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Contents

LEAVE OF ABSENCE 3399
Member for Mulka 3399
VISITORS 3399
Mates4Mates 3399
CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT (WORKER SCREENING) BILL 3399
Serial 49 3399
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT 3400
Member for Johnston's Birthday 3400
TOURISM NT AMENDMENT (INTEGRATION OF NTMEC) BILL 3400
Serial 42 3400
DISTINGUISHED VISITORS 3417
NOTICES 3417
QUESTION TIME 3417
Tropical Cyclone Fina – Grants 3417
Crime Data 3418
Health Staff – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 3419
Alcohol-Fuelled Violence – Reduction 3419
Public Service – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 3420
North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency – Funding 3421
VISITORS 3421
Secondary School Reform 3422
Digital Violence Prevention 3423
Rebuilding the Economy Strategy 3424
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Programs 3424
Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Programs – Supplementary Question 3425
Major Events 2025 3425
Gamba Army – Weed Control 3426
International Engagement 3427
Darwin Private Hospital – Healthscope 3428
Arts Sector – Support 3429
REPLIES TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS 3429
Written Questions 149 to 169 3429
Written Question 146 3430
Written Questions 133, 135, 136, 144 and 145 3430
Written Questions 111 and 113 3430
MOTION 3430
Importance of Improving Decision-making, Integrity, Transparency and Accountability 3430
in our Parliament 3430
MOTION 3439
Environmental Protections 3439
MOTION 3442
Water Security in the Northern Territory 3442

MOTION....3456
Select Committee on Pathways for Children and Young People....3456
PAPERS TABLED....3466
Auditor-General's Report No 4 to the Legislative Assembly....3466
Auditor-General's Report No 5 to the Legislative Assembly....3466
ADJOURNMENT....3466

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Mulka

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the Member for Mulka due to personal reasons.

Leave granted.

VISITORS
Mates4Mates

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of visitors from Mates4Mates. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT (WORKER SCREENING) BILL
Serial 49

Ms CAHILL (Child Protection): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled Care and Protection of Children Amendment (Worker Screening) Bill 2025, Serial 49, and table the explanatory statement.

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

This Bill makes important amendments to the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* to strengthen protections relevant to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across the Northern Territory. It does so by giving effect to national commitments to improve the sharing of information relevant to working with children clearances between Australian jurisdictions and regulatory bodies and to provide for the mutual recognition of negative clearance notices issued interstate. This ensures that a person who is prohibited from working with children in another Australian state or territory can no longer obtain or retain an Ochre Card in the Northern Territory.

These amendments seek to address operational deficiencies and reduce the administrative burden on Screening Assessment for Employment Northern Territory (SAFE NT), which is the screening authority under the Northern Territory Police Force that administers the Northern Territory working with children clearance scheme. The number of people who undergo screening in the Northern Territory is significant, with 47,124 applications finalised in the 2024–25 financial year. The Northern Territory Government is committed to keeping children safe, closing jurisdictional loopholes and strengthening safeguards.

This Bill reflects the strong commitment to ensuring that our working with children clearance legislation is aligned with nationally agreed outcomes from the meeting of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General. On 15 August 2025 Attorneys-General from across Australia agreed on decisive action to deliver a national approach and address systemic gaps in working with children clearances to improve the safety of children across Australia. The Bill aligns with these commitments and ensures the Northern Territory can implement the nationally consistent mutual recognition of negative notices scheme, complementing the current Act's powers to issue, revoke and impose conditions upon clearance notices. This means that SAFE NT will now have the capability to see if an Ochre Card applicant or current cardholder has been barred from working with children in other Australian states and territories.

This Bill addresses current legislative gaps that prevent the Northern Territory screening authority from recognising or acting on negative notices issued by interstate counterparts. This strengthens child safety protections by ensuring a person who is barred by interstate screening authorities from working with children cannot move to the Northern Territory and apply for an Ochre Card. The Bill represents a vital step towards a more uniform national approach to worker screening for child-related employment.

The Bill closes loopholes relating to forum shopping for clearances across all Australian states and territories. Where a person receives a negative notice in any other jurisdiction, it will apply in the Northern Territory. The Bill will ensure existing natural justice safeguards are preserved.

A person retains the right to seek a review of the negative notice in another state or territory through the original jurisdiction who administered the negative notice. This will be through that jurisdiction's established processes, ensuring they have access to the appropriate appeal mechanisms and procedural fairness.

Should a person in another jurisdiction have a negative notice overturned on review, they will be eligible to make a new application for an Ochre Card in the Northern Territory. Regulations may also be made that will set out circumstances where a person subject to a negative notice may apply for a new Ochre Card.

The Bill enables the Northern Territory screening authority to receive and share information with its Australian counterparts. Further, the Bill's enhanced information sharing provisions allow the Northern Territory to share information relating to clearances with the national database.

Information may also be disclosed to relevant employers and to any regulatory or professional bodies connected with child-related work regarding a clearance notice. This creates a transparent legislative basis for working with children clearance information sharing. The information-sharing powers allows for information that is relevant to refused or revoked clearances across Australian jurisdictions to be recognised in future applications.

The new framework will remove existing information exchange barriers. It will authorise and require disclosure of relevant information so that people who pose unacceptable risk to children cannot exploit legislative gaps between states and territories. By enabling timely and coordinated information sharing, the reform strengthens the Northern Territory's ability to identify and respond to risks, delivering strengthened and more consistent safeguards for children.

To implement these measures, upgrades to systems and information and communication technology infrastructure are required. These upgrades are critical to allow the Northern Territory to integrate with the National Reference System.

The National Reference System is a database for tracking negative notices of working with children clearance decisions across Australia. While long-term ICT infrastructure to support this integration is being developed, the Department of Digital and Corporate Development is committed to an interim solution in order for the information from the National Reference System to be considered when reviewing applications for Ochre Cards in the Northern Territory sooner.

I am pleased to commend this Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Member for Johnston's Birthday

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge a special birthday girl in the Chamber. The Member for Johnston, Justine Davis, it is your birthday. Many happy returns. I hope you have a lovely day. You are almost as old as me, but you will never get there.

Members: Hear, hear!

TOURISM NT AMENDMENT (INTEGRATION OF NTMEC) BILL
Serial 42

Continued from 16 October 2025.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I wish Justine a happy birthday. Thank you for everything you do in this place. I hope you have a great day.

The Territory Labor opposition will support the Tourism NT Amendment (Integration of NTMEC) Bill 2025 because the tourism and events sector is vital to the Northern Territory economy. Our unique festivals and events support tourism by promoting our regional destinations, further enhancing economic and social benefits for the community, creating jobs and driving visitation.

Territory Labor also supports legislation shaped by the tourism and events sector to ensure that it can maximise its potential and boost visitation to the Northern Territory. Territory Labor backs industry leaders,

businesses and people who keep the industry running. As the streamlining of administrative, operational and marketing efforts for tourism and events through this integration is welcomed by the sector, we will support it.

Under the former Territory Labor government action and industry growth were driven by comprehensive and well-considered strategies, co-designed with the sector to strengthen visitation, connectivity and investment. This is why Territory Labor could put forward the Tourism Industry Strategy, Cruise Tourism Strategy, Aboriginal Tourism Strategy, Long-term Business Events Strategy and Drive Tourism Strategy as well as an aviation strategy backed by the Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme. All those strategies have seen fruitful outcomes over the past couple of years.

The former government also supported a wide range of events each year, including national sporting fixtures, world-class music festivals and various community events, from the booming BASSINTHEGRASS, the Darwin Festival, the revving Tatts Finke Desert Race and the FIM Motocross World Championship, which took off this year, to the rich multicultural celebrations of Greek GleNTi and the strong showcases of Aboriginal culture at Garma and the Barunga Festival. That is just to name a few. We knew that visitors to the Territory were looking for something unique and distinctively Territorian.

We must acknowledge the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry only a few years ago. The former government made significant efforts to turn that around. Year on year the Territory saw the tourism industry start to recover. Again, we are starting to see those fruits today with some considerable visitor numbers that we welcome. The number of domestic visitors increased by 11.3% from 2021 to 2024, while average visitor expenditure improved by 18.6%. Why? It is because we had a vision for the tourism industry that was complemented by investments in events, the screen sector and enabling infrastructure.

The former Territory Labor government also put in place Destination Management Plans (DMP), developed in collaboration with key tourism stakeholders and operators. These DMPs identified key strengths and assets across our regions, providing a comprehensive overview of comparative advantages, product development opportunities and visitor profiles. This was all to ensure that we could get visitors to the Territory to stay for not just a night but as long as possible, and hopefully in some cases leaving with the idea of wanting to put down roots and stay in the Territory. ‘Come for a short time, stay for a lifetime’ is a story we all know well in this Assembly.

It was disappointing that earlier this month the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality rolled out her glossy yet lacklustre high-level framework for the tourism industry moving forward, after more than a year of having no vision for the industry. After consulting with people in the sector, gathering their ideas and putting them on paper, the minister delivered a document that once again demonstrates a preference for style over substance.

I acknowledge the sector’s contribution to the 2025 Visitor Economy Strategy. I attended a stakeholder session in Darwin, and it was great to hear the discussions, especially those surrounding future investments needed in our world-class parks used by tour operators and ensuring environmental sustainability. However, the high-level framework put out by the CLP government does not align with its actions to date.

In just over 15 months in office, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality has cut funding to the combined tourism, events and screen sector by a massive 23%. The screen industry alone has suffered a $1m cut under the CLP compared with the previous financial year. Movies and TV shows such as *Kangaroo*, *Top End Bub* and *Territory* would have suffered without the investment from the former Territory Labor government.

Furthermore, visitors are adjusting their spending habits in the wake of COVID-19. When visitors come to the Territory, they are seeking an authentic experience that is immersive and genuine. Aboriginal culture is at the heart of the Northern Territory and is a significant drawcard for visitors seeking that unique and immersive cultural experience.

We also derive a vision for infrastructure from the minister’s high-level framework to support a thriving visitor economy and enhance the lives of Territorians. The document states that this is achieved by building the right mix of projects that meet travellers’ long-term desires and investing in facility improvements that benefit the regions and communities that host them. That is why it beyond beggars belief that the CLP government, despite the tourism industry highlighting the importance of cultural tourism, ripped funding out of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery in Alice Springs—a project that would have attracted 53,000 visitors and injected $64m into the economy each year.

The government also scrapped the Darwin State Square art gallery, leaving it as an empty shell for tourists to walk past. It has scaled back tourism investments and enabling infrastructure, including scrapping upgrades to Central Arnhem Road and Alice Springs tourism infrastructure. It has failed to maintain year-round flights to Central Australia, which it again highlighted in the high-level framework as essential for the Territory tourism industry in the long term.

Overall, the minister has presented a document with repackaged aspirations rather than genuine long-term actions. I greatly recommend that the minister gets on with the job and starts outlining short-term, medium-term and long-term actions rather than just aspirations because the tourism, screen and event sectors will not thrive on aspirations alone.

While Territory Labor supports this legislation, it urges the CLP government to support the sector with tangible short-term, medium-term and long-term actions to strengthen visitation and invest in enabling infrastructure. Future event funding should also not come at the expense of supporting tourism operators or marketing with the new entity. The tourism, events and screen sectors must be equally supported in funding to deliver meaningful results for the Territory.

Territory Labor also supports industry calls for fair representation on the new TENT advisory board, including the hospitality sector. Given the growing importance of Aboriginal culture to the visitor economy, traditional owners and Aboriginal organisations must also have fair and meaningful representation moving forward.

We thank the tourism and events sector for all the work it did to put its voice to the new high-level framework. It is just sad that, so far, the CLP government has only backed them in words, not funding.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I contribute to the Bill as a key stakeholder through my Department of People, Sport and Culture. Historically, many sporting events were a key feature of the department of Sports' remit prior to the establishment of the NT Major Events Company, so there is an intrinsic historical link between these agencies which continues today in many forms.

Some of these are by way of supporting infrastructure as managers of TIO Stadium at Marrara; supporting the delivery of AFL, NRL and cricket; and the Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex for MXGP and Supercars. It is our responsibility to ensure we deliver the best possible venues for the Major Events team and various sports to work with. Sometimes this work takes not just weeks or months; it can take years. No-one hears of the visits from nationally and internationally renowned turf grass and wicket curators or track designers who work tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver venues for these events, and that is just sports.

Behind the scenes we have an entire arts community that provides the backbone of local artists, performers and industry workers. For example, we have production staff for the Darwin Festival, Darwin Fringe, National Indigenous Music Awards, Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival, Garma Festival, Parrtjima, Desert Mob, Barunga Festival, Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Awards.

Here are some statistics from the Darwin Festival this year alone:

- There were 152,397 attendees.
- Of the attendees, 75% were local, 23% from interstate and 1.8% from overseas.
- The event generated 52,228 visitor nights and a total economic impact of $25.9m.
- There were 53,110 tickets sold, generating a total box office value of $2.8m.
- The event program delivered 110 events held across 50 venues.
- There were 847 artists, 53% of whom were local.

One of the key things our government wants to do is to ensure we are supporting local artists and that they have the pathways to reach the next level.

Let us not forget the multicultural community, with events like the Greek GleNTi, the Italian Festival, the Darwin Waterfront Harmony Soiree, the Thailand Grand Festival and Chung Wah Society Chinese New Year, just to name a few. Territorians come together for these events to celebrate different cultures and share food, which is an integral part of our Territory lifestyle.

Our government is pleased to play a major supporting role in the return of the Alice Springs Masters Games. The Masters Games will be recorded forever as one of the first multi-sport masters events in the world; we were the second in Australia when it started in 1986. The Masters Games is one of the Territory's most iconic and social sporting events that attracts thousands of visitors to the Centre, injecting millions into the local economy.

Regarded as the 'friendly games' due to the hospitality, warmth, camaraderie and sense of fun Alice Springs is famous for, the games will have more than 3,600 competitors over 33 disciplines with nearly 800 volunteers assisting. I look forward to seeing how many members of this Assembly will participate in the games next year.

Mr Young: How old do you have to be?

Mr CHARLS: I believe it is 35 years of age and above for certain ones. It depends on which sport it is.

Mr Paech: It is 25 for swimming.

Mr CHARLS: Yes, it depends on which sport you want to participate in. There are different levels, so there will be an opportunity for everyone, including Andrew Mackay, who is our youngest member of this Chamber.

Competitors return year after year because they know what a special experience it is. The events team has worked hard to make 2026 one of the best games ever. It is important that the integration is supported in the delivery of key events that showcase the Territory. The Department of People, Sport and Culture is supporting the Department of Tourism and Hospitality with cross-promotion and support during the event to ensure that the games continue to grow in participation numbers and visitors to Alice Springs.

As a key supporting partner, the department will coordinate access to local sporting infrastructure managed by the department; increase cross-promotion through departmental newsletters to Sports, Multicultural Affairs, Gender Equity and Diversity and Youth Affairs; and increase promotion to key social inclusion peak bodies to raise awareness and promote participation, either as a participant or volunteer, across the portfolios of Seniors, Veterans, Multicultural Affairs, Disability and Youth. This will also include cross-peak body cross-promotion to interstate and national counterparts. There is also work on:

- promoting volunteering opportunities through departmental social media channels as part of a coordinated campaign

- documenting and confirming Masters Games participation and technical or logistical support as a strategic priority within peak sporting body funding outcomes. Discussions have been formalised as part of the annual funding review meetings with peak sporting bodies.

- the Volunteering NT FreddyMatch campaign to attract additional volunteers and leverage Volunteering NT resources as required

- promoting local volunteer heroes online through the Australian Sports Commission Volunteer Map

- regional sport coordinators and youth coordinators—promotion of the Masters Games through local networks and partnerships

- providing workforce through Alice Springs-based regional staff to support conduct of the Masters Games. As a government we want to make sure the regions have the capability to step up when there are major events coming to them.

- assisting the organising group with any logistical or technical issues requiring liaison with peak sporting bodies

- providing incentives for participation through discounted or free access to the gallery at Araluen Arts Centre for registered participants and volunteers.

As the Minister for People, Sport and Culture I know that the integration of the Northern Territory Major Events Company with Tourism Northern Territory will enhance the Territory's ability to attract tourism and major events. In addition, the integration will continue to support community-level events and festivals that preserve cultural heritage, strengthen social cohesion and support the Northern Territory's Government's commitment to restoring the Territory lifestyle. Leveraging community events and festivals will provide activities that help

to strengthen the visitor experience for domestic and overseas travellers to celebrate the Territory's proud identity, culture and heritage.

I will touch on the importance of major events to grassroots sports and community involvement. The story playing out in front of our eyes is none other than Jake Weatherald. Jake was the opener for the first test match of Australia versus England in Perth a few days ago. It was a proud moment for the Northern Territory because he is the first born-and-bred Territorian to play for the Australian national test team.

Jake's mother shared the opportunity Jake had in 2003 when the Australia versus Bangladesh test match was held in Darwin and he met the cricket players. He took a photo with Jason Gillespie and Brett Lee, and his mother left it on his bedroom wall. He believes that was his motivation for the next 22 years. He was eight years old then, and by the time he made it to the national test team he was 31. That shows the resilience of a Territorian to chase his dreams until it was done. He had a long way to go. Jake did well in the second test innings. As a Territory we are proud of what he achieved and look forward to more.

It goes back to how major events motivate our young Territorians. We all saw Australia versus South Africa at two T20s at TIO this year. The crowd cheered the loudest I have ever heard at TIO Stadium. There was an opportunity for Territorians at the Waterfront and TIO Stadium to get autographs and photographs with the players. In the next few years there may be more young Territorians working on their aspirations.

Our government wants to provide the opportunity for young Territorians to look forward because there is a way to the national stage from the Territory. We have proof now, and I am sure that there will be more Territorians coming through in the wake of Jake Weatherald.

As the Minister for People, Sport and Culture I attend many community events and festivals that celebrate and showcase the diversity of the Territory. Many of these events are supported by my department, and this ongoing support for community events and celebrations across the Territory will continue to be enhanced with the funded festivals and key community events through NT Major Events.

I am proud to support the efforts to restore the Territory's lifestyle where we celebrate community and connection and deliver engaging activities to events for Territorians and visitors and promote the Territory as a place everyone will want to call home.

A key focus of this Bill is tourism. When we look around the globe, we see that the Northern Territory is arguably the best place in the world. Regarding the tourism industry, we need to do comparisons with other jurisdictions to see why they are doing well. It does not need to be limited to Australia; there are many tropical destinations around the world where people spend a lot of time with their family. The Territory can offer that.

It does not matter how many different strategies and glossy things we have; it is about how we will implement them. We need to be working towards the outcomes of those strategies. The Minister for Tourism and Hospitality introduced this Bill because the Finocchiaro CLP government wants a clear pathway and brand for the Territory.

What was the branding of the Territory two years ago? The Territory was in the national media for all the wrong reasons, but that has changed. We are now in the media for pushing forward on population and the economy, which is what we want. We want to make sure it is safe for people to come to the Territory. This Bill will further enhance that.

It goes back to the three key strategies of reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring the Territory lifestyle. Those three pillars are interconnected. The Finocchiaro CLP government sees that and will ensure those pillars work together, and we will support each other. I always encourage all the people working hard, especially my Cabinet colleagues, to ensure that there are clear policies to reduce crime and rebuild the economy. I communicate that at different community events too.

I want my colleagues to work hard on supporting the lifestyle and all the volunteer organisations, whether they are disability support, multicultural, sports or arts organisations. We have grants as well. Many organisations want additional support from the government to support their membership, and that is what we want to see.

We want our economy to move forward so that it generates revenue for Treasury so that the Treasurer can create better outcomes for the Territory. He is doing a great job and is supported by other ministers. My ministerial responsibilities mainly align with the third pillar. I always encourage and am passionate to see the work that has been done and how the Territory has moved forward in the last 12 months.

This Bill is the minister's vision to take a step ahead to brand the Territory as a place where people want to come and spend time with their families. We want to put offers on the table for that.

Last August, especially during the peak three to four weeks when there was the Darwin Festival and all different arts awards, everything was going on. We had the cricket and other sporting events at the same time. When I have been out and about talking to people, especially people with families, one of the things they said was that they were here not just for the arts; they had an opportunity to have arts and sports, because in their family unit there may be different interests for individuals. Darwin offered that this August. We are making sure that, moving forward, we are in a position to provide that opportunity for visitors.

