to 200 existing businesses. Incentivising businesses to invest more into their business and employ more people will help drive the Territory economy and grow our own-source revenue. When we talked to Pat Whitehead yesterday, he told us he employs approximately 25 people; therefore, 200 businesses would employ approximately 5,000 employees, and those businesses will benefit from that scheme.

The payroll tax-free threshold will increase from $1.5m to $2.5m. As the scheme fully rolls out from 1 January, this will be in place for businesses under the $2.5m threshold and the other businesses from $2.5m to $7.5m will see the full benefit of that scheme as at 1 July 2025.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about some successes of the Labor government. I picked up on the community service obligation whereby the government supported lower tariffs for electricity. We understand why this was done. Labor kept increasing the CSO, and it was projected to hit close to $200m over the next few years. The irony in the Leader of the Opposition's statement is that Labor did not do anything else to lower power prices or work with the industry to reduce that community service obligation; Labor kept increasing it and maintained the tariffs at those levels. There was no forethought and foresight in how it would work to actually lower power prices in a realistic and meaningful way. Labor kept throwing money at the CSO and did not do any hard work to reduce power prices longer term.

The three large solar arrays that Labor commissioned through a contractor only recently started producing for the market. They sat there for many years doing nothing because the Labor government did not do the contracts correctly or require any firming when they were put out. It then backtracked and changed the contracts, and the arrays sat there not producing power for our network.

The Leader of the Opposition also mentioned the bridge over the Keep River; this was the road to nowhere. It was part of Project Sea Dragon. The Territory Labor government invested up to $70m of Territory taxpayers' money to build a road that went to the gate of Legune Station, which it is probably happy about.

In our eight weeks in government, we have done a lot of things. I am proud of the work in Central Australia. As the Member for Katherine said, we kept Anzac Oval; it is there for our community and will be there forever. We will still build the art gallery but keep the oval and improve our sporting facilities at Jim McConville Oval to give the people of Alice Springs a much-needed boost to sporting infrastructure.

We are here for the long haul to deliver for Territorians. I am proud to be here as a minister in the CLP government delivering for the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the CLP plan.

Leave granted.

Mr KERLE: Those opposite do not appear to be aware of our plan, so I tabled it. It is now on the record for them to peruse at their leisure. We took that plan to the people of the Territory. It was the culmination of years of consultation and listening to Territorians, which the former Labor government stopped doing.

I am proud to be part of a government that has hit the ground running and is delivering. For years, Territorians were calling for reform on bail to keep serious violent offenders off our streets and stop the catch and release of offenders committing crimes and being released straight back on the streets to continue.

In two short weeks, we have delivered Declan's law, laws against posting and boasting and liquor amendments to stop public drinking. We did this after seven weeks of government. The former Labor government was in power for eight years and delivered zero of these reforms. Today, we will deliver mandatory sentencing that protects workers. I will be proud to support that later today.

Labor always had plans to have a plan but never had its own plan. A lot of work in the public service—many people watched *Utopia*. I remember people commenting that it was meant to be a comedy or parody, not a how-to guide on running government. Labor was always searching for, 'We need an announcement. We need to launch something. We need to take the heat off the back of all this crime. What is up with this crime? Quick—let us announce something to take the attention away from that.'

I had friends working in departments who would get directives from above to say, 'Just grab something. Find something. Go and look under the cupboards and for papers on the desk. We need to find something to announce.'

Ms Boothby: That is poor leadership from ministers.

Mr KERLE: Exactly. I will remind us of some of the greatest hits of the former Labor government, starting with the former Chief Minister's chief of staff emailing one of their donors a letter instructing him what to write in order to be given $12m of taxpayers' money. That was early on in its regime. We should never forget that. That is taxpayers' money.

The government does not have money. It is taxpayers' money taken from mums, dads, business owners and pensioners. It is not free money; it comes from private citizens and businesses. We have to be careful with how it is spent. Just emailing someone to say, 'This is what you need to send me' so that they could then hand out $12m—boundless possible.

There was the failure to deliver the Alice Springs art gallery over eight years. The Member for Gwoja talks about loving the rainbow community and the arts. He failed to deliver the Alice Springs art gallery over eight years because the Labor government seemed to be tied up in ideology and a particular location. We will deliver it.

The Member for Brennan will remember the failure to move youth offenders to the industrial area at Pinelands in Palmerston. That was early on. I remember that was one of the first things that galvanised the Palmerston

community to come together and have their voices heard by the Labor government. To its credit, it finally agreed to move it to the Holtze precinct, but we had to have a lot of community meetings with everyone in the streets protesting that one.

There was an endless stream of major projects that were eventually taken quietly out the back and drowned in a bucket of water. Our Treasurer spoke today regarding the prawn farm—the road to nowhere. A number of projects were announced with major projects status, yet where are they today? In business, you do not try to do everything. You pick a few good things and do them well. You deliver those and then move on to the next thing. You do not try to have a million balls in the air, because then you do not do anything well.

There was the failure to deliver solar farms. We have three solar farms in the NT. As the honourable member just said, they have only just started delivering to the grid. It was a failure. For a government that talked endlessly about renewable energy and the inevitable transition, it was unable to transition our grid and connect these farms in a meaningful way.

While we are on the topic of solar, Madam Speaker, you will remember the Alice Springs blackout years ago.

Madam SPEAKER: I certainly do.

Mr KERLE: Labor's failure to plan and properly implement led to the entire town of Alice Springs being blacked out for a day or a couple of days. It led to the spectacle of the ETU calling for the sacking of a minister. Eventually, the chief executive of the department was, unfortunately, thrown under the bus to save the minister. What a shame.

The taking away of the solar feed-in tariff rebate is close to the hearts of the people in my electorate. It is fair enough that it had to be subject to a sunset clause. That was done in the middle of COVID over an Easter weekend when no-one was paying attention. The former government slid out its stinking media release when people were not watching. The people who made investment decisions based on a structure promoted by the government were told, 'Sorry, you have already invested thousands of dollars and planned your retirement around having solar on your roof and not having power bills, but we will take that away now. We will remove your grandfathered position, and you will pay full price on your power bills. You will get the wholesale FIT instead of the retail FIT.'

There are so many people in my electorate of Blain who raised that issue with me. They had planned for their retirement and invested thousands of dollars to put solar on their roof and then the former Member for Drysdale took that away. She said, 'Sorry, guys. We have mismanaged the budget; there is $12m sitting there, and we will take that.'

I come back to the five areas of our economic focus: mining; agriculture; gas; tourism; and Defence. I know a little about agriculture. There are probably two billion people living to the north of us between Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, China and India. A lot of people there need protein. In northern Australia we have an ideal climate to grow protein on four legs on land that is not suitable for intensive agriculture due to water and a lot of other factors. However, a cow can walk around on four legs and graze the excess vegetation. We can put that cow on a boat and send it north for money to provide for the economic development of northern Australia.

Gas at the Beetaloo will get going. I cannot even begin to talk about what a game changer that will be. It cannot come soon enough.

I remind the Assembly of the tourism icons that were closed under Labor. The walk to the top of Uluru was closed under Labor. The infinity pool at the top of Gunlom Falls was closed and is now opening under the CLP. Douglas Daly Hot Springs was closed under Labor. I do not know what the status of it is. I hope it will be open again. I have been unable to take my kids there; I am sure they would love it. There are a few others that I do not have on my list.

I am proud to say that the Territory is open for business again under the new CLP government.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, my contribution will focus on the legislative workload that the new CLP government has managed in our first eight weeks.

By the end of today's sittings the government anticipates that five substantial matters will have been dealt with by the parliament, honouring our commitment to Territorians to get cracking on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

Declan's law represents the initial shock and heartbreak felt throughout the community, none more so painfully than Declan's family and loved ones. From that moment of horror, the community came together, campaigning to say enough is enough, with Samara Laverty displaying superhuman strength to push through the deep sorrow only a grieving mother can know. We passed Declan's law on the first substantive day in parliament this term.

It is one of those times that you remember where you were when you heard the terrible news. You remember the knots in your stomach and the mix of rage and sorrow. Declan's law stands in testament to Declan, Samara, his family and all others in our community who have suffered at the hands of senseless violence. At this time, we think of Sifat and all those in the Territory community and abroad still grieving his loss and awaiting the courts to dispense justice.

Everyday Territorians came together; they came to the steps of Parliament House in the largest peaceful protest the Territory has ever seen. They turned out and indicated their views strongly. When that was not enough and it fell on deaf ears by those opposite and many of their former colleagues, they let the will of the people be heard loud and clear on election night.

Under Declan's law, there will be a presumption against bail for youth and adult serious violent offenders, regardless of whether a weapon is involved. Breach of bail will become an offence for all, and electronic monitoring will be mandatory for the few repeat serious offenders who are still granted bail. The laws will also give police more powers to scan for weapons. This is known as wanding.

Although the passing of Declan's law does not bring Declan back, we hope these laws show Samara, Declan's wider family and all those in the community touched by senseless violence that their loss has led to this parliament ensuring we make the Territory a safer place.

The CLP government said that ignoring 10 and 11-year-olds who commit serious crimes was not the answer to turning around their lives or protecting the wider community. Since 1 July there have been more than 104 incidents involving youths aged 10 and 11 in the commission of offences in the Territory. By lowering the age of criminal responsibility, we can intervene earlier in a young person's life and provide them the support they need to turn a new page and start a better journey of skills training, including our promised two new youth boot camps in Darwin and Alice Springs.

Under the former Labor government's approach, it was almost certainly the destiny of these kids to end up in an adult correctional facility. The status quo simply cannot continue. Territorians want to feel safe again, and our troubled youths need earlier intervention. No-one wants to see kids locked up, but when 10 and 11-year-olds commit serious crimes, including violent threats to people's lives and armed robberies, they must be held accountable. Simply dropping them home with no consequences only guarantees that the cycle of crime continues. These changes are about putting troubled youths on a better path and making our community safer. We make no apologies for delivering the laws Territorians voted for in the August election.

Under the new ramraid legislation, police can charge offenders who have stolen a vehicle and used it as a weapon to damage property or gain entry to a building, with this brand-new offence which attracts up to 10 years behind bars.

Some examples of property are businesses, homes and police and private vehicles. Since 1 July, there have been 26 ram raids on commercial premises and six rammings of police vehicles. We have seen too many businesses targeted by vehicles used as weapons in ram raids. The cost to Territorians, financially and mentally, has been too high.

The new posting-and-boasting offence will see a penalty of up to two years in jail. This will apply to any person who promotes a certain crime or criminal activity—such as violent offences, property damage, theft, stealing a motor vehicle, police pursuits and robbery—on social media platforms, including sharing criminal activity online for the purpose of notoriety. This is about drawing a line in the sand about what is acceptable. Filming yourself or your mates committing a crime and gloating about it online is not okay.

The CLP government's new nuisance public drinking laws have been passed in parliament this week. The new nuisance public drinking offence will give police the powers to fine, charge and arrest people in public places where alcohol is prohibited, as well as issuing those same people a seven-day banned drinker order. This is about making our public spaces and parks safer and cleaner for everyone.

These changes will allow police to intervene earlier to ensure we stop this scourge in public places where alcohol is prohibited. We want to reduce the harm being caused by alcohol in our community and enforce a

higher community standard. Territorians want to move freely around their communities, go to the shops and enjoy our parks and public spaces without being confronted by unacceptable alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour.

The CLP government's crime focus continues, with legislation targeted at minimum mandatory sentences for cowardly assaults on frontline workers on track to be finalised today. Assaults on police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers and any other NT worker are unacceptable.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, reducing crime, rebuilding the economy, restoring lifestyle—easy to say, but hard to do all of them.

We on this side of the Chamber acknowledge that, but we are genuinely following through on plans to realise those aspirations. They are not motherhood statements or political slogans; they are part of an actionable plan, and we are following through with legislative amendments to deliver that strategy.

My learned colleague, the Treasurer, has already articulated some of the first tranche measures we are employing in the economic space. I draw reference to a couple of those items, noting how significant they are. We have already discussed the home building scheme, which is critical to the Northern Territory's economic rebuild. We are in the middle of a housing crisis nationally, and the Northern Territory is not immune to these pressures.

The key factor is we are seeking to stimulate supply. Economists across the country will agree on little about what to do in dealing with the housing crisis, but they all agree that we must stimulate supply, which is why our grants are targeted at people building new homes.

It is also worth contrasting that when we came out at election time with a plan to stimulate supply, we were immediately followed by the Territory Labor government trying to up the ante on our plan. Has everyone forgotten that part? The difference was that where we were offering $50,000 to build a new home, the opposition was offering $60,000. They missed the fundamental point …

Ms Uibo: Only for Territorians though.

Dr RAHMAN: That is right, Opposition Leader—for Territorians only. You missed the trick on the fact that it is about stimulating population growth. That is what we are doing. The eligibility on our side is for citizens and permanent residents to support population growth because over eight years you have overseen demographic decline; we have no workforce to build any of the houses. We will stimulate the population growth and workforce support.

The home building scheme is of great significance to my constituents at Northcrest in Berrimah. Northcrest is a place filled with potential. It reminds of the place I grew up in—Karama. Young, aspirational families trying to get a leg up and multigenerational families trying to create a space in a community from which to advance have been held back by Territory Labor's failure to support that development, so it does not have the number of houses that it needs to flourish. Instead, it has stagnated; there is no Australian mail service, council service, supermarket provision and no progress on the mere possibility of creating schools. Why is that? Is it because of a failure on the part of the residents? It is a failure on the part of the former government. Its economic policy was negligent and failed to support stimulating housing supply.

We are stimulating housing supply and population growth. We are supporting both in tandem. We know that remote housing is important, but so is urban housing stock which has dwindled under eight years of economic mismanagement.

The Treasurer will speak on our payroll tax initiatives today, the details of which will be elaborated later. I need not speak to the granular detail, but it is important for everyone to understand why we are taking the calculated risk to spend own-source revenue on cutting payroll tax and making ourselves a competitive place to run a business. It is because we are trying to stop businesses foreclosing, giving up, shutting down and leaving as they have been for years as the economic conditions were parlous because of Labor's negligence and mismanagement.

We are incentivising businesses to stick with us, hang in there and reinvest. We are asking you to reinvest in your businesses, staff, capital and plant, and we will stick with you to rebuild the economy along the way. Fong Lim is the industrial hub and engine of Darwin. I represent more active businesses in my electorate

than any other electorate in this House throughout Stuart Park, Winnellie, Berrimah and I hope increasingly through Wishart, East Arm and all the strategic industrial land we have that has not been capitalised upon.

I am urging those businesses in Fong Lim, which I will be spending more time with, to stick with us, reinvest in their businesses and have confidence that this CLP government will back them to restore integrity to the economy. We will ensure their businesses can flourish in a place that has a functioning, viable economy managed by people who are paying attention to the details and not just coasting on ventures of vanity and nonsense major projects that are reminiscent of an episode of *Utopia*.

Tangible achievements have been documented by my government colleagues. These include our delivery on legislative amendments. I am grateful for the contributions from everyone in this House, most recently the preceding contribution from my colleague, the Member for Casuarina.

I will reference what my colleague, the Member for Karama, pointed out because it is a critical thing that was overlooked in the last parliament—the CommSec State of the States reports. We reached the point with the former government being so filled with hubris that it would dismiss CommSec repeatedly and say, 'It does not apply to us. It does not matter that we are last on seven out of eight metrics consistently over time.'

Will we suddenly come out of that and be first on every metric overnight? Of course we will not. We know that and are facing economic reality. Labor was in denial repeatedly on every economic metric. We were seen to be the most underperforming basket-case jurisdiction. It was not because we lack natural resources, gumption or the right people; it was because of policy failure in the economic space. The former government must take responsibility for that.

Part of what we are achieving in this government is facing economic reality. That is a tangible deliverable. You probably have to read between the lines in our plan to figure it out, but that is what we are doing. We are facing reality, as opposed to pretending there is nothing wrong and saying, 'Nothing to see here; it is fine.'

Supporting mining, gas, agriculture, tourism and Defence will also require attendant workforce support, population growth and homes to house that population. We must engage with Southeast Asia to leverage our geographic proximity and cultivate better relationships to generate commercially viable investment options.

That is why we have delivered, in a short time, our promise to deliver the new ministries of Trade, Business and Asian Relations and of International Education, Migration and Population. Why did we do that? Because they are signals to the market and to Territorians. Aside from the granular detail, they signal that it is time for courage and that we are committed to being courageous.

In that spirit, I thank the Chief Minister for having the courage to embark on a package of bold reform. I thank her for her ministerial statement. I thank my colleagues for giving weight to her assertions that we are delivering. I look forward to our continued demonstration of courage from this strong, 17-person CLP government with a mandate to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, if there was an award equivalent to the Grammy or the Oscar the Member for Fong Lim would win it. The Member for Fong Lim only a few months ago was a member of Territory Labor and was rubbishing every current Cabinet minister for their poor performance as an opposition team.

The Member for Fannie Bay, during the election campaign, told people the opposite of what the CLP's plan was. She was not telling people at their doors that she would put 10-year-old kids in prison; she said the opposite, as did the Member for Fong Lim.

Let us be clear: if we want to talk about delivering, then maybe every one of the CLP members who want to deliver something should deliver themselves to their cars and get their backsides to the bush where they will see what has been delivered. There were more roads sealed than by any other government in the history of the Northern Territory. There were more houses built in any remote community than in the history of the Northern Territory. That was delivered by us.

When the CLP was last in government, one brand-new house was built in the last two years of their term. It is nothing to be proud of. The only reason we continue to see record investment across the bush is Labor. Labor settled that agreement and got that investment into the remote communities. Labor's legacy will continue when none of us are left in this place.

You have delivered nothing for the environment. You got rid of the Climate Change portfolio because you are a bunch of climate change deniers and cannot even talk about it. Government members are laughing now. The Member for Sanderson is having a great old laugh at climate change. It just shows what he thinks about it.

You put the Environment portfolio with Planning and Development because you do not care about any of the environmental protections or preserving the environment. You care only about making money because you put profits before people. Shame on all of you.

I am sick to death of people talking about Aboriginal people and making false accusations. The Uluru climb was closed at the wish of the traditional owners, not by any government. Do not talk crap. Aboriginal people said that they did not want it to happen. Aboriginal people said that allowing people to climb on Uluru is like climbing on your church. Would you accept that? No, so do not expect Aboriginal people to accept separate treatment.

The Mount Gillen climb in Alice Springs was closed at the wish of the traditional owners because it is a sacred place for them. It is a spiritual place. That is what we must honour and respect. Under this government, we are already seeing the attitude that it does not care about that. It is willing to sacrifice places of deep cultural and spiritual significance for development. That is not what this place should be about. That is not what we want.

Let us talk about delivering. Last term this parliament delivered contemporary reform to the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*, strengthening the protections and laws for domestic and family violence survivors so that people are protected.

Truth-telling grants were rolled out so that Aboriginal people could have an opportunity to tell their truth and help inform and educate people in our community. Is there a problem with that? That is important, and it needs to happen across the country. We need to tell the truth because it is part of true reconciliation and healing. The only way we will move forward as a country is by working together. That is delivering.

You say that nothing was delivered. What do you say to Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory about what was delivered? There were new houses and roads. Community Courts went back to remote communities; they were cut under the CLP. There were law and justice groups, embedding Aboriginal people's voices into the justice system so that they can work with the judiciary, inform appropriate sentencing options and inform people of the cultural and respect elements that need to be embedded.

There were the arts trails delivered over the last eight years. Aboriginal art centres across the communities were upgraded, showcasing Aboriginal creation stories and Aboriginal people's works. Aboriginal art is not just something that is bought; it is someone's story. You are buying a story and helping them with livelihood. For some people, it is their only source of income.

Community infrastructure in town and in the bush was delivered last term. There was important reform.

In Alice Springs, the hospital accommodation for nurses was delivered. The hospital car park in Alice Springs was delivered. The Members for Braitling and Namatjira are patting themselves on the back and saying, 'She'll be right, mate. I'm a good bloke. We are saving Anzac Oval.' You are building a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art gallery behind a sports field. What other national institution is hidden behind an oval with a fence? What does that say to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? It says that the CLP government does not value or acknowledge them—you are behind a sporting oval. That is what the CLP is doing.

The CLP members talk about delivering; the only thing the government has delivered this week is lies.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; he cannot call it lies. There are no lies, and he should withdraw it.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, he did not call anyone a liar. He said that they were lies. There is a subtle difference.

Mr PAECH: It is not lies; it is the truth. The truth hurts, so I hope you hurt. The truth is the government comes in here talking tough; it has delivered on punitive, harmful, retrograde, back-to-the-future policies that will not change lives in the Northern Territory for the better.

Locking up 10-year-old kids is not delivering for the better; it is going backwards to when kids were sitting in cells, not in programs; when kids were in courts, not on country; and when kids were in spit hoods. That is what the government is delivering—punitive, draconian, old, failed policies that do not work—because it is more interested in headlines and populist policy.

The CLP government made changes to the *Bail Act* and told everyone in the community, 'We are serious about this; we are getting on with the job and getting it done.' It does not start until January. What month are we in now, Member for Barkly? We are in October. November, December, January—it is not urgent, according to the government, because it is delayed.

Let us understand the landscape we are in. We are here to represent everyone, and things have been delivered over eight years and over the entire period of self-government for people in the Territory.

Government members all laugh at the car park, yet all MLAs' staff members park in the car park that Labor built; they are parked there now.

We are worried about the environment. We have an Environment minister, who is also the Planning minister, who is not talking about climate change. The CLP got rid of that portfolio. We have a Chief Minister who rubbishes Territorians for standing up for the environment and tells them to go home. Guess what, Chief Minister? They are home. They are not going anywhere. They will keep up the pressure because they will call for environmental regulations and safety for Territory kids and all Territorians, because everyone deserves it.

The Territory is home to many people. When we hear that horrible language, telling people to go home—this government refers to Aboriginal people as 'them', 'their' and 'those people'—that is what you are getting. The Territory is being delivered a back-to-the-future government with no future, no idea and no plan other than to go back to what did not work.

Government members talk about scrutiny and accountability, yet they are copying every other government prior to them in regard to what they have done and are excluding the Independents from having a say. That is what you are getting under this government.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

QUESTION TIME

Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

You promised Territorians open and accountable government. You also promised them that projects would have to meet a robust environmental standard. Since coming to government, you have secretly released the Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper which will give you and your ministers the power to sidestep any laws, including environmental laws, to avoid scrutiny.

I seek leave to table the consultation paper.

Leave granted.

Ms UIBO: When will you come clean with Territorians that you are removing safeguards that you promised to keep?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the Opposition Leader had the opportunity to recognise that we are delivering our commitments to reduce red tape for Territory businesses and rebuild our economy, which was trashed by Labor over eight years. It not only blew debt to a nearly $12bn liability for Territorians but also failed to grow our economy and recognise our true economic potential.

It is no secret that we took to the election a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. The jewel in the crown of rebuilding the Territory's economy is the Territory Coordinator.

As the Opposition Leader rightly noted, we, as an open and transparent government, put out a consultation paper and exposure draft of the Territory Coordinator legislation to key sectors in the community and the business sector to get feedback and test with them whether that legislation has hit the mark.

We look forward to getting all that feedback from the consultation paper, which we have transparently issued to get the feedback because the legislation needs to hit the mark. This is about reducing timeframes and making sure projects are fought for, not just facilitated. We need to go full steam ahead when it comes to private sector investment.

As is plain for anyone to see, people do not need to know much about economics to know that private sector investment in the Territory is at all-time lows. Although the government has an important role to play in building public infrastructure—and we are proud of what we will achieve in the future—without private sector investment, our economy will not grow.

That is why measures like reducing payroll tax are an important part of this story as well. Between incentives like lifting the payroll tax-free threshold from $1.5m to $2.5m, meaning another 200 businesses do not pay payroll tax …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was clearly about what safeguards will be removed by the Chief Minister.

Madam SPEAKER: The Chief Minister has the call.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It comes as no surprise to anyone that the Territory Coordinator is about fast-tracking and facilitating investment. Where there is duplication in approvals processes, we need to unblock it and streamline this process.

We are proud and excited about the Territory Coordinator legislation. That will come to parliament after it has been through a public consultation phase. It will be a flagship, signature piece of rebuilding the Territory's economy. We are proud of that and look forward to feedback on the Bill from all the stakeholders.

HomeGrown Territory Program

Mr HOWE to CHIEF MINISTER

Our new CLP government took a plan to the election to rebuild our economy and restore the Territory lifestyle. The plan included our HomeGrown Territory program to stimulate building construction and help Territorians achieve the dream of owning their own home. Can you update the Assembly on the CLP's HomeGrown Territory program and how it is working for Territorians, as well as helping to attract new residents from interstate?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is another signature deliverable of a CLP government getting on with the job and taking action. That is what we promised Territorians. I told them to judge us on our actions; let us deliver for you, and you can judge us on whether we stuck to the commitments we promised. That has happened in these two weeks of parliament with our reducing-crime package and our HomeGrown Territory housing package.

This scheme is exciting and is already delivering enormous results for our economy. We know that people are facing cost-of-living pressures, so in developing this scheme we wanted it to have the broadest possible impact and help the most people. We tailored a scheme that supports not only people who want to buy existing homes or build new homes but also people who have already owned a home to build a new home. This is adding stock to our market, increasing construction stimulus and giving people that dream of owning their own home, keeping them here for the long haul and letting them put down roots in the Territory.

