Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

15th Assembly



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Debates and Questions



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Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Photography in Chamber

Madam SPEAKER: For the information of members, I have given permission for two media organisations to be on the floor to take photographs for their stock footage archives. These media outlets have been allowed to do so because they made a specific request; it was not an open invitation. The government and opposition have also been given the opportunity to take some photographs.

Members might like to remove from their desks anything they may not wish to have photographed.

VISITORS
Wagaman Primary School

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

Members: Hear, hear!

WATER AMENDMENT (ABORIGINAL WATER RESERVES) BILL
Serial 21

Mr BURGOYNE (Water Resources): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Water Amendment (Aboriginal Water Reserves) Bill 2025, Serial 21.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

The purpose of the Bill is to amend the *Water Act 1992* to improve the efficiency and administration of the *Water Act* and to ensure regulatory decisions can be made with respect to the Aboriginal water reserve.

The Bill introduces amendments to support the activation of Aboriginal water reserves to provide economic benefit to Aboriginal people and the Northern Territory.

This Northern Territory Government was elected on a clear mandate to rebuild the Territory economy, something that had all but come to a standstill under the previous Labor government. This government is committed to rebuilding the economy through a range of reforms that provide a strong foundation for growth with robust regulatory frameworks, world-class environmental protections and long-term certainty for business investment.

The introduction of legislation into the Legislative Assembly for the Territory Coordinator and the removal of third-party merits review supports this commitment, and so does this Bill.

Water is an enabler for economic development. We use it for agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, mining and onshore gas developments. If we are to grow our Territory then we need to ensure that the water made available for economic benefits is used.

For too long access to the Aboriginal water reserve has been impeded by distractions caused by ambiguous legislation and because the former Labor government was unable to find a solution to a problem of its own creation—a problem created because the former government did not implement its own policy.

This Bill corrects this ambiguity to make water reserved for Aboriginal economic development available for those who are ready to start doing business in the Territory today.

An Aboriginal water reserve is a volume of water set aside for Aboriginal economic benefit. This water is allocated under a water allocation plan to Aboriginal landowners relative to the size of their landholding. The Aboriginal land must be greater than one hectare, and it must have a certain relationship with the water resource being managed under a water allocation plan. How this relationship is described under the current *Water Act* is unclear, and subsequently its interpretation does not align with the underpinning principles of water resource management in the Northern Territory, specifically that water is tied to land.

When Aboriginal water reserves were introduced into the legislative framework in 2019 those amendments created ambiguity and operational challenges. This Bill removes those ambiguities and reduces operational challenges. Specifically, this Bill will do three things.

Firstly, this Bill makes clear the land that is eligible for designation to an Aboriginal water reserve under a water allocation plan. As I previously mentioned, water is tied to land under the *Water Act.* The land must have a certain relationship with the water resource being managed under a water allocation plan to which the Aboriginal water reserve applies. Not only must the land be more than one hectare, if the water allocation plan is managing groundwater then that groundwater must be beneath the land for that land to be designated as land to which an Aboriginal water reserve applies and for the owners of that land to be assigned a share of that reserve in the water allocation plan. This has been the practice for water allocation planning to date. The amendments proposed in this Bill will make that practice clear under law.

Secondly, the Bill creates efficiencies and removes elements of the legislation that have created a distraction to the water allocation planning processes. The current requirement to consult specifically with land councils regarding eligible land before it is designated in the water allocation plan duplicates consultation processes already undertaken as part of the development of those plans. Eligible land for the purpose of Aboriginal water reserves under the *Water Act* includes Aboriginal land under exclusive native title, land declared under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and freehold land owned by registered Aboriginal corporations. Through existing water allocation planning practices all groups are equally consulted with the opportunity to participate in water advisory councils and through public consultation processes. The department has also been making great inroads into increasing Aboriginal participation in these planning processes.

It is the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment that has the skills and capabilities to complete the task of identifying the land of a particular tenure and size and its relationship with the water. The department holds and administers Northern Territory land title information under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and freehold land, and has established relationships to be able to draw on the national datasets for native title land. The department is the expert on land titles in the Northern Territory and is responsible for generating and managing the spatial information that shows our groundwater resources are and where our surface water flows. The department is best-placed to identify eligible land and has existing consultation practices and responsibilities that ensure this information is available to all landowners before a water allocation plan is declared.

Finally, with these amendments we are stepping aside from attempting to prescribe a one-size-fits-all consent process for Aboriginal people to access the Aboriginal water reserve. The amendments proposed under this Bill will allow eligible Aboriginal landowners to determine how and who gives consent for a person to apply for a licence from the reserve.

We are creating this opportunity by removing a requirement to establish regulations that prescribe the class of people who can give consent and the process that must be followed in determining consent. Government does not impose on any other individual, group or company how it goes about deciding to apply for a water extraction licence, and we will not do this for Aboriginal landowners. To enable this autonomy this Bill proposes that the Controller of Water Resources be satisfied that an application for a licence has come from an eligible Aboriginal person or if that eligible person so wishes, someone with whom they have made an agreement.

This government respects Aboriginal decision-making practices and traditions and is removing itself from prescribing a process for consent that already exists within tradition and through existing practices. These amendments will provide the space for Aboriginal landowners to decide and apply their own processes for determining who can apply for a licence. The Controller of Water Resources, the independent statutory decision-maker, in deciding an application for a water extraction licence in relation to an Aboriginal water reserve will need to consider who the applicant is and whether they are an eligible Aboriginal person as specified under the water allocation plan. How the controller satisfies himself of that may vary depending on the land tenure, and I will be encouraging the controller to develop some guidance that explains this.

Ultimately, a decision to grant a water extraction licence rests with the Controller of Water Resources, and they are directed in their decision-making by the *Water Act*. In the case of the Aboriginal water reserve, after considering who has applied for the licence, the controller must consider several other factors that include the relevant water allocation plan, water availability and impact on other water users. It is through this process that the controller considers the impact of taking water.

Applying for a licence does not guarantee a licence will be granted. Equally, consent to apply for a licence from an Aboriginal landowner does not mean a licence will be granted. Once an application is accepted the

assessment process commences. It is through this public process that the impact of taking the water is considered, and it is through this process that all people who may be impacted by the take of water also have an opportunity to make submissions for the controller's consideration in making a water extraction licence decision. These amendments clarify the criteria for granting a water extraction licence with respect to an Aboriginal water reserve.

Ultimately, this Bill makes amendments that will improve the Territory's water resource legislative framework and supports economic development for Aboriginal people and the Northern Territory. There will be some Aboriginal landowners who are ready to reap these benefits now, and there will be some Aboriginal landowners who are not, but these amendments create an environment that facilitates Aboriginal landowners ensuring they can take advantage of available economic benefits when the opportunity arises and when they are ready to do so.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Water Resources): Madam Speaker, I move that the second reading of the Bill be made an order of the day for the first Assembly meeting after 28 days have elapsed.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move an amendment to omit all the words after 'that' and insert 'the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 May 2025'.

The Environment minister spoke about the importance of water and how important it is for people to have a say. The government continues to say that it has met with people. Let us remind the government that meeting with people and organisations does not constitute consultation.

The Northern Territory was leading …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the laughter of the government members, thinking that by meeting with people …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PAECH: … they are consulting with people.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, please pause. The Member for Gwoja will be heard in silence. Please continue.

Mr PAECH: Meeting with organisations and with people does not equal consultation.

The significance of this Bill …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: People will be on a warning if they continue to interject.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The clock has continued to click for about one minute due to the interjections.

Madam SPEAKER: We will adjust that. The Deputy Clerk said that she paused it. It is paused now. I am happy to give the member 20 extra seconds.

Mr PAECH: We have seen in the parliament this morning that there is interest in this important legislation. Water is important to Territorians, and every Territorian should have the opportunity to have a say and put forward a submission to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee on this matter.

On a national level the Territory has been leading the Closing the Gap targets on strategic Aboriginal water reserves, yet the Environment minister will erode that. He wants to water that down, without any consultation.

We have heard how disrespectful the Environment minister is to traditional owners by not consulting them on other legislation. If the government had nothing to hide it would send this Bill to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee to deliberate on it, hold a hearing and invite submissions from the community, including Aboriginal Territorians who will be affected by this legislation.

It is crucial that the voices of Aboriginal Territorians are heard and can be represented in this place. Not allowing them the opportunity to put in a submission about this Bill is shameful. Not allowing organisations that represent Aboriginal interests and their land to have a say is disgraceful. That is what you get with the Environment minister; he does not want to consult and talk, and he does not like scrutiny of his poor performance on the environment.

This Bill is too important not to send it to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee because almost half the Northern Territory is Aboriginal land through the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and native title. You are effectively shutting out a significant portion of Territorians. Aboriginal Territorians make up more than 30% of the Territory's population. This says to them that the government is not willing to hear their voices, concerns or suggestions on how this Bill could be strengthened or amended to be in the best interests of Aboriginal Territorians. The government does not want to hear it. It does not want to afford them the opportunity to have that level of input and to hear where changes can be made. The government is shutting down Aboriginal Territorians.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PAECH: This is an important issue. We can already hear in the Chamber how passionate people are about this. Imagine how interested and passionate all the people outside are about their rights. Water rights is everyone's rights, and everyone deserves the opportunity to have a say about it.

I am sure if these were certain other stakeholders that the government is in bed with there would be public hearings because the government would want those stakeholders to say how great, amazing and deadly the Bill is. However, when it comes to vulnerable people in the Northern Territory this government does not give a damn. It does not want to hear their voices. The government does not want to hear criticism.

Environment minister, this is an opportunity to hear from Aboriginal Territorians about how they could help you make your Bill better. They can help you open and unlock the potential for business, but you do not want to hear it.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I support this amendment.

I urge those on the other side of the Chamber not to let their feelings about Labor get in the way of doing what is right for all Territorians.

When you talk to any traditional owner, any person on country, they always say that water is life and water is country. It is always the number one thing they say when talking about protecting country. Water is a sacred site, be it underground water or surface water. I do not know how any of you will be able to look any countryman in the eye and say that you are doing the right thing by them if you do not let them be involved in this process by sending the Bill to the scrutiny committee.

This is serious—water is serious—and if you truly stand by the laws you are making, you would let the Bill go to the committee to be scrutinised and have those Territorians be involved in this process. Their voices matter. Shutting out their voices is not good enough. I honestly do not know how you will look any of them in the eye. First Nations' voices and the voices of community and remote areas—water is everything. Let them have a say in this and come along on the journey. Put this before the scrutiny committee, please.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I could not help but speak this morning, listening to the righteousness of those opposite. These are the same people—the Member for Gwoja was a senior minister and Attorney-General in a failed Labor government—who scrapped the scrutiny committee.

I find it incredibly offensive to 50 years of the Legislative Assembly when those opposite, as ignorant as they are, can stand in this parliament and say that the parliamentary process is not proper and does not allow for consultation. It is a misleading statement and a farce to say that the normal parliamentary process does not

work. It has supported the Westminster tradition for hundreds of years across dozens of countries in the world. It works ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is a tried and tested system of government, Opposition Leader. It works. We made it even better, so I will not tolerate the garbage from members on the other side for their own political gains because they are too lazy to do their jobs.

It is proper parliamentary process that Bills be tabled in parliament and sit on the table—in this case the Bill will sit on the table for about six weeks—before coming back for debate. In that time every Territorian, every person who does not live in the Territory and every person in the world, for all I care, can look at the Bill and provide their feedback to—wait for it—their elected representatives who are meant to be doing their jobs. If you care so much about this, get out there over the next six weeks and do your job, Member for Nightcliff. You can shake your head at me all you like, but this is the role and responsibility of a member of parliament.

Newsflash, everyone: the Westminster system works; the scrutiny committee is there for an additional process; and, at the end of the day, the people who came into this parliament and scrapped it because they were running and hiding from scrutiny cannot point the finger at the government that brought it back.

Members interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We will not accept the Member for Gwoja's tokenistic amendment …

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, take your seat. Everyone is being rowdy this morning.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The interjections are interfering with hearing the Chief Minister.

Madam SPEAKER: You are correct. I have allowed some latitude; it has been exciting this morning. We will listen to the Chief Minister's contribution in silence.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As I said, we will not accept the Member for Gwoja's tokenistic amendment …

Ms Uibo: Shame!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Opposition Leader is yelling out 'shame' because she believes the parliamentary process does not work. You should not be a member of parliament if you do not believe the parliament works; that is what you are saying. Those opposite said that the process does not work and does not allow for the community to have a voice. In that case you should not be a member of parliament because it fundamentally undermines the integrity of the entire institution. Your argument is rubbish—nonsense.

The process is there for a good reason, so do your job, put it in your newsletter and reach out to your electorate. That is what we will all be doing. We will go to our electorates, seeking people's feedback on it, discussing it as a team and giving speeches in parliament about that feedback. Do you know what happens at the end of all that? We vote on it. That is how we allow the voices of Territorians to be properly and appropriately heard in the parliament. That is the process.

It would be amazing if those opposite did their jobs and came in here and voted on what their communities want, because we most certainly do not see that from those opposite.

I think I have made my point. The hypocrisy from the other side is not lost on everyday Territorians. They are sick and tired of it. They want Labor members to look at themselves in the mirror and reflect on the result that was dished out to them by Territorians because of the way they failed to govern for eight years.

Now there is an opportunity to do things differently. We will not apologise for going against the status quo. We will not be taking leadership lessons from Labor. We will not be following anything that Labor used to do because it did not work. Labor broke the Territory. It put Territorians on their knees. Do you know what we are doing? We are building the Territory back from the ground up; that is our commitment to Territorians, and we will stop at nothing to deliver on that for everyone.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, we see an unhinged Chief Minister responding to a simple amendment put forward by the Member for Gwoja.

The CLP was so proud to announce to everyone the return of the scrutiny committee, and the Labor opposition welcomed it.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Of course you did, from opposition.

Ms UIBO: Yes, from opposition. It is no secret that Labor lost the election; we all know that.

The Chief Minister outlined the Westminster system processes. Public scrutiny of what government does is important. We agree. We are in opposition and understand the importance of that. We heard from the Member for Nightcliff, a Greens member, about its importance. We know that Territorians want to have a say, but, more importantly, they want their voices heard in regard to legislation which—guess what—affects all Territorians, not only the 17 government members, four opposition members and four crossbenchers in this parliament.

We respect and welcome the scrutiny committee, but what we are seeing from the CLP government is a horrible, bad pattern of behaviour, whereby CLP members cherrypick what they decide as a government. They have the numbers; everything they put forward will pass. We are not naive; we know how the system works. However, they are cherrypicking what they can be publicly scrutinised on. That is the most dismal display of respect when it comes to the democracy of the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister outlined the Westminster system—we are all here because of it. We are here to adhere to the processes the government has put in place with the new sessional orders. Again, we see the picking and choosing of which legislation is scrutinised. How crazy is that!

The government has the numbers. We know from a bad history that the CLP does not even listen to its own government-dominated committees. The government will do what it wants to do, but let us pretend for a minute that the CLP government wants to be a good government and the CLP members want to listen to the people of the Northern Territory, not just the 17 electorates they represent. Guess what? The Northern Territory Government governs for the whole of the Northern Territory, so let us remind the CLP of that.

Today the minister talked about—but provided not a sliver of evidence of talking to and understanding the people who are directly affected—Aboriginal Territorians, who have the rights for Aboriginal strategic water reserves. This was groundbreaking legislation and policy. Other jurisdictions looked to the Northern Territory and the complex work—it was not simple—led here to provide strategic water reserves. The Closing the Gap Refresh targets include inland water. With this legislation the minister—who you would hope is a responsible minister—neither has shown a sense of responsibility by listening to the people doing the work in the Northern Territory nor had regard for national expectations about water reserves and inland water targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

That is why the Member for Gwoja, on behalf of the Labor opposition, moved this simple amendment to send this important legislation, which will resonate across the Territory, to the committee to allow anyone and everyone who wants input to scrutinise it and say that they support the Bill or not, or—blow me down—can maybe improve it. The CLP does not want to act in ways that show it is a credible and responsible government that will listen to Territorians.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support the Bill and oppose the Member for Gwoja's amendment.

When those opposite were in government they failed Indigenous Territorians. Domestic violence increased by 82% …

Ms Uibo: What are you doing now? You are failing Territorians because you do not want to listen.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, for the most part your contribution was heard in silence. Please give the same respect to the Member for Blain.

Mr KERLE: Domestic violence under the watch of the previous Labor government increased …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. This is a motion to send the Bill to a scrutiny committee. It is about Aboriginal strategic water reserves …

A member interjecting.

Mr PAECH: Do not laugh and disrespect Aboriginal people, Member for Nelson—Goyder.

Madam SPEAKER: Please sit down.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: That is bordering on disorderly. Member for Gwoja, we will take a deep breath and we will listen to each other respectfully. The Member for Blain has just started his speech; he is 29 seconds into it. Please listen to what he has to say.

Mr KERLE: I pick up the Opposition Leader's interjection alleging a glass jaw. From the number of interjections this morning I think it is obvious who has the glass jaw.

Ms Uibo: Not to you—to this one here sticking his tongue out like a baby.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, you are on a warning.

Mr KERLE: As I was saying, under the watch of the previous Labor government domestic violence increased by 82%.

When I visit bush communities the number one thing that elders talk to me about is bringing back their local community councils. They still feel disempowered by the actions of the previous Labor government that took away their local community councils. Luckily, we have this government, and the Member for Barkly is in charge of bringing back those community councils and giving back local determination to the people in community.

The second thing elders talk about is housing. Again, the Member for Barkly will sort that out.

The third thing they talk about is economic development on country. Water is a key part of that. I support this Bill that the Member for Braitling has brought in and I oppose the Member for Gwoja's amendment because Indigenous Territorians need economic development on country, and this is a key part of delivering that.

The previous government created confusion with its legislation, which made it difficult to do business under this regime.

I commend this Bill.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I will speak to the process, not the substance of what we are discussing. This is coming to a head repeatedly, with discussions regarding scrutiny and what should and should not be sent to a scrutiny committee.

We are playing fast and loose with the Westminster system and what we should and should not do. The only part that is embedded in our process is that we provide the Bill and the time for people to consider the Bill and consult widely in the community in whatever form they determine consultation to be. Twenty-eight days have been provided. This is not a Bill on urgency, so there is ample opportunity for everyone in this House to solicit feedback from people in the wider community.

It is important to note that a scrutiny committee is not a substitute for this legislature; it is an additional mechanism that did not exist under the original Westminster system provisions. This is foreshadowing debate to some extent—not that anyone knows—as later this evening I will speak about the Scrutiny of Legislation Conference that members of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee attended. We learnt a lot at that conference, and I will table documents when I speak about it later.

I point out that scrutiny committees do not function the same way everywhere. They are not all functioning as ours does, but at least we have a scrutiny committee. The reality is that we have gone from having nothing to having something.

If the opposition and crossbench are dissatisfied with the government's prerogative to choose when to send things to the scrutiny committee, that is a subject they should take up separately. They should challenge the sessional orders, mount a campaign and seek to change the terms on which the scrutiny committee operates, but at this time we have sessional orders and a process. We must respect that process. I am a believer in process in this regard. This government at least had the decency to put a scrutiny committee back in place.

My personal position—I am happy to declare it—is that I would prefer the scrutiny committee to address things as a de facto standard, as is the case in many other jurisdictions, but if that were to be the case we would need a legislature with a lot more resources than we have at the moment. I do not want our scrutiny committee to just become a pointless forum for protest. That is essentially what it will be if we continue down this track.

I implore all members of the Assembly to think carefully about how best we can utilise the mechanisms at our disposal. I understand the intention behind the amendment. I do not disagree with the intention, which is to provide people in the community an opportunity and a voice to speak on an important Bill. I will consult widely with my community about the Bill, and I encourage you all to do the same and bring back your collated data to the Chamber in six weeks' time so that we can systematically go through it.

The question of whether you are heard to your satisfaction is a matter of our democratic process. I am not rejoicing in the democratic system we have here; it is essentially a winner-takes-all system. However, the reality is that the people of the Northern Territory, in the most recent election, elected a government of 17 of us. The 17 of us are collectively doing the best we can to progress the Northern Territory socially and economically in a balanced way. Not everything we do will be to your liking or of your choosing, but it will ultimately be a matter for the people to decide whether they are satisfied with our direction and governance.

I am all for having a discussion about our processes, how our committee system works, how our motions work and, frankly, the standard of conduct in this place, which I still generally find is pretty disgusting. It is up to all of us collectively to do something about that.

This amendment will not pass. Rather than bemoaning it not passing or politicising the Bill not being sent to a scrutiny committee, concentrate on speaking for the people you represent, bringing those voices to the Chamber and fighting your corner in that regard. We will do the same.

I believe the intention behind the Bill is sincere. I do not believe that the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment is out to nefariously destroy …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, your time has expired.

It is also past 10.30 am, so I ask the photographers to leave the Chamber, please.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I also support this amendment.

As a member of the scrutiny committee, our job is not just to see what people like or do not like. It is not just to talk to constituents, which of course we will all be doing. We will bring back to this House what our constituents think, and I hope it will be heard by the Chamber. However, the job of the scrutiny committee is much more than that; it is to consider whether a Bill referred to it has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, including a list of items, many of which are significant and relevant to this Bill. We have a job; we are here to help the parliament, not to stand in the way of things.

I rejoice that the scrutiny committee came back. It enhances our system. I agree with the Member for Fong Lim that the baseline, as it is in many other jurisdictions, should be that by default Bills go to the scrutiny committee. We would need far more resources to do that well. However, in a parliament as unbalanced as this when a Bill is of great importance and clearly of great significance to people, including in this Chamber, we should not have to argue that we can do more work to make sure that Bill is as good as it can be for the whole Northern Territory. That should be the default.

I strongly support this amendment. We know not every Bill can go to the scrutiny committee. This Bill has a significant impact on the rights and liberties of individuals. Part of the scrutiny committee terms of reference is that we must make sure that Bills have sufficient regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition, and this Bill goes directly to that. This amendment will enable the Bill to be better. It will enable all of us in this parliament to do our job better.

Mr BURGOYNE (Water Resources): Madam Speaker, it is important to look at what has been said regarding the amendment and why it should be adopted. I pick up on many things that members said.

The NT has nation-leading legislation as it relates to water allocation and the Aboriginal water reserve. Those opposite put in place many of those laws, which we are now speaking about. The problem with those laws is that there is 60 gigalitres—this is important for those opposite to understand—in the Aboriginal water reserve allocated for Aboriginal people that cannot be utilised now or activated due to that failed legislation previously.

This Bill seeks to amend that legislation, which those opposite proudly speak about, so that the Aboriginal water reserve can be activated for Aboriginal people. It is important we understand that.

Water is life. Water is important in the Northern Territory, and it is an economic enabler. We are seeking to activate that resource for Aboriginal people.

People will be able to have a say. What was overlooked by many members is that Aboriginal people are a part of the water allocation plans and processes before we even get to having an Aboriginal water reserve. There is a huge amount of work—processes that can last for years—before we get to the stage when we have an Aboriginal water reserve for people to access and utilise however they see fit.

There will be a lot of conversations over the next month regarding this legislation. Today we are seeking to strengthen the legislation to ensure that everyone—Aboriginal people—can access that water reserve should they see fit. They can benefit themselves and their communities through this enabling resource and get on with doing what they see fit to make their communities a better place to live.

We do not accept the amendment.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 17
J Davis	Ms Boothby
Mr Guyula	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Ms Cahill
Mr Paech	Mrs Carlson
Ms Uibo	Mr Charls
Mr Young	Mr Edgington
	Mrs Finocchiaro
	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

NORTHERN TERRITORY ABORIGINAL SACRED SITES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 23

Mr BURGOYNE (Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, Serial 23.

I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

One of the first Acts passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory following self-government in 1978 was the *Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1978*. In the mid-1980s that Act was the subject of a significant review, resulting in the current version of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*.

The Act established the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and provides the framework for the registration and protection of sacred sites in the Northern Territory. The purpose of the Act is reflected in its long title, which states the Act's intended purpose is:

> *… to effect a practical balance between the recognized need to preserve and enhance Aboriginal cultural tradition in relation to certain land in the Territory and the aspirations of the Aboriginal and all other peoples of the Territory for their economic, cultural and social advancement …*

Since the Act commenced operation there have been considerable economic, political and social developments in the Northern Territory.

There are three main amendments addressed in this Bill.

Firstly, the Bill formalises the composition of the members of the authority. The majority of the authority's members—10 out of 12—are Aboriginal members, nominated by the land councils to ensure strong representation of traditional owners.

It has been longstanding practice that the two remaining members are nominated by the minister. The minister's ability to nominate two members provides a mechanism to introduce perspectives that reflect broader policy objectives, development, heritage, and governance considerations. This balance is essential to ensure that decisions made by the authority take into account a wider range of interests, including economic and social factors.

Accordingly, section 6 is updated by categorising the authority members into two groups: Aboriginal members nominated by the land councils; and members nominated by the minister.

The revised section 7(3) allows the Administrator to terminate the appointment of an Aboriginal member on limited grounds of incompetence or misbehaviour.

Additionally, sections 7(3A) and 7(3B) are inserted to enable the minister at his or her discretion to recommend in writing to the Administrator for the termination of a member who was appointed on the minister's nomination. These provisions allow for broader removal powers which reflect that such persons are the minister's own nominees. Once the minister makes this recommendation, the Administrator may remove the member from their position.

The power to terminate the minister's nominated members allows for action at the minister's discretion, including but not limited to where a member is not performing effectively, has a conflict of interest or is acting contrary to the best interests of the authority. This will ensure that the authority remains functional, credible and responsive to evolving policy and community needs.

The second key amendment of the Bill is to improve process efficiencies in the transferability of an authority certificate and minimise administrative burden on proponents and the authority by allowing additional parties to be recorded on an existing authority certificate.

Currently, the Act does not provide a mechanism for transferring an authority certificate from one proponent to another. Authority certificates are limited to the original applicant for the specific works identified in the certificate. For example, if a proponent applies for an authority certificate during the early stages of a development, the application will be lodged under their entity name. However, once the authority certificate is issued it cannot be used by another party if the development is later sold to a new developer. As a result the new proponent must submit a fresh application for an authority certificate, even if the proposed works remain unchanged. This requires the authority to repeat the approval process, including further negotiations with custodians.

The lack of transferability creates several challenges. It leads to unnecessary duplication of consultation and approval processes, increasing administrative burdens for both proponents and the authority.

The new section 24A establishes a mechanism for transferring an authority certificate where prior consultations with custodians have already been conducted for the same area of land where an authority certificate has previously been issued. This is a process whereby a person, known as the transferee, with the consent of the holder of an existing authority certificate may apply to the authority for the existing authority certificate to be transferred to the transferee.

The application must be in the form approved by the authority and include the required fee. After receiving the application the authority must issue a new authority certificate to the transferee. The new authority certificate must cover the same land and works or use of the land as the existing authority certificate and have the same conditions. When the new authority certificate is issued the existing authority certificate is automatically cancelled. It should be noted that these transfers are administrative in nature only.

Previous considerations undertaken by the authority or the minister prior to the issuance of the existing authority certificate would have considered wishes of Aboriginal people relating to the extent to which the sacred site should be protected and taken them into account as required by section 42 of the Act. With these transfers there will be no changes to the original protections, limitations or controls put on the land to protect the sacred site.

Noting the Territory is a creation of the Commonwealth Parliament, the Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* operates to require that laws concerning sacred sites in the Northern Territory relevantly must provide a mechanism by which the wishes of Aboriginal people—properly interpreted as the relevant custodians—are taken into account in determining the extent to which those sites are protected. This new provision is consistent with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, as it does not seek to change any of the protections initially imposed which would have considered the wishes of the relevant custodians regarding the extent to which sacred sites are protected. Any conditions that were imposed at the time will carry over to the new party to which an authority certificate is subsequently transferred, ensuring the continuing protection.

In long-term large-scale development projects it is common for multiple entities to undertake work over different stages of the project. Under the current Act each entity must apply for its own authority certificate, even if the proposed works and land area remain unchanged.

The new section 24B introduces a mechanism allowing the holder of an existing authority certificate to apply for additional individuals or groups to be listed as recorded parties. These recorded parties could include specific individuals or broader groups such as those working on or making use of the land covered by the authority certificate.

An application to add recorded parties must be submitted in the form approved by the authority and accompanied by the required fee. Upon receiving the application the authority must issue a new authority certificate that includes the additional recorded parties. The new authority certificate must cover the same land and works or use of the land as the original authority certificate and be subject to the same conditions. This includes, importantly, any conditions that were originally imposed, taking into account the wishes of the relevant custodians about the extent to which the sites be protected.

Once issued the new authority certificate automatically replaces and cancels the existing one. Protections will be provided from prosecution for conduct that may have occurred under the previous certificate.

This process streamlines regulatory requirements for long-term projects involving multiple entities, reducing duplication and ensuring continuity while maintaining the integrity of the authority's oversight.

Another key amendment in this Bill is the introduction of Part IVA, which establishes a framework for the authority to enter into enforceable undertakings in relation to an alleged contravention of the Act or the terms or conditions of an authority certificate. The provisions are modelled on Part VA, Division 2 of the *Petroleum Act 1984*.

Enforceable undertakings provide an alternative to criminal or civil enforcement, with the aim of achieving better compliance outcomes while reducing the burden of formal legal proceedings. These undertakings are common in many modern environmental and development legislative regimes. They provide a useful tool for the authority to continue to ensure rigorous protections of sacred sites in the Northern Territory and ensure they have increased powers to ensure remediation occurs where there are any issues.

An enforceable undertaking is a binding commitment made by a person in relation to an alleged contravention. It allows the authority to set out specific terms and conditions to ensure compliance with the Act or a term or condition of an authority certificate, which may include a requirement for public notice of the breach and any remedial actions undertaken. To ensure accountability these undertakings must include clear timeframes for compliance and a method for monitoring progress.

Importantly, negotiations surrounding an undertaking do not compromise the legal rights of any party, and if discussions fail neither party can use what was said during negotiations against the other in future proceedings.

Before accepting an undertaking the authority must consider a range of factors, including the seriousness of the alleged breach, the maximum penalty that could apply, the public interest and the potential benefits of resolving the matter through this alternative mechanism.

To ensure transparency, undertakings must be in writing, signed and dated by both parties and published along with the reasons for acceptance.

To uphold the integrity of the enforcement process the Bill also introduces mechanisms to ensure compliance with enforceable undertakings. If a party fails to comply the authority may seek enforcement through the Supreme Court. The court will have the power to impose penalties, recover costs incurred by the authority, order compensation for affected parties or revoke the undertaking entirely. Additionally, if a person does not comply with an enforcement order the authority may take necessary steps to carry out the required actions and recover associated costs.

The Bill also provides flexibility by allowing an enforceable undertaking to be modified or withdrawn with the authority's consent. In the interest of transparency any variation or withdrawal of an undertaking must be publicly disclosed, along with the reasons for the decision.

Further, to incentivise compliance a person who enters into an enforceable undertaking cannot be subject to criminal proceedings for the alleged contravention while the undertaking remains in effect or after it has been fully discharged. However, if an undertaking is breached legal proceedings may resume. Criminal prosecution will not be pursued against the person who enters into an enforceable undertaking where the authority is satisfied that all requirements of the undertaking have been met.

This reform enhances regulatory compliance while ensuring a fair, efficient and effective resolution of breaches. It provides a more constructive approach to enforcement, reducing unnecessary litigation while maintaining the integrity of the regulatory framework.

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

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

VISITORS
Wagaman Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from Wagaman Primary School accompanied by their teachers. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee for report by 7 May 2025.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, it is important that this legislation is referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, as the previous Aboriginal strategic water reserves legislation should have been.

Sacred sites in the Northern Territory are important to many Territorians. We should be proud of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*. The Northern Territory is the gold star in the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites in Australia. Other Australian jurisdictions look to the Northern Territory for that best practice. Anything done to this legislation should strengthen it, not water it down.

It is equally important that every Aboriginal Territorian has the opportunity to participate in the hearings and public deliberations and to put in submissions to the committee. It is important that the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority can work alongside government agencies in providing a public hearing so that people can hear firsthand what the changes are and how they would work in a practical sense.

We have heard from the Territory's land councils that they are concerned they were excluded from the CLP government's preliminary development of the Bill. We have heard that Aboriginal Territorians are upset with this government, saying that the government is treating them like little kids. Aboriginal people outside this Chamber said, 'The government met with us, but would not tell us what the changes were. They told us to trust them but gave no information.' The government said that it was a form of consultation. People have every right to be concerned.

This legislative scrutiny process will provide people the opportunity to have a say and give Minister Burgoyne the opportunity to consider any amendments put forward by Aboriginal Territorians and those who represent Aboriginal lands across the Northern Territory. I look forward to working with members of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee to talk about and work through this important issue.

I call out to all Aboriginal Territorians to work with our fellow countrymen to ensure we have good representation, because the government needs to hear from you. Not one member of the government is an Aboriginal person, which is why the government needs to take this Bill to the committee to hear from Aboriginal people about whether the Bill needs to be strengthened and what their concerns are. They might agree with some aspects of the Bill. It is important that this process happens.

Anything we are doing should strengthen the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and the sacred sites legislation. We should be increasing penalties, not decreasing them. We should be coming down hard on those who do the wrong thing and taking them to court, not letting them off. We should be working with landholders to ensure that the appropriate clearance certification is best practice.

A volume of reform was done last year with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and the four land councils to contemporise and strengthen that. That is worth considering. I very much look forward to working with the other committee members—the Independent Member for Johnston and the three CLP members—on this important Bill.

I think these are the appropriate steps to be taken. I look forward to working through deliberations, public briefings, hearings and submissions.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL POLICY STATEMENT
Territory's Energy Future

Mr MALEY (Mining and Energy): Madam Speaker, I present a ministerial policy statement on the Territory's energy future. I address the House on the absolute mess our power system is in, left in a shambles by the former Labor government, and I outline the Finocchiaro CLP government's plan to secure our energy future.

The Northern Territory is a place of extreme climes, with very hot days in some areas and very cold nights in others. As a result, Territorians rely far more on cooling and heating than people in other parts of Australia, and the typical Territory family consumes more electricity than other Australian households.