When it comes to branding, one of the main things is how people are visiting and talking about the Northern Territory. In Central Australia there are many iconic places where people can visit and spend time. We want to ensure that—it does not matter what region of the Northern Territory—all five regions are in a position to attract people and have small businesses and opportunities for people living there. It does not matter the race, culture or background; we want that opportunity for every Territorian irrespective of where they live or work. That is where we want to take the Northern Territory moving forward. This Bill will ensure tourism will be a key priority for this government. Along with that, it will be supported by major events and other events.

This Bill will give further emphasis on how we can ensure the whole-of-government strategy aligns with different strategies. Another thing I heard in this Chamber was about different strategies from the previous government. We cannot have the same strategies that never worked before and try to implement ours as the new government as well. We want to ensure the strategies align with our overall strategy. All the policy decisions, legislative changes and everything happening in this Chamber over the last 15 months is making sure we position the Northern Territory as a place aligned with the three key pillars. Yesterday I heard in this Chamber about businesses aligning with the strategy. Yes, when the government is taking the Northern Territory forward, if businesses want to align with the strategy—it is criteria we want. I mentioned earlier that we want to see the outcomes; it is not about putting strategy after strategy forward.

The Chief Minister outlined during this sitting and the last sittings the numbers and stats not from our government but from external organisations that put the numbers out there when it comes to the economy and the number of houses we have provided grants for over the last 12 months. That credit goes to the Treasurer for his vision and for introducing the Bill early to give the opportunity for Territorians from 1 October 2025 to access those grants. We have seen how many Territorians want to call this place home. That is important because the Territory relies on population growth.

One aspect is migration, and Minister Cahill is making sure we have every opportunity on the table at the national level. When it comes to migrants—and I shared my story earlier—when you see Australia from outside, it is seen with many big cities like Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. That is not the problem of the people outside; that is the brand they have.

For example, for me as a child following the cricket, that is where all the cricket was played by the Australian cricket team, which was unbeaten by any team around the world, and we watched from all over the globe. This year at the T20 we saw a one-handed catch with two beers in the other hand. That is the thing. We never pitch or plant; we have not done anything. It happened. Also, the supermoon on that day came on the TV. Those are the things people talk about. When they say, 'The cricket was in Darwin', that is a naming. Along with that, things happen in Darwin that write the name of Darwin in people's minds. They will know.

I came to Australia in 2011; I did not know much about Darwin until 2014 or 2015 when I started to look for a job, which was in Darwin. I thought that I would just give it a go. When I came here, within a month I said, 'I will not leave this place because this is the place I want to be'. I was struggling with the winter down south.

With all these major events, we want to put Darwin on the map so people know about it. Once people know about Darwin they will want to come and experience the Territory and the far regions. Many people are interested in going to the regional and remote areas as well because that is the lifestyle choice they want to make. Our government, with the right direction and the way we are going, can promote all those far regions and encourage people from interstate or overseas mobilising or wanting to call places home.

This will be an important Bill to make sure we are putting that brand of the Northern Territory out there and saying that we want to promote the Northern Territory as a place for people to come, experience and call home. This Bill will give the opportunity for the minister to work closer with the department to make sure that things are aligned with the government's overall strategy and that we can support that into the future.

We have many industry endorsements. I heard some talk about the industry and going to one meeting. I am standing next to a minister who has been engaged with the community for the last 15 months, and it is not just once every few months or per year; it is almost a daily routine for the minister. I have seen her out and about and listening directly to the people who we want to make sure are important stakeholders. We want private businesses to have the confidence in us as a government so they want to support and work with us. We want to see more private investment, not relying on the government to run everything.

The Chair of Tourism Central Australia, Patrick Bedford, said, 'It is an exciting milestone; one coordinated organisation gives visitors a powerful and authentic reason to come and stay longer.'

Chris Chaffe, Chair of Tourism Top End, said, 'This is a strategic alignment between two powerhouse organisations, which ensures better delivery of major events'.

Alicia Triggs, Executive General Manager of Journey Beyond, said, 'A natural fit, tourism and events strengthen each other and create a strong driver for visitation'.

Ben Hall said, 'Together they are a marketing powerhouse. This move brings the NT in line with what is working across Australia.'

These are some of the key stakeholders that the government is working with, along with other stakeholders. This is what they are saying about this Bill. We are listening to the community, and we want to align this Bill to position the Northern Territory as a brand as well.

One of the key things in tourism is aviation and direct connectivity with other regions. This year we have seen that work. China Southern is coming next month, and Minister Cahill is working in that space and making sure we have the opportunity that other jurisdictions have. As a government we want to see that opportunity. We have seen AirAsia to Kuala Lumpur come on board, and AirAsia to Denpasar is back. There is also Qantas to Singapore; Jetstar to Gold Coast, which is seasonal; and Airnorth Alice Springs to Cairns.

A key thing the tourism industry mentions is direct connectivity. People do not want to get on one flight and then change to another one to go to a destination, especially if they are travelling as a family. They want to go to one destination and spend time there.

Minister Cahill has been doing well over the last 15 months, making sure that Territorians have that opportunity to travel. We are giving visitors the opportunity to come and experience the Territory, and some of them will call the Territory home. That means we will have more Territorians in the future.

I am sure Minister Cahill is working in that space closely with Minister Boothby. We would like to see more of that coming to fruition. That is one of the key things I hear when I am engaging with multicultural community groups, because most of the multicultural community travel back to where they come from to visit their families. That is an important thing, especially during the peak season. The prices are high, which is how the market works. We can bring it down to have more economic activity. That is exactly what this government is doing.

The five new strategic objectives of this relate to securing infrastructure investment, improving connectivity, investing in people and workforce development and enhancing global perception of the Northern Territory, which I talked about in detail earlier. We want to change the perception of the Northern Territory and make it a place that people want to experience and call home. The last one is about the expanded experience and product offering.

When it comes to other major events we have seen, AFL is an important game to Territorians, especially many communities. The Gold Coast Suns will be back next year for another two games. There will be a game in Alice Springs with Melbourne. We have NRL games. Territorians love all the varieties of sports. Major Events will be looking under this new umbrella to the future to enhance and provide more opportunities.

There will be announcements in the next few months regarding more of those opportunities for Territorians to experience world-class sporting events within the Territory rather than travelling. I met many people recently who have been travelling interstate to see events such as the AFL grand final and the recent international cricket match in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. We want to provide that opportunity for Territorians in the Territory.

There will be more of the next generation, like Jake Weatherald, from the Territory. We can continually inspire this generation and ensure they have a pathway forward rather than thinking that the Territory is a place

where there is no opportunity. The Territory is a place of opportunity. Sometimes Minister Edgington says that the Barkly is the land of opportunity, but it is in the Territory, so the Territory is the land of opportunity. We have proven that time and again.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly. I congratulate Minister Boothby on bringing this Bill to the Chamber and making sure that our vision will be a reality.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I was not planning to speak, but it is a good opportunity to talk about Central Australia and the importance of tourism in the southern region of the Territory, the heart of the country.

From the outset, I acknowledge and support the changes. Anything that works to streamline and enhance potential opportunities for the future is incredibly important.

I start my contribution by acknowledging the hard work of the Northern Territory Major Events Company. It has been in existence for 25 years and has done a great job over that time. I reflect on that and say a big thank you to all of the current board members of the Northern Territory Major Events Company and acknowledge all the former board members who, for all intents and purposes over those 25 years, have always worked to sell the Territory, attract tourism into each corner of the Northern Territory, bring and create important events and celebrate the uniqueness of being a Territorian.

I acknowledge that the Northern Territory Major Events Company has been at the front door of our events in this industry. It has supported more than 70 events across the Territory for years, including major festivals, and has attracted national attention. It has also supported grassroots events, bringing people together on country.

Through that program it has brought significant investment to the Northern Territory. I highlight that from 2022 to 2023 just six of our major events generated almost $189m of economic stimulus. The community-led events supported by the Northern Territory Major Events Company added a further $39.8m in spending and delivered more than 100,000 visitor nights. These numbers tell the story of the importance of that work.

I acknowledge amazing events that have been delivered in the Northern Territory, including Parrtjima, the Red CentreNATS and the Masters Games, which the Member for Sanderson spoke about. These important events paved the way for many people to be recognised or be engaged on a nationally significant stage, celebrating artistic and cultural excellence. That is important.

I support the changes, but I place on the record that it is imperative that with any new board structure managed within the department there is a dedicated Central Australian person on advisory boards and committees to ensure that the voices of Central Australians are not lost. I acknowledge that there have been people from Central Australia in the Major Events Company, and they always stood up for the people of Central Australia. It is important that any advisory board being stood up in place of the Northern Territory Major Events Company directors needs one Central Australian, at a bare minimum, on that board to elevate the voices of Central Australia in regard to future considerations of major events. The government will advertise nationally to attract people with tourism industry and major event experience to that board, but we have great champions at home.

This morning we heard about the economics of these events, but it is also important to acknowledge the artistic excellence produced in the Northern Territory and celebrate that contribution. People come to the Northern Territory for, first and foremost, a tourism cultural experience. They want to engage with our amazing First Nations communities and the pristine, beautiful landscapes that we all get to call home. That needs to continue to be built on.

I was at some tourism seminars recently to shape the future plans, and every person in the room spoke about tourists attending their businesses for a cultural experience. They come to engage, learn and understand First Nations culture and creativity first and foremost.

Disappointingly, in the forums I participated in there were only two Aboriginal people, being me and Paul Ah Chee. We need to reflect on how we can encourage and grow Indigenous participation in the tourism space. We have Indigenous tourism subcommittees and boards, but that should not be the case. People come to the Territory for an Indigenous experience, so First Nations people should be the dominant number on the tourism boards in the Northern Territory to help grow and showcase that.

Educational tourism is an untapped resource, and the Territory stands in a strong position to grow it across every corner of the Territory.

We also look at experiences in other jurisdictions. I draw members' attention to places such as Sedona, Arizona and Moab, Utah in the United States where they have changed the landscape of what were traditional mining towns and turned it into an adventure tourism place. That is not at the cost of country or the landscape. They have worked to create what they call precinct parks, and this was led by local communities and having people on boards who understand tourism and the local environment, which is important. I look at those places and think about what we could do in Central Australia to grow our economic opportunity in the region and showcase our amazing country.

I encourage the government to consider quarantining positions on the new replacement board of the Northern Territory Major Events Company to make sure there is solid representation from each corner of the Territory. It is crucial to lock it in and continue to have that local excellence.

It is important to highlight that this is important, but we also have to grow tourism opportunities in our regional and remote areas. There are amazing arts, culture, women's and men's centres across the Territory doing great work. We should look at how we can grow tourism opportunities to get people off the beaten track to these communities to see firsthand how important language, law, culture and creativity are. Every time we back an art centre, we are backing local jobs, our community and economic opportunities.

The Minister for Arts spoke about a number of key events, and I acknowledge those events. The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair is an amazing event in Darwin, celebrating and showcasing First Nations cultures, livelihoods and opportunities, selling pieces of creativity and storytelling. It is important to continue to support that. The National Indigenous Music Awards is an important event for the Territory. It celebrates the contributions of First Nations artists and musicians and brings together people from all over Australia to showcase First Nations' creativity on the stage.

These types of events cannot be lost when department funding gets shifted. They are told that they have to now apply for the Community Benefit Fund, which is time-limited and not continuing. We do not want to lose the National Indigenous Music Awards to a bigger state. We cannot let Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane or Perth take this event. We have to back it and provide long-term funding agreements to keep that in Darwin.

The Desert Mob festival in Alice Springs showcases amazing artistic contributions. Storytelling and truth-telling through art and creativity is important. Parrtjima in Alice Springs brings thousands of people every year to showcase the festival of light and the amazing Alice Springs community. They are all great, important events.

I am interested to learn and understand, when these 70 events come to the department, how will they be managed to ensure that we continue to deliver a high level of service and that those events continue well into the future to support our local community?

I want to understand the new board. Hopefully, its members will be in a position where they can still put ideas to the government about new events. I would love to see new events in Alice Springs. There has been a community group talking about a major event in Alice Springs, being a rodeo or a bushmen's weekend. Its members may have spoken to the Tourism minister about that—I am not sure—but I know that was a passion of the former Mayor of Alice Springs and a few business stakeholders. We want to bring people to our regions so that they can spend money, support our local businesses and get a taste of our culture.

It is not often that I highlight and celebrate CLP policy, but there was a policy many years ago to have a tourism commission in Alice Springs. I think that is a great idea, and I hope the CLP goes back to that. I am a Central Australian and will always fight for things to be located in the heart of Australia. Having a tourism commission in Alice Springs back in the day was a great initiative. I welcome any initiatives that bring events to the Red Centre. They create local jobs and positions in Central Australia, and we want people to have a positive experience with that.

I acknowledge the great work of the new Alice Springs Town Council, which is doing a great job in reimagining and re-imaging Central Australia, giving it a positive rap. It is a great place. That is not to dismiss that we have our fair share of challenges and social issues to work on, but this is an opportunity for us all to work together. Anything we can do that will bring more people, flights and life into Central Australia I will get behind and back every day, just like I will back this legislation.

This Bill is streamlining and tidying up. The proof will be in the pudding as to how successful it is in the future, but I am willing to give it a go because it potentially could create greater opportunity for the growth of tourism in the region.

That could also be said for the arts. I have mentioned many times in parliament that, year on year, the creative industries deliver more than $750m into the Territory economy and more than 2,500 jobs. These are events we need to support. We need to get behind organisations like ANKA, Desert Mob, Music NT, Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and Browns Mart—all amazing arts organisations. When we back arts, we also back tourism. The arts enable people to have an amazing experience. If they are visiting, they might go home and talk to people about it.

The Darwin Festival is another amazing example of celebrating the unique life of being a Darwinite. I know people who have come up every year for the last seven years to participate in the festival. It is the same with the Alice Springs festival. When you travel down the track to Katherine there is amazing opportunity. I would love to see more major events in Katherine, Tennant Creek and remote communities. Let us support the Freedom Day Festival in Kalkarindji/Daguragu, celebrating the amazing achievement of the Gurindji people.

I will unashamedly give it a plug and encourage the minister for Sport and Culture to get behind the Bush Olympics, which we had years ago. It is not the Masters Games; it was an opportunity for communities to come together every year in Yuendumu. I can tell you now that if you think watching the Olympics on TV is good, you should have been there to see the Bush Olympics. Amazing champions would come together from across the bush to participate. If we can get behind this new amalgamation that the Tourism minister is putting forward, I hope that there is some scope and opportunity for us to hold events in remote communities.

During the last year or two of our term in government we started to look at New Year's events in remote communities—for example, fireworks in some of the larger communities—to enable people to stay at home with their family and not make the long commute to Darwin, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs or Katherine to see the fireworks for Territory Day or New Year's Eve. When we support community events, we support the economies in local communities. People buy food from the local Outback Stores or independent stores; the art centres flourish, and we encourage tourism. There is an amazing opportunity that awaits us in tourism.

We have amazing corridors being opened. When the Tanami Highway is officially opened, the Outback Way—which is often referred to as Australia's longest shortcut—will have more people coming through the Territory. As they come through, we want to keep them for nights in the Territory to spend their money and grow our economy.

I look forward to understanding how the Northern Territory Government will spend with what was previously earmarked for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art gallery of Australia. I hope that money can be used on tourism and cultural and artistic investments in Central Australia because it will significantly increase people's nights of stay in the Red Centre and will attract people.

I continue to call on the Commonwealth Government regarding its contribution of $80m to be delivered in Central Australia on a worthwhile economic investment into education and arts and culture, because it is important. The Tourism minister has spoken about this before, and I support this initiative of educational tourism. There are a number of wonderful communities that hosts kids who come up on the bus from interstate every year for a cultural educational experience.

It is powerful to see kids from inner-city Melbourne or Sydney and how confronted they are—in a good way—by the sheer beauty of the country and landscapes, people, culture and love that is Central Australia. When they go home, they talk to their parents about how great their trip was and encourage them; they become ambassadors for the Territory to encourage people to come for a holiday. It provides an opportunity for us to look at greater investments in educational tourism. It is important for us to build facilities and places where people can come together, hear the stories and see the resources.

I have always said that the best place for a national centre of truth-telling and reconciliation should be the heart of the nation, Central Australia. It would deliver significant value culturally and economically—a place where people can come together and learn about the history of this nation. They could also hear from people about the future they want to see. It could be a place of living art, culture and history for people to record their stories and for truth-telling. It would provide an opportunity to deliver on a number of pillars from the Uluru Statement from the Heart regarding truth-telling, and I think the best place to do that is Central Australia.

Central Australia needs a strong economic narrative. With the removal of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art gallery, we need new projects which will deliver social benefits and economic value for our local communities. I encourage the government to work on that with the Commonwealth.

I do not often thank her, but I thank the Tourism minister for bringing in this investment. I have always said that I am happy to support something when I think it will benefit the people of Central Australia. I am willing to give this a go. I would love a commitment to ensuring that there is always a Central Australian, a First Nations Territorian and a multicultural representative on the board so that we do not unintentionally lose sight of the importance of those pillars in our local community.

This is a good opportunity. We have amazing untapped potential in the Territory for tourism and events. The Northern Territory Major Events Company runs more than 70 events. Hopefully they will all transition succinctly in a measured way to the department, which will continue to deliver that quality service. Every member of this Assembly often attends events hosted by the Northern Territory Major Events Company. They are great events that we should all celebrate.

I thank the Northern Territory Major Events Company. I acknowledge that the CEO of Tourism is the former operator of the Northern Territory Major Events Company, Suzana Bishop. She did a fantastic job there. I worked with her when I was in government. I am happy to see that she has experience with the Major Events Company because she has that level of oversight to see that roll out.

I thank the government for bringing this forward. It is something that we can all celebrate.

I will be cheeky and suggest that BASSINTHEDUST returns. I used to bang on about it to my Cabinet colleagues, and the Members for Braitling and Namatjira may bang on about it to their colleagues. We had BASSINTHEDUST, and the Top End had BASSINTHEGRASS. It was a great event. We have to evaluate events to see whether they are worthwhile. One of the Major Events Company's main objectives was to take on the risk and the liability, then if events were successful it would transition them on. I know that has not happened for a number of events, and there are reasons for that, but it has been some time since we had BASSINTHEDUST so it would be great to look into having it back in the Red Centre at some point. I accept if there are reasons that it cannot happen, but it would be remiss of me as a proud Central Australian not to wave the flag and ask for consideration of that event.

I acknowledge this government's work on the Masters Games. There is more work to be done to contemporise it and consider what it will look like in the future and how we can engage younger people to be involved. You do not have to be old for the Masters; you can be 25 for the swimming events. As a former gold medallist in the Masters, I look forward to seeing more members of this parliament participating.

We need to review events and listen to the community when areas for future growth are identified. Let us move on and see what the government can do.

I acknowledge all the former board members and directors of the Northern Territory Major Events Company. It was a challenge and a hard job. Having been an external company of government, it had a lot of demand, liability and risk. We had a few hiccups along the way in delivering some events, but all in all we had a good 25 years with the Northern Territory Major Events Company. Yes, we are looking at winding it up, and I acknowledge the government will keep it in operation for a further six months while we wind it up and close it out before it is deregistered.

It is important to celebrate those events. A series of great events has been created through the Northern Territory Major Events Company. One that we were happy to be involved with was the MXGP. The former CLP government was involved in the Red CentreNATS, Parrtjima and a series of events that has always been important to delivering economic benefit to the Territory.

I am not having a go at the Tourism minister today. I say to the Arts minister that it would be great if we could increase the funding for festivals and community events in our remote regions. Let us see how we can all get behind community events. If you are not going to a community event held by the Major Events Company, do not be stingy; just buy a ticket and give it to someone in your community. Run a raffle and donate it. The more tickets we sell, the more we can continue to hold great events across the Territory. If you cannot go, make sure you acknowledge and recognise the amazing people in your electorates and maybe look at helping them or our frontline workers who do not often have the chance to share in those celebrations.