We also expanded it as far as possible to include not only Australian citizens but also permanent residents. We are excited. This was launched on 1 October—just a few weeks into our government—and has been going for 24 days. At this time, I am proud to report to the parliament and the people of the Northern Territory that we have spent $1.68m of our hardworking Territorian taxpayers' money to turn around approximately $25m into our economy. In regard to the return on investment, this is a fantastic scheme because it is supporting people through a cost-of-living crisis where that $50,000, $30,000 or $10,000 can go towards their deposit, which is incredibly hard to save for.

There have been four applications for the first home owner grants of $50,000; 42 applications for the FreshStart New Home Grants of $30,000; and 22 applications for the $10,000 grant for existing properties. This is spinning money through our economy and keeping people here, and it is only 24 days into the scheme. We are excited about the future of this.

We want to continue to target people interstate because it is even tougher to get into home ownership in the big states. We say to the people who live in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland: come to the Northern Territory; build your dream home and life here; and be part of rebuilding the Territory together.

Housing – Air Conditioning

J DAVIS to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

I draw the minister's and the Chamber's attention to a research study released today, published in the *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, which showed that there is a rise in suicidal behaviours among young people linked to hotter temperatures. This study builds on work done by Curtin University and Sydney University, which found increased suicide and mental health risks with high heat anomalies.

The NT's temperatures are rising, and our suicide rates are the highest in the country. Housing conditions and energy security are key vulnerabilities. My understanding is that the NT department of Housing does not supply air conditioning in dwellings and passes the responsibility of installing air conditioning to tenants. Can you advise how this will be addressed as a matter of immediate public health concern? In particular, will the NT department of Housing provide affordable air-conditioning options to our vulnerable populations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, firstly I send a shout-out to all the department staff who are out and about doing fantastic work in not only the urban areas of Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, but also the regions.

Air conditioning has been an ongoing issue for many years. For those who are unsure, over the last eight years the Labor government had plenty of opportunities to change housing in the bush. We have seen failure from Labor over many years across the board. It is not just in regard to air conditioning; I have seen a number of projects that were ignored by the Labor government.

In my electorate alone, there was an opportunity for the former Labor Housing minister to free up 51 houses in Tennant Creek. They had eight years to do that but failed. They had opportunities to build new staff housing in Tennant Creek, free up housing from BRADAAG and deliver social and affordable housing—22 new houses—under the regional deal, but they simply failed to deliver.

Air conditioning has been an ongoing issue; in fact, many residents have spoken to me about it. In urban areas there have been many different approaches to me over many years in regard to air conditioning.

In urban and bush areas, the former government delivered what we call the evaporative model of air conditioning. I recall that about 18 months ago I went to Alpurrurulam (Lake Nash) where the Labor government installed some evaporative air conditioning. Labor worked out it had made a mistake, took it down and provided no replacement air conditioning for the people who lived there.

There is a lot of work to be done in housing. We were left a mess by the Labor government. I will work with the department to determine the best way to deliver cooler air conditioning in remote areas.

Remote Travel – Milk Run Route

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

Our rural and regional residents, businesses and tourists rely on the milk run flights to provide access to Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. They have been in operation for many years and provide vital alternatives to what can be long and tiring road journeys.

Can you outline to the Assembly how these flights are operated and funded? What is the CLP government doing to ensure they can continue to operate?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I believe many members in this Chamber have used the milk run over the years. For those who do not know, the milk run flies between Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. It is operated by Airnorth.

A number of people use that service; I believe it is over 6,000 seats per month. The service is a crucial lifeline to the regions of the Northern Territory, connecting smaller centres. This ensures that people in remote areas have access to essential services like healthcare, education and other supports that people in major centres take for granted.

It also plays a key role in supporting industries that are vital to the Territory's economy. Mining, agriculture and tourism businesses regularly use the milk run service.

Incredibly, in the 2024–25 budget, Labor failed to allocate funding to this vital service beyond the next eight months. We have come to government, looked at the books and the contracts coming up and seen that there is no budget for when that contract ends. This is another black hole the CLP will have to deal with. It did not bother to fund the milk run past the existing contract in the budget.

Mr Edgington: How will I get home?

Mr YAN: Member for Barkly, you might have to rack up some miles in your car, and the Member for Katherine may have to drive more often than flying.

All too often, we are seeing gaps in the forward budget. The Labor government made the forward estimates look good by not funding projects past a certain date. That is why it could project surpluses that looked great, but when it gets to budget time, we need to fund it. Therefore, instead of a surplus we start to see a deficit again.

Our government will be working closely with Airnorth, the contractor, to make sure that we can provide appropriate services for people in the communities who rely on the milk run to travel throughout the Northern Territory, rather than having to drive long distances where fatigue is a factor, which can increase accidents.

Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper

Mr YOUNG to CHIEF MINISTER

You committed to Territorians that you would be transparent and accountable. In your answer to the Leader of the Opposition, you stated that the Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper is available for the public. It is not available to the public; it is open only to a select group of stakeholders. Why have you released your Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper only to a small number of hand-picked stakeholders and property developers, denying all Territorians the opportunity to have their say?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to talk more about our plan for the Territory Coordinator and its critical role in rebuilding the economy.

I will clearly explain this to the opposition. Eight-and-a-half weeks ago we had a Northern Territory election. For about five or six years the CLP's policy was to deliver a Territory Coordinator if we were to win government. Not only was this policy fleshed out at the 2020 election and with us for four years in the last term, but we also took it to the last election eight-and-a-half weeks ago. Territorians resoundingly voted for the CLP reducing crime and rebuilding our economy.

In fulfilment of our commitments to reduce crime, we have delivered our first tranche of legislation, which gives police the immediate powers they need to keep Territorians safe. That work on crime will continue; there is a long road ahead.

The next bit we are delivering is the Territory Coordinator legislation. To be open and transparent—rather than just bringing the legislation to parliament later this year, next year or whenever it might be—we put it out to key economic stakeholders for exposure consultation. That is what a transparent government does.

Opposition Leader, you have tabled it in the parliament, so anyone can get their hands on it. If you want to provide feedback, go for your life. You are welcome to.

Make no mistake; we have done targeted consultation on the Territory Coordinator legislation because the feedback we are after is whether it hits the mark to press 'go' on our economy and give industry the green light for private sector investment in the Territory.

The time for delays and obfuscation of our economic growth and opportunities is over. Under a CLP government, the Territory is open for business.

This morning children from Alawa Primary School were in the gallery. I spoke to them and said that we are here to build their future. It is not for us; it is for our kids, their children and the future of the Northern Territory.

There will be people who vehemently oppose our Territory Coordinator legislation; I have no doubt in my mind about that. It just reinforces to me and reignites the fire in my belly to get it done, because that is exactly why we need it. It is the reason we need to do this in the first place.

Do not worry; everyone will get their chance. It will be introduced and go through the parliamentary process. We can debate it all day and night when it comes up.

Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper – Supplementary Question

Mr YOUNG to CHIEF MINISTER

Can you provide a list of the hand-picked stakeholders you sent the consultation paper to?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not have the list on me, but from memory there are maybe a dozen organisations—for example, Darwin Major Business Group and Master Builders. There are key industry peak bodies, which is typical of who you would provide this exposure draft to get their feedback on whether it hits the mark.

We are focused and keen to make sure it works. This is a strength-testing exercise to ensure it will hit the mark. We are excited by the feedback we will receive and open to what that looks like. We are keen to strengthen it if that is required.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 46; clearly the Chief Minister does not have a list of the stakeholders. Is she willing to put the question on notice and provide that?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I am happy to provide a list of the stakeholders; there are no secrets. You probably have the list and are just wanting to carry on with this charade.

We are proud of the Territory Coordinator and what it will do to rebuild the Territory.

Howard Springs Facility – Damage

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

The Howard Springs quarantine facility has been the subject of much commentary and even more government spending in recent years. This especially occurred after the unprecedented use for wet weather respite last year. The former Labor government tried to tell everyone the damage was fair wear and tear, although a Labor minister later reluctantly agreed that it was senseless destruction.

Can you report to the Assembly what the true cost of using Howard Springs for wet weather respite was?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we all remember last year when we were asking the previous Labor government about what was taking place at Howard Springs. We were hearing all sorts of stories and asked simple questions on what was happening, the costs and what was being done to deal with issues.

The facility was stood up for two months between March and April to deal with the flooding event that swept through the northwest part of the Territory. It displaced a number of people who we had to bring here. The decision was made to put them up at Howard Springs.

We always asked about the costs. We heard from two Chief Ministers that it was just wear and tear. One minister was reasonably truthful in saying that it was senseless damage. We now have the cost of the repairs and cleanup alone, which was $1.249m. When you break it down, there was nearly half a million dollars in broken windows alone. Where in anyone's world is half a million dollars in broken windows in two months classified as normal wear and tear? That is garbage.

That was just the cost of wear and tear, according to Labor, which was actually damage and cleaning. There were also handyman costs of $277,000; a select tender went out for nearly $90,000 to replace mattresses; just the plumbing costs alone to repair damage was $174,000; and replacement of fire extinguishers and damaged smoke alarms cost $176,000.

Do not get me wrong; we need to look after Territorians during flood events, but Labor dropped the ball and did not have due diligence. Overall, including the operational costs to run the facility and stand it up for two months, the entire cost was $12.5m. That is a lot of money out of Territorians' pockets. We will spend Territory money wisely.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, you are still talking even after the minister ceased. Please stop your interjections.

Environmental Organisations – Funding

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

The Chief Minister has told passionate Territorians who care about the environment to go back to where they came from. The Chief Minister has advocated and proudly said that she will cut funding to the Environmental Defenders Office. Will you guarantee that you will not cut funding to other environmental or advocacy bodies across the Territory out of fear of scrutiny of your government's decisions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Northern Territory Government has a range of rules and regulations relating to environmental approvals. On this side, we want to ensure that we protect our environment whilst also encouraging development. We have environmental regulations. Legislation is being developed to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in the Northern Territory.

There is the *Environment Protection Act 2019* that requires assessment and approval of proposals that have the potential to significantly impact the environment. The Act requires proposals to be assessed and planned to take into account the impacts of a changing climate. This includes the assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and may lead to the imposition of conditions in environmental approvals.

We also have an emissions reduction strategy. This is important. A draft strategy is being developed that outlines how the Northern Territory can meet its objectives of economic growth and net zero by 2050. This aligns exactly with what the Chief Minister has been talking about. We want to drive economic growth in the Northern Territory and ensure that we protect our environment. Those strategies for emissions reduction include the strategy that builds on the foundation work that has already been completed or is underway, as set out in the Climate Change Response document.

The Territory also has the opportunity to contribute to decarbonisation elsewhere in Australia and overseas through the export of renewable energy. It was those opposite who brought in the legislation, which we all voted on, that will assist Sun Cable to export energy overseas. Once again, this is reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. I am sure that we can work towards …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; minister, will you guarantee that other environmental organisations will not have their funding cut for standing true to the environment and for scrutinising your government?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has the call.

Mr BURGOYNE: In regard to the scrutiny by these environmental groups—there are many of them—I want to talk about some regulations. If an entity wants to ensure that it has its gas well approved, there is a huge range of environmental requirements put upon it in the Northern Territory. After the government was first established in 1976, all that was needed was an ILUA. Now, a huge range of requirements must be met which go through those environmental protections.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; it is a direct question. Will you guarantee funding remains in place for environmental organisations—yes or no?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has the call.

Mr BURGOYNE: The Chief Minister has made it clear on a number of occasions that we will not be supporting environmental organisations that seek to use the community as weapons.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BURGOYNE: That is proven to have occurred in cases. The EDO was one of those. The Chief Minister said loudly and clearly that it will not be funded into the future.

Mr Paech: Your electorate will punish you for that.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease your interjections, please.

Ms Uibo: Biggest swing for the Greens in Territory history.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, you are on a warning. I am sick of this commentary.

Health Budget

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for HEALTH

One of our primary responsibilities as government is to provide quality healthcare services for Northern Territory residents. Our doctors, nurses and health professionals work tirelessly to provide a strong and stable healthcare system which makes up a large part of spending in the Northern Territory. Can you outline what the state of the Territory healthcare budget has been and what you have discovered since coming to the portfolio?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri is right; our doctors, nurses and health professionals work tirelessly to provide a strong and stable healthcare system. I thank all the staff for the work they do.

I have discovered quite a bit since I have been in this portfolio. The inaction of the Labor government in addressing the unprecedented health overspend is outrageous. While I appreciate the critical importance of health delivery and the complexities in this jurisdiction, we are not talking about historical budget pressures. We are talking about a $280m overspend in one year. That is more than $5m per week that Labor has spent on unspecified, unexplored structural gaps between funding and expenditure. The known Labor trait of spend, spend, spend was alive and well for the entirety of the last eight years. This unprecedented and abhorrent budget blowout is one for the record books.

Members opposite not only let the Territory slide into lawlessness by failing to act on the evident crime crisis sweeping our cities, towns and communities; they opened the public purse to top up critical services rather than identifying where money was evaporating. The former Labor government failed to act on putting supports in place at the sunsetting of the Stronger Futures legislation, letting the rivers of grog flow. This put further extreme pressure on our health sector. Labor failed to consider action needed to get NT Health back on budget. Once again, Labor's failure to act over the past eight years has contributed to the budget blowout in Health. It will require heavy lifting to turn around this catastrophe.

NT Health advised that the budget is predicted to be overspent again in 2024–25. We need to support and protect our esteemed health professionals across all sectors of the health fraternity, as they work in a pressured environment and are a trusted and respected cohort of professionals.

Scrutiny so far has included monitoring financial performance across NT Health, planning cost reduction measures and addressing structural inequities in Commonwealth funding for healthcare in the Territory. The NT Health budget represents a significant portion of the NT budget and unprecedented blowouts.

An additional thing I discovered is that the Opposition Leader was the former Health minister.

Gas Industry – Environmental Regulation

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

It is a bit hard to just discover something that I was for eight months, but anyway.

Minister, you said:

> *Our onshore petroleum industry is well regulated under a range of laws to ensure it occurs safely, and in line with community expectations.*
>
> *Our regulatory systems and processes are informed by the best available science, and the Beetaloo has been subject to extensive environmental and scientific studies.*

Your Territory Coordinator Consultation Paper talks about sidestepping environmental protection laws to push through projects. Will you give a guarantee to Territorians that you will not remove the important environmental protections the former Territory Labor government put in place to ensure strict regulation of the onshore gas industry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there is a huge range of laws and regulations in the Northern Territory to protect our environment. There are over 800 rules and regulations that relate to gas extraction in the Northern Territory. There has been a huge amount of work to ensure this activity can happen safely.

There has been a huge amount of work funded with the federal government. The SREBA—the Strategic Regional Environmental and Baseline Assessment—was set up to ensure that gas extraction could occur safely in the Beetaloo. We have federal scientists looking at the work that has been done to ensure gas can be extracted safely.

Before I was interrupted earlier, I was talking about the levels of scrutiny when proponents want to extract gas. This is what we are talking about. We know those opposite, when they were in government, talked big on gas but never delivered. Half of them did not want it and half did. The former Chief Minister was running ahead and saying, 'We support gas', and the Deputy Chief Minister did not want it to happen.

On this side of the Chamber, we support industry and want to see it happen in a sustainable manner. That is why we must go through all these rules and regulations. Proponents must ensure an ILUA is in place, that they have done an environmental management plan and have a gas extraction licence. They must work with AAPA. I thank Dr Benedict Scambary, who I met recently, from that important organisation. They must comply with the code.

I recently met Dr Vogel from the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was clearly about environmental protections and whether the minister will assure Territorians they will be kept.

Madam SPEAKER: His response is entirely relevant, and he still has 50 seconds to go.

Mr BURGOYNE: If the Northern Territory EPA, an organisation that oversees environmental regulation, believes that an environmental management plan does not meet the standards, it has the authority to bring it in and add additional conditions that come before me, as the Environment minister. We can ensure that additional conditions are put in place. This is the work that occurs to ensure …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was direct. It was about …

Madam SPEAKER: We know what the question is …

Mr Young: Will the minister guarantee that he will not remove important environmental protections …

Madam SPEAKER: Take your seat, Member for Daly! The minister is answering the question.

Mr BURGOYNE: As I am saying loudly and clearly, a range of environmental protections are in place to ensure that industry can operate in the Northern Territory safely. We will ensure that these are in place in the future and that there is a structured environmental protection policy going forward.

International Education, Migration and Population

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, MIGRATION and POPULATION

The new CLP government is the first in the Territory's history to create a ministry for International Education, Migration and Population. These are key sectors and subjects to address if we are to attract skilled workers and new residents to the Territory and assist our businesses to grow and prosper. Can you update the Assembly on why this ministry has been created and how it will contribute to our CLP plan to rebuild the economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our government is proud to be the first government in the Territory's history to establish this incredibly important portfolio of International Education, Migration and Population.

Anyone who lives in the Territory will understand how important migrants have been to building our Territory's population and economy.

Our Chief Minister, a grandchild of Italian migrants, has stated a number of times that for our Territory to grow and prosper, not only should our doors remain open to migration, but we should also be actively encouraging migrants to look to the Territory as the preferred place to call home.

Including International Education in this portfolio sends a clear message to prospective students that we want them to stay here and make the Territory their home. That is why we are working hard with CDU to ensure the federal government understands how critical international students have become in not only the Territory tertiary education space but also the vocational education training (VET) space so that the Territory's future growth and prosperity can be assured.

Our government is committed to helping our businesses fill workforce shortages and increase access to services for Territorians. We will leverage our close proximity and our connection to Asia and advocate for effective and tailored migration solutions to boost the workforce and population for the Territory.

Migration programs such as the NT Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) provide NT employers with greater access to overseas skilled workers. It makes it easier for skilled workers to move and stay in the Northern Territory. Through the program, Northern Territory employers can sponsor workers in occupations that are specifically in demand in the NT and access concessions to the standard criteria, including English levels, age limit and salary threshold.

With a new agreement currently being negotiated, it is anticipated that we will see this as a greater priority for the government to reduce the stress and the need for higher numbers and broader parameters in the agreement at the federal level. Our NT businesses will then have greater access to experienced overseas workers to help upskill local apprentices and trainees and grow their businesses. New overseas workers and their families will add to our diverse and well-integrated population which will help rebuild our economy. With a number of frontline workers—such as nurses, aged-care workers, teachers and childcare workers—in the occupations list, the Territory will have greater access to services helping to restore our lifestyle.

Motocross World Championships

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS

The former Labor government in May announced that Darwin would be hosting the Motocross World Championship—MXGP—from 2025 to 2029. Such an event provides an excellent stepping stone for Territorians looking to join the world MXGP, such as local boy Joel Kelso whose mother, Nayelle, lives in Karama. In a press release in May, the former Labor government highlighted the allocation of $1.65m to build a permanent motocross track at Hidden Valley. Could you update the Assembly on how the CLP government

is working to successfully stage the event and any challenges you have identified with the construction of the track at Hidden Valley?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have yet another example of the financial mismanagement that the previous Labor government has left us to fix. In our short time in government, we have been handed a series of costly, unfinished projects signed off before undertaking the necessary due diligence or financial scrutiny.

A prime example is the recently announced Motocross World Championships (MXGP). This project was initiated by Labor with a rushed and flawed business case for an event which is to occur in less than 12 months' time. For the last eight years, the Labor government has loved a headline, announcing exciting big projects to grab the Territory's attention. Behind the glossy announcements we have uncovered a mess.

They signed up to a large-scale costly event, such as this, without doing the work necessary to ensure these commitments were properly costed or financially viable. In February this year, before the motocross event was announced, Labor signed off on the cost of building the racetrack. The Members for Gwoja and Arnhem were a part of that disastrous and financially reckless Cabinet; they may not like the truth, but they were a part of that Cabinet. Eight months later, the cost has ballooned five times more than the original estimate. This is without contingencies with less than a year to go and still no track construction underway, with the Wet Season in between.

The sad reality is that the cost to pull out of this project would outweigh the cost to see it through. The additional unbudgeted funds the CLP needs to see this event through could have been assigned to provide more police, teachers or nurses. There is no doubt the MXGP event will bring benefits to the Territory. It will be a great opportunity for our Territory, sporting community and spectators. It will draw interstate and international visitors to our town. This is another case of Labor being unable to properly plan for and deliver projects with due diligence. The first MXGP event is scheduled for September 2025, which is a tight timeframe to complete all the necessary works and approvals. Track construction is essential for the event to proceed, and failure to deliver on time will result in further financial losses for the Territory—yet another burden inherited from Labor's reckless governance.

We are committed to making this work, because we recognise the long-term benefits for our local economy and the lifestyle boost for all motocross supporters.

Prisons – Air Conditioning

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

It is very hot at the moment, which can cause physical and mental health issues. How many cells in the Northern Territory's jails are air-conditioned? How many prisoners are housed in cells that have air conditioning? How many of the cells in the old Berrimah jail and Don Dale prison facilities will have air conditioning for adults in the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a classic example of how Labor failed us in the Northern Territory. Labor caused a Corrections crisis no matter where you are, whether it is Alice Springs or Darwin. For eight years the prison system got worse, and Labor chose to ignore it. It did nothing. It saw the warning signs with the overcrowding and did nothing.

Labor put us in a huge, terrible mess, and ultimately the CLP has to fix it. The CLP is spending taxpayers' money, not money that we make. It is taxpayers' money, and we need to spend it wisely because Labor spent it unwisely. It wasted money left, right and centre. It put us in debt, rising from $1.9bn up to about $12bn in a short period.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I note it is a minute in, and the question was about air conditioning for prisoners. He has not mentioned that; he is talking about debt.

Madam SPEAKER: He is one minute into his answer; he has two minutes to go.

Mr MALEY: We on this side of the Chamber, in just eight short weeks, have come up with a master plan to deal with the Corrections crisis in the Territory. We have a plan that includes an additional 1,000 beds for

prisoners in the Northern Territory. That is because the Labor government failed to do that. In a short eight weeks, we have.

Part of the plan is to look at the health and wellbeing of all the prisoners and offer rehabilitation and training. That is key, because we need to break the cycle of reoffending that the Labor government let run rampant throughout the Northern Territory.

I understand that air conditioning is part of our plan in relation to facilitating the prisoners, but now we need beds. The Labor government dropped the ball, and there was simply not enough space. The plan is in place, but we need to put prisoners into beds, and that outweighs the air con. The Labor government failed …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the Member for Mulka asked a direct question about the future of air conditioning in Territory prisons. The former government did the study and was moving to air-conditioned prisons. Will the CLP provide air conditioning?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, sit down! This is not your opportunity to give a speech.

Mr Paech: Well, I just did.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has touched on air conditioning and answered the question. It may not be to your satisfaction, but he has been answering the question.

Mr Paech interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop arguing.

Mr MALEY: In the current Don Dale there are some rooms with air conditioning. The women's sections in both prisons have air conditioning.

There is a plan to deal with this matter, but we need to make sure the mess caused by Labor is fixed, because we want to keep the Territory safe. We need to make sure the police can do their job and free up their watch houses.

Because of the failures of the Labor government, the watch houses are full and prisons are overcrowded. Labor had a plan not to do anything. The former government thought it would go away and said, 'We will not fix it or look at it. Put the problem away and ignore it.'

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: If this is about relevance, you can sit down now.

Mr YOUNG: It is not. It is Standing Order 46; it was about …

Madam SPEAKER: What is Standing Order 46?

Mr YOUNG: There was a direct question about air conditioning in cells …

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down, Member for Daly.

Mr MALEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for stopping the irrelevant interjections. They know that they have failed Territorians.

In relation to air conditioning, the youth facility in Alice Springs has air conditioning. We will fix the crime crisis.

Asian Relations

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

During the election the CLP outlined a plan to rebuild our Territory economy, including through the appointment of a dedicated minister for Asian Relations. Our CLP government understands the importance of Darwin being recognised as a gateway to Asia for business and trade. Can you update the Assembly on the work being done to rebuild our relationships with our Asian neighbours?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it was a dark day in 2016 when the then Labor Gunner government dropped Asian relations from the trade and business portfolio. That ill-thought action saw a 24-year commitment beginning in 1992 by the then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Marshall Perron, to building business and trading relationships with our northern neighbours come to an end. This, in no small measure, contributed to the deterioration of our Territory economy over the ensuing eight years. Until that point Darwin was seen across the country as the gateway to Asia.

Governments across Australia knew that if they wanted to do business with our northern neighbours, they had to start that journey in Darwin, engaging with the Northern Territory Government and businesses. In dropping that portfolio, the Gunner Labor government sent a clear message that the Territory no longer considered itself the gateway to Asia.

I am delighted to say that wrong has been righted. The placing of Asian relations back on the Territory's economic agenda with the creation of the Trade, Business and Asian Relations portfolio sends a clear message that the Territory is open for business and that we are again looking to our north.

The work to re-establish Darwin and the Northern Territory as Australia's gateway to Asia has commenced. The first steps have been to commence discussions with local businesses to assess their appetite to grow their business into Asian areas and to enter partnerships with our Asian neighbours. Groups such as the NT Cattlemen's Association and the Australia Indonesia Business Council have similarly welcomed our government's commitment. Meetings have already been held with representatives from Indonesia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

There are tremendous opportunities for the Northern Territory to diversify existing trade links for mutual benefit and economic development with our near neighbours. The Territory's growing sectors such as agribusiness; mining and energy, including critical minerals; higher education; and competency-based vocational education present great opportunities for partnerships with neighbours such as China, Taiwan, Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

Darwin is the only Australian city geographically located within Asia. I am excited about where we can take things, and I am buoyed at the welcome the restoration of this portfolio has received.