This ministerial statement seeks to make clear to Territorians the position Labor left the Territory in, and steps through the actions we are taking to provide energy security, reliability and, most importantly, affordability.

Several entities are responsible for the operation and regulation of the Territory's electricity system and market, including three government-owned corporations. Territory Generation is the main generator of electricity in our network; it makes the power. Power and Water Corporation is the main network provider, responsible for electricity transmission infrastructure and delivery of energy to remote communities; it gets the power to your home or business. Jacana Energy is the Territory's main energy retailer, responsible for buying electricity wholesale and selling to customers alongside private retailers; it sends you the bills.

Combined, the government's electricity entities hold $1.7bn in debt, representing 20% of total debt on the NT's balance sheet. Territorians pay interest on this debt, meaning there is less money to spend on improving Territorians' lives. Collectively, these entities employ 1,236 people, who are passionate Territorians committed to providing essential services to communities throughout the Northern Territory. They too have been let down by Labor's mismanagement.

The Northern Territory Government supports affordable access to electricity for all Territorians, irrespective of where they live. We do this through a uniform tariff price policy, meaning you pay the same per kilowatt hour for electricity use regardless of where you live or work in the Territory. The government sets the price for approximately 76,000 households and 13,000 small to medium-sized businesses so that Territorians pay less for electricity than it costs to deliver it. The government partially subsidises Territorians' electricity bills.

The difference between the real cost of electricity and the price Territorians pay is called the community service obligation (CSO). The CSO subsidises electricity prices for Territorians by 11.5c per kilowatt hour. If the Northern Territory Government did not do this Territorians would pay the highest power prices in the nation. This means the Territory government pays approximately $1,200 per household and $2,200 per small business a year on top of what Territorians pay. Of course, all Territory government money is Territorians' money raised through taxes.

In this financial year the total subsidy to power prices is $134.6m. This has grown by more than $37m over four years, a 38% increase, because Labor failed the electricity system and as a result condemned Territorians to pay more for power, either directly on their bill or through taxpayers' debt.

Labor failed the electricity system in three key areas: not having a backup plan for the lack of gas; sitting on its hands as rooftop solar created grid instability; and failing to invest in new equipment, forcing Territorians to rely on old generators that are at end of life. I will go into greater detail on those three areas.

Labor failed to explain to Territorians that the Blacktip offshore gas field, which is meant to provide most of the gas used for electricity generation, has been failing since 2021. Blacktip has not been producing enough gas to keep the lights on. Labor failed to have a plan in place to deal with the shortfall and its onshore gas moratorium meant years of delay for alternative energy sources.

Labor purchased expensive export gas at exorbitant spot prices. Things were so bad that Labor resorted to filling the old diesel tanks at Channel Island as a backup. The Labor government was eager to spurn its green credentials, filling tanks with diesel ready to burn—just to keep the lights on. Labor stands condemned for failing to do the work and relying on expensive spot gas for the last four years at a cost of $43m to taxpayers in 2023–24 alone and resorting to diesel to keep the lights on in Darwin. A cheaper and more reliable gas supply such as that from Beetaloo would have significantly reduced the cost of electricity for Territorians.

On top of what is a pricing and reliability mess, Labor also failed to manage the integration of renewables into our electricity system, resulting in surges and blackouts. Again, it did not do the work.

Under Labor large-scale solar farms were stopped from connecting to the grid for years, because their connection would have made the grid so unstable it would lead to surges and household blackouts. As of last year many of these large-scale solar farms were limited to 25% to 75% output or were not dispatching power. This has been slowly increasing this year as important grid stability comes online. Think about the waste—financial and material—of these solar panels rusting in the fields which are unable to provide renewable power for Territorians, let alone the message this sends to business about certainty and confidence. It has been a disaster.

Labor not only mismanaged large-scale solar but also failed to take the necessary action to accommodate the rapid build-up of household solar in a way that maintained system reliability and affordability. This was despite clear advice from experts and regulators on what needed to be done.

Labor talked a great game about pushing its uncosted and unachievable 50% renewable energy by 2030 target. Like so many others things, Labor's actions never matched its words. As far back as 2017, in the early years of the Gunner Labor government, Territory Generation advised that the 50% renewables by 2030 target would not be reached without significant capital expenditure, and even then the grid would be less stable. That is code for more residential blackouts and big users being told to limit their power usage.

Do you know what Labor did when it was faced with that advice? It stacked the board of Territory Generation, which provided that advice, and installed a compliant senior Labor staffer who would not provide such unhelpful advice to Labor ministers moving forward.

In 2019, when large blackouts occurred in Alice Springs after repeated warnings from the Utilities Commission in 2017 about the lengthy list of problems and the failure to manage integration of solar, Labor sacked the CEs of Territory Generation and Power and Water.

In 2019 the Grattan Institute reminded the Labor government that the renewable energy target was achievable provided the right stabilising technologies were deployed and supported by effective management systems. What did it do? There was classic head-in-the-sand policy from Labor when it came to power.

That is how the Territory ended up in this position. Despite Labor growing public debt by more than $1bn each year it was in office, it failed to make the necessary investment required in our electricity system to accommodate renewables. In short, Labor failed to ensure that electricity would be reliable and affordable for every Territorian.

This brings me to the third area of failure. Despite having $11bn of debt, the Territory has equipment that is old and reaching end of life. The electricity network, particularly the Darwin–Katherine grid, is struggling with the volume of power generated by household solar. This is because the Territory must run its big, inefficient generators all the time, no matter how much solar is being added to the grid. The generators must keep

spinning so that they can quickly take the place of household solar as power fluctuates when clouds interrupt the solar generation system.

The effect is a costly, inefficient, unstable system resulting in potential blackouts. This is not a new or unique problem; electricity grids the world over have grappled with and had to adapt to the challenge of increasing solar penetration to varying degrees of cost and success.

The real tragedy in Labor's failing was that the Territory had the opportunity to learn from others who went through these challenges before us. The relatively high proportion of tenants in our large urban centres, in part from our historically transient workforce, and the large footprint of government and community housing in our remote and regional communities meant that rooftop solar uptake in the Northern Territory significantly lagged behind the rest of the nation and similar international competitors for a decade. What did Labor do with the extra time it had to plan and prepare? Nothing.

Labor neglected the maintenance and upkeep of our critical energy infrastructure for years, and it failed to plan for the change in household production and consumption trends. These failings would have a real-world impact beyond the higher cost of electricity for Territorians. The Utilities Commission reported that Katherine endured more than 500 minutes—eight hours—without power in the last financial year, and network performance continues to go down. This means more blackouts. In summary, we have high-cost electricity paid for by householders and taxpayers that is less reliable.

It was important for our new government to outline the failures we have inherited which if left unchecked would spell disaster for everyday Territorians, our economy and our lifestyle. It is equally important that we outline the action the Finocchiaro CLP government is taking to restore certainty and security to our electricity generation and supply.

In 2018–19 the Northern Territory Electricity Outlook Report by the Utilities Commission highlighted that achieving Labor's 50% renewable energy by 2030 target would require major investment and diverse technologies to maintain reliability. Estimates now suggest up to $5bn would be required to achieve Labor's 50% renewable energy by 2030 target. That equates to $56,000 for each of Jacana's 88,800 household customers. That would need to be either put on the bill or absorbed by an increase in the community service obligation, which is code for tax. That was coming under Labor and it did not want you to know about that.

Instead of penalising Territorians for Labor's mess our government is putting Territorians first. We have formally advised government-owned corporations to stop advancing their 50% renewables by 2030 target capital expenditure and, instead, plan their future spending on achieving the renewable and traditional mix of energy that delivers the lowest-cost electricity to Territorians. Put simply, we are cancelling Labor's failed 50% renewables by 2030 target that was making power prices unaffordable and power less reliable. In addition, we will reform the electricity market to drive further efficiencies to limit cost increases.

Territory households should not have to pay for Labor's failures and mismanagement of our electricity system. Territorians need certainty and security in power prices, which is why the Finocchiaro CLP government has taken the responsible step to cap the electricity pricing order at 3% this year. NT Treasury forecasts that CPI will continue between 2% and 3% over coming years. The Northern Territory Government previously announced its public sector wage policy of a responsible 3%. Today's announcement means the cost Territory households will pay for power in line with inflation and public sector wage growth.

Today is the start, not the end, of an important honest conversation with Territorians. How we will deal with the challenges we have inherited from Labor in the electricity network and the gas industry specifically means we need to consider further reform, and our government is not shying away from getting the work done.

Work is underway on what the structure of the electricity market should look like moving forward to increase transparency, ensure reliability and put downward pressure on cost growth. Work is also underway to look at what legislative and network settings may be needed to shape unregulated solar input into our grid to ensure we can keep the lights on.

It is too early to outline further plans, but let me be clear: unlike those opposite we will be honest and up-front with Territorians when reform is necessary, and engage them in the debate. It must be stressed that although the challenges are very real, we will not sell our energy regulators, networks or retailers. Our first and last position is that householders, regardless of whether they have invested in solar, should not be put in a worse position as a result of Labor's failures.

Ensuring a Territory-first lens is run over all our future gas agreements and activity is another clear point of difference between this government and those opposite.

It is shameful what we have uncovered in the last seven months and which Labor never wanted Territorians to know.

I move that the statement be noted.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, there are two things in the Deputy Chief Minister's statement that are true. First, the irresponsible scrapping of the Northern Territory's renewable targets is now official. Second, the CLP is putting up Territorians' power prices, which we expected all along, even prior to the election. The rest of the statement is utter nonsense, but what else would we expect from the Member for Nelson?

Make no mistake: the CLP government is scrapping the renewables target not because it cannot meet it but because it wants to scrap it. The CLP does not want to do the hard work that has been laid out before it, and CLP members certainly do not want to listen to the many thousands of Territorians who expect the Territory government to take on that workload and work hard in the renewables space to have a great balance of energy and efficiency in supplying power for Territorians and growing the Territory economy.

I give a big thank you to the many people who work in the government-owned corporations. Thank you to the people working in Power and Water, from the linesmen to the executive leadership and beyond. PWC ensures that Territorians have access to essential services. The people at Power and Water clear lines when there are big weather events, like we have seen in the past couple of months with this 'almost Wet Season', and in times of severe weather. Thank you to the hard workers of Jacana Energy. Great efficient work is led by their executive to ensure that the Jacana customer service experience is improved year on year and is of the highest quality. I give a huge shout-out to Territory Generation (TGen), our energy provider of last resort which does great work across the Northern Territory.

I thought it was an extremely low blow from the Deputy Chief Minister to verbal the Chair of TGen, who is a highly regarded, competent and well-placed person to do the job. He was a bit too shy to say it in parliament, but he put it in his written statement.

Mr Dennis Bree is a civil engineer with decades and decades of experience. Mr Bree was involved in the recovery of Cyclone Tracy in Darwin when, I believe, the Deputy Chief Minister was about four years old. Mr Bree was the Executive Director of Power and Water, and the CEO of the department of Business. He is known across the Territory, and highly regarded by many professionals and businesses, regardless of their political colour. Mr Bree is a professional with high integrity and an extremely high level of experience in engineering.

I hope that the Deputy Chief Minister is not blinded by his political party colours and can see that we have great people in the Territory who do their best regardless of who is in government, and are professional in every step of their career. They go beyond politics to represent the Territory's best interests in the professions they embarked on. We hope the CLP government and whoever is in it—whoever the leader is at the time—will pay homage to that and recognise the great work that Territorians do, regardless of political values.

The Territory Labor government made massive inroads on the energy target. The Territory was on track to achieve it.

We are seeing the CLP government remove any mechanism or measure of accountability, and now, unfortunately, through the energy and renewables sector.

To ensure energy stability and affordability hard work must be laid. It is the right thing to do for Territorians now and into the future. It is nothing short of a disgrace that the CLP members are turning their backs on the energy target. It is abundantly clear they are doing it at Peter Dutton's bidding. He has made unpopular announcements, but the CLP will blindly support and follow him into the federal election. The CLP is taking this stance to try to support Peter Dutton—all the way from little NT. It is short-sighted, just for the federal election, as opposed to looking at the bigger picture and the long, hard road that needs to be followed to ensure that Territorians have diverse energy sources. It is appalling that the CLP is so blind because of politics.

Territorians already think that this government is being less open, accountable and transparent. These are the actions of a government that does not have Territorians' best interests at heart. The CLP government is

taking its marching orders from its political masters in Canberra and not thinking about the Territorians it represents.

Securing our energy future should be a critical priority of any Northern Territory Government. Our Labor team worked hard to achieve a secure energy future, which is a complex matter. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to be the Renewables and Energy minister and the Essential Services minister for a time. I learnt so much because we have such skills and quality in the Northern Territory when it comes to having a vision for energy security and looking at diversifying the energy sector. I take my hat off to all those who work in the energy sector, those who have provided proposals and the proponents who work to make sure that energy is secured for the Northern Territory, Australia and the international market and that there are jobs.

There are opportunities for Territorians to work in the energy sector, which will grow the Territory's economy. It was a disgrace to hear this statement from the Deputy Chief Minister on behalf of the CLP government. Other jurisdictions face significant challenges, and they do not have the same level of resources we have to grow the energy sector and capitalise on the Australian energy market. We want to not only ensure that there is reliable and affordable energy supply for households and industries in the Territory but also grow the Territory's economy.

This is a big concern across the country. I do not know whether the CLP members are sitting there with their eyes and ears closed, but there is a national conversation about energy security. The Deputy Chief Minister's announcement today was bizarre; it had no vision and no understanding. The government has a lack of credibility in energy and renewables.

Thanks to the previous Labor government's strong decisions and policy settings, we have the right ingredients to secure the energy supply for the Territory through a mix of gas and renewables. We can leverage that to attract private market investment and grow the Territory's economy.

In the first instance our world-class onshore and offshore gas resources will ensure that we meet demand for cleaner, more affordable transition fuel sources. The impact it will have internationally and nationally is exciting, but it should not be the only energy source that we rely on to keep the lights on and power costs down.

While the rest of the world is moving to sustainable, affordable renewables the CLP government is putting all its eggs in one basket; it is putting all the money into gas, gas, gas only. We know from the national conversation and industry experts that energy supply needs to be diversified, but the CLP government is being naive. Today's announcement from the CLP government is beyond irresponsible. Underneath all the rhetoric and mistruths that have been perpetuated it is clear that the CLP government has no interest in the development of renewable energy solutions and new technology because it will take hard work, and the CLP is not up to it.

The Territory Labor government had two clear plans: one for gas and the other for renewables, and they went hand in hand. Listen to the department experts who brief you, Deputy Chief Minister; you will probably learn a thing or two if you do not talk over them and ramble away. Reliable, affordable and cleaner energy was the key focus of our government's Gas Plan, which outlined a clear path to economic growth, energy security and environmental sustainability by 2030. What that plan does—or did, now it is being scrapped—is ensure that the Territory not only is well placed to capitalise on our resource strengths to create jobs and local business opportunities but also can continue to keep down energy costs.

The Deputy Chief Minister spoke about Blacktip. Apparently it is the first he has heard of the issues in supply chains and the challenges with those wells. Where has he been for the past four-and-a-half years? He has not been paying attention, doing his job as a member of parliament or listening to the key issues in the energy sector that affect Territorians and our market. Crazy! This is old news. The previous Labor government worked on this and managed it. The work was challenging and complex, but it was done to ensure the lights were kept on for Territorians through a difficult and stressful time.

The Deputy Chief Minister claimed that the former Labor government did not tell anyone about this. That is nonsense. He is the only one who did not bother to keep up. He should be ashamed for announcing how ignorant he has been on this topic. If the Deputy Chief Minister is so interested in transparency, perhaps he can update Territorians on where his CLP government is at with this matter.

While dealing with that unforeseen gas supply issue, the former Labor government got on with securing alternative gas supplies to keep the lights on and the power costs down for Territorians well into the future. In the first half of 2024 the former Labor government signed three energy security arrangements with gas-producing companies—Tamboran Resources, Empire Energy and Central Petroleum.

The partnership with Tamboran will provide competitively priced gas to Territory power generators for nine years from 2026, with an option to extend. The deal with Central Petroleum from the Mereenie and Palm Valley fields will secure local gas supplies over a six-year period. Empire Energy is expecting first gas from its Carpentaria pilot project early next year, once all the approvals are in. I had the pleasure of meeting with representatives from Empire last week, and they are excited about the progress.

Empire Energy is pleased that its first gas will be given to Territorians, providing us with competitively priced gas until 2035. This Northern Territory gas supplied to Territorians will ensure a secure and affordable energy supply for many years. This was negotiated and signed off by the former Labor government.

It is one thing to see commercial success from our precious natural resources, but we see what happens when we do not reserve resources for our own use in the first instance. We can learn from that. This is why our former Labor government made sure that Territorians will be the first customers for gas from the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

The Territory has been going about its business in partnership with the gas sector for many years. It is time that the Deputy Chief Minister and his CLP team catch up and be honest with Territorians instead of misleading them and being irresponsible with the statement he delivered and his media release.

The Territory is in the enviable position of having large amounts of renewable and natural gas energy supplies. We are leveraging both, as we should be. Territory Labor supports renewables in future energy production. The Territory has so much potential, particularly for economic growth. Although natural gas will continue to be an indispensable part of the Northern Territory's electricity generation mix, we need to develop renewable energy infrastructure across the Territory, and the capacity to further support low-cost energy for households, businesses and those who want to come to the Territory.

The former Labor government knew this a long time ago and set out the 2017 Roadmap to Renewables strategy in order to provide a pathway to transition to 50% renewables by 2030. If you do the simple Year 3 maths that the Treasurer talked about the other day you will know that we have not got to 2030 yet, so why is the CLP scrapping a target that keeps accountability and a future guideline for the energy sector in regard to renewable energy? We have no idea; there is no sense to it.

In the Roadmap to Renewables strategy the former Labor government recognised the opportunity of renewables to drive economic development and deliver cost-effective energy. The CLP supported this important and achievable aspiration when it was in opposition, but abandoned it within seven months of coming into government.

We were well on track to meet this target. Any suggestion otherwise is an utter lie and does not acknowledge the hard work of the many professionals in the energy industry and the department who provide important advice to ministers to make their decisions about the future of the Northern Territory …

Ms Boothby: We will never meet that target. It is a couple of years away.

Ms UIBO: The Member for Brennan is apparently an energy expert and has already predicted the future. Good on her. I do not think many Territorians would take her word over that of experts, not just department officials but also energy proponents, who look after those important decisions about commercial investment. If the Member for Brennan knows something that all of them do not, it would be interesting for her to share what that is and explain how she is an expert on energy.

I strongly suggest that the CLP Caucus members, particularly the backbenchers, ask their ministers for briefings through their departments so that they can be educated about this extremely important issue. Their leadership team is not being honest with them, so how can we expect that it will be honest with Territorians? CLP government members will need to answer to not only the electorates they represent but also all our electorates and future generations about why they made this pitiful, disgraceful and shameful decision that is not based on any science or expertise.

We have made significant progress in securing a future for Territorians that is powered by renewables, works with the gas industry, focuses on the reduction of emissions and keeps power prices down for Territorians. We have been working towards this for many years. A clear plan is articulated in our Roadmap to Renewables strategy that was developed by experts in the field and backed by science.

The Deputy Chief Minister failed to talk about the significant work that the former Labor government did towards the 50% renewables by 2030 target. We made important strategic investments in utility-scale solar

and batteries to enable even greater uptake of renewables across our grid, which Territorians constantly speak about.

Under the former Labor government the Darwin–Katherine area was a key focus for renewable energy and uptake. With the Darwin–Katherine system providing electricity to 150,000 Territorians, including households and businesses, the switch to renewables is not without its challenges and is certainly not simple. It is a comparatively small grid compared with those in the rest of the country, so economies of scale are difficult to manage in the Territory. However, as we have shown in the past it can be done.

The Territory is a remote jurisdiction. Our conditions, particularly in the environment, are harsh and our population is small and dispersed across our beautiful Territory. However, the former Labor government was up to the challenge, unlike those opposite.

The former Labor government invested in the $45m Darwin–Katherine Battery Energy Storage System (DK BESS) to be delivered by Territory Generation at the Channel Island Power Station. DK BESS is designed to support the Darwin–Katherine system, which has the largest usage of a power system in the Territory, stabilising it for increased solar use, including its integration into the grid and replacing some gas-fired generation at the Channel Island Power Station. This investment reduces our reliance on gas generation, delivers cost savings of up to $10m per year and eliminates upwards of 60,000 tonnes of carbon emissions each year. The best thing is that it will pay for itself in only five years.

The Deputy Chief Minister failed to tell that story in his statement. Where is the DK BESS project up to? Has the CLP government switched it off?

Territory Labor did not stop at DK BESS; we also invested in DK BESS 2 to further support the grid. This second phase project was aimed at delivering large-scale batteries across locations in the Darwin–Katherine power system to further boost capability and stability. It was due to be commissioned in 2026, so it would be great to hear from the CLP whether this is continuing and will be on track.

Will the Deputy Chief Minister update Territorians on where this project is at, or has the CLP just scrapped it with the swipe of a pen rather than listening to the experts and having a vision about the energy future and security? If anyone wants to stand in this House to talk about renewables, it would be great if they told Territorians the full story and not just the little patchy parts we heard from the Deputy Chief Minister.

These investments meant that more Territory households and businesses could reliably make the switch to solar to keep their power bills down. The Territory Labor government incentivised Territorians to do just that, and we now lead the nation with the highest proportion of solar PV systems installed with a battery, at more than 30% compared with the national average of only 6%.

Again, that is a big piece of the story that the Deputy Chief Minister left out of his statement. Why? Because the CLP government cherrypicks what it tells Territorians. Sooner or later when Territorians hear parts of the story and not the full thing they will make up their own minds about how disingenuous the CLP is in giving them full accountability, openness and transparency in relation to government decisions, which it promised it would do.

The highly successful Home and Business Battery Scheme was at the time the most generous assistance program in the country for small-scale batteries. it was a great feat for the Northern Territory to be at that high level.

We acknowledge that the CLP government has introduced its own scheme. We feel that the average Territorian will never be in a position to avail themselves of the full amount of the grant, unfortunately. It looks good on paper, but you would need to invest in a huge expensive battery to get the full benefit of the CLP's scheme, which will not suit most Territory households. If you are interested in the new scheme, the CLP has announced it will run out at the end of this year, so you need to get in quickly.

When Labor was in government we did much more in the renewables space. We signed off with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency for 16 community batteries in various locations across the Darwin–Katherine electricity grid, expanding rooftop solar capacity and keeping power prices down. The Wurrumiyanga solar farm project on Bathurst Island in the Tiwis, which was moving towards a battery storage project, started under our Labor government. The remote power systems strategy focused on delivering an average of 70% renewable energy to 72 remote communities across the Northern Territory. We provided further investment in rolling out solar and batteries in our remote communities.

The Deputy Chief Minister needs to tell Territorians whether his government will go ahead with these critical investments that will go a long way to meeting our renewables target, particularly in remote communities, keeping power costs down and our power stable.

The former Labor government also established the Office of Sustainable Energy to oversee the progress of the 50% by 2030 target. As with so many initiatives aimed at ensuring the Territory moves forward for a sustainable future, we are not sure whether the CLP government continues to support the Office of Sustainable Energy. It would be great if a CLP member could provide confirmation either way—whether it is still going or has been scrapped—as it is important to understand the CLP's priorities.

The cost of living and energy security are two of the biggest issues for Territorians, which is why it is critical that the CLP government remains focused on ensuring that Territory residents, businesses and industries have access to reliable and affordable power via a mix of energy sources. That means continuing to progress gas and renewables together for many years to come.

The Deputy Chief Minister gave us a lecture on how community service obligation payments work. I think he pretty much cut and pasted it from his incoming minister's brief. His statement did not stir the imagination; it demonstrated that he has only a Year 3 level of understanding of energy production and supply. I honestly feel as though he gave us a primary school report on energy. I am sure that Territorians understand the community service obligation (CSO) payments, but we heard the 101 explanation regardless.

The most important thing Territorians need to understand about the CSO is that it keeps power costs down for Territorians. This means less money spent on power and more money in Territorians' pockets. Somehow the CLP has dressed that up as being a bad thing, which I find bizarre. Those payments come out of the budget because that is taxpayers' money being beneficial for taxpayers. The CLP does not seem to understand that connection, but Territorians understand that. They will definitely understand that when they see their power prices hike under the CLP government.

The last Territory budget had a significant increase for the CSO payment, purely to keep the cost of power down for Territorians in the cost-of-living crisis. The federal government's energy bill relief of $300 for every household combined with our CSO payments ensured that more Territorians benefited.

We were up-front in government about our vision and the way forward and the opportunities for energy in the Northern Territory. We are proud of this legacy. Sadly, it looks like it will be only a legacy, based on the CLP's statement and its poor attempt to hide the 3% power price hike it announced. There was absolute dishonesty and a lot of hot air from the Deputy Chief Minister. The CLP should be ashamed.

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

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 16

Continued from 13 February 2025.

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

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I support this important Bill.

A common theme of this government is emphasising that many of the benefits offered to Territorians are a privilege, not a right. For example, we definitely consider public housing, bail and parole to be a privilege. There needs to be consequences for breaching these privileges. I consider it a no-brainer that we should enable our police to enter premises to arrest individuals in breach of parole, including persons whose parole has been revoked, ensuring that those who violate their conditions are effectively taken into custody.

I will focus on the Bill's domestic violence order provisions. I will be honest: I believe that every member of this Assembly, be they government, opposition or Independent members, abhors domestic violence and are committed to reducing it in our society. That is a genuine theme across the parliament. I have heard passionate speeches by various members, including the Member for Gwoja who last night shared personal experiences of how domestic violence and its flow-on consequences have impacted on his and the lives of his family and friends.

Sadly, I come across domestic violence and its terrible consequences on a regular basis when I walk around my electorate of Karama. For example, last year I was accompanied by my colleagues, the minister for Housing and the Members for Fannie Bay and Wanguri, in distributing food with Mr Tejinder Singh and his Sikh Family Food Van to the vulnerable people of Karama and Malak. We laid a wreath of condolence outside one of the public housing units in Fawcett Court, Malak, where an Aboriginal sistergirl had been tragically murdered in a domestic violence incident a few days earlier. In further tragedy, a number of other domestic violence murders occurred in the same neighbourhood within a one-month period.

I also visited the Darwin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Shelter in Malak with the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence. We heard firsthand how the shelter supports the victims of domestic violence, and it has many.

A number of times I have directly intervened to stop women being attacked by their menfolk in various parks and streets in the neighbourhood, stepping in to say that this is totally unacceptable behaviour.

If we look at the monthly crime statistics for the greater Darwin/Palmerston region and compare January 2024 with January 2025 we see that there has been a reduction in a number of areas. For example, house break-ins are down by 44%; commercial break-ins are down by 9%; property offences are down by 18%; robberies are down by 77%; and all assaults are down by 18%. These figures are pleasing. I acknowledge the great work of our dedicated police to help achieve this reduction. However, in the spirit of honesty, the same statistics sadly show that domestic violence-related assaults have increased by 27%. It is imperative that we do everything to turn this around. I know our government is committed to doing so.

This Bill empowers our police to take direct action to help reduce the risk of domestic violence by enabling them to conduct alcohol and drug testing of individuals subject to domestic violence orders (DVOs) on private property. Essentially, police will be able to enter a property's yard or driveway to conduct compliance testing, reinforcing measures to protect victims—I emphasise victims—and prevent further harm.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Karama, I am sorry; it is lunchtime. You can continue your comments later.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that the Legislative Assembly recognises the urgent need for government to begin the work of creating genuine partnerships and shared decision-making with all Aboriginal communities on all issues that affect Aboriginal people. This work must begin by providing support for the development of community groups that represent all clan and family groups within a community and have authority to make decisions for the people of the community in accordance with Aboriginal law.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that:

1. This Assembly acknowledges that young people today are the first generation in modern history to be worse off than their parents. We are leaving our children a far harder world to flourish in than the one we inherited. We need to have long-term solutions that we know will protect our children's future.

2. This Assembly takes action to create longstanding protections for the next generations of Northern Territorians by establishing a select committee to investigate and report on the creation of a wellbeing of future generations Bill that:

    (i) requires that intergenerational equity and wellbeing be considered and promoted in all government and public decision-making

    (ii) imposes a responsibility on government and public bodies to consider the long-term impact of their decisions

    (iii) requires a statement of compatibility with the provisions and objects of the Bill to be completed for Bills which are put before the parliament

(iv) establishes an independent officer or appoints an existing public officer to oversee compliance and conduct investigations regarding the Bill to ensure that its objects are achieved

(v) conducts a comprehensive community consultation across the Territory to gather input for the creation of the Bill.

3. The committee be composed of two members from the government, two from the opposition and two from the crossbench to be nominated in writing to the Speaker by the relevant Whip or crossbench member, with the Chair being a non-government member.

4. The committee be able to report to the Assembly periodically, but must deliver its final report with recommendations within 12 months of this resolution.

PETITION
Petition No 9 – Immediate Withdrawal of the Proposal to Establish the Territory Coordinator

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 116 petitioners praying for the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to establish the Territory Coordinator. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Speaker and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

We the undersigned respectfully showeth:

We are opposed to the proposed functions and powers to be given to the Territory Coordinator and the Chief Minister, as outlined in the Territory Coordinator Bill*. We are deeply concerned about the following proposed measures:*

- *Empowering the Territory Coordinator to direct decision-makers to make decisions within certain timeframes;*
- *Empowering the Territory Coordinator and Chief Minister to 'step in' and undertake an assessment themselves instead of the NTEPA or other relevant decision-makers;*
- *Empowering the Territory Coordinator and Chief Minister to exempt projects from approvals;*
- *The introduction of a 'primary principle' for decision making that elevates the objective of driving economic prosperity above all other considerations.*

These proposals threaten to undermine oversight and accountability for projects in the Northern Territory. The unprecedented powers of the proposed Territory Coordinator represents a threat to our democracy and promotes poor decision making. We do not support this Bill.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that:

The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory recommends the immediate withdrawal of the proposal to establish the Territory Coordinator under the terms proposed.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Public Accounts Committee to consider whether the petition should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

VISITOR
Wayne Kraft

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge a great Centralian in the gallery, Wayne Kraft. Welcome to parliament, Krafty.

Members: Hear, hear!

QUESTION TIME
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sector – Report

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

This morning on ABC radio you said that you were confused about what the domestic violence sector wants. I can help catch up the Chief Minister. I seek leave to table the comprehensive report into the Territory's domestic, family and sexual violence response, including gaps, priority needs and the future direction that Territorians want to see in the DV sector.

Leave granted.

Ms UIBO: This is what the domestic violence sector wants. Have you read the interagency coordination response and report which simply maps out the needs for investment, which you committed to with your CLP government? Have you read it, and why will you not commit to it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I ask the Opposition Leader what year that report was published. I have not seen the document you tabled, and you asked me a question about it. Can someone tell me the year on that report?

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, through the Chair.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can someone tell me what year is on that report? I have been asked a question about something I have not seen.

Here is the report. Where is the date? The date on the bottom of that report is 2023. What happened in 2023? Let me close my eyes …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Silence.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: … and take myself back. What was I doing in May 2023? Let me think. I was the Opposition Leader, and do you know who was in government? The Opposition Leader now. The Labor member, along with all her Labor mates on the other side, did nothing. Woman after woman died on their watch. They can wave around big wads of paper and explain to the DV sector why domestic violence increased by 82% on their watch. Why didn't you implement this huge document?

Now you pretend to sidle up to the DV sector and be its best friend. It is disingenuous, to say the least. This is hypocrisy in a form and to a degree we have never seen in this parliament before. The stunts that we had, with the Member for Gwoja talking about how he did not want DV to be political—what a load of rubbish! This is a weapon those opposite are trying to use for their own political advantage, and it is disgusting.

That report is dated 2023. That is years under your watch. You did nothing about it, and DV increased by 82%.

Speaking about the Member for Gwoja, he is the one who let Stronger Futures lapse, rivers of grog flow, women get bashed and killed—carnage and destruction. You had the sector, Aboriginal organisations, us, the community, police and nurses screaming at you saying, 'Please, for the love of god, stop'. What did you do? Nothing.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. It is simple: have you read the report?

Madam SPEAKER: The Chief Minister may have indicated she has not read the report.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is so simple to you. What is the point of reading it if you do nothing about it? Sit there, do nothing, you read it, use it as a thing to hold open your door, 'That is a nice thick document. We will put it on the shelf with all the other documents we made Territorians pay for and gather dust.' It was sitting right there next to Langoulant, Langoulant was sitting right there next to TERC, and on and on went the …

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; interjections. The Attorney-General is yelling out that it is a waste of a report. That is disgraceful.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, sit down. Everyone has been having a go this afternoon.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, you wasted the report because you used it as a doorstop instead of using it to inform your policy and position.

Going back to the rivers of grog, it took them seven months to take action while women died. Shame on you, Opposition Leader!

VISITORS
The Essington School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the senior legal studies students from The Essington School. You are seeing us at our best, students. Welcome to parliament.

Members: Hear, hear!

Crime Reduction

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

Labor created a crime crisis, destroying the Territory. Sadly, I continue to hear from concerned constituents in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon about how crime has impacted their lives. Only last month I too became a victim of crime when the doors to my electorate office were senselessly smashed, along with other shops, by two adults. Our government has acted quickly to respond to community concerns about crime, with stronger laws and better powers for police. There is still much work to do, but can you provide an update on how our actions so far have reduced crime?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I called the member that morning upon learning the Karama shops had been broken into. It is a horrible thing for anyone to go through, and just like the member too many Territorians have had to face that fate and worse, much worse.

In eight years on Labor's watch crime was left to deteriorate to proportions we had never seen before. Labor turned its back on our police; it was a mess.