The more we back events and buy tickets, the more we can secure these events well into the future so we can continue to participate in them and show the rest of Australia that there ain't no place in this country like the Northern Territory. We are the best territory in Australia, and we will continue to celebrate that through hosting major events and festivals and getting people here.

When it is freezing cold in Melbourne and you are at the Darwin Festival having a great time, it makes people plan their calendar for next year. When you are at Desert Mob, the Red CentreNATS, the Beanie Festival or any of those amazing events in Central Australia, it makes you question where you are and what you are doing. It makes you think, 'Next year I want to be part of that'. That is what we are all here to do—make people come to the Territory and spend their money here, particularly when they are from interstate; we love spending interstate people's money. Selling experiences in the Territory is incredibly important.

To all in the tourism sector who are starting up for the first time or have been long-term operators, thank you. You are amazing; you sell the Territory and do the best job. I acknowledge that it is a hard environment, but let us work together to make sure you continue to have a great industry to work in.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, I am at a bit of a loss. Thank you, Member for Gwoja. That is the loveliest speech I have ever heard you give.

Mrs Hersey: It is Christmas.

Mr KERLE: Yes, the Christmas spirit. Member for Gwoja, I remember last year you brought in a wonderful Christmas suit. Are you planning to bring one in?

Mr Paech: It is in the cupboard.

Mr KERLE: All right. I am looking forward to it. You will have to let me know where you managed to buy that, because I will have to …

Mr Paech: Local business.

Mr KERLE: Local business. All right. See me afterwards; give me a hook-up.

This Bill delivers one of our key commitments. I am channelling the Member for Karama here; I love to pull out our plan. This was our bible during the campaign, with all our key policies and commitments in it. When you go to the middle fold, it talks about playing to our natural strengths, and the first dot point is tourism, along with Defence, agriculture, gas and mining.

Gas gets beaten up a lot in this Chamber by those on the other side—not the Member for Gwoja, but some others. We can all agree that tourism is a great thing. I agree with you, Member for Gwoja; I love it when people from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane come here and spend their money in the Territory because it stays here. It supports local businesses and our arts and tourism industries.

When I was studying at uni I had a job adjacent to the tourism industry; I was working on Mitchell Street. Backpackers from all over the world would come to Darwin and hop on those tour buses. They would go to Kakadu and Litchfield, then down the track to Central Australia. They were drawn here by the amazing untouched landscape and wilderness that we have. That was in the early 2000s, probably at the end of the original CLP government's time when it had a strong focus on playing to our natural strengths. It worked on primary industries, cattle, mining, Defence and tourism. It spent a lot of time working on tourism and promoting the NT as a destination for those around the world.

Who can forget *Crocodile Dundee*? People think of new movies like *Kangaroo*, but there is a long-vaunted history of great movies that showcase the natural wonders we have in the Territory. Paul Hogan said, 'Chuck a shrimp on the barbie'. Daryl Somers said, 'You'll never never know if you never never go'. All these fantastic campaigns put the NT on the national stage.

People from those horrible, cold climates where it is raining and drizzling all the time can come to the NT where we have beautiful, sunny Dry Seasons when it is not too hot and not too cold, with blue skies every day. They can get out to the beautiful natural landscapes and explore the Territory. They can have life-changing experiences that are unavailable to people living in England, the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Sweden and that whole European area. All the people who live in those temperate climates down south and internationally should come here during their gap years—and in their golden years—to experience the Territory.

This Bill is a major reform that strengthens the Territory's tourism and events sectors. They are two pillars that—again, coming back to our bible—rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. It delivers one united agency, Tourism and Events NT. The acronym is TENT; I do not know whether that one will stick. If anyone has a better idea for an acronym, please put your idea in the suggestion box.

This is a great idea because the two agencies were doing a fantastic job, but when people come to the Territory from interstate they do not necessarily distinguish between coming here for an experience versus for an event.

We have great events like the V8 Darwin Supercars—which was started under a previous CLP government—and the MXGP. Credit goes to the previous Labor government for managing to win that event, which is definitely a global phenomenon.

It makes sense to unite the two agencies so that they have a combined, coherent message. They can work together to streamline and have a consistent message to attract people from around Australia and the world.

I have stats on how tourism is going since we came to government. Tourism spending is up by 13%, and total visitors is up by 19%. I really feel that. In my first year in this job, we travelled down the track a fair bit doing the show circuit and for an inquiry as part of one of the committees that I was on. The grey nomad traffic on the Stuart Highway was fantastic. Adelaide River was jam-packed. If you wanted to use the loo, good luck trying to find a car park. You had to park down the road and walk a long way to get there because the car park at Adelaide River Inn was chock-a-block. I do not remember that happening for a few years, so it is good to see that happening again.

Regarding restoring our lifestyle, we are working on our events, parks, culture, history, outdoor lifestyle, festivals, food and sport. These are all part of who we are. This reform protects and strengthens that lifestyle with better marketing, stronger events, a more coherent approach and more year-round activity. That is one of the things that is good to highlight with the reform.

Traditionally, we have this golden Dry Season, which is a wonderful time. Everyone gets to our wonderful Dry Season events. Then the Wet Season comes, and everything goes quiet; life gets a bit hard for the tourism operators. This new combined agency will have a bit more focus on year-round events so that they are opportunities and not a cliff at the end of the tourism season when the Dry finishes. We must have those shoulder events to carry tourism operators through and help them keep the doors open and the bills paid so that they are not just seeing a boom-and-bust cycle and trying to survive through the Wet Season until the next year.

This Bill combines Tourism NT and the NT Major Events Company into Tourism and Events NT. This is delivering one of our commitments to streamline and improve efficiencies. We will have one advisory board instead of two separate boards. This removes duplication and improves accountability because we will have one board wholly and solely focused on events and tourism, reporting to the minister and delivering for the Territory.

The Bill gives the new agency powers to sell tickets, run events, partner with airlines and operators and operate more commercially. It also establishes a reserve fund to support large events that span financial years.

This is a funny day; I keep finding myself agreeing with the Member for Gwoja. There were funding cliffs in previous years when people tried to chase down Community Benefit Fund grants to try to stitch together enough funding to get through. If we have large events that span financial years—for example, the Supercars, which most Territorians love—it is good to have certainty, knowing there is funding that spans multiple years, so they will not be running around, trying to scrabble and scratch together grants tied to a single event, and when that event finishes, they have to start applying for the next one. They will have more certainty, which means they can plan and promote better as well as build more relationships and partnerships nationally and internationally to bring people to the Territory.

Following the changes we have already made, here are some numbers for the year ending June 2025: 19% increase in total visitors; 13% increase in visitor expenditure; and 21% increase in domestic travel.

I want to touch briefly on the increase in visitors. Over the last eight years, prior to us coming to government, the NT was, unfortunately, in national and international media for the wrong reasons. I remember about 20 years ago I had friends in Europe who were sending me headlines that had popped up on their side of the world from the *NT News*. I believe the headline was, ‘Why I stuck a cracker up my clacker’. Some foolish person, on Territory Day, put a firework in his rear end, lit it and took a photo that went around the world. People were messaging me 20 years ago from the other side of the world asking, ‘What is going on over there?’ That played to our larrikin spirit; where else could you see that happening? I said, ‘Come over here and check it out. Territory Day is a fantastic event.’ It is the last place in Australia, and one of few places in the Western world, where citizens can responsibly let off fireworks. We do that to celebrate the founding of the Northern Territory.

Over the last eight years the Territory was in the media for the wrong reasons. I will not go into them, but it was one thing after another. Unfortunately, the tourist trade, the number of grey nomads and international visitors declined as a result. I acknowledge that COVID knocked us around, but the declines were there before; even after COVID we did not jump back to the levels pre-change of government.

This shows that the Territory was not a failed state; we just had a failed government. All that was needed was a new government with fresh energy and new policies and which listened to the people, with renewed focus on community safety and putting victims ahead of offenders. The tourists are racing back; they cannot wait to get to the Territory and experience the unique natural wonders we have to share.

New and returning air routes have opened as the tourist numbers have increased. The flights coming to the Territory have been bankers—overflowing—and people have been unable to book flights. That has proved to the airlines that they need to put on more routes. When their tickets are sold out it signals that there is demand, so they can put on more routes and run flights more often to destinations.

China Southern Airlines will fly from Darwin to Guangzhou from next month; AirAsia flies to Kuala Lumpur and Denpasar; and Qantas flies from Darwin to Singapore. Singapore is amazing. Many countries have a lot to learn from Singapore; it is a successful example of a melting pot, with many cultures such as Chinese and other people from Southeast Asia working together to create an economic powerhouse. Jetstar flies to the Gold Coast, which is a seasonal route, and Airnorth flies from Alice Springs to Cairns. Member for Gwoja, there is another route in Alice Springs. That is wonderful.

It goes to show that when there is a good government focused on community safety and getting the basics right, the tourists and airlines will come. After many years of airlines pulling out or restricting the number and variety of flights, it is good to see them coming back.

It gives the Territory a clear direction for growth and helps stabilise our economy by lifting year-round visitation, not just the peak season. There is the all-important shoulder season. When you are running a tourism business and have a gangbuster Dry Season but are uneconomical over Christmas and the off season, it puts serious financial stress on your business. If we can keep year-round visitation going it will help maintain those tourism operators, enabling them to pay the bills, keep their heads above water and stay in the black, so when the next tourism season comes they will get ahead.

We had great events this year. There were two Gold Coast Suns games, which was great fun. We handed out tickets to AFL aficionados in Palmerston by running a raffle at Palmerston College and Moulden Primary School. The kids who were mad about AFL got to go along with their friends and family, which is something that they may not have been able to do without support from the NT Government.

We had the motocross MXGP. I was there with the Member for Brennan, the responsible minister. It was a cracker. A lot of my other colleagues were there, including the Members for Fannie Bay and Wanguri. It was hilarious that on the final day, when we were just getting ready for the last race, it poured down, which was not expected for that time of year. The organisers were all running around trying to save the track; they had the little dozer pushing all the mud off the track and pushing dirt up, trying to save it. In the end the final race was called off, which was a shame, but it was a fantastic weekend. It was well attended and broadcast internationally, putting the NT on the map. The MXGP has a five-year contract, so hopefully as people begin to see the broadcast all around the world, in America and down south, they will see what is on offer in the Territory and see it in person rather than watching it on the TV. We also had another awesome year of the Darwin Supercars.

I will touch on some of the issues that we had previously. Under the previous government there was a number of short-term funding cliffs, making the short-term budget forecasts look better, but we all knew that those events had to be funded. We will not cancel the Supercars or not support our tourism and major events industry. Those things always need to be funded, and having short-term funding cliffs and pretending they would not be funded did not help. This helps to provide security and certainty to our tourism sector.

Screen Territory experienced a $1m increase in the 2025–26 financial year because it delivers economic value, unlike the scattergun spending of the previous government. We have amazing talent in the NT. There is a local internationally recognised screenwriter, Philip Denson, who lives in the Member for Daly's electorate on the other side of the harbour. He has been in Los Angeles working on screenplays for productions all around the world. He is a local lad who grew up in Darwin, contributing to local developments. We have so much talent here. It is fantastic to invest in Screen Territory and anything that can get the Territory on the national and international stage.

When I was in Europe for a mate's wedding in 2009 it was around the time when the *Australia* movie came out. Travelling around Europe at the time, everyone was mad about Australia because they were seeing it on the big screen. The *Australia* movie was a smash hit in Europe, and everyone was talking about Australia. As soon as they heard my accent, they asked me what Australia was like. I would answer them by saying that we ride kangaroos to school and if we wanted a handbag we would go and hunt crocodiles—just silly games that you play with people, but they loved it. There was a lot of interest in coming to Australia and seeing the natural landscape for themselves.

Anything we can do with Screen Territory that puts us on the national and international stage is fantastic. The previous government's approach was always the same: throw money around; cross its fingers; and hope for the best that visitors would magically appear.

Who could forget Boundless Possible? It was a failed PR campaign borrowed from the Middle East in Qatar or something like that, which was grammatically challenged …

Mr O'Gallagher: Passion fingers.

Mr KERLE: Passion fingers. I do not know what whoever came up with that was on. I never saw any evidence that it had any impact. It was an embarrassment. Wrapping was stuck haphazardly around the place on government-funded construction sites, and it did not do anything. Visitation never changed, our operators suffered and confidence collapsed. This is a different approach with discipline, strategy and long-term planning that grows visitation and supports local businesses. It sets up the Territory for long-term success.

I like to talk about what is in the DNA of parties. In the nature of the CLP, in our DNA, is building on solid foundations. We look around and see the potential in the unique world-class landscapes, culture and history we have. We are one of the few places in the world where we can experience the longest continuous culture in the world. People can experience artwork, dancing and singing which exists today in only few places around the world, including in the Territory.

The CLP does not believe in slogans and marketing campaigns that deny the truth of reality or stick our heads in the sand and pretend that the crime crisis does not exist. We do not say, 'Come to the Territory; do not worry about getting your car broken into or about being assaulted.' No; the proper role of government is to keep the community safe and establish good order so that businesses and citizens can prosper. That is in the CLP's DNA, and this Bill is working towards it in line with our five key natural strengths.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, today we debate one of the most significant structural reforms to the Northern Territory's visitor economy in more than a decade. Territorians remember all too well what tourism looked like under the previous Labor government: planes flying straight over us; visitors cancelling their bookings; and any kind of confidence packing its bags and heading elsewhere. If missed opportunities were a tourism strategy, the former Labor ministers would have delivered the golden age for the NT. Instead, they delivered empty hotel rooms and even emptier excuses, and Territorians know it.

While other jurisdictions were sharpening their strategies and integrating tourism and events, Labor was busy sharpening press releases and integrating excuses. Businesses were hurting, population was going backwards and, for too long, tourism policy from Labor was like a Territory road: full of potholes and no clear direction. The Northern Territory did not wake up one morning and mysteriously lose tourists; it took years of careful neglect, creative excuse-making and world-class buck-passing from the previous government to get us where we were when we were elected to government in August 2024.

While other destinations were busy sharpening their strategies and investing in new experiences, our former leaders seemed to think a couple of glossy brochures and a slogan brainstorm in a boardroom would do the trick. When operators in Central Australia started reporting their slowest season on record—with empty beds on weekends that used to be sellouts—the government's response was to shrug and point at global headwinds and cost-of-living pressures with the enthusiasm of a bored travel agent.

Crime splashed across national headlines. Territorians were told that crime was just a perception problem. Visitors did not stop coming because they fell out of love with the Territory; they stopped coming because the only thing growing faster than our sunsets was the crime statistics, while Labor ministers insisted that everything was fine. 'Flights too expensive and too few? Do not worry; we are having conversations with airlines'—but those conversations were presumably filed next to all the other conversations that never quite turned into action. The result was a tourism strategy that looked less like a plan and more like a wish list, with

fewer visitors, nervous operators and a national reputation that was being quietly undercut while the spin machine hummed along.

The past government treated tourism like an ATM—something you visit when you need revenue—rather than a fragile, competitive and living industry that needs care, investment and, occasionally, a reality check.

When people talk about the soft start to seasons, the slump in bookings and the slide in confidence, let us be honest. It did not come from nowhere; it came from years of pretending that bad headlines did not matter, visitors would not notice rising crime or airlines would magically add routes without any serious strategy or support.

By contrast, the picture under our government is different. The good news is that tourism operators are a resilient lot. They have kept the Territory on travellers' bucket lists despite policy drift, mixed messages and marketing that often felt like it was designed by committee. The bad news for the previous government is that now the numbers and headlines have caught up with them. It is clear who turned the NT from the trip of a lifetime into, all too often, the trip that people decided to skip.

The Northern Territory is now leading the nation in visitor growth and tourism spending, with a 19% increase in visitors and a 13% rise in expenditure in the year ending June 2025. More than 1.7 million visitors came to the Territory, with around 227,000 international visitors spending nearly half a billion dollars. These figures show that the visitor economy is not just recovering; it is roaring back. Tourism supports about 17,000 Territorians, making it one of the core pillars of our growing economy.

This Bill delivers our government's commitment to action, certainty and security. It brings together two powerhouse organisations—Tourism NT and the Northern Territory Major Events Company—into one united agency, Tourism and Events NT.

Tourism and events are no longer treated as separate worlds because visitors do not experience them separately. Whether they come for the Red CentreNATS, Parrtjima or a Kakadu adventure, their journey and experience are one. This reform recognises that reality and responds with one strategy, brand, team and purpose to attract more visitors, deliver stronger events, support local jobs and grow the Territory economy.

This is not change for change's sake; it is reform for the industry that the industry asked for. Operators, airlines, hoteliers and event organisers have been clear that it is time for a unified and strategic approach. When I spoke with staff from Tourism NT and the NT Major Events Company, their message was the same: positivity and excitement. They see what this merger will achieve and the opportunities it will unlock.

Across Australia other jurisdictions have successfully integrated their tourism and events bodies. The Northern Territory is now joining that national direction, ensuring we can compete and lead on the global stage.

Under Labor we had a tourism strategy that seemed to involve crossing our fingers and hoping the Dry Season would do the heavy lifting. Visitor numbers slipped, international markets softened and the NT lost ground while other states moved ahead with integrated modern tourism and event structures. Tourism operators were screaming from the rooftops for support and telling the government that the system was not working, but Labor's response was to put it in the too-hard basket.

This Bill directly supports our government's focus on reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle. A stronger visitor economy means more jobs, more eyes on our streets and more confidence and pride in our communities. Tourism already supports approximately 17,000 Territorians. This is proof that momentum is building. This Bill locks in that success and provides a structure to turn recovery into long-term performance.

When it comes to restoring the lifestyle, it is the events, culture, food, sport and our great outdoors that make the Northern Territory special. The integration strengthens how we market that lifestyle to the world. The Bill updates the *Tourism NT Act 2012*, creates a single advisory board, removes duplication and increases transparency. Importantly, it establishes a reserve fund to support major events that span across financial years, such as the Supercars. It also gives the new agency powers to act commercially to sell tickets, run events and form partnerships with airlines and operators. This makes government not just more efficient but more agile.

Even before this Bill has passed the benefits are visible. Major events are now sold through tourism trade channels, and cross-promotion is stronger. The T20 cricket and MXGP events were sellout success stories.

For the first time NT events have featured in Tourism NT's global media and travel agent programs. The team even took home the MXGP Global Award for Best Promotion, with 58% of attendees coming from interstate or overseas. These results speak for themselves.

This government has taken a different approach, and we have seen strong growth in the domestic and international markets, with domestic overnight trips rising by more than 20% and the number of international visitors surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Events such as MXGP, Red CentreNATS and major festivals have driven record attendance, with MXGP alone attracting more than 36,000 people and earning that global promotion award. These are results, not slogans. This is not just a government success story; it is industry-backed reform. The Territory is moving forward. This strategy was built with industry, with more than 350 consultations, workshops and surveys across every region of the Territory. That collaboration ensures the strategy has credibility to deliver real outcomes.

Tourism and aviation are inseparable. We need seats, competition and affordable fares.

The case is clear: tourism and events are cornerstones of our economic strength and our Territory identity. I am glad that many events are held in the amazing electorate of Fannie Bay.

This Bill makes practical sense. Labor had years to fix the cracks in the tourism system and chose to lead with paper and glossy brochures. This government is doing the opposite. We are fixing the foundation, integrating tourism and events, backing a strong Visitor Economy Strategy to 2032 and delivering record-breaking visitor numbers and spending. It is structural reform that locks in success. It guarantees that the only thing deteriorating in Territory tourism is Labor's credibility on the subject.

Tourism and Events NT will be a powerhouse organisation that rebuilds our economy, grows confidence and tells our story to the world. This is action and progress. This is the Territory moving forward with certainty and confidence.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank the members who contributed. There was a lot of positivity in the parliament, which is fantastic, because the future is bright for tourism, hospitality and events in the Northern Territory.

This Bill is a strategic step to strengthen how we market the Territory, attract visitors and build a sustainable year-round visitor economy that supports local jobs, businesses and the Territory lifestyle we all love. It represents one of the most significant structural reforms to Territory tourism in more than a decade and is designed to deliver practical, measurable results.