Age of Criminal Responsibility – Children in Detention

Mx McNAMARA to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

The children who have been visiting us in parliament over the last couple of days from Alawa and Essington have been 10 and 11 years old. I hope the irony of this is not lost on you, considering your Bill. When the age of criminal responsibility was previously 10, there were 10-year-olds in custody; that is a fact. Can you guarantee us that not one 10 or 11-year-old will end up in detention under your changes?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Corrections is an important part of our community, and we need to make sure there will be consequences for crime. The CLP went to the election with a plan to keep the Territory safe. We will send a message to criminals that if you commit a crime there will be a consequence.

The problem with these youth offenders is they have been deserted by their communities and their families across the Northern Territory. We are not talking about children who have had a fight with their parents over a bag of lollies; we are talking about children and young offenders who have committed serious offences on repeated occasions. We want to make sure those children have access to rehabilitation and support programs that wrap around them to enable them to have better choices in life.

The Labor government failed the Corrections system because we are in a crisis. Prisons are overcrowded, and prisoners are flowing into watch houses, which causes more ongoing problems because police must arrest those who have committed a crime and there is nowhere to take them. The Labor government dropped the ball.

We want to make sure that all prisoners, whether they are youth offenders or adult offenders, have access to rehabilitation and training programs.

Under the Labor government 75% of people who were in jail went back to jail. We want to break the cycle of reoffending. We cannot break the cycle of reoffending when we are in the middle of a Corrections crisis.

Mx McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing 110; relevance. It is simple. Can you guarantee us that not a single 10 or 11-year-old will end up in detention under your changes?

Mr MALEY: I can guarantee the Member for Nightcliff that we will support young offenders no matter where they live in the Northern Territory. We will offer them services in rehabilitation and life skills that their families and communities do not offer them. We will support young offenders to grow up to become better young people. We will support young offenders to get a job, have a family, move into accommodation and maybe even use our home-building scheme to build a house, because without education they will not go anywhere in life.

We want to give the young offenders the skills they need to be better people and the wraparound services that their families have not given them. Their families have deserted them. I said earlier this week …

Mx McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Give us an answer. You keep saying that they will not be locked up. Can you guarantee that no 10 and 11-years-olds will be locked up in detention—yes or no?

Mr MALEY: We cannot guarantee that a 10 or 11-year-old will not commit a crime. We can guarantee there will be consequences if you commit a crime. Those consequences will be in the hands of the court, but we will support the young offenders to become better people and have a good opportunity in life, unlike the Labor government that failed them.

Barossa Gas Project

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

In Blain there is a large number of gas workers who work at INPEX and Middle Arm. They are upstanding members of the community. The development of the Territory's onshore and offshore gas industry is critical to rebuilding the Territory economy. Labor members sat on their hands for years, not willing to make decisions to provide certainty to this critical industry. Now is the time to see industry accelerate its activity for the benefit of Territorians.

Can you update the Assembly on the work of the Barossa gas project and how that will contribute to restoring our economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, people in this House are making money from the gas industry. Their partners are employed in the gas industry and making money. That is what gas does for the Northern Territory. The gas industry supports jobs and families, which is crucial to rebuilding our economy.

The Chief Minister is doing the job of keeping the Territory safe. She has brought in legislation which this House passed to make the Territory a safer place. Now we will focus on rebuilding the economy. We will do two or three things at once, unlike the Labor government that could not do anything at all. We will move forward on many fronts.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

EXCLUSION OF MEMBER
Member for Arnhem

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, I have listened to your chitchat for two weeks now. Please leave the Chamber for an hour.

Mr MALEY: In the Northern Territory gas is responsible for 88% of our electricity generation. I will say five important words again: gas; mining; agriculture; tourism; and Defence. We will support those industries because when we have a strong industry, we have a strong economy. We want to move forward.

Barossa is now 82% complete and remains on track for production in quarter 3 2025. This will create and sustain hundreds of jobs in the Northern Territory and inject billions of dollars into our local and the Australian economy.

Santos is moving forward developing the carbon capture and storage facility project. We also support that because we want to make sure the Territory is a safe place to live and the environment is protected. It is important that we put these projects together and move forward as one because the environment and jobs are important.

On this side of the Chamber, we cut red tape, not corners. We want to make sure that the environment is protected, but we also want to make sure that people can make money and the economy can move forward as we go.

The Barossa gas field contains approximately 5.1 trillion feet of gas and will replace the Bayu-Undan field that is currently supplying the Darwin LNG export facility. Gas will play an important part in firming up electricity as we move to renewables. At this stage, renewables are unreliable, but the gas will firm it. We support the gas industry.

We will have the Department of Mining and Energy, not the 'department of no mining'. We will support the industry and move forward because Labor did not. The former Labor government did not support gas. The Labor Party and its wing had a big fight and cancelled one of its central councils because it did not want the criticism.

Youth Diversion Programs

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

I have been contacted by the Anglican minister, Kristan Slack, in Alice Springs, who is concerned about the removal of children from Alice Springs to Darwin. He has asked me to ask you what specific programs you will put in place for these children and young people. What rehabilitation programs will there be? What diversions programs will there be? He said, 'Can we please have a direct answer and fact? I do not want to hear speeches. I want to hear information. I want to know that if these children are being taken away from their existing supports and community that the government has a clear plan in place to make sure that they are cared for.'

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have a plan in place. We will move the children to a brand-new purpose-built facility. There are reports in the media that these children will be moved to the old Don Dale. That is not correct. The young offenders will go to be moved to a brand-new purpose-built facility which will offer them rehabilitation, training and support to make them become better people. When they grow up, they can make better choices in life. They will be job ready and have skills to get a job. They will learn through rehabilitation that they have made wrong choices and that there is ample opportunity for them to make the right choices as they move forward.

The programs currently in place will not be changed. We are reviewing some of them, but we want to move forward to give these children the best opportunity in life. It will make it more beneficial for these young offenders because they will be in a centralised location that offers more wraparound services to give them better support than they have at the moment.

We can ensure that these children have the best opportunity to better themselves as they become adults and move through. We do not want these children to go through the revolving door and end up in the adult prison, which is what Labor allowed to happen.

We want to give them all the opportunities. We will offer them as many programs as we possibly can. The Back on Track program has been renewed; the youth program is on track; and there is the Palmerston drop-in centre. We will make sure there is a range. I will read about a few service providers. There is the Bush Fit Mob, East Arnhem Regional Council, Kalano, Tennant Creek Mob and MacDonnell rangers. We will continue to support them because we know that these young children need the support that the Labor government failed to give them.

Economic Outlook – Under Treasurer Presentation

Dr RAHMAN to CHIEF MINISTER

On Monday 28 October at 9 am, the Under Treasurer will be giving a public presentation on the Territory's economic outlook. Why is this presentation so important?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is an exceptional question. The economy is close to the Member for Fong Lim's heart and is an area of expertise for him.

The economy is important to everyone. Over eight long years of Labor we have had no public discourse about the Territory's economy. Worse than that, the Labor government walked away from the Territory's natural strengths and our economic and strategic advantages and tried to shape the Territory into something she is not, pretending that the Territory's strengths are not what they are and moving us to be something we are not.

I have said a thousand times—the Member for Fong Lim has heard me say it—that we teach our children to be true to themselves. Yet Labor tried to teach Territorians to be ashamed of what the Territory is. We have a strong resources sector. Gas is a natural advantage to us, along with our mineral and rare-earth resources; our strategic proximity to Asia; our Defence strategic importance; tourism opportunities; pristine environment; cultural heritage; agriculture, with our vast arable land; and our cattle industry, just to name a few.

This is what the Territory is known for and should be celebrated for. That is why Tim McManus, the Under Treasurer will be giving a public presentation on our economy at 9 am at the Convention Centre on Monday. I encourage everyone to attend. This is about making sure everyday Territorians understand where this economy is at and where it needs to go in the future.

We have just had the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report tabled in parliament. It shows that net debt has hit $9bn and our fiscal balance deficit is at $1.2bn. These are big headwinds for the Territory. These are significant challenges that the CLP now must overcome. For us to overcome those challenges we will have to be brave and bold and do things differently. I am encouraged by the fact that we have a mandate from the people to do things differently. They do not want the status quo from a CLP government; they want change.

The Under Treasurer's presentation will be the start of an important conversation we must have with Territorians about our future. To rebuild the Territory, we must do it together. I am proud to be delivering that public presentation for all Territorians.

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

FINES AND PENALTIES (RECOVERY) AMENDMENT (VALIDATION) BILL
Serial 8

Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Amendment (Validation) Bill 2024, Serial 8.

Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Corporate and Digital Development): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to retrospectively validate enforcement orders and subsequent enforcement action made under the *Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Act 2001*.

This Act provides for the recovery of monies payable to the Territory arising from penalties imposed by infringement notices and fines imposed by the court as a penalty during court proceedings. Infringement notices are used where there is a penalty which may be imposed under an infringement offence. These notices are issued by various enforcement agencies including:

- NT Police—for speeding offences and other offences where an infringement may be issued

- councils—for parking offences and other infringement offences

- agencies—such as the Department of Health, which may undertake regulatory enforcement actions through the issue of an infringement notice.

The Fines Recovery Unit operates to enforce the payment of these fines and penalties. Where a penalty imposed through an infringement notice or a fine issued by a court has not been paid within the required timeframe, the penalty or fine becomes a debt payable to the Territory. It may then be enforced by the Fines Recovery Unit unless the person to whom the infringement notice has been issued has elected to have the matter heard by a court or, for a fine, the person has applied for a rehearing or lodged a notice of appeal against the conviction or sentence.

The Fines Recovery Unit enforces unpaid fines and penalties by making a fine enforcement order or a penalty enforcement order. This allows the Fines Recovery Unit to take further action under the Act, known as the taking of sanctions, which includes action such as suspending drivers' licences or naming and shaming a person with unpaid fines and penalties to encourage payment of the fine or penalty. These sanctions are commonly used across Australia by bodies like the Fines Recovery Unit to recover unpaid fines and penalties and are necessary to uphold a robust infringement and penalty regime.

However, in June 2024 a number of issues were identified with the processes applied by the Fines Recovery Unit in enforcing unpaid fines and penalties. The Fines Recovery Unit has temporarily ceased undertaking enforcement action while it works to address these issues. This Bill is the first part of that work so that the Fines Recovery Unit can recommence its function to enforce and recover unpaid fines and penalties.

This Bill seeks to validate the purported enforcement orders made in good faith by the Fines Recovery Unit. It also seeks to validate all subsequent enforcement action taken by the Fines Recovery Unit in reliance on these enforcement orders, seeking to comply with their lawful obligations to recover monies payable to the Territory. The validation is made to all enforcement orders and enforcement action taken up to 28 June 2024 as the date on which the Fines Recovery Unit ceased taking action. It does this through inserting provisions into the Act to:

- validate penalty enforcement orders purportedly made

- validate fine enforcement orders purportedly made

- validate the subsequent enforcement actions taken on the purported enforcement orders

- provide that enforcement action taken by the Fines Recovery Unit in the name of the Registrar of Motor Vehicles is deemed to be validly performed.

The measures to validate the orders are necessary to ensure that the actions taken by the Fines Recovery Unit to enforce and recover fines and penalties are not invalid because of errors in the application of the enforcement process. As I indicated, the Fines Recovery Unit was operating to enforce and recover unpaid fines and penalties that had become debts payable to the Territory. This is not about the issue of the fines and penalties themselves, which are valid, but of the enforcement and recovery of unpaid fines and penalties that were a debt to the Territory. The Fines Recovery Unit took steps in good faith to enforce and recover the unpaid fines and penalties.

This Bill forms the first tranche of amendments seeking to improve the enforcement processes implemented by the Fines Recovery Unit under the Act. A further Bill will seek to make amendments that will allow the Fines Recovery Unit to recommence enforcement actions and will reduce the administrative burdens currently placed on the Fines Recovery Unit in undertaking enforcement actions.

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

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

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 7

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill 2024, Serial 7.

Bill read a first time.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill delivers a number of payroll tax reforms aimed at supporting Northern Territory businesses and workers.

The Bill amends the *Payroll Tax Act* to increase the tax-free threshold from the current level of $1.5m to a new level of $2.5m from 1 July 2025. This means that businesses that pay wages of up to $2.5m per annum and employ Territory workers will be exempt from payroll tax from this date.

The Bill also increases the maximum annual deduction from $1.5m to $2.5m per annum from 1 July 2025. For context, the annual deduction is an amount subtracted from the taxable wages of a business for the purposes of calculating the payroll tax liability. The deduction ensures that smaller businesses, many of which are locally based, pay a lower effective tax rate than their larger counterparts.

For businesses paying wages above $2.5m per annum, the deduction will now start at $2.5m, meaning the first $2.5m in wages are exempt, and reduce by $1 for every $2 in wages paid over $2.5m. Those familiar with payroll tax will note that this is greater than the current reduction rate of $1 for every $4 in wages. This is to ensure that the deduction continues to extinguish for businesses with wages of $7.5m or more. Importantly, the net effect of these changes is that every business that pays wages of between $2.5m and $7.5m per annum will receive a payroll tax reduction.

In total, these measures are expected to provide employers with $12m per annum in payroll tax savings from 2025–26. Smaller businesses paying wages below $2.5m, which includes many locally based businesses, will no longer be required to pay a single cent of payroll tax or lodge monthly returns, saving them thousands of dollars each year.

I am also pleased to note that the changes will result in the Territory having the most generous tax-free threshold and annual deduction in the country, sending a clear message that we are committed to supporting local businesses and attracting new employers to invest in the Territory.

Finally, the Bill introduces a new payroll tax exemption for wages paid to apprentices and trainees from 1 July 2025 to encourage businesses to invest in growing Territory talent by offering more apprenticeship and trainee positions.

The tax exemption is available for apprenticeships and traineeships regulated by the Territory government under the *Training and Skills Development Act 2016.* In other words, all employers, training programs and training providers must be approved and regulated by the Department of Education and Training to ensure apprentices and trainees are provided with genuine training that leads to nationally recognised certification.

In addition to these safeguards, the trainee exemption will be limited to new employees, defined as persons who, immediately before the traineeship started, had not been employed by the employer for a continuous period of three months or more for full-time employees, or 12 months or more for part-time or casual employees.

In total, the new tax exemption is expected to result in forgone revenue of $5m per annum, based on the current number of apprentices and trainees in the Territory.

I note that the payroll tax measures contained in this Bill commence on 1 July 2025. This is because payroll tax is calculated and reconciled on a financial year basis.

Changes that take effect during a financial year increase the complexity of the required legislation and require the 3,100 registered taxpayers to make midyear adjustments to their internal accounting systems and processes to factor in a change in calculation methodology. However, as an interim measure, I will use my power as Treasurer to waive the payroll tax liability of employers who expect to pay Australian wages of $2.5m or below during 2024–25.

The waiver period will commence from 1 January 2025 in respect of any payroll tax liability incurred between 1 January 2025 and 30 June 2025. This will effectively bring forward the tax-free threshold increase by six months until the Bill formally commences, meaning eligible employers can stop paying tax and lodging monthly returns from 1 January 2025.

Those employers will submit their 2024–25 annual return to the Territory Revenue Office at the end of the financial year. If the return verifies that their Australian wages were $2.5m or below, the waiver applies. If the return shows that the Australian wages were above $2.5m, the unpaid tax will need to be paid. However, any employer that ceased paying tax on reasonable evidence that their wages would not exceed the threshold will not face any penalty tax or interest.

For the avoidance of doubt, where two or more taxpayers are grouped for payroll tax, only the designated group employer will be eligible to claim the waiver where the total Australian wages paid by all group members is less than $2.5m. This is consistent with how payroll tax groups are treated for the purpose of claiming the tax-free threshold and annual deduction.

Full details of the waiver will be published on the Territory Revenue Office website.

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

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

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

SENTENCING AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 1

Continued from 23 October 2024.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I want to set the record straight. The former Attorney-General said in his contribution on the Bill that Labor made changes to protect frontline workers by increasing the maximum penalty for assaulting workers, including police and emergency workers. He is talking about the Criminal Justice Amendment Bill 2022.

I thank that government for making spitting an aggravating factor in assaults, as it should be, but they stopped short of applying any actual consequences. Any Territorian who reads the *NT News* or the sentencing remarks published on the Supreme Court website would know that it is rare that an offender gets the maximum sentence. In fact, I challenge those opposite to find an instance when an offender has spat or committed any offence that causes harm or serious harm where the offender got the maximum penalty. I would be grateful to be proven wrong, but I do not think there are many.

This was just another example of the Labor government managing the media instead of managing crime. They made a big song and dance about increasing in the maximum penalties, but no-one gets the maximum penalties. It is like there is a bridge and everyone is driving under it; there is a lot of headroom above, but you say, ‘We need to raise the bridge’. You do a big announcement and raise the bridge, but no-one was coming anywhere near it, so it has no effect in real life.

In contrast to that, this CLP government is getting on with business of bringing real consequences to real offending and meeting community expectations. For example, the Member for Drysdale has been concerned about a serious assault that happened in his electorate in Gray. I am not sure about the specifics of naming people in the House, so I will not name the offender, but I will summarise the offending.

A man went into a house and committed a serious sexual assault—quite brutal—which went on for some time. This offender was on a suspended sentence, the judge recorded in his notes, for another series of offending. The maximum penalty for sexual assault, otherwise known as rape, is life imprisonment. The judge recorded the details of this offending in his remarks. I will not repeat them because they are not fit for decent people. They are disturbing. Suffice to say, they would be at the upper range of that kind of offending. He got seven years. Granted, that is a long time, but for the harm and trauma that would have been inflicted upon this innocent victim who was in her house living her life, does that meet community expectations? I will let you decide.

Minimum sentences are needed. The maximum penalties by and large are in line with community expectations, but minimums are needed, and that is what this Bill delivers. This Bill ensures that our workers who go to work every day in the Territory, particularly police and emergency workers, know that if someone steps out of line and does something despicable, like spitting on them or assaulting them in their workplace, that person will face a term of actual imprisonment. They will not get a slap on the wrist and let go like, 'Off you go, sonny Jim. You get a good behaviour bond and suspended sentence. See you later. Do not do it again.' Then, 'Oops, they are back' when they continue to offend.

We all saw the harrowing vision this week of the assault on the bus driver where a man jumped over the barricade and kicked the driver in the head, forcing him to stop the bus. From the vision it seems that the gentleman in question had missed his stop and was upset about that. He asked the driver to stop, and the driver continued on his way, then in a fit of rage he jumped over the barricade and started assaulting the driver in the head with his foot. That is completely unacceptable, but unfortunately under the previous Labor government it has become all too common. For that poor bus driver, it was just another day at work.

I will tell you the story about Cliff from Moulden. I was doorknocking in Moulden during the campaign. Cliff was a bus driver and a lifelong Labor voter. As I was coming, he did not particularly want to talk to me because I was wearing a shirt from the other side, but he made sure to tell me that he was not voting Labor because they had abandoned the bus drivers. Bus drivers were on the receiving end of a torrent of abuse because of the former Labor government, and they were not being kept safe.

Once this Bill passes and becomes law, anyone who is found guilty and convicted of an assault on a worker will be facing actual consequences, which means that when their emotions are rising and they are feeling like acting up, there will be a little voice in their heads that says, 'Hang on, there is mandatory sentencing. Do not do it.' Hopefully, that deterrent effect is what this Bill will achieve; when these lawless people are looking to respond to their out-of-control emotions and assault our workers, they will think twice and refrain.

I grew up in the Territory. I remember, when I was a kid, a time catching buses around Darwin when they did not have floor-to-ceiling plexiglass. Member for Braitling, do you recall that? They just had a little door at about waist height. Unfortunately, we are not in that world anymore. With the lack of consequences, offending has escalated to the point where bus drivers need to be behind floor-to-ceiling plexiglass. As the Opposition Leader said, Territorians have been let down by Labor.

I will talk about a legend in the electorate of Blain, Sandra from the Woodroffe shops. Sandra is an institution in the suburb of Woodroffe. She has one of the most thankless jobs but one of the most necessary. She works long hours in the Woodroffe shops making sure that anyone from that suburb or Palmerston can drop in and grab milk, essential groceries or a bottle of wine if it pleases them and be on their way. When I was doorknocking in Woodroffe, I frequently dropped in to grab a bottle of Coke, have a driver reviver and a yarn with her to see how things were going before I headed out again.

Sadly, it is a regular occurrence for me to receive messages from constituents in Woodroffe telling me about the latest incident of Sandra being assaulted. She is a private person, so I will not put too much on the public record, but Sandra is deeply appreciated and valued by all the residents of Woodroffe. She is assaulted and her store is damaged and invaded by offenders who sometimes are chasing alcohol or cigarettes and at other times are looking to cause vandalism. Every time that happens it causes pain and suffering to the people of Woodroffe because we all care for Sandra. When she hurts, we hurt.

This Bill brings consequences for these people who think that it is okay, or indeed fun and a good time, to go to a shop and assault someone in their workplace. It is not fun, a good time or appropriate, and it should not happen.

Over the last few years I have spoken to a lot of workers across the Territory, including police, and the stories they told me are harrowing. One former police member, unfortunately, told me that spitting is so common that police do not report most instances unless they are particularly bad. He told me that it was normal and common for him to have his uniform spat on. That is not an isolated occurrence.

Another constituent is also a former serving police officer. This speaks to why it is so hard to retain police officers. The former government did not have their backs, and they were not supported. He told me that it was his common practice to leave his uniform and boots at the station and get changed to go home because he had two small children and a young wife, and he wanted to cuddle and kiss them. He was afraid that the spit and bile on his uniform would contaminate his house. I cannot express what this young father was going through that this was a common practice for him.

I went onto the NTPFES media newsroom and searched ‘assault police’. Just this year there were a few instances. I will read one of this year’s instances onto the record because it speaks to exactly what we need to stop in the Territory.

As the Member for Drysdale eloquently said yesterday, spitting is vile and disgusting. It is an expression by the spitter that dehumanises the victim. It is an expression of complete disregard for the humanity of the other person.

This was issued on 22 March 2024:

> *Northern Territory Police have arrested a female in relation to an assault police incident at Casuarina yesterday afternoon.*
>
> *At around 2:15pm, Casuarina general duties were called to the Casuarina bus interchange to assist Transit Security Officers with the apprehension of an 18-year-old female that had allegedly assaulted them.*
>
> *As the offender was being escorted to the rear of the police vehicle, she resisted and spat at a male police officer before producing an edged weapon.*
>
> *The offender then began to threaten police with the weapon.*
>
> *A female police officer was able to provide … negotiations …*
>
> *Upon arrival to Palmerston Watch House, the female spat at a Police Auxiliary.*

There are pages of similar incidents on the PFES newsroom website. This is what our police officers deal with every day whilst at work. It is not acceptable. It has been normalised that spitting on police officers has no or limited consequences. I am not privy to the court outcomes of these cases. I am sure if you did a forensic analysis of sentencing remarks on the Supreme Court website you could piece it together.

Police members tell me that they are frequently spat on when in uniform and do not report it because they are already overworked and suffering from rolling overtime. They are tired, doing mandatory overtime, dealing with the critical incidents that they encounter every shift and the paperwork they need to finish. On top of that, if they were to lodge a file or lay charges for every incident of being spat on their uniform, they would never get home to see their family.

Sometimes it rises to the point where they cannot avoid it. I heard an anecdote of a police officer who was arresting someone and reading them their rights when the person leant back and spat directly into their mouth as the officer was reading. That officer needed extensive testing. They were unable to kiss their partner or children for several months whilst waiting for the test to come back to be sure that they had no infection.

Is it any wonder that we have a retention crisis in our police force? We need strong laws and consequences to protect our police and provide a strong deterrent to offenders who would seek to express their complete disregard for the humanity of another person by spitting on them.

To the workers of the NT, I say that the CLP is here for you. We hear you, and we will protect you. We will not talk about it; we will take action and do our best to ensure you are safe in your workplace and that you can go to work, do your job, earn money to pay your bills, provide for your family and come home without fear of contracting a horrible disease or being assaulted in your workplace. There are a lot of common themes between this Bill and Declan’s law. Both are about protecting workers in their workplace—Declan’s law not explicitly but because of the incident that triggered it.

I will read the crime statistics for my town of Palmerston over the last eight years to illustrate how things have gone from bad to worse. From August 2016 to 2024, acts intended to cause injury went from 479 to 1,054, which is an increase of 120%; and offences against the person went from 583 to 1,256, which is a 115% increase.

Recently, we spoke about domestic violence, and as the matter is of public importance we agreed that it is abhorrent and that we will do everything we can to prevent it. Under the former government’s watch domestic violence incidents went from 247 to 654, which is an increase of 164%. Every one of those 654 incidents is someone who was assaulted, sometimes severely, by one of their loved ones—someone who professed to love, care and look after them. Alcohol-related assaults went from 212 to 531, which is an increase of 150%.