On coming into government the first thing we did was get police back on the street and in uniform, and it had an immediate impact. In getting towards our eight months in office it is abundantly clear to us and to Territorians that we have done more to reduce crime in the Northern Territory in eight months than Labor did in eight years, and it is a disgrace. We walked straight into parliament with our reducing-crime package—Declan's law, post-and-boast laws**,** mandatory sentencing for assaults on workers, knife crime laws—and we are in parliament today giving police greater powers. We are working on the *Youth Justice Act* rewrite and changes to the *Traffic Act*. There are huge amounts of work to do, and this is just the beginning for us.

The crime stats were published last week. Whilst the experience you and many others have had continues—crime is far too high—we are starting to see good indicative results, and we are hoping that gets better in future. We will keep coming back to this parliament, strengthening the laws and supporting our police until Territorians feel safe. Crime stats are one story, but our measure of success is how the community feels. That is most important.

If we turn to the data as an indication of how things have gone, it is looking good. In the Darwin area commercial break-ins remain steady when we compare January last year with January this year. House break-ins were down by 60%, which is huge. Over January many families are away on school holidays, so not returning home to a house that has been broken into is incredibly important; everyone deserves that. The data is starting to move forward, and there are good results across the region. I will stick to the Darwin and Palmerston area, which is your patch, Member for Karama. Property offences were down by 18%; assaults were down by 15%; and robbery was down by 77%.

It is early days and there is plenty of work to do. We will stand with Territorians who want to be safe. We promised Territorians at the start of this year that 2025 would be a year of action, certainty and security. That is what we are delivering to our community and hardworking police. We want to be judged on our actions and will continue to work hard to deliver a safe Territory which everyone deserves to live in. Until the Territory is safe, we will not stop.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sector – Funding

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

You and the Chief Minister have been publicly talking about giving money to the DV sector. We have talked to and listened to people in the DV sector, who have said that they have not received a single dollar from this government since the election. Will you show proof that you have given additional resources to the DV sector and the funds that they have not received?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a repeat of the question from yesterday, but I am happy to answer it again.

It is concerning—in fact, I am flabbergasted—that those on the other side do not seem to understand how budgetary processes work. The 2024–25 budget was set by those on the other side, as was the budget for domestic, family and sexual violence this year. A number of projects were only part-funded for this year, which we have continued—for example, the co-responder program—to the end of June 2025. In the course of doing that we have worked extensively with the sector to look at what is needed and what is working or not working.

The commitment we made—that Labor failed to make—is an ongoing, uninterrupted commitment to fund these services to the tune of $36m per year. That detail will be given in the budget, which is nearing completion, and we are excited to share that. We have also given a guarantee to those services that were going to fall off the funding cliff created by those on the other side—who failed dismally to make an ongoing commitment to provide services to this sector—that they will have security through this process, as we work to ensure that we will have services put in place that get the results that we need, which is a reduction, not an increase, in domestic, family and sexual violence.

There are many fabulous ideas out there that have not seen the light of day.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Minister, you and the Chief Minister have been on the record saying …

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, you said that. What is your point of order?

Mr PAECH: … that you are providing additional funding. Where is the additional funding, apart from that which was already committed in the budget? Or are you lying to Territorians?

Madam SPEAKER: No. That is disorderly.

Ms CAHILL: I can say once again that some of those programs were funded only to March, which defies logic; it is not even a complete financial year. Those programs have been continued. Not only have they been continued, but if you look at the co-responder model you will see that we have rolled it out to Katherine and the Darwin–Palmerston region. That is additional funding. We have created a framework where our young people are safely supported and their families are supported as they deal with the horrendous …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked her to provide proof that she is funding the co-responder model in Katherine, Darwin and Palmerston.

Madam SPEAKER: She is answering the question.

Ms CAHILL: Perhaps if the Member for Gwoja went into those communities and looked at what is happening on the ground and the fabulous work being done by our police, the co-responder model and the Circuit Breaker teams in those areas, he would not have to ask the question because he could see for himself exactly what is going on.

Mr Paech: Perhaps if you told the truth.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, please do not interject.

Corrections – Investment

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Less than eight months ago the CLP was elected by Territorians to deliver on its plan to reduce crime, which outlined that significant action was needed to address an overwhelmed, overcrowded and poorly resourced Corrections system. In eight years Labor said a lot and is trying to say a lot today, but it did very little and did not deliver on any of its prison infrastructure build, with delays and cost blowouts. How does eight months of the CLP government stand in contrast to the eight years of the failed Labor government?

Mr Paech: He is trying so hard to be a minister.

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

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder knows how serious crime is. There is crime in his electorate at the Woolworths shopping complex. People vandalise it and break windows there. Crime is an important issue.

In the first few days of government we moved fast to futureproof the system with new prison infrastructure, planning and design. We finished and opened projects that were plagued by delays and cost blowouts under the previous Labor government. For example, the Tennant Creek bail accommodation had a three-year delay; Holtze youth detention centre was $70m over budget and had a two-year delay; and O block at the Alice Springs jail was delayed 18 months with a $12m blowout under Labor.

The real price of inaction is police cells being tied up, higher costs and there being fewer officers on the beat to keep the community safe. We are cleaning up the mess and getting the job done—action, certainty and security. Labor is trying to project its failure on to us, but the facts speak for themselves. In eight months we have done more than Labor did in eight years. We passed new laws, built a more flexible workforce and—one of many important things—returned police watch houses to police to allow them to do their job.

That is 508 beds in eight months. I will let that sink in. That is real action on capacity. That is offenders off the streets, behind bars where they belong. If you have 508 new inmates there are at least 508 victims in the community. How many extra beds did Labor deliver? None. It delivered mattresses on the ground in police watch houses. Shame.

We tackled staff shortages head on through targeted recruitment and smart outsourcing. I thank prison officers for doing a great job. They have been challenged over the last eight years. I want to make sure they are aware that we support them, and say thank you. We secured a global partner, G4S, to strengthen our court transfers and support our Corrections system. We have put extra support into Community Corrections to get rid of the backlog. We have expanded electronic monitoring for alternative-to-custody arrangements. We have modernised the prisoner classification system to make sure that it meets the needs of today. We are making sure that prisoners are classified correctly. We are finalising work camps and the new women's prison and men's prisons. We are moving this from a vision to reality.

Police – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Before the election your Chief Minister promised Territorians that you would spare no expense to resource our hardworking police, and declared your unconditional support for police officers. If that is true, why are you tying hardworking police officers to a 3% wages policy, well below the pay rises offered in other jurisdictions? Was your pre-election commitment to police genuine or just lip-service?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there are eight EBAs going on this year. One of those EBAs is the police agreement, which commenced on 3 February this year. Negotiations for a new general Northern Territory Public Sector workforce agreement commenced on 19 February. Those negotiations are ongoing. Sorry, Opposition Leader, I do not have a lot of information about the negotiations for police. There are eight EBAs ongoing, and those EBAs are in the process. Negotiations are continuing with police.

I am not sure whether the Police minister has more information, but I can get you more information.

Ms Uibo: Will you take it on notice?

Mrs HERSEY: I will take it on notice, yes. Sorry about that.

School Attendance – Statistics

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

I welcome the kids from The Essington School. I am glad to see that you are enrolled and attending school.

You previously outlined in this House statistics relating to the intensive support roll. The intensive support roll was previously known as the passive roll, but the former Labor government changed the name to make it seem like it was doing something about it. The passive roll is a list of students who have not attended school for 20 days or more. This does not count towards the Northern Territory school attendance statistics. We have heard how the former Labor government kept these figures hidden, and the figures paint the true story of its shameful legacy in education.

Can you outline to the Assembly how the government is getting our kids back to school as part of our plan to address the root causes of crime?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay is right in acknowledging the former Labor government's shameful legacy in education.

We have been in government for less than eight months, but in that time we have discovered a secret list of students who have not attended school for 20 days or more and who do not count towards the Northern Territory school attendance statistics. The former Labor government—of which the Leader of the Opposition was one of three Education ministers—deliberately hid these statistics from Territorians and used this list to try to make school attendance figures look better.

When Labor took government in 2016 the number of students on the intensive support roll was 1,274. When Labor left office in 2024 it was 1,628. I am pleased to report that, as a result of our new initiatives to get kids back to school, in less than eight months we have reduced this number to 1,133 students, a decrease of almost 500 students. Getting 500 kids back to school should be applauded. We know that these numbers fluctuate and are typically lower in the first term of the school year, but this is nonetheless an encouraging sign.

Unlike Labor we will not hide these figures and keep Territorians in the dark about the true state of the education system. We will not shy away from being open and transparent about the uncomfortable truth of the Territory's education system under Labor.

I thank all the dedicated staff in the Department of Education and Training for putting their shoulder to the wheel and working with our government to increase school attendance and boost literacy and numeracy.

As part of our government's plan to get kids back to school and address the root causes of crime we introduced school attendance officers, and we passed the legislation for that last week. Students on the intensive support roll are a priority cohort for school attendance officers and for schools. For parents who repeatedly fail to send their children to school there will be fines of $370.

We believe that unpaid fines should come out of parents' Centrelink payments, and we request that the Commonwealth agree to our government's referral of parents who neglect their children to income management. Peter Dutton and the Coalition have agreed in principle to accept our referrals, and I sure hope Anthony Albanese and the federal Labor government will follow suit.

Getting kids off the street and into school for an education is key to addressing the root cause of the unacceptable high levels of crime in the Territory, and we will continue to do everything we can to get kids to school.

Domestic Violence – Services

K McNAMARA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Hello to the students from my electorate from Essington. If you are here to learn how not to answer questions, you have come to the right place.

Central Australia and the Barkly have the worst domestic, family and sexual violence rates for First Nations people. The Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit (CAAFLU) is a specialised domestic violence organisation that provides legal and non-legal culturally safe and trauma-informed services. It is an essential service for Aboriginal victim–survivors of family violence in Central Australia and has worked tirelessly for 25 years, despite never being fully funded.

Despite being a domestic, family and sexual violence service, the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence has told CAAFLU that the decision on its funding allocation rests with you, Attorney-General. CAAFLU has been reaching out for transparency and clarity on where the $36m funding will go, but you have not provided any answers. Will you meet with CAAFLU? When will you provide assurances about its funding, including support for the business case it provided to you?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I met with people from CAAFLU only a few short weeks ago in Alice Springs. It was a good meeting because I was enlightened about their history and what they are doing in the Central Australian area and the community. They are doing a lot of good work.

We had a good conversation about the fact that victims need to be protected from domestic violence and how they have not been. I can tell you that the rate of domestic violence over the last eight years has increased astronomically. More and more victims are dying, which is disgusting, so we had a conversation about that. One of the people from CAAFLU said that they were happy to stand next to me in media when I make announcements about tougher sentencing for domestic violence perpetrators.

We have the backing of the community to ensure that perpetrators are dealt with under the law. Labor scrapped mandatory sentencing for domestic violence in its term of government. We will not do that; we will protect victims by bringing back mandatory sentencing for domestic violence perpetrators. That is important.

The Member for Nightcliff asked about some victim services. I am excited that after such a long time I can pass legislation in a couple of weeks' time to increase the victims levy by 41%. It has not been increased for such a long time; Labor did not want to do it. This will increase the pool of money available for our victim services.

The other thing we spoke about with CAAFLU, the Women's Legal Service and others across the Territory is the Victims Register and the fact we now have legislation, which will be debated, to increase the number of times domestic violence victims will be notified. When their perpetrator is moving around the place, the victims will be notified.

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate the answer so far, but the question was: when will you provide assurances to CAAFLU in regard to its funding support, including support for the business case it provided to you?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have some time.

Ms BOOTHBY: What has not been mentioned is the fact there is a national justice agreement on foot with the federal government. I do not know what will happen in the future, because who knows with the federal election, but there is some money coming to victim services, including the likes of CAAFLU. That is coming up soon. There is an agreement that will go out to many of the legal services in the domestic violence space.

I think you would agree that no-one in this or any other Chamber in Australia wants to see any more victims of domestic violence. That is why this new CLP government has done more in the last eight months than Labor did in the last eight years to ensure that perpetrators are dealt with under the law.

Youth Justice

Mr MACKAY to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

The CLP was elected with a clear mandate to restore law and order in the Northern Territory. Territorians have had enough of repeat offenders being released back into the community. Strong action is needed to ensure that our laws reflect the community's expectations. Can you outline the government's commitment to strengthening youth justice laws and ensuring that our legal system prioritises community safety and victims' rights?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder has for a long time been out and about in his community talking to Territorians, and they continue to tell him that youth crime is a serious matter.

For eight years Labor's soft-on-crime approach made it easier for repeat offenders to walk free and harder for police and prosecutors to keep them locked up. That is changing under this government. This year we are taking decisive action to reform the *Youth Justice Act* and the *Bail Act*. We will ensure that young offenders face real consequences for their actions, stop the revolving door of bail that has allowed repeat offenders to walk free and put victims and community safety above all else.

Labor weakened our laws. We are reversing the damage and restoring security in the Northern Territory. Recent events proved that stronger laws are needed to protect Territorians, meet community expectations and hold offenders accountable. The rights of victims must come first. We will not stop until our laws reflect that.

Australia is waking up to the failures of soft-on-crime policies. Even the Victorian Labor government has admitted that its bail laws are not working. It is implementing tougher measures.

Unlike Labor, we take community safety seriously. In less than eight months we have taken stronger action than Labor did in eight years. Under Declan's law all serious violent offenders, youths and adults, start with a presumption of no bail. We introduced mandatory electronic monitoring for repeat offenders and mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers. We lowered the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10 years.

Our stronger laws are already delivering results. Between 6 January and 10 March adult bail numbers dropped by 5%, adult remand numbers increased by 18% and more than 600 offenders have been put behind bars—people who should never have been out on our streets.

In less than eight months we have taken real action and delivered certainty and security for Territorians, but we are not done. We will continue to strengthen the laws to reduce crime because community safety is the number one priority of this CLP government. We will rebuild our economy, restore our lifestyle and reduce crime.

Fracking Fluid Spill

J DAVIS to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Welcome, students. I do not know whether you have studied Dorothy Dixers in your legal studies, but what is happening in this Chamber is a good example of them.

The government has used the last two weeks of parliament to pass Bills that weaken environmental laws and community appeal rights while disregarding and even demonising community concerns about the safety of developing unconventional gas projects in the NT. Meanwhile, the environmental impacts of fracking are already being felt in the Territory, with pollution incidents stacking up even at this early stage of the industry's development.

Yesterday in the news it was reported that there had been more fracking fluid spills by gas companies exploring in the Beetaloo Sub-basin and McArthur Basin. Traditional owners said that they were devastated to see the damage to country caused by the fracking fluid spill. Will the NT regulator's test results for contamination at this site be released and the findings of the investigation, including what action will be taken, be made available to traditional owners and the public?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our government has been getting on with improving business confidence by improving the laws in which businesses operate.

The Petroleum, Planning and Water Legislation Amendment Bill passed this week. We were proud to get that legislation over the line. Once again in the Northern Territory an approval will mean just that—an approval. It is important that is the case. For too long environmental activists sought to disrupt and delay these major projects that seek to improve our Territory economy.

We have heard in this Chamber from many people about the need to improve our economy and to give the mums and dads of the Territory the money they need in their pockets so that they can pay for things they require every day, like food on the table and clothes for their kids. That is important.

Regarding the second part of the Member for Johnston's question about the spills that have been spoken about in the media recently, NT Government inspectors have gone—in relation to the 2,000-litre flowback water pumping incident on exploration permit 187—to investigate, as planned. They have determined any offsite environmental impacts, whether there have been breaches and the environmental management plans.

I make it clear for those listening that inspectors undertook site inspections as follow-up to the reportable incident on 15 January 2025. Whenever an incident like this occurs it is incumbent upon the proponent to report it to the Environment Protection Agency, then people go out to inspect the site. On 4 February 2025 they also went to make inspections. On 22 January 2025 inspectors issued a direction under section 89L of the *Petroleum Act* for remedial actions and additional testing and monitoring. I believe that is what has been reported recently.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. My question was not answered. Will the NT regulator's test results for contamination be released, and will the findings of the investigation, including what action will be taken, be made available to traditional owners and the public?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have some time.

Mr BURGOYNE: On 27 February 2025 a written agreement with Imperial was reached for a shorter interim reporting period. This is important. It must report more frequently as a result of these things.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, I think you are answering the question. Member for Johnston, you cannot extract the answer you want. It is up to his interpretation.

Mr BURGOYNE: To ensure the incident was investigated and resolved within a timely manner the first interim report was submitted on 13 March 2025, and the department is considering the information in this report to inform its next actions, which is what happens under the Act. The department continues to monitor this incident, and any potential noncompliance …

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Infrastructure – Alice Springs

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

In November the CLP government committed $27m to infrastructure projects in Alice Springs. I know you love Alice Springs. Can you update the Assembly on how the government is continuing to support the great people of Alice Springs and Central Australia?

Ms Uibo: He is never there, though; he is in Darwin.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I pick up on the interjections from the Opposition Leader. They were unbelievable, saying that I am always in Darwin. There is a reason I am in Darwin; I am helping the CLP government drive the Territory forward and make changes that Labor failed to make.

The Member for Casuarina is an exceptional member. He works hard for his electorate, and so do I. I am also working hard for all Territorians.

While I am on my feet I also acknowledge a true Central Australian, Wayne Kraft, in the gallery. We will claim Sean Parnell on the odd occasion when he is down there. He spent a long time in my electorate in Atitjere and has done great work for people in the bush.

There has been a long, hot, dry summer in Alice Springs, but at least last week the rains came. Sadly, I was not there; I missed them. This coincided with a big shift in the mood of the town; the better times are here and will be in the future.

The crime stats tell that our strong-on-crime approach has brought about a seismic shift in criminal activity in our town. Perpetrators are being kept off the streets and those who are committing crimes are being locked up quickly. Our government is committed to, and makes no apology for, taking charge.

This kicks off a raft of activities to promote everything that is positive about living in the heart of the country. We have great events coming up over the next few weeks. I will outline them in a second.

For the first time in a long time, especially after eight years of Labor, there is a sense of optimism in our town. Who can forget that horror Christmas of 2022? We can thank the Member for Gwoja for that horrible Christmas and the hurt committed upon our community.

Our $27m of investment in infrastructure in the town is starting to make traction. Anzac Oval will again be open, rugby is coming back, shovels have been turned on the $1.8m regional skate park and progress is being made on our commitment to the multicultural community.

This week and over the next few weeks there are many events taking place in Central Australia. Parrtjima turns on the lights next week. We are following that with the running of the Alice Springs Cup. This weekend on Saturday is the Chief Minister's Cup. I will be glad to be there to celebrate it.

There is the new national tourism campaign, Love Letters to Alice. There were no love letters from the Labor Party; all we got was hate crime.

Our government is delivering on our promise to the people of Alice Springs to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle.

Environmental Issues

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Your government has refused to appoint a minister for climate change, walked away from the Territory's renewable energy target, defunded environmental organisations, revoked water allocation plans, sacked water advisory committees, abandoned the Large Emitters Policy and turned a blind eye to illegal land clearing. Your government claims that restoring the great Territory lifestyle is a key priority. Exactly how do you intend to achieve this while ignoring climate science and dismantling environmental protections?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there was a lot in that question, and I look forward to getting to all of it.

Madam SPEAKER: There was; let us make it relevant.

Mr BURGOYNE: Absolutely.

Our government is being clear about the action we are taking with regard to the environment. No longer will we be funding environmental activists. I want to ensure that the money we spend—hundreds of thousands of dollars of Territorians' money—is going to groups on the ground, doing the things that I love such as looking after the environment, our plants and our roundabouts; planting Sturt's desert peas; and ensuring that we are all looking after the environment around us.

In regard to Claravale, which was also mentioned in the Member for Daly's question, this was a win for the environment, one that those opposite could not achieve. What we achieved is a 250-metre, 1.5-kilometre

long, 80-hectare covenant in gross over a section of land beside the Daly River. I thought the Member for Daly would support that, but perhaps he does not.

These are things that were raised with our government …

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! To be clear, I do not support illegal land clearing …

Madam SPEAKER: It better not be relevance. Can you …

Mr Paech: Just pass him a note. Read the note you have been given.

Madam SPEAKER: You will not be given any more points of order if it is not a true point of order, I am sorry.

Mr BURGOYNE: Where was I? Claravale Station, the farm. This had been ongoing since 2021. In 2023 formal proceedings started and the Labor government did nothing to resolve this. Our government has ensured a positive outcome for the environment. Those opposite did not care. We came to the negotiating table to get this done, which means that 80 hectares of land will have to be revegetated.

The environmentalists put up social media posts with a picture of land cleared beside a river. That land was cleared legally. The land in question was further away from the river.

As part of the agreement the defendants acknowledged that vegetation was cleared by them on another section of the Claravale farm without a permit. It will cost them a lot of money to revegetate, as well as losing 80 hectares of their land.

This is a message to anyone who would clear without a permit in the Northern Territory. Do not do it; it is not the right thing to do. Our government ensured that the message is sent loud and clear.

In regard to Labor's renewable energy target …

Members interjecting.

Mr O'Gallagher interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: I agree, Member for Karama; I can hardly hear the minister. Let us hear the minister in silence.

Mr BURGOYNE: We know what Labor thinks about the renewable energy target. There was a report that had been through freedom of information; 116 of the 118 pages were redacted by the Labor government. Labor did not want anyone to know about its renewable targets.

Our government is working to ensure that the environment is protected through a range of legislation; we will continue to do that for all Territorians.

Domestic Violence – Circuit Breaker Program

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Cases of domestic violence rose by 82% in the eight years prior to the CLP coming into government. Obviously, not enough was done by the previous Labor government to address the root causes of domestic violence. Can you update the House on how the Circuit Breaker Program is working with our vulnerable youths to reduce the level of domestic violence by addressing the root causes, compared with the inaction of the previous Labor government over the last eight years?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Wanguri has seen firsthand in her community the consequences of not taking active steps to reduce the impact on our young people of horrendous situations involving domestic, family and sexual violence.

I am delighted to talk about the amazing success that has been seen through the work of the incredible Circuit Breaker teams in Alice Springs, the Big Rivers region, Darwin and Palmerston. Those guys are working tirelessly for our kids, who were abandoned to be left on the street, picked up and taken home to words I have banned in our vocabulary—I will say them here once and not again—'responsible adults'. It was a glorified taxi service.

We have empowered those teams to actively intervene and take steps to protect those children and help their families break the vicious cycle in which they find themselves in relation to domestic violence, alcohol, difficulties in their home environment and challenges in their housing environment. The teams are working and representing them.

I am delighted that compared with the same time in 2023, when there were approximately 600 interactions with children on the street in the regions—particularly in Alice Springs over the summer break period when there were approximately 680 interactions—this year we saw more than 1,000 interactions overnight in that timeframe. Under the Circuit Breaker Program there have been 63 family responsibility agreements signed in six short months compared with 60 since 2019 when those on the other side were in government—abysmal behaviour. This project is making a significant difference.

I was pleased to go out on the road with the Circuit Breaker team in Alice Springs recently to see firsthand how they interact with our kids, the work they are doing and the difference they are making in the lives of those children and the families who are responsible for them. They are helping the families to see why it is important for these kids to be at school, helping them to get referrals to the health service as needed and helping them into services when crisis accommodation is needed.

We are doing action on the ground to address the root causes of domestic, family and sexual violence and making an active and real difference in these kids' lives.

Anti-Discrimination Act

Mr BROWN to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

We have recently seen disturbing Neo-Nazi hate propaganda appearing in Darwin. How can your government justify removing protections against vilification, especially when experts, including the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, have clearly warned that this will open the door to dangerous hate speech across the Territory? Why is your government removing these hate speech protections when other jurisdictions within the Commonwealth are actively strengthening theirs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our government is looking at the *Anti-Discrimination Act* which we promised at the election—in fact, before the election. I will give everyone a history lesson. The former Labor government's Attorney-General, the Member for Gwoja, brought forward a full rewrite of the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. He basically removed the protections in that Act for our faith-based schools.

We had protests on the steps of Parliament House. Hundreds of people who believe in something came to Parliament House for the first time ever to rally against the Labor government at that time. It was a beautiful peaceful protest. They prayed. Bishop Gauci stood on the steps addressing hundreds of people, explaining how he had been told by the Labor government, the Member for Gwoja and the then Member for Nightcliff, that nothing would change for those schools; they would still be protected and could still employ whoever they wanted based on faith. That was not true, because he got legal advice. The Labor government lied to Territorians about this Act.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 1; I ask that on the comments you made—it started this week about the …

A member: Wrong point of order—31.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr PAECH: The standing order gives the Speaker permission to rule.

Madam Speaker, the comments directed at political parties and the word 'lying' should be withdrawn.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask that be withdrawn.

Ms BOOTHBY: I withdraw the comment, but I will continue with my answer to this question because it is important.

We said to Territorians at large during the election and after these changes were made that we would reverse—repeal—that section. We believe that parents who send their kids to a school of faith will be able to do that because they know the teachers at that school are of that faith.

The second part we are looking to change with our *Anti-Discrimination Act* is the removal of the word 'offence', because why should a bureaucrat decide whether you are offended by something? Is it not up to you to decide whether you are offended? What an overreach of the rights and liberties of Territorians. No other jurisdiction in the world thinks that a bureaucrat can decide whether something feels offensive. That is ridiculous and an overreach.

We will change those laws. We are consulting widely about this. It was the sittings just before Christmas in 2022 when the former Attorney-General came in, rammed it down our throats and we sat here until midnight debating it because there was so much opposition about two clauses. We will go out to consultation and ensure that we get it right for Territorians this time.

Veterans Community Health and Wellbeing Grants

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for VETERANS

I thank The Essington School students for being here; that is my old school. It was an honour to speak to you on Monday, and I look forward to getting up there shortly. I also apologise formally for the fact that two members of the crossbench today used your presence for political cheap shots.

Madam SPEAKER: No. Come on.

Mr HOWE: It is unparliamentary. My government and I are proud of you.

In four weeks we will be commemorating Anzac Day, a time of reflection and pride in our nation and one that I and other ex-service men and women as well as many of my constituents look forward to. Can you advise the House how the Veterans Community Health and Wellbeing Grants support the physical and emotional wellbeing of vets across the Northern Territory and events such as Anzac Day?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: The Minister for Veterans will be heard in silence.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Drysdale for the question, but, more importantly, I thank him for his service to this country as a former member of the Defence Force.

As the Member for Drysdale is aware, Defence members and families comprise a large section of our community. About 20,000 of the Northern Territory population are Defence families, members and ex-serving members. The Chief Minister, as the Minister for Defence NT, is also passionate about the veteran community and the support services provided to veterans through my department.

The office of veterans affairs offers up to $10,000 to eligible organisations and community groups through the Veterans Community Health and Wellbeing Grants. The grant program was allocated initial funding of $120,000, with successful applicant funding totalling $80,400. These grants support activities organised by veteran organisations or community groups. Examples of the activities awarded funding include:

- a two-week wellness program at Shady Camp, incorporating social connection through outdoor recreation, including fishing
- an AFL team, made up of current serving Indigenous men and women within NORFORCE
- coffee catch-ups, including morning tea, for veterans located in and around Alice Springs

- a sponsored ride to Brisbane for the Australian Veterans Motorcycle Club annual general meeting, to promote physical and mental health benefits as well as social connection
- a two-week intensive program at the RSPCA Darwin shelter, rehabilitating rescue dogs
- developing and training assistance dogs for veterans
- a wellbeing and mental fitness program in Tindal.

These activities assist in improving physical and emotional wellbeing of the veteran community members.

As the Member for Drysdale noted, Anzac Day is an event like no other and goes to the heart of the veteran community. It allows us all to pause, reflect and remember the service and sacrifice made by our service men and women for our great country. It is why I am proud to announce that the government will also support the RSL to assist with the Anzac Day commemorations in Alice Springs and Darwin. These grants of $10,000 and $20,000 respectively will be warmly welcomed.

I thank the Member for Drysdale, our service men and women and all veterans, including the Member for Arafura, for their service.

Fracking Fluid Spill

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Yesterday there was news on the ABC that Empire Energy had at least two fracking wastewater spills at the Carpentaria fracking site over the Wet Season. Will Empire and Tamboran be directed to stop work until the investigation of these fracking spills finish? Will the companies be prosecuted and compensation paid to TOs for the damage they cause?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I could spend a lot of this time going over the previous information I have given, but I will seek to give a bit of further information to the Member for Mulka.

To date the department has undertaken inspections and issued a direction, as I previously spoke about, in regard to the inspections taken onsite. In accordance with its compliance and enforcement policy and guidelines, the division will exercise its discretion to take any enforcement action it considers appropriate, taking into account the seriousness of the contravention of the legislation. It is working through the processes, has done all the reports and will decide what happens next.

I know that does not add a lot more, but that is the information I have to date in regard to that incident.

Public Housing Reform

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Last week I and many of the constituents in Blain welcomed your ministerial statement on public housing reform. This statement was a beacon of hope for the good people of my electorate, Drysdale and Karama and no doubt other electorates across the Territory. For eight long years under Labor they endured unacceptable levels of crime and antisocial behaviour in and around public housing tenancies. We heard about the $39m in rent arrears. Quite frankly, I was blown away that it had become the norm under Labor; in fact, Labor even wrote off rent debt.

Can you update the Assembly on what has been happening in the last eight days since your announcement on public housing reform?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for the work he does in his electorate. Visiting the Members for Blain and Drysdale I saw firsthand some of the issues being faced in the Palmerston region. I have also been to the greater Darwin area, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine.

I have fantastic news on rent arrears. Since my announcement last week on public housing reform and the mess Labor left behind for this government to clean up, we have started the process of clawing back the $39m in rent arrears. I am happy to advise that the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal has found in favour of the CEO of Housing regarding excessive rental arrears, not once but twice.

Instead of bleating on about the rights of individuals and overriding community expectations, we are realising results through positive action, as we said we would. The process to receive more than $70,000 in unpaid rent has begun. Two separate tenants in two Darwin suburbs have been ordered by NTCAT to pay back unpaid rent. One sum was $33,738 and the other was one of the higher ones I have spoken about, with $40,783 outstanding. One has agreed to leave the property and the other has been issued a tenancy termination.

In other positive news, last week I mentioned a tenant who had 62 Red Card demerit points. They have now decided to vacate their premises, and the locks have been changed on that house. This tenant was moved into alternative supported accommodation with the assistance of NAAJA. This was a negotiated agreement rather than a termination. There was a huge combined effort from several teams to negotiate this outcome, saving considerable time, money and angst for the community whilst ensuring that the tenant and their family had somewhere safe to go.

As I said, we are not about turfing people onto the streets. We understand that some tenants are vulnerable and face challenges, and we do not want people having added debt stress in a cost-of-living crisis. We will assist people to get on top of their rent and continue to provide support services to tenants in public housing.

The CLP said that 2025 will be a year of action, certainty and security. In the last eight days this included making public housing safer and clawing back rental arrears.

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

POLICE ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 16

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, domestic violence is a serious issue for the Northern Territory. This Bill simply empowers our police to take direct action to help reduce the risk of domestic violence by enabling them to conduct on private property alcohol and drug testing of individuals subject to domestic violence orders (DVOs).

These powers will allow police to enter a property's yard or driveway to conduct compliance testing, reinforcing measures to protect victims—I emphasise 'victims'—and prevent further harm. These powers will also provide our police with greater clarity and authority to carry out their duties, whilst respecting privacy and due process.

I acknowledge that tackling domestic violence requires a holistic approach and short, medium and long-term strategies to address this critical issue. In this context, I consider this practical empowerment of police to be a no-brainer.

I sincerely hope that the opposition and the Independents can join the government in providing unanimous support for this Bill, signalling the 15th Assembly of the Northern Territory's united and strong support for the victims of domestic violence.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I support the Police Administration Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which reinforces our commitment to law and order and arms our police with the legal authority they need to keep Territorians safe.

For too long we have seen criminals take advantage of the laws watered down by Labor, defying domestic violence orders with impunity and our police being unable to act swiftly due to unnecessary restrictions. That ends today. This legislation strengthens our enforcement framework by providing clear decisive powers to our police force, ensuring that it can do what it does best—protect our community.

Under the previous Labor government, crime rates surged and the rights of offenders were placed above the safety and rights of law-abiding citizens. Under eight years of Labor there was an horrendous 82% increase in domestic violence assaults, the highest in the country. Police were restricted in their ability to act, with their

hands tied by weak laws that prioritised offenders over victims. This Bill will ensure that police no longer are the ones with their hands tied; now it will be the offenders.

We had eight years of Labor diluting our domestic violence laws, and the state of domestic violence in the Territory is appalling. Territorians deserve better than this. We must turn this around. This is why we are acting. We are acting fast because the Finocchiaro CLP government believes in real consequences for crime. Labor did not care about the victims. It did not put the rights of victims above the rights of offenders, but our government is.

In the Territory domestic violence offenders breach DVOs time and again, and nothing happens. It is a revolving door. Labor did nothing to address this. There were no firm consequences for these offenders. With our tough-on-crime approach we are ensuring that offenders are dealt with in the way they deserve and with the consequences they deserve.

In 2025 more reforms to reduce crime is a priority for our government. This Bill is more than just a legal measure; it will support those who suffer in silence and live in fear. It is another promise to innocent Territorians that we will always put their rights above the rights of offenders.

This Bill will ensure police have the appropriate legal authority to act decisively against anyone who poses a risk by breaching their parole or DVO conditions. It does three critical things.

This Bill will give police the power to enter a property and arrest those who breach parole. When parole is revoked, offenders can no longer evade justice.

It empowers police to conduct alcohol and drug testing of perpetrators subject to DVOs, even if they are on private property, because no-one subject to a DVO should be intoxicated and dangerous while under these restrictions.

Additionally, it eliminates legal barriers that previously delayed police intervention, ensuring that offenders will face swift consequences for their actions.

This is what it means to be tough on crime, not just words but action that protects victims, backs our police and restores safety to our communities.

Let me paint you a picture of what these new laws will look like in practice. If a police officer sees a person with a DVO standing on their property outside their home, the police will have the authority to step onto the property and conduct an alcohol or drug test on the spot. If the respondent complies, the officers simply leave; if not, consequences will follow that. Refusal to comply is no longer an option; it is an offence.