I thank staff members at the Department of Tourism and Hospitality and the Northern Territory Major Events Company. They have worked tirelessly for a long time to deliver for Territorians and the visitors who come to check out the Northern Territory and have a wonderful time. They have also spent a lot of time in the last few months pulling together the vision that I had to streamline the powerhouses we have in these two entities. It has not been easy. There were a lot of conversations, and sometimes people are uncertain when things like this come together with big reforms and change. I pay tribute to them as they have done it with professionalism and worked together. The board of the Northern Territory Major Events Company, led by Penny Priest; the Tourism NT board, led by Paul Ah Chee; and the department's CE, Suzana Bishop, came together day-in and day-out to pull together these two powerhouse entities. It is a credit to the boards and the department staff, and I thank them.

There is not a lot more to say than what has already been said by all members. Everything that I had in my speech—which was quite long if I needed it to be—has been said. That demonstrates how important tourism is to the Northern Territory.

Tourism is one of the five key pillars of our Northern Territory Rebuilding the Economy Strategy. It is so important to have events, which drive visitation. The two powerhouse teams working side by side can leverage every bit of resource that comes their way to market the Northern Territory as the most exciting place for visitors to come. We want them to visit, enjoy themselves, then go away and tell everybody about it; sometimes they might choose to live here too, which is a story that we have heard before.

There is some concern regarding the makeup of the new advisory board. I assure Territorians that we are going through an Australia-wide expression-of-interest process. We have amazing people from the Northern Territory as well as across Australia who will no doubt put up their hand for that important job of

advising me on how they see Tourism and Events NT in terms of its strategic direction, collaborations with international or domestic markets or whatever it might be. It will be strategic, skills-based, big-picture thinking. That process will go ahead. I will be excited to announce those board members.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly. I thank everyone for their contributions.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

The Assembly suspended.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr Mark Boothman, Member for Theordore, and Ms Kendall Morton, Member for Caloundra, from Queensland. Welcome to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

Members: Hear, hear!

NOTICES

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Alcohol Harm Reduction Amendment (Banned Drinker Orders) Bill 2025, Serial 48.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Trade, Business and Asian Relations Legislation Amendment (Streamlining Licensing Schemes and Other Matters) Bill 2025, Serial 47.

QUESTION TIME

Tropical Cyclone Fina – Grants

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER referred to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Your government has announced immediate response grants for people impacted by Cyclone Fina. According to your government's fact sheet, grants of $309 per child, $661 per adult and $1,537 per family are available to cover the cost of basic needs like food, transport, medical supplies and clothing. This sounds great, and the opposition supports that.

In order to access these grants people need to have been evacuated by the Northern Territory Government during the cyclone or have not attended an emergency cyclone shelter. Based on these criteria virtually no Territorians are eligible for your gammon grant—no-one in Darwin, the Tiwi Islands, the rural area or in the Northern Territory.

Before you start pointing the finger, please make it clear. While Commonwealth grants contribute to funding towards this payment, the NT Government decides the eligibility criteria. Will you come clean and explain why your grants are a stunt?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader is a stunt; she is a total joke. We have just had a Category 3 cyclone, and all the opposition has done is try to blame other people for not doing the best job. When she was in government, it did the most deplorable job during Cyclone Marcus. She wants to play games about Power and Water. I hope she asks the Treasurer a question about that today because he is ready; come in, spinner!

She comes to this parliament and throws mud. I have just been at the welfare centre checking in on the hardworking Department of Children and Families staff who are there. NDIS, Services Australia, the Multicultural Council of the NT, TIO, Red Cross and a number of organisations are there. People are lined up because they are accessing the $250 immediate relief payment that we brought online from 9 am. People

have been coming in because they need urgent funding to buy food for their families. We are proud to have stood that up quickly yesterday.

I met with Minister McBain two days ago when she came to Darwin and activated federal funding. Ultimately, those three tiers of funding are now in place. I will pass on to the Minister for Children and Families because that department is doing the welfare component of our emergency response.

Ms CAHILL: Madam Speaker, I can confirm that the eligibility requirement for the $250 relief payment is linked to loss of power for more than 72 hours. The confirmation of anyone who is still without power as of today is being done by Power and Water. There are issues where the street's power may have been restored but the house's still has not been because of electricity supply within the boundaries of that household. Power and Water is working to verify that people are still without power, and they have been advised that once that is confirmed they will be eligible for the $250 payment.

As at 12 pm today, 339 people have been through the doors of the Welfare Recovery Centre, representing 134 households, and 22 payments have been processed, with the remaining eligible people having their payments processed. Anyone who has lost an item like a fridge or a freezer, once they provide evidence of that, can obtain some compensation from the Northern Territory Government, not from the Commonwealth Government.

Crime Data

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

The latest NT crime statistics show substantial reductions across offence categories and significant improvements in communities across the Territory, which is consistent with the positive feedback that I and other MLAs are receiving from residents in our electorates. Unlike the former Labor government, which presided over rising crime, our government has made reducing crime its top priority.

Can you update the Assembly on the latest crime data and explain what these positive trends mean for Territorians who are finally seeing real progress?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is the single biggest issue that the Member for Karama's community cares about. He and I have regular conversations about the way law and order is going. It is starting to show real results for our community and the reprieve that the people in the member's electorate so desperately want and deserve.

We can compare the crime data with last year. I make it explicitly clear for people who are cynical about data that the CLP has not changed the way we capture data. Labor created a new police system, but we now have two full years under the new system. Beyond two years we cannot compare, but for the last two years we are comparing apples with apples; when we do, those apples are pretty shiny now.

When we compare January to September this year with January to September last year—apples with apples—the number of victims has dropped by 8.3%. That is 1,635 fewer victims of crime this year compared with last year. That in itself speaks volumes about the way we have approached the top priority of Territorians, which is community safety. We have backed our police and done the right thing.

We are seeing huge results. Territory wide, house break-ins are down by 25%; commercial break-ins by 22%; robbery by 19%; and assaults by 3%. In greater Darwin house break-ins are down by 38%, which is nearly halved. That is the result of the strong action we took straightaway. We walked into this parliament in October, just two months after coming to government, and passed an entire reducing-crime package on urgency. Declan's law has done an incredible job in stopping the revolving door of bail and making sure that people who do the wrong thing stay behind bars.

We have done a power of work. We backed police with the best pay deal in 20 years, and we continue to do that work. Today we announced that banned drinker orders, which police issue to people on the spot, will go from seven days of no grog to 28 days. That will make a big difference, particularly at this time of year where there are seasonal spikes.

I thank our police. I am proud to be the Police minister. They are doing an incredible job. The Attorney-General is getting the courts working better; boy, is that a mission. The Deputy Chief Minister has found more mattresses than you could ever believe so that people doing the wrong thing have a comfy bed

on the floor. We will keep this focus because law and order is our number one priority, and this is just the beginning.

Health Staff – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for HEALTH

One year into your government nearly 5,000 public servants—including nurses, allied health, pharmacists and other frontline health workers—have voted against your EBA. Twelve months on, with code yellows, staff shortages and exhausted clinicians, can you point to anything you have done to improve pay, fix unsafe workloads or stop the exodus of health professionals?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, when we talk about pay, we talk about conditions of service. In the health system our staff are on the front line, and they just demonstrated their commitment over the last three or four days in the middle of a cyclone. In Darwin we had roughly 700 to 800 of our frontline staff bunkered down at the hospital in the middle of a cyclone, doing the job for Territorians, patients, staff and visitors and looking after everyone in the health system.

For the Member for Daly to talk about what has or has not been done is appalling. Our health staff are facing the biggest battle in the Northern Territory because we are underfunded $200m under the National Health Reform Agreement. Every day we have 60 to 80 aged-care patients in our hospitals because there is no aged-care facility in Darwin. The federal Labor member talked about this year on year; they promised $60m in April this year, but has it been delivered? Of course not, because the federal Member for Solomon is banging on about Aldi rather than talking about …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. My question was directly about the EBA negotiations, and I asked where they were at.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes. Could you make your comments relevant?

Mr EDGINGTON: They are relevant. The Member for Daly cannot see the relevance between us being underfunded $400m by the Commonwealth and what he is expecting or what people are expecting to be paid in the health system. If he cannot see any direct correlation between us being $400m short in the health system and pay and conditions for the staff, something is seriously wrong.

Being $200m short under the National Health Reform Agreement, we are 6% behind the national average. There is no equity in health funding across the country. We are spending $40m per year on aged care and $51m per year for the CareFlight contract, and we are $95m short for primary healthcare in the Northern Territory. When we talk about funding …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question was specifically about the EBA, which is the Northern Territory's responsibility.

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, minister.

Mr EDGINGTON: It is clear to me that the Opposition Leader and Deputy Opposition Leader cannot see any correlation between the Northern Territory being underfunded $400m and pay and conditions for staff in the Northern Territory. It is appalling. You should be advocating for more funding rather than coming in here and criticising our frontline staff. Get on the front foot and start asking for some funding.

Alcohol-fuelled Violence – Reduction

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for ALCOHOL POLICY

The CLP government has been delivering on our promise to reduce crime and keep Territorians safe. We have introduced a raft of laws aimed at putting victims ahead of offenders. We have the country's strongest bail laws. We created ramraid and social posting-and-boasting laws as well as laws to protect frontline workers. The Territory's latest crime statistics, covering January to September this year, compared with the same period last year show an 8.3% reduction in victims of crime, with 1,635 fewer Territorians becoming victims. We know this is not job done, and we continue to work hard to keep Territorians safe. What new actions are we taking to reduce crime, particularly alcohol-fuelled violence?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain has been pushing for these reforms across alcohol-related crime ever since he was elected. It is not only alcohol-related crime; it is antisocial behaviour in public housing and drinking in public places and in common areas of public housing.

The CLP is delivering on its commitment to keep Territorians safe and reduce crime. We announced this morning that we are further increasing banned drinker orders from seven days to 28 days. That will come into force next month. This gives police an additional tool to combat alcohol-fuelled violence and crime and further protect our community.

Earlier this year in Katherine, police undertook an operation to drive down crime, which resulted in a 354% increase in banned drinker orders issued. During that period the community saw a significant reduction in crime.

This week we will bring to parliament changes to the *Alcohol Harm Reduction Act* on urgency to give effect to this important change. The Police Commissioner has welcomed these changes and has welcomed the extended booze ban as police gear up for summer operations. This is critical, particularly in Alice Springs, leading into the summer period. It is critical that we have the resources, the legislation and the policy settings right.

Police have said that public drinking remains our biggest catalyst for overall assaults and domestic violence, so we must continue to take action. The summer period in Alice Springs will be busy, and we want the police to have the tools they need to do the job to keep Territorians safe and reduce alcohol-fuelled violence.

The change to the BDO is part of the BDR review. Our party is delivering on another election commitment. We reviewed the Banned Drinker Register and came up with a clear pathway to increase the banned drinker orders from seven days to 28 days. Extending those sends a clear signal that alcohol-fuelled violence simply will not be tolerated and offenders will face real consequences for their actions.

Extending BDOs not only restricts harmful behaviour; it gives people the opportunity to get help. This is important because we often talk about supply measures. We are dealing with demand issues as well. Twenty-eight days gives that person an opportunity to seek participation in a therapeutic program to get help for their addiction.

Overall, we will continue to take action and put the rights of victims first. Putting this in place will assist the community.

Public Service – Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

It has been 64 days since our hardworking public servants overwhelmingly voted down your pay offer. Many have worked overtime to get the Top End back on its feet after Cyclone Fina. When will you recognise the contribution that our public servants make to the Territory and come to the table with a decent offer regarding their pay and conditions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, on this side of the Chamber we recognise the hard work that our public servants do each day. Throughout Cyclone Fina, our frontline workers from Education, Territory Families, emergency services, the health sector—we have just heard from the Minister for Health about how hard those staff were working in the hospitals over the weekend with Cyclone Fina, getting the people sorted in the hospital system. We recognise the hard work that these professionals do.

Ms Uibo: Will you pay them properly?

Mrs HERSEY: I note the interjection. You can wait until I finish, Opposition Leader; you will get your turn.

An offer has gone out. This Friday there will be another offer going out for this general consent agreement. An agreement went to a vote and was voted down; then it went to Fair Work, and it has come back. Negotiations have been happening again. It will go out for a further vote this Friday. I look forward to seeing what that vote is. It is a generous offer.

The opposition fails to see that while it was in government and racked up a debt of astronomical proportions, we are constrained under a wages policy. We are being responsible. We have to manage the budget. The Treasurer talks about that all the time. We need to make sure that what we are doing is responsible and that we are not hiking up the debt even further because of the previous Labor government.

It will go out this Friday. Our policy is higher than what Labor had when it was in government. Labor had only a 2% pay increase; we have a 3% increase, which is above CPI.

Ms Uibo: Every EBA should be; that is the way it works.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mrs HERSEY: Those opposite might like to think about the questions they are asking because on this side of the House we are fiscally responsible. We make sure that we spend Territorian taxpayers' dollars responsibly.

North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency – Funding

J DAVIS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

This year your government gave millions of dollars in extra demand pressure funding to the lower courts, the DPP and Legal Aid NT to manage pressures created by your own expensive legislative and policy changes, yet you have provided nothing to NAAJA, which represents the majority of people before our criminal courts and is already proportionally funded well below Legal Aid NT. Why did you fail to give the Aboriginal legal aid service additional funding? What will you do to close the funding gap so that NAAJA clients receive at least the same level of funding support as Legal Aid clients?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know that the Member for Johnston is new to this parliament. When I became the Attorney-General there was a lot to look into, especially with the shambles that Labor left taxpayers' money in.

NAAJA is fully funded by the federal government. A couple of weeks ago, just before we started to hear about the cyclone coming, Attorney-General Michelle Rowland was asked whether she would top up NAAJA's funding. She was clear in her answer that the feds provided additional funding in a long-term agreement, which our CLP government finished negotiations on upon coming to government. She was clear that NAAJA already had a huge uplift, as has Legal Aid. It had a huge uplift last year when we came to government. Legal Aid was in shambles; NAAJA was imploding, so Legal Aid was taking on a lot of that work.

We met those requests because demand was obviously increasing, not only because of our new laws, which we needed, but also in general, as it had been underfunded by Labor for so long. We met those demands and increased the funding by an historic amount—an 87% increase to Legal Aid's baseline funding. That was a huge amount. It does not mean it is just a one-off bandaid solution; it is ongoing funding year-in and year-out.

Legal Aid has new leadership and dedicated ongoing funding. Of course, there is still work to be done. It has an important job to do to make the changes in its organisation to do that. Territorians expect NAAJA to do that as well with the funding that it has received. It received a huge uplift from the feds, with 100% federal funding, and it too is expected, being based on taxpayers' money, to work within its means.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the Member for Johnston's mother, Dina, and her husband, Kit, to be with her on her birthday.

Members: Hear, hear!

Secondary School Reform

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Territorians are seeing changes taking shape across our middle schools, and these reforms are generating a great deal of excitement and optimism in the community after years of frustration with a system that clearly was not delivered. Families can finally see action, certainty and a clear plan for our secondary education system.

Can you update the Assembly on the progress that the CLP government is making on secondary school reforms and tell us how these changes will improve outcomes for students? Can you tell us how we will strengthen pathways to jobs and deliver the modern Year 7 to 12 system that Territorians have long been calling for?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are delivering reforms in secondary education, and that will start next year. I have said many times in this House that we have spoken to schools in Alice Springs. Those schools will come online in 2027. The schools in Darwin will be making changes as of next year. Labor failed to fix a middle school model that it knew was failing. We are acting on Labor's inaction.

In our year of action, certainty and security we are putting Territory students and families first by replacing the outdated middle school model with a modern comprehensive Year 7 to 12 system that delivers pathways to real jobs. From Term 1, 2026:

- Nightcliff Middle School will become Nightcliff High School under principal, Eva Kokkinomagoulos.
- Dripstone Middle School will become Dripstone Secondary College led by current principal, Nektaria Pikoulos.
- Sanderson Middle School will become Sanderson High under the continued leadership of Robert McIntosh.
- Casuarina Senior College will retain its current name and principal, Glenn Dixon.
- Palmerston College will be replaced by two new schools—Driver Secondary School, under Maisie Floyd, and Rosebery Secondary School to be led by the current head of campus, Kristi Beynon.

Darwin Middle School and Darwin High School will transition next year. It is a much bigger school. They have a lot more changes to happen. In March they will get a new school board when they go to an AGM. The principal will be Annette Pedersen, who will lead the transition. They will go from being Darwin Middle and Darwin High to Darwin High School.

We are supporting this transformation with a $3m capital transition fund. Upgrades will support senior secondary curriculum to enable onsite VET delivery, new signage and essential infrastructure improvements to make sure every school is fit for purpose. Our government will make sure that this transition to comprehensive secondary schools will deliver pathways to real jobs for the students of the future.

Corrections – G4S Partnership

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Can you update the Assembly on how Corrections is working to strengthen prisoner transport and custody services outside the prison perimeter, including court management in Darwin and Alice Springs, hospital visits, medical escorts and prison movements to and from Katherine? Can the minister outline the role of G4S in supporting these services, the benefit of its local recruitment and training efforts and how this initiative is helping redeploy NT Corrections officers back to frontline duties within our prisons to support daily operations, rehabilitation, programs and employment activities? How does this reflect the government's commitment to innovative and collaborative Corrections reforms?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina rates the importance of keeping the community safe, and having a strong Corrections system allows us to keep the community safe. I thank him for his interest because he knows that we keep Territorians safe on this side of the House, unlike the previous Labor government did.

We partnered with G4S to enhance prisoner transport custody and court management services across the Northern Territory. We are building this partnership to have local people working here, creating jobs for Territorians in the Northern Territory, to allow us to strengthen the Corrections system.

These initiatives involve efficiency and safety and, more importantly, free up Corrections officers to do their jobs behind the wire to allow them to concentrate on rehabilitation—an industry for detainees who are in there for a reason. We want to make sure that we do not just pack them and stack them like the previous Labor government; we want there to be training and rehabilitation for those people so that they can make better choices for their life, come out and keep the community safe.

Just last week I was at a graduation for 21 new Territorian trainees. In fact, I knew one of the trainees; I have known him since he was a young fellow. He has been in the Northern Territory for his entire life; he was born here. His mother was there, and she was proud to see him, a Territorian, going through the training course and graduating on that day. It is not just one job; this partnership with G4S allows for a line of promotion to work up to senior roles as he progresses and trains in that system. The week after, there were another 24 trainees, so now G4S has 68 staff in the Northern Territory. That is 68 locals who got jobs to keep the Territory safe.

G4S is working in the courts in Darwin. Some good news is that in the first week or so of December it will transition to the court in Alice Springs. That is important because it will free up frontline police officers to be on the beat, keeping the community safe.

We have been working hard over the last 15 months to do that, and the crime stats show that. The Chief Minister went through them, but they are so important that I will read through them again: house break-ins are down by 25%; and commercial break-ins are down by 22%. These figures are going down because we are working hard.

There is a lot more work to be done, and we will continue to work hard to keep the community safe and strengthen our Corrections system.

Digital Violence Prevention

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There has been an increase in sexual violence in our community, including online, with perpetrators using technology to stalk, groom and share people’s images without consent. There is nothing in your strategy to address this. Can you explain why your domestic, family and sexual violence strategy fails to address sexual violence through prevention and early intervention strategies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is timely that the Member for Daly asks that question because yesterday was the first day of the 16 Days of Activism, which is an international anti-domestic violence campaign. Guess what it is focusing on this year? Digital violence. This approach has been embraced by the Department of Children and Families. It is rolling out resources across the Territory to alert people to the dangers, risks and real issues that kids are facing in this space.

It is a horrendous situation that our young people are facing; they cannot even be certain that their friend today will not become their enemy tomorrow and turn an innocently taken image into a horrendously embarrassing one, which is sexual exploitation.

I refute the claim that the department and the strategy do not take into account that real threat to our kids and community more generally, because there is no limit on where we will look to address where violence comes from. There is a broad agenda in the education space. There is a number of strong not-for-profits and non-government organisations working to provide incredible education in school programs and our community.

Most importantly, yesterday the department commenced an intensive program rollout alerting people to the dangers of digital violence; the risks it poses to their kids, neighbours and friends; what it looks like; what it means; how to recognise it; and where to go for help.