There was an experiment by the Labor government over the last eight years which was, ‘We do not like it when Indigenous people or youths are incarcerated’. Domestic violence and offending in our Indigenous community are hard issues. There are deep causes which drive these statistics, but rather than grappling with them and doing the hard work, the former government loosened the law, reduced consequences and let people out of prison.

Unfortunately, the consequence was increased offending. If there are no consequences, why should behaviour change? Behaviour only changes when negative feedback is received and they think, ‘I do not like that consequence. I do not want to do the thing again that caused it.’ When the opportunity comes up, they think twice. That is the deterrent effect of legislation.

As a short anecdote, many probably had a muck-up day at high school. I remember some wild days at Nightcliff High School in the 1990s, and sometimes they were inappropriate by the older years. In 1998—the year of my muck-up day—the then CLP government passed mandatory sentencing and brought in mandatory minimum times for all ages for offending. Year 12 students put their heads together and said, ‘We better be careful if we are doing things we have seen on muck-up day’. We had seen things that verged on criminal damage. One year, people broke into the school, turned on hoses, flooded rooms and ran around with shampoo. There is a line between high schoolers mucking up and teenagers vandalising school equipment; quite a few times that line had been crossed.

I remember being a 17-year-old hormonal teenage boy—testosterone flowing through my veins—talking to other kids in Year 12, and we all said, ‘You know what? We will all keep it quiet this year because we do not want to end up in jail.’ I do not think that would have happened, but it illustrates that deterrent effect.

Young people know the difference between right and wrong. When I come home and there is a mess, and I ask who did it, I know that it was my three-year-old. I look at him, and he gets this look on his face. I say, ‘Did you do it?’ and he says, ‘No’. I look at him and know he did it. I say, ‘Mate, did you do it? Kerle boys always tell the truth.’ Then he says, ‘Yes’. The look on his face tells me that he knows he is doing the wrong thing by lying about it, and he is three.

At 17 years of age, we knew that if we mucked up we would face consequences. That was the effect of introducing minimum sentences. That is what this Bill is trying to do.

This Bill introduces a deterrent effect so that workers in their workplace and our police and paramedics doing their jobs will be safer. Anyone in this House who talks to paramedics is horrified at the stories that they tell. I am horrified. A former student I used to coach in gymnastics is now a qualified paramedic. I shout out to you, Lily. The assaults on paramedics by friends and family of the person they are trying to help—sometimes it is that person—do not make sense.

We need a strong deterrent to keep workers safe. That is what this Bill is about. It is about deterrence and sending the message that we will meet community expectations.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I support worker safety. Frontline workers and all workers, including unpaid workers, have the right to be safe at work and protected from physical and mental harm.

Like every person in this Chamber, I believe that all Territorians have the right to be safe. We have heard many detailed stories in this Chamber about harm being done to people at work. I could also share many of those stories, but we do not need to hear any more of them. We all know what is happening to people.

In preparation for considering this Bill, I talked with the people it aims to protect—frontline workers, people in my electorate and workers’ representatives. I am no stranger to working with victims of crime. I believe that everyone has the right to safety and to be protected in their workplace. Also, as part of my preparation for this Bill, I consulted with people in the legal profession who will be implementing this law.

Every person I talked to, just like all of us, is concerned about worker safety, yet they could not see how this Bill would make workers safer. Across the board, people were clear that workers need protection and that mandatory sentencing will not achieve this. Once again, this is a law where there is no evidence that the stated intention of the law to keep people safe will be met.

I have used all the time available to me since this Bill was given to us to pass on urgency to understand its detail that I will be voting for if I support it. Despite this consultation and a briefing from the department, I still remain unclear about the detail of this Bill.

My understanding of it is that clause 7, which provides for mandatory imprisonment of three months for spitting, applies only to police and emergency workers, not all frontline workers. This seems to be in contradiction to what the CLP members said on this floor. I am unable to vote for a Bill when the details of it remain unclear.

It is also interesting to me that the CLP, which is talking strongly about supporting workers' rights, has not consulted with any of the unions representing these frontline workers, including the firefighters, paramedics, Corrections or nurses union. The CLP also tells me that they are concerned about victims. People raised with me that if the CLP was really worried about victims, they would address the fact that workers who are injured at work are not covered by Victims of Crime compensation.

The Member for Blain talked about how this Bill will work because it will create a deterrent. Mandatory sentencing does not work to reduce crime because there is no evidence that it creates a deterrent. I agree with my friend from Fong Lim who is committed to evidence-based research. I could not find one piece of research or evidence in the hundreds of pieces of research that have been done that show that mandatory sentencing provides a deterrent. I have 82 pieces of evidence I am happy to share with anyone who is interested that say clearly that mandatory sentencing does not provide a deterrent. Justice Mildren, in the NT Law Reform Committee Final Report on Mandatory Sentencing, said that the premise of those who argue in favour of mandatory sentencing is that it acts as a deterrent. She said that there is no evidence whatsoever to support this premise.

The underlying paradigm of sentencing law is that a sentence involves the exercise of discretion by a judicial officer. That is what they are trained and paid for. We heard Minister Edgington speak on Tuesday about how important judicial independence and discretion was. He said:

> *It is clear to me that the court already has discretion when it comes to determining whether a conviction should be made. When it comes to sentencing, the court should have that discretion to determine what to do with an offender who is brought before the court, whether it is the first time, fifth time, or included with a number of offences …*

Section 5 of the *Sentencing Act* gives a clear direction to judicial officers in how to do their job. A sentence must be just in all circumstances. Mandatory sentencing is the antithesis of just sentencing. When a sentence is prescribed by law and a judge has no discretion, it undermines the integrity of the whole criminal justice system. Judges cannot do their job of ensuring a sentence is just in all circumstances. It corrupts the system and effectively takes away the discretion of a judge as to what sentence is most appropriate in all circumstances.

Mandatory jail terms generally serve to increase the prison population because courts are forced to jail people where otherwise they may have imposed a punishment in the community. We know our jails, watch houses and remand centres in the Northern Territory are over capacity, and this kind of policy will only increase this problem. The failure of mandatory sentencing to achieve its stated aims also comes at significant cost to the public. By their nature these policies divert more people into the prison system, and for lengthier periods of time the result is greater cost.

By personality, experience and practice I believe in working with others, and this is what I have learnt works. I have also learnt that we do not need to set everything up as either/or. We can look after vulnerable people and make sure that people are safe. We can preserve the fundamental elements of our justice system and protect the safety of workers. Setting these things up as mutually exclusive fails all of us. I feel like a broken record in saying in this Chamber time and again that to make good law we need time, evidence and wisdom, but once again, I cannot support a law which undermines our justice system and at the same time will not make any of us safer. I will not be supporting this Bill.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, it is with a bit of trepidation and emotion that I come to speak on this Bill, which I support. I go back to my maiden speech. It is always a good point of reference for people. Of the virtues my mother shared with me, and I have adopted, the most important were love, compassion and tolerance. However, my commitment to tolerance is tested when I hear about assaults on our frontline service workers. Like others, I have to control my anger, disappointment and sheer abhorrence that anyone would want to harm our wonderful frontline workers, including emergency workers who are trying with a spirit of love and compassion to help and care for people.

I need to declare a personal interest in this debate, noting my son, Fergus, who was here to witness my maiden speech, is a hardworking and committed paramedic in Darwin with St John Ambulance. Let me give you a parent's perspective on how we value, care for and worry about the safety of our children, no matter how old they are.

By way of background, for honourable members, my darling wife, Marylou, and I were blessed to have our son, Fergus, born in Darwin in 1995. Like the children of many other parents, he and his younger sister, Nadia, became the centre of our universe. In the early days, Marylou and I learnt to live tired, raising what I can only say were boisterous, mischievous but delightful children.

Both went to Leanyer Primary School, where Marylou joined as a primary school teacher under the guidance of the great educator and renowned principal, Henry Gray. They both progressed to Dripstone Middle School and on to Casuarina Senior College.

Fergus was accepted into the health Centre for Excellence. He was always interested in the health field; I am not sure why, because he did not get it from me. He considered many career options, including physiotherapy. Eventually, he chose to complete a Bachelor of Paramedicine at Monash University. Following the completion of his degree, he went on to join the Victorian ambulance service and became a fully qualified paramedic.

A couple of years ago, he decided to come back to the Territory and was warmly welcomed by St John as a fully qualified, experienced and talented paramedic who had the added benefit of already being familiar with living in the Territory. He continues to grow his skills and is working towards becoming a highly skilled intensive care paramedic in the NT.

I love my son. Naturally, we have chats about how his day has been and how he is going. I have a wonderful photo of a baby being held by my smiling son, whom he had to deliver at the home of some parents where the baby had decided to come into the world a bit earlier than expected. He is also called upon to successfully treat people to save them from severe stroke and heart attacks, much to the gratitude of the person involved and their families.

However, as a frontline paramedic, he witnesses and is actively involved in many traumatic accidents, including, sadly, some of which involve the deaths of children in car accidents as well as the treatment of many domestic violence victims, including murders.

While Fergus is the consummate professional and never breaches the privacy of his patients, you can understand why I am keen for him to tell me about these experiences as part of his own wellbeing. Yes, St John has its own post-trauma counselling services for paramedics, but mum and dad are always there to listen to and care for their son.

It is no wonder I sought my son's view about what he thought about people who assault and/or spit on paramedics during the course of their work. He could not have been clearer. He said, 'Dad, the worst thing for me and other paramedics is someone deliberately spitting on us, be it the patient or someone else at the scene'. I emphasise the word 'deliberate', as he accepts that some patients may do it involuntarily just as they may vomit.

He said he would much prefer to be punched than spat on. He openly said that as a professional, he and his colleagues have to control their urge to strike back in defence. I am unsure that if I was there at the time I would have the same self-control. As a father, I would want to protect my son in any way I could.

We also need to appreciate that paramedics and other frontline emergency service workers are going into dangerous situations on a regular basis. For example, Fergus and other paramedics are always wary when they have to go to known violent hotspots such as Fawcett Court in Malak and Victoria Drive in Gray. Many a time they have had to wait for a police escort before they can enter these neighbourhoods to treat victims. In some cases, due to the high workload confronting police, that police escort may take up to three hours to arrive.

Even some genuine patients have to suffer from a delay in being treated due to the potential threat of violence and assault on our frontline emergency workers. This is unacceptable. It is time that we swing the justice pendulum in favour of our frontline emergency services, genuine patients and the 98% of Territorians who do the right thing, rather than pandering to the small minority who believe that they can assault our frontline workers with minimal consequences, if any. Enough is enough. Labor has failed these frontline workers.

Let me wind this discussion out to all workers. I recall that on Tuesday the Member for Gwoja had the temerity to say, ‘The Labor Party is the party for workers’. I will quote another statement he made in the same speech, which I consider applies to this claim about being the party for workers. That quote was, ‘This is complete nonsense’. You are right, Member for Gwoja, your claim is complete nonsense.

This out-of-touch Labor opposition failed workers. Many of us recall the surveys of police members over the last couple of years conducted by the NT Police Association. I do not recall that the results of those surveys said the overall membership thought the Labor Party was the party for workers. In fact, I recall that the police membership felt let down by the former Labor government and that it had failed them and the Territory.

I will go back to the stats provided earlier about police assaults. In the nine months to 23 March 2024 there were 212 police officers assaulted, with 56 assaults including bodily fluids such as spit and blood. A total of 114 assaults included bodily force such as hitting, kicking, punching and biting, and 40 assaults included weapons, with 28 police officers requiring medical attention and one hospitalised.

I will look at other categories. In the 2022–23 financial year, there were 1,561 assaults by patients or their family members on staff at Territory hospitals. That is unacceptable. For the financial year to 31 March 2024 public housing safety officers reported 36 serious incidents of physical assaults. There were 23 assaults on transit officers. This is wrong; we just cannot have it.

Let me go to the view of workers across the whole Territory. This is for the party that is the so-called party for workers. Maybe its members should listen to this. When I say the whole Territory, I mean including those in Darwin, Palmerston, Coolalinga, Humpty Doo, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

These workers had the chance to voice their lack of confidence in the former—I love that word, ‘former’—Labor government in the recent general election. And didn’t those workers shout it loud and clear! Labor failed them, and they urgently wanted a change of government. Like the majority of Territorians, they welcomed a united CLP team that had a clear plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. A clear element in that plan was to immediately get to parliament to pass legislation to introduce new minimum mandatory sentencing for assaulting a frontline worker.

Let us look around the Assembly to see the result of the general election. I believe I am a caring person, and I care about the health of our Labor Party members. I want them to be an effective opposition, hence why I offered each of them a free hearing test last week so that they could stop being deaf to the concerns of the majority of Territorians. That offer still stands.

I am also concerned they may inadvertently incur a neck injury, because when they look across the Chamber to see the result of the 2024 election, and they look at the extent of the government benches—not just a look-ahead exercise at the Chief Minister and a couple of others—it requires a full twist of the neck past 90 degrees, from the Member for Barkly to the Member for Drysdale and me. I caution the members of the Labor opposition to do this carefully so as not to incur a hypertension injury.

Let us get back to the concern for all workers and their views in support of this legislation.

When I was campaigning, I met with many workers and businesspeople operating or living in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon. Many said that they were fed up with the escalating crime and antisocial behaviour that was being left to grow, unfettered by the former—I still love that word—Labor government.

I recently met with the owners and staff of the Malak OTR service station. This service station has been subjected to continual theft of goods and threats of serious violence against its staff over the last five years. I had the minister for Housing visit the service station. It got to the stage where staff just accepted that adults and youths will come in around seven or eight times a day to steal products from the shop. Because of fear of assault, the staff stay in the secure cash register area.

Recently two staff resigned, and the owners were unable to recruit or relocate staff to fill these positions. If this continues, the owners will look to change its operating model, whereby customers can only pay and purchase goods via a small night window for the full period of operation from morning to late evening. The owners are considering closing the whole operation, which would be devastating for local residents, as they will have to go elsewhere to fill up their cars with petrol and purchase convenience store products.

Likewise, there have been violent attacks on workers at the Karama service station over the same period, including the stabbing of staff. This is unacceptable. Two weeks ago a group of 10 to 15 youths ran riot through the Karama Shopping Plaza, running into businesses such as the newsagency, the chemist and the

cafe, threatening staff and stealing what they could. My electorate office immediately called the police. Unfortunately, the offenders quickly moved on before the police arrived.

Workers are demanding that there be consequences. This government has listened and is delivering for them.

I heard from the opposition and the crossbench members. We are putting this through on urgency. They would like it laid on the table for 30 days to let them scrutinise and think about it, even though we went to the electorate with all of this in advance of the election. We had an overwhelming result, but, no, they think it is better if they can talk to various people to get their own citizens advice bureaus, have a little powwow chat and come up with whatever evidence they can get.

I will tell you about the Labor Party. The Member for Fong Lim is not here, but he would understand …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Karama, you cannot refer to members being in or out of the Chamber.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Sorry, Madam Speaker. The Member for Fong Lim would understand the need for data.

If it was coming from journals such as *The Lancet* or *Nature*, I could understand; however, the Labor Party, true to form, goes to its own authoritative source that it always uses and will continue to use—the journal SLAGNAT. Labor members need to have in writing under all their data, whatever month it is, 'SLAGNAT October 2024' or 'SLAGNAT June 2023'. It is not only the Labor Party here; the Albanese government uses the same authoritative source, as does Queensland Labor and Labor all around the country. For those who do not know the authoritative source SLAGNAT, it is an acronym that stands for 'sounded like a good number at the time'. That is what they use all the time. So much for evidence; I would not trust it.

I will get serious about this. If the Bill went out for 30 days and came back, I would bet money that the Labor opposition, despite all its consultations, would stick to its view that all our legislation should be rejected. I honestly think that would happen.

I am pretty sure our CLP team would stick by its conviction that this legislation has been validated and supported by the majority of Territorians. Apart from some time-wasting divisions, I believe in 30 days' time the legislation would be passed 17–7 by this Assembly.

In our plan we said that we will introduce legislation to provide new minimum mandatory sentencing for assaulting a frontline worker. The workers of the Northern Territory want it passed now, not in another month, and that includes my loving son, Fergus, a wonderful frontline paramedic. I have spoken for less than normal, but I feel a bit emotional about this.

As I said at the start, I am committed to love, compassion and tolerance, but we also need justice to protect our workers. I support this Bill.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I express my full support for the important Sentencing Amendment Bill 2024. This Bill will have a significant impact on the people of Casuarina and, indeed, all of the Northern Territory. This legislation is about sending a clear and strong message that we will not tolerate crime and will do everything in our power to protect those who have been victimised.

Recent crime statistics tell a troubling story. In the March quarter of 2024, there was a significant rise in crime in the Northern Territory, with assaults, particularly against workers, becoming alarmingly frequent. These frontline workers, who are the backbone of our communities, face threats every day. This legislation, which introduces mandatory sentencing for individuals who assault police, healthcare workers and emergency responders, sends a clear message that such violence will not be tolerated.

Let me read out the all the statistics available since August 2024. The offences have increased by almost 75% in the Northern Territory—robbery, extortion and related offences in the last eight years have increased by 316%, house break ins by 101% and domestic violence by 84%.

This a joke. In the Northern Territory, we only have a population of 250,000.

Thank you to the Labor government for leaving all this work for the CLP government to deal with. Labor could not do it in eight years, and we are doing in eight weeks. We do not apologise, and we will not stop until all Territorians feel safe.

In my electorate of Casuarina, which is home to a large hospital and many local businesses, the importance of protecting workers cannot be overstated. Just recently in a high-profile case, a healthcare worker was assaulted while performing their duties in the emergency department of Royal Darwin Hospital. Such incidents have been rising in frequency, not just in healthcare but also in retail and emergency services, placing tremendous stress on those whose job is to serve and protect us.

This Bill will introduce tougher penalties for those who commit such assaults, ensuring that our frontline workers can do their jobs without fear. By mandating actual imprisonment for repeat offenders or those who commit serious violent acts and by imposing community correction orders for first-time offenders, the legislation provides punishment and rehabilitation opportunities. This deters potential offenders, contributing to reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, which is a critical issue in the Casuarina area—in fact, in all northern suburbs.

This ensures a balance between punishment and reform, giving individuals a second chance while protecting the community from serious violent offenders. With this dual approach, we can reduce the overall crime rate while still addressing the root causes of criminal behaviour.

Families and businesses in Casuarina and all other suburbs of the Northern Territory often express concerns about safety, particularly in public spaces. Yesterday we heard many stories of real people from the Members for Drysdale and Blain, so we can understand how serious all workers' safety is.

Strengthening penalties for assaults on workers helps to build community confidence in the justice system. When people feel safer, they are more likely to engage in local commerce, attend events and feel comfortable using public services, which in turn supports the local economy. In Casuarina, local business owners have reported a decline in foot traffic, with residents avoiding certain areas due to safety concerns.

This Bill will support Casuarina's police and emergency responders. Protecting these essential services with mandatory sentences for assaults strengthens their morale and ensures that they are protected while serving the community.

I am satisfied that this Bill not only strengthens protection for frontline workers but also provides a framework to reduce crime, increase safety and foster a sense of security in Casuarina and all Northern Territory communities.

This Bill means that criminals will face tougher consequences for their actions. It means that those who victimise others in our community will think not just once but a thousand times before committing crimes. We need laws that protect the innocent and ensure that criminals suffer the consequences for their actions. This Bill is a step forward in making our community safer, and it gives hope to those who have suffered at the hands of criminals.

In this Chamber yesterday we all spoke passionately about domestic violence. If we are truly committed to reducing domestic violence and protecting those who are most vulnerable, we must recognise that stronger laws are part of the solution. Stronger laws act as a deterrent and ensure that we will not stand by while people suffer.

The Northern Territory was once known as the best place to live. I want to ensure that we return to its original state and reputation. Since I arrived here, I have seen the changes, and it is time for us to take action and restore the safety and security we all value.

This is why I am proud to be part of the CLP government, showing people that it is a politician's job to make law that works for the people. We are united in our job to make it safer for people and future generations. If laws are not working, we must keep changing them until they work. It is as simple as that. I am proud that the CLP government is not making any apologies for changing them for a better future.

People in our community are impressed with the work we have done in eight weeks, not wasting time at all. This is unlike the Labor government, which had eight years and did not listen to its constituents' complaints about what they were suffering.

This Bill is not about being soft on crime or making excuses for those who break the law. We are not here to make laws that benefit the perpetrators; we are here to protect the victims, stand up for the people who have suffered and ensure our laws serve those who need them the most.

Casuarina is a beautiful place that is home to wonderful amenities and a great lifestyle that we are enjoying. In order to preserve that lifestyle, we must take strong action to protect it. This Bill will help ensure the people of Casuarina, and indeed all Territorians, can continue to enjoy the beauty and safety of our communities.

I do not apologise for supporting tough laws. We need them to safeguard our families, communities and future. I fully support this Bill and urge my fellow members to do the same. Together, let us make the Northern Territory safe again.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, Territorians have a right to feel safe in their workplace and a right to know that those who break the law and harm them will be held accountable and face the consequences. Territorians have a right to know that if they are assaulted, those who commit the offences will do the time.

I will address some rhetoric of those opposite. I thank the Member for Mulka for his contribution and unique perspective on this Bill. In his contribution, he said that he did not support this legislation due to his belief that mandatory sentencing is unfair, discriminatory or detrimental to Aboriginal people. Member for Mulka, this change will only affect criminals. It will only affect those who have assaulted workers in the Territory. These laws are not racist. These laws apply equally to every Territorian and visitor in our community.

I reject his claim that there will be more people engaging in crime and we will have more criminal activity because we have mandatory minimum sentences. The mandatory minimum sentence kicks in only for those who have already committed a crime and been found guilty by our court system.

The message the CLP government, which has been elected on our commitments to addressing the crime crisis and keeping Territorians safe, is telling is simple: if you do not want to go to jail, then do not spit on our cops, do not kick our paramedics, do not abuse our nurses and assault those who are just trying to earn a living and serve our community. It is not hard. Do not do the crime, and you will not have to do the time. Mandatory minimum sentences kick in only once you have been found guilty of the offence, not before.

These laws will see consequences for crime, which we promised in our plan. Our plan, tabled today, will deliver for Territorians and was overwhelmingly endorsed by people across the Territory, as shown by our clear majority in this Assembly.

The Member for Nightcliff, in their contribution, suggested that they would abstain from the vote based on not having had enough time to consider this legislation, even though members had no problems voting on motions all week and on the four Bills we brought to the Assembly this sitting. Rest assured, Member for Nightcliff, if you will not stand to protect our workers, I and the 16 other members of this government will.

New members of the crossbench would do well to remember the voters in their electorates whom they represent in this Chamber and who voted for change. I also look forward to the Members for Johnston and Nightcliff explaining to their electorates why they did not stand up for workers today and instead spent the last two weeks standing side by side with the party they helped deplete.

In his contribution the Member for Gwoja stated that his party, of which he was deputy leader until the previous government failed—perhaps he has dreams of being the next Opposition Leader in a failed opposition—is the party for workers, in which case I welcome his vote of support to protect workers later today.

I heard the Member for Gwoja's complaint that this legislation does not go far enough to protect our hardworking people who work in retail outlets, behind the counter in hire car places, at airports and security guards at pubs and clubs.

I am pleased to say that the provisions of this Bill will ensure that the case of an assault on anyone at work carrying out their duties will now carry a minimum penalty of a mandatory community correction order or, in the case of a violent reoffender, a mandatory term of imprisonment. Member for Gwoja, I look forward to standing with you as you vote for this Bill, as we stand for the workers of the Northern Territory.

This week we all saw the shocking footage of two attacks on bus drivers that occurred this month. In one attack the bus driver was repeatedly kicked in the head while driving a bus. In the video you see passengers losing their balance and rolling around in the cabin of the bus. In another, you see a man approach the barrier and start trying to stab the bus driver through the barrier. Both videos were shocking to see, and this is not okay or acceptable. Burying your head in the sand will not change a thing.

These bus drivers are Territorians like the rest of us who want to go to work and go back home to their families and loved ones safe and sound. They serve the Territory by helping those who cannot travel independently for one reason or another and help people get around our beautiful city and Territory. They do not deserve the horrific attacks they endure and do not deserve the physical and mental trauma associated with that. They deserve better, and those responsible deserve consequences for their crimes.

Over the past year I have spoken with many people who selflessly serve the Territory in one way or another—cops who have been bitten and spat on, nurses and midwives who have been pushed and punched, teachers who have had rocks thrown at them and retail workers who have been robbed and bashed. These stories are far too common in the Territory, and this is not an acceptable reality nor a standard I will accept.

This Bill is about standing up for everyone who goes to work each day expecting nothing more than to return home safely. It is about ensuring frontline workers are protected and that those who choose to break the law are held to account. The people of the Territory have been clear in their demand for stronger measures, and this government will not turn a blind eye to them, unlike members opposite. We are delivering on our promise of a safer Territory.

We must remember that these laws are not just about punishment but also deterrence. The consequences must be crystal clear to anyone contemplating an attack on our hardworking Territorians. If you assault a paramedic or nurse, attack a retail worker or spit on a cop there will be consequences. Mandatory sentencing sends the message that these actions will not be tolerated by our society and that there will be no excuses. Our laws must reflect the seriousness of these crimes, and this Bill does exactly that.