We cannot forget about balance. This Bill does not give police unchecked power. They will be required to act reasonably. If police visit a property and it is clear that no-one is home they will leave. This Bill ensures police have the authority to act where it is needed, but safeguards are in place against unnecessary intrusion.

These are real-world situations that our police face every day and have faced for far too long. That is why today we are giving back to them the legal backing they need to do their jobs, protect victims and hold offenders accountable. There will be no more loopholes or games, just clear enforcement of the law.

It is hard to believe that this has not always been the case. Then again, it is not difficult to understand when we remember that Labor governed the Territory for the last eight years. Our frontline officers have told us where the weaknesses are and what is needed, and we have listened. Labor ignored these calls for action. It let police struggle under difficult circumstances in a crime crisis.

We do not expect police to fight crime with one hand tied behind their backs. Since coming to office we have passed strong crime laws, including laws for tougher bail conditions, new knife wanding powers, mandatory sentencing for assaults against workers and cracking down on public nuisance drinking.

The results are clear: 600 additional criminals have been put behind bars since August. This week we will go even further. By granting police greater entry and enforcement powers, we are ensuring criminals, especially those who breach parole or DVOs, are held accountable. This is real law and order in action.

This Bill is not just about punishing offenders; it is about protecting victims. For too long women and families who have suffered under threat of domestic violence have been let down by a weak system. Imagine living in constant fear of someone breaching their domestic violence order, because there are not enough

consequences in place, and being too scared to leave your own home. This is no way to live. That is why we are changing this, and this Bill will play an important part in that.

This is just the start. We will continue changing the laws until our community feels safe again. We will not stand by, like Labor did, while offenders continue to violate the safety of those they have already hurt and those they plan to hurt.

To add to our action, yesterday we introduced the Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill. This will reinstate mandatory sentencing for repeat DVO breaches, increase victim support funding by raising offender penalties, provide more resources for victim services and expand victim protection so that they are informed when their abuser violates their conditions.

When Labor scrapped mandatory sentencing for DVO breaches it sent a message that breaking these laws had no real consequences. No victim should have to live in fear, wondering whether the system will protect them.

When we were elected we made a promise to Territorians to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. This Bill is another step in delivering on that promise. It empowers our police, strengthens our laws and enhances our capacity to hold criminals accountable. It will help ensure justice for victims and protect victims, which is our top priority. When a domestic violence offender is behind bars they are not out on the streets causing more harm.

Throughout this year, which is our government's year of action, we will make necessary changes to laws to protect the community because that is what Territorians deserve. We will not back down until we have rebuilt the economy and restored our lifestyle. We are committed to reforming our justice system to reduce crime, protect victims and hold violent and repeat offenders accountable and keep them off our streets because this government will always put the rights of victims above the rights of offenders.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I will address the government's recent amendments to the *Police Administration Act*, specifically concerning the power of entry related to domestic violence order compliance testing.

The recently introduced Police Administration Legislation Amendment Bill represents a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to combat domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory. At the heart of this amendment is the introduction of powers for police to enter premises without a warrant when dealing with prescribed respondents. This change is designed to strengthen our ability to enforce DVOs and ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals.

We have heard time and again stories of domestic violence victims who are too scared and refuse to lay charges against their perpetrators. These changes will help the victims by taking that responsibility off their shoulders.

Under this new provision police officers may enter a place if they reasonable suspect a prescribed respondent is present. Entry to dwellings still requires the occupier's consent, maintaining a balance between enforcement and privacy rights. Officers can remain on the premises for the time necessary to confirm the person's presence and exercise their prescribed powers.

These amendments are not made lightly. The need to support police with enhanced powers to address domestic violence comes in response to the alarming rates of domestic and family violence in our Territory.

The Northern Territory experiences domestic violence rates well above the national average. In 2024 Northern Territory Police recorded over 42,000 occurrences of domestic and family violence, a significant increase from 15,000 in 2010. On average there are 61 domestic and family violence incidents per day. Almost two-thirds of victims are female, and two of every five assaults involve the use of a weapon.

Domestic violence is not only a direct threat to victims but also a catalyst for other offending, including property crime and antisocial behaviour. The impact of domestic violence extends beyond immediate victims, with more than one million children across Australia affected by family violence each year. Indigenous women in Australia are 45 times more likely to experience domestic violence and 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence-related assaults.

Despite high rates of domestic violence, reports of sexual assault in the Northern Territory are falling compared with other jurisdictions, suggesting that there is significant under-reporting—again, there is a need to take this responsibility off victims' hands. These statistics highlight the urgent need for more effective measures to combat domestic violence.

Enhanced police powers will enable swift interventions, better protections for victims and improved enforcement of domestic violence orders, ultimately helping to reduce the devastating impact of domestic violence on families and communities.

This amendment Bill is part of a broader strategy to improve our justice response to domestic and family violence. You can see that with some of the other changes we have made since coming to government in August 2024.

These powers come with appropriate safeguards. There is a requirement, as my colleague stated, for the occupier to consent to entry to dwellings. Police will ensure that they respect privacy, but they also want to protect the people at risk. That is the reason we are making these changes.

These amendments represent a crucial step in our ongoing fight against domestic and family violence. By standing by our police and giving them the tools they need to enforce DVOs effectively, we are sending the clear message that domestic violence has no place in the Northern Territory.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly, and I urge all members to support these vital changes that will keep Territorians safe from violence. Stand by your words, stand by what you have said about domestic violence and commend these changes to the Assembly.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Our government is not afraid to take strong action on domestic violence and keep Territorians safe, unlike those opposite when they were in power. They continually watered down the law for eight long years, putting the rights of offenders above the rights of victims. When Labor removed mandatory sentencing for domestic violence breaches, I think in 2019, it had untold consequences, letting domestic violence offenders walk the streets free while their victims lived in fear.

I will give a history lesson and talk about some of the victims who suffered under the previous Labor government's regime. I will start with Kumarn Rubuntja, a woman in Alice Springs who died. Being in your area I think you are aware of this case, Madam Speaker, so forgive me if I get some facts wrong. You probably know this case better than I do.

Kumarn Rubuntja went with now Senator Jacinta Price to Canberra so that the federal politicians could hear about domestic violence. She was a proud and fierce defender of women's rights and stood against domestic violence. That is why it was all the more horrific when we learnt that she was killed out the front of Alice Springs Hospital at the hands of her husband, someone who was meant to love and care for her. I believe that he ran her over. That was terrible. It is indicative of the sorts of things that happened under the previous Labor government when domestic violence rates rose by 82% over eight years.

This government will not stand by and let women suffer. I know that domestic violence is a complicated space, but there is only one way to eat an elephant, and that is by taking one bite at a time. You have to take one piece and strengthen that and then the next and the next until the women of the Northern Territory are safe.

I turn to the substantive matter of this legislation. There was a High Court case a few years ago. NT police were doing their job and being proactive, which is exactly what we want them to do. Unfortunately, over the last few years police have been unable to do that because of the previous Labor government's mismanagement. Various Police ministers and Chief Ministers left police without strong leadership. NT police did not feel as though they were supported by the Labor government of the day, as NTPA surveys repeatedly found.

In 2019 police in Katherine were doing their job and proactively checking up on domestic violence orders. They went to an address they knew a couple to be at. The police found a person there who was in breach of a domestic violence order, and that person was charged. The Local Court decision was appealed, and the Supreme Court opinion was that police did not have the power to enter that residence.

You can appreciate how chilling an effect that can have. Our police were doing what we want them to do; they were being proactive, not reactive and only answering calls to go to jobs. They were proactively using

their operational methods to check up on high-risk DVOs to make sure that men were not breaching them and the women were safe, but the Supreme Court pulled the rug out from under them. Thankfully, that case went to the High Court which brought some sense to the matter and corrected the decision of the NT Supreme Court.

It is now 2025; that case was in 2020, five long years ago—I will be generous and give Labor four. There were four years when the previous Labor government could have taken action to remove ambiguity and give our police confidence. Labor could have done that and said, 'We have your back. You can be proactive and do your job. You can go into the community and check up on these domestic violence orders. We trained you. We recruited you. We have robust procedures in place to manage your behaviour on the job. We trust you to do the right thing and keep Territorians safe.'

The previous Labor government—in which the Opposition Leader was a minister for its entire term—had that opportunity to strengthen the law to keep Territorian women safe. It should have backed our police and ensured there was no ambiguity. Unfortunately, it has taken this CLP government to come in and clean up the mess left by the previous Labor government, back our police and give them confidence.

My understanding is that there being a High Court decision on this matter there will not be further appeals. However, for the avoidance of all doubt, we need our hardworking NT police officers to be 110% confident that when they want to make sure that women are safe they can enter a property lawfully, according to their general orders and the legislation, so they will not be raked over the coals, hauled before the Supreme Court or taken to Canberra to face the High Court.

Police are doing the right thing—they are doing what we expect them to do—when they check whether a person with a domestic violence order is complying with that order. If the order says that the person is not allowed to be around their partner they should not be around their partner. If it says that a person is not allowed to drink while they are in the company of their partner they should not be drunk. These are simple things.

We 100% back our hardworking Northern Territory police. We will continue to give them the tools they need to do their job of keeping Territorians, women and Indigenous people safe.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I want to afford the Member for Blain time to correct the *Parliamentary Record* when he referred to Kumarn Rubuntja. It was Senator McCarthy not Senator Price.

Madam SPEAKER: Noted.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I have circulated amendments to the Police Administration Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 for everyone to consider. I thank the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for its assistance in preparing those amendments.

It is not easy to look at how we can create solutions that work across all our diverse communities, but I am quite proud of these amendments because they demonstrate partnership and working together to acknowledge and provide for two ways.

I have a good relationship with many of the police officers in my region. They are good people who are working hard, usually with community members, to get good outcomes. However, the systems they work in are broken and, consequently, we see issues of systemic racism.

The former Police Commissioner promised to work on these issues, and I believe he was working on the issue of racism and systemic racism in the police force. The apology at Garma showed his intent to form partnerships with our communities, and I hope that the next commissioner will also commit to continuing this work.

The amendment I have proposed reflects much of the police practice we see in the community, and this amendment can formalise a practice that is already happening and should be the normal practice in Aboriginal communities. This amendment can also be a standard application for Aboriginal communities.

There should be no police powers to enter a house without first seeking the support of an elder. We are everywhere in a community. I have watched police officers step over elders on the pathway to a house without realising that they are elders for the house. When an elder is resolving a conflict and yelling to a group in

Yolngu Matha I have observed people identify them as the troublemaker and send them home, even though they are the very person who can resolve the conflict.

It is not good practice for police officers to enter houses in Aboriginal communities by force, even when they are looking for someone who has broken their parole conditions, like in the Bill. It is far safer for everyone if police officers ask an elder to locate the person in question and bring them to the police. I have done this many times; I have found the person in question and explained to them that they need to present to the police, and then they presented to the police.

Our communities already have authorities. They are the rightful authorities for the land; they are the elders and leaders for the clans. These people are the government and the police; they are the leaders of our people. On our country, on our land, there is no place for police to walk over the top of that, and the government needs to understand that the best outcomes will be when we work together, with the leaders of both cultures working together. We know that working in partnership is better for everyone, police included.

My family and the community of Galiwinku remember my *wawa* who was shot on the beach in 1990. We knew his death should not have happened that day. There were family members who could have brought my *wawa* to the police, and they would have done that because we knew that he suffered from mental illness and could become violent and difficult to manage.

Coroner Alasdair McGregor made many comments, suggestions and recommendations in his report that addressed the importance of police working with elders, leaders and community. The Coroner made the point that the police aides or Yolngu working with police should be given equal status as the senior police so that an alliance could be formed. He could see the importance of equal status and an alliance. The Coroner understood that the police came from an entirely different culture and needed to work in equal partnership with Yolngu leaders to avoid my *wawa*'s death.

It is 35 years since my *wawa* was shot on the beach and 34 years since this recommendation was made, and we are yet to see any formalisation of partnerships; we are yet to see a way in which police work in partnership with our people.

Every time I said these things I heard governments say, 'But we employ liaison officers'. That is good, but it is not what I am talking about. A liaison officer is very low in the police hierarchy; they do not even get the pay of a graduate police officer. I am talking about the senior elders of our communities, people whose rank might equal the higher ranks of the police force. Their knowledge and training as leaders of their clans means that they are highly ranked. It is the same as asking me to work under junior police officers as a liaison officer; it is not appropriate because I am an elder and a senior leader for my people.

As I have said before, we must move towards having resources for peacekeepers in the region. Elders, like me, can work alongside police under our authority as clan leaders. In the same way that I have helped to find people and bring them to police when needed we can do this job, which brings greater safety for everyone.

We are yet to hear the recommendations from the coronial inquiry into Kumanjayi Walker's death, but we know that if the elders had been asked to locate this young man and bring him to police he may still be alive.

When the government brings in a Bill that increases police powers to enter houses, I know that there are greater risks in this situation. This is why my proposed amendments outline that in our remote communities the police must work in partnership with the people.

The second part of this Bill gives police greater powers in relation to people who come under domestic violence orders. Again, this is a situation when we need to be careful. I am told by DV sector workers that in domestic violence situations the involvement of police officers can quickly endanger victims. This information is coming from the victims. I am told that their information about how to protect themselves does not include increased powers like these.

I am also aware that the DV sector was not consulted on this Bill. If the aim of this Bill is to protect victims of violence, surely the best step is to work with the sector, the community and the police to create legislative changes.

This Bill did not go to the scrutiny committee either, so communities have been unable to raise their concerns. NAAFLS put out a statement that it may have provided to the scrutiny committee. It states:

> *We know that these types of powers disproportionately impact Aboriginal people in the NT and could be used as a tool for harassment and over-policing … There are no safeguards in the legislation to prevent misuse, such as excessive or targeted checks …*
>
> *… Increasing police powers are not in line with recommendations handed down by the coroner, following the coronial inquest …*

That is the DV coronial inquest last year.

This makes me concerned that the government is not being genuine; rather, the government wants to look like it is doing something to tackle domestic violence, but it is not genuine.

In New South Wales police ran Operation Amarok. Over four days they conducted 12,382 DVO compliance checks, but we have no data on whether it made people safer. We need the government to implement changes that make people safer.

Family violence has sadly become an issue for many families. I need to be clear and say that family violence is not part of Yolngu law; it is unlawful. We do not want to see this violence happening, and our communities want support to create community-led solutions to address this tragedy.

In my electorate the Galiwinku Women's Space is guided by senior women leaders. These women have called for pathways that stem from Yolngu *rom*—our way—to work with young people for early intervention, the young women with the *miyalk* (female elders) and the young men with the *dhirramu* (male elders), learning how to create respectful strong relationships. This is what many of our ceremonies teach—discipline and respect—and we need these ceremonies more than ever.

It is clear that the balanda systems for dealing with family violence are not working. Police-imposed domestic violence orders do not bring clans together so that we can create the terms of the order and make a plan of how to keep people safe in the community, to protect victims from being harmed. DVOs are created without the broader families' involvement. This is not the best outcome in our communities where families live side by side.

In the instance of this Bill, when a police officer wants to check whether someone is complying with a DVO the elders must be a part of that. We want to ensure that everyone is kept safe. Giving police greater powers to enter our houses will create less safety. Many police officers will find an elder to assist them when they are looking for someone, but we know when a rogue police officer who decides to be a cowboy comes through a community that things can become dangerous. I believe the government's intentions are good, it wants to provide greater protections, but this Bill provides less protection for people, including police officers.

Through my amendments I have created a different pathway for policing these laws in Aboriginal communities, but even in town police officers should go through the process of requesting a warrant to enter a house. It creates a check that people expect to be in place. Amendment 1 to clause 5 provides that.

Although the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel has been good, I do not have a department to advise me, so I encourage the government to look at the amendments I put forward and consider whether there is a way of incorporating those ideas within a government amendment, if needed.

In this Chamber there are 25 members, all equally elected. We are meant to listen to each other. If we work together we might achieve outcomes.

I do not support the Bill that the government has brought forward, but I believe that the amendments I have proposed will improve this Bill and make it much safer for the Northern Territory.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I voice my gratitude for the work our police force does every day. Like everyone in this Chamber, I voice my commitment to tackling domestic violence in the Northern Territory. We know how acute the domestic violence crisis is. We just heard the horrific figures from the Member for Fannie Bay.

We need to take urgent action to enhance women's and children's safety, so the important question for me is: will this Bill make women and children safer? In considering it I sought advice from many of the specialist services that work directly with victims of domestic and family violence. I asked them directly: will this Bill make women and children safer? Their answer was clear—no. They said that if we truly want to protect

women we need better support, proper training for police and adequate resources to help police handle high-risk situations effectively. In fact, their concern was this Bill could make women and children less safe.

I support our police. They work incredibly hard, often in high-risk and challenging circumstances. They have a critical role in keeping us all safe. They work under incredible pressure, and they do not have enough support. However, enhancing police powers without thoughtful consideration of the wider consequences does not make communities safer. Evidence from jurisdictions across Australia has shown that increasing police powers alone does not reduce crime. In many cases it leads to overpolicing, increased community mistrust and the erosion of civil liberties.

In the Northern Territory we must be especially cautious. Aboriginal people are already devastatingly over-represented in the criminal justice system. Expanding police powers risks making Aboriginal communities even more vulnerable to overpolicing and harassment. This is why I will support the Member for Mulka's amendments, which reflect the reality on the ground in communities and act to strengthen this Bill.

Like every person in this Chamber I am committed to doing whatever we can to keep women and children safe. I am committed to doing what will work. When we talk about protecting women and children from domestic, family and sexual violence we must always take the necessary steps to do it in ways that are effective, evidence based and in consultation with the people who work on the ground to keep our communities safe.

When I sought advice from specialist services and asked whether it would make women and children safer their answer was no. These people work every day on the front line with women and children who are survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence. If we want to protect women those services need better support, proper training for police and adequate resources to help them handle high-risk volatile situations effectively. Expecting police officers to make split-second decisions without the proper support and training will not keep women safe; in fact, it could put them at greater risk.

We have heard from experts that the recommendations of the coronial inquiry into the deaths of four Aboriginal women should be central to any reforms made in this Chamber. Other members have made reference to these recommendations.

Yesterday we heard from the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence that recommendations 7 and 17 were being implemented. What about the other 33 recommendations? It is important to note that none of the 35 recommendations made by the Coroner in that report suggest expanding police powers. We must make sure that any expansion of police powers comes with appropriate safeguards for police and community members—oversight mechanisms and mechanisms like those proposed by the Member for Mulka. Expanding police powers without these measures could worsen disadvantage and take us further from our commitment to closing the gap and to the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, just last week recommitted to by the government.

Domestic violence is complex, and we must address it in as many ways as possible. I acknowledge the positive news that the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence shared yesterday and today that funding for the co-responder model in Alice Springs is being continued and has been expanded to the Darwin/Palmerston and Katherine regions. I was happy to hear that this has started in Katherine, Darwin and Palmerston, because people on the ground have asked me about it. The sector looks forward to hearing more details on how it will be implemented. I hope that we can get clarity on funding and timelines for the co-responder model, because we must ensure that our officers have the appropriate time and training to be better equipped to handle these situations and work with the co-responder model.

If we truly want to enhance safety for victims and survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence we must focus on what works. This means improving support services, providing police with the right training and resources and investing in community-led safety initiatives. It also means genuine consultation with Aboriginal communities and people on the ground doing this work, particularly when legislative changes are proposed. This approach, grounded in justice, equity and respect for human rights, will build safer communities. Expanding police powers without the necessary safeguards and the input of those most affected is not the solution.

I do not support this Bill, but if we are to pass it I urge the Chamber to support the Member for Mulka's amendments to provide protection to people in our community.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been vocal about the dire need for increased support, funding and action for domestic, family and sexual violence. It has been well established that we are facing

a violence epidemic. We have the worst rates of domestic violence in the country, with some estimates suggesting that up to seven or eight out of every 10 women in the NT experience domestic, family or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Intimate partner homicides are seven times higher than average. I extend my deepest sympathies to the families who have mourned a dear loved one, and I recognise the strength of all victims and survivors.

I also stress that domestic, family and sexual violence is not a women's problem or a problem that concerns individual families; it is a societal issue that must be addressed collectively by everyone. I remind everyone that it is a sensitive and serious issue and to try not to politicise it. It is frustrating to hear, 'Labor did or did not do this'—I know; I was vocal against Labor for the last eight years and frustrated by the lack of funding.

Mr Edgington: What has changed?

K McNAMARA: I am still just as frustrated, but it is not a good enough excuse. I am sick of the government saying, 'Labor did not do this'; just because the former government did not do it, it is not okay for you not to do it. I want better outcomes.

Given the terrible Territory context in regard to domestic, family and sexual violence I genuinely appreciate that the CLP government has put this dire issue on the agenda and is taking action. I never want to get in the way of changes that would protect victims; however, a concerning trend is emerging within the CLP. None of its actions seem to be supported by experts or the peak bodies in the area that it is legislating.

I come to this as someone who has not worked in the sector, but I have personal experience with men's violence and am a survivor. As a regular person when I look at the legislation my first thought might be, 'That sounds good; maybe this will protect victims', but I cannot just go by my random thought bubbles, so I spoke to legal services, women's shelters and people on the front line who are doing this every day and asked what they think about it. They are the experts, as well as the women who are experiencing that. Doing that changed my opinion on this legislation.

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, the North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service and the Top End Women's Legal Service all released media statements on their concerns about these changes and disappointment on the lack of consultation, given they are three key legal services that deal with domestic, family and sexual violence every day. It is not hard to consult properly. We hear in this Chamber, 'We visited and met them', yet the organisations are releasing media statements saying, 'We have not been consulted'. It is not good enough.

NAAJA identified:

> *… any expansion of police powers needs proper consultation, scrutiny and robust oversight. These expansions of powers always have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal Territorians.*
>
> *…*
>
> *These bills come at a time when 40 Aboriginal people are taken into custody every day across the Northern Territory. Expanding police powers … will not reduce crime or improve community safety, it will only further harm Aboriginal Territorians.*

We do not have to be the ones who come up with solutions for this epidemic. We should not, because we are not the experts.

A mere four months ago the Territory Coroner, Elisabeth Armitage, released her findings from the inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women who were killed as a consequence of domestic violence—I would say men's violence. This incredibly detailed report has 35 recommendations on what we can do to prevent more of these tragic murders. Not one of these 35 recommendations was to expand police powers. Everyone keeps asking about these recommendations because so much work was put into it. We ask whether they will be implemented and get wishy-washy answers—'Maybe one or two, or maybe not'. I do not understand where the hesitation to listen to experts comes from.

The report highlighted a problem of 'fear or distrust of Police or other service providers', as well as the fear of repercussions, compromising community support and shame. The report highlighted multiple examples of how women who reach out to the police for help often do not get the protection or help they are looking for and, in some cases, may be charged with criminal offences. This misidentification of perpetrators happens often, particularly for First Nations women, and it is dangerous.

Throughout the report there was criticism of the police and their handling of DV incidents, but at no stage did the Coroner identify their lack of power to enter a premises to be one of the key issues. It is clear that there is so much work to be done on how our police force responds to DFSV and the services we provide to victim–survivors before we rush into expanding the range of potentially harmful tools available to the police. If we want to take DFSV seriously let us implement the 35 recommendations the Coroner put forward.

I highly recommend that everyone read this report and its recommendations. I will not read them all out, but I will highlight a few key recommendations that have clear pathways for us to pursue.

Recommendation 1 is:

> *The NT Government should establish a sustainable permanent DFSV whole-of-government coordination mechanism (DFSV-ICRO) to lead consistent and evidence-based DFSV policy and practice, and health, housing and community services to address DFSV.*

The Coroner heard from the Territory's domestic, family and sexual violence sector that a peak representative body is needed to coordinate the sector's efforts to achieve meaningful and lasting change. The absence of a peak representative organisation adversely affects the sector's ability to be strategic and well organised, and impacts upon the government's ability to consult with and take advice from the sector. This peak body would also assist in elevating the voices of those with lived experience. It is important to highlight the fact that this peak body would work across health, housing and community services, as they are the areas we need to invest in if we truly want to see a reduction in this terrible violence.

Recommendation 5 is:

> *In order to reduce the victimisation of Aboriginal people, particularly women and children, the NT Government should develop and enforce an evidence-based strategy to reduce alcohol availability, taking into account that alcohol increases the frequency and severity of DFSV and reducing alcohol availability has a significant impact on reducing DFSV.*

We know that alcohol is a driver of the horrific rates of domestic, family and sexual violence. Alcohol does not cause it on its own, but it exacerbates it. Most domestic violence offenders in the NT Supreme Court were intoxicated at the time of the offence, so let us actually address the issues with alcohol that we see in the Territory. At the last sittings the CLP government scrapped the minimum unit price, despite its effectiveness, and brought in no other policy to replace it. Every other state and territory has a strategic plan on alcohol harm minimisation, yet we do not. That is simply not good enough. Where is the plan?

As per the Menzies School of Health Research, the cost per person of alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory is more than four times the national level. I look forward to supporting the Member for Johnston's upcoming motion on implementing an alcohol action plan in the NT.

To me, a government that is taking domestic violence seriously would first thing be up here with a comprehensive research plan to tackle the alcohol problem in the NT. We have not seen that.

I highlight recommendation 7, which states:

> *As a matter of urgency, the NT Government should provide further and sufficient funding to the current Alice Springs co-responder pilot (NT Police and the Department of Children and Families … DFSV Co-responder model) to guarantee its full implementation and independent evaluation. The model must involve victim survivors (including children) as well as perpetrators. Adequate funding (inclusive of independent evaluation) should be provided so that this model can be evaluated, replicated and implemented in other regions …*
>
> *In addition, the NT Government should consider the development and implementation of further co-responder models, including:*
>
> *i. consideration of models based on the success of the Queensland models, and*
>
> *ii. consideration of NT Police partnering with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop a community-led co-responder model to incidents of domestic and family violence in remote NT communities.*

This past week I met with people from the North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service for the second time this year and heard from them about their perspective on this legislation. They too pointed out all the recommendations in the Coroner's report and highlighted the need for co-responder models.

Even the police are recognising that they alone cannot respond, with Acting Deputy Commissioner Michael White stating:

> *I think it's not a job [for police] alone to do. I think we are attending to the critical crisis points when an event is occurring or just occurred and it is for all of us in the whole … to be able to wrap around the services of the victim to get them as much support as possible to make them safe and to give them the ability to separate themselves from a situation so they can then make informed decisions to further and protect themselves with the support of—whether it's a DV specialist, a counselling services, women's shelter, those sorts of things.*

This would help ensure that the response is culturally appropriate and has the right approach for incredibly sensitive, distressing situations.

Coroner Armitage dedicates 28 pages on the role of police, touching on resourcing, training and changes to the system. Once again, no mention was made of expanding police powers to enter property. Instead, the Coroner suggested that NT Police:

- embed interpreters and/or Aboriginal liaison officers in the emergency call centre
- provide PARt (Prevent. Assist. Respond. Training) to all current police officers, auxiliaries and new recruits, including emergency call centre workers. This training package has been designed specifically for this purpose and has been rolled out for some time now, with positive feedback. There is, however, a lack of clarity about the future funding and continuous evaluation and improvement of this measure
- expand the domestic, family and sexual violence command in Alice Springs and Darwin
- expand the NT Police family harm coordination daily auditing program.

Dr Marianne Tiemensma is a forensic pathologist who gave evidence to this inquiry. She stated:

> *… you just think: But this was something waiting to happen for the last 20 years. This could have happened last year or last month or last week. It's not a surprise that this happened, it was expected. And … you just think: But how could you not have stopped this? Anybody can see this coming.*

Let us be the ones to put a stop to this unnecessary heartbreaking violence and enact these 35 recommendations from the extensively researched coronial inquest.

I encourage everyone to engage with and support the Member for Mulka's amendments. This is him coming in here with his lived experience as a leader for his community and saying, 'Work with me. This is what I know will work in my community.'

I do not think it is okay for a government or lawmakers to say, 'I have this thought bubble. Here is what I will do. Let us give the police X, Y and Z.' It has to come from evidence and from speaking to the organisations. When you speak to each one they will say, 'We do not support this legislation'.

For example, one of the things I heard from people at the legal service is instead of making a law for alcohol testing it should be a law for a protected person to have a containment area of 100 metres around their property so that if an offender came the protected person could call the police. They said, 'If the government had spoken to us, we could have told them a bunch of different things to implement to make domestic violence situations safer'. However, the government did not do that; it has these bloody brain farts and just wants to give the police more powers. The people on the ground are saying that is not the right way to go about it.

I will support the Member for Mulka's amendments, but I cannot support the Bill in its original form.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Mr Deputy Speaker, there were some interesting quotes in the Member for Nightcliff's speech.

I pick up on the commentary about the comprehensive plan. I do not how much more comprehensive the Member for Port Darwin can be. She has spoken until she has been blue in the face on the Circuit Breaker

Program and all the work being done in the domestic violence space. I do not think it would matter what we said; the opposition and crossbench members just do not like it.

The Police Administration Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 amends the *Police Administration Act* to give police express powers to enter premises without a warrant to arrest a person who is in breach of their parole or whose parole has been revoked. It also gives express powers for police to enter onto private property for the purpose of administering a test to a respondent who is subject to a domestic violence order condition which requires them to submit to an alcohol or drug test. This power is needed, as DVOs routinely include conditions prohibiting a respondent from being in the presence of the victim or protected person or in the same location where the victim resides.

This amendment Bill strengthens the law to protect victims. When police are doing routine checks they can make sure the perpetrator, as I stated, is not in the same house or location as the victim. If the perpetrator is there, they can be charged with a breach of bail.

Domestic violence reached a crisis point over the last eight years under Labor, which is now in opposition. Domestic violence has risen by 82% across the Territory. These statistics are not lost on any of us in this parliament, as I am sure we are well aware of this increase in domestic violence in our own electorates. It is the response that is the issue.

The Northern Territory has the worst domestic violence rates in Australia. In fact, death by intimate partner homicide is seven times the national average. I will let that sink in. In Katherine, where I have lived for 35 years, this rate is horrendous. Last year four women lost their lives to domestic violence. The fact that this was not on the front page of every paper in the nation is a crying shame.

The flow-on effect of these deaths in our community is horrendous. There are the loved ones who have lost a mother, auntie, sister or daughter and the children whom this affects, going on without their mother. It is heartbreaking. However, we did not see action under the previous Labor government.

In Question Time all the Leader of the Opposition wanted to know was whether the Chief Minister had read a report that was from May 2023—under her government. That is laughable, but this is not a laughing matter; it is a serious matter that all Territorians need to be responsible for. As a government, we are working hard and putting things in place to make this better. The opposition members are the same people who were in government for eight years and saw this appalling rate of domestic violence skyrocket to 82%.

Through conversations I have as the Member for Katherine I hear of accommodation issues and the lack of safe spaces for predominantly women, but sometimes men, suffering domestic violence. Conversations with Katherine women's shelter staff and staff at KWILS have been concerning, and I have spoken about this in the House before.

The Katherine women's shelter is a 25-bed facility that is at capacity. Jo, who has worked at the centre for the last 20 years, told the story of a 19-year-old woman who walked into the centre a few years ago after saying that her partner had pushed her. Jo was pleased that the woman knew this was not okay, and this is the awareness we need in the community, not when they have been stabbed or beaten with a metal pole. In Katherine 239 women have been turned away because of capacity restraints in the last year, and Jo says that if the same 19-year-old woman walked into the centre today she would likely not be given a bed and would be turned away because of the increase in domestic violence, which reached crisis point under the previous government.

Domestic violence has reached new heights, and this is nothing to be proud of. We acknowledge the need for funding, which the minister has spoken about plenty of times in this House. We need to invest in programs that deliver real change to Territorians and start with early intervention and prevention. Minister Cahill has spoken until she was blue in the face about the Circuit Breaker Program and the additional $36m ongoing funding for domestic violence. That will also support the implementation of the Coroner's recommendations.

It is important to have continued and additional investment in services and programs that work to prevent and address domestic, family and sexual violence impacts. There needs to be ongoing coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the whole-of-government response. The Circuit Breaker team that was stood up in Alice Springs late last year continues to be a priority of our government to revive and support the region.

I note that Minister Cahill and Minister Burgoyne met with homelessness, legal and domestic, family and sexual violence frontline providers and workers. Although those opposite say that we do not talk to frontline

workers, the minister has clearly stated numerous times that she does. She also attended the night patrol meeting and joined the Circuit Breaker night staff team in action on the streets while she was in Alice Springs.

On 7 March in Katherine we had the first of many meetings of the Katherine local patrollers in a new initiative to have a more coordinated response, which has been happening in Alice Springs, to crime and antisocial behaviour. I commend the Katherine police, Territory Housing, Kalano patrol and the Circuit Breaker team for working together towards better solutions.

Agencies are working together for the prevention of crime and domestic violence. Each night the police tip out many litres of alcohol. This is money that could be spent on rent or food for families. It is through this initiative that early intervention takes place. A youth out on the streets and picked up by police is followed up the next day by Children and Families. Conversations are had with the family, and from there conversations can be followed up with Education, Health and other relevant agencies.

We will not be dishing out funding to services that were clearly not working. The minister has been clear about that. There are more than 35 not-for-profits in Katherine that all receive funding from the Northern Territory Government or federal government—sometimes both—yet we have not seen much relief in the rates of homelessness and domestic violence in our town. The minister said that she will not continue to fund things that do not work. There needs to be evaluation so that supports go to the right areas.

This amendment supporting the police is a step in the right direction. In the almost eight months since we were elected we have done more than the previous Labor government did in eight years. We introduced our reducing-crime package in the first sittings; brought in Declan's law; gave police more powers for wanding operations; strengthened bail laws; introduced ramraid legislation; made public drinking an offence; and lowered the age of criminal responsibility. On this side of the House we back our police and will not shy away from representing Territorians. We were elected on a mandate of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory Labor opposition supports measures that keep our community safer. We support strong measures, evidence based and expert led, that help to address this scourge of domestic, family and sexual violence that is disproportionately impacting the lives of too many Territory women and kids.