Rebuilding the Economy Strategy

Mrs ZIO to TREASURER

This year the CLP government set itself the task to make the Territory the best place to do business. To do this, we unveiled our Rebuilding the Economy: Northern Territory Economic Strategy, a roadmap to cut red tape—my favourite thing to do—to deliver regulatory reform and get more investors to the NT. Thanks to the decisive leadership of the CLP, the NT economy has gone from strength to strength, a far cry from the economic basket we inherited. Led by nation-leading reforms, such as our payroll tax changes, the CLP has gotten out of the way and allowed businesses to flourish, which I can confidently say people and small businesses in the Fannie Bay electorate are happy with.

Can you update the Assembly on the impact the Rebuilding the Economy strategy has had on the NT economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I note that over the last few days the Member for Fannie Bay has been updating me on responses she has received from local businesses in her electorate about how the changes are having a positive effect on small local businesses.

Nothing is more important to me as Treasurer than getting our economy back on track. It was only last year when we realised the extent of Labor's eight-year economic trainwreck—an economy running off the rails. Businesses were crying out for help, and investors were fleeing. We led the charge, putting the Territory's best foot forward and showing Labor what responsible economic management actually looks like. This started with putting small and medium businesses front and centre, implementing the highest payroll tax-free threshold in Australia.

These businesses—mum-and-dad and family businesses—are working hard to keep the doors open. They are the people we support because they are the beating heart of our local Territory economy. A great example is Wilson Diesel Services, a proud family-owned business run by managing director, Max, and his wife, Liza Wilson, who I recently met in Tennant Creek. For them and nearly 70% of businesses in the Territory, this was a welcomed relief from Labor's price gouging, seeing them pay zero on payroll tax. It opens their doors to hundreds of apprentices and trainees who are now building their bright career in the Northern Territory.

I am proud to announce that nearly 100 businesses have claimed the apprentice and trainee wage exemption. That is more trainees and apprentices, which means more tradies for the Territory. More than $8m in apprentice and trainee wages is so far exempt from payroll tax, meaning these businesses have collectively saved $440,000.

Look what has happened: the cranes are back; our population is back; and even planes are coming back. Confidence is back in the Northern Territory across key industries of agriculture, tourism, Defence, gas and mining. We are now driving jobs and investment to the Territory, not away from it, which is what the previous government did.

The impact these reforms have had on businesses and our economy cannot be overstated. These are the facts that those opposite must face; the reality is that the Lawler-Fyles-Gunner Labor government could not manage the economy, but the CLP can, and we are turning it around.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Programs

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A significant portion of the funding allocated in the domestic, family and sexual violence strategy goes to unevaluated government programs instead of evidence-based, community-led programs. Will you commit to supporting the sector's calls in supporting your programs to be evaluated by an independent body?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am a bit flabbergasted—one of my favourite words—because there has been zero evaluation on most of the programs that were rolled out by those opposite during their eight years in government. It is appalling behaviour, with money spent, not accounted for and wasted.

I presume the Member for Gwoja is referring to the successful Circuit Breaker Program, which is just about to celebrate its first year of operation in Alice Springs. We just had a 1.4% decrease in domestic, family and sexual violence across the Northern Territory, which is significant because we were hoping to plateau it by 2030, but we are starting to see it come down. The biggest decrease is in Alice Springs, where Circuit Breaker has been running for 12 months. It is around 30%. How phenomenal is that?

Yes, there will be a formal evaluation because we have completed a year, so we have a year's worth of data. You cannot evaluate something unless you have the information to evaluate. Now we have that information, and I cannot wait to see the outcome of that report. I have been talking to my colleagues interstate working in this challenging field and told them about our program, which is outcome focused, not output focused, which was those opposite's favourite thing. It is seeing true results. They are interested in seeing the outcome of the evaluation.

I am pleased that we are starting to make inroads in Katherine and the Barkly region …

Mr Edgington: Hear, hear!

Ms CAHILL: It is the best place to live, right?

Mr Edgington: The land of opportunity.

Ms CAHILL: It is the land of opportunity.

We are also starting to make inroads in the Darwin and Palmerston region, which is one of the most challenging areas because it is such a big space to cover. I am proud of the work that has been done in that space.

We will continue to fight the good fight. Every program we fund is required to demonstrate that it is delivering results, not outputs. We want programs to show that they are contributing to the decrease in domestic, family and sexual violence that we are starting to see, and if they can demonstrate that we will continue to support them.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Programs – Supplementary Question

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Can you confirm that your evaluations will be independent from your government department, and what are those timelines?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I can confirm that we will not waste $250,000 doing an external evaluation on a program where the evidence is clear.

Major Events 2025

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for MAJOR EVENTS

Territorians love their lifestyle and the events that bring people together, from local festivals to major national sporting fixtures. In my electorate of Drysdale we are eager to see the economic, social and cultural benefits of more major events. Events play a big role in supporting small businesses, increasing visitation and helping to keep our economy strong throughout the year. As we head into another big year of tourism, hospitality and events, can you update the Assembly on how the Territory's event calendar is shaping up, what it means for local jobs and businesses and how the government is ensuring that these events continue to grow the Territory's reputation as the best place to live, work and visit?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is right; people in his community know the impact that major events have on their lifestyle and local businesses. Under our government events are back. They are stronger and smarter. Finally, we are delivering the lifestyle that the community members in Drysdale and all Territorians expect.

Territorians know the difference between the old government and the new CLP government. Under Labor everything was the status quo, but we are not afraid to make changes. We are refocusing on what Labor let slide, and we are restoring the Territory lifestyle again.

This year has been all about action, certainty and security. Nowhere has that been clearer than in the 2025 events calendar. We delivered the biggest year of motorsport in Territory history. People in Palmerston love their motorsport. We have had the Supercars, the Red CentreNATS, Nitro up North, the Finke Desert Race, Chariots of Thunder and the MXGP returning to Australia for the first time in 24 years and coming to Darwin for the first time.

Ms Uibo: Thanks to Labor—hear, hear!

Ms BOOTHBY: I can hear them over there chiming in. Let us face it: those opposite were dreaming if they thought that Labor would deliver the MXGP on its budget, because it would not happen. We fixed and delivered it, and it was a huge success.

We also brought back international cricket to sellout crowds at TIO Stadium. We heard a lot about that this morning from the Member for Sanderson, who is a huge cricket fan, like many Territorians.

Territory favourites have flourished under our government. We doubled the number of people going to the Laksa Festival by changing the night it was held and the location, which is huge. We had that in November in the off season. That time is normally quiet around town, but the Waterfront was packed. That is fantastic.

Here is another one for you, Member for Drysdale. Your electorate saw the PGA golf return to the Territory. I know that people in Driver love sitting on their balconies to watch it and then they wander or drive their golf carts to the club to have a feed or a beer and watch the PGA. Not only did we host it; we also telecasted it across the country. We had lots of news showcasing the Territory to the world.

Coming up next is the Dolphins begin their three-year NT home game deal—national attention and real economic dollars. I am confident they will give the Penrith Panthers a run for their money. We have three AFL games in the Territory, a third day of Supercar racing added to the calendar, and we are preparing to showcase our military history like never before, including opportunities around Pitch Black.

Gamba Army – Weed Control

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for PARKS and WILDLIFE referred to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Gamba grass continues to be an ever-growing environmental and fire risk to our national parks and communities. The Gamba Grass Annual Report released last week highlights the success of the Gamba Army in coordinating and assisting landowners and undertaking control work across our national parks. However, since the Gamba Army ceased operations there has been a visible increase in gamba grass in Charles Darwin National Park, for example.

Minister, you may need to refer part of this question; I am not sure. Why has your government discontinued funding for this proven program, and what measures will replace this critical workforce in protecting our national parks and communities from gamba?

Additionally and separately, can you guarantee that the NT Government's $250,000 in annual funding for Litchfield gamba control is an ongoing commitment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we know that gamba grass is a huge problem in our national parks. We have seen it for decades and have been trying to eradicate it. It has been an ongoing battle.

The previous Labor government had a scattergun approach, which did not work. I have pooled our resources together with my colleague, the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment. Both departments work together now. We have a full-time gamba grass coordinator.

Charles Darwin National Park and Litchfield National Park are crucial for tourism. It might be difficult to eradicate altogether, but the research that has just been done shows that 90% of gamba grass has been cleared and eradicated from the Tabletop Track in Litchfield, which is huge. That is based on a heap of research that is done with a coordinated approach with different agencies and scientists. It is about coming together. That work is ongoing.

For the rest of the question, I will hand over to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, who can contribute.

Mr BURGOYNE: Madam Speaker, our government continues to invest in gamba grass management on government-owned land, including vacant Crown land for which I am responsible through the Lands, Planning and Environment portfolio, including road reserves.

During the 2024–25 management season approximately $2m was invested in this program. The Gamba Grass Weed Advisory Committee continues to meet. Minister Boothby is right; we are working together like never before to ensure that we eradicate, where we can, or manage this infectious weed.

The Gamba Action Program provides ongoing support to landholders, offering advice, free herbicide and spray equipment loans across the Darwin and Katherine regions. By the end of the 2024–25 season more than 3,000 landholders were engaged through the program.

The 2025–26 Gamba Action Program is scheduled to commence on 28 November—we are just about there, with two days to go—and the Weed Management Branch manages a targeted compliance enforcement program in the urban and peri-urban emergency response area. In the previous season there were 969 property inspections. This is something the Member for Goyder is always on at me about. He wants to know that there are properties being inspected and that the management is being done.

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I appreciate the answer so far, but I specifically wanted to know why the Gamba Army program was discontinued and if anything will replace that workforce.

Mr BURGOYNE: We are continuing to invest in a range of groups across the Northern Territory. We have the Gamba Litchfield Neighbours Project, which includes a $20,000 grant for the Coomalie Community Government Council to complete weeds surveys and development of a weed management strategy. We are working to ensure we manage this weed.

International Engagement

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

International trade and strategic partnerships are vital to unlocking new investment, strengthening regional cooperation and creating long-term opportunities for Territory businesses. Recent engagement has included high-level visits from key diplomatic partners; NT business representation; international events; and ministerial delegations across Southeast Asia to advance cooperation in critical minerals, energy, education, agribusiness and aviation.

Can you update the Assembly on how international engagement is delivering tangible benefits for Territory businesses, jobs and investment, and outline what success looks like for Territory businesses and the Territory economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder's interest in the work we are doing in this area is strong, and I am pleased to update the Assembly on what is happening. It is obvious to our Finocchiaro CLP government that the success of the Territory and our prosperity are inextricably linked to our region and the role we play in that. That is why over the past 15 months we have been restoring our focus on the international relationships that we need to rebuild to unlock vital investment opportunities. Strengthening regional cooperation is critical to creating long-term opportunities for Territory businesses.

Since November 2024 I have led targeted delegations to Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Japan. Each one of those was designed to advance practical cooperation in areas where our economies are naturally aligned. These missions have focused strongly on skills exchanges, international education, energy security, critical minerals, agribusiness, the digital economy, aviation and renewables. The work we are doing in this space is starting to pay off.

We are delivering clear results. For example, in Japan—our largest trading partner—Team Territory supported 18 Territory businesses and progressed major opportunities with INPEX, Osaka Gas and key investors in hydrogen, carbon capture and storage and future gas supply. There were also discussions with JOGMEC and Panasonic Energy, which has set in motion inbound investor visits and virtual showcases for our critical minerals sector. Commercial leads have been secured across agribusiness, space investment and education.

I was delighted when I was in Denpasar recently to formally open a Territory partnership between an Indonesian butcher and a Territory cattle producer, which has a fabulous restaurant in Sanur. If anybody is over there, I encourage you to visit this remarkable partnership. This is a real example of what is happening.

In Timor-Leste our work has reinvigorated skills and education. The Darwin to Dili Yacht Race has returned, and we have committed to that in 2027.

For us it means we have export-ready businesses, diversified investments, strong regional partnerships and sustainable job creation—all positive news for the Northern Territory and a commitment to showing that this is the place to come and live, work and invest.

Darwin Private Hospital – Healthscope

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for HEALTH

It has been more than six months since Darwin Private Hospital entered receivership and nearly five months since private maternity services ceased. In October you assured Territorians that you were engaged directly with the receivers and current operators as well as the federal government and that you would continue to engage with all interested parties.

Given the ongoing loss for Territory families who can no longer access private health services, can you outline clearly the dates and timeline for the restoration of this service?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Daly struggles to understand what private business is about. In June this year Healthscope closed Darwin Private Hospital maternity services. Like everybody here, I am extremely disappointed. Mothers and families are extremely disappointed that they no longer have that choice in the Northern Territory. I remind the Member for Daly what has been going on, because we have spoken about this before.

The Commonwealth is currently leading work with the receivers of Healthscope regarding the continued operations of private hospitals across Australia, including Darwin Private Hospital. I recently met with the receivers of the private hospital, McGrathNicol, as well as the CE of Healthscope. I have also spoken with Minister Butler. I can update the Assembly that the receivership process is still underway.

The Member for Daly struggles to understand that when a private company goes into administration and is in the hands of receivers, it is not something that I can directly lean into other than to put pressure on them. When they find a buyer for the private hospital, we want to have those conversations because we want to see a private provider take on Darwin Private Hospital and return private maternity services to the Northern Territory.

We want families to have choice. There were previously about 250 births at the private hospital on an annual basis, and about 60 families were affected by the closure. The important part is that all the families were contributing through private health insurance. They no longer have that choice to give birth at the Darwin Private Hospital.

The conversations are continuing, and our officials are maintaining contact with the Commonwealth, which is in direct contact with the receivers. I can assure you that we are keen to have a conversation with any new buyer to ensure private maternity services return to Darwin.

Arts Sector – Support

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for ARTS

There has been a lot of noise this year from the other side about the arts. The Labor opposition has made a number of claims that funding to the arts has been cut or that the arts community is not being supported by this government. For those who have not heard the message clearly or have missed the facts, can you clarify for the Assembly what support our government is delivering for the arts in the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to clarify for the Assembly how we are backing the arts community in the Territory. The Labor opposition has been telling incorrect information in the community and in this House about this government cutting funding for the arts.

In 2024–25 our CLP government invested $7.84m to support 201 arts activities, with $7.932m allocated for 2025–26. In other words, there are no cuts. We also extend multi-year operational funding to 29 arts organisations and added six new organisations, expanding opportunities across the Territory.

Our arts organisations reach 261,000 audience members and employ more than 600 Territorians, engaging 12,000 artists and securing $23m in leverage investment. Our CLP government continues to help artists and musicians develop their careers, with some now going global. This government initiated music exports through Music NT and invested $100,000 last year through the grants program. We are giving opportunities for Territorians to take their music to the international level.

It has been a fantastic year for the arts and creative industries. Some of the events our government supported include the Portrait of a Senior Territorian, the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards, the Darwin Festival, the APAX conference and IMPACT Awards, the NT Literary Awards and the prestigious Archibald Prize and Young Archie in Alice for the first time.

Our NT Arts Strategy reflects our government's commitment to all arts as a powerful force for enriching our lifestyle, rebuilding the economy and strengthening our communities.

Speaking of communities, I have been across the Territory, from Gapuwiyak to Gunbalanya, Maningrida to Hermannsburg, Wurrumiyanga to the Barkly and Big Rivers to Alice Springs. I am looking forward to visiting more next year.

Mr Paech: Four remote communities—there are 76!

Madam SPEAKER: Silence! We are almost there.

Mr CHARLS: Just last week I returned to Katherine and attended the Meeting of Arts Professionals Conference and Northern Territory Performing Arts Awards, which were held in Big Rivers for the first time. I send a sincere congratulations to all the winners and finalists from the awards.

I remind the Assembly that tomorrow is AusMusic T-Shirt Day, a celebration of Australian music.

I also inform the Assembly that I have announced that the expression of interest will open shortly for the newly established Ministerial Advisory Committee for the Arts.

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

REPLIES TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS
Written Questions 149 to 169

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 114(2), I ask that you write to the relevant ministers seeking reasons for the delay in responding to 21 written questions. These questions, numbered 149 to 169, were submitted on 8 October 2025, more than 30 days ago.

Written Question 146

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 114(2), I ask that you write to the Minister for Health seeking reasons for his delay in responding to written question 146, which was submitted on 8 October 2025, more than 30 days ago.

Written Questions 133, 135, 136, 144 and 145

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 114(2), I ask that you write to the Chief Minister seeking reasons for her delay in responding to six written questions sent on 11 July 2025. These questions are numbered 133, 135, 136, 144 and 145.

Written Questions 111 and 113

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 114(2), I ask that you write to the Minister for Health seeking reasons for his delay in responding to written questions also sent on 11 July 2025, numbered 111 and 113.

MOTION
Importance of Improving Decision-making, Integrity, Transparency and Accountability in our Parliament

Continued from 23 October 2024.

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, it has been 399 days since I last spoke about this matter in parliament. I need to quickly refresh my memory to see where I was then.

During that debate I spoke about the importance of scrutiny, accountability and integrity in our parliamentary processes. Much has transpired since that debate. I welcome the opportunity to continue outlining the achievements of the CLP government as well as the Legislative Scrutiny Committee chaired by the Member for Wanguri, Oly Carlson, in strengthening integrity and transparency.

Considering the debate 399 days ago focused heavily on the value of legislative scrutiny committees, re-established by this government …

Ms Uibo: Not used by it.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

Mr EDGINGTON: After Labor chose to scrap scrutiny committees, I am proud to say that upon coming into government—we spoke about this in October—we re-established them. We often hear criticism about scrutiny committees in this House, but the fact remains that while Labor continues to criticise the CLP scrutiny committee, it never had one. This is important. I am not sure why those opposite continue to criticise a process this government brought back to parliament and that Labor took away.

Through the committee process hundreds of Territorians have taken the opportunity to provide insight and critique legislation that was referred to the committee. These submissions have no doubt shaped critical recommendations and amendments to Bills brought before parliament. With the majority of the committee's recommendations and amendments being accepted, it is clear that the positive impact this committee is having has ensured the laws passed in this Chamber are reflective of the electorate.

The strength of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee lies in its principles of integrity and transparency and the breadth of legislation it has examined on this Assembly's behalf. This includes the Tourism NT Amendment (Integration of NTMEC) Bill passed this morning, strengthening tourism and events; the Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Legislation Amendment (Expansion of CDS and Other Matters) Bill to expand the container deposit scheme and tackle plastic waste; and the Animal Protection and Related Legislation Amendment Bill, improving animal welfare.

This committee also scrutinised culturally significant reform, such as the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Legislation Amendment Bill; and justice reforms, including the Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill, the Attorney-General Legislation Amendment Bill and the Defamation Legislation Amendment Bill.

The committee has also scrutinised and provided recommendations on the Local Government Legislation Amendment Bill and the Territory Coordinator Bill. Most recently the committee reviewed the Building Legislation Amendment (Fidelity Fund) Bill and the Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Legislation Amendment Bill, which was debated in the House last night.

The breadth of these inquiries demonstrates the committee's essential role. From tourism and environment to heritage and education the Legislative Scrutiny Committee has provided a process to ensure that the laws passed in this Chamber are robust, transparent and contain public accountability.

I refer to the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill that the Chief Minister brought on for debate in the Chamber yesterday. This Bill was introduced to strengthen oversight and accountability. That is indicative of the CLP's commitment to integrity at all levels of the Northern Territory Government and public service. The Bill passed last night. It establishes the Office of the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner, ensuring consolidated oversight of important matters involving concerns of integrity and ethics. To quote the Chief Minister:

> *The passage of this Bill shows, unequivocally, our commitment to the highest standards of integrity and to strengthening confidence in the accountability of government.*

It has been almost 400 days since I spoke to this motion. Since coming to government we clearly demonstrated that we have improved accountability, transparency and integrity. We brought back the scrutiny committee that Labor members constantly complain about but fail to admit that they never had in place.

It is a pity the Member for Nelson is not here. We have all seen the document, Restoring Integrity to Government, that members of the Gunner government used to hold up and wave. From 2016 to 2024 the former Labor government failed to restore integrity in the Northern Territory. There was chaos when it came to ICAC referrals. Labor failed to bring back scrutiny committees in any way whatsoever and was not transparent or accountable. That is why it continued to fail, fail, fail.