I will break from my speech for a moment to relay a story I heard during the campaign, where a police officer had been spat on and bitten. He explained to me the hardship it put on his relationship with his wife while he was awaiting blood tests to make sure he had not caught something from the incident. Not only do they take an immediate test afterwards; they also have a six-month follow-up, which can be quite draining on people's mental health while waiting to find out if some horrible human being has intentionally inflicted a virus on you.

To those who claim that this legislation is too harsh or disproportionate, I ask what is disproportionate about ensuring that people can feel safe at work, knowing that if someone crosses the line, they will face consequences for their actions? It is not harsh; it is fair. It is fair to the victims who have suffered and to the community, which has had enough.

This government was elected to fix the problems left by those opposite. This Bill is a step in the right direction to restore law and order, rebuild confidence in our justice system and deliver the safer communities that Territorians have been crying out for. I urge all members of this Assembly to support this legislation and stand up for the people who make our Territory thrive.

This Bill cannot undo what is already done, but it will help turn the tide on what those opposite have done to the Territory and help us restore community safety. These laws will see criminals put behind bars and will keep the Territory safe.

I commend this Bill and fully support its introduction into this Assembly. I commend the work of my fellow government members on our impressive mandate and our even more impressive dedication to getting on with the job and delivering for Territorians.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this Bill as it protects workers from violent attacks by introducing minimum mandatory sentences for assaults on police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers and any other NT worker who just wants to go to work and earn a living.

We, as a government, have a responsibility to propose and pass legislation to protect our workers in the community, who deserve to be safe at work. By having better legislation, it supports our workers, particularly those who are there to help us as members in the community while doing their job. I must support this.

The CLP has listened across the Territory and is looking to keep workers safe. The proposed legislation acts as a deterrent and sends a clear message that we have their back. I thank the Member for Brennan for doorknocking with me for hours in my electorate while I was campaigning. She listened with me. We faced Territorians who are police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers and all the other NT workers. She spent hours with me in the hot sun, listening and putting this proposal forward. I thank the Member for Brennan.

Many of the residents in the electorate are frontline services workers. How are we having to debate legislation to protect workers who get out of bed every day to protect us, nurse us back to health, educate us, serve us at the shops and commute us to where we need to go? These workers deserve to do all that without someone spitting at them, punching them, kicking and biting.

The amendment strengthens the law to provide consequences for those who decide to spit, punch, kick or bite—in fact, any harm.

I will share a story from when I was working at the Commonwealth Bank. One of my colleagues was stabbed during an incident when an aggressive customer came in wanting his concerns heard, but unfortunately on that day we could not resolve his concern. That person intentionally went to his car, took a knife, entered again and stabbed her in the neck. Luckily, that person did not lose her life.

I thank Samara for standing with us here last week to pass Declan's law. Laws like this protect people by deterring those who consider harming anyone in frontline services.

I was lucky in my 25 years at the bank that I was never harmed or assaulted. We now see banks with screens to the ceilings—why? It is due to aggressive customers who are increasing in numbers daily. We have security guards in banks and shops because of the increased numbers of aggressive customers. This is an additional cost to businesses to protect their workers. The government can do something about it and implement changes to protect workers so that there are consequences for anyone who assaults a worker.

Hundreds of healthcare workers live in my electorate, many of whom work in the hospitals. They deserve to work in a safe environment.

A community member in Wanguri, after 38 years as a registered nurse, can no longer work as a nurse in the hospital system. She has spent 30 of those years in NT hospitals. For some, 38 years is a long time, and she should be commended for her service and dedication to nursing the sick back to health. She has tirelessly worked long hours to nurse people who are injured and sick. She has sat by bedsides and delivered the nursing care required by patients to get back on their feet.

She disclosed to me that over the last several years she had been continually spat on and kicked in the stomach. She had pills and urine-filled bottles thrown at her. This long-term harm has since made her feel sick, stressed and frustrated. She now has anxiety which has led her to stop nursing. She has left that profession. The Territory healthcare system has now lost a long-term, dedicated nurse. We need nurses to care for those who are sick and injured. The sad thing is that in her own words, she described the last years of her career as 'the death of my career by a thousand cuts'. How sad is it that instead of retiring or resigning on a happy note, this nurse had to resign to keep herself safe? This is one of 100 stories.

I support this legislation to strengthen the laws. The amendment Bill provides consequences for those who spit on or harm our medical staff and puts the rights of workers above the rights of offenders.

Member for Karama, thank you for sharing your story about your son who is a wonderful paramedic. He deserves to work in a safe environment. Paramedics are there to help, not to be assaulted. I am fortunate that my son gets to work from home and is never in harm's way.

I have had hundreds of conversations in the last several years with the staff at Woolworths Leanyer, my local store. I frequent it because it is 100 metres from where I live, so I am there daily, and now my office is in front of it.

Two weeks ago, before we came into the first week of parliament, Charlie at the front of the store simply said to me, 'Do not back down', so that his staff can be safe every day. Every day for the last eight years, they have had to endure harm from people who simply put their needs above others and put them in harm's way. Those staff now have to wear bodycams to record anything that happens at the store.

A taxi company in my electorate for the past eight years has had hundreds of workers assaulted while commuting passengers. People at that company also commend this Bill; they want their workers to be safe.

I support the amendments in the Sentencing Amendment Bill as it protects all Territorian workers who have stayed in the Territory. We want our population to grow; this Bill sends a message to anyone who wants to move here that we will have their back.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Mr Deputy Speaker, I worked at the hospital and in the community health setting over the last 13 years before serving the community as the Member for Sanderson. I have worked in the emergency department and the mental health sector in our community and have seen the risks and challenges that frontline workers face daily. I have worked with doctors, nurses, support workers, admin officers, ambulance officers, police officers and other professionals who have been a victim of assault.

In 2022–23 there were 1,560 assaults by patients or their family on staff in NT hospitals. During the same time there were 598 assaults by patients or their family on other patients or family receiving treatment in the hospital. These figures show we have a problem in our community, especially in the hospital setting. People are there to receive care. If patients, or those with patients, are assaulting staff or other patients and family, that shows there is a problem that needs to be fixed. The message we are sending to the community is there will be consequences for their actions, and that will have an impact on the decision-making of individuals who believe that there will not be consequences of assaulting staff, patients or family members.

It is disheartening to witness individuals who dedicate themselves to serving and saving lives endure abuse, including being spat on or assaulted, while simply doing their job. This is not just an unnecessary burden on them, but it also disrupts the workplace environment and affects the quality of care that they can provide.

Over the last few days I have been contacted by many of my previous colleagues and friends who work in different parts of the NT to comment on the work of the CLP government. They are noticing that the promises made before the election are being taken care of. They tell me, including the doctors and nurses who are working in the Territory hospitals, that we need to go ahead with the set of legislative changes that we have proposed, and they are backing us.

We are in a democracy. I will not claim everyone in the Northern Territory will be in support, but we need to realise that there was a mandate from the election. You can see from the communication we are having with Territorians that a majority support these changes. If there are people in this Chamber who believe in democracy, I would think they need to agree on the decisions we are making. There are many things that people on this side believe in that may not happen. Members of this Chamber were elected by Northern Territory citizens, and that is who we are representing.

One of the common themes when I spoke with residents of Sanderson and other workers was they were shocked to see the video footage of the bus driver being assaulted while driving a bus. They commended the commitment of the bus driver to stop the bus without causing major harm. As many in this Assembly mentioned, there was harm caused to the bus driver, and there was a female traveller who also had an injury during the event.

I received a phone call from a friend who is a taxidriver. He said he was taking care of tourists and asked them about their experience in the Territory and if they had used the bus. He asked them this because the bus fare is free, and they can move around. These passengers told the taxidriver they had tried that option but would not use it because of the amount of destruction and antisocial behaviour that happens on the buses. We need more people to visit Darwin. If we want more tourists in Darwin, we need to address some of the issues that we face.

There has been a pattern of normalising behaviour over the years. The data that we see for assaults shows that they are under-reported. From working in the hospital sector, I can say that the staff are not reporting all the assaults. The reason is that once they report an assault there is paperwork they must complete, and most of the shifts are understaffed. When it happens, they prefer to provide care to the clients. There can be other issues during the shift as well. There are times when the staff report at a later time if they get an opportunity, but the majority of the time that will be set aside, so it is under-reported.

There is the impact of these assaults on the staff members, other frontline workers and retail workers. A lot of staff experience post-traumatic stress disorder and physical injuries that impact on their family and can even lead to workers' compensation claims whereby they need to remain off work for some time.

This is a burden on our system. We have heard about the situation with the Northern Territory budget. We want more of our staff members working because they want to work; we do not want these staff members to be assaulted and be on workers' compensation. They want to work and serve Territorians.

I commend this Bill for introducing stricter mandatory sentences for those who assault workers, particularly police and emergency personnel. This sends a clear message that such behaviour will not be tolerated, and there will be meaningful consequences.

I appreciate the incorporation of the community correction order, which will provide a more rehabilitative approach for first-time offenders without prior violent convictions. It is an opportunity to address underlying issues such as mental health or substance abuse and help them to reintegrate into society more effectively.

Contrary to what has been suggested by some members, this legislation is not about locking up people indiscriminately. This is applicable for all people residing in the Northern Territory, even tourists. If they are in the Northern Territory and they break the law, there will be consequences. It will not discriminate against anyone.

It is about having respect for others, especially the people who care for you, serve you at a counter and the police and ambulance officers running into dangerous situations. It is about taking a measured, informed approach to keeping Territorians safe while also offering the right kind of intervention and support when appropriate. I prefer to see more criminals in prison than see workers in hospital beds and on workers' compensation.

The Bill provides for increased use of community correction orders, which may include rehabilitation, medical treatment and work programs to help address the root causes of offending.

The Bill also ensures clarity in its application through transitional provisions, preventing confusion about when the new rules come into effect.

I firmly believe that no-one should have to endure assault while serving their community. This Bill is a step towards ensuring that our workplaces are safer and that our essential workers feel supported and protected. With that, I proudly support this Bill.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to introduce mandatory sentencing for the offence of assaulting a worker and amend mandatory sentences for assaults on police and emergency workers in recognition of the special vulnerability of our community's first responders.

I listened to the speech you gave before, Mr Deputy Speaker. It was moving. I could see that you were moved by the story about your son. I thank him for his service.

These amendments are made to give effect to the CLP government's election commitment. This legislation is important because the data shows that there were 56 reported incidents involving edged weapons in or around schools in the last financial year, which disrupted learning and caused 34 lockdowns to date.

Last week we passed Declan's law as part of a suite of measures that support the expansion of policies and procedures in school environments to deal with weapons in schools and allow the principal—should they think there is an edged weapon in a school area—to call the police and get them to come in and do wanding. We spoke about that last week.

In the last financial year, teacher assaults increased from 316 to 335. These assaults on our frontline teaching staff are unacceptable. This is a sad statistic when we are trying to get the best teachers to come to the Territory and educate our young people.

Over the last four years, I have heard countless times just in my community—let alone the rest of the Territory—of incidents of assault and attacks on teachers. One incident I have spoken about before in this Chamber involved a new maths teacher from St Joseph's who was attacked in his own home. He had a knife held to his throat, was threatened in his house and had his car stolen. This incident left this teacher and his family traumatised. In fact, he packed up their possessions and came back to Darwin.

These types of incidents leave communities reeling. They have a ripple effect across communities like mine and make the attraction of frontline workers more difficult. In addition, this year alone, to deal with the skyrocketing levels of crime, we have seen police overtime rise by 7%.

The pain and suffering our police must endure with these assaults of spitting on frontline workers—which is disgusting—as well as the high risk of exposure to communicable diseases when spat on can cause stress and trauma for those workers and is totally unacceptable. I cannot even imagine somebody spitting on you while you are out trying to do your job.

Erasing this type of conduct against our frontline workers prioritises their safety. Spitting is abhorrent behaviour, just like any other sort of assault on frontline workers. Police and emergency workers put their

own safety at risk each time they go out to keep the community safe. Assaults on a police or emergency worker where harm is caused because of spitting will now carry a minimum mandatory sentence of three months' actual imprisonment, and this will apply to first-time offenders.

This will not be tolerated, and perpetrators must be aware that there will be consequences when they assault the people who are trying to keep our communities safe every day.

Along with the spitting, we have seen ram raids towards police members, the people who are tasked to keep our communities safe. They carry on regardless of the exhaustion they feel having worked such long hours and additional overtime, which comes at a cost to the taxpayer of $15m.

These funds could be better allocated towards the wellbeing of our police officers or ensuring that we can attract and retain the hardworking men and women in blue who get up and go to work each day to keep Territorians safe.

In Katherine in the last few weeks there have been two ram raids causing considerable damage to Slingshot Haulage and also to the Toyota in town. I spoke about that recently. Two years ago a stolen NLC vehicle was rammed into a police car in the main street outside the Opposition Leader's office and Marion Scrymgour's office directly opposite my office on our main street.

It is appalling that these people are trying to keep our community safe while there are people stealing cars, terrorising communities and ramraiding the people who are doing their job.

In Darwin earlier this week a gang of youths stole a school bus from Adelaide River before travelling to Darwin where they stole further vehicles and ramraided multiple different businesses. The damage bill for this would be in the tens of thousands of dollars, and it is not fair to the school who had their school bus stolen, the Darwin residents who had their cars stolen and the businesses that suffered thousands of dollars of damage from these ram raids with stolen vehicles.

People deserve to be safe in the workplace whilst carrying out their duties. The assaults on police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers and any other NT worker who is undertaking work in accordance with their duties are unacceptable. I have heard many stories about taxidrivers in Katherine who have been assaulted or attacked, had machetes pulled on them or been robbed while they were going about their duties. It is unacceptable.

Our legislative changes align with community expectations, and Territorians have given us a clear mandate to deliver these changes. Our crime crisis needs a crisis response, and that is what the CLP government is delivering after only eight weeks in power. Labor had eight years and failed the Territory.

Spitting on, punching, kicking or biting police and Territory workers should result in a mandatory minimum sentence, not a 'get out of jail free' card. Everyone saw the shocking vision—I note colleagues have spoken about this—of the attacks on the bus driver. I felt sick when I saw that guy jump over and stomp on that bus driver's head.

Imagine you are getting up and going to work for the day. When you go home to your wife or whoever, you will be asked how your day was. It is ridiculous that these people are driving around, doing their job and that is the kind of behaviour they face. They should not have to tolerate that on a daily basis. It is despicable. The footage is sickening and shows how desperately we need this legislation to penalise offenders and act as a deterrent. No-one should go to work and think they might be a victim of crime, but it is the reality for many workers in the Territory. It is not good enough.

We have also seen shocking separate attacks on police and ambulance officers in the past few weeks. In Katherine, only a couple of weeks ago, ambulance workers were attacked whilst going about their day-to-day job.

For all these reasons, I commend this Bill to the Assembly. I look forward to more legislation that our CLP government will bring forward to reduce crime and keep our Territory safe. We all want a safe place so that we can live and work here and people can come and invest here and make the Territory a better place.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I am proud to contribute to the debate on the Sentencing Amendment Bill 2024. This is the last piece of legislation in our suite of measures reducing crime, which we promised Territorians we would deliver in the first sittings of parliament. We have successfully passed all other legislation and hope to pass this later this evening.

It is important that we address minimum mandatory sentencing for assaults on police and emergency workers and all Territory workers, which includes people in their volunteer capacity, because this is about setting an expectation and the standard of behaviour in our community that is acceptable. Where there are breaches of that acceptable behaviour, consequences will flow from it.

It is important that consequences are meaningful. We feel we have struck the right balance in all the changes we have made in this legislation to deliver outcomes for perpetrators, victims and the community. We know that when you are in your workplace, you are in a more vulnerable position. If you are a retail worker you might be behind a desk or in a shop, for example, where you are backed into a space. If you are a taxi or bus driver, you are confined to a driver's seat and have carriage and responsibility for a vehicle in motion. It puts you in a more vulnerable situation. Receptionists and anyone working across the Territory are put in that vulnerable position. They are there doing their job; they are not there in a defensive mode ready to protect themselves if need be. Equally, that applies to our police and our emergency workers.

There has been discussion regarding the definition of that. These are existing provisions in the *Sentencing Act* that we are strengthening. Currently it delineates between workers and police and emergency workers. The definition of an emergency worker is someone in the Fire and Rescue Service, Emergency Services, a paramedic, a health practitioner, an ambulance officer or police. The rationale behind that distinction is these emergency workers are the ones who run into highly volatile, often dangerous, high-stress critical incidents to provide a response. That is their job.

They are workers, but they are going into extremely intense, difficult environments time and again. They need to do their job despite the challenges, difficulties and dangers of the circumstances. Whether it is going to a car crash where there could be a flammable situation, additional vehicles or a threat to life of any injured people in the crash—all these types of extenuating circumstances—the emergency responders need to be focused on the job at hand. When you have situations where they are providing lifesaving CPR, totally devoted to saving someone's life, or intervening in a highly volatile, dangerous, potentially lethal violent situation, those emergency workers and police need to have their full concentration on that specific task.

To think that there are people in our community who target them is abhorrent. It does not pass any standard or test of acceptable behaviour. The CLP promised Territorians laws that meet community expectation.

Time and again I have said that the parliament is elected by the people to reflect the people of the Northern Territory and their aspirations for the future. Parliament sets the rules of our community. It is then the judges, the courts and the legal system's responsibility to interpret those laws, effectively operate within them and implement them.

Our responsibility is to ensure we have a robust framework, a system in which our community can thrive underneath. Part of that is ensuring workers are safe and that we stop this escalation where people seem to think that they can attack people at work.

This is not to diminish the fact that everyone deserves to be safe; make no mistake about that. We have spent the entire two weeks in this parliament working towards that goal, doing everything we can to give police better powers regarding public drinking, to strengthen bail, to have new ramraid and posting and boasting offences, to lower the age of criminal responsibility and to capture young people early in their offending rather than let that offending to go unabated.

We have done significant work across a range of areas and expanded the ability of our police to deal with knife crime and intervene earlier, hopefully acting as not only as a deterrent but also prevention, to take these types of weapons and alcohol out of circulation before they become a bigger problem. It is about stopping crime before it happens.

We also must recognise that additional layer of vulnerability of workers and send a clear message. One part of this legislation, and the most significant in my view, is the way we have brought in a three-month mandatory minimum sentence for spitting as an assault on police and emergency workers. This is because there is currently a three-month minimum when physical harm is inflicted on the police officer or the emergency worker.

We know that spitting is a vile, disgusting, degrading and highly dangerous act. Although physical scars may not be there, the emotional and mental scars are. The impact on our emergency workers should not be underestimated. We have to send a strong message that this is unacceptable behaviour and should be treated like it inflicts physical harm like a cut or broken bone. The act of spitting can leave people with lifelong communicable diseases. It puts the person through an extraordinary and tortuous process of testing and

retesting. They receive counselling and advice about being careful about their engagement with their loved ones and not passing on any potential diseases that they might have contracted as a result of the spitting; testing goes on and on, sometimes for months.

It is a deeply disruptive and stressful time in the lives of these workers, and in the meantime the worker has to get back up, put on their uniform, go back out and do it again. They go back to that violent scene, to that car crash to provide lifesaving support, to the person who has rung 000 and desperately wants to see someone in an emergency response with someone coming to their aid.

While the torment and anguish of the spitting continues, they are still expected to get back up and go again. We must deal with this issue in the strongest possible terms, and I am proud that our team could deliver this.

I am also proud of the way we have incorporated community correction orders. We also took to the election a commitment about compulsory community service, and we want to see more of that as a consequence and alternative sentencing option for our courts. This is about not only someone having their opportunity to pay back their debt through contributing to our community; it provides the courts additional options in sentencing other than strict imprisonment. So, we have expanded community correction orders for other offences on workers and other emergency workers as well as adding in the actual term of imprisonment.

This has been a significant eight-and-a-half weeks in pulling this together, not only to show Territorians that we are serious in taking action to turn the Territory around but to show them that when there is the political will to listen to the people and deliver their expectations that it can be done.

For a long time, Territorians were brainwashed by Labor in their attempt to control the narrative because all they cared about was the narrative. People felt they were pushed into a state of helplessness where they felt like nothing could be done.

The feedback we are getting across the Territory through our actions in the last two weeks is hope and optimism that things can be done again. When we want change, we can deliver change. People have power, agency and voice.

If there is anything we have done in the last two weeks it is tell Territorians that a good government listens, responds and can act; a good government will continue to act when required.

This is not the end of the story; it is not job done. This is job started, and we are proud to have started hitting the ground running with meaningful change that will deliver for our community. There is a long road ahead to turn this crime crisis around. It has been a long time in the making under Labor, and it will take time to unwind, but we have set a clear tone and expectation and have the will of the people to continue to deliver.

I am proud to be part of a team committed to this type of reform and as the Police minister and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services, I am proud to say to the people who put on their uniforms every day that we have their back. That is important for them because when you go out every day and put yourself in the line of danger to protect other people's families, leaving yours behind, you need to know that you are respected, valued and that your government has your back.

I am proud as the minister for those frontline workers to deliver this reform. I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all the workers in the department who have pulled together an enormous amount of work over the last eight weeks.

After the election when the Chief Minister first sat down with the Commissioner of Police and the head of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet, she laid out a clear foundation of what she expected and, from that point forward, things started to move. We pulled together all the legislation. You have seen over the last two weeks that it is possible to pull this together. Thank you to all of the departments, especially the Attorney-General's Department, which has been moving heaven and Earth to ensure we could deliver for Territorians in the first sittings of our new government.

I also thank all of the honourable members for their contributions to the debate on this Sentencing Amendment Bill. I will go through things they touched on shortly, but, first, the intention of this Bill is to fulfill just one of many CLP commitments. As promised during the election, we brought this legislation to parliament during the first sittings to ensure that assaults on police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers and any other NT worker who is

undertaking work in accordance with their duties have consequences. These laws align with community expectations. They expect us to deliver this promise.

The crime crisis that Territorians have been experiencing needed a crime response, including having spitting on a frontline worker trigger a three-month minimum mandatory sentence. Punching, kicking or biting Territory workers, or spitting or assaulting police and emergency workers, should result in a mandatory and minimum sentence, not a 'get out of jail free' card.

The election platform clearly outlined the exact steps we would take to reform our laws. At the top of the list was to ensure assaults on workers would result in mandatory sentences and, in instances, ensure mandatory imprisonment by amending the *Sentencing Act*. This Bill will target every offender in the sentencing stage who is cowardly enough to assault police, paramedics, nurses, doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers, volunteers and any other Territory worker. I repeated that because this is important that this step protects all Territory workers, unlike Labor.

This Bill applies to any worker, not just frontline workers, not just police or emergency services. If you are assaulted during the course of your professional duties, the perpetrator will be sentenced under this law. I agree with Territorians; we have had enough of assaults on workers. Everyone has a right to feel safe when they are going about their business, especially while they are at work. Frontline workers put their lives at risk every day to promote public peace and respond to emergencies. Any worker, no matter what your job, should feel safe at work.

Under Labor, we saw retail workers, police, ambulance workers and bus drivers speak up to say they do not feel safe at work. For years we have been calling for more support and tougher measures, but the Labor government did not listen. We have heard stories of retailers trying to keep themselves and their staff safe by locking up their premises during trading hours. Trading with their doors locked—that is ridiculous. Where else in the world would that happen?

From 1 July 2022 to 31 March last year, close to 1,000 Northern Territory public service employees were also a victim of an assault whilst at work under Labor. That is shameful. Comparatively, NTPS employees were 10 times more likely per capita to be subjected to an assault while performing their work activities than their Queensland counterparts. This is why we are bringing about this change. That came from the 2020 Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council report.

We cannot go on like this. Under the eight years of Labor 299 police officers were assaulted from July last year to March this year. In February 2023 the Police Association president reported a dramatic increase in violence towards police. This included attacks with axes and other weapons.

When in opposition the CLP advocated for the Labor government to tackle assaults on workers, in particular those on police. Since being in power, Labor turned its back on police, focusing more on the rights of the criminals rather than Territorians. This attitude left police vulnerable to attack; not surprisingly, they felt unsupported by their government, as is highlighted in all of the Northern Territory Police Association surveys over the last number of years.

Lawlessness became the new standard under Labor. Criminals had no respect for authority and knew they would not be punished.

During Labor's term, the CLP tried to introduce mandatory jail time for assaulting a police officer, and Labor voted against it. The CLP tried to establish a police inquiry to look at assaults, police morale and resourcing, and Labor voted those attempts down as well. The CLP moved an amendment to strengthen laws preventing an offender controlling an officer's weapon, and Labor voted against that too.

Instead of backing the CLP's suggested reforms during their term of government, Labor chose not to protect Territory workers. It voted against all those changes.

Under the Bill by this new CLP government, assaults against police and emergency workers where the offence involves the use of a weapon, causes physical harm and the offender has committed prior violent offending, a mandatory minimum of 12 months' actual imprisonment will apply. Where an assault causes physical harm a mandatory minimum of three months' actual imprisonment will apply, including for first-time offenders. For offences where harm is caused, including where an offender has spat on a police or emergency worker, a mandatory minimum of three months' actual imprisonment will apply, including for first-time offenders.

For offences where the offender has committed prior violent offending, actual imprisonment will apply. For first-time offenders where no harm has occurred, a community correction order with a mandatory community work condition will apply.