On the face of it these are relatively minor amendments to give police additional operational powers to help them to do their job. We are supportive of giving police the operational tools they need to keep our community safer, but as with most of the Bills from the CLP government so far, the government has refused to send this amendment Bill to the much-hyped scrutiny committee.

It also appears that there was no public consultation or engagement on this Bill prior to it being introduced.

I received a half-hour briefing about this Bill two weeks ago, which I appreciate. However, I am not sure that the domestic violence sector or the legal sector were afforded the opportunity to scrutinise or give feedback to the CLP government on this important Bill. These may well be useful additional powers for police, but it is hard to separate these considerations from the growing feelings of scepticism towards the government as it continues to duck from scrutiny and accountability. I look forward to being proved wrong in future years, but unfortunately the last few months have led us to this path.

Over the past few weeks we have seen a messy police leadership matter play out under the leadership of the Chief Minister, who is also the Police minister. Initially, the Chief Minister tried to brush off this matter. She tried to hide behind the ICAC to say that she could not do anything about it, then was found out through parliament that she could have acted sooner.

After almost three weeks of public pressure the Chief Minister was forced into action to meet community expectation by announcing an independent review into senior hiring practices in the Northern Territory Police Force. Unfortunately, the lack of action and leadership from the Chief Minister meant the damage has already been done, and the Chief Minister has significantly exacerbated a crisis of confidence in the executive of our hardworking Territory Police Force. The Chief Minister's dithering on this issue has been incredibly damaging for frontline police. It has had a massive impact on morale, police officers' faith in the integrity of their leadership and the community's confidence in our senior police leadership.

This is in no way an attack on our police officers, because we know they work incredibly hard and face enormous challenges. From our cadet police and liaison officers to the top brass, police make many sacrifices in order to support and keep our communities as safe as possible. However, there is a need to look at whether some internal practices within Police can be strengthened from an integrity point of view.

I suggest that amendments such as this one the Police minister has brought forward should be deferred until an independent inquiry is complete and the community has had a chance to see that report. There is a question of integrity hanging over the government in relation to the matter I have outlined. The Chief Minister needs to sort this out as soon as possible in order to move us forward and reduce the impact on our police so that they can continue to keep our community safe.

This police crisis is undoubtedly having a flow-on impact on community safety. In her attempts to duck and weave on the issue, the Chief Minister has taken her eye off the ball when it comes to the law-and-order agenda that she promised Territorians.

The last time I mentioned crime statistics those opposite went out of their way to retaliate with personal attacks. It is clearly a sore point for them, which is understandable when the CLP has staked its whole reputation on reducing crime, yet all its laws to deal with crime focus on after the fact, when crime has happened, not prevention.

I will be brave and mention crime statistics again, knowing that I will probably get a personal attack for it. You have an interest in them as well, Mr Deputy Speaker, because of the recent impact at your electorate office. The CLP government has finally released the crime statistics, which we saw last week on 21 March. They were delayed a number of weeks; however, it was great to see that the former Labor government's commitment to transparency has been retained …

Ms BOOTHBY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! What the Leader of the Opposition is saying is not true. We did not delay the crime statistics; it is the same system that Labor used for eight years. There has been no change, so I ask her to correct the record.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms UIBO: We were delighted that the CLP has taken on the transparency of continuing to publish the monthly statistics, although we still maintain they were late.

Looking at the combined December and January statistics we see that compared with the same time last year total offences against the person increased by 11.7%, from 2,117 to 2,364 offences; assaults increased by 12.3%, from 1,832 to 2,058 incidents; sexual assault and related offences increased by 17.6%, from 91 to 107 cases; and total domestic violence-involved assaults increased by 27.2%, from 1,100 to 1,399. Mr Deputy Speaker, these statistics did not make it into the Chief Minister's press release last Friday, but you can see them for yourself—anyone in the community can—because they are publicly available on the Northern Territory Police website.

When it comes to crime we would love to see the CLP government be genuine and give Territorians the full picture, because that is the only way we will see whether things are changing for the better. The CLP has mentioned that things are increasing in some areas and decreasing in others, but it is not giving us the full picture. The government is picking and choosing the data that it talks about, and that is disingenuous. There are many categories and factors of crime. Those I just mentioned have, unfortunately, increased. Anyone can judge the numbers.

The Chief Minister promised Territorians that she would reduce crime; it was her number one election pitch. I recently met with local businesses that have experienced multiple break-ins, and I have spent the last seven months talking to domestic violence services that are seeing demand for their services, unfortunately, rising significantly. They are asking when the government will listen to them and roll out the much-needed funding. Even you, Mr Deputy Speaker, was on the front page of the *NT News* complaining about crime under your own CLP government. Unfortunately, the government is not coming to help.

When the CLP brings in legislation like this the Territory Labor opposition is concerned that the government is simply tinkering around the edges, trying to look busy and trying to make a difference, but not going to the heart of the problem. It gives the impression of stronger action from the outside, but—as we have heard in this debate from the Members for Mulka, Nightcliff and Johnston, and on behalf of our Labor opposition—when those who do their job look closely they see that it will not go to the root of the challenges we face across our communities. There is not a lot to it.

Crime and antisocial behaviour has been an ongoing issue for Territorians. I am not suggesting that it popped up under the current CLP government; however, there is no quick fix. There are deeper issues at play which need to be addressed if we are to deal with the increase in crime.

In my first speech I said that I was concerned that all of the CLP's laws were aimed at dealing with crime after it occurs and that they do not work to stop, reduce or prevent crime, which is what Territorians expected when they went to the polls. Sadly, what we have seen over the last seven months is exactly that. There are more people in jail, but crime is not necessarily going down.

Similarly, the big announcement about domestic violence funding of $36m is all talk and no action. The government announced that funding is flowing, yet we heard from the Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence that none of this money will flow until after the Territory budget. Why did the CLP go out to the media to say it was already flowing? We have not been able to follow any of the money, and neither has the sector.

We applaud the government for saying that it will provide ongoing funding to the domestic violence sector. This is great news, which the Territory Labor opposition supports; however, the CLP government still has not answered the simple question of whether this new money is just a reannouncement of existing funding. We have asked this multiple times, and members of the crossbench have asked similar questions. Unfortunately, the CLP government continues to dodge this important question and refuses to provide the details that Territorians and the sector are asking for.

There is no evidence that this money has started to be rolled out, despite earlier media releases saying that it has. The Chief Minister said that we will not be able to see any of the specifics. There is no hard evidence to the contrary, so we remain sceptical on this issue.

We will keep asking the important questions because Territorians expect us to do so, and they expect the government to deliver. Addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in the Territory is way too important for smoke and mirrors and to be playing politics with.

The minister points to the Circuit Breaker Program as a shining example of where domestic violence funding has gone. There are two points I will make about this. First, this program is the former Labor government's co-responder model by a different name. Second, this is not a domestic violence program; it is a program aimed at supporting young people and diverting them from crime and antisocial behaviour. Of course, we support this program and will continue to do so, but this is not the intention of that domestic violence reduction money. We are pleased that the funding for the co-responder model—AKA the Circuit Breaker Program—is continuing. This seems to be the only youth support program the CLP is not ripping away funding from, but it should not come from the domestic violence bucket of funding either.

I am not sure who the CLP is trying to fool with this spin, but we know that the sector is not buying it. We desperately need genuine leadership from the CLP government on domestic, family and sexual violence. I honestly believe that only Minister Cahill can lead in this space because she seems to be the only minister who can answer our questions. Unfortunately, Minister Cahill's talent to lead will be quashed, as a threat to the Chief Minister's leadership and becoming Chief Minister in the future. We look forward to seeing Minister Cahill continue to rise above the CLP's petty personal politics, because she will be able to answer our questions when she becomes the Chief Minister.

The vast majority of crime in the Northern Territory is, unfortunately, domestic, family and sexual violence incidents. This is the biggest reason that our jails are full. Piecemeal legislation and promises of funding are simply not good enough to address the root causes of crime and domestic violence.

The domestic violence sector has been crying out for support and leadership on this issue. The CLP says that it steps up, but then unfortunately ignores the sector's expertise. What are the government's plans to address this critical issue? We are waiting, months in. I even tabled a document to provide the blueprint that was given by the sector, yet there is still no recognition of this.

We heard from my parliamentary colleagues about the Coroner's 35 recommendations from the inquest into the tragic domestic violence deaths of four Territory women.

It is for all these reasons that the Territory Labor opposition does not support this legislation going through at this time. We are not saying that we do not support giving police the right tools to help them do their job; we want police to be able to reduce crime. However, we strongly urge the CLP government to defer passing this legislation until the integrity matters within the NT Police Force are resolved, this Bill has been through

the process of the scrutiny committee and the CLP has put forward a more holistic strategic plan to address domestic, family and sexual violence in our communities.

The CLP government needs to listen to the experts in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, honest to goodness, I do not know where to even start. Holy moly! I shake my head sometimes because of the nonsense coming from the opposition. It wants to support police. It thanks our police. On the one hand, those opposite say that our police are amazing, and on the other hand they try to link two small amendments to powers of entry for police—straightforward, mechanical operational amendments to the legislation—to what it calls 'integrity issues within police', which I dispute, and the Justice Blow review into the promotions that have taken place for superintendents and above. The opposition is all over the shop.

The Opposition Leader and the Members for Johnston and Nightcliff talked about listening to the experts. Here is a gem for you: how about the High Court of Australia? Does that fit your criteria of being an expert? I am not sure who else you would like me to ask. In this country it pretty much does not get higher than the High Court of Australia.

I am truly concerned about the state of the opposition and crossbench because these are new lows of embarrassment. It shows that they are so desperate to find a platform and a voice that they will just flick and flutter mud, guff and junk around in the hope that it hits someone. Their machine-gun approach to government scrutiny and accountability is much the same as their machine-gun approach to government, whereby if they shoot enough bullets, hopefully it will hit something. That is not how you govern. I have a red-hot tip for you—because I was the Opposition Leader for a very long time—that is not how you do opposition either. I am happy to take you through a bit of a masterclass in surviving opposition for a very long time, Opposition Leader.

Honest to god, this is an embarrassing degradation of parliamentary debate if I have ever seen one. The Member for Nightcliff said that this legislation is a thought bubble. Is the High Court of Australia a thought bubble? I am not sure. She said that we needed to listen to the experts. Like the High Court of Australia? Would that be the people we would listen to? I am not sure.

I wrote down what the Member for Johnston said because it was good. She said, 'We need to be making laws in consultation with the people who make our community safe—you know, the people on the ground.' Like our police? Would they be the people on the ground, the experts, whom we would go to for community safety? That is logical to me. It seems normal that if there was a policing issue, law and order or something that involved crime, I would go to the police because—I do not know; maybe I got it wrong—that is their job. I think that they are the frontline experts in community safety, much like the High Court of Australia is the expert in law.

Anyway, let us not split hairs over some of these issues. I could stand here all night and tear apart the rubbish that is now captured in *Hansard* forever. In 50 years some young kid will read it thinking, 'Bloody hell, that was different back then'.

I draw hysterical members' attention to the fact that we are debating two simple, highly operational amendments to legislation that have come from community safety experts, the police, off the back of the legal experts, the High Court of Australia—to put my expert credentials out there for those who care so much about them. That is where this has come from.

We will not wait for the Justice Blow inquiry to happen because it has nothing to do with this. The experts told us what is needed to give police the powers they need.

To allay further concerns about powers of entry and all the rubbish and scattergun approach of those opposite, the police have the same powers and can enter a premises for a community correction order, an intensive community correction order, breach of suspended sentence and breach of interim and final supervision orders for serious sex offenders. That is quite a good list. Is it the best list? No. What are our laws trying to do? Make the list even better.

Let us go back to basics: what is parole? It is when the Parole Board lets a person out of jail a bit earlier. That person has been in jail because they are a criminal. The board looks at the situation and says, 'All right; you can go back into the community to start your reintegration and reconnection. You have done your time and are ready to go back to the community, but you have to follow certain rules.' Those rules are different every time because every criminal is different. The Parole Board—I would call its members experts—makes

that assessment on a personal crim-by-crim basis; there is not a one-size-fits-all parole order. We give them rules to follow.

Hopefully tonight, with the indulgence of those opposite, we will let the police find those people who do not do what the Parole Board said they must do. I am cool with that; I do not know about anyone else. It is great idea, enforcing the law. Who would have thought? You can have a law, but if it is not enforced it is not worth that much. This is a clear insight into how those opposite oversaw the highest rates of crime we have seen in the Northern Territory. They fundamentally missed that point.

We can have a law, but if it is not enforced people start to push the boundaries. That is why we are intervening earlier in young people's lives, because we need them to know that we care about them, will pull them up, tell them what they did was wrong and help them make better decisions. There is no point waiting until they are an adult criminal and end up in the big house to cry poor about how we should have helped them when they were little. We cannot ignore behaviour.

These amendments go to the core of enforcing the expectations of not only the community but also the Parole Board or whoever gave the domestic violence order. It is an element of it, and we will support safer domestic violence victims.

There is a parole component and a DVO component. Parole is about a criminal who has been convicted and is in prison being let out earlier with terms and conditions.

The other is for people who have a domestic violence order of any description—they are many and varied—which has terms and conditions as well. A common one is that the person to whom the DVO has been issued is not allowed to either be in the presence of the person who sought the order or drink in the presence of that person. Usually there is a strong connection between drinking, ongoing offending and domestic violence. They are run-of-the-mill ordinary things that happen daily.

Police need a greater opportunity to send a clear message that if you think a DVO is just a piece of paper that can be ignored you are wrong, and to find people who have a DVO and are thumbing their nose at the law and ignoring it. We are comfortable with these amendments.

Opposition Leader, here is a red-hot tip: you cannot come in here and say that you would love to support better powers for police and vote down every improved power for police. You vote against everything we bring to this parliament. Of all the amendments we have brought forward these are probably the most straightforward, least complicated and most operational. They are practical and tried and tested. It is not new or interesting; it is just practical stuff that gives police certainty and security in the execution of their powers, which they already have for a range of other similar offences. That is not to mention the law; there are all the procedural ways in which police have accountability and the things they must follow in all their interactions with any member of the public at any point. There is nothing in this legislation that can cause legitimate concern to anyone.

The Member for Nightcliff spoke extensively about DV. All three members tried to conflate issues and say that this was our answer to DV. Unlike those opposite who think they have the magical solution to everything, we recognise that this is a complicated problem, and like many others in the Territory it will take a multifaceted approach. This is one small tool to help with enforcement.

To put it in a practical sense, person A has a DVO against them and is not allowed to drink in the presence of person B, whom they would usually bash. We think that police should have the opportunity if they suspect that person A is drinking near person B to go in and breath test them, because person A was either doing the right or wrong thing. Police will breath test them and they will either blow over or not. The result will be 000 or 0.2 or whatever. That gives police the opportunity to say, 'Yes, you did drink, so you have breached your DVO. Let us go for a walk, come with me and I will give you a free ride in the back of the paddy wagon.'

Although that might be unpleasant for person A, they should not have done it in the first place. They were already on a warning, so it should not be a surprise when they have been drinking that the police come to their house. They have a DVO, which means those two people are separated. That person who is drunk when they should not be will have no opportunity to inflict harm, misery and pain on the victim. This is what we are talking about. It is beyond me how those opposite could turn this into something other than what it is.

There was talk about the royal commission. I love the praise for Minister Cahill. She is an excellent minister, and we are proud to have her in our team. She is doing a fantastic job. I am glad you noticed, because from the way you ask questions of her in parliament we would think you never heard her answer. Every day you

ask her the same three questions, and every day she explains it to you, yet you wake up each day and feel the need to ask her again. I do not know what is going on, but at least at the bottom of all that—you should take heart in this, Minister Cahill—you think she is doing a good job. Do not feel bad about repeating yourself as often as you must; I guess tiny bits are sinking in.

Those opposite talked about the Coroner's report. Police has implemented recommendations 10, 11 and 12; Children and Families has already done 7 and 15; and plenty more are being worked on. Work is underway, but not in the utopian way that those opposite believe.

The Opposition Leader's stunt in Question Time with the big, heavy, thick report that she tabled was so tricky that I was worried. That report was done in May 2023, and she had the gall to ask me what we have done about it. What did you do about it? You were the Attorney-General. The report would have come to you. It is unbelievable.

Mr Edgington: Maybe she tripped over it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It was the doorstop, so she did not get to read it; that is why. It was next to the Langoulant report; it got stuck between the TERC and Langoulant reports. CommSec reports were piling up on top of it; it got confusing. Even the ICAC report for Operation Sirocco was stuck in with it.

We had all these allegations about the cherrypicking of crime statistics, even though my media release acknowledged that crime was going up in other areas. We have said consistently, from day one, that the work we have done is just the beginning; there is a long way to go. I explained that again in Question Time. There is some good indicative data, and we are proud of that. In other areas there is a lot more work to do, but even where we are seeing some improvements there is a lot more work to do. None of this has us saying, 'Okay, house break-ins are done; that is good, we can forget about that.' It is a continuous process.

When we talk about a continuous process, I come back to what I am standing to talk about; that is, meaningful legislation that has come from the people on the front line—the experts—to give police certainty in the use of their powers in a way that make sense to enforce laws that already exist. It is the job of police to enforce the law; they are law enforcement officers. 'Enforce' means make people do what the law says to do. If we do not give them the power to do that, what are we saying to them? 'Stand there and look pretty, officer. The uniform is great. Just stand there, you'll be right.' Will that terrify people enough for crime to disappear? No, that is not how it works. The deterrent impact is good, and the uniforms are great and our cops are wonderful, but they need a little more than just being able to stand on the street corner and wave at people. They need the unchallengeable and unquestionable legal power to enforce the law.

I feel I have probably covered that. If there are further questions from those opposite, I am sure they will ask.

I thank the Member for Mulka for his amendments. I have read them and, obviously, we will go through them at the consideration in detail stage. Member for Mulka, we will not accept your amendments, but you will have the opportunity to speak to them, and I am happy to respond to each of them.

Thank you to everyone who contributed, despite the misguided way in which those opposite did. I encourage them to be less hysterical about every single thing the CLP brings into parliament. There is no ulterior motive other than to do the job we set out to achieve and Territorians elected us to do; that is, to rebuild the economy—the Territory Coordinator, merits review and all the other things we have been doing—and to reduce crime through our reducing-crime package, Declan's law, post-and-boast laws, mandatory sentencing, knife crime wanding and this legislation.

This is designed to make the lives of our police easier. If their jobs are easier, more certain and more efficient they can be back out on the streets faster and doing proactive policing. This Bill before us goes to the core of proactive policing. If police can stop a crime before it happens it does not get better than that.

A member: Saving lives.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: That is the whole point. So often our police have to attend afterwards; they are at the road crash, the death, the stabbing or the sexual offence. They are there to put it all together after and deliver justice, to be a part of that justice system.

With the rarer opportunities for police to do the proactive stuff, I cannot believe for a second that anyone in this Chamber would stand in their way, but that is what opposition members are saying. Last night they talked extensively about DV, and Question Time has been dominated by DV, but they will not allow our police to

enforce domestic violence orders. They may as well be turning their backs on victims, because what is the point of having a DVO if it means nothing?

It is a victim who gets the domestic violence order; they say, 'I want a DVO against that person'. The court, or police, or whoever, issues the DVO with the restrictions, and then someone has to ensure that the person is doing what is stipulated. That someone is our police. If you say, 'No, we don't actually want you to do that', you are telling the victim that their DVO is not worth the paper it is written on. I am not prepared to do that, and neither is my team. If you are, fill your boots; you can explain that to the sector you profess to love so much. You can explain it to the victims who get DVOs and your friends, family and constituents. We will not have to, because we are not standing for this.

There were 4,021 breach DVO offences charged over a 12-month period between 2024 and 2025, so people often breach their DVOs. We want to make sure compliance is to the highest possible standard to keep people safe. We do not believe that DVOs are just a piece of paper, and we do not believe in telling victims that they are not worth the paper they are written on. That is what you are saying. We stand with victims, the people who have been brave enough to seek those orders.

We stand with the Parole Board, which gives someone an opportunity to recommence their life in the community early. That is a great system; we have no problem with that, but it is a privileged opportunity. The court said that you would serve five, 10 or 20 years. If the Parole Board says, 'We'll wipe a year or two off that', whatever it might be, there is an expectation that you will be on your best behaviour. It is not dissimilar to your kids. If they muck up and you take away the iPad for an hour or two, you can say, 'I'll give it back to you, but be on your best behaviour'. If they do the same thing again, what happens? You up it; you say, 'No iPad for a week; how do you like that?'

The Parole Board has an important function to undertake. In giving a privilege, there is a responsibility. In having a right, there is a responsibility to exercise that right properly. That is what we are talking about. This is 101 fundamentals, and those opposite cannot bring themselves to do something as basic as this. They have not learnt a thing from the election. We hold out no hope of them supporting any increases in police powers or any laws that support community safety.

If they cannot support something identified by the High Court of Australia and the police as an operational frontline measure to support the enforcement of laws that relate to criminals being on our streets earlier or people who have active DVOs against them, god help us.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 4, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr GUYULA: I move amendment 1 to omit proposed section 126AB and insert new proposed sections 126AB and 126AC.

The purpose of this amendment is to require that members of the police force obtain a warrant to enter a place of residence in a non-Aboriginal community for the purpose of arrest relating to parole orders if the member believes on reasonable grounds that a person is at that residence.

This amendment also inserts section 126AC, which applies to Aboriginal communities. This section outlines that members must first ask an elder of the community to locate the person and bring that person to the member. Members may enter a residence only at the request of the occupier and in the presence of an elder if the member believes on reasonable grounds that person is at the residential premises.

Section 126AC also outlines that ceremonial grounds can be entered only with the permission of an elder and in the presence of an elder and only if the member believes on reasonable grounds that the person is there.

On Aboriginal country it is much safer for police officers to work with the elders of an Aboriginal community. That is what this amendment calls for. It is not appropriate for police to enter housing on Aboriginal country without support of an elder.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Member for Mulka, I appreciate you explaining the intent of your amendment. As I indicated earlier, we will not accept the amendment.

The purpose of the legislation as we have it drafted is that police do not have to get a warrant. It goes back to the fact that police already have these types of powers of entry for various other orders, such as community correction orders, intensive community correction orders, breach of suspended sentence and breach of interim and final supervision orders for serious sex offenders.

The Bill clearly requires the member to believe on reasonable grounds that the person is at the place. I assure you that—you mentioned this in speaking to your amendment—this is not about entering dwellings; it is about entering property. For example, it allows police to go through the front gate and approach the front door. Then they would obviously have to knock on the door, and they would not be allowed inside. That applies to other types of dwellings. There is no allowance for police to walk on in and walk through someone's house and wander around willy-nilly. There is a structured process to that. Therefore, it is not being accepted on those grounds.

The additional layers you embedded into your amendment about requiring an elder first would put far too much restriction on police in what is a highly operational environment. You would appreciate that if police have reasonable suspicion that someone is at a premises or is usually there, it is for a point in time. Therefore, if police were required by law to seek out an elder that could very much end in a situation where the intelligence trail has moved on and the person they reasonably suspected has moved on as well.

We will not be crystalising it into the legislation, but police out on community are embedded in their community and have a tremendous respect for the people they serve. There are many practical examples of when police engage with the community elders, TOs, leaders and family all the time to support the path-of-least-resistance outcome for what the police and the community are seeking. In a practical sense that may well be what happens from time to time, but it is just not a practical application in this amendment.

Amendment not agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that clause 5 stand as printed.

The Assembly divided:

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

Clause 5 agreed to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Mr Deputy Speaker, before we move on, can I please clarify one of my comments?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It does not change the outcome, as we have voted on that clause, but in an abundance of caution and because I have great respect for the Member for Mulka, I want to refine some of my comments that might have been a bit too broad.

If a person's parole has been revoked this power will allow police to go inside their house. If police suspect that a person has breached their parole, for the parole component police can go inside their house, because it has been revoked or there is a reasonable suspicion of the breach, but not for the DVO. It is not a fishing exercise. They must either know it is revoked or the person is there. Police cannot just go looking around people's houses. That is what I meant to say.

Clause 6:

Ms UIBO: How will police assess the safety of members of the public when exercising these powers in relation to a place?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Can you expand on your concern?

Ms UIBO: Some consultation we did with the DV sector raised concerns about possible unintended consequences if a police officer is entering a place. Police and the DV sector both gave the example of a residence. For example, a police officer enters a place—a residence—asking to check the parole parameters for an individual who may be on a conditional DVO, perhaps contact with the recipient, and there is a party happening at the back of the residence. If the perpetrator were to take retribution against the owner of the house, or a friend or family member—take it out on them, as opposed to complying with police—what mechanisms would be assessed for community safety?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is no different from how police do anything. It would be the same if they were marching into Casuarina, the mall or any other public space to deal with a violent offender. If police have information and need to enforce the DVO, they can enter the front yard, open the gate if it is a fenced property, walk through and around the back, find the person with the DVO, submit them to a breath test and the outcome will determine what action will be taken. If that person was to assault people or something else, the police would deal with that as they would in any other circumstance.

Ms UIBO: Who signs off on the police being able to exercise these powers—that is, what rank?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There is not a required rank; it is a normal part of police powers as they have, for example, for a community correction order.

Ms UIBO: Can a junior police officer on probation exercise these powers?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Absolutely.

Ms UIBO: Would that extend to an Aboriginal liaison officer?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is sworn police. Could I add, there are many Aboriginal community police officers becoming constables, which is wonderful—so they will.

Ms UIBO: I agree; hear, hear! Thank you, Chief Minister; it is important to acknowledge that.

What effort is made to contact the person in breach or who has had their bail revoked, before exercising these powers?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is not bail revocation. There is the parole revocation, which is done by the Parole Board, or the DVO compliance component. I do not imagine any notice would be given. The police will deal with the person with the information they have at the time.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

Mr GUYULA: I move amendment 2 to insert new subsection (1AA) to existing section 126D. The purpose of this amendment is to outline that the powers prescribed in section 126E do not apply to Aboriginal communities. This is because the next amendment will insert a section to specifically refer to Aboriginal communities.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Member for Mulka, for explaining your amendment. It is important to apply this legislation Territory-wide, so we will not accept your amendment.

J DAVIS: I support this amendment. I believe it strengthens the Bill and gives security and certainty to people who are concerned about it. I believe that it can make it work better. I thank the Member for Mulka for his work on it.

The Assembly divided:

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

Amendment not agreed to.

Ms UIBO: Who has been consulted in relation to this amendment besides the police?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This a highly operational police power. It was raised as a result of the High Court case and providing police certainty in the execution of their duties. Police brought it to us and I said, 'We will run that in parliament; no dramas.'

Ms UIBO: Will extra support be provided to police for specialist training on domestic violence incidents and being able to support potential victims when this power is exercised?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: There has been loads of reform within police when it comes to DV. One reform goes to recommendation 11 of the Coroner's report—that is, delivery of the PARt training. I have been in police stations when police are going through that training; it is being rolled out across the agency. There is a permanent DV command. There is a dedicated person in the JESCC as well, so DV calls go to them. There is an additional layer of bespoke supervision over those matters. There is the rollout of language speakers. We are doing work in Alice Springs, and I have been to the JESCC when language speakers are there. A lot of work is happening; it is called PARt training, and it is being rolled out across the force.

Ms UIBO: I am aware of the positive feedback from police about domestic violence specialist training, particularly for new recruits and those who are entering the force as new professionals. Is this also available for or being undertaken by some of our more experienced police officers who have been in the force for a longer period and may not have been privy to that training when they first entered the profession?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, 100%. If you have gone through the college recently or are going through the college you will do the training. Everyone else who is already a constable or above must do the training.

Ms UIBO: Is there a regular refresh of the domestic violence specialist training for police or is it a one-off—tick and you do not do it again?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: At this stage it is a one-off. Our police interact with DV just about every day, unfortunately, so they are well exposed to it. The training informs their practices going forward, but there is no repeat of that training once they have originally done it.

Ms UIBO: I hope that, through this legislation and questions, some of the recommendations from the coronial inquest into domestic violence could also be considered for that specialist training and a refresher—every two, three, four or five years—based on what the experts in the force think would be most beneficial to their officers.

J DAVIS: Proposed section 126E(5) defines 'dwelling'. If someone is living in a tent in their yard, is that categorised as a dwelling?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, it is a building or structure, so a tent would be structure. It does not apply to the open space and common areas, such as stairwells and common spaces like in an apartment building perhaps.

J DAVIS: Does it not include the common areas?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A dwelling would be a tent. What a dwelling is not is a yard or garden or, as it says, the common property.

J DAVIS: What if someone was living under a carport or a shelter?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Anything that is a building or structure, so a carport is a building.

J DAVIS: A carport is excluded under paragraph (a).

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I guess it depends how long they have lived there. It says:

dwelling *means, a building or structure, or part of a building or a structure …*

Therefore, it could be a carport:

… that is ordinarily occupied for residential purposes …

J DAVIS: But does not include …

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A garden.

J DAVIS: I am seeking clarification.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Sorry; what is your question?

J DAVIS: Would a carport be categorised as a dwelling if someone was sleeping in it?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No.

Ms UIBO: Will the police keep data from any of the uses of this power or will it become the routine practice?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Everything police do is kept in data, so yes.

Ms UIBO: How often are police notified of someone breaching an alcohol or drug condition of their DVO and they are unable to act?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: This is outside the scope, but I think I have the number if you can give me a minute.

I have data on when police pick up on the breach. We do not have data for when police cannot enforce it because, obviously, if they are not able to access the premises, they cannot. For example, between March 2024 and February 2025 there were 4,021 breach of DVO offences that ended in a charge. The number of DVOs for that same period increased by 37%, and the number of breach of DVO offences charged over that same period was 41% more than DVO offences from January and February 2024. It is significant, and you could imagine there would be even greater numbers that cannot be picked up.

Ms UIBO: Thank you, Chief Minister; I really appreciate that data.

Who administers the records of the result of an alcohol or drug test through these powers?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: What do you mean? It would go into SerPro. Do you mean who takes the sample?

Ms UIBO: Once the sample is taken by the police officer, how is that recorded in the results—say, a positive result or a particular blood alcohol content reading?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is exactly the same as an RBT. If there was a breach that information would go into SerPro, and that data is collected like on any other occasion.

Ms UIBO: Does this allow for immediate arrest if there is contravention of a domestic violence order?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It sure does; that is what we are looking for.

Ms UIBO: Will these powers be monitored? Are there any oversight mechanisms if there are complaints about the exercise of powers?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I think our police are probably the most regulated body in the Territory. Of course, it will be all those normal ordinary provisions. Just like when police exercise their duties and their powers at any other time, people can make complaints to police at the station or to the Ombudsman. All those normal channels are available.

Mr GUYULA: I move amendment 3 to insert new section 126F after proposed section 126E.

The purpose of this amendment is to insert section 126F, which outlines members' powers to enter places in Aboriginal communities for the purpose of exercising a prescribed power in relation to a prescribed respondent.

This section outlines that:

- before exercising a power, a member must request assistance from an elder to locate and bring the person to the member to exercise the member's prescribed powers

- a member must not enter a place of residence unless the member suspects on reasonable grounds that the person may be at that place of residence and an occupier of the dwelling requests the entry and an elder is present

- a member must not enter a ceremonial ground unless they suspect on reasonable grounds that the person may be at the ceremonial ground and an elder gives permission and is present when the member enters the ceremonial ground.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Member for Mulka, I appreciate that explanation. Our response in not accepting this amendment is similar to that for one of your previous amendments. We have deliberately drafted the Bill to avoid the process of having to get a warrant. For example, section 126F(4) has quite an onerous threshold that would have be met by police which would significantly inhibit their ability to respond and the risk being that the intelligence has moved on—that is, the person they are looking for.

In regard to those thresholds we have no problem with 'suspects on reasonable grounds' because that is in our clause. Paragraphs (b) and (c) relate to entering the premises only if the occupier requests the entry—you can imagine there would be situations when a person will not be requesting the police come in—and having an elder. This could be happening in the middle of the night and in remote locations. Police discretion in how they use their powers is important. Relationships are important, particularly in remote communities. However, this is a threshold that does not meet operational requirements and goes against the way we have deliberately worded the clause.

We will not accept your amendment.

J DAVIS: I support this amendment, particularly in relation to ceremonial grounds. This amendment strengthens the Bill. It makes it more likely to be effective within the community.

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

The Assembly divided:

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

Mrs Finocchiaro
Mrs Hersey
Mr Howe
Mr Kerle
Mr Mackay
Mr Maley
Mr O'Gallagher
Mr Patel
Mr Yan
Mrs Zio

Amendment not agreed to.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 10, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 11:

Ms UIBO: This is the 'Repeal of Act' clause. Will there be any mechanisms for a review of repeal?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: No.

Ms UIBO: Have the Parole Board, domestic violence sector and other relevant stakeholders been notified of or engaged on the new powers in this legislation?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The Parole Board previously asked police to do this. This should have happened years ago when you were in government, and you did not do it. The Parole Board knows about it because the board wants it, and because we are in government we are doing it. Tomorrow the board members will be happy when we tell them the Bill passed through parliament.

Ms UIBO: The other part of that question was about the domestic violence sector. Will it also be notified?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The sector will be notified once the Bill has passed and gone through its process.

Ms UIBO: Will that include family and legal services, women's legal services and Aboriginal legal services?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We will let the domestic and family violence advisory committee know, then that will go out to the sector.

Clause 11 agreed to.

Schedule agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Police): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

PAPER TABLED
Legislative Assembly (Disclosure of Interests) Act 2008 – Statement of Registrable Interests

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Legislative Assembly (Disclosure of Interests) Act 2008 Statement of Registrable Interests as at 10 March 2025.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Investment in Education

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

I propose for discussion this day the following definite matter of public importance:

That the Northern Territory Government ensures its investment in education, particularly early childhood education, meets the current and projected needs of all Territorians.

The letter is signed by the Member for Arnhem. Is discussion supported? Discussion is supported.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I ask the Northern Territory Government to ensure its investment in education, particularly early childhood education, meets the current and projected needs of all Territorians.