Here we are 399 days after I first spoke on this motion. To refresh where I was 399 days ago: we have restored integrity, accountability and transparency and will continue to do so.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I was looking through the *Hansard* to see when this motion was first brought forward, and it was in October last year—more than a year ago. It struck me that after more than 12 months of this government being in power it is a perfect time to reflect on why this motion mattered then and why it matters even more now.

At its heart the motion is about giving Territorians a voice and making sure that before new laws are passed and decisions are made that affect people's lives, Territorians have a chance to speak up, ask questions and be heard. It was also about giving us, as members of this parliament chosen by our communities, the ability to properly review those laws to make sure they are fair and in the best interests of all Territorians.

To the government's credit it re-established the scrutiny committee. For a while it worked the way it should. The government decides when it will or will not allow legislation to be reviewed or questioned by Territorians. How can Territorians trust a government that does not want to listen to them?

A number of pieces of legislation that affect all types of people have not gone to the scrutiny committee. This government does not want to hear people's concerns; it does not value our or community members' input.

Territorians are becoming disengaged. Underhanded acts, such as not being able to recommend a Bill for scrutiny, make people lose trust in government. Territorians deserve more than a say after the fact because when the government stacks the deck in its favour, transparency and accountability and public faith in government and its members disappear. If we truly want people to believe in democracy again and pay attention to the work of this parliament we must make it easier, not harder, for them to participate.

Since this government came to power, 46 Bills have passed through the Chamber. Eleven were sent to the scrutiny committee. I was disappointed about the sacred sites Bill. I remember questioning it, as I was on that committee. A committee member said, 'We will not discuss this one because we got smashed from the Territory Coordinator one. Why would we pass this through?' Eleven out of 46 is 23% of the Bills introduced so far. The Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill was one of the big pieces of legislation overlooked.

Territorians want to see their leaders ask the questions and get the answers. There is no better place to have that than here. That is why I support the Member for Johnston's motion to reduce the number of government questions asked during Question Time. Question Time should not be a time for patting ourselves on the back;

it should be a time dedicated to doing our job as an opposition and getting answers to the questions forwarded to us by Territorians.

The CLP government passed the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill this week. It establishes the Ethics Oversight Inspector. Labor will always support a review of government functions and authorities to ensure that they are performing as well as they can be. That must be done truthfully and honestly, not in a sneaky way as happened with the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill, which surprised not only the opposition and crossbench but also Territorians. It is most disappointing that this Bill was introduced without warning or consultation and without a chance to be scrutinised.

The leader of the Northern Territory has again told Territorians that what she says goes, and if you do not like it, leave. It is disappointing to see a Territory-born politician disregarding the opinions and voices of fellow Territorians.

As I said at the beginning, it is almost one year since the Member for Johnston introduced this motion to the Assembly. At the time it may have seemed like she was sounding the alarm for something that was not yet a problem, like the story of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, warning of a danger that people could not yet see. Twelve months on, we can see that the Member for Johnston's psychic merits have come to fruition. We need safeguards in place for not just the opposition or the crossbench but this entire parliament's integrity.

What we have witnessed is truly concerning. We find ourselves with a government that does not welcome scrutiny and speaks of transparency and accountability only when convenient. That is not democracy.

We should work better for all Territorians. They deserve a parliament that does its job with integrity and welcomes tough questions. Ministers should take those questions on board and answer them honestly and accountably.

I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing forward this motion. I hope the government reflects on the last year, and hopefully the number of Bills going to the scrutiny committee will increase. I will be watching that.

When we increase the scrutiny of legislation that affects Territorians we will restore genuine accountability and transparency in this House.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I wish the Member for Johnston a happy birthday, officially on the record.

When Labor returned to government in 2016 public trust in politicians was at an all-time low, and understandably so, given the circumstances and performance of the Giles CLP government—one of the mentors of the current Chief Minister, Lia Finocchiaro.

After more than 12 months of the CLP being in power, this motion matters more than ever. Yesterday the CLP passed the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill in spite of all the concerns raised by not only the Labor opposition team and the crossbench but also multiple community stakeholders who were denied the opportunity to contribute to the Bill. They wrote letters to the Chief Minister and the opposition to raise their concerns, but that, unfortunately, fell on deaf ears. They did not have the opportunity to contribute to a scrutiny committee inquiry because the CLP did not send the Bill to the committee.

The CLP government is at an all-time low for trust in public office. There is a clear and concerning pattern of behaviour from the CLP government; it is a pattern of cover-ups and cop-outs. The Member for Johnston's motion gives members of this parliament, who are chosen by their communities, the ability to properly review laws to make sure that they are fair and in the best interests of all Territorians.

While we are on the topic of transparency and accountability, I touch on the points the Member for Johnston has made a few times in the past about the importance of limiting government members from asking questions of ministers, commonly known as Dorothy Dixers, during Question Time.

The former Labor government got rid of Dorothy Dixers in the 13th Assembly from 2016 to 2020 when the opposition was down to two members—one of whom was the Member for Spillett—on the Wednesdays of parliamentary sittings. Guess what? The CLP has maintained the status quo—much to its despair, I am sure—and has kept the processes of the 14th Legislative Assembly to deny the opposition and crossbench valuable opportunities to scrutinise this government's policies and initiatives.

Let us hope we can use the words of the Attorney-General and be brave and not go with the status quo and think about changing the CLP government's processes for Dorothy Dixers on Wednesdays. In the 13th Assembly Dorothy Dixers were limited to two out of every three sitting days, allowing a full hour for opposition and crossbench members to ask questions of the government. Scrapping Dorothy Dixers for one out of three sittings days was great at the time. If the 17-member CLP government wants to show good faith to Territorians we implore it to consider this so that opposition and crossbench members can do their jobs properly. The government can save a little face by saying, 'We are not afraid; we are brave enough to answer all those questions for a full hour without the spin in between.' Let us see whether the CLP government will take up that challenge.

This is an opportunity for CLP members to redeem themselves after they denied opposition and crossbench members, including brand-new members of this Assembly, the opportunity to properly scrutinise the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill yesterday. That legislation impacts the whole Northern Territory.

The Member for Barkly rattled on about how great it is that the scrutiny committee has been brought back by the CLP. One minute the CLP makes a fuss about bringing back the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, and the next minute it turns around and does not send three-quarters of its Bills to that committee. Again it is ironic—may I say moronic as well—to say one thing and do the other. That is not what Territorians expect of us in this place.

The Member for Arafura spoke about the number of Bills that the CLP has introduced thus far, 47, and the number referred to the scrutiny committee, 11. Less than one-quarter—less than 25%—of important Territory laws are being sent to the fabulously celebrated scrutiny committee which, might I remind the government, is a CLP-dominated committee. If the government does not trust its own members on that committee, by golly, not sending them the work that they should be doing on behalf of Territorians is a really good way to show it. The government is not allowing its members and the crossbench and opposition members of that scrutiny committee to do their jobs.

Of late the CLP has been choosing to send only non-controversial legislation to the scrutiny committee. These Bills are hand-picked to show that the government is using the scrutiny committee it established, but it will not send that committee the complex, highly contested or important pieces of legislation that Territorians want to have a say on. That sort of legislation may need sets of eyes from outside this parliament placed on it in order to scrutinise it thoroughly. It should be done properly, with stakeholders, experts and community members alike being able to contribute to the inquiry and provide submissions.

All of this is a surface-level facade, a big a song and dance—as we saw from the Member for Barkly—to try to say that the CLP is scrutinising legislation. One Bill out of every four is referred to the scrutiny committee, if we are lucky.

Whilst I am on the topic do not forget—I spoke about this yesterday—that the CLP government has gone to great lengths with three amendments to the standing orders to remove the ability of any member other than the person sponsoring the Bill, who is typically a minister, to send the Bill to the scrutiny committee.

When we get the chance we can slot into the gap between someone who has introduced a Bill sitting down and the Clerk reading the next order of the day—that bit of imaginary time when nothing is in front of the Assembly. That is the only time that a member other than the member putting forward the Bill can refer that Bill to the committee.

Guess what? All the referral motions—to scrutinise legislation introduced by the CLP government—of the Labor opposition or the crossbench have been denied; they have been voted down. That is a matter of fact, so the Member for Goyder can go back and do his research. The government has not agreed to scrutinise legislation that the opposition or crossbench has moved to refer to the committee. Those motions have all been voted down, and that is a shame.

The Member for Johnston's motion is as relevant today as it was a year-and-a-bit ago when it was introduced.

The CLP has been shying away from scrutiny and oversight. Yesterday we saw the CLP government's two-faced approach when the Attorney-General said, 'Our government is transparent and open'. I do not think so from its track record so far, and we are only a quarter into the CLP's term—one year down and, thankfully, a little less than three years to go.

When we debated the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill yesterday there was a substantial number of questions asked during consideration in detail. That process could have been combed out, tidied up and

finessed by having referred that important Bill to the scrutiny committee. However, the government is led by Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro, with the 'my way or the highway' attitude of 'get it done and if you do not like it, bugger off'. We have heard her say it many times publicly and in this place. It shows disdain and disrespect to fellow members of parliament who have an important job, as well as the community and experts in the field. Apparently, she knows better than every other person in the Northern Territory.

Another concerning pattern of behaviour is the CLP systematically shutting down the voices of Territorians and dismantling the legislative and regulatory safeguards that protect the critical environmental, social and cultural values of the Northern Territory, not to mention our lifestyle that CLP members pretend to care so much about. We have seen the CLP do this through its dodgy, rushed consultation process—if a Bill is lucky enough to have a consultation process.

An example is the Territory Coordinator Bill; the big saviour Bill for the economy, yet that office has not delivered or even marked a single significant project. I said it yesterday, and I say it again: from Estimates we know that so far $21m has been spent on the Territory Coordinator office, and not one significant project has been declared or authorised. This is a shame.

It shows that the CLP already is out of ideas only a year in and does not have a plan to improve the Territory's economy. Everything is resting on the Territory Coordinator, who has not done anything to create economic opportunity in the Northern Territory. The government definitely has not created or supplied any stimulus to the Northern Territory in terms of forward planning for the economy. I am not sure, but maybe the Treasurer is enjoying a good time on boats fishing rather than focusing on his job, the Territory's economy, which is what he gets paid for.

The CLP ripped up third-party merits reviews, which was an important layer of scrutiny in the assessment of new developments in the Northern Territory, including for traditional owners and others with a genuine interest in the community impact from development approvals.

The CLP made a big fuss about its Legislative Scrutiny Committee process, but the committee has considered only a few Bills so far.

We have also seen the rush with multiple pieces of legislation being put through on urgency, and we expect another one tomorrow. Eight Bills have been passed on urgency. I do not know what the government is doing with all the time it has between sittings that it cannot get itself in order to present clear, robust and well-consulted legislation that has had the time to do the rounds and be the best possible draft legislation to be brought before the Assembly before it is debated and passed.

We say time and again that if the government does not have its processes together by now and continues putting through Bills on urgency, it shows that it is not doing the work and perhaps CLP members are not even working together as a team. As I understand it, a huge amount of work is involved in the process of putting together a Bill—getting it through Cabinet, working through it with each of the departments, getting it back through Cabinet again, debating it in parliament and passing it. CLP members think it is okay to shortcut every process of the Westminster system, which the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly parliament is built on. They basically thumb their noses at these processes, and it is becoming more clear that the CLP government cannot get its stuff together. The ability to provide more transparent and accountable measures, and better public confidence and faith in the government and its members has been eroded under the CLP.

I also put on the record that when the CLP announced that it would establish a lobbyist register Labor thought that was good. We had it as a commitment in August 2024, as did the CLP. It is one of the few commitments the CLP continued with rather than lying to Territorians—getting away with making election commitments that were voted on by Territorians before scrapping them at the first opportunity once it was in government.

The CLP dished up a sham lobbyist register. It does not require the Chief Minister or other ministers to be open with the community about which private companies and organisations they are meeting with. This sham lobbyist register that the CLP created, seemingly on the back of an envelope, is out of step with other jurisdictions like New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT where ministers must publish their diaries.

These are a few examples of a CLP government that is more focused on image and mirage than on substance and practicality. It is a government that is terrified of scrutiny; there is no doubt about that. The CLP members are working overtime to avoid accountability measures rather than moving the Territory forward. Imagine if, since this motion was introduced last year, the CLP government put all that effort into

moving the Territory forward and where we might be now. The focus on trying to keep up the appearance of doing things is falling short. In reality the Territory's future will suffer.

The CLP has explained much of its legislative agenda. Eroding transparency and accountability was not in its election commitments, but—by golly—it has definitely delivered that. The CLP promised the three-pronged slogan that looks increasingly flimsy as it realises it has to do the work to deliver on that slogan. A slogan might sound good and get you elected, but you have to do the work once you are in government. The CLP is not showing Territorians that it is capable of this work.

The CLP promised community safety, yet its punitive responses do little to prevent or reduce crime or rehabilitate people to make our community safer in the long run.

We have all spoken in this House about how domestic, family and sexual violence has been rising in the Northern Territory. Across Australia it is a harrowing process. It is being spoken about more, which is good because we need to shine a light where there are shadows. The process in the Northern Territory and how slow we were, dragging, to meet the national roadmap criteria is concerning.

Whatever happened to the Chief Minister leading a bipartisan-supported delegation to Canberra, which she committed to in October 2024? The Chief Minister committed to driving and supporting a bipartisan approach to stamp out domestic violence and to make a Territory approach to Canberra to get extra support. What happened to that? Nothing.

She says one thing to have a good press conference and get ticks on the board and people saying, 'Wow! Look at the Chief Minister; she is standing up for the NT.' However, when push comes to shove and she has to do the hard work, she is nowhere to be seen. It is a disappointment and travesty for the Northern Territory, particularly for domestic, family and sexual violence survivors and those who are suffering silently or loudly across our communities.

As the CLP government's shallowness becomes more clear, the empty promises of transparency and accountability are increasingly exposed. There is no doubt in my mind that the CLP government's plan to win an election was just that—a plan to win, but not a plan to govern. The examples I have highlighted suggest that CLP members have been working overtime to remove transparency and accountability measures in their quest to become less responsible and answerable to Territorians for their actions or, should I say, inactions.

The CLP's failure to consult with community, relevant experts, stakeholders and those with lived experience on rushed legislative amendments is obvious. The only ones who do not see it are the CLP government members—a group of 17 people trudging around the Northern Territory thinking they are all high and mighty and that what they do and know is better than every other Territorian or expert in their field. It is appalling.

We will continue to go out and do our job in the community, hold the government accountable and push it to do its best to have integrity.

J DAVIS (Johnston)(in reply): Madam Speaker, as I was reminded by the Member for Barkly, 399 days ago I stood in this Chamber and moved this motion to recognise the critical importance of improving decision-making, integrity, transparency and accountability in our parliament.

I was brand new in this job and this Chamber. I was full of hope and optimism that we could work together for all Territorians. I believed that we could open up this parliament, bring people in, strengthen scrutiny and rebuild public trust in a system that so many Territorians told me that they no longer trusted.

I reflect on the Integrity and Ethics Commissioner Bill passed by this parliament yesterday that the Member for Barkly, the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Arafura talked about.

I presented expert advice, which I shared with every member in this Chamber, from each of Australia's leading integrity bodies, including Transparency International, the Centre for Public Integrity, the Australian Democracy Network and a former Commonwealth Ombudsman. These organisations and experts, along with Territory organisations that are working with people who use the integrity functions that the Bill condensed, called on the government to scrap the Bill because it would make integrity and anti-corruption efforts in the Northern Territory significantly worse. Yesterday I watched this government go against that specific expert advice and pass this Bill anyway.

When I talk about integrity I am talking about not only transparency but also good governance—governance with integrity. That means making considered laws which make Territorians' lives better. It means doing the research and listening to experts on behalf of Territorians, because surely that is what we are here to do.

We are here because Territorians have entrusted us to make good decisions on their behalf. Good decisions are not made when the government chooses, sometimes proudly, to ignore the expert advice from leading experts—in this case, Australia's leading integrity experts—like it did yesterday.

The Bill we passed yesterday was our chance to get things right. We know that the Northern Territory has integrity problems, and it is fundamentally important that we address them. Instead, when every major integrity expert in Australia said that this Bill will not work, does not address our issues and puts us at risk, the government celebrated that it was addressing issues in passing the Bill.

I moved this motion asking for three simple, reasonable, democratic reforms: to re-establish scrutiny committees that scrutinise; to limit Dorothy Dixers so that Question Time could do what it was designed to do; and to explore real public participation in lawmaking.

It is amazing to me that with the system we have it has taken nearly 400 days to come back and conclude a motion like this. It is one of the mysteries to me about how we work in this parliament and how decisions are made.

However, here we are, more than a year later, and it is a good opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made in this Chamber to improve decision-making, integrity and transparency and, more importantly, what remains before us.

When I moved this motion last year I welcomed the CLP's announcement that it would re-establish the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I said:

> *… that re-establishing this committee is a clear commitment to a more accountable government, one that values the voices of the people it serves, and I look forward to serving on this committee … and being able to enhance our democratic process …*

I appreciate the Member for Barkly's overview of the Bills the scrutiny committee has examined. He described it as dealing with the breadth of legislation, but let me give some facts. Since forming government, the CLP has introduced 47 Bills. It has referred only 11 of them to the scrutiny committee, which is fewer Bills than this government has passed on urgency. Meanwhile, non-government members attempted to refer six Bills to the committee between October and March, including Bills dealing with sacred sites, discrimination, youth justice, mandatory sentencing and bail, and the government rejected every referral.

When that was not enough, on 13 May the CLP changed standing orders so that only the minister sponsoring a Bill can refer it to the committee. Think about that: the minister who writes the Bill now decides whether their own Bill gets scrutinised. It is like a student choosing which assignments they want marked and which ones they do not. This behaviour sends a clear message that the CLP, not the parliament, will decide which Bills will be scrutinised.

The scrutiny committee has clear terms of reference, including examining whether a Bill has sufficient regard for the rights and liberties of individuals, is consistent with natural justice, imposes obligations retrospectively and has sufficient regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition. How has the government been following these terms of reference? It refused to refer the Water Amendment (Aboriginal Water Reserves) Bill, the anti-discrimination amendments, the Bill lowering the age of criminal responsibility to 10, mandatory sentencing changes and bail law reforms. Every one of these Bills sits squarely within the committee's terms of reference.

Instead, the CLP repeatedly referred uncontroversial Bills, including those that do not even fit the committee's terms of reference, such as the beverage container amendments. I have no objection to these Bills being scrutinised, but when we scrutinise bottle caps and not anti-discrimination legislation, children's prisons and mandatory sentencing, something is deeply wrong.

Every Bill the government refused to refer clearly engaged the rights and liberties of individuals, had natural justice issues or were matters affecting Aboriginal Territorians. These are the kind of Bills that the scrutiny committee exists to examine. The scrutiny committee is here to help us in this parliament to make good laws for all Territorians; it is not our enemy. When the CLP refuses to use its own scrutiny committee it undercuts transparency and avoids accountability. I stood in this Chamber more than a year ago and welcomed the

return of the scrutiny committee, but today it is hard to see how it is more than a performative exercise. The CLP gets to claim that it has a scrutiny committee while ensuring that no controversial Bills are scrutinised.

I will also speak about the abuse of urgency powers by this government. Overuse of urgency powers has undermined transparency and accountability. Urgency is a serious parliamentary mechanism. It exists for only one purpose, which is to allow the rapid passage of legislation when delaying it would cause clear, demonstrable and immediate harm to the public. Urgency should be reserved for natural disasters, public health emergencies, national security concerns or administrative matters where a genuine legal gap must be filled immediately to prevent harm.

In just one year this government has used urgency for Bills that were not remotely urgent. More than that, these Bills have reshaped fundamental rights, criminal law, sentencing and integrity bodies, none of which required immediate passage. The only thing that urgency achieved was preventing public input, avoiding community scrutiny and reducing the time available for members to properly analyse the Bills and their consequences.

Question Time should be when the government embraces scrutiny, not avoids it; ministers should come prepared to answer questions because they know accountability is part of their job; and members on all sides can use their time to evaluate community concerns and seek clarity on government decision-making. Question Time should be when ministers are required to explain, justify and defend their decisions, and to share information with the public when it has asked for that information. It should be the moment when the public can hear in real time what its government is doing and why.