I want to be clear that spitting qualifies as harm for police and emergency workers. These are workers who are in the line of fire. We have drafted this Bill to ensure that spitting by itself will attract the mandatory sentencing provisions if it is done to a police or emergency worker.

For assaults against a worker where an offence involves physical harm and the offenders have priors for this offence, this will result in actual imprisonment. Where the offence involves physical harm and the person is a first-time offender, a community correction order with a mandatory community work condition will apply.

A number of stories have been shared today. I had more, but I will not share them because I have heard loudly and clearly from many of the horrors that they have experienced, been told about and have seen in the media, none of which were justified. It should not be acceptable, which is why we are passing these laws tonight.

Unfortunately, assaults on workers are so prevalent that even our bus drivers are assaulted. We urge our children not to take the bus because it is too dangerous. This is not the Territory that I grew up in.

Yesterday we heard the Member for Gwoja say that mandatory sentencing does not work and that Labor supports the judiciary having the discretion to sentence, yet the Member or Gwoja also admitted that under Labor, mandatory sentencing existed. Labor has quite the conundrum with this Bill. I want to know if Labor supports workers, as it says it does, and will support this Bill, or if Labor will continue with the ideology of a soft approach on criminals.

We heard from the Member for Fannie Bay about the alarming increase of assaults on workers. She spoke about a family member being spat on in an incident, and I am sorry to hear that happened. Labor's efforts were not enough, and that is why we are here.

The Member for Fannie Bay said, 'We are not just changing laws; we are changing attitudes.' That is so true. Under Labor, the consequence for bad actions did not go far enough, and people did not feel safe. This is what we have been hearing throughout the Territory for a long time.

We heard from the Member for Nelson, our Deputy Chief Minister, about assaults on correctional workers. I was appalled to hear that there were 61 assaults on staff at Alice Springs and Darwin correctional facilities over the last financial year.

We also heard how the failure to protect Territorians has had a negative flow-on effect to our economy. I agree that crime running rampant has impacted our population and economy. Individuals and families have left Darwin because they have had enough of the crime and of the former Labor government not doing anything about it.

We heard from the Member for Drysdale, who told this parliament that this Bill was about morality and to protect people whilst they are at work; I agree. He also told a story about Ralph, who said he is constantly being assaulted at work. Ralph is a bus driver, and he and his colleagues go to work knowing they might be assaulted. Ralph informed the Member for Drysdale that he and his colleagues do not report half of what goes on, because there is no point. They said nothing ever happens. Something will happen from now on, Member for Drysdale. That is why we are passing these laws.

This means, equally as disturbingly, that we are not even getting the statistics we need to determine how bad the situation is. We can assume that this problem is much worse than we already know. I heard the Member for Casuarina talking about health workers at RDH, and I have had a conversation with a health worker. They said they do not report many of the assaults that happen to them because they feel there is no point, and it happens so frequently that they would just be taken up in paperwork. That is not okay.

The Member for Drysdale also talked about Jennifer from the Driver Supermarket, who was punched while being robbed during her shift, and a more senior gentleman who suffered a gash to the forehead. We heard about the violence against taxidrivers. They are subjected to horrendous abuse and being constantly attacked. These are taxidrivers who drive around people with disabilities and our elderly; why should they be assaulted? Stories we have heard in the last two days are horrific.

The Member for Mulka said that Labor did not put enough resourcing into where it should have gone to reduce crime, and I agree. That might be another reason we are here today. We heard from the Member for Karama about his son, who is a paramedic. It was an impassioned speech. He said that his son told him that he would rather be punched than spat on. I find that incredible, Member for Karama. Thank you for sharing that with us, because that tells us so much about what it is like to be spat on as an emergency worker—as a paramedic—going to help other people.

Assaults do not just affect workers but other patients who need help from emergency services when services are delayed. We heard from the Member for Casuarina that these are the people who are fixing and tending to people, but they are not protected. This law will protect them.

The Member for Katherine talked about the stolen cars on the main street of Katherine, I know this has happened repeatedly, and those stolen cars are then ramming police cars which is horrendous. Our ramraid laws will ensure that consequences are there for those who offend.

Territorians should be able to go to work and come home safely. We are sick of hearing the opposition members say that they did all they could and that their so-called solutions are the only ones that would have worked, because they simply have not worked. Things are worse now.

The Chief Minister mentioned that this law is about saying what we will accept from a set of behaviours and that we will not accept our workers being assaulted. We all feel the same way on this side of the Chamber.

The Chief Minister talked about how people felt like nothing could be done, and I know that to be true because every person I spoke to, whether doorknocking in my electorate or in other electorates with candidates who now sit next to us—including business owners, police officers or emergency services workers—told us repeatedly, 'I do not know what you will do because I do not think anything can be done'. They felt like nothing could be done after eight long years of being told how difficult it was to change anything. In these last two weeks we have shown Territorians that it is possible to make change and that we are here to do so.

The Chief Minister said that the job has started and that she will make meaningful change. We know that it will take time, but it is important reform that is needed to change the direction of the Territory. Territorians expect this from us, and we will deliver.

Labor was happy for Territory workers to continue to be bashed, kicked, punched and spat on while offenders walked free from court. It is just not good enough. Kicking, punching, biting and spitting on police and Territory workers should be met with a minimum mandatory sentence. Under the CLP government, it will be.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 2:

Ms UIBO: It says that the commencement date will be when the assent of the Administrator is declared. Can you give us a timeframe for that date?

Ms BOOTHBY: I can confirm that as soon as the Administrator's assent is declared, this Bill can be implemented and start as soon as possible. There is nothing holding it up.

Ms UIBO: What date will that be?

Ms BOOTHBY: It will be as soon as possible after the assent.

Ms UIBO: Do you have no timeframe for the commencement of your own legislation?

Ms BOOTHBY: It will be as soon as possible. You have just seen us do two weeks' worth of four Bills …

Ms UIBO: That is a no.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clauses 3 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 6:

Ms UIBO: Clause 6 inserts two new sections. I listened to your explanation in the debate. I want to make clear on the record the definition in relation to the mandatory sentences for the offence of assault worker. I looked at the *Criminal Code Act 1983* and the section it refers to—namely, section 188A. It defines the workers.

You said that it will cover a range of workers. Section 188A(3) defines 'worker'. You spoke about the expansion of that definition. I want to make sure that the categories stated in your government media releases, those employment titles, are covered so that it is the frontline workers as well as what your colleague has said in terms of doctors, teachers, Corrections officers, retail and hospitality workers, bus and taxi drivers. Are they included under that definition?

Ms BOOTHBY: I will read from the section you referred to in your question. A worker is defined in section 188A(3) of the *Criminal Code Act 1983* as a person carrying out employment-related activities in a lawful capacity. This includes an employee; a contractor or subcontractor; an apprentice or trainee; a student gaining work experience; a volunteer; a self-employed person; and a person appointed under a law in force in the Territory to carry out functions or to hold an office.

Ms UIBO: That is the subsection in the *Criminal Code Act 1983* that I referred to. The new section in clause 6 has the intention to impose a term of actual imprisonment. Will it apply only to an offender with a history of violent offending that causes harm to victims? If it is a first-time offender, will they not be put through the mandatory sentencing process? Would they then go through the discretionary court process as per normal in the judicial system?

Ms BOOTHBY: To clarify—because I know judges in courts read the *Parliamentary Record* when it comes to this part of the Bill—section 188A of the Criminal Code, 'Assaults on workers', after the amendments, when an offence involves physical harm and an offender has priors for a violent offence, that will be actual imprisonment. When the offence involves physical harm and applies to first-time offenders, that will be a mandatory community correction order with a mandatory community work condition.

Ms UIBO: Section 188A of the Criminal Code says that there must be proof that a victim suffers harm under subsections (2)(a)(i) and (2)(a)(ii), and those subsections would need to be proven. If a person is found guilty on indictment, imprisonment is for seven years, or if the person is found guilty, they are summarily imprisoned for three years? Could you please confirm if that would stand in the case of spitting.

Ms BOOTHBY: It is in clause 7 that it applies to both.

Ms UIBO: New section 78DAA(2) relates to offenders having been found previously guilty of a violent offence who contravene section 188A of the Criminal Code; if the offender causes the victim to suffer physical harm as a result of the offence, the offender will be sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Would that apply to a first-time offender? As an example, if someone spits in a frontline worker's face and causes serious harm, would they then not have to go through the term of imprisonment and have the community correction order?

Ms BOOTHBY: That part is in clause 7 as well, but you must have a conviction for a prior offence for that to occur.

Ms UIBO: I am reading from the explanatory statement, which says that clause 6 refers to section 78DAA(2). Do you want me to ask that question again in the next clause?

Ms BOOTHBY: Have I not answered your question, Leader of the Opposition?

Ms UIBO: The question was if it is a first-time offender, would they be sentenced for a minimum of three months, or if they are a first-time offender—because this refers to offenders who have previously been found guilty of a violent offence—and have not been found guilty of a violent offence but have spat on a frontline worker, would they not be held to a sentence of imprisonment? Instead, would they have a community correction order?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Will it not be a term of imprisonment for a first-time offender?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is right.

Ms UIBO: Further to that, would it then be through the court process where new section 78DAB(2) imposes a community correction order with a community work order—could that occur anywhere in the Northern Territory, or would it have to be in a city or town where there is a Corrections centre?

Ms BOOTHBY: Those programs would need to be rolled out in a community or town where there is a program run by Corrections.

Ms UIBO: I refer to section 78CB of the *Sentencing Act*. An offender who is subject to this provision may have a portion of their sentence suspended or dealt with under an intensive community correction order with home detention. Could that occur in a remote community, or, similar to the previous question, would it have to be in a place where there is a work camp, correctional facility or detention centre?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is an operational question, rather than what the courts will impose.

J DAVIS: If an elderly lady is charged with assaulting a police officer for getting into a tussle with them at a protest, for example, about climate change, because one of the police in the tussle—which the elderly woman started—falls over and is hurt and if that woman has a prior conviction from an assault in her twenties, which was 60 years ago when she had a fight with her friend, under new section 78DAA she would have to go to prison. This appears to be the case even if she was desperately ill with a chronic disease and far too frail to endure a jail sentence. It does not appear to me that the drafting in this section provides for exceptional circumstances, and the effect of the law in this case would be to remove the discretion of the judge to impose a more appropriate sentence. Is that correct?

Ms BOOTHBY: To clarify, this Act will be used by judges if the person has already pleaded guilty or has been found guilty. It depends on what the DPP and police come up with and all the evidence being gathered throughout the process. If they have been found guilty or have pled guilty then this Act will apply.

J DAVIS: In this situation this woman has pled and been found guilty.

Ms BOOTHBY: She may get the rising of the court.

Ms UIBO: I have one more clarification point. The question is about first-time offenders. Reading the explanatory statement about the CCO, the information provided to parliament is:

> *It is the intention of this amendment that the imposition of a CCO will become a minimum sentence for offenders who contravene section 188A and do not have a prior history of violent offending and who cause physical harm to victims in the course of that offending.*

Can you confirm whether that means a first-time offender with no violent history who may spit on a frontline worker or a worker—you were saying it covers everyone—would have a minimum sentence of a CCO?

Ms BOOTHBY: To clarify, spitting is not part of section 78DAB. Are you only talking about one section of the amendment, as we have two together?

Ms UIBO: Sorry. I am trying to work it out because it leads into the next clause which I have questions on. So you know where I am coming from, section 189A of the *Criminal Code Act 1983* is about assaults on police or emergency workers. I am trying to understand because one of the amendments that our former Labor government included was section 189A(2)(ab) which says:

> *suffers harm and the assault includes spitting by the offender, the offender is liable to imprisonment for 10 years …*

It continues on, 'or other than the application of force'. I am trying to understand that in an everyday situation for the Territory's context and the horrible examples we have seen of people not respecting our workers.

Could somebody who spits on a worker experience the mandatory sentence *of* imprisonment if they have a violent offence? Would they get a minimum of three months' imprisonment for spitting on a frontline worker in this case under that definition, or would the minimum mandatory sentence for spitting on someone—which is horrible—attract a community correction order rather than a sentence of imprisonment? I am trying to understand that bit because the definition of assaults on police and emergency workers suffering harm included spitting through a recent amendment.

Ms BOOTHBY: I know what you are getting at. It will be dependent on whether it is classed as harm or physical harm. Physical harm and spitting is not in this realm. Spitting is where harm comes into it. It would be up to the court to determine whether it is physical harm or harm.

Ms UIBO: I am reading from the definition in the Criminal Code Act section 189A(2)(ab) which says:

suffers harm and the assault includes spitting by the offender …

If somebody spat and was deemed as having assaulted—I am confirming that would have to come together as the two acts. Would physical assault and spitting then sit under that paragraph (ab)?

Ms BOOTHBY: The part you are referring to is in clause 7. It is separate to 6.

Ms UIBO: Yes, the next one.

Ms BOOTHBY: If you want to ask me then, that is fine.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Ms UIBO: Would you take the assault and spitting as one act or two acts, under that definition in the Criminal Code?

Ms BOOTHBY: The existing definition already has physical harm in there, and we are extending that so that spitting becomes harm.

Ms UIBO: I appreciate that confirmation. My question is about (2), which inserts new subsection 78DA(3A) after section 78DA(3), providing for a mandatory minimum sentence of actual imprisonment for three months for offenders who contravene the section which we have already outlined, 189A(2)(ab) of the Criminal Code.

You answered my first question about this clause. In the circumstances where offending involves spitting, would the minimum three months' imprisonment exist here, or could you also be sentenced in this circumstance, under this new subsection, with a community correction order as well as imprisonment?

Ms BOOTHBY: It is one or the other.

Ms UIBO: That would be, I assume, up to the court's discretion to decide what the mandatory sentence is. Would it be a term of imprisonment for three months or a CCO for three months?

Ms BOOTHBY: No, if it causes harm and the offence involves spitting, that is three months' imprisonment. Where there is no harm caused and it is a first-time offender, that is when a community correction order with a mandatory community work condition applies.

Ms UIBO: I appreciate the clarification. Because of the delays in our judicial system, people serve time on remand while waiting to be sentenced. Can you please confirm if time served would be taken off if someone is waiting on remand and then sentenced? What would happen there?

Ms BOOTHBY: That would be up to the court to decide.

Ms UIBO: The other question is about subsection (3), which the minister references, regarding section 78DA(4) including the reference to the new subsection (3A). It talks about convictions for prior violent offences and the term of actual imprisonment, which do not apply. Can you outline where that would not apply if it supposed to be mandatory?

Ms BOOTHBY: This is an amendment to take into consideration that this is a bit like a cascading level of what happens when certain offences are undertaken. That is why that is in there as new subsection (3A) as that extension.

Ms UIBO: If no prior conviction is recorded for an offender, does this mean that they will only have the mandatory sentence of a community correction order and that there would not be circumstances where a cleanskin or non-offender would not have a term of imprisonment attached, or is that at the court's discretion? I want to know whether that is mandated.

Ms BOOTHBY: The community correction order applies when none of those other elements match what is needed.

Ms UIBO: If the other areas did not apply, would that automatically be a term of imprisonment?

Ms BOOTHBY: If none of the other areas apply, then it is a community correction order.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8:

Ms UIBO: Will first-time offenders who are sentenced to a minimum three-month community correction order record a conviction?

Ms BOOTHBY: It could be with or without a conviction.

Ms UIBO: Would that be at the court's discretion, or is it something that the department will work on after?

Ms BOOTHBY: This is at the court's discretion.

Ms UIBO: Is there a reason why a community correction order would not warrant a conviction?

Ms BOOTHBY: That would be a matter for the court.

Ms UIBO: So, someone could get sentenced to a minimum of three months for a community correction order, have no paper trail for the conviction and therefore if they are applying for a job which looks at a criminal convictions list, their name would not be on it despite having served a community correction order?

Ms BOOTHBY: If there is no conviction, then no.

Ms UIBO: For example, I could assault a worker, be sentenced to a community correction order, serve the order for three months and have no record throughout my future employment that I have essentially done a criminal act and served my time.

Ms BOOTHBY: That would only apply if there was no harm and they were a first-time offender.

Ms UIBO: That means if they are not a first-time offender, then they would get the conviction recorded?

Ms BOOTHBY: Yes.

Ms UIBO: The clause talks about approved projects and what can be used for the sentencing aspect of the CCO. What happens if there is not an approved project for an offender for their sentencing?

Ms BOOTHBY: That will be determined not only by the court but also operationally by Corrections.

Ms UIBO: The process would then rely on a different agency to create the consequence?

Ms BOOTHBY: That would be up to the courts.

Ms UIBO: What would find an offender unsuitable for an available project?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is also an operational question.

Ms UIBO: The intention of the provision says that it is the court that will in all instances—not subject to the exception in section 36 of the *Sentencing Act*—impose a CCO with the community work order. Must they go together to get a minimum of three months, or could it be longer?

Ms BOOTHBY: It could be longer.

Ms UIBO: What would be the maximum timeframe for the CCO and the CWO together?

Ms BOOTHBY: Two years is the maximum.

Ms UIBO: Is the participation in the community work order required to be for a minimum of three months, and how will this condition be checked to ensure someone has served their time on a community work order?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is the usual process.

Ms UIBO: Which is?

Ms BOOTHBY: This is something Corrections sorts out with the courts. If you would like more detail, I can take it on notice; I do not have all the detail here because it is operational.

Ms UIBO: Thank you; that would be great, between the split of the two portfolios …

Mr MALEY: I can answer that for you. Corrections will go through the community work order; there is a report done which goes back to the court and then the court relists that matter and deals with it, because it is a breach of the court order. Then they look at what the breach is and work out what the remedy is after that.

Ms UIBO: The breach could then impart a longer sentence essentially if the three months is not served or found to be …

Mr MALEY: It would be a matter for the court to decide what action it takes.

Ms UIBO: Would the community work order sit under the Department of Corrections, not under the Attorney-General's Department?

Ms BOOTHBY: That is correct.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Clause 9:

Ms UIBO: This clause inserts Division 15. The provisions of the Act apply the principles against retrospectivity in penal statutes. What time period will be retrospectively looked at?

Ms BOOTHBY: The offences must be committed after the Bill is implemented for that to occur.

Ms UIBO: When the Bill commences if somebody's court case is afoot, would all the changes then come into effect for anything that has not been sentenced by the court?

Ms BOOTHBY: That will apply to the current laws and then it will be if it is after this Bill is enacted.

Ms UIBO: Do we have the date for that yet?

Ms BOOTHBY: As soon as possible.

Clause 9 agreed to.

Remainder of the Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 19	Noes 3
Ms Boothby	J Davis
Mr Brown	Mr Guyula
Mr Burgoyne	Mx McNamara
Ms Cahill	
Mrs Carlson	
Mr Charls	
Mr Edgington	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	

Mr Howe
Mr Kerle
Mr Mackay
Mr Maley
Mr O'Gallagher
Mr Patel
Dr Rahman
Ms Uibo
Mr Yan
Mrs Zio

Bill agreed to.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

PAPERS TABLED

Northern Territory Electoral Commission Annual Report 2023–24

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Northern Territory Electoral Commission Annual Report 2023–24.

Office of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Annual Report 2023–24

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I table the Office of Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Annual Report 2023–24.

Special Report of Inspector Pursuant to Section 140 of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017 and Evaluation of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I table the Special Report of the Inspector Pursuant to Section 140 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 2017 and Evaluation of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

I seek leave to speak on this report.

Leave granted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: On 30 September I received the special report of the inspector. Pursuant to section 140(4), the inspector has specified that the report is to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly. Having read the inspector's special report, I provide the following update to the Assembly.

While the inspector of the ICAC makes it clear in his special report that none of his findings should be interpreted as a criticism of the staff of the Office of the ICAC or any officer thereof, he does not evaluate the performance of the Office of the ICAC as satisfactory in certain aspects of its work.

These aspects are that the Office of the ICAC could not attract sufficient staff to perform its function adequately; the commissioner's absence on leave prevented the completion of a number of significant reports and items of work; staff morale and job satisfaction have been, and continue to be low, resulting from the commissioner's leave and the events leading up to it as well as the circumstances surrounding the allegations against Commissioner Riches, which have been referred to the Commissioner for Public Employment; three significant KPIs were not met; and the report goes on.

The inspector's special report is comprehensive, and I thank the Inspector of the ICAC for its compilation. I encourage all members to read its contents.

I note the Inspector of the ICAC had to complete a special report and not the usual evaluation report envisaged by the ICAC Act, because his term expired on 27 September 2023, and he was not reappointed until 21 December 2023.

The special report of the inspector outlines how the absence of Commissioner Riches is impacting the Office of the ICAC and several significant reports and items of work. The investigation being undertaken by the

Commissioner for Public Employment into the allegations against Commissioner Riches remains on foot. The Inspector of the ICAC has advised that it would be inappropriate for Commissioner Riches to return to work before that investigation is finalised. Commissioner Riches, therefore, remains on leave.

I am conscious of the impact this issue continues to have on the staff of the Office of the ICAC and the broader standing of the office in the community. Naomi Loudon remains acting Independent Commissioner Against Corruption.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I have tried my best to look after my people over the course of this fortnight. I have been travelling to parks to talk to my countrymen and warning them about the changes. I will continue to do that. If the people out there are listening, I will be walking around and will be with you.

We are not all criminals. There are many kids who are doing their best, even if they get caught up in crime. There are many families who are working hard. There are many leaders and elders who are responsible for caring for their clans the best they can in their given situations.

There were comments and phrases that have been said in this House over the past fortnight that have rarely been said in the Chamber before. I have never felt truly comfortable in this Chamber, but during the past two weeks, I have heard people discuss things in ways that I am not used to. There were constant references to drunks, but they did not mean the people in Mitchell Street bars or the people at home; they meant Aboriginal people in the parks who are homeless. Quite often these comments are about Aboriginal people, but it is not being said.

Member for Drysdale, it is not often that Aboriginal people are in a house that is not highly overcrowded; 20 people in a three-bedroom house is an issue of homelessness. The people in the parks may have houses to go to, but they are overcrowded. Is the lease in their name? How many people sleep in the bedroom they sleep in?

Many members brought up stories about different crimes that have occurred, committed by Aboriginal children and Aboriginal adults, or some of them are not crimes yet. They talked about people camping in parks. Is it a crime to be homeless in a park? Are the parks of Darwin and Palmerston reserved for the residents in the surrounding houses, or can Aboriginal people enjoy the parks too? The problem with these attitudes in this Chamber is that it does damage to the First Nations members of this Chamber. First Nations people in the NT carry these stories in their hearts.

Today in the Chamber Minister Maley said that the government will take these kids and put them in programs because no-one else is supporting them. He said that their families are not supporting them. This is not true. Many of these children have families who want to help. Families, leaders and elders want to help, but the resources are not there. The grandmother protesting outside Parliament House last Tuesday who has a grandchild in Don Dale cares so much that she stood outside Don Dale protesting for over a year.

I understand that people are frustrated. You think you are alone, but we are all frustrated. I heard the Member for Blain talking about people spitting on police or anyone, which is not okay. I have provided the answers many times. It is so frustrating that no-one is listening. I have called many times for funding for peacekeepers so that our elders and leaders can be the front line. I have done this, and I am resourced by the parliament so that I can do it. Other elders have no resources.

Leaders and elders are the best people to take control of this situation. We have called for the right to educate, support and provide discipline for our children. The intervention I spoke about yesterday created a lie that Aboriginal parents and adults were all abusing their children. This has made people scared to discipline their children because they believe that the police will come and lock them up. I have been calling for the resources for our elders and leaders to work with these kids. Let us look after them.

I urge this government to listen to us. To the government members who are new in this House, you have been here for five minutes and are saying that you know what is best for us. No, you do not. Stop talking and start listening to the elders and leaders who can help you solve these problems. I want to work with everyone in this Chamber who is willing to listen and work in partnership. This is greatly needed.

While I am standing, I take the time to say happy World Teachers' Day. To the teachers in my electorate—Yolngu and balanda teachers, elders and leaders who are teaching our children—thank you for your hard work. Let us keep working hard for all the Yolngu and balanda children of the Mulka electorate.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, it was good to hear the Chief Minister deliver the ministerial report today and update the Assembly on all the policies we took to the election and how the CLP is delivering on those commitments in just a short eight weeks. Our policies were to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle.

One of the CLP's election commitments is to provide free meningococcal B vaccines, with the program rolling out from 1 January 2025. The parents who have been advocating for this free vaccination are Sally and Ash Lawrence who live in my electorate. Sally and Ash lost their beautiful daughter in 2017 to the deadly meningococcal disease. Their goal is to get the meningococcal B vaccine funded and on the immunisation schedule Australia-wide so that no other families go through losing a child from this deadly disease like they did.

For the first time the meningococcal B vaccine will be free for all infants under the age of two and adolescents aged 14 to 19 years. Previously the meningococcal B vaccine was only available for free under the National Immunisation Program for Aboriginal children or children with specific medical conditions that put them at risk of contracting meningococcal disease.

Sally and Ash's tireless work of advocating over the last seven years will see the CLP's new program for the free vaccine mean over 4,200 babies and 18,500 adolescents will be eligible. Sally said this year would be extra special knowing their advocacy efforts had finally paid off for their beautiful daughter, Skylar.