Everyone in this room knows the importance of education and the role it plays in giving our children the best tools to live their lives to their full potential. That is why the former government invested strongly in education for Territorians, no matter whether they are age three or 65 and over, or where they live. We wanted Territorians to know that if they sought an education their government would provide it for them. We provided it through infrastructure, early childhood teachers, growth, seeking alternative forms of education, secondary education, jobs and skills development and getting the internet into classrooms.

The former Labor government was committed to education for Territorians, particularly young Territorians. In the our 2024–25 budget we:

- invested in supporting families, providing them and their young children a subsidy for long day care, three-year-old kindergarten and family day care services to assist parents and families with childcare costs

- constructed a new early childhood preschool space and administrative building in the Alekarenge area that would provide a space for the Families as First Teachers program

- expanded Families as First Teachers, and an important investment across the Territory, assisting young families to work with the schools in the classrooms and help their and their children's journey in the education system

- provided $9.2m for new preschool facilities at Parap Primary School in the electorate of Fannie Bay

- helped families with the cost of living by continuing our popular Back to School vouchers.

The best way to grow the Territory is through a well-funded government-supported education system that knows the education needs of students across the Territory cannot be addressed with a one-size-fits-all solution. That is why I am asking the government to consider in its 2025–26 budget the education needs of Territory students now and into the future and provide parents and communities with a solid, well-funded education plan for their children.

This plan must especially support the early years of education. Programs aimed at early childhood can help families to understand the importance of education and be a part of their children's education journey, which in turn will help to increase school attendance rates and improve educational, social and health outcomes.

I ask this of the government because the CLP is not concerned about what is being taught or provided in our classrooms. To be fair I looked through the CLP team plan, which the Member for Karama likes to talk about. Besides increasing literacy and numeracy—nothing is more important than assuring parents that their children's education will achieve this—there are truancy officers; fines for families who are already living on or below the poverty line or trying to escape domestic violence; the mention of boot camps; and, of course, Clark Rubber swimming pools.

Our schoolchildren need more than that. They need programs that support them and their families, modernised classrooms and infrastructure, mentorship programs and teachers who are supported by their schools.

The previous Labor government invested in our schools. We allocated money for infrastructure to assist in building a better Territory through education and supporting the future growth of our schools. We invested $1.9m to refurbish and purchase new equipment at Yirrkala School; $1.6m for upgrades to the administration block at Leanyer Primary School; and $1.2m for Wulagi Primary School.

When Territory kids go to schools built for their needs they are excited to attend, and with that excitement comes a drive to learn. That drive to learn leads children to develop good habits, which leads to them accessing employment opportunities and jobs that build the Territory economy.

I encourage this government in developing its first budget to put aside adequate funding to address the critical infrastructure needs across our schools—which I am sure the Member for Barkly will talk about—so that they can continue to function as great places of education where students can build social skills for the real world.

The CLP government should continue to invest in the Stars program. The former Territory Labor government committed $2.4m to provide school-based mentoring and wellbeing supports for girls across 16 schools to increase attendance and assist female students to complete Year 12.

I heard today that the 2025 school attendance data is down by 0.54% across Territory schools for Term 1. Despite the Education minister saying that there is record attendance and despite the investment that the Education minister continues to talk about, there is a lower attendance rate for the start of the year than at the same time in 2024. For all the investment in and the work done for the punitive approach to getting kids to school, the school attendance data is down for this year. There is nothing to crow about; it is worse than it was last year.

These young women go on to be mentors, teachers, coaches, advocates and pillars of their community. They can go on to do the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program, which enables remote residents to pursue a teaching career in schools and early childhood care.

If the CLP truly wants what is best for Aboriginal Territorians, programs like Stars, Clontarf and Aboriginal education programs will assist in creating strong Aboriginal leaders. Kids who go through those programs go back to their communities and invest their skills and education into those communities and the bush economy.

It is important that the government honours the National Agreement on Closing the Gap so that we continue to see investments in skills development, with $8.5m for Indigenous job development funding to support Aboriginal staff working in local communities.

In the Northern Territory 18,000 people have HELP debt and will save an estimated $81.9m on their outstanding loans; that is an average reduction of $4,500.

There is so much good stuff happening in the education space, and it is time we recognise and celebrate that. This includes the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, which will see the federal government contribution go from 20% to 25%, providing $118.8m over four years from 2025–26 for a better and fairer school funding system in the Northern Territory. This is an incredible investment. Every Central Australian, and now every Territory school, will have increased funding so that every school can invest in areas to help students have the best chance at success in their education.

With that investment we have seen things put into practice like school ranger groups. Young children are out on country with traditional owners and community members learning maths, science and practical skills and developing literacy and numeracy through a culturally appropriate lens and framework. This has increased their learning and engagement. It is important to highlight that.

I acknowledge all the great work in the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program, particularly in the Warlpiri triangle. The Warlpiri triangle has always been a strong area for education, with the development of a number of local community members to become wonderful educators.

Everyone knows that Batchelor Institute is another staple in the Territory's education fabric. We need to support entities like that. It delivers important programs to grow the Territory's own educators in Batchelor, whether they are from the Top End or Central Australia.

The Health and Aboriginal Affairs minister, Steve Edgington—I hope I get this right—was at Desert Knowledge recently to see a cohort of young graduates from educational institutions across the Northern Territory. Charles Darwin University does a fantastic job at growing the Territory's own lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, scientists, mechanics, electricians and plumbers. All those positions, whether it is the tertiary or VET side, are important.

That investment goes beyond our classrooms; it is investing in our teachers and critical infrastructure to support teachers to be strong on country, teaching students across the urban centres of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Palmerston, Nhulunbuy and Darwin. It is important to value that education. We cannot afford to have a single dollar removed from Education because when we deny it appropriate funding, we deny Territory kids their best opportunity for success.

There is a volume of work on investment across Territory schools. The work between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments is incredibly important. We need to continue to support that investment. I hope that the Northern Territory Government will continue that investment in infrastructure and learning.

It is also important to ensure that our workplaces are conducive to supporting education. One of the things our former government did—the Housing minister has retained this aspect—was change the guidelines for government employee housing across remote communities to ensure that Aboriginal Territorians working in Education were given the same entitlement to community housing as our non-Indigenous teachers who moved to remote communities. Importantly, this recognises the skills and qualifications of the educators and support staff in our remote communities.

Across the Territory you can see firsthand the importance of programs such as the amazing FaFT (Families as First Teachers) program. This important program works with families—it can be mums, dads, aunties, uncles, grandparents or caregivers—and embeds that into the education system. It not only recognises the educational value for the young person and their family but also brings in lifelong learning and the concept that everyone is learning at different levels and that the parents of the child can continue to learn while they are in the classroom, as well as support and help.

I travelled to Yuendumu to celebrate the 50th anniversary of bilingual education. I have always been a massive supporter of bilingual education. A number of members of parliament on both sides support it. I was there, as was the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Education and Training, for those celebrations to recognise a number of fantastic, quality educators. These remarkable men and women have committed to lifelong learning and supporting young people into the education system.

This has been talked about for many years and will be for many more because education is the most important thing that we can do. When we support young and older people to access a quality education we make the Territory a better place. It does not matter whether you are three years old going to childcare or preschool or you are aged 90-plus years, there is always a space and a place in the education system for you to continue to grow and learn.

It is also important to acknowledge the role of childcare. Some remote communities have childcare centres. They are important in creating a safe space for mums and dads, aunties and uncles, grandparents and extended family members to go to with their young child or family member they are caring for and help enhance their ability to be outstanding caregivers. It is remarkable; there is something to be said about being in a childcare centre and seeing the level of kindness, love and commitment to learning. If we grow the childcare centres, we can get kids in at a young age and help them understand the pathways into school, university and the jobs of the future. That is important.

I hope that this does not come across as a lecture. The Education minister has a big job in working through the budgets and so forth, but education is the key. If we get education right, a number of the other social determinants of wellbeing can be supported. I acknowledge that a number of schools use their royalty money to run school nutrition programs so that our little kids have tucker in their bellies when they go to school; lunch, morning tea and afternoon tea are catered for.

I shout out to every Territory teacher, remote, urban or regional; the Isolated Children's Parents' Association; all the Territory kids; and every person who works in the education system, including the school attendance officers, receptionists, administrators and department staff. Thank you for all your work. I also thank the Commonwealth Government for the amazing funding contribution to ensure that every Territory school is fully funded and programs can be rolled out across the Northern Territory. A shout-out also goes to those amazing people who stood by and defended bilingual education.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, this matter of public importance is that the Northern Territory Government ensures its investment in education, particularly early childhood education, meets the current and projected needs of all Territorians.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising such an important issue as education and early childhood, as it provides the foundation for a brighter future for all young Territorians. However, I find it interesting that the Opposition Leader brought this MPI to the House, given that she is one of three Education ministers in the previous Labor government who presided over the poorest literacy and numeracy and lowest attendance rates in the country. It is a matter of public importance, but why was it not important when those opposite were in government? They were in government for eight years and could have done something about it. I give them an F for failure in education over those years.

A few years ago we spoke about the exposé in the *Australian* highlighting the appalling outcomes which were a national embarrassment. It highlighted the Territory's shocking attendance rate and poor literacy and education outcomes.

The early years of a child's life are crucial. The early childhood education and care we provide in these formative years shape their potential future in ways that cannot be overstated. It determines a child's ability to thrive academically, stay healthy, form meaningful social connections and later become active contributing members of society. This is why we made the election commitment to boost literacy and numeracy and increase attendance.

Since coming to government we have brought back school attendance officers. I have been on patrols in Alice Springs, Katherine and Palmerston with these school attendance officers, who are dedicated. Their connections with the community cannot be understated; it is an important part of the puzzle. Those connections with families and kids across the Territory get kids back to school.

For every dollar spent on quality early childhood education programs like FaFT, preschool and childcare, society benefits with a return of $7 to $8. Every dollar invested in early childhood education is an investment in our community's long-term wellbeing. The importance of early education goes beyond financial returns; it provides every child with opportunities to socialise, interact with others and overcome challenges, ensuring that they are given the best possible start in life. This is especially true for the children who experience vulnerability or disadvantage, as early childhood education offers them a pathway to a better future.

Our government understands the power of education and we are committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or where they live, has access to the high-quality early education outcomes and care programs they need to succeed. Access to preschool is provided free of charge in all government schools.

Another election commitment was attracting and retaining teachers. To make a difference we need skilled and passionate educators who are equipped with the knowledge, resources and support to make a real impact on the lives of young children. Our government understands that a strong and stable teaching workforce is key to the success of our education system. We are exploring opportunities to expand skilled migration pathways to address immediate workforce shortages.

Although providing access to education is critical, ensuring that our children are safe while they learn is equally important to our government. We are dedicated to ensuring that our teachers and students remain safe in their school environments.

We have given police stronger powers for wanding operations so that if school principals feel unsafe, they can work with police to have a wanding operation done. I saw this in Katherine recently. When we announced this late last year at Darwin Middle and Darwin High Schools, I was there with police, who showed us what they do with a little wand. Fortunately, when police did the wanding exercises in Katherine no edged weapons were found, but it is about prevention to make sure that everyone in the school environment is safe.

Our government was elected with a clear mandate to fix the Territory's education system. A key part of this rebuild is addressing school attendance head-on. I am proud to say that last week we passed the Education Legislation Amendment Bill, sending a clear message that the CLP is serious about improving school attendance. This legislation reinforces existing attendance measures within the *Education Act* to hold parents accountable when they fail to send their children to school without justifiable reasons. Parents will be held accountable if they deprive their child of the right to an education, as no child should be left behind simply because of the neglect of their parents or guardians.

I remind the Opposition Leader—who was one of three Education ministers in the Labor government—of the attendance rates in the opposition's electorates. The average attendance rate in the electorate of Arnhem is 44%; Daly is the best with 62%; Gwoja is 47%; and Arafura is 51%. I note that in Daly, two out of 10 schools are under 50% for attendance; 10 out of 19 schools in the Arnhem electorate are under 50%; and four out of seven schools in the Arafura electorate are under 50%.

That shows the importance of the school attendance officers. Those rates are disgraceful, but that is what you get from eight years of inaction by a Labor government. As I said, attendance officers are important in providing relationships and building conversations with families to find out the reasons why children are not getting to school, and working with the relevant departments to make sure they attend.

In Term 1 of 2025 we issued 75 compliance notices and 13 infringement notices. For the same period in 2024 there were 44 compliance notices and two infringement notices issued, with no revocations recorded. This is

an increase of 31 compliance notices and 11 infringements. In addition, 46 compliance notices and one infringement notice were revoked. Revocation of infringement and compliance notices is evidence that parents are listening and returning their children to school. I reiterate the important work of attendance officers.

In Question Time I spoke about the intensive support roll and the numbers on that roll which were hidden by the previous Labor government. I think about 1,600 children were on that roll. These are children who have not attended school for 20 days or more. A huge number of children across the Territory were on that intensive support roll. I note that 500 children have come off the intensive support roll since we have been working with the attendance officers.

Our government has a clear vision that Territorians of all ages learn the skills and develop the capabilities to contribute to the Territory's economic and social future. This is why we have brought training back into Education. Students need to know of alternative pathways and opportunities to get into the workforce. Whether it is through VET in schools, school-based apprenticeships or heading off to uni, there are many pathways students can take.

One of the most pressing issues we face in education is the decline in literacy and numeracy outcomes. The recent NAPLAN results show that one in three students in the Territory are categorised as needing additional support in literacy and numeracy, which is significantly higher than the national average of one in 10 students. Addressing this issue is at the heart of our education agenda.

To tackle this we are getting back to basics, providing explicit instruction in literacy and numeracy to students in the classroom. I have been to some schools to see that explicit instruction firsthand. It reminded me a bit of when I was at school. It is great to see the passion of these teachers. The kids are listening and engaged. It is 'I do, we do, you do', and they are learning. Those schools are getting great results. That is being rolled out in schools across the Territory to boost literacy and numeracy. Every teacher will be equipped with the training and support they need to teach reading and numeracy effectively.

We will provide targeted support to students who need additional help to reach their full potential. We are not just talking about these changes; we are already putting them into action. As part of our literacy strategy we will introduce a Year 1 phonics check from Term 3 this year. This initiative will help us identify students who may require additional support and ensure that we are tracking progress effectively. Early identification is key, and we will provide targeted support in Term 4 of Year 1 and early in Year 2 for students who need extra assistance to achieve literacy.

We are committed to ensuring that 75% of classroom teachers in our schools are permanent by 2027. This will provide teachers with the security and stability that they need to put down roots in Territory communities. To grow the economy and increase population we need to do more to support people like teachers to stay here longer.

Currently 71.4% of teachers in government schools are employed in permanent positions—a 10.5% increase compared with the same time last year. This is a significant step towards achieving our goal, and we will continue to build on this progress by launching initiatives to attract more teachers to the Territory.

We are introducing two major initiatives to help recruit and retain teachers. The 'teach local' scholarship will support NT residents pursuing teaching degrees with paid part-time classroom work and a guaranteed permanent position upon completion. The 'teach up north' incentive will provide financial incentives for interstate teaching students who complete their practicum in the Territory and accept an employment offer in an NT Government school.

To keep teachers and principals safe, the department will be launching a Safe Teachers, Strong Schools public campaign on zero tolerance for violent behaviour in schools. It will also introduce a new educator safety and wellbeing program and new regional staff safety and wellbeing officers to support teachers, especially those teaching in remote areas.

Education is not just about preparing students for the next grade; it is about preparing them for life. We are creating pathways to real jobs by reforming secondary education, including a move away from middle schools to create better pathways to real and critical jobs. We are working with business, industry and the community to build the Territory's workforce in the key industries of tourism, Defence, agriculture, gas and mining.

The shift away from middle schools is a key election commitment. In February all principals of impacted middle and secondary schools were consulted on the proposed changes. From mid-March to mid-April the department is engaging with teachers, parents and school communities in urban areas to test future school

models. The feedback so far has been positive, with school communities interested and excited in about the possibilities. Following consultation there is still significant work to design the future model and identify changes to school infrastructure, enrolment catchment areas and NTCET pathways. This is a big lot of reform. The first of it will start next year, but this will not happen overnight.

Work has also begun to improve secondary pathways for all students in remote and very remote areas. This will focus on pathways to NTCET completions, looking at regional hub intensive learning on country and distance education. Pathways will be aligned to economic priorities in the region to ensure that there are pathways to local jobs.

Tomorrow we will release the survey for members of the public to have their say on the new urban schooling model to shape the future of secondary education in the Northern Territory. This will be open for two weeks, and I invite everyone in the Chamber—including the opposition—to circulate it to their constituents. I will be sending this to people in my electorate.

We must remember that education is about not only academic achievement but also the social and emotional wellbeing of our students. Our government is committed to expanding student wellbeing programs, increasing the number of school-based counsellors and strengthening special education services across our schools. Every student must feel supported, valued and understood in their learning journey. The government is committed to ensuring qualified school counsellors are based in schools and are properly resourced. School counsellors will not be centralised in Darwin, as the previous Labor government had them; they will be on school premises where kids need them to be.

We are expanding school-based policing. School-based police will keep our teachers and students safe in schools. In Katherine recently we saw the importance of school-based police. The broader department of Education came in to support Katherine High School through its considerably trying times over the last few weeks.

Our new education plan is on top of existing commitments, including the Kiss and Go project. The Member for Drysdale and I spoke about that when I was in his electorate. He is putting in a lot of hard work. Hector the Cat and I spoke to the school. Clinton has been working on that great commitment for his electorate.

We have free swimming lessons for all primary school students. Students in Years 1 to 6 have begun swimming programs. We have spoken about that in the parliament numerous times. By the end of Term 1, 42 schools will have completed their swimming lessons, with another 24 booked in for Term 2.

Our government's $200 Back to School vouchers add to the cost-of-living relief for families.

Our clear plan will ensure that the investment in education and the early years is being spent wisely and results in real and measurable outcomes for young Territorians. Under the new funding model implemented this year schools are funded more equitably, which sees more funding flow into small remote schools and additional funding for bilingual education programs.

There are nine bilingual schools, four of which have had 50 years of bilingual education, which is a feat in itself. Although bilingual education is important you need to get kids to school to make sure that they are getting an education. Some of the schools delivering bilingual education have attendance rates of 30%, which is unacceptable.

As I outlined, our plan is not just about education but also ensuring that every child in the Territory has access to the quality early education and schooling they need to succeed. Our government is committed to building a stronger, more inclusive education system that will serve the needs of every Territorian now and into the future. We are investing in early childhood education, strengthening our schools, supporting our teachers and ensuring that every student has the tools they need to thrive. We will not stop until every child in the Territory can reach their full potential.

I thank the Opposition Leader for this matter of public importance so that we could outline our government's education plan.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this matter of importance before the House.

No student or school in the Territory should be worse off now or in the future. Education is a critical component in ensuring that all Territory kids have the skills and knowledge they need to get the best start in life.

The former Territory Labor government made significant strides in advancing education, aiming to empower individuals and communities to best engage our kids and see positive results. We knew that delivering quality education required an education system that is relevant, engaging, culturally responsive, flexible and appropriately funded. The former Labor government invested in teaching training, technology integration and curriculum development to equip students with the skills necessary for success in the modern world. The former Labor government also ensured appropriate funding was allocated to improve our education infrastructure throughout the Territory.

Territory Labor recognises that investment in education helps students to have the best start in life and reach their full potential. Both the federal and Territory Labor governments have invested unprecedented amounts in education in the Territory.

We heard nothing from the Education minister during the Treasurer's tirade—report—on the federal budget. The Education minister knows that the federal government is putting money on the table to lift the funding for Northern Territory public schools through the bilateral Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. It is through this agreement that all Northern Territory public schools will be fully and fairly funded to 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard by 2029.

The Albanese federal Labor government is investing an additional $737.7m from 2025 to 2029, with the Northern Territory committing to invest an additional $350m over the same period. The money provided by the Albanese federal Labor government means that Northern Territory schools will reach their full and fair funding levels two decades earlier than they would have if funding continued under the original settings. This means more resources to schools across the Territory and support for students and teachers who need it most, as the most disadvantaged schools will receive the additional funding first. This funding will have tangible benefits for our Territory students.

We all understand the Northern Territory school system operates in a challenging socioeconomic and geographic context. We also know that service delivery in the Territory is higher than other jurisdictions, with 40 remote school and 91 schools in very remote areas. We consistently allocate resources to deliver quality education for Territory kids, which is why we had the federal government and the former Territory government sign on to an historic funding agreement, benefiting all Territory students.

Education is a fundamental right for every Territorian. It has always been a core Labor value. In the 2024–25 budget the former Territory Labor government invested a record $1.34bn in education services, the key tool which can drive every kid forward, nurture critical thinkers, problem solvers and lifelong learners who contribute positively to their community. This funding will help provide access to quality education, prepare students for diverse career paths and foster the love of learning and curiosity that Territory kids have.

Education is the pillar that Territory Labor can be proud of when we look back on our achievements as a government. We would never talk down Territory kids. That is why we will always be proud of securing the landmark deal of 100% funding for Territory public schools. This agreement will reshape the Territory's schooling landscape and its 153 schools.

Thirteen of those schools are in my wonderful electorate of Daly, which is quite a lot of schools to get across. Some urban members might have only one or two schools, but bush members have quite a lot of schools to get to …

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: The Member for Drysdale said that he has four and the Member for Fannie Bay has six.

We have quite a lot schools, and it takes a lot of time to get across our electorates. The Member for Barkly probably has a few more than I do …

Mr Edgington: You closed a couple of ours.

Mr YOUNG: I missed that comment, but everyone else is laughing.

There are 13 schools. There is Adelaide River School and Berry Springs Primary School, which I visited last week for Harmony Day. It was a wonderful event to bring the community and the school community together to celebrate the diversity we have in the rural area. A lot of people attribute the diversity in the Northern Territory to our urban settings in Darwin and Alice Springs, but we have a diverse community in the rural area. It was a beautiful place to be to celebrate that.

There is Batchelor Area School; Belyuen School; Douglas Daly School; Dundee Beach School, which I attended on the same day last week to meet with the school council, which was wonderful to see, and we will hear more about that at a later stage; Emu Point school; Palumpa school; Peppimenarti School; Pine Creek School; Tipperary Station School; Woolaning School; and Woolianna School.

A big shout-out to all the schoolteachers, principals, assistant staff and the parents who help make our schools run in the background, from the canteen shop to getting the kids to school. Thanks to all those across the electorate who help with education. The teachers and support staff at the schools in my electorate do amazing work. I take this moment to acknowledge all their efforts collectively; thank you.

The agreement is all about ensuring that our schools are fully funded so that our kids get the best learning opportunities they can. I am a proud as the representative for the Daly electorate to have been a part of the Territory Labor government that secured this agreement for our schools. The Leader of the Opposition played a huge part in that when she was the Education minister. It does not happen overnight, It takes time to negotiate, work with the department and work with our counterparts in Canberra and their departments. There is a bit of logistics to securing that funding.

This agreement means a lot to people in my electorate. It will support students at Adelaide River School; increase resources for schools such as Batchelor Area School and Pine Creek School; give more funding certainty for schools such as Berry Springs Primary School; and provide more educators and support staff for communities in Belyuen, Peppimenarti, Wadeye, Emu Point and Palumpa. The support staff will help to get our students to school.

Improved education outcomes have a direct link to kids, who will be positive contributing members of our community. We have amazing public schools in the Northern Territory. No representative in this building hates the idea of attending our local school assembly and watching kids thrive in such fantastic learning environments. One thing I love doing straight after parliament—I think a few of us do this—is to head to a local school on Friday to reset, refresh and put everything back into context.

Education has the power to change lives. Territory Labor secured this investment for young Territorians to get the skills and knowledge they need to get a job, position them to lead a good life and contribute to their local community—the best possible start to life. The best way to achieve this is through investment in high-quality early childhood education and care.

Families as First Teachers is an important program. There are about 55 FaFT sites established across the Northern Territory. The program acknowledges the important role families play as a child's first teacher. It delivers quality early learning and parent support programs to young children and their families. It is a fantastic initiative which provides lifelong education, health and wellbeing outcomes for children and their families. I encourage all parliamentarians if you have not been to a FaFT class, you should head to your local school and see how they operate.

My electorate has FaFT in Wadeye, which I visited. I have been to a FaFT class in Ngukurr. You have one in your community, Selena. It is a holistic approach to the way we look at the education system, engaging with families and parents. I have seen mothers, fathers and grandfathers at FaFT helping with their child's education. It is an important program, so I hope that all of us will advocate for more sites across the Northern Territory to support families.

Another investment worth mentioning is the local decision-making agreements, which I have spoken about a number of times. The communities that signed those agreements are proud because it took a lot of work and consultation to get it right and ensure their aspirations and priorities were part of that agreement locked in with government.

The Leader of the Opposition came with me to Emu Point, and we signed an agreement there. I encourage everyone to look at that agreement on the Local Decision Making website. It is fundamentally important to the Emu Point community. The community highlighted education as one of its priorities, including transitioning early education and childcare service delivery from Murin to Mulyung, a recently established Aboriginal corporation. Mulyung wants to take on that responsibility to ensure the kids get the childcare services they need so that they are ready to go to primary school.

Part of that agreement looked at constructing additional education facilities; some of that work has already started. The basketball court encourages kids to get to school. The community has established a school council made up of local people who guide the way the school operates.

Emu Point has good school attendance. When we engage with the community, leaders and elders we get good results. I have been at Emu Point and seen the way some of the elders get the kids to school. They walk around that community for about 10 to 15 minutes to make sure everyone is in the schoolyard. That good school attendance flows into secondary school. A place like Emu Point is a small community, so people do not have the opportunity to go to secondary school in their own community; they have to either come to Darwin or head interstate. It is an important transition, and we need to ensure we engage the family.

I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition bringing on this matter of public importance.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I am glad when the Member for Daly does not finish early; I appreciate that he uses his full time.

I love the topic of education. I am a true believer that education will change one's life. I believe in lifelong learning and education. It has given me everything I have. I want for the future of all the children in the Northern Territory that they can have their lives opened through the power of education. At its core that is why I love it. Education is the most empowering thing that any individual can receive, and we need to value it in its highest form for the next generation.

In Drysdale, education is a community. Gray Primary School has the most amazing parents, teachers and sense of community. I thank Donna Westaway, the principal, who in my opinion has set the example for how you can run a school and involve the community and have a real connection with the parents so that they feel a connection to the school themselves, which is so much more engaging for children. I take my hat off to her and thank her. When the Minister for Education and Training joined me there she was thoroughly impressed too. Rachel Turton is the assistant principal. Rachel and Tina are the two teacher representatives on the school council. They do a fantastic job representing the teachers.

While I am on the topic of that council I will thank a few people because they have made an incredible impact on the school's culture. Tamara Boyd is a fun character I enjoy spending time with. She has created an amazing environment with the programs she runs. The young mums program is great, as is Families as First Teachers. These are inspiring programs which I am keen to ensure we commit to and grow.

I have spoken to Tamara for myself to have personal engagement with young dads as well who feed into the catchment of Gray Primary, as it is important that we support young fathers who are on a mission to finish education themselves and begin to step into the role of fatherhood. Supporting our young fathers is something I am keen to support in the electorate as well. Ensuring young fathers and fathers across the board stay engaged with their children is important. I encourage fathers in Drysdale and throughout the Northern Territory to stay involved with their children and their education. I will support and advocate for any measure in which we can get fathers more involved in education and their children's lives.

I thank Lisa and Maxine for their roles in supporting the treasury and secretary functions. I thank the amazing parents. This school council is fun to attend; I would invite you to come, but you cannot, so you will have to take my word for it. I thank Cloe for her time. She is bright and has a few children, who are sweet and amazing kids. They attend Gray Primary, and I love seeing her. Jess makes sure I know when a meeting is happening and checks in with me in the afternoon; Jess is fantastic and a lot of fun. Emma, who I got to know well in my time in this role, is a breath of fresh air. I thank her for teaching me some of the dance skills for the Dancing with the Stars night.

Mr Paech: Show us your moves!

Mr HOWE: Member for Gwoja, be careful what you wish for.

I have a special spot in my heart for Rohanna. She is an amazing mum and a lot of fun, and I enjoy hanging out with her. Sophia is also a great addition to the Gray Primary School Council. Anne, the business manager, has done an incredible job; she works hard and diligently. This team cares about their school and the kids. It has been special for me to join the board. They have been welcoming, so I thank them. Charmaine at the child and family centre is incredible.

To all the teachers at Gray and Driver Primary Schools, as the Member for Daly pointed out, it is special to attend your events. Tomorrow I will be at Driver Primary School to attend the assembly, which is special. I am sure we have all had this: I walk in, and the kids think I am semi-famous. It is a special feeling, and it brings us back to why we are doing this. We all have different approaches, but when we go to a school assembly it reinvigorates why we do this. I agree with the Member for Daly that this is an incredible part of our role.

A huge and great group of teachers support Palmerston Senior College. I hope over the time, however long that may be, I have the privilege and honour to be in this role I can do as much with that school as possible.

To all my schools, Anzac Day is approaching. I am keen to visit, bring some memorabilia and talk about Anzac Day and its meaning and the history and importance of service, purely as a veteran. That is key. Defence creates a great pathway for a lot of Territory kids from the bush and urban areas. Defence supports lifelong learning, so I encourage children from across the Northern Territory to view Defence as an option. There are endless career opportunities. Much of the learning from Defence can be taken into other areas of your life.

I love education. I look forward to being a part of a government that supports our teachers, puts our students front and centre and supports our parents. I will endeavour to ensure we are supporting people in Drysdale, including our single parents, mums and dads; young parents; and grandparents. Quite a few grandparents look after children in my electorate. I want you all to know that I will do everything in my power to support you and the kids you are caring for so that they can have a strong education and the future that we may not have had. The power of education will give them everything they need.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, there are fantastic schools in Blain.

The star in the crown of golden Moulden is Moulden Park Primary. I acknowledge Principal Sylvia Gregory was recently substantively made principal, after spending some time as acting principal and before that assistant principal. Sylvia is the paragon of what we want in the leadership of our schools. She is innovative, passionate and driven to see the best outcomes for her students.

A few years ago as assistant principal she came up with a program to increase attendance at the school. The school did not have a bus, so she hunted around until she found a spare one at the Families as First Teachers program at Gray Primary. The schools were willing to work together, so Sylvia got together some of the staff at the school and put a few incentives in place. I first met her when I was doorknocking the streets of Moulden and they were doing the morning drive to check on kids, make sure they were okay and doing their best to get them to school. Well done, Sylvia. I look forward to working with you.

Moulden Park Primary also has a successful and well-attended breakfast program. Every morning the school runs a breakfast club to help with nutrition, and to fill up the little tummies that might be empty to make sure the children can concentrate. As a father of three boys, I know that if their tummies are empty, so are their minds, but if their tummies are full you have a hope of putting something in their minds.

Clontarf and Stars are well represented at Moulden Park Primary; they do fantastic work there. I visited a couple of the Clontarf academies around Palmerston, and I was impressed with the work they do to increase attendance and engagement.

Congratulations to the new school council Chair, Mikhaila Carter, and immediate past Chair, Mel Wilson. Well done, team. If you have any fundraising or other events that require volunteers coming up this year, please give me a yell. I am happy to help.

I congratulate Kristy West of Woodroffe Primary School, the fantastic principal who works hard every day for the children of Woodroffe. That school also has a breakfast club and from time to time runs special breakfasts that include the parents. The staff are doing everything they can, as we all are, to get kids into school, get those bums on seats and get those minds ready to learn.

One of the assemblies I recently attended was a lucky surprise. The school had a performance that morning. I was impressed; it was a great performance. At the end of it people went around and handed out—I do not know the name of it—some orchids and palm fronds that one of the teachers had enterprisingly gathered from around the community. I do not know where they gathered them; I have some suspicions that it might be near my office. They were available to be gathered, and gathered they were. It was well received by all the parents at the assembly. Well done, Kristy and all the team at Woodroffe Primary School.

Congratulations to principal Danielle Banicek of Rosebery Primary School. She stepped into the role only recently after being assistant principal for a number of years. I honour Ms Banicek for her amazing abilities in theatre and dance. I must declare a conflict of interest: my boys go to Rosebery Primary School. We have been to their end-of-year performances for the last few years at Darwin Entertainment Centre. Have you ever tried to wrangle a whole school of children, from transition all the way through to Year 6, and get them to put on a performance with costumes, lighting, music and a strong narrative? They pulled it off and it was

seamless. It is amazing. Ms Banicek, now that you have increased responsibilities I hope you have enough time to continue to make this and next year's performances as great as the ones that came before.

My mother was a teacher at Batchelor. She spent 28 or 29 years teaching transition at Batchelor Area School. Then she moved …

Madam SPEAKER: What a woman.

Mr KERLE: Yes. Did she teach you, Member for Arnhem?

Ms Uibo: No, no. She taught my sister.

Mr KERLE: Jossie—that is right.

When we moved to town she spent another 10 or 15 years teaching transition at Wulagi Primary School. Education is strong in my veins. My wife is a teacher as well. She is not a primary school teacher yet, but she has spent a lot of years teaching English as a second language to international students. She has quite a few qualifications.

She tries to explain to me the pedagogy of learning and the theories of instruction. I have to admit that after a while I put up the white flag and say, 'Slow down a bit'. However, I picked up on the minister for Education talking about the explicit instruction model. I hear a lot of good things about the explicit instruction model. I look forward to us improving the methods of instruction, maintaining the classroom and the tools we give teachers to maintain order in their class. There is a big toolbox. We need carrots and sticks—everything in the toolbox—to try to get the best possible outcomes for Territory kids.

Many people I know were educated under the original CLP government that unfortunately lost power in 2001, but was in power from …

Ms Uibo: Hear, hear!

Mr KERLE: Including you; you were educated under it.

Ms Uibo: I do not know about you—the CLP lost.

Mr KERLE: There are some amazing innovative individuals who were educated under that education system.

There is a lot of work to do. There are a few bits of meat that we can pick off the bones of the previous Labor policy. Reversing the failed Labor policy of middle schooling is probably the main one. I am happy to take that up, and will be excited to follow along with it as we roll it out in Palmerston, Darwin and across the Territory.