That is not what happens in Question Time; instead, it is dominated by Dorothy Dixers, government members asking government ministers pre-planned questions for the purpose of praising themselves, attacking the former government and repeating slogans.

I am not here because I am interested in political game playing. I am deeply uninterested in the endless back and forth of CLP versus Labor. I am here to represent my constituents and work with every member of this Assembly to make good, responsive and compassionate law for every Territorian.

I have statistics on the use of Question Time in this year's sittings. So far 167 Dorothy Dixer questions have been asked, an average of 24 for each sitting. Let me share what these questions contained: 86 (51%) included some form of self-promotion or self-congratulation of the CLP government by its own members; 73 (44%) included in their phrasing criticism of the previous Labor government; and 56 (34%) included CLP buzzwords like 'restoring the Territory lifestyle'. How many questions were asked that used language where the only agenda was to seek information? There were 13 questions. That is 8% of all questions asked. Only 8% of questions government members asked in Question Time this year were genuine questions seeking information. The other 92% were self-promotion, attacks on the previous government or political messaging.

That is not Question Time, and it is not what Question Time is for. This is propaganda time. This is a taxpayer-funded platform for the CLP to promote itself while the people of the Northern Territory wait for real answers to real questions about the real issues affecting their lives.

Imagine what Question Time could look like if we reformed it. Imagine if the majority of questions came from members seeking answers about issues that genuinely affected their constituents' lives, like housing shortages, long wait times for critical services, the safety of our harbour, children in the youth justice system or the rising cost of living. Imagine if ministers stood in this Chamber and provided meaningful updates, transparent explanations and clear commitments because they expect to be questioned and respect the public enough to answer. Imagine if Territorians tuned in to Question Time because they would learn something useful, truthful and relevant to their daily lives instead of—as people often say to me—saying, 'I cannot believe the way things happen in that Chamber'.

Question Time could look different; we could have a Question Time that operated to build a healthy democracy. Limiting Dorothy Dixers is not about political pointscoring or trying to manage and limit what people can say; it is about restoring this Assembly's purpose.

When 92% of government questions are used for self-promotion we have to say that Question Time is not functioning as it should; it is failing the public and failing to uphold transparency and accountability. We can fix this. We could make Question Time what it is meant to be, but it requires a commitment to opening up this parliament and listening to what people want to hear.

One year ago I quoted the Chief Minister's words in this Chamber when she said:

> *Scrutiny, accountability and transparency is a crucial feature of a healthy democratic society, it protects against corruption and wrongdoing and produces better decision making and greater benefits to the community.*

I could not agree more with these words, and I urge all of us to try to live by them.

When we have a scrutiny committee that considers only what the government wants scrutinised, when only 8% of questions in Question Time genuinely seek information and when we have a government that talks about accountability but avoids it at every turn, it is hard to see where the commitment to accountability and transparency is.

More than a year ago I talked about how I and others in this Chamber heard repeatedly during the election campaign that people were sick of politicians and did not trust them to act in their interests. I said that we could change that.

We have not changed it. When we have a scrutiny committee that ensures it will never consider the Bills that need most scrutiny, when Question Time is not a platform for real questions seeking information on behalf of our constituents and when transparency is promised but not delivered, trust is eroded.

Our mandate in this House is to represent 100% of the Northern Territory and make laws in the best interests of everyone. The government cannot represent 100% of Territorians if it only allows scrutiny of the Bills it is comfortable with; it does not allow an open Question Time, controlling it so that there is no space for real questions from members on behalf of their constituents; and it continues to resist real accountability and transparency.

I said at the beginning of this speech that I came into this Chamber a year-and-a-half ago full of optimism. I still retain some of that optimism. I still believe that we can do better, that this House belongs to the people and that we need to approach lawmaking for the Northern Territory with the whole community at its heart.

I believe that other people in this Chamber are committed to good governance; I have heard a deep commitment to integrity, accountability and doing things better. I do not think this is a partisan issue; it is something that people agree with. There are simple mechanisms that could help us achieve this so that people in our community will look at this parliament and say, ‘There is a parliament that is committed to democracy and doing things better’.

When I spoke on this motion the first time I said:

> *One thing I love about the Northern Territory is that we have a strong belief in doing things differently. We can make this parliament a beacon of democratic innovation …*

We are the perfect place to do it. We are a small parliament. I have often said that we do not need to shout at each other in this room; we can hear what each other says. We should be able to work together, and there are easy ways to do that, which this motion proposes.

I ran for parliament on a platform of doing politics differently. Central to that was bringing community voice into the parliament. That is still what I am committed to and is how I try to do my job every day, but in this Chamber that is sometimes deeply challenging.

Transparency is not a threat to good government; it is the foundation of it. Scrutiny is not an obstacle to effective governance; it produces better laws and outcomes. Accountability is not a burden; it is our fundamental obligation to the people we serve.

I urge every member of this Assembly to join me in supporting genuine scrutiny, transparency and accountability. This is not in the motion, but I urge this Assembly to consider amending standing orders so that any member can refer a Bill to the scrutiny committee.

I also urge members to support limiting Dorothy Dixers to two out of three days—there will still be two days that the government can ask itself whatever questions it wants—and to keep working to open up this Chamber to the people to make it the people’s House, because that is who we are here for.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 17
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	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

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Environmental Protections

Continued from 27 November 2024.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I am glad to finally finish this speech I began in November last year. As the Member for Arafura, I am privileged to represent some of the most breathtaking sea and country in the Northern Territory, from the islands around Cobourg Peninsula to West Arnhem, Kakadu and Tiwi Islands. This region is the jewel in the crown of the Northern Territory, even if she is looking a little battered from Cyclone Fina.

Protecting country is not just a duty; it is a passion that motivates my work in this place and is one of the reasons I chose to run. With this privilege comes responsibility. We are accountable not only to those who elected us but also to the future generations of Territorians who will inherit it. As an Aboriginal person, I can tell you that this is not new to us. Caring for country has been our responsibility for thousands of years. We grow up understanding the environment, how it takes care of us and how we need to take care of it.

This respect for environment was central to the former Labor government. We took a bold, practical step to protect our natural assets, balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability. Since the election Territorians have voiced real concerns about the CLP government and the legacy it will leave. Territorians expect economic growth to be delivered responsibility with strong environmental protections and transparency. That was the key focus of the Labor government, and it remains our central work in opposition.

It has been more than a year and the Labor opposition remains deeply concerned about the government's $21m Territory Coordinator Bill and the threat it poses on our environment. Despite the Territory Coordinator failing to fast-track a single project, the coordinator's powers are enormous, allowing an unelected bureaucrat supported by the Chief Minister to override laws and push through developments while bypassing environmental and regulatory protections. This represents a fundamental shift from environmental responsibility towards unchecked development. It is not in line with what Territorians expect.

I am incredibly proud of Labor's legacy in protecting the environment and safeguarding our waters. Water is vital to our remote communities. We need development, but we also must care for our land, rivers and coastlines. Water is the lifeblood of tourism, agriculture and life itself in the Territory.

When Labor came into government in 2016, we inherited a broken water system from the Giles government, a system that ignored science and the environment, handed out water licences to mates and scrapped the climate change response. Labor turned that around.

Our record is clear. We introduced strong modern protections, including the *Environment Protection Act*; comprehensive reforms to manage the environmental impacts of mining; the Territory Water Plan, the first

long-term strategy for water security; the Northern Territory Climate Change Response: Towards 2050 framework, setting a pathway for a sustainable future; the Northern Territory Circular Economy Strategy 2022–2027, reducing waste and creating new economic opportunities; and a ban on seabed mining to protect our marine environment. These changes provided a robust transparent set of rules, regulations and guidelines to protect the environment and water resources.

Labor invested significantly in our national parks and strongly supported Aboriginal ranger groups, the first responders for weeds and clearing out feral animals. Territorians love their parks. We delivered major upgrades to nine parks: Nitmiluk; Litchfield; Watarrka; Mary River; Elsey; Judbarra/Gregory; Devils Marbles, West MacDonnell and the George Brown Darwin Botanical Gardens. These upgrades delivered new campgrounds, walking tracks, lookouts, signage, visitor centres, swimming areas and shaded spaces, improving the experience for locals and boosting tourism to make the Territory a more desirable destination. The CLP government must continue this investment, and abandon its attempt to sidestep essential environmental safeguards, to protect the water and lands in our national parks in the Territory's interests.

Labor also created new parks, including Limmen Bight Marine Park, declaring Casuarina Coastal Reserve a national park and the Keep River extension.

Limmen Bight Marine Park is especially significant as a sanctuary for seagrass, dugong, turtles and, importantly, fishing and seafood industries. Its management plan includes traditional owners in the decision-making and provides the framework for the ongoing management of the park using best-practice monitoring and evaluation with traditional owners' inclusion and local management. This delivered our election commitment for a framework for ongoing marine management, a model for ongoing Aboriginal employment opportunities and best-practice monitoring and evaluation. The Labor opposition will push the government to continue this work to protect the Territory's environment.

I am most proud of the investment that Territory Labor and federal Labor made in Aboriginal rangers. Our rangers combine cultural knowledge and Western science to care for land, river and sea country. They deliver environmental, cultural and economic outcomes that strengthen communities. I see this every day across Arafura with the Tiwi rangers, the Djelk Rangers in Maningrida, Adjumarllarl Rangers in Gunbalanya and the Warddeken Rangers in the rock country, each doing exceptional work to keep country healthy. Successive Labor governments have built a strong ranger network in the nation, including record levels of ranger grants and funding. Our agreement with INPEX will support ranger grants for 20 years.

We fully support federal Labor's plans to double ranger numbers nationally by 2030. It made a wonderful start on that promise, recently announcing a $190m investment into rangers and regional programs across Australia. As part of that investment, 17 new projects will be funded in the Northern Territory out of a total of 82 across the nation, with all new projects having a dedicated position for women. This will see about half of our new ranger positions held by First Nations women. That is amazing stuff.

Federal and Territory Labor have always believed in the vital role that rangers play in protecting the Territory environment and our unique ecosystem. We believe in our rangers. The only uncertainty for the future of Aboriginal rangers is whether the CLP will continue this funding.

We urge the government to protect and invest. Labor will oppose any attempts to undermine the environmental progress we have made. Territorians expect the government to balance development with economic responsibility, and Labor will always fight for that balance.

In closing, I express my deep pride in our environment. It is the lifeblood of our communities and the foundation of our future. From opposition we will fight to protect it, ensure it is not undone and preserve this precious legacy for all generations to come.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja)(in reply): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is good to speak again about the need for greater environmental protections across the Northern Territory. Make no mistake: the Northern Territory is at a critical crossroads in environmental protection.

I acknowledge and thank honourable members for their contributions to this motion about the need for greater protections for the Northern Territory's environment.

This is a critical space, and we will need more action over the coming years to tackle a range of issues and address climate change.

It is important that we discuss this motion. As I said, the Northern Territory is at a crossroads. What we choose to do and how we do it will be important for future generations.

I make it clear we have heard from government members' contributions that they are not choosing to take the brightest and best path for the Northern Territory's environment. The CLP government is choosing a path that steals the future of our children and their children, weakens protections, silences communities and hands the keys of our land and water to a select few. We cannot and should not pretend that this is anything less than a crisis of leadership and values.

In the Territory the environment is not an abstract concept, a line in a report or a colour on a map. Country is identity, culture, food, water and energy. Country is life. I acknowledge the Member for Mulka who spoke about country being the language of our First Nations people.

It is crucial that we continue to listen to our communities and experts about addressing climate change and protecting our environment. We all have to bear the responsibility to strengthen our environmental protections.

What have we seen over the last 12 months from the minister for Environment? We have not seen a lot of action in standing up and protecting the Northern Territory's environment; we have seen the minister bring into this parliament far more measures that weaken environmental protections. Over the last 12 months this government has walked back on important commitments to protect country, stand up for the environment and futureproof for and adapt to the climate changes.

This year under Minister Burgoyne the CLP government quietly walked away from—abandoned—the emissions reduction target. There was no honesty and no explanation, just a retreat from the action we need in the most important decade for climate stability. Experts tell us clearly that every year of delay locks in more damage, but instead of stepping up, this government steps back. Instead of safeguarding the future, the government shrinks its ambition and shifts its burden onto our kids. That is not leadership; that is neglect.

Water protections have been weakened and watered down. The minister signed off on a plan that allows 62,000 megalitres to be taken each year from the ancient Tindall Limestone Aquifer—double previous limits. That aquifer feeds the Mataranka hot springs, the Roper River and sacred waterways and ecosystems that have sustained our mob for thousands of years.

Traditional owners this week are across the road at the Supreme Court fighting for climate justice and water rights. Traditional owners, elders and environmental experts have all been raising the alarm, and this issue has come to the Supreme Court because people felt they had no other choice.

When you damage water you damage life, but this government approved the plan anyway. It is killing country.

Stripping away environmental oversights and removing community voices are not the answer. The Territory Coordinator laws and the water, petroleum and planning amendment Bills rammed through this parliament are just some of the dangerous pieces of legislation we have seen. They allow major projects to bypass environmental approvals, sideline independent regulators and silence landholders, environmental groups and traditional owners by removing their review rights. The power is concentrated in a few hands. There is less transparency, accountability and democracy. These laws are not about development; they are about control. They strip away the protections that keep our landscapes, water, sacred sites and communities safe.

If we continue down this road the CLP has chosen, our water security will be at risk. Our springs, rivers and groundwater ecosystems will suffer damage that cannot be undone. We will fall further behind in our climate obligations. Our children will inherit a hotter, harsher and more uncertain Territory. The voices of First Nations people, the first custodians, will be weakened at the very moment they should be strengthened. That is not the future we want for Territorians, and it is not the future they deserve.

A different path is possible. We can have development and strong environmental protections, create jobs and safeguard our water, reduce emissions and grow our economy, but only if we build a system that respects science, community and country. Protecting the environment is not an obstacle to progress; it is the foundation of progress. Without clean water, healthy land and a stable climate, there is no future industry, economy or opportunity.

The CLP is killing country and stealing the future from our children and their children. Territorians deserve better. We deserve leadership grounded in truth; decisions that honour culture, science and country; and a government that sees environmental protection not as a burden but as a duty.

The choices we make now will echo far beyond our lifetime. I will always choose to stand with country, community and future generations who cannot yet speak for themselves. Environmental protection is and should be everyone's business, because when our country is sick, our communities are sick. We need to elevate the voices, experiences and understanding of environmental protection in the Northern Territory.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 15
Mr Brown	Mr Burgoyne
J Davis	Ms Cahill
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Mr Paech	Mr Charls
Ms Uibo	Mr Edgington
Mr Young	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O'Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Water Security in the Northern Territory

Continued from 19 March 2025.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing on this important motion about water security in the Northern Territory.

Water security has been a critical issue for Territorians for a long time. The sheer size of the Territory, its diverse climates and its population of 250,000 make providing safe and secure water for all Territorians essential, but it is also a challenge. To ensure our water security we need to sustain our supply against the challenges of climate variability and extreme weather events, as well as protect it against misuse.

The Territory's water resources are driven by the presence or absence of rainfall, with more than 95% of the annual rainfall across the Top End falling during the Wet Season. That rain feeds our large river systems, which are some of the world's last remaining free-flowing rivers. The rain that falls in the Top End during the Wet Season also tops up the aquifers that Territorians draw upon. For most Territorians living in Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine, the water supply comes from surface water sources such as the Darwin River reservoir or the Katherine River. Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and other communities across the Territory get their water from aquifers. These range from minor, less reliable local aquifers to large, more resilient regional aquifers, although these are typically infrequently recharged. We also know that 90% of water supplied in the Northern Territory comes from groundwater.

Water security for the Territory means having an acceptable quantity and quality of water for people, economic opportunities and cultural and environmental needs now and into the future.

The Territory has many unique waterways that are home to vibrant ecosystems supporting a diverse range of flora and fauna. These waterways also play a significant role in putting the Territory front and centre as Australia's iconic tourism destination, with Litchfield National Park and the Daly River in my electorate among them. These waterways are more than scenic landscapes. The Daly River plays an integral role in sustaining the NT's aquatic ecosystems. It is fed by hundreds, if not thousands, of springs and flows year-round.

I recognise the traditional knowledge of these waterways, which have been at the centre of Aboriginal Territorians' stories for thousands of years. They remain a central tenet to Aboriginal Territorians whose lives are intertwined with the land, sea and water. Traditional owners have a responsibility to care for water places on their country. Almost one-third of sacred site records in the Northern Territory are water related. This is

one of the core reasons it is essential that traditional owners have a place at the table in the discussions of how we manage our water.

Sound water policy is smart economic, environmental and social policy. The Territory's water is precious. As the population grows and new businesses and industries develop, so does the demand for this finite resource. Failure to follow sound scientific principles when developing this policy puts the environment and long-term viability of essential industries at risk.

The Territory's economy is linked to water security. It provides for the agriculture that feeds us and the tourism ventures that we spoke about earlier. A secure water supply ensures our economic success. It supports the functioning of our resilient cities, towns and communities that maintain our economy and society. It directly supports a range of industry sectors and enterprises that provide opportunities for all Territorians.

Territory Labor acknowledges that water remains a highly emotive issue. Sustainable use of the Territory's water resources is crucial for the health of our rivers and waterways and the ecosystems that rely on them. The former Territory Labor government knew this and took the necessary steps to progress environmental reforms and safeguards which ensured resources such as water were protected. This included:

- delivering the Territory Water Plan, the first whole-of-Territory, long-term strategic plan for water security
- legislating strategic Aboriginal water reserves, ensuring that when a water allocation plan is developed a proportion of water is reserved for Aboriginal economic development
- jointly funding remote water infrastructure projects in communities, including Maningrida, Yuendumu and Numbulwar
- improving access to safe drinking water for remote Aboriginal communities
- appointing an independent Controller of Water Resources.

We call on the CLP government to continue implementing the priority actions outlined in the Territory Water Plan. These priority actions are based on evidence, good regulatory practice, community values and aspirations for water. They are informed by intensive community consultation and engagement, including detailed submissions and proposals from stakeholder groups. These priority actions lay the foundations for future water security in the Northern Territory.

One of the actions addressed through this motion is the introduction and passage of safe drinking water legislation. Safe drinking water is one of the most important issues for many Territory communities.

Under the Territory Water Plan the former Labor government committed to commencing drafting legislation through the Department of Health. This new legislation would regulate public drinking water providers and improve transparency for the quality of the water they supply. This includes setting monitoring and reporting requirements and ensuring all providers have drinking water management plans for the communities they supply. This legislation was expected to be ready for introduction and passage through the Assembly by late 2024, but over the past couple of months we have not heard anything about this, or anything solid about the Territory Water Plan, from the minister.

It is critical that the CLP government commits to continuing the priority actions in the Territory Water Plan to ensure all Territorians have a safe and reliable water supply that is resilient to the impacts of climate change, can support sustainable development, protecting the environment and cultural values into the future.

This CLP government has a lot to prove when it comes to water security, because the previous CLP government, of which the Chief Minister was a part, had an abysmal record. Its water policy ignored the science, over-allocated water and gave water to its mates. That was the CLP way.

The former Labor government commissioned an independent review into 57 water licences granted under the CLP between 2012 and 2016. The review found errors in the handling of applications and inconsistencies with the Act. It criticised the systems brought in by the CLP to calculate sustainable water allocations based on only 30 years of data rather than complete historical data. It also found that the CLP's policy to stop setting aside Aboriginal water reserves for economic development was writing Aboriginal Territorians out of the process altogether. The CLP refused to prosecute illegal land clearing in sensitive catchment areas.

It is time to safeguard our Territory water resources, coast and waterways, as they are essential to our way of life. The Territory is experiencing hotter weather due to the impacts of climate change, adding to the urgency for a robust water management and allocation system. We need to ensure that every Territorian, no matter where they live, has access to a reliable, high-quality drinking water supply.