I thank Sally and Ash Lawrence on behalf of thousands of parents going forward for their work in fighting for this vaccine to be available free for babies and children around the Territory.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge a fantastic initiative established by Darwin's only locally owned independent bookstore, the Bookshop Darwin. Since opening in 2003 the Bookshop Darwin has become an icon in the Darwin CBD landscape. Owner Anna Savvas and her team have worked tirelessly to spread their love and passion for books and reading.

This year in the lead-up to Love Your Bookshop Day, Anna and her team decided they wanted to do something that would have a positive impact on our community. They initiated the 'pay it forward' scheme. The initiative aims to foster a love for books amongst children, at the same time making a positive impact on literacy levels in the NT. The initiative is brilliant in its simplicity.

Customers of the Bookshop Darwin are offered the opportunity to purchase a $15 voucher with any other purchase. That voucher is then available for a child under 15 to redeem on a book they choose for themselves. This fabulous initiative was kicked off by Anna and her team with 10 'pay it forward' vouchers provided by the bookshop.

I am delighted to say it has been embraced by the community, which is in no small measure due to the fact that there are no catches or hidden fees, just the gift of reading passed straight to the next child who needs it. Well done to Anna and her team.

Congratulations to Nelson Lin and his team at Meow Waffee who have just celebrated their first year of operation at the Vic Arcade. Nelson is a talented barista and businessman. It has been quite the year for Nelson and his team because not only was Nelson crowned the Brew Dreams Coffee Training Latte Art Smackdown 2.0 competition winner in July this year, but his team also took out the 2024 Hospitality NT Australian Liquor Marketers Gold Plate Award for the Best Dessert. It is no mean feat for a small cafe that has only been open for 12 months in the middle of the CBD. I cannot wait to see what Nelson and his team does next.

I also give a shout-out to all the volunteers and participants at Darwin parkrun. This Saturday marks the 11th birthday of Darwin parkrun, which takes place every Saturday at 7 am in Bicentennial Park on the Esplanade, for anyone who is interested in joining us. In that time, parkrun has operated 543 events with 11,045 participants who collectively have completed the run 58,284 times.

None of what parkrun does would be possible without the volunteers who turn up every Saturday—rain or sunshine, humid or dry—to support the event. In its 11 years, 782 people have put their hands up to support

this social event, which is an incredible testament to the value of the event in the parkrun family and for the Darwin community.

Finally, I give a shout-out to all the teachers at Larrakeyah Primary School and St Mary's Catholic Primary School and wish them all a happy World Teachers' Day for tomorrow.

Mx McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I will briefly touch on the debate on mandatory sentencing. The Member for Goyder asked why I felt confident enough to vote against the previous crime Bills but said I would abstain from this one, originally. It is because I am taking this bloody seriously. Mandatory sentencing is extremely serious; it takes the power away from the judiciary. We have separation of powers for a reason. It is understandable and expected that I would be cautious about any Bill that seeks to remove this.

Despite the serious nature of the proposed changes, it was to be pushed through on urgency, and I had a handful of days to go over the Bill. I have reservations about mandatory sentencing, and I am also extremely concerned about worker safety. Without enough time to understand this Bill inside and out and without ascertaining any potential unintended consequences, I decided at the time the most appropriate response was to abstain from the vote.

Since then, I have learnt more about the Bill. That is the whole purpose of these debates—to listen, to be challenged and re-evaluate our stances. If you do not think that is part of your role here, then you do not understand your role.

It appeared that the Bill did not protect all workers and that in some sections it covered only police and some frontline workers—not all workers, as the CLP members kept saying. First, you push aside proper parliamentary process to rush things through so that we have little time to consider the Bill, then you deceive about what the Bill says. How can I trust anything the CLP is saying? How can I make a decision when I am not being told the truth?

Then I found out from the Member for Johnston that the CLP had not consulted any unions. The Bill was supposed to be for workers, and no unions were consulted. How dare you prop up workers as the reason for this Bill, when you have not consulted one workers' union? You are not the party for workers; you never have been and never will be.

I heard it said by members of the opposite side that this Bill was about deterrence. We heard a long-winded story from the Member for Blain about him and his teenage friends engaging in, or thinking about engaging in, serious property crime, but that they would not go to jail. Telling the story demonstrated an incredible lack of self-awareness.

I heard the member say that he hoped people who had out-of-control emotions would think twice and then refrain from lashing out at a worker. On what planet does he think the type of person who will hit an ambo will stop, think about mandatory sentencing and then simply decide, 'Okay, maybe not'? This is not a deterrent; it does not deter. If it is about punishment, then fine; just say that is what it is about. If it is about punishment, what makes the CLP think that it or we are more qualified to determine sentencing than a judge?

I want people to be safe at work. Yes, members have all shared stories of violent, intense crime, but they do not have a monopoly on outrage. I also live here, and I know stories like this. I have also experienced things like this; we all have. Yes, it is beyond awful and no, it is not okay.

I was hoping the CLP would be presenting us with things that would make a difference and do something about the escalating levels of poverty. I hoped it would do something about the dismal state of our mental health services; about our healthcare system that is on the brink; about supporting families who are struggling; about the children falling through the cracks—that is not criminalising them; about the overburdened legal system; and the desperately needed programs to divert and reduce recidivism.

I have been bitterly disappointed with what I have seen—as has the community I represent—and in particular the way that many members have conducted themselves in these debates. The racist dog whistling and derogatory statements about vulnerable people have been disgraceful.

I heard the Members for Brennan and Drysdale continuously use the term 'drunks' when talking about Territorians who are clearly suffering addiction and immense difficulties in their lives. The label of 'drunks' and the derision and contempt with which you spoke of them was shameful. I remind the members of the CLP that the people you spoke of with such contempt are your constituents too. You represent them.

To hear the Member for Mulka say that he has never heard such things said in this Chamber before—he is more gracious than any of you deserve. He has stood here for eight years saying, 'Work with me. I want to help', and now I see how he is being treated here, and it is shameful.

I had hoped that in this place we as representatives of the Territory could debate these issues professionally and treat all Territorians with respect, but this has not happened this fortnight. I hope, probably in vain, that this will change at the next sittings.

To change gears, I give a shout-out to incredible people and organisations in the Nightcliff electorate.

Recently, a Darwin institution turned 40—Corrugated Iron Youth Arts. We are so lucky to have Corro in the Nightcliff electorate. I attended its 40th birthday soiree and met the champions—a group of incredible young people who are dedicated to the arts and use their skills and talents in contributing to the artistic direction of the organisation. These young people in my electorate are awesome. We had a great chat, and they told me that even though they could not vote, they had been watching the election closely and were desperate for the first Greens member to be elected. I was blown away when I heard, 'You getting in was the best 16th birthday present I could have received'.

The kids are all right. Our young people are smart, empathetic and switched on. They can see that the major parties are not working for the best interests of the next generation. They understand the reality and urgency of acting on climate change and feel let down that our major parties are trashing their future with pathetic attempts to appease the fossil fuel industry. I am proud to be giving young people a voice to stand up for their future. The future is Green.

Thank you, Corro, for putting on an epic family fun day as part of the birthday celebrations. I brought my kids, and it was wild. There was circus training, sushi making, temporary tattoos, screen printing and a DJ; it was hands down the best family fun day I have been to in Darwin yet.

I shout out to another young person, Charlotte, who came past my office to say how happy she was that I was elected. Charlotte, you may not be able to vote yet, but I am working for you. Come back to the office anytime and let me know how you want to see politics done differently.

I am humbled by the reaction and support that I have received from young people in my electorate. They are the future, and I am genuinely working for that future.

On the day before World Teachers' Day, I give a big shout-out to all the teachers in my electorate at Nightcliff Primary School, Nightcliff Middle School, St Paul's Catholic Primary School and Essington. Your schools are such cherished and important places for the people of Rapid Creek and Nightcliff. I thank you for your tireless work educating and caring for our children. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow to celebrate World Teachers' Day and working with you to get the best outcomes for your school and families.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I will talk about a couple of outstanding Territorians.

Richard Glyn (Dick) Kimber AM passed away on 16 September 2024 surrounded by family. Dick was a writer, historian, teacher, conservationist, surf lifesaver, footballer, husband, father, grandfather, friend and consummate yarner.

It was an honour to attend his memorial in Alice Springs at Traeger Park recently with my good friend, Minister Hersey, who is a relative of Dick's. The attendance on that day spoke highly to the impact that Dick had on the community of Alice Springs. People came from across the country and filled the stands to pay their respects to a man who meant so much for our town.

I first met Dick when I went to my first training session with the West Football Club in 2007. As a young under-17s player I was embarking on a new journey, having played soccer for most of my junior sports life. The West Football Club where many of my friends had played for years was a wonderful environment. Dick was always there to give advice, run water and run laps around the oval whilst we all trained.

After games on the weekend it was back to the club, and Dick always made sure the young players who attended got a bowl of chips and gravy. At first it seemed a simple way of showing his appreciation, but over time you began to realise it was more than a simple gesture. Dick loved seeing young people thrive and would always support others to ensure we were all at our best.

More recently, in an acknowledgement of his impact on the club, the West changerooms at Traeger Park were named in his honour. Dick will never be forgotten; he leaves an incredible legacy that lives on in his children and grandchildren.

To Dick's wife, Marg; his children, Steve and Barb; and the entire family, I pass on my condolences.

As many said on the day, it is not a day to mourn but to celebrate the life of a man who lived life to the fullest and gave so much to a town he loved.

I also recognise another incredible Territorian, Luke Bowen, who we lost recently. He is a man of incredible character, a remarkable leader and a friend. The northern cattle industry—indeed the entire agricultural community—mourned the profound loss of someone who dedicated his life to serving and advocating for the sector across the NT, before taking that advocacy to the nation.

Luke was a man of exceptional integrity, vision and compassion. As the chief executive of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association from 2008 to 2014, he guided the industry through one of the most challenging times—the 2011 ban on live cattle exports to Indonesia. This difficult period could have led to division and despair, but under Luke's steady leadership, the industry began the long journey of healing. His calm demeanour and unwavering commitment helped to repair relationships and lay the groundwork for a new era of cooperation and understanding with international partners.

He understood that true leadership is not just about making decisions; it is about inspiring people. Luke recognised the potential in young minds and created an exchange program that welcomed more than 400 Indonesian university students to work on Northern Territory cattle stations. This initiative has strengthened bonds and fostered goodwill, ensuring that the cattle industry not only survived but thrived.

In 2023 Luke took on the role of the inaugural chief executive of Cattle Australia, where he continued to champion the interests of grassfed cattle producers across the nation. Though his time in this role was cut short due to health reasons, his impact was immediate and lasting. As the National Farmers' Federation so aptly noted, Luke led with passion and intelligence, always placing the interests of agriculture at the forefront of his work.

His contributions went beyond the cattle industry. Luke was deeply involved in various organisations, including the agriculture industry advisory council, as well as being head for agriculture in the Territory. He was a tireless advocate for sustainable practices and a mentor to emerging leaders, always willing to share his wisdom and insights.

Markus Rathsmann, a fellow pastoralist and former president of the Cattle Council of Australia, spoke of Luke as the greatest advocate the northern pastoral industry every had. It is difficult to encapsulate the depth of loss we feel without him. Luke was not just a leader; he was a guiding light in the industry.

As we reflect on Luke's legacy, let us remember him not just for his remarkable achievements but for the kindness he showed to everyone he met. The NT Cattlemen's Association stated it perfectly when it said:

> *His passion, kindness and unwavering commitment made him an invaluable asset to our industry, and to Northern Australia.*

To Tracey and the Bowen family, please know that our government's thoughts and deepest sympathies are with you during this time. Luke's legacy will live on in each of us who were fortunate enough to know him and work alongside him. Thank you, Luke, for everything. You will be profoundly missed, but your spirit will forever guide us.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I feel privileged to be one of 25 Territorians elected to this Assembly, and I respect the community. My goal is to be the best MLA ever for the residents of Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon. I am not there yet; I have a long way to go, but that is my goal, and I will be a loud voice for them in this Assembly.

Let me give a big shout-out to the whole public service who facilitated the transition from the 14th Assembly to the 15th Assembly. That is not an easy task. There was a lot of work right from the minute we were elected to get us established into the Assembly. There would have been a lot of briefings for incoming ministers, and everything would have been helter-skelter for the entire public service. They have done a great job. To all the agencies—be it the department of the Chief Minister, Treasury, the Attorney-General's Department or any of the agencies—thank you. We need your help.

A special thank you goes to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. We have just had a huge two weeks' worth of legislation. I know its drafting efforts have been huge, so I thank them.

I particularly thank the Department of the Legislative Assembly. It has helped us from day one, not only with our electorate offices and all of that, but with parliamentary training and getting us to understand the processes of this Assembly and how it needs to work.

I congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election as Speaker. It was a great choice. While we obviously have contested debates, I say again that I respect every member of this Assembly. I wish you all the best.

For the ministers, there are a couple of TV shows they need to watch re-runs of. The first is *Yes Minister*. Which part you laugh at depends on whether you are in the public service or a minister. It is true. The Chief Minister should look at *Yes, Prime Minister*. There are a lot of Sir Humphreys out there. Who wins the battle? I do not know. She will be led on but enjoy it; she will have a good time.

Of course, there is *Utopia*, which was referred to by the Member for Blain. The ministers need to watch it to understand how the backrooms work, how the media dictates a lot of things and decision-making.

For my own entertainment, I will watch a re-run of the *Teletubbies*.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I am not sure what the obsession with the *Teletubbies* is from the Member for Karama. Maybe he is traumatised from watching it when he had a kid or a grandkid watching it. I hope he gets to watch an episode now that parliamentary sittings are nearly finished and get it out of his system before the November sittings. He can then come back with another reference to another kids' show. Who knows? Hopefully it is not the *Teletubbies*, Member for Karama.

My dad is one of the constituents of the Member for Karama, so we will be monitoring from afar and making sure he is doing his job as a good local member.

I place on the record my congratulations to the constituents in the Arnhem electorate who have been announced as 2024 award finalists for World Teachers' Day in the Northern Territory. I thank the Member for Gwoja for reading the school roll call yesterday for all those finalists across the Northern Territory in his role as the shadow Education minister.

I congratulate the Arnhem electorate finalists. In the first category of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year, I send my congratulations to Sonia Joshua from Ngukurr School and Rachel Wunungmurra from Gapuwiyak School.

For the category of Early Childhood Educator of the Year I send my congratulations to Lee Milroy from Alyangula Area School on Groote Eylandt and Munya Chigiga from Gapuwiyak Preschool.

For the category of Inclusion Educator of the Year we do not have a finalist from the Arnhem electorate, but they do amazing work. We had finalists in that category in previous years. Mr Brendan Flynn, who is at Henbury School now, used to teach at Gapuwiyak School in the Arnhem electorate. I give a big shout-out—I will be a little biased for Brendan.

In the category of Leader in Education, a big shout-out goes to the two Arnhem constituents, Heather Carter from Ngukurr School and Zoe Bertrand from Gapuwiyak School, who also taught at Numbulwar School previously.

For the category of Primary Educator of the Year there are three finalists from the Arnhem electorate: Haylee Malan from Alyangula Area School on Groote Eylandt; Anna Hennessey from Laynhapuy Homelands School, which covers some of the new parts of the electorate that I represent that came out of Mulka electorate; and Emmy Macrae from Gapuwiyak School.

In the category of the Principal of the Year, I send my congratulations to Miss Genevieve Wild from Umbakumba school on Groote Eylandt. In the category of Secondary Educator of the Year there are two Arnhem electorate finalists: Gathapura Munungurr from Laynhapuy Homelands School; and Peter McDonald from Gapuwiyak School.

For Support Person of the Year, I send my congratulations to Kylie Hendry from Gapuwiyak School. In the final category of Vocational Education Teacher of the Year, I congratulate Mr Chris Spurr from Gapuwiyak School on being an award finalist.

Education is a pillar of anybody's success. Whether it is through school, training or adult education, the work our educators do day-in and day-out across Territory daycares, preschools, schools, middle schools and high schools and educators who work in the field of vocational education and training often create critical pathways for employment for our school leavers and trainees. We say a huge thank you.

I know that there is a lot of movement across the NT from school students who may move from school to school. Our educators are always flexible and adaptable in providing a student the best possible opportunity in education and always cater for the circumstances of the child in the school.

I remind the Assembly of wording that I shared yesterday through the General Business day motion on education: we must remember that the children and the young people who are going to our schools come with a rich diverse knowledge and experience to add value to that environment of learning and to thrive in that environment.

Our educators do a phenomenal amount of work to harness that. I know it is challenging at times. I have had the experience of being a teacher—a high school teacher at that—but the success at the end or that 'ah-ha' moment when they get it is invaluable and precious to see. When you see a young person sharing their moment, helping to support another young person's learning, it is an amazing thing to watch and know that you are creating this benefit of a journey and a cycle of lifelong learning.

I truly believe, even as adults, we should not forget that love of learning. There are a lot of people in here who have been learning a lot in the last two weeks as adult learners. We should not forget that our children need to flourish to truly ensure the Territory will be a strong and flourishing jurisdiction in this country. We cannot leave them behind or ever forget the importance of education.

The people who support that journey—our hardworking teachers, principals and, as we have seen in award categories, the school support staff—who also connect to the community provide another level of support that is not necessarily always classroom based. It is another level of support for our schools, staff and students so that our communities can engage in the best possible way, and when there are challenges and tricky points in someone's learning day, they get that extra support.

We thank, acknowledge and appreciate all our Territory educators across the NT. We do not just want to honour you tomorrow on World Teachers' Day; we honour you every day you work and particularly the days you are not supposed to be working, like your weekends or after hours. We know you are always thinking about those kids and often still putting in your own personal time and effort to make sure young people in your classroom have the best option for the most quality education you can offer. We thank you for that.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, many of the problems we seek to address in this House will take time and patience. They also require cooperation and a better shared understanding of the underlying dynamics of the problems. With that in mind, I will speak more about our population growth, demographic decline and loss of human capital in recent years.

When I grew up here and left for university interstate, I honestly believed that by the time I returned, there would be half a million people, we would be a state and there would be a David Jones and a Myer. That was what I had been told for time immemorial.

It is sad for all of us that things have gone backwards. One of the reasons things have gone backwards is that we have dropped the ball on cultivating, securing and prioritising our human capital. As I have said, this is part of the reason I have returned, to help us with skilled migration and population growth. I am encouraged that some of these bigger-picture issues may have the possibility of being addressed by the new government.

I am not here to politicise the facts tonight; I wish to put information on the record for the benefit of everyone because these are discussions we will return to in different ways, and it is useful for us to have a shared frame of reference.

Our population growth over the last 40 years is wildly differential. In the pre-2000 period, the Northern Territory used to outpace the rest of the country on population growth. From about 2012 onwards it starts to fall dramatically.

Years ago Arthur Calwell, an immigration minister, popularised the phrase 'populate or perish'. That is not dissimilar to where we are now. We are in real terms declining in population and viable workforce, and it affects all the areas we want to work in and all the services we want to provide. It matters because as the TERC report from 2020 stated:

Until such time there is a significantly larger base population, the Territory will continue to rely on interstate and overseas migration to fill … jobs

Our overseas migration stocks over the last 40 years have also been wildly differential. Why it matters is that overseas migration has become very low, and if population growth is our goal we must start thinking about how to attract, retain and develop migrants from overseas because Australia's immigration policy is its de facto population policy, so the Productivity Commission has said for years.

What about the other components of population? They are natural increase, which is births minus deaths, and interstate migrants. There was a time in the last 20 years when everyone was growing less but still growing, but the most salient part of that picture is net interstate migration which has been negative for a long time in the Northern Territory; this is our resting state, essentially. We need to think about how to mitigate that because we cannot turn it around overnight, but if we want to populate the Northern Territory with a skilled workforce to support all the areas we want to support, we must understand that there is no other way to do that than to look to overseas skilled people. This requires the right conditions here for them to come back to.

People often think in the last 10 years things were significantly better in periods that correlated with our gas boom. However, what you will find—this is not drawing a causal relationship or a correlated one—is in that period our population stocks got even worse and our net interstate migration was even lower because we started to create substitute capacity in our economy by having so much FIFO work, agency workforce labour and reliance on temporary migration mechanisms in place of permanent migration mechanisms.

We need to band together to change that story. If we turn this into a political football as well, there will be no-one left to work, live or grow up in the Northern Territory. Treasury data shows that negative interstate migration has been our resting state and that our population growth is trending downwards on every metric.

Treasury was hoping it would be 1.1%, then it turned out to be 0.9%, and now it is 0.8% year on year. Deloitte Access Economics, which is the most bullish forecaster, will tell you it needs to be somewhere around 1.4%. For us to get anywhere near 300,000 people in this place, we must grow in excess of 2.5% population growth. That means we have to do things radically differently and will have to cooperate, or this will be gridlocked and there will not be enough Territorians to make the Territory realise its potential.

Charles Darwin University has done good work on this. I urge you to look at the work done by Professor Andrew Taylor, who has pointed out that our periods of positive interstate migration correlate with when we build things. In the early 1980s when we were building new suburbs like Karama and Palmerston and the then Northern Territory University; in the mid-1990s, when we were building Cullen Bay which created headroom in the market for people to move up and on; or again when we had projects like Conoco Phillips when we prioritised opex and capex in the same place, we grew our economy and population at the same time. Those are the periods we had positive interstate migration. The last time we had it was for a perverse reason—a bunch of Canberra bureaucrats here because of the Northern Territory intervention.

If we want to grow our population, we have to start thinking about how to make this an attractive place in every regard, and we are trying in different ways to create those conditions. We will need to work together on this. It is important to understand this is not how it always was, though. In the 1980s we were growing at 30% population growth, which elapsed over the decade. In the 1990s and 2000s, we had 20% population growth. These are rough figures.

It is only in the last decade that the economic policy choices made by both sides of government resulted in us having less than 5% population growth, and that is a failure of economic policy. I am genuinely proud to be part of this government, which is facing up to this reality at least, creating ministries to look at this seriously. These issues are being taken seriously. I do not want to politicise this, but the last government was not interested in facing the reality of our demographic decline. There was wilful blindness about it, and it was a serious problem. It is part of the reason none of these projects are off the ground, because we frankly do not have the workforce to support them.

Migration is not a substitute for investing in the skills of Australians, but the Australian Government's White Paper on Jobs and Opportunities said 10 times over that well-targeted migration can complement local skills while contributing to productivity growth. That is why it is important for us to have a sensible discussion in the Northern Territory—where we all love and care about Laksa festivals and multiculturalism—to genuinely invest in multiculturalism when it comes to migration. We need to be welcoming people, laying out the welcome mat, integrating and settling them and making them long-term Territorians.

Our plans to create new housing supply are important in that regard, because even if we can find all the people in the world, where will we put them? We need to create housing stock, and we are incentivising new supply. That is a critical part of this.

I could go on about this for a long time, but I wanted to put down foundational data tonight so that we might have a think about it collectively, going forward, noting that this discussion will come up in a lot of forums, I imagine, over the coming months.

We know that for overseas and interstate migrants and Territorians, different things have to be addressed when we diagnose the situation and look at what needs to be done to attract, retain and develop our population. The single most important metric when it comes to attracting overseas migrants is the lure of permanent residency. We want to get the right people here and then we want to make sure, to retain them, that we settle them. Then to develop them, we integrate them.

When it comes to interstate migrants, we know that liveability, opportunity and upward mobility are the most important things. If you cannot provide a better deal here than elsewhere, people will go back interstate.

Finally, for Territorians, we need to reinforce our existing population because, unless we can improve lifestyle and provide opportunities for growth, there are not salient reasons to stick around.

I appreciate your indulgence at the end of a long day and fortnight on these issues. I sincerely hope we can work together on sustainable population growth to underpin sustainable economic growth for the benefit of all Northern Territorians.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, it is the day before World Teachers' Day. Today I attended Darwin High School with the Member for Fannie Bay for a Year 12 high achievers' function. It was lovely to see about 60 kids were in the list of high achievers.

Thank you to Jill, the principal, for the invitation. Attendees also included the Year 12 Assistant Principal, Nick Ergos; Aaron Dalgleish, Year 12 coordinator; Erin Jovanovich, Year 12 coordinator; and Sophie Butler, NTCET coordinator.

They had an amazing cake that was large, which a couple of the students helped to cut. We all gathered around for a photo. If anyone needs a cake, Jimjam's Cakes was amazing; they did a good job.

It is important to reward these high achiever students who are doing Year 12 and let the Assembly know who they are: Suzi Akumu; Lara Borbon; Kosta Chatzipapas; Feifan Chen; Jennifer Choi; Bill Cotter; Andrea Critchley; David Dela Vega-Dela Pena; Paris Diamandopoulos; Joel Durrheim; Rebekah Ebin; Raymond Eliorda; Nadishka Fernando; Gabriella Francis; Nathaniel Freeland; Tahlia Freijah; Abbey George; Mia Gilbert; Niyaz Hasan; Laura Henssen; Hyunwoo Jeong; Naomi Jia; Afiya Khan; Toby Koefoed; Tom Kuswadi; Cassia Latz; Mari-Dine Laubscher; Zoe Lim; Muxi Lin; Anna Lindsay; Lily Lewellyn; Pheebi Lockley; Taufiq Lubis; Rupendren Manimaran; Harriet Matthiesson; Vincent Mondol; Vic Nguyen; Gerome Nguyen; Svanik Pande; Larissa Pandey; Mahi Patel; Leo Perry; Aidan Pevely; Lily Purdon; Maaz Qasim; Atif Saeed; Pedro Sanches Luiz; Jorge Saroukos; Amby Shinmarh; Hrithik Singh; Panayioti Siskamanis; Myles Smith; Frencessca Sparrow; Gayatri Sureshbabu; Rangchak Tripura; Shane West; Phoebe Wiltshire; Jia You; Evelyn Zheng; Karis Zheng; and Haoyang Zheng.