I reaffirm my and our party's wholehearted support of educating Territory kids to reach the best of their potential.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, like many others in this Chamber I had the privilege and benefit of receiving a wonderful public education, as did my two sons who both went to school in the Northern Territory, in Johnston in fact. They had extraordinary teachers and other educators who went above and beyond often in classrooms where they had to meet the needs of children learning to read and write at the same time as children who aspired to study medicine—an incredible juggling job. I have been a student here too, at CDU, as was my dad who had to leave school at 13 and was incredibly proud to get a master's degree when he was nearly 70.

Like others in this Chamber, it is such a joy to me to go to the schools in my electorate. I have only six schools in my electorate, although I bake cakes for all of them, so I am glad I do not have 25 or whatever; that would be hard. I love especially going back to the schools that my kids attended. It is great; they still sing the same songs and plan the same events. Talking with the kids, working with the teachers, principals and school councils and hanging out in the school gardens for me, like everyone else here, it is one of the best parts of this job.

The story of education does not begin in the classroom. Long before a child steps foot into a school their journey is shaped by their experiences and family situation, and we must understand that a child's success in education is linked to the circumstances in which they are raised. We do not all enter the classroom from an equal place, and we cannot afford to see education in isolation from the other issues we discuss in this House, like domestic violence, public housing and poverty.

I sincerely thank all our educators who work tirelessly in the schools in my electorate—Millner, Moil, Alawa, Jingili and Nemarluk schools and Casuarina Senior College—you are all fantastic. You do not get nearly enough recognition or support, but lots of us see you and see what you are doing and we are grateful to you.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing on this matter of public importance; it is a topic that you all know I am passionate about. I am sure we can all agree that education is the key to bridging the gap and removing disadvantage; that is why we need to get our kids into school.

I have had the privilege over the last 26 years to work in and out of schools across the Territory. I went through the public system as well. I finished my schooling in Alice Springs at Centralian Senior College, and it was great. I thank all my teachers for that time. I feel like we are having adjournment speeches, so I will try to keep on topic.

During my time in education I had the privilege to work in schools in Central Australia at Yuendumu, Ntaria, Papunya, Mount Allan, Willowra and Ti Tree; Tennant Creek—I lived in the Barkly for a little while—Epenarra, Canteen Creek, Ali Curung, Ampilatwatja and Elliott; Katherine; Bulman; Borroloola, Ramingining and Gunbalanya. We lived in Jabiru for a couple of years and travelled to East Arnhem. I have been to Maningrida and to Nhulunbuy many times and all the surrounding communities. I have probably missed a few. I have been to many communities, worked in many schools and had the privilege to experience what happens in those communities and how they work.

We are talking about education and its importance. I will touch on the statistics that the Member for Gwoja brought up. He says that the attendance rates for Term 1 of 2025 are down from last year. I am not sure where the member got that data from, because I am pretty sure that the 2025 school data has not been released yet. That is an interesting fact.

If his figures are correct, I wonder whether it is because this government has now included the 500 additional students who were on the intensive support roll into the general publication now. That would bring down those statistics a bit. It will take a while to get these more than 500 children fully re-engaged and back attending school regularly, but as an open and transparent government, we are reporting on all the kids in the Territory and not only those who were at school, like the former government did. I wonder if we removed those 500 students whether we would see gains like the former Labor government would have reported.

All the Labor opposition members' electorates cover remote areas, and attendance in these remote areas is below 50%—that is less than half the kids in their communities going to school every day. As I said, we can all agree that attendance is the key to bridging the gap and removing disadvantage. My questions to the opposition are: what have you done; what will you do; and how have you helped your communities get kids back to school? You say that school is important, but what are you doing about attendance in the communities you represent?

We have heard you say that if we want to see things change in this space that Aboriginal people need to be part of the decision-making. They need to drive and implement this work. We have local decision-making in many communities you represent, yet attendance is still below 50%.

There is significant room in the Australian curriculum to include Aboriginal cultural learning, and the communities are doing that, yet the attendance is still below 50%. The Australian curriculum explicitly includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority across all learning areas. It is designed to engage students in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living culture. By including Aboriginal cultural learning, the curriculum allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum. It provides opportunities for all students to deepen their knowledge of Australia's First Nations people, and it promotes an understanding of cultural differences and respect for diversity.

To fully realise the potential of cultural learning in schools, we need kids in school. We do not need 50% or 40%; we need you in your communities helping to get those kids back to school.

I spoke earlier this week about my previous roles. I led the attendance and truancy team in Alice Springs and then I drove the prosecutions work. I have worked in this space of trying to re-engage kids for a long time. I have put in the effort and saw increases in attendance for the kids I worked with. I have picked up kids from their houses and transported them to school. I tried to educate families on what they need to do to maintain that routine. You cannot keep sending in people to do the jobs of families; we need families to pick up the slack in that space.

We need young male role models in our communities, driving this change with our young people. About five weeks ago I met a young man named Kaden from Bulman. He is an outstanding young male role model for the people in his community. We need to tap into that potential and make sure we are driving that change in our communities.

As a government we are working to remove red tape. In my maiden speech I said it was one of my priorities. From the front office to business managers, attendance officers, assistant support staff, teaching staff, principals and assistant principals, all staff who work in schools are amazing. We also have amazing people in the department of Education who are extremely dedicated. I have heard lots of people talk about public sector employees, how they are slack and are not doing their job. I can honestly say that there is no laziness among the people I have worked with in the department of Education. They are working 110% to try to get the job done because their key priority is the children. They cannot see the fruition of that work unless the kids are at school. Our government is working to remove red tape because we need our kids to have the full attention of their teachers.

Other staff need to provide the support services that help kids who are either disengaged or causing havoc in the classroom. Other staff need to look after those kids so that our teachers can look after the kids in front of them who want to learn.

We are improving the transition points across school. When kids move from primary to middle school or middle to senior school, we are losing kids in those spaces. The data has shown that over the years. We are losing kids as we transition from one stage of schooling to another stage. We are improving the transition and taking on the recommendations of the senior school review, and the removal of middle schools is one thing we will support.

The school-based police officer program was destroyed over the Labor government's time, and we will work on that. They were not even school-based constables; they were school-based police officers. Auxiliary police officers were put into schools who could not assist with the situations that were escalating in schools. The sole responsibility of that role was to help educate kids. They could sit behind a glass window and watch a fight or something else happening and they were unable to do anything. They could not walk and help; they could not intercept that argument. All they could say to staff was, 'You need to call police'.

Under the previous government the school counsellor program was decimated. School counsellors were pulled out of our schools. Do you expect a child in middle or senior years to walk up to a school counsellor they have never met before, a stranger, and expose what they need to do to feel comfortable? School counsellors were dragged out of schools and centralised in the department, then sent out left, right and centre to try to support students. Our government will work to reinstate counsellors in schools where they are needed so that they can develop a rapport with their students and have an impact.

Early years and FaFT were amazing programs which were developed. We support the early years and will focus on that. Ludmilla Primary School in my electorate has FaFT. It does amazing work with the surrounding community to get young kids engaged in school. We will continue to support that program.

I will touch on boosting literacy and numeracy in our schools. Over the past eight years our NAPLAN results have crumbled. Literacy and numeracy was not a priority for the former government, and we will take control of that. We will make sure that kids are getting the literacy and numeracy skills they deserve so that they can move through life and become members of society who can contribute, get jobs and build businesses in their communities. The success they need comes from attending school, improving their literacy and numeracy and learning how to be respectful, mix and socialise with people from all different backgrounds and races. We need to ensure that they have the foundations to learn, develop and succeed in life.

We want to move away from a welfare state in the Northern Territory; we want people to support themselves. The way we do that is to get kids back to school. The processes and programs our government has implemented in less than eight months will support that work.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, education changed my life dramatically. I come from a bilingual setting in Milikapiti and I went to Kormilda for high school; that is where I learnt quick and smart that I needed to adapt to reading and writing and get along with the rest of the Territory.

I will comment on the Member for Fannie Bay's contribution about what are we doing. Last week I told the ministers that I would roll out a red carpet for them to visit my electorate. In eight months only one minister has come. That was Minister Cahill. I thank her for that. I am excited …

Ms Cahill: I will be back.

Ms Uibo: Hear, hear!

Mr BROWN: Yes, and I will be there. I will tell all the ladies. I am excited. I am hearing on the grapevine that the Minister for Health and the minister for Education are coming soon. I look forward to their visit, as does the community. We want to chat; we want you mob to come and engage.

This important matter of public importance calls on the NT Government to ensure its investment in education, particularly early childhood education, meets the current and projected needs of all Territorians.

It is an honour to speak in this parliament, but today I am particularly pleased to discuss education. A good education and great teachers can change lives. They certainly changed mine.

In a week when the CLP has criticised the federal Labor government, this matter of public importance provides an opportunity to highlight the significant investment Labor made in Territory schools. The federal government has invested $7.2bn in the Northern Territory in this financial year alone, clearly demonstrating Labor's commitment to the Territory's growth and development. Federal Labor is allocating significant funding to public schools, with $736.7m to enhance education infrastructure and resources by fully funding our public schools.

I will discuss the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and its importance to schools like those in the Arafura electorate. Given the MPI's mention of early education investment I will also highlight the vital program of FaFT (Families as First Teachers) which I strongly urge the new CLP government to continue to support.

This MPI is about investing in education. There has been no more significant investment than the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. This agreement guarantees that by 2029 every government school in the Territory will be fully and fairly funded—two decades ahead of the original timeline. This agreement represents the most significant ever investment in education in the Territory, with nearly $1.1bn addition funding to which the Territory government will contribute at least $350m. Crucially, this funding is needs based, meaning that more resources will be directed to disadvantaged and remote schools, which is great news for the schools in remote areas. This investment will address critical needs and improve outcomes for our kids, but only if the agreement is honoured in full.

The Territory has the highest concentration of small schools in remote and very remote areas, with 67% of all schools in those regions. For government schools that number rises to 71%. The Members for Barkly and Namatjira understand the unique challenges of education in remote areas.

With this funding we can expect better resourcing, improved infrastructure, stronger teaching and learning conditions and new programs to help students catch up, keep up and finish school. This benefits all Territorians. I acknowledge that the new government has said that it will deliver this program.

We know that the path out of poverty is employment. The best way into employment is through quality education, good housing and access to healthcare. That is why we all ran and have a go at this place. I fight for education opportunities for my people that are available to kids in town. This agreement will help bridge the opportunity gap.

This MPI also discusses investing in early childhood. I am proud to have been a part of the Labor government that invested in education for our youngest ones. Research consistently highlights that the years from birth to age five are critical to a child's future success.

The FaFT (Families as First Teachers) program provides quality early learning and support to parents. It has been transformative for communities. FaFT delivers targeted programs that engage families and build parents' capacity to give children the best start in life. Participating in FaFT from a young age prepares these young people and their families for a successful future. It also builds the skills of young parents who are navigating parenthood. Participating in FaFT sets up young people and their families for long-term success.

The previous Labor government's $12m investment in FaFT has significantly improved education outcomes in young ones, with studies showing increased engagement through primary and secondary school, and beyond. Fifty-five FaFT sites have been established across the NT. The Labor government committed to expanding FaFT and prioritising remote community schools.

I thank all the educators in my electorate for the incredible job they do. There are 20 languages in my electorate. Trying to get kids to school, to learn English and read and write, is a huge task, but they do it. Kids come to school every day to try to learn. To the teachers, assistant teachers and school leaders from Gunbalanya School, Jabiru Area School, Mamaruni School, Maningrida College, Milikapiti School, Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School, Pularumpi School, Tiwi College, Warruwi School, Wurankuwu school and Xavier Catholic College, thank you for educating, guiding and inspiring your students and making the Territory a better place. A special shout-out goes to Aboriginal teaching staff whose cultural knowledge is invaluable in the classroom and essential to improving education outcomes.

Kids out bush need to be prepared for a different future from the one they are growing up in. Aboriginal students walk in two worlds and the education system needs to recognise this and deliver for them. Labor believes where you are born and who your parents are should not determine the education you get. That is a core belief of our party.

In conclusion, I urge the new government to continue previous funding agreements and the strong education record by investing in education. Together we can ensure that all students, whether they are in town or the bush, receive a better education and a better future.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it has been refreshing to hear the common themes that members have contributed to this matter of public importance. As a general statement, everyone in this Chamber appreciates the great work of educators and childcare workers in their electorates. I heard that clearly from the contributions. The matter of public importance is to highlight the concerns we are hearing across the Northern Territory as well as the ideas and suggestions on ensuring that, regardless of where our kids live, they have the best possible support and access to education and childcare.

It is an important topic to speak about. As a former teacher, I know that everyone has an expert opinion on education. You learn to live with that. We often find the same thing happening in parliament; everyone is an expert on something.

We want to ensure that the importance of education—we see this locally as members—is foremost for the CLP government. We want to ensure that we have quality educators who are supported.

Great work was done by the former Labor government to ensure that every public school in the Northern Territory will be fully resourced through the bilateral agreement and the $1bn of education funding. It took many years to secure that funding, and it is an amazing legacy that the CLP government has the opportunity to build on. That is on top of the $1.34bn already invested in education in last year's Northern Territory budget.

Our Territory Labor opposition firmly believes that no child should be left behind in education. In Budget 2024 the investment delivered by our former government included the following key points:

- stronger support for homeland learning centres, ensuring students in very remote parts of the Northern Territory had access to quality education
- enhancing delivery of preschool education to better prepare young children for school
- increasing per-student funding for the non-government school sector, along with grants such as the supplementary boarding scheme, back-to-school bonus, capital subsidy and Isolated Students Education Allowance
- expanding flexible learning pathways to support secondary students in gaining skills for jobs in industries within their communities
- greater investment in education and training for women, ensuring more opportunities for lifelong learning and economic empowerment
- $24m for apprenticeships and traineeships, helping Territorians gain the skills they need for good jobs
- $2.4m for Stars Foundation programs, supporting education leadership opportunities
- $2m for the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education program (RATE)

- fostering local talent in the education sector and ensuring that we have Aboriginal teachers teaching in all our schools

- more than $65,000 in scholarships to support students to achieve their education goals.

Let us contrast that with the CLP's record. There is a stark difference. What did Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro and her former CLP colleagues do when they were last in government? They ripped $135m out of classrooms and sacked 500 school staff. This had a devastating impact on education. In my home town of Katherine 11 full-time teaching and support staff were cut from the local schools. In Gunbalanya, in the Arafura electorate, schools lost nine staff and eight teachers. Across the Territory the devastating effect was that students lost the support they needed to thrive in the classroom.

We never want to return to the dark days of the former CLP government's education legacy. It took Labor four years to return to the level of funding and investment our school staff, kids and communities had prior to the CLP government. The CLP cannot say that we had eight years to do something when four years were needed to rebuild the funding for schools to what it should have been. We could have been building every year under the former CLP government, but we did not; we saw decreases, cuts, jobs lost and children suffering.

Labor firmly believes that every child deserves access to high-quality education no matter where they live. That is why we invested to ensure that students have the best possible start to life, with a focus on children aged zero to five years. I support the Member for Johnston's statement that learning starts before children enter the classroom. That is why the former Labor government initiated the Families as First Teachers program as an integral policy many years ago. We secured long-term funding under the NT Remote Aboriginal Investment program, which funds all our FaFT programs.

The Member for Arafura spoke about the success of FaFT in his electorate. Thirteen years later we have seen the success of the first students in Gunbalanya who entered the FaFT program, with 11 graduating. This shows that early investment makes a difference down the line. We want to ensure that the CLP government never forgets that.

When it comes to chaos just last week we learnt that the Education minister—who does not have a background in education—was clearly overwhelmed when talking about the CLP's election promise for free swimming lessons. Time and again the Territory opposition said that swimming is important, but the simple question was: who will pay for it? There are 153 public schools across the NT. The Member for Katherine has not said where that money will come from.

It is coming from school budgets, clearly. We heard an example of $6,000 for one school alone. This is a rural—not remote—school on the outskirts of Darwin. It has been asked to pay $6,000 from its own school budget to pay for the CLP's so-called free swimming lessons commitment. That $6,000 has been ripped away from that school; its own autonomy to use its budget in any way it chooses will now have to be to appease the CLP government's election commitment that it did not properly fund.

It gets worse. The Education minister confirmed that the Department of Education and Training will send Clark Rubber blow-up pools to fulfil its so-called promise to an island or whatever, apparently …

Members interjecting.

Ms UIBO: It was written on a Post-it note and it was not thought out. It has been ill-informed, ill-planned and, unfortunately, the schools have to pay for it. The Education department is scrambling to try to …

Members interjecting.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the interruptions. If they continue, they might need a detention.

Madam SPEAKER: It is a bit late for that sort of humour; isn't it?

Ms UIBO: Clearly, the Education department must backpedal to try to cover the Education minister's tracks because she makes ridiculous statements in parliament when she is asked questions. The only thing blowing up these blow-up pools is the hot air from the Education minister. They will be sent to every school, so I look forward to finding out how many students fit in a Clark Rubber pool and how many teachers or instructors are required to supervise the Clark Rubber pools that have been promised by the Education minister.

I feel nervous for people in the Education department every time the minister opens her mouth. They think, 'Oh my goodness, what will I have to cover up? I will need to sort out the mess that the Education minister has put her foot in.'

I thank the federal Labor government which, because of the tireless efforts of the last eight years of a Territory Labor government, secured that historic $1bn of school resourcing and funding for all Northern Territory schools to be fully resourced.

Mr Edgington: Hopefully it might start soon. When is it starting?

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr Paech: Detention.

Madam SPEAKER: You too.

Ms UIBO: Following the tirade of the Treasurer the other day, who would make you believe the Territory is being left scrambling with a bowl in our hand begging for more—'Please, Canberra, can we have some more'—there was $737.7m allocated to Territory schools in the federal budget announced on Tuesday evening. This will ensure that every school in the Territory is fully funded. On average every NT public school student will be $33,764 better off and every non-government school student will be $7,596 better off over the lifetime of the agreement. Under the Better, Safer Future for Central Australia initiative, all 44 operating schools in Central Australia have already received full and fair funding for the first time and that was in 2024.

Mr Edgington: What about the Barkly?

Ms UIBO: What about the Barkly? It will be part of the $737.7m to fund Territory schools, thanks to the federal Labor government.

There are key reforms that need to be continued, and we implore the CLP government not to cut those important initiatives for greater wellbeing support. The Education minister spoke about school counsellors. Yes, unfortunately, there has been a history of struggling to get the number of school counsellors needed so that all our public school students can have health, wellbeing and mental health support. There are not 153 school counsellors sitting around waiting to be plunked into a school. What work will the CLP government do to fulfil access to a school counsellor? The minister for Education said that not all would be centralised, so which schools will she pick and choose to have priority for the school counsellors? At last count I think there were only 24 school counsellors available for 153 public schools.

Let us hear from the Education minister about how she intends to ensure that students in our public schools have access to school counsellors. We have not heard a single word; we heard only rubbish, rubbish, rubbish. What action will make a difference and ensure we have school counsellors? I would love to hear that; I would love to be educated and proved wrong. If the government can find 152 school counsellors for Northern Territory public schools, I will be the first to congratulate it. I do not think that will happen, and it will not happen in the next four years that is for sure.

Whether it is the ridiculous funding promise of Clark Rubber pools or election promises that have not been properly costed, we know that our schools will expect to be supported by the CLP government. I want to make sure that all our schools, including our childcare centres—that important zero to five years—are supported.

We saw last week that the minister for Education, in a different portfolio, will repeal portable long service leave, which ensured there were incentives for childcare workers to move from centre to centre across the Northern Territory and take their portable long service leave with them, keeping them here. Guess what? They can access those entitlements in other parts of the country, so what is the incentive for those childcare workers to stay in the Territory if they do not have the same benefits as those in other jurisdictions?

It is incredible when you think about the tough challenges of our educators, school staff, school communities and, indeed, our students. Of course, attendance should be improved. The Member for Katherine told some great stories. She asked us to concentrate on the good stories, but rubbished the work that some of our schools that have struggled for many years have been building up. I will give the Member for Katherine a great story.

Gapuwiyak School in the beautiful Arnhem electorate had record-breaking attendance with 195 students attending the school the other week, as well as 23 FaFT students and teachers of that school. That is not

due to the CLP's punitive policy of school attendance officers; it is due to the hard work of the educators, teachers, school staff and the wider community of Gapuwiyak. The government does not need to take credit for the things that our communities show initiative for.

We need to make sure that all our kids, no matter where they live, what colour skin they have, how old they are or what gender they are, will have access to a fair and quality education.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that the education of our children is critically important. Our government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro, is committed to ensuring our children receive the education they deserve. Having grown up with a mum for a teacher whose career spanned almost five decades I know firsthand how hard our teachers work.

First up I give a big shout-out to the amazing teachers at the schools in my electorate. Larrakeyah Primary is an award-winning NT Government independent public school which, under the leadership of Principal Fathma Mauger, delivers exceptional educational results to our community. Fathma is supported by Assistant Principals Danni Mattiazzo and Bradley King, and an incredible cohort of exceptionally dedicated teachers and support staff, as well as a committed school board. The programs on offer at the school are fantastic, with a blend of the academic, sports, music and the arts, giving the children who attend the opportunity to develop the skills they will need to be successful in later life.

I am also privileged to have in the electorate St Mary's Catholic Primary School, which is a faith-based school that delivers fantastic results for our children as well. Principal Lisa Boyd leads the school's team and is supported by Deputy Principal Christine Ferreira; Acting Religious Education Coordinator Leonie Kane; a wonderful cohort of skilled teachers, who are passionate about offering the children at the school a wonderful education experience; and a great team of support staff.

My eldest son, Joel, attended St Mary's when we first moved to the Territory some 30 years ago, so I can attest to the school's commitment to ensuring its students receive an exceptional education that will hold them in good stead for their adult life. When we moved to the northern suburbs he continued his education at Nakara Primary School, where he was later joined by his brother, Christian. Both boys progressed through our excellent public school system, finally completing their high school education at Casuarina Senior College. I know firsthand how amazing the education system in the Territory is and how well it equips our children for lifelong success in whatever career paths they enter into.

We heard members of the Assembly talk about the outstanding commitment of our teachers, school support staff and parents who put themselves forward and support their schools by taking part in school boards and councils. We know the passion exists in our community to ensure our children have the best possible educational opportunities.

Sadly, none of this matters if we cannot get our children to school. Although those on the other side are correct that our education system needs to meet the current and projected needs of all Territorians, when looking at the attendance rates of children, particularly in our regional and remote areas, the question must be asked: why did the former Labor government not do more to ensure all school-age children attend school to receive the education they need and deserve? Why, under its watch, did literacy and numeracy for the Territory fall to levels that cannot be viewed as anything other than disastrous?

That is why we made a commitment to bring into our system school attendance officers who will work with our kids and their families to make sure that these kids attend school and receive the best possible opportunity as they progress forward through their lives. Our government is committed to working to get our kids back to school. We have to get them back to school because a child at school is a child with a future. A child not at school is a child on a path to potential destruction. All Territory kids deserve a future so we have to keep this focus front and centre. We must first make sure they learn the skills that they need to get a job. That has to be our focus. That is where the matter of public importance lies—in getting our kids to school and giving them the education they deserve so that we know as they progress through life they will be successful in whatever path they choose.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker …

Mr Paech: Oh look—picking your deputy.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: Come on, you have to look after me. You have spoken too much anyway.

I will reflect on my maiden speech. In that speech I identified three virtues which I hope can help drive and shape my life. Those virtues came out of my family, my mother in particular. The virtues were love, compassion and tolerance.

Over the last couple of weeks I had a couple of incidents in my family which made me seriously look at that and think how important they are. I have been notified that my brother-in-law, a wonderful husband to my sister and father to two wonderful children, has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and probably has less than 12 months to go. They are optimistic; they will do the best they can. I feel for the family, as they have to deal with that as they go forward. As we say, someone has got to be at the high end of the averages, and I am hoping he will be one of them.

A neighbour friend only a week ago was diagnosed with an aggressive bile duct cancer and is going through various tests. He is not optimistic. He said, 'If it cannot be removed, it is sayonara'. They were his words. He has been travelling the world; he did not expect this, and it has hit him like that.

It makes us reflect on our own mortality. We all think we are important in this place; we come in and dress up. We do important stuff, and it has been an important two weeks. Who on Earth can forget Tuesday last week, which ran into Wednesday? It was a busy day and long night; boy, did I learn consideration in detail. I thank the Member for Johnston for contributing to that. That was fun. Seriously, we do good work. From our perspective, we passed important legislation. I know the opposition and Independents do not agree with it, but that is what we are here for.

In between sittings I had the opportunity to go to a 50th school reunion in Melbourne, which was fabulous; that shows everyone how old I am compared with these youngsters. I had not seen people for 50 years, and it is amazing that within five minutes it was like we had never left. We were picking up the same conversations; the same dirty jokes I used to tell them, we are still telling now; and the same observations we made about women then, we are making now. It was good, but not everyone was there, as a number had passed away due to either illness or accident. Once again, you reflect on your mortality.

I reflect on why we are here; sometimes we get combative, but just enjoy the people you have. We are all human beings. For whatever we say, we may as well enjoy people. In the end, the old saying is the same people you see going up are the same people you see coming down. We never know where we will meet again. We need to work together. Sure, we can have big debates, but when we walk out of here let us try to be friends and share a bit of love.

I keep reminding people to stay grounded, and all MLAs should stay grounded. Get out in your electorates, walk around and talk to people. On Saturday I am joining Tejinder Singh to hand out food to vulnerable people. As I mentioned in a previous speech, we took the opportunity to lay a wreath for a victim of domestic violence.

We still have to keep grounded and listen to people. I am bloody glad that I know all of you.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama raised important points about being kind when we are out of here.

There are many incredible stories from the Gwoja electorate that I will take a few moments to talk about and place on the *Parliamentary Record*.

Recently, we celebrated the inspiring milestone of 50 years of bilingual education at Yuendumu School. This achievement is a testament to the power of culture, language and community working together. I acknowledge all the amazing work the *yapa* did in putting together an amazing event and thank all the *kardiya* educators for their support as well.

I acknowledge the senior traditional owners of the newest Indigenous protected area, the Central Western Desert IPA. It was an extraordinary moment when they came together to sign an agreement with the Australian Government. This agreement celebrated many years of careful planning and working on looking after country and how to best protect it. I heard that the celebrations ended with a number of kids running straight for the cake, just to add that touch of joy to the celebration. I give a big shout-out to the Central

Western Desert IPA group for its phenomenal work and all the organisations that helped such an amazing event happen at Ilpili, just outside of the beautiful community of Papunya in the Western Desert.

Another remarkable story comes from the beautiful community of Kintore, where the rangers have finally moved from a dusty old shed and a shipping container into a state-of-the-art ranger hub. This purpose-built facility has everything that the community needs to look after and care for country. In February the entire community of beautiful Kintore came together to celebrate the hub's official opening. It was a day to remember with rangers from all the other regions, government representatives and visitors joining the hardworking, amazing Kintore community and the rangers, over 500 kilometres west of Alice Springs. The elders and schoolchildren performed a ceremonial dance in the scorching 44-degree heat. What a testament to the resilience and pride of our culture.

I also highlight the great work happening in the beautiful little community of Mount Liebig. The local church has been a much more comfortable and welcoming space since the much-needed investments, both inside and outside. Thanks to the renovations, the church has insulation and air conditioning, making the interior light, cool and airy, while the new toilets and concrete paths have enhanced the exterior. This is thanks to the community development committee which did an outstanding job of bringing this community together, creating happiness and pride in the community. Well done, everyone.

In the beautiful community of Warumpi (Papunya) there has been a buzz of excitement. The new Papunya hair salon officially opened, bringing training, jobs and much-needed services to the community. This community-driven initiative has sparked much joy and creativity, with a number of proper deadly hairstyles out and about in the community. I even heard my amazing, strong, deadly cousin, Garrard Anderson, highlighting the amazing work of the hairdressing salon and the Ngurratjuta Aboriginal Corporation.

These stories are a reminder of the strength, resilience and spirit of the bush. They demonstrate the power of collaboration, cultural pride and community-led initiatives. They create positive change in our communities. It is an honour to stand in parliament and talk about these celebrations, and witness the incredible achievements happening in Gwoja.

For the last two weeks there has been sorry business and a number of funerals I have been unable to attend because we have been in parliament. Bush members on all sides of the parliament know that is a hard thing to do when you must be here. I acknowledge all the families and friends across the bush who have gone through a difficult time or had a funeral which we were unable to be at. I send my sympathies and condolences to all the families across the bush and in our towns and centres. That is important.

Across the bush we are hearing lots of excitement, as lots of mob in our communities are getting ready for the upcoming footy season. As I and the Member for Barkly know, sometimes you get pulled in to be the umpire. When your community's team is playing, as long as they are playing another community that is not in your electorate, it is pretty good. However, when all your teams are playing, it becomes really hard. I give a shout-out to all the communities preparing for the upcoming footy season. We will be out there and we will be deadly.

Any member who has never been to a bush game of footy is missing the opportunity to witness the true talent of the Territory on those fields. They do not play on the soft beautiful grass that you might get in the lush Darwin suburbs; they play on the rocky red dirt in remote communities. This is where we see the Territory's true talent.

I acknowledge all the amazing work that goes into the preparation for softball. A number of our Territory women in remote communities are gearing up for softball and basketball. It is worth the investment to get out and see these wonderful events.

There is much excitement in Central Australia and up to the Barkly, as there has been much-needed rain. That countryside has had a beautiful drink. The Member for Barkly and I might have a challenge as to who has the best wildflowers after these rains. It is truly magical. For those who have never experienced Central Australia during or just after rain, it is incredible. It has brought a sense of excitement and happiness. People are going to the local waterholes and rivers, and it is great to see families and communities come together to celebrate this event that does not happen often in Central Australia.

There is so much happening in the bush, particularly in Gwoja. It is important to stop and reflect. When I get home tomorrow the first thing I will do is take off my shoes and walk in the river sand. It is important to reconnect.

This weekend in Alice Springs is the fabAlice Festival. I shout out to everyone who went above and beyond to put together this amazing event. Thank you to all the volunteers for keeping these community events strong, vibrant and alive. Without the vollies we would not see these amazing events. The volunteers and committee members work every day to make these events happen every year. The fabAlice Festival will be a great event. It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase Alice Springs and bring the community together.

Some members in this Chamber like to have a boogie at a dance party, and we will have to test out our moves some time.

On the last sitting day for this session it is good to reflect on how amazing every corner of the Northern Territory is. We live in the best territory in Australia, and if we were a state we would live in the best state. No-one else has the privilege and the honour to live in such a magical place as we do.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for the shout-out. I would make the same noise as you about the number of amendments I moved the other night.

Last year I gave notice of a motion to support the return of voluntary assisted dying (VAD) to the Northern Territory. As everyone in this Chamber would know, we were the first place in the world to have it, and we are now the only place in Australia where people cannot access it.

Since announcing my intention to bring forward this matter the response from my community and beyond has been overwhelming. Thank you to my constituents who have contacted me to thank me or plead with me to make it happen quicker and shared their stories; the people who have experienced firsthand the pain of seeing loved ones suffer without options; the healthcare professionals who want to provide better care; and the advocates who have fought long and hard for the rights of people to end their life. These voices are clear: they want the right to choose and have autonomy over how and when their life ends.

To all the people, both my constituents in Johnston and the people beyond who are so desperate for this to happen, who have contacted me—sometimes in pain and sometimes in tears—asking for help, my message to you is this: you have my word that I will do everything I can to make this happen. I have said this to you and I will say it publicly, my hope is that we can work together across this Chamber to make a law that we know that more than 80% of Territorians want.

There are many complexities surrounding this law. I also have constituents who are concerned about VAD and I spent a lot of time with them, listening to their concerns. It is always important to listen to all the voices in our community. There is much wisdom in the 'no' as well. We can learn from that and find ways to develop laws that respect all the issues that people are raising.

We need to make sure that any laws we develop in the NT are appropriate for our specific complexities, including culture, remoteness and our health system challenges. Many of these issues were addressed in depth in the Report into Voluntary Assisted Dying in the Northern Territory, which was tabled in this Chamber last year. I encourage everyone to read it.

I make special mention of Sophie Kuswadi, a young woman in my electorate who sent a speech to me as part of my youth speeches parliament competition. She thought I might not read her speech because it was against VAD. Sophie, I assure you that I will always listen to all the voices. There were many things in your speech that I think we can all learn from. I will not read out your entire speech, but you highlighted the importance of supporting palliative care and not forcing doctors to do things they do not want to do. Sophie, we need to listen to your ideas, along with the rest of the community.

In the last week I sat with three different people with terminal illnesses—long-term Territorians, people who have contributed greatly to our community and people who will die long before we can develop and pass legislation in this House, if that is what we choose to do. They all said the same thing to me, 'I would do anything to have this as an option'. They all told me that they would spend the rest of their limited lives trying to make it possible for others, knowing that it will be too late for them. To Gavin, Lori, Sonia and everyone else who has contacted me, thank you for your courage and for sharing your stories.

I will finish with a quote from Judy Dent, whom some of you may know. Judy's husband, Bob, was the first person to die in the Northern Territory with what was then called euthanasia. She has been campaigning for the return of the VAD to the Northern Territory for more than 27 years. Judy said that the responsibility to act in the interests of the people who voted them into office rests with each individual member of parliament. I look forward to the members in this Chamber talking to and listening to their constituents and representing their views when we vote on this motion in the next sittings of parliament.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I am delighted to congratulate the recipients of my Larrakeyah Primary School citizenship awards.

The February citizenship award recipients were: Matilda Davis, who received the early childhood/lower primary award for showing resilience in starting big school and for being a kind friend and helping them settle in as well; and Lexi Dorrian who received the middle/upper primary award for exemplifying and embodying our school's values through their leadership.

Savannah Shirvington received an award in March for consistently demonstrating exceptional kindness and respect towards her peers, always ensuring that everyone feels included and valued. Her thoughtful actions and considerate nature create a positive, welcoming environment for all around her. Well done, Savannah.