All of those students were enjoying a lovely lunch that was put on by the school for them as high achievers for their year. I said to them, 'Remember it is World Teachers' Day tomorrow, so be nice to your teachers'.

I give a shout-out to and congratulate all of the amazing educators across the Territory. Happy World Teachers' Day for them tomorrow. In the next sittings I will go through those who won the awards

I will be back in Katherine dropping off goods to all of the schools in my community. I look forward to seeing them and being home after being here for a couple of weeks.

This year's theme is 'Valuing teachers' voices'. We value our teachers' voices. Our CLP government acknowledges the effort put in by teachers and supports them in a safe workplace. We will bring back school-based policing to intervene and stop crime.

I again thank all of the teachers and support staff across the Territory who work hard every day in shaping the minds of young people. Congratulations to all who were nominated for the awards tomorrow. I will be in

Katherine at the celebrations. There are celebrations across the Territory. To everyone who gets an award tomorrow—even if you were nominated or simply are a teacher—we value and thank you for your dedication.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I celebrate the achievements of Darwin High School's Year 12 students in 2024. Darwin High School is in my electorate of Fannie Bay.

As we approach the end of another school year it is important to recognise the hard work and the resilience of all our young Territorians. Darwin High School is one of five schools in the electorate of Fannie Bay, and I am proud to say that all three of my children attended Darwin High School. Two have gone on to finish Year 12, and my third is doing quite well in Year 10 now.

I am sure that Darwin High School will again prove itself to be a beacon of academic excellence in the Northern Territory. It consistently places multiple students in the top 20 high achievers. In 2022 a Darwin High School student by the name of Alishba Saeed achieved an ATAR of 99.95. That is the highest possible ranking, putting her in the top 0.05% of Year 12 students across the country. This perfect score was unmatched in the Northern Territory that year, and it exemplifies the calibre of students that our local schools are producing.

In conversations with the school staff today, I know that they are confident that they may see a similar result this year. We do not have those specific results yet, as ATAR scores are not released until after exams, I think on 16 December this year.

I attended Darwin High School with the minister for Education today, and we met those 61 high-achieving students, whose names are already on the record. They were identified as high achievers because they received, so far, four or more A-grade results in their studies. These results are not just numbers; they represent years of hard work, countless hours of study and the unwavering support of their teachers, families and the broader Darwin community. Each of these high achievers has a unique story of perseverance and dedication.

It is also worth noting that Darwin High School's success is not limited to academic achievements. The school fosters well-rounded individuals who contribute to our community in various ways, from the arts to sports and community service.

As we look to the future, these young achievers give us hope. There are future leaders, innovators and problem-solvers across the Northern Territory. Many will go on to pursue higher education, and some will choose to study interstate; however, I say to those students who go interstate: please come back to the Northern Territory and bring your skills and knowledge back to benefit our community.

I congratulate not only the high achievers, but all Year 12 students at Darwin High School and across the Territory. Completing secondary education is a significant milestone, and each student should be proud of their accomplishments going into their exams and over the next few weeks.

I want to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the teachers, staff and leadership at Darwin High School. Minister Hersey read out the names of the teachers at Darwin High School who specifically support those Year 12 students.

Tomorrow is World Teachers' Day, and I send my best wishes to Meg Davis at Darwin High School, who is a finalist in the Teaching in the Territory Excellence Awards for the category of NT Vocational Education Trainer of the Year. Winners will be announced tomorrow, and I wish Meg all the best.

In addition, other finalists from schools in the Fannie Bay electorate include Craig Viellaris from Ludmilla Primary School for NT ATSI Educator of the Year; Melissa Ah Kit from Darwin Middle School for NT ATSI Educator of the Year; Danielle Ford from Ludmilla Primary School for NT Leader in Education; and Anne White from the NT School of Distance Education for NT Principal of the Year.

I thank all our teachers, classroom support workers and school administrative staff who work to support all students to be the best they can be.

The success of Darwin High School's Year 12 students is a testament to the quality of education in the Northern Territory. It demonstrates that our students can compete with the best in the country if they are given the opportunity. As we celebrate these achievements, let us recommit to supporting and investing in education across the Territory, ensuring that all our young people can reach their full potential.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the remarkable work of a not-for-profit organisation that plays a vital role in our community in the Casuarina electorate, Amber NT, which is located at Harry's Place. This organisation specialises in providing non-clinical support for families and communities who have experienced the profound loss of a child, from conception to the age of 18.

Under the compassionate leadership of Katy Chin and her dedicated team, Amber NT offers a range of personalised support services, as well as group bereavement programs and events that foster connections and healing.

Among these initiatives are the monthly Sunset Connections and the coffee and chat groups. These events create safe spaces for families to come together, share their stories and find solace in one another's company.

I highlight a particularly special event that took place earlier this month, Light the Lagoon, a reflection event designed to honour the cherished memories of those little ones lost too soon.

Families gathered together in a spirit of remembrance, creating an atmosphere filled with love and support. In the reflection tent, heartfelt messages to their departed little ones were displayed. Others were placed in memory lanterns.

Together, families released bamboo boats adorned with drawings, photos, messages and candles. They watched as their symbols of love and remembrance floated gently across the Waterfront lagoon at dusk. It was a stunning reminder that even in the darkest times there can be light.

One mother who attended shared her experience with me, expressing how the event was both emotional and profoundly beautiful. It provided her and her children a safe and comforting moment to reflect on their loss and connect with other families who understand their journey.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Katy and the entire team at Amber NT for their unwavering dedication and the essential service they provide. Their work brings hope and comfort to families navigating the depths of grief, offering light in what can often feel like an overwhelming darkness. The impact of their compassion and commitment to supporting those in need is immeasurable, and I am truly grateful for their presence in our community. I thank them.

I acknowledge the community event organised by the sports and recreation team earlier in October. It was a welcome home visit to Darwin for various Australian and Territorian Olympians and Paralympians. It was a truly special occasion. I was delighted to attend the event in my electorate at the Casuarina Square Shopping Centre.

The atmosphere was filled with excitement and pride as community members gathered to meet these remarkable athletes. It was heartwarming to see families, friends and fans come together to celebrate the extraordinary achievements of these individuals who have represented our country on the world stage.

The opportunity to obtain autographs and share in the athletes' stories fostered a sense of connection and inspiration within our community.

I extend my gratitude to the athletes and the community for making this event such a resounding success. I thank Natalya Diehm, a dual Olympian in BMX Freestyle and a bronze medallist in Paris; Matthew Glaetzer, a four-time Olympian and double bronze medallist in cycling in Paris; Darren Hicks, a dual Paralympian and bronze medallist in para-cycling in Paris; Nikki Ayers, a dual Paralympian and gold medallist in para-rowing in Paris; Lani Pallister, a gold medallist in swimming in Paris; Zac Stubblety-Cook, a dual Olympian with silver and bronze medals in swimming in Paris; Zoe Arancini, captain of the Stingers, a triple Olympian and silver medallist in water polo in Paris; and Shae Graham, a dual Paralympian and bronze medallist in wheelchair rugby in Paris.

The collective efforts of 467 Olympians and 160 Paralympians contributed to a remarkable tally at the Paris games, bringing home a staggering 116 medals across 17 Paralympic and 33 Olympic sports. Your participation and enthusiasm showcased the strong spirit of support we have for our sports heroes, and I hope this event inspires future generations to chase their dreams with the same passion and determination.

I also thank the Members for Sanderson and Wanguri for coming along to Casuarina shopping centre and supporting this event.

I acknowledge the Henbury School Art Exhibition last week. I had the pleasure of attending the exhibition, Connections to Land, Sea and Sky, and voted on the best artist and talent that we have in the Northern Territory. I congratulate all the following award winners:

- Critics' Choice honourable mentions—Marlee Thompson, Lebron Ahpene, Dennis Greet, George Kynigos and Lawrence Owens

- Critics' Choice middle years' winner—Billie Boencke for 'Shells'

- Critics' Choice senior years' winners—equal in first place is Duane Wanambi for 'The Wolf Fang at the Circus and Eat People' and Azaria Bretherton for 'Pretty Girl'

- People's Choice middle years' division—first place is Lebron Ahpene for 'Beach Panoramic', equal second place is Marilyn Gurruwiwi for 'Sunset Beach' and Laura Martin-Webb for 'Rosie Nebula'

- People's Choice senior years' division—first place is Callum Jauncey for 'Wolf Night', second place is Eddie Ngarri for 'Elsa' and third place is Joaquim Caluza for 'Pirate Ship and the RMS Titanic'.

Well done to all the students for a great art show.

I acknowledge the newly elected President of the Nepalese Association of the Northern Territory, Prativa Devkota Sharma. I had the pleasure of meeting Prativa at the recent Dashain Festival, where her dedication to the community was truly evident.

Prativa's journey as a teacher at the Nepali Language and Cultural Class at Darwin Language Centre, her work as a professional tutor and her leadership at a childcare centre all speak to her commitment to education and community service. Her prior volunteering with the Nepal Red Cross Society and her role as Vice President of NANT further highlight her contributions.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Prativa on becoming the first woman to hold the esteemed position of President of the Nepalese Association. This is a well-deserved recognition of her leadership and passion for the community.

I extend my congratulations to the other newly elected energetic and active members of the executive committee in August 2024: Sandhya, Women Vice President; Kalpana, Secretary; Barma, Joint Secretary; Roshan, Treasurer; Dharmendra, Joint Treasurer; and the executive members Ranjan, Hari, Yuvraj, Madhu, Saughat and Nishan.

Your collective leadership will no doubt continue to strengthen the bonds within the Nepalese community in the Northern Territory. Congratulations to all, and thank you.

I will thank all of you in your language, if I could. Sorry if I make a mistake. *Tapaiko kada Parishramakolagi dhanyavad ra Nepali samudayalai garva garnuhos.*

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, we all know that tomorrow is World Teachers' Day. Like others in this Chamber, I give a big shout-out to all the teachers, particularly the hardworking teachers in Johnston.

We have six incredible schools in Johnston, with almost 2,000 children and young people between Alawa, Jingili, Millner, Moil and Nemarluk schools and Casuarina Senior College. I have been lucky to connect with each of the schools in different ways over my decades in Darwin, and I look forward to working with them now as the local member.

My kids attended both Millner and Jingili schools, and I love going back to the Jingili 'jiggle'. I remember the last time I was there 15 years ago watching my nieces and sons 'jiggling' to the same songs they were playing this time; *Eye of the Tiger* still rules.

I also appreciate the hard work that parents do to support schools. Throughout my children's schooling, I was an active member of the school councils. It has been great to meet the school councils at Alawa and Millner schools, and I look forward to meeting and working with the parents, teachers and children at all of the wonderful schools in my electorate.

There are almost 2,000 young people going to school in my electorate. This morning kids from Years 5 and 6 at Alawa Primary School were in the gallery. It was wonderful to talk to them in the House and hear their

questions and aspirations. There were future pilots, teachers, comedians, inventors and even politicians. It feels like our future is in safe hands.

They had questions; one was, 'How come they are shouting? We can't do that in school.' I agree, Alawa students. It is not hard to hear each other in this room; we do not need to shout. We can listen. As I have heard the Member for Mulka say over and again in this Chamber, we need to listen. With great generosity he has told us that he and his community, the elders and leaders, have solutions, if only we will listen to them.

I know there are other members in this Chamber, on both sides, who support what the Member for Mulka is saying to support peacemakers on country and give authority to leaders and elders. I know this because they have told me. I hope we can find ways to work together to create solutions and create what we all want—a safe, thriving community. I hope we can show the children who came into parliament this morning that we do not need to shout; rather, we can listen and work together to make change and make things better for our electorates. We represent every person in our electorate, not only the ones who voted for us; that is my commitment to my community of Johnston.

I echo the Member for Karama's words: let us bring love, compassion and tolerance into this Chamber and our work here. I heard the Member for Mulka say that he has never heard some of the language and words he heard in the Chamber this sitting. As leaders we must promote respectful and inclusive conversations. We need to be aware of the language we use that marginalises people based on their race or background. By doing this, we can work towards a society that values everyone and brings us together. We can show the children that is what we are all here for and that we can do things a better way.

I thank my fellow members for their work in the last two weeks. I know we have not always agreed, and there has been a lot of talk about both sides. My wish is that we could see ourselves as one House working together. I know we have been working hard in this Chamber and with our electorate when we are not in the Chamber.

In line with the other members, I acknowledge and thank the Speaker and the amazing work of the DLA staff for your patience and tolerance with, what must seem like, on my part, interminable questions. I am sure I am not the only one calling on your expertise, often many times a day. Thank you for helping us do our job. I look forward to that for the next four years.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, in Question Time the opposition showed great curiosity and interest in the CLP's plan to rebuild the Territory's economy and in the Territory Coordinator, which will be a game changer for how we do business in the Territory. I thought I would use this opportunity to highlight exactly why this is necessary.

I was concerned in Question Time because of the number of questions the opposition were asking. It sounded like this opposition does not understand that the Territory needs to grow in order to survive and succeed. It sounds like the opposition is content for the Territory to continue to be the worst-performing economy in the nation, as it has been for five-and-a-half years under the Labor government.

I put on the record how determined we are to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. We have taken many steps to move these goals forward. We have spent two weeks in parliament with our reducing-crime package—the start of a long road ahead to reduce crime across the Territory.

We have also delivered our commitment on payroll tax, which is kickstarting our rebuilding of the economy. Starting from 1 January, an additional 200 businesses will not pay payroll tax, allowing them to invest further in the Territory, employ more staff and grow their service delivery and their businesses for the benefit of the Territory's economy.

On 1 October, weeks into our government, we got the HomeGrown Territory housing grants out the door; we have seen 68 people have that dream of home ownership being successful in their applications for these grants.

The next phase for us is the Territory Coordinator role. This is something we took to the 2020 and 2024 elections. There are no secrets or surprises about this being a CLP policy; in fact, we even tried to pass legislation to establish one in the last four years. I will be clear about a discussion paper that my department has put out, including to all four land councils, LGANT, the Northern Territory EPA—the people tasked with overseeing environmental protection across the Territory—the Heritage Council and the list continues to expand and grow.

We will not maintain the status quo. It sounds like Labor is content with the status quo. If we do not do things differently, we will not get a different outcome. We have been given a mandate to deliver change. We desperately need it, with the level of debt that Labor saddled Territorians with, having broken our service delivery—whether this is in health, police or teaching. Everyone in the Territory needs additional support after years of Labor neglect.

We are not happy to maintain the status quo in our position on the ladder as the worst-performing economy in the country, which is why we are continuing with home building, payroll tax and with the Territory Coordinator.

On Monday the Under Treasurer will give a public lecture about the state of the Territory's economy, where we are at and where we need to go. We are proud to be communicating with everyday Territorians on the importance of economic growth.

Our Territory Coordinator is looking to achieve growing and developing investment in the Territory. We have not had any major projects delivered in the last eight years under Labor, and many of the projects on the list were inherited by Labor from the former CLP government many years ago.

The Territory Coordinator is about making sure we have a program of works for businesses and making sure we have projects of significance that are supported and facilitated through the system. The system does not work, otherwise we would not have the worst-performing economy in the nation. It looks at establishing Territory development areas and precincts, perhaps like Middle Arm which are designed for certain industry or agricultural development, and then can have coordinated approvals processes across that development area. We are looking at making sure it is an independent statutory office.

We are also putting out a primary principle. I will read part of that principle:

> *The … Territory Coordinator … is required to have regard to the primary objective of driving economic prosperity for the Territory, including consideration of:*
>
> - *The economic, social and environmental outcomes of the project for the Territory (including the overall balance of positive and negative impacts); and*
>
> - *The implications of any outcomes at a Territory level as well as in the locality of the project.*

As an overarching principle, the Territory Coordinator's mission is to make it easier for people to do business in the Territory. It will have powers; we have been clear about that. We are seeking feedback from organisations like the land councils, EPA, Heritage Council and industry about the ability to direct and coordinate information across agencies; request information from relevant agencies; and undertake public consultation. We are seeking feedback about the ability to require certain information from project proponents to prioritise, progress, decide on projects and step in when decisions are taking too long. The list goes on about the opportunities before us.

This is not some brand-new CLP made-up, fictitious thing; this has been tried and tested in other jurisdictions whose economies are advancing and moving forward, where their population is growing and their people's wealth is growing and where the ability to deliver services is increasing.

I put it firmly on the record that we are proud and determined to make sure the Territory Coordinator is fit for purpose, which is why we are being open and transparent and seeking feedback. This has not even come into parliament yet. It will then have to go through all of those usual processes of the parliament and of scrutiny. The legislation will be tabled, and everyone will get to see it.

We want to make sure it is robust, fit for purpose and that it will drive the change the Territory so desperately needs, because the CLP was not elected to maintain the status quo. We were elected to deliver important reform and change in three key areas: crime; economy; and lifestyle. That is exactly what we have set out to do. I gave a report in parliament today outlining all of the election commitments we have already delivered, all the progress we have made and what we are working on next; that work will continue.

Despite the success of passing our reducing-crime package over the last two weeks, it does not represent the end. That is just the beginning for our team. There is so much work ahead of us over the next four years. In all of our portfolios in all of our electorates, people are hurting and are uncertain about the future, but based on the feedback we are getting, I know people are encouraged by our decisiveness. They are encouraged

by the demonstration that we are taking action. They are encouraged by the fact we are delivering what we promised we would.

We will continue to push forward, challenge the norm, not follow along with business as usual and not take any advice or pages out of Labor's playbook. If what Labor was doing was working, I would not be the Chief Minister, the CLP would not be the government and we would not be having this conversation in the first place.

I am proud that we are pursuing the Territory Coordinator. It will be bold, brave and will deliver better outcomes for the economy and, in turn, better outcomes for the Territorians who put us in this position to govern for the betterment of everyone.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, may the record show that the Member for Nightcliff fired the first volley, and I am simply returning.

It took the first sittings for our speech to try to be controlled. Orwell's villain came out in the first sittings. I do not care what language I use; I am free to use my language. I do not care for the sensitivities. Member for Nightcliff, if you do not like hearing the word 'drunks', understand that the people of Drysdale elected me for a firm reason.

Whilst we have been in this Chamber, it is a war zone in Drysdale. This is what I am dealing with. This message from a constituent came to me an hour ago:

'Clinton, it is out of control. People are getting bricks thrown at them, and the site is facilitating gang meetings. People are openly walking with machetes and poles as weapons. A barricade was built to block the road, with cars having bottles and bricks thrown at them.'

That is why the people of Drysdale put me here. I will not be silenced by the national socialists who tell me how I can use my language. I will represent Drysdale. They put a soldier in this Chamber because they are at war, and I will fight for them.

This week I am proud that we delivered Declan's law; lowered the age of criminal responsibility; delivered legislation against ramraids, posting and boasting and nuisance public drinking; and delivered legislation to protect workers. I will not be sorry for any of that.

To the people who are drinking and carrying machetes, you have come up against the wrong member. I will fight for Drysdale until it is safe. I put this on the public record for the Member for Nightcliff: since my methods are so heinous to her, how about we take all the problem tenants that you say I speak so despicably of and we move them to Nightcliff? It is on the public record. If the Member for Nightcliff does not think that I can deliver for those constituents, I offer that she may take them. I await her response eagerly. This has been witnessed. The Housing minister is here; I am sure he can facilitate it.

The Member for Nightcliff spoke of addiction. If she knew my story, she would understand that I know about this topic deeply—more deeply than you could understand. I take offence to the assertion that I might not know what I am talking about.

The difference between her and me is that I do not believe that being an addict is an excuse for people to hurt others. No matter how close the addict is to me and how much I could love that person, it does not mean that they can harm others in the community, Member for Nightcliff.

I thank the Member for Johnston for her speech earlier. It brought me down a notch.

I have been worried in this sittings about the use of race. Race has been raised so much. I ask the opposition and the members of the crossbench who have defaulted to the use of race not to lower the standard of this Chamber.

At times I feel as if we have gone back 70 or 80 years with the use of race in the parliament. I grew up in this country. As a boy at school in the 1990s I did not think we would be having racial conversations in the parliament.

What we are pushing is not racially based. There is nothing in Declan's law; in lowering the age of criminal responsibility; or in legislation against ramraids, posting and boasting, nuisance public drinking or to protect workers that is racist. If anyone can highlight it to me, please show me because I will not support any

race-based legislation. It has not been shown to me. We just heard weak arguments pushing that it is racial. I find it an incredibly weak position. I find it lowers the standard in the Chamber. I ask all those opposite to raise the debate. I fully welcome questioning and opposing positions, but do not bring this down to the melanin in someone's skin that somehow makes these laws not worthy.

I reserve the rest for the next sittings. I hope in the next sittings, we hear less of race and that the opposition and crossbench fight the CLP's ideas on more noble grounds.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I have a few subjects in my contribution, so I will break them up a bit. I start by thanking the Member for Mulka for his contribution. He is a respected lawman on his own country, and I respect his contribution and the story he brought.

I echo the Member for Drysdale and say that the laws that we brought in this sittings will apply equally to all Territorians. There was a referendum last year, and the message that came loud and clear from that is that Australians do not want to be divided. We want to be one people together. We have a long, proud Indigenous heritage and people who have come from many nations. We have come together to build what many call the luckiest country in the world.

Growing up in Batchelor it took me years to realise that I was colour blind. I did not see this colour or that colour; we were all little Aussie kids running around together. Something has happened over the last five, 10 or 15 years, and race has come to the fore. We now, as a society, seem to be trying ways to divide ourselves rather than to come together and build on our common strengths and the values that unite us.

It is well known that an enemy divided will fall. If we are being divided, who is our enemy? Sorry, I have gone off topic.

I thank the Member for Mulka. I look forward in the days, months and years to listening to him, as I listen to our Yolngu brothers and sisters in my electorate and community. I was born and grew up here. I have lost many cultural brothers and sisters, as he has. I am passionate about working towards a future where all Territory kids will have an opportunity to walk in two worlds and become all they can be.

I thank the Member for Johnston for staying here to the bitter end at this time of night. I appreciate it. We may not always agree on solutions, but we agree on what a lot of the problems are. I appreciate that you are still here and engaged in this debate. I know you had a career in mediation, and I can see the weight that lends to your contributions, and I thank you for it …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, you cannot refer to people being here or not in the Chamber. Please make your comments through me as the Speaker.

Mr KERLE: My apologies, Madam Speaker. We agree on the problems, but from time to time we will disagree on the solutions. I look forward to our debates in and out of this Chamber as to the best solutions over time.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for her contribution. The Member for Drysdale summed up my comments.

I thank the Members for Arnhem and Arafura for supporting our sentencing amendments to protect workers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your service in this Chamber over this sittings. You have been a stern but fair master or mistress, whichever you prefer.

I am proud to be a member of the new Finocchiaro CLP government which has come to this Chamber with a mandate to rebuild the Territory. We took to Territorians our plan to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. Such a simple three-point plan, but it sums up all the various things people said to us on the hustings. When we announced our reducing-crime package, I said yes, because that was what people were crying out for. It brings back consequences. When I was on the doorstep and said that we planned to bring back consequences, people's eyes would light up and say, 'Yes, please; do it.' That is what our mandate will be: restore consequences for bad behaviour and rewarding good behaviour; expanding school-based policing and bringing back truancy officers, because the best place for kids to be is in school, not running around wagging school, holding parents accountable; and addressing the root causes of offending.

There has been discussion this sittings, and outside of sittings, that the things we are bringing in are coming at the tail end of offending and after people are done. We have been clear that we will address the root causes of offending. There are a few links to that, such as holding parents accountable and youth boot camps; that is what we will be focusing on. We have been clear.

When I was doorknocking, a lot of people were telling me that the Labor candidate for Blain was walking around talking about boot camps four years ago. Well, where are they? Labor had eight years; can anyone point to any youth boot camps they set up? I am not aware of any, but I am proud that this government took a plan to the election that we would establish youth boot camps that will start to turn young lives around before they get trapped in the cycle of offending.

I am proud to bid farewell to a stalwart of a Palmerston institution, Rod Greenwood, aka ‘Greenie’, who is stepping down this year as President of the Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Football Club. Rod became president in December 2018, replacing long-serving president, Greg Hansen, who led the Raiders for around 20 years, taking them from the old ground in Archer with the midges to their current ground in Rosebery. This will mark six years of service to the Raiders from Greenie.

Rod is a veteran and served his country with distinction in the Defence Force. With that background, he brought a strong focus on veterans and service to the Raiders. In the years that I have been involved with the Raiders, I have watched him build. It was always there, but he emphasised the role of the Raiders as a family, community and safe place where the kids of Palmerston could come to train in rugby league, engage in community and learn prosocial skills. I have been constantly impressed by the culture that was built in that club. It encourages good behaviour and strong effort.

My understanding is that Greenie is not going far, as he has committed to staying on as vice president to help the new president, who will be appointed at the AGM. Greenie, thank you for all of your service. I wish you all the best for next season and for Rugbytots.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.