Congratulations also go to the school leadership team at Larrakeyah Primary School for 2025: school captains Neve Ross and Michael Baldry; Abigail Bromell from Year 2/3; Year 3, Sarvad Brown and Victor Miller; Year 3/4 Wesley Carwell; Year 4, Paridhi Rowe and Rose Ingle; Year 5, Alexandra Dorrian and Poppy Thompson; Year 5/6 Shelby France; and Year 6, Viola Mamouzellos and Ryan Goodear.

Congratulations and a big thank you to the members of the Larrakeyah school community who put up their hands to be on the Larrakeyah Primary School Board. They are chairperson, Kristy Rees; secretary, Leigh Robke; treasurer, Andrew Lee; parent rep, Nicholas Peters; and teacher reps, Cheryl Thompson and Riley France.

I was there the evening the school board was appointed. I must say that the enthusiasm with which those positions were competed for was interesting, because normally people run 100 miles in the other direction from taking on those roles. It was a hotly contested competition with well-deserved appointments as a result.

Well done to the students from Larrakeyah Primary School early childhood classes for the stunning Harmony Day T-shirt they designed—proof that age is no barrier to creativity.

A big shout-out and congratulations go to the St Mary's Catholic Primary School award recipients. In February they went to Noah Atkinson for being responsible and leading with kindness and to Adaline Dekuyer for being an inclusive and kind community member. In March the awards went to Asha Roscoe for going out of her way to be supportive to others and to Avik Lamba for his care, support and inclusion of everyone in the St Mary's Catholic Primary School community.

I also congratulate the organisers of the Multicultural International Women's Day Fashion Show 2025. It was a demonstration of the diversity of the Territory and a celebration of the vibrancy of our community. Thank you to the organisers for inviting me and my colleagues along to allow us to be a part of the celebration, which was truly spectacular.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the students from Darwin High School's class of 2024 whose work has been selected to feature in the 2025 Exit Art exhibition at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. It opened on Saturday 22 February. If you have not already seen it, I believe it is still open. I encourage everyone to see the outstanding and creative work from our young people. They are Amelia Surtees, Bethany Gibb, Bo Russell, Ella Lines, Eshani Senarath, Frencessca Sparrow, Jarvis Musgrave, Jude Bird, Laura Hutchinson, Lily Purdon, Maddie Ladd, Margaux Papalonias, Ida Shiddiq, Pearl Mathers-Musulin, Ruby Joswig, Savvina Koukouvas, Toby Koefoed and Yu-Shan Hsu.

On Monday 19 February Darwin High proudly continued its tradition, participating in the 83rd anniversary commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin. Fifteen students attended the commemoration service at Darwin Cenotaph, dedicating their time to honour this historic event. Year 12 student Chay Keating delivered the *Ode of Remembrance*, receiving high praise for his confidence and poise during that delivery. The SRC representatives and intensive English unit students were outstanding ambassadors for that event, with four student leaders laying wreaths on behalf of Darwin High.

Five Darwin High School students, accompanied by their Defence mentor, attended the ADF International Women's Day morning tea. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect and celebrate the achievements of women in the community.

Congratulations to Year 10 student Tayah Stripling who recently returned from Malaysia as a member of the Territory Stingers Hockey squad.

Well done to Year 11 student Lachlan Ammerlaan who was awarded NTFL Junior Umpire of the Year for the 2024–25 season.

Year 12 student Ruhan Sun achieved the highest score in the Australian Languages Competition Level 3 test in Chinese—a fantastic accomplishment.

Darwin High School students have represented the school at mathematics and language competitions, netball and volleyball sports gala days and the Youth Round Table with great results, serving as proud ambassadors. Everybody is proud of them.

Beyond the classroom students have had incredible learning opportunities so far. Mr Burton's stage 2 physical education class spent some time at Darwin Golf Club investigating the biomechanics of golf. Three back-to-back day trips saw the stage 1 outdoor education classes spending days rock climbing and abseiling out at Hayes Creek, putting into practice all the training that they have been working on at school over the last seven weeks. On Thursday Mr Bent's class commenced the next unit and spent a double lesson mountain biking in Charles Darwin National Park, which we all know is an amazing national park.

Student achievements include Year 10 student Matthew Kollakkombil's success at the recent NT Juniors Challenge Badminton Competition, winning the under-17 and under-19 singles titles; Year 12 student Sean Deutsch winning 11 gold medals and a bronze medal at the NT Swimming Championships earlier this month; Year 12 student Isabella Savage being shortlisted for School-Based Apprentice of the Year at the GTNT Awards; and Darwin High School alumni George Beattie's nomination for Outstanding First Year Apprentice at the GTNT Awards.

Darwin Middle School student Dylan Ralph attended the kart racing Victorian State Championships and finished seventh in the top 10 in the senior category final. It was a great achievement for Dylan and his family.

It is awesome to hear that St John's Catholic College's enrolments have grown this year. A couple of years ago it has about 180 students, but it is up to 300 in 2025. These enrolments at St John's means that the school must be continually improving, which is great.

The Year 12 student results from 2024 were strong, with 100% completion rate in the NTCET. Notable accomplishments include 29 A grades in stage 2 subjects; 55% of the stage 2grades were awarded as As or Bs; and 99% of grades were C or higher.

The cohort for 2024 included seven Aboriginal students, seven boarding students, four from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds, four international students and 12 students from a language other than English. They all completed their NTCET, which is fantastic.

Emma Ryan earned an A-plus merit in stage 2 Indonesian. Nathania was named the 2024 dux of the college, with the highest ATAR. These are amazing results, as I am sure you would agree.

Moving away from those good news stories, last night we heard the Member for Johnston's adjournment speech about 170 frontline workers who signed a petition against the recent changes that included mandatory sentencing for assaults against frontline workers. Subsequently, there have been radio interviews and media interest, so I will add my contribution to this. The Member for Johnston stated, and I quote from *Hansard*:

> *These workers are deeply concerned, and rightly so, about this government's misguided approach to workplace safety. These workers are angry that their legitimate safety concerns are being used as a pretext to expand incarceration through mandatory sentencing laws. These workers know from experience that the number of assaults on frontline workers will not be reduced by mandatory sentencing; in fact, these laws will only worsen the social issues that drive crime.*

We disagree. As the Chief Minister stated when she delivered her closing statement for the police administration Bill, we are working to educate people on the right path, and if there are no consequences to poor behaviour we will not see any changes. We have implemented laws for mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers. My husband is a frontline worker and has been assaulted.

I wanted to test my theory. About three hours ago I put up a post on both my political Facebook page and my private Facebook page asking people for their feedback on what they thought about mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers. The comment I put on my page was, 'Please like this if you support mandatory sentencing and send me a message if you want to have a chat about it'. I have received 78 messages in three hours that are supportive of mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers.

Many of those messages are from frontline workers saying that they need additional support and they are sick of being treated like garbage. It is phenomenal that in three hours there have been 78 messages of support.

The people who come into my office are people who disagree with mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers, people who agree with mandatory sentencing for assaults on frontline workers and people who are not sure where they lie and want a bit of discretion and to find out whether then can or cannot report and whether that will result in a sentence. People from all walks of life come to talk to me about that. I hope that people who agree with this are coming to see those opposite and talking about their challenges as well, because I am getting everybody coming to see me. I take everybody's word for it—not just the minority, not just a few—everybody.

In three hours there have been 78 messages. I will give an update in the next sittings for how many I receive over the next week or so.

As somebody who has witnessed—I have a friend, a police officer, in hospital who is receiving surgery for a fractured eye socket from being hit. There was no reason; they were just hit. Would we let that person walk by because they may have a mental health issue or something else? We say no. Mandatory sentencing is something we support, and that is why we have implemented those laws. We will put the rights of victims over the rights of criminals, and we stand by our decision to do so.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise with a smile to share a lovely morning I recently spent with the residents at Greenfields Living retirement village. My team and I hosted a morning tea, and it was a genuine pleasure to sit down and have a cuppa and hear from seniors who built the foundations of our community. We talked about their concerns and ideas from improving local services and activities to ensuring better support for seniors' health and wellbeing.

I give a heartfelt thank you to all the residents for their warm welcome and honest conversations. Their insights are deeply valued, and I look forward to working with them to make positive change. I also thank the dedicated Greenfields staff for their care and kindness towards all residents. Let us all continue to engage with our seniors, listen to their stories and honour their incredible contribution to our community. To everyone at Greenfields, thank you and I am already looking forward to our next gathering.

I will share the joy of being part of this year's Chinese New Year celebrations in Darwin, welcoming the Year of the Snake, a symbol of renewal and fresh beginnings. The festivities were vibrant, meaningful and full of community spirit. From the incredible banquet at Mindil Beach Casino Resort to the colourful festival at the Marrara netball stadium, it was a true cultural showcase.

A highlight as always was the dragon dance performed to bring good fortune and ward off negativity. The Chung Wah Society of Darwin continues to do a brilliant job, blessing more than 400 homes and businesses each year, including the Casuarina electorate office. I thank the Chung Wah Society for keeping this beautiful tradition alive and sharing it with us all. It is events like this that remind us of how rich and diverse our community is. I wish everyone good luck, health and happiness in the Year of the Snake.

On 8 March I joined many inspiring people in the city centre for the annual International Women's Day walk, celebrating strength, resilience and the achievements of women across the Territory. It was organised by the City of Darwin, the UNAA NT division and the Northern Territory Government. The event was a powerful reminder of what we can achieve when we stand together for equality. I was proud to walk alongside Minister Cahill, the Members for Fannie Bay and Wanguri and many more colleagues and friends from parliament. The 2025 theme 'For all women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment' could not be more fitting.

To every woman, thank you. You are the backbone of our communities, the givers of life and the leaders of change. Your impact is everywhere, and you deserve every opportunity to thrive. Here's to you and to a future that is fairer, stronger and full of promise for all women and girls.

Education is one of the greatest gifts we can give, and in Casuarina we see that gift in action every day. From our primary schools to our high schools, our special schools and our university, we are surrounded by excellence. We are so lucky in Casuarina.

I thank Ms Liza from Nakara Primary School, Ms Nektaria from Dripstone Middle School, Ms Paula from Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School, Ms Sarah from Henbury School and all the staff, teachers and support

teams behind them. I thank the team at CDU for their commitment to teaching, training and upskilling Territorians. Your work is not easy, but it is powerful and deeply appreciated.

As the Member for Casuarina, I proudly stand with CLP government, which is proud to support all our schools.

Mr EDGINGTON (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I recently attended some exciting events.

Over the weekend of 7 to 9 February, Tennant Creek once again hosted the annual Rossy Williams Shield at Purkiss Reserve. Named in honour of local legend Rossy Jagamara Williams, a co-founder of the Imparja Cup, the Rossy Williams Shield brings together men's and women's teams to compete and connect. The shield also plays a role in introducing new players to the sport of cricket.

This year, His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO, PSM opened the weekend of cricket and performed the bat flip for the opening game. Unfortunately, I was unable to convince him to hit the opening ball, but I am pleased to say that the Administrator and I put our fielding skills to the test while Rossy faced up to the first ball.

Congratulations to the One Shots, who took this year's title, defeating last year's champions, the Telegraph Cyclones, in the grand final. It also looked like day 2 of the tournament might have been washed out, but thankfully the rain cleared early and play could continue.

I thank NT Cricket; Tennant Creek IGA; Safari Lodge Motel; the NO MORE campaign; CatholicCare NT; the Barkly Regional Council; Papulu Apparr-kari Aboriginal Corporation; His Honour Professor the Honourable Hugh Heggie AO, PSM, the Administrator of the Northern Territory; the Northern Territory Government; Rossy Williams; Irena Edwards-Kelly; Lachlan Dunemann; and all the competitors and supporters.

Congratulations to Lachlan Dunemann, who was selected to lead the Northern Territory at April's National Indigenous Cricket Championships after his stellar performance at the Northern Territory Imparja Cup, held the weekend after the Rossy Williams Shield.

I congratulate Lorraine Bathern and Cameron Rankine from Elliott, who won the February 2025 Pride in Your Place award. Pride in Your Place awards are monthly awards to thank and recognise public housing tenants who go above and beyond to look after their house and yard. Lorraine and Cameron were nominated by their tenancy officer, Mary Kingham-Bradley, for their magnificent front yard. I enjoyed seeing their beautiful windmill garden, planter box and the lawn, which looked a lot better than mine. On 5 March I travelled to Elliott to hand them their $200 voucher and certificate. It is fantastic that I can present this award as both the local member and as the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Community Development. Hopefully, I will be able to present more of these awards in person.

Last Friday in my capacity as the Minister for Health I was delighted to be invited to speak and officially open the new Darwin office for the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council.

NTAHC, as it is known, originated in the early 1980s when devastating stories and news of rapid deaths from an unknown disease began to emerge. Groups and committees predominantly led by gay men began to form in the Northern Territory, trying to stop the spread of HIV and Aids and providing support to those living with the disease. This eventually grew into the Northern Territory AIDS Council Inc in 1986. Two years later the AIDS Council of Central Australia was formed, becoming the first regional Aids council in Australia. With the addition of hepatitis services and merging with Central Australia, the organisation became the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council, as it is known today.

NTAHC can be proud of its response to HIV and its continued achievement since its commencement. The Northern Territory continues to have one of the lowest HIV notification rates in Australia. Notifications of hepatitis B and C are declining over time.

The Northern Territory Government has been working with NTAHC for four decades. It has supported the council since 1986, providing funding of approximately $1.5m annually to prevent bloodborne viruses through initiatives such as the Needle and Syringe Program, improving the health and wellbeing of people of living with bloodborne viruses. It is this collaboration between community and government, peer educators, consumers, stakeholders, volunteers and professionals that underpins the success of the HIV and bloodborne virus response in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory has unique challenges, including geographic remoteness, diverse populations and health inequities. That is why organisations like NTAHC play a crucial role in reaching people who may otherwise face barriers to accessing mainstream care and support.

I commend the council on four decades of passion, hard work and dedication to the health and wellbeing of all Territorians, free from stigma and discrimination. I acknowledge the incredible dedication of NTAHC's staff, volunteers and board members.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate two schools in my electorate on their wonderful attendance rate.

Leanyer Primary School, led by Leah Crockford. has an over 90% attendance rate. It has a wonderful initiative; Henry Gray, a retired principal, donated two bikes at the end of the year for those who have great attendance records. I will take up that initiative this year as the new Member for Wanguri. We are preparing to donate two bikes.

Wanguri Primary School is led by David Cluse, who is doing a wonderful job there. I was lucky enough to attend the school's Harmony Day celebrations the other day. The Year 1 students—Ms Magriplis' class—invited me back to show me their classroom. School has come along way since I went to school. The children check themselves in on the smart board—instead of having a roll call like we used—to tick them off. They showed me a lot of stuff on their smart board. Technology is not my thing, so I would probably get lost and may not learn enough in the day. Luckily, I did my education when I did. Thank you to the class.

I send a shout-out to Dripstone Middle School, led by Nektaria Pikoulos, which will be going through the middle school reforms. She is passionate about education, the school, all the students and their learning.

The school council had its AGM earlier this month. A big thank you to Rebecca Mellon who has been the Chair for the last three years. Rebecca is stepping down this year, but staying on the council. She is a wonderful contributor to the council.

Congratulations to Nicky D'Antoine who was secretary and has now stepped up into the Chair role. There is a vacancy for the secretary position. Taryn Tyack is returning as the treasurer, with Robert Stuart, Jude Dawson, Cath Halkon, Lisa Hall, Joanne Butler and Belinda Orme. The teaching body representatives on the school council are Nektaria Pikoulos, the principal; Charleen Conroy; George Triantafillos; Shanae Kuo, who is an amazing teacher, full of energy, passionate about the students and always in contact with me to try to work out things the children can do each week; and Katina Laouris. Congratulations to the new council. I look forward, with the Member for Casuarina, to working with the school council through its transition. We both attended the council's AGM.

The Member for Casuarina mentioned that the Chung Wah Society had its New Year Festival celebrations. It has a number of festivals. The society is led by Roland Chin, who has been the Chair and president for a long time. That community is thriving each year, and I am privileged to have Roland in my electorate. He is a great role model for the new generation. Thank you very much, Roland, for all your hard work with the community as well.

The Muslim community had a number of Iftar multi-faith events. UMNT had its event, and we were guests at that with many of the members in the Chamber. The mosque at Wanguri also held its multi-faith event recently. Those who are observing Ramadan will have their grand day on Monday. I look forward to celebrating with them as well.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will put a few different things on the record.

On Saturday 22 March, when I was home, we had the 83rd commemoration of the Bombing of Katherine. Many people laid wreaths. The Katherine High School leaders were there, as was St Joseph's Catholic College. The Opposition Leader was there with her two young children, who are growing up extremely quickly. There is considerable growing participation of RAAF personnel, who are coming to these events. That is great to see, given that we are a RAAF town. I thank Tegan from Dragonfly Catering who always does a great job, Katherine Town Council and Katherine Museum for putting on this event.

Also, the Katherine Vehicle Enthusiasts Club, of which I am a member—my husband has many old cars—had a display with its members' war cars. We then went up to the site a little further away where Dodger Kodjalway was killed. He was the only guy who was killed in the Bombing of Katherine. I feel almost embarrassed to say that after 35 years of living in Katherine, I had not been there before. It was incredible.

The old cars were positioned around a rock that has a plaque which explains what happened. You can see all the shrapnel clearly in the rock. As much as he took cover behind these massive, big rocks, I do not think he stood a chance with all the shrapnel holes that are visible in the rock area there.

A huge congratulations to Tom and Annabel Curtain from Katherine Outback Experience who, over the weekend, won for the third year in a row best tourist attraction in Australia. Katherine Outback Experience has been going for many years. Tom and Annabel work hard with their team to put on a great display of horsemanship, a bit of singing and dog training. Tom is incredible in the way he can get dogs to do exactly what he wants them to do in his training and with his horses. In the Dry Season when they are not in Katherine, Tom, Annabel, the kids and the whole team take the show on the road. Friends of mine have seen the show in different states around Australia, and everyone says how fantastic it is.

Last Friday was World Down Syndrome Day. It was a pleasure to meet up with people from Project 21 who had a tour of Parliament House. Briony Festing—a friend's daughter of similar age to my daughter, and she is now living in Darwin—was there, and we all donned crazy socks for the Lots of Socks campaign last week. All the Cabinet members donned crazy socks, and it was quite funny.

I give a big shout-out to Nick Lovering, Principal of Katherine High School; Alicia Stanley, head of campus; Brianna Gibbs, the AP; and all the school leadership team and staff. I also shout out to Paul van Holsteyn, deputy CE; James Brooking; the Aboriginal liaison officers, Gary Manbulloo, Henry Driver, Sylvia Maroney and Ethan Woods-Alum; and Dani Mattiuzzo who was the school-based constable and has come back to help support the school. I have spoken about this in parliament numerous times. I think you would agree, they have had an unsettling period at the start of this school year. I give them a big shout-out and put my thanks to them on the record.

Yesterday COTA and the seniors had a seniors expo in Katherine. I could not be there but Jen, my electorate officer, does a great job of representing me when I am not in Katherine. Many of the seniors were there. We gave them a prize which they raffled off on the day. There was a good turnout at the YMCA in Katherine.

This week in parliament I caught up with Holy Spirit Primary School; COTA, with the Members for Casuarina and Wanguri; and Shepherdson College, with the Member for Mulka. I give a big shout-out to our Parliamentary Education team for the great work they do in coordinating these schools that come in and educating them on what happens in the parliament. They do a mighty fine job.

The Member for Fannie Bay, Laurie Zio, was the emcee at a function in the hall for St Patrick's Day celebrations. The venue was transformed into a vibrant stage, and it was great to see the Keltikka Performance Dance Company. Congratulations to Pat Murray and Tom Kiely for their service to the Irish community. It was a fantastic dance group. Along with you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I think the Members for Barkly, Wanguri, Casuarina and Sanderson attended.

Members interjecting.

Mrs HERSEY: A lot of us were there; I did not want to leave out anyone. The Member for Arnhem stuck her head in for a moment or two. It was a great event.

It is great to see so many events taking place at Parliament House. We have had other multicultural events recently, as the Member for Wanguri spoke about. It is great to see the hall transformed into a fantastic and vibrant place, inviting different groups in and letting them enjoy the celebrations here at parliament.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the retail workers throughout the Northern Territory for their hard work every day in providing goods and services for things we all need day to day. I want them to know that we do not take for granted those essential things and that their work is important.

To the retail workers of Palmerston, please know that Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro, Attorney-General Marie-Clare Boothby, the Member for Blain and I are in your corner and we listened. Throughout my campaign I spoke to many retail workers, and I know how difficult it has been for you. Know that our government listened and we have taken swift and firm action to ensure that you are safe at work.

I thank everyone who works at the Gateway Shopping Centre, the Palmerston Shopping Centre, the Oasis Shopping Village and all the small shopping districts throughout the CBD and greater Palmerston. To the store managers and owners, I know the last few years has been a difficult period.

My special thanks are to the workers who have rocked up to shift after shift, copping abuse from customers, violence and threats of violence from criminals and regular theft. Something that struck me through the campaign was the level of sexual harassment, particularly women not feeling safe on the walk to their car at the end of their shift. That motivated me.

I spent a day in Gateway Shopping Centre speaking to retail workers. A lot of them are young people. There is a lot of young women, and the fact is that the jobs they are doing will likely be some of the first jobs my daughters will do, probably at the same shopping centre. To think that they would have to suffer sexual harassment simply walking to their car and not feeling safe had me highly motivated during the campaign last year because I wanted to be in here to make those changes. That is exactly what our team has delivered.

We came in here and set mandatory sentencing for assaults on Territory workers. To every retail worker throughout Palmerston and the Northern Territory, know that this government made those changes because we do not want any of you to go to work and suffer at the hands of others. We listened and we acted.

To all the retail workers, keep up the good work. Attorney-General Marie-Clare Boothby and I had the pleasure of speaking to some of those workers a couple of weeks ago. We did a tour of the Gateway and Palmerston Shopping Centres, and I was pleased to hear that the degree of abuse and assaults has decreased. Although I know there will still be incidents, we were both pleased to hear that. That is the result when you take more than 500 criminals off the street—they cannot assault our workers and young women.

It was pleasing to hear—I will not say that it has stopped—that not one person brought up incidents of sexual harassment or fear walking to their car. I asked that question a lot because it matters to me. I was glad to hear that there has been a vast improvement in our shopping centres.

I note that we have a lot of work to do, especially at the Casuarina shopping centre. It was raised with the Attorney-General and I that significant issues are still occurring at Casuarina. Know that our government is committed to staying the course. I want every retail worker in the Northern Territory to be safe at work; every parent to know that when their child goes to work they will be safe; and every manager and business owner to know their staff will be safe. Our government cares.

Thank you, retail workers. We will keep listening, seeing you and speaking to you. I am one for freedom and freedom of association, but it is unfortunate your association continues to fund the party that oversaw this massive decline in your safety. Where it has failed, this government will step in.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I provide service to the people of Blain and the Territory by putting on the record the history of cover-ups and hypocrisy by the former Labor government.

In 2016 Labor promised to be open and accountable to Territorians. In November 2016 then Labor Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, tabled the Restoring Integrity to Government document which he proceeded to make a mockery of over the next six years with cover-up after cover-up.

Who could forget February 2020, when the ABC reported that in January 2019 the Chief Minister's chief of staff had written to the Turf Club saying, 'This is the letter you need to write to us'? After which, we saw the world land speed record for $12m of taxpayers' money heading out the door to the Chief Minister's electorate. Do I need to mention the scandal of the former Labor secretary and staffer to the Labor government, who is now a convicted paedophile? The now Opposition Leader thanked him in her maiden speech.

I will talk about the blatant hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition and to expose her and the former Labor government's cover-up and fundamental failings as Ministers of Renewables and Energy. In this House this morning we heard the Opposition Leader espousing her wisdom on how dare the CLP scrap the 50% renewable energy target by 2030. We also heard her talk a lot about transparency and accountability.

I would like to talk about transparency and accountability. I seek to table the Achieving the Northern Territory Renewable Energy Target document which was prepared for the former Labor government. It was sought by Sky News under freedom of information, and every page was blacked out except the front and back covers. It is 118 pages—what a waste of black ink.

Leave granted.

Mr KERLE: By comparison I will show transparency under this CLP government. I seek leave to table the unredacted version of the Achieving the Northern Territory Renewable Energy Target document.

Leave granted.

Mr KERLE: In 2020 the Labor government—in which the Opposition Leader, and the future Opposition Leader, the Member for Gwoja, were ministers—refused to reveal the true cost of its expensive renewables target, despite commissioning this expensive detailed report into the issue. That report cost $218,768 of taxpayer money. There is no such thing as government money; there is only taxpayer money. When Sky News was given a copy of this report under freedom of information, 116 of the 118 pages—everything except the front and back covers—were redacted.

This report was done in April 2019, which means nearly six years ago the Labor government was told that its 50% renewables target by 2030 was a sham, yet Labor—including the then minister and now Opposition Leader—covered this up from Territorians for another five years while it was in government. It makes you wonder what other terrible decisions the former Labor government, including the current Opposition Leader and the future Opposition Leader, the Member for Gwoja, covered up during its time in office. Shame, shame, shame!

The now Opposition Leader became the Minister for Renewables and Energy on 23 May 2022, after Michael Gunner was unceremoniously dumped to try to save two seats in the federal election, which makes it clear that NT Labor dances to the tune of the Labor Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese. Maybe he plays a bamboo pipe, and those opposite dance to that tune. She became the Minister for Renewables and Energy and the Minister for Essential Services, under the then Chief Minister, Natasha Fyles. At this point, she could have chosen to tell Territorians the truth. There was a new Chief Minister and a new minister. She could have come clean and tabled that document, as I have, releasing the full report. However, she chose not to. She chose to cover up and hide the truth.

She did not stay in that portfolio for long; she held it only until 30 October 2023. Maybe she was not good at it. Now she is the Leader of the Opposition.

It is no wonder the former Labor government had no idea what was going on with renewables. Labor chopped and changed ministers in the portfolio like it was a game. As well as the Leader of the Opposition holding the role, Kate Worden, Nicole Manison and Eva Lawler served as Ministers for Renewables and Energy at different times. All four were utterly hopeless.

Who can forget the shame of the ETU (Electrical Trades Union) calling for the sacking of the then Labor minister, Dale Wakefield, in the fallout of the Alice Springs system blackout. Instead of the minister taking responsibility, the Labor government sacked the CEOs of TGen and Power and Water. Labor's management was rudderless and its performance was nothing short of embarrassing.

In June 2022 a media release quoted our current Opposition Leader, Selena Uibo, stating:

> *Our Government is developing a green hydrogen industry because it is a clean, sustainable and secure source of renewable energy that will benefit all Territorians.*
>
> *A hydrogen industry in the Northern Territory will contribute significantly towards our 50 percent renewable energy target by 2030.*

She further claimed that it would be:

> *… instrumental in achieving a net zero emissions economy by 2050.*

Green hydrogen is indeed a promising energy source, but where was the actual progress in developing this industry? The common theme of all the previous government's failures is the lack of real progress. There were lots of media announcements and pressers, but no results. Where was the funding? Where were the tangible results?

In June 2022 the now Opposition Leader spoke to the ABC, boldly stating:

> *The Territory is tracking well towards achieving 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030 …*

'Tracking well'—this is when I have to stop and say, 'You've got to be kidding'. This was nearly three years ago and the situation today shows that we did not see any substantial movement towards meeting this target under the former Labor government. The reality is that under the Opposition Leader's leadership there was no coherent strategy, no significant actions and no meaningful progress, just press releases.

Let us take a closer look at the other bold promises made under the Opposition Leader's reign as Minister for Renewables and Energy. In August 2022 she spoke about the $45m Darwin–Katherine battery energy storage system, describing it as:

… a huge step forward in our plan for 50% renewables by 2030.

She made this project sound as though it would be a game changer. However, there is a problem. It is one project among many that has yet to deliver the large-scale transformation necessary to meet the 50% target.

I am running out of time because when I talk about Labor's failures, there is far too much. I will sum up by saying that the Labor Party's record on this issue is one of empty promises, cover-ups and misguided optimism. The decision to scrap the 50% renewable energy target …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I have no other place to be. My family is hundreds of kilometres away.

I echo some of the Member for Katherine's comments about the great event that was put on for the commemoration of the Bombing of Katherine. The date is often the same as parliament sittings, but I could attend on Saturday 22 March to commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the Bombing of Katherine.

As the Member for Katherine said, it is great to see more RAAF Base Tindal personnel attending that event. Both wing commanders from the great electorate of Arnhem were in attendance. The new wing commander of the 17th Squadron, Wing Commander Alex Smith, was in attendance and kindly came over to collect my wreath when I had the two young ones with me attending the commemoration.

Wing Commander Andy Nilson is the wing commander of the 75th Squadron, the Lightning II jet fighters squadron. An impressive fleet is in the Northern Territory, and there is great work happening at Tindal. Commander Nilson, his three young children and his amazing wife, Pippa, who is also part of the RAAF, were in attendance. They did a fantastic job.

Katherine Town Council Mayor Lis Clark was the presiding officer and master of ceremonies at the event. It is always wonderful to see Mayor Clark and the work that the Katherine Town Council does to support this event. The Returned and Services League personnel were there, as were members from across the Katherine community and RAAF Base Tindal.

A fly-past was organised. Three Lightning II jets flew over. Quite loud, wasn't it, Member for Katherine? They were impressive. They went around, then headed off and made the long way back to the base. Mayor Clark had started the formalities and thought they might have been coming back for round 2. Luckily, it was the one display. They are fantastic, impressive aircraft.

We are fortunate in this country to have those service men and women who have a long history. The 75th Squadron was born of World War II. The base moved from Queensland into the Northern Territory outside of Katherine at Tindal. Tindal RAAF Base is named after Wing Commander Archibald Tindal who, unfortunately, was one of the casualties of the Bombing of Darwin in 1942 at the Darwin RAAF Base. There is a long history, and it is important to commemorate those humbling and emotionally affecting events. The Northern Territory community always comes together to show that respect.

It is important, which is why I took both my young children. Unfortunately, my husband was sick, so he was unable to attend that day with me. The two little ones are used to travelling and being around lots of different people. My daughter was excited to sing the Australian anthem because she is in transition, and they are doing that at school. She said, 'I know this song'. She sang the words of the Australian anthem. It is great I do not have to teach her; she already knows it.

She has been singing songs for many years. For her to click on and know that off by heart already, as a four-year-old, is pretty impressive. My husband teaches her other songs and raps to her in his own way. That is his way of doing a lullaby at bedtime. I do the old-school lullabies and he does rap songs. There you go—different parenting. Hopefully, effective either way.

A big thank you to my friends and family who put on a surprise birthday for me on Monday evening. There is not much that gets past me when it comes to organisation. It was only in about the last 30 seconds that I started to twig, 'We are not in the right venue that was put in my diary. This is weird. This is not the right

entrance to the restaurant where we are to meet the dignitaries who were listed on my calendar.' They had a car taking me out after the supposed dinner with a well-known consul in the Northern Territory. They did a great job.

I put on the record my thanks and heartfelt appreciation to Fiona Le in my office—she is tenacious and does an amazing job—who coordinated it. As much as I love my husband, he is terrible at keeping surprises and secrets. I unfortunately have to tell my daughter she has the same daddy face, and she cannot tell lies because my husband cannot tell lies. It is probably a good thing that your kids cannot tell lies and your husband cannot tell lies.

They managed to trick me. They almost were caught out when the after-school care messaged me to say, 'Your daughter is not here. Could you let us know whether she went to school?' I was madly ringing my husband and texting him. He finally said, 'I picked her up. She has been upstairs. She is here with me at work. I am in a meeting; I cannot pick up the phone.' He was mortified because he had let the school and the after-school care know, but, unfortunately, the message had not got to the educator who was on duty. Luckily, the surprise stayed intact for him. It was a fantastic surprise.

My dad was there with my sister, nieces and nephews and some good friends. My electorate officers came all the way up from Katherine to surprise me. They have looked after me for many years. I have had friendships with them for a long time, as well as being supported by them professionally. I am fortunate in that sense. Some former colleagues were there as well, some old friends since I was a teenager and people who have literally known me since the day I was born, like my godfather, some of my parents' close friends, as well as some of my staff. It was a fantastic mix of people to surprise me. They did a great job of being out of the office and poker-faced.

I had organised to have dinner at the end of this week. Everyone was quiet and I said, 'All right, you do not have to go. I know we will spend two whole weeks together. You do not need to feel pressured to come to a dinner with me.' They said, 'No, we will come'. We are still doing it as a post-parliament celebration rather than a birthday dinner for me, so it all worked out in the end.

I feel fortunate to be in a role like this—despite being rubbished by the Member for Blain in his whole contribution—standing here, knowing who I am and representing the amazing electorate of Arnhem, which has a huge number of challenges. Those small and big wins make it all the more worthwhile to continue to fight for the people of Arnhem.

I am fortunate to know where I come from, to know the way I have been grown up and to have a strong education base and my family. I am so lucky to be in a position to be educated, to have grown up in a warm and loving household, to always have food and fresh clothes, to be clean, to be supported, to have a car, to travel with my family, to be able to see both my mum's side of the family and dad's side. I know that is, unfortunately, not the case for all Territorians.

I vow to continue the good fight for the people of Arnhem. I am now honoured to be in the role as the Northern Territory's Opposition Leader, to continue to give a voice to those who do not have a voice, who feel powerless, who have a soft voice or who are not sure how and where to use their voice. With the strong upbringing my parents have given me for the last 40 years and three days I owe it to them to continue that legacy, especially for my Mum who passed away three years ago.

She still has an impact on people. I am fortunate that in the parts of the Northern Territory I get to travel to in my role as Leader of the Opposition, and formerly as a minister of the Labor government, I have such a strong connection to people I may have never met purely because my mum held herself in high esteem, and my dad continues to hold himself in high esteem. That strong grounding means that when we go through the highs and lows of this place I will always come out knowing that if we do the best for the Northern Territory, we are will leave it in a better place. That is my vow, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Happy birthday, Member for Arnhem.

Ms UIBO: Thank you, Madam Speaker; thank you for the lovely gift.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.