In highlighting the importance of water security it is worth mentioning the Adelaide River Off-stream Water Storage (AROWS) project. Sustainable solutions are essential to protecting our environment and preserving the Territory's lifestyle. The AROWS project is a long-term solution to boost Darwin's water supply. It is an innovative, sustainable, large-scale water storage project. Darwin's water supply sources are operating at or above capacity, and new infrastructure will be required to ensure water availability does not limit Darwin's social and economic growth.

This project will take advantage of the naturally occurring basin formed by a ridge that can hold water next to the Adelaide River, with two main containment barriers to be constructed at the basin's low points to store water. No new dam infrastructure will be built across the Adelaide River to impede its flow, minimising environmental impacts. The Adelaide River will supply AROWS with water via a controlled pump system during Darwin's wettest months. Water will then be stored in the AROWS basin and pumped through a new pipeline adjacent to the Stuart Highway to the proposed Strauss Water Treatment Plant for distribution. By storing water in a natural basin, AROWS has attracted millions of dollars in Commonwealth investment and will create hundreds of jobs in the years to come.

This Assembly's commitment to water security in the Northern Territory is crucial, because it is not just about managing a resource; it is about securing the future of our Territory communities, economy and environment. We need to ensure that every Territorian, no matter where they live, has access to a reliable, high-quality supply of drinking water. Territorians want confidence in the way this government is managing and allocating water, meaning it must be evidence based and transparent.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Mr BURGOYNE (Water Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Finocchiaro CLP government was elected with a clear mandate to rebuild the Territory economy, which had all but come to a standstill under the previous Labor government. We are delivering real results; the economy is moving in the right direction under the CLP government, and the Treasurer is all too happy to speak about that.

I was born in the Northern Territory, and many of us in this room and elsewhere have strong ties to our outdoor lifestyle and the many fishing and recreational activities undertaken on or around our rivers, creeks and streams. We do not want these special areas to be impacted any more than those opposite. That is why we are rebuilding the economy through a range of reforms that provide a strong foundation for growth with a robust regulatory framework, matching world-class environmental protections with long-term certainty for business and investment.

This is supported through improved environmental legislation, including amendments to the *Water Act* that focus on refining the regulatory framework to support economic growth through shortened approval timeframes, removing red tape and establishing a regime that enables the activation of water for development for the benefit of everyone in the Northern Territory. This work is already well advanced, with the passage of legislation to remove third-party merits reviews in March 2025 and amendments to the *Water Act* in May 2025 to facilitate the use of Aboriginal water reserves, activating that water for Aboriginal people so that they benefit from the water that is rightly reserved for them under those plans. In addition, the passage of the environment legislation amendment Bill in September this year made a range of improvements to the *Water Act* to support economic recovery.

Further amendments to the *Water Act* are being considered to help guide future water allocation planning and address other anomalies in the legislation in order to support economic growth.

It is not proposed nor appropriate for the Northern Territory Government to request the Commonwealth to undertake an independent review of our legislation as is laid out in this motion. We do not just hand over our sovereignty to the Commonwealth, and we strongly defend our environmental regulatory system.

The *Water Act* is functioning as intended. The Member for Daly spoke about the changes the former Labor government made. The Act provides a science-based decision-making framework that supports a robust regulatory regime, including clear compliance and enforcement roles and responsibilities.

Territory officials already engage with Commonwealth policy and coordination groups, including colleagues from other states and territories in water and environment who are subject to national scrutiny through those processes. The Territory is already proactively working with the Commonwealth Government through the National Water Grid Authority, securing about $19m in funding to further develop scientific understanding of our iconic water resources.

This government acknowledges the work of the Office of Water Security in developing the Territory Water Plan. We will continue to progress the actions identified in it where they align with our priorities.

This government recognises safe drinking water as one of the most important issues impacting communities. This is why we are focused on progressing infrastructure solutions that will deliver safe drinking water to homes and businesses in communities. The Member for Barkly is always talking about his wonderful electorate, and this is seen in his electorate at Lake Nash, where we are getting on with ensuring we deliver water to that community now and into the future. Investment in community water infrastructure is growing under our leadership, with recent infrastructure projects announced for Galiwinku and the Gove Peninsula. We have secured a total of $140m in water infrastructure projects in remote communities.

We will not be introducing a moratorium on water licensing and allocations; nor do we propose to carry out an independent review on licensing—quite to the contrary. As stated, this government was elected on a platform of rebuilding the economy, and we are delivering that commitment. We want investment and development to happen across the Territory, made possible by providing access to our resources for the benefit of all Territorians. Water licensing plays a key role in this as an economic enabler for responsible regional development.

Since coming into government we have declared two new water allocation plans—for the Mataranka region and the re-declaration of the Western Davenport region. Both these water plans are based on the best available science and community advice. I thank those in the department, including the hydrologists and water scientists who spend their lives studying the science then put it into reality when formulating these water allocation plans. The water plans have been declared for 10 years to provide certainty to the community and for investment, creating and supporting regional businesses and jobs.

We also recently released the draft Katherine water allocation plan 2026–2036 for public consultation, which will be declared early in 2026. New plans for the Adelaide River, Alice Springs and Ti Tree catchment areas will be developed. We are working with communities to ensure that we can have the best outcomes for everyone when it comes to our water.

Water plans share water. This is an important point. These plans prioritise water for the environment first and foremost, protecting our Territory lifestyle, and share the leftover water that can be sustainably used between users for drinking or development. Our water plans are shaped by what makes the Territory unique.

We have a developing economy, remote and rural populations with water resources that remain intact and some of the last free-flowing rivers of the tropical world. By adopting water efficiency measures the government estimates we will save 1.4 billion litres of water per year by 2028. That is something to be proud of. We are working to save water where we can and reduce our usage.

Water plans and water licences demonstrate that the *Water Act* is working. Rather than shutting it down, it is our intention to support the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment and the independent Controller of Water Resources—which those opposite spoke about—in their respective roles to facilitate water licensing and the activation of water already licensed but not yet utilised. That is often not spoken about. A huge amount of water is licensed and not being utilised, and that makes up these plans. There is a lot more water to be used under the current plans to support economic growth, and we will not place a moratorium on it.

The Water Resources Division's Report Card: Compliance and Enforcement Priorities 2024–25 revealed significant improvements in the management of the Territory's water resources. That is always good to hear. The department received 8,079 meter readings throughout the year, with more than 95% of the Territory's 642 water licence holders submitting their monthly or quarterly meter readings. The department inspected 136 water licences across the Territory, exceeding the target to inspect 20% of licences each year. Currently, 89% of licensed bores are metered, with the department working to reach the 90% target this financial year. There were 452 statements of bores received, with 69% received within 28 days, up from 52% in the previous year. We are working with people on the ground to ensure they are utilising their water in a sensible manner. We can meter that when necessary and tell how much is being utilised.

Every year on 1 May the Controller of Water Resources announces how much water a licence holder can use for the upcoming year. In the key areas of the Top End these announced allocations are the amount of water that can be taken in the coming year in response to water availability, which a lot of people do not seem to understand. Although the water is licensed it is retained by the Territory, and that is important. This transparent process ensures sustainable water management across the north to maintain our unique lifestyle.

We are committed to responsible economic development. Water allocation plans and associated decisions for water licensing are based on the best available science. This includes the data collected from more than 70 years of work undertaken mainly by the Water Resources Division—which has a big birthday this year; congratulations—and the CSIRO and other respected scientific institutions. These allocation plans are in place to ensure our precious water resources are protected.

As we look to the future, effective and sustainable water management will continue to underpin our efforts for a more prosperous and resilient Northern Territory.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I correct the Minister for Water Resources' opening comment about this motion. The motion does not ask the Commonwealth to save, overbear and override the Northern Territory Government. It clearly indicates a partnership on the work needed, particularly when we think about the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*, which involves the Commonwealth. The four Aboriginal land councils are statutory prescribed body corporates for that country on behalf of TOs, and they report directly to the Commonwealth, not the Northern Territory Government.

The motion is all-encompassing of water security for the NT, so it is about working in partnership. I will correct the miswording of Minister Burgoyne on that particular component, because anyone listening who has not read this motion would assume that the Labor opposition put this motion from the Member for Gwoja to ask the Commonwealth to override the NT Government. That is not what the motion is about.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing on this motion. Water resources are incredibly precious, and their importance cannot be understated regarding the economic, social, environmental and cultural benefits. The Territory is driven by those four key elements.

I hope the CLP government will support this motion because of the work that has already been done and some of the work that it has already undone.

Going back to the heart of the motion, water is critical for everyone across the NT, whether you are in the Top End where there is often an abundance of water, particularly in the Wet Season—it is great when we get a good Wet—or in the dry country, those arid parts of the Northern Territory where the Member for Gwoja hails from. Water resources are special and should be protected. There is no debating that; everyone would agree.

Water is critical to our way of life and the identity of Territorians. The Member for Daly spoke about the people in his electorate's deep-rooted connections to water. The opportunity for economic development depends on ensuring water security and protection. In previous debate we heard about water's importance for Aboriginal culture, spiritual beliefs and identity, stories of creation and cultural obligations, including kinship.

We hear only a reactive response from the CLP government when it comes to water.

Water is the lifeblood of the Northern Territory. It is the one thing all of us need to survive. Humans can survive about a week without food but only two to three days without water; that is how much our bodies rely on water. It is important for the functioning of our being, starting with making sure we are hydrated and that our bodies have water to fuel our existence. There is a similar analogy for water and the operations of country, land and the environment—no argument or doubt about that.

All of the Northern Territory's big industries and providers rely on water. I cannot think of any industry that provides economic stimulus that does not rely on access to water. Mining, energy, agriculture and tourism—all of these economically important industries could not operate and function without a sustainable and accessible water supply.

The Territory's water resources rely on rainfall and the recharge of country, but in recent years the focus on underground water aquifers has become more of a part of the community's dialogue on industry development, the country, pastoralism, tourism, mining and energy. The conversations about these key industries are not just about surface water and groundwater; they have become more focused on the deep aquifers that run under our rivers and creeks and sometimes carry many kilometres of water underground.

We had record rainfall on the weekend with Cyclone Fina passing the Top End coastline. This is great for the country as it recharges water levels and allows for fluctuations when we have a lovely day like today, which is hot and sunny in Darwin and will dry out the country. The water will not necessarily be sitting around and accessible straightaway because of absorption and evaporation.

The desert country is beautiful and I love visiting it, but I would not be able to live there. No offence to anyone who lives in and loves the desert and the dry country, but I am a Top End girl and I love the humidity. I need to be near a long-term water source, preferably saltwater, but I live in Katherine, so the Katherine River is my water source. As someone who comes from the Top End, the beauty of the desert and the special relationship with water in the desert is interesting for me. People in the desert do not always have accessible drinking water resources, so water security is an important topic for everyone.

The management of and care and responsibility for water should be taken seriously. There should be transparent and accountable measures for managing water.

The Member for Daly spoke at length about the processes the former Labor government put in place to safeguard, protect and plan for the future of water security. It unfortunately seems that the CLP government has started to regress on water policy and wind back protections for water and the environment. Our bodies literally cannot survive without good water, so it is becoming more of a concern to see the disdain of the CLP government. We heard a lot of the history from the Member for Daly, so I will not dwell on that. However, I will say that Territorians are still bruised by that history. In many parts of the NT people are still concerned about the CLP government's lack of regard and the lack of a safety net for water security.

The Member for Braitling is the minister responsible for Lands and Planning. That is a huge responsibility. I hope he is not alone in the role with the portfolio he holds. I assume that it probably is not something that interests certain other members of the government, but I hope I am wrong.

I note the Member for Braitling, as the responsible minister, spoke about upcoming water plans being put out to the community. I hope that is genuine, because yesterday and today, just across the road from the Northern Territory parliament—the Member for Gwoja spoke about this in debate on the previous motion—the Supreme Court is hearing a case about the Mataranka Water Allocation Plan.

Mataranka is in my electorate. Almost 30 community members and traditional owners have travelled to Darwin, some of them for many hundreds of kilometres. One member of my electorate travelled more than 600 kilometres to be here yesterday and that is only one way, so they still have to travel another 600 kilometres home. That shows the importance of the decisions that we as the parliament and the government as the executive arm of the Northern Territory make. The courts make rulings, decisions and judgements on this. That is how seriously people in my electorate take water security.

Strong words were shared, but not aggressive, cranky or angry. I cannot imagine that people want a detrimental outcome in their area, but the concern and care is there. I took a lot of that away from my community members. The process of the court case and any decisions made about the Mataranka Water Allocation Plan will impact the people in my electorate. I am watching that closely.

It has mobilised a lot of people in my electorate who may not always connect in the formal sense. There are lots of family, kinship and community relationships and people connected in my electorate of Arnhem. The formal processes that constituents have started to design as a point of advocacy in the Arnhem electorate have impressed me, as the local member. I am related to some of those constituents; that is no secret. The Ropa Woda Governance Council has formalised, particularly this year.

I mentioned last night—it was a long sitting yesterday; at about 11.30 pm I was the last speaker in adjournment—that I had gone to Jilkminggan and some of the back country with the women's committee of the Ropa Woda Governance Council. That is a connection for all different communities and pastoralists along the Roper River. There is a formality starting to grow that is designed for advocacy for water security in my electorate. Other parts of the Territory have similar groups, organisations or committees.

I was impressed with the women from Jilkminggan, Mataranka, Mulggan Town Camp and Minyerri at the meeting held last week which focused on that area. I again extend an invitation to the Member for Braitling who, I believe, spoke to some of those community members last year. They told me that they are still waiting for him to come and visit. I am happy to help guide, support and reconnect the minister with my constituents to hear from them directly. That offer—an olive branch, or mango branch as we say at the moment—remains.

We want the water plans to have a comprehensive and integrated approach to the Northern Territory's water security. There was a change of title for the minister from 'Water Security' to 'Water Resources'. 'Resources' is an interesting and important word, but 'security' is about protection, sustainability and longevity. Resources, in the Western sense, sounds like something that you take from, not necessarily give back to. There is a big worry about even that language change—just two different words. The process, role and responsibility of a minister are completely changed just with those two English words. That is why we feel it is pertinent that we hear the government speak about water security, not just water resources.

It is for that reason my team and I are happy to talk about water security today. The Member for Gwoja moved this General Business motion because we do not hear enough from the CLP government about water security, and we do not hear it discussing water security with community members.

It is a concern for us, but it will become more of a worry if there is no solid framework and guiding principles for water management led by the CLP government. This is an opportunity that the government can seize and improve—not regress, reduce, limit or restrict in that sense—take on, grow, develop and solidify.

The key priority areas in the framework are to provide safe and secure drinking water for Territorians; maximise economic opportunities and livelihoods through water management; use water sustainably to protect the Territory's environmental and cultural assets; and engage Territorians in water management and decisions to build confidence and foster a shared understanding. Water security is not a nice-to-have; it is critical for the Territory's future. I continue to urge the CLP government not to ignore this plan. It is a plan for the Territory. It is not a Labor plan, so just make it a plan for the Territory.

It is important to come together on this matter, hence why we are debating it. Talking about maturity in the approach to governing, Territorians have already seen betrayals in water plans across the Northern Territory which should be, and we hope—I use that word loosely—are, created in good faith. Every Territorian should want to have a say in government decision-making for the communities they work, live and play in. They should be proactive and share responsibility with the government for decisions that are strategic, well-thought-out and planned. We do not want those box-ticking exercises, 'Yes, we've done a bit here and then we will shove it through', hence the Supreme Court case challenging the Mataranka water plan.

Water advisory committees were scrapped under the former CLP government. Labor reinstated them, but the representation on the advisory committees was not without its challenges. The committees' role is to advise and gather different expertise and the experiences of community members, business owners and industry experts and talk about the local context of each place for a water plan. That was the whole idea. Overriding and disregarding those committees shows no respect for Territorians when it comes to water security. It is a disgrace that the CLP government thinks this is appropriate and has silenced community members' voices.

In 2024, just before Christmas, Minister Burgoyne quietly upped the annual allocation that can be extracted from the Western Davenport catchment, hoping that no-one would notice. That was terrible. He did it without consulting experts, we are told, or stakeholders and any of the people who use the water.

The Mataranka water plan doubled the allocation from the Tindall Limestone Aquifer to 62,000 megalitres a year with no consultation. It is phenomenal and strange.

A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move an extension of time under Standing Order 43 to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: This is an important issue because that aquifer feeds into the iconic Mataranka hot springs and the Roper River, places I am sure people in this Chamber have been. If not, you definitely would have seen photos. If you have not swum at Bitter Springs in Mataranka, you would have seen it in the beautiful tourism pictures. It is often on the front page of the booklets at tourist information centres. It is a beautiful and pristine part of the Northern Territory. I am proud to be the local member representing that area. It is a loved and sought-out tourist destination. It is one of my favourite places I travel to as the local member. I do not always get to swim there, because I am working and speaking with people, but sometimes on weekends I can travel to the electorate with my family and take my kids swimming there. It is a beautiful part of the NT and the great electorate of Arnhem.

That region is also an incredibly precious and special part of Aboriginal culture. It links and connects cattle stations and the aquifers of interest for the big gas industries of the Beetaloo all the way across the Member for Barkly's electorate and up to my electorate of Arnhem.

The water resources sought by industry seem to be competing with the water security of agriculture and tourism businesses and the livelihoods of Territorians. There needs to be a lot more synergy in that area. Unfortunately, I am not hearing anything about the government's plan. That is not only a shame but also a huge concern because this will become critical in the next few years, not just because there is an election in 2028, but in terms of sustainability for the residents, community members, traditional owners, pastoralists and industry stakeholders in the Arnhem electorate.

This motion focuses on what could be improved. We can play politics, and we all do that in this place, but there are important matters for Territorians that should go beyond political lines, and this is definitely one of them.

Water security is needed across the NT. Territorians expect, as they should, that will be led by the government of the day. More focus from the government on planning would be very much appreciated because it does not seem to be on its radar, other than to respond to things like this motion or questions asked in the House. The government is not necessarily forward thinking or future planning.

I mentioned the case regarding Mataranka. The investment of time and effort in, advocacy for and Ropa Woda Governance Council members' attendance at this case demonstrates just how important water is across many different sectors of my electorate, including industry and stakeholders.

Third-party merits review processes have been removed. The inability to have a robust and transparent system that could be challenged—not frivolously or litigiously, but in a way that highlights community, industry and stakeholder concerns—is a shadow on the Territory.

A strong water plan should provide a firm and strategic basis for decision-making and planning for water. The Member for Braitling said that several areas will go through this process. All I can say is that I hope people in those communities, regions and towns start to formalise and get together like the Ropa Woda Governance Council members have, otherwise they will be mowed down and steamrolled by this CLP government because it has no care or respect for community input into water plans. That is a huge concern and a big shame.

Our water security is too precious to leave to chance. We should not hand out water resources without strong parameters or a robust and rigorous framework to provide water security and sustainability in the long run.

The Territory Labor team calls on the government to do the right thing by Territorians and review and update the *Water Act* in consultation with the community; get going with implementing the Territory Water Plan; introduce a safe drinking water Act so that all Territorians have access to good-quality water for themselves and their families; and stop handing out new water licences and allocations until a comprehensive and independent review is done so that Territorians can be assured that water licence allocation processes are transparent, fair and accountable.

Water is too important to play politics with and to ignore this key area of concern for Territorians. It is high time that the CLP starts to take this more seriously. Territorians are becoming more worried, and I hear that from people as I travel around the Northern Territory, not just in my electorate and my home town of Katherine. I hope that the Member for Katherine is getting out and about to hear people's concerns about water in the Big Rivers region. My region borders a couple of electorates, but the concerns that have been raised by community members about water security in Katherine alone are concerning.

The Member for Katherine has not made much of a contribution about water security for the township and the region. She is a government minister with decision-making capacity at the Cabinet table, so I urge her to make contributions that stand up for our region. Do not just talk about how great Katherine is; talk about what Katherine wants. What does Katherine deserve as the hub of the Big Rivers region?

Hundreds of thousands of people pass through Katherine every year. It is a hub for industry, particularly the mango industry. I think something huge and phenomenal, like 90%, of Australia's mango exports comes from the Big Rivers region around Katherine. Industry could potentially die and fade away, and the Territory's economy drop, if we do not have water security. We are famous for mangoes, and we want our kids and grandkids to be proud of it. There are opportunities to grow farming industries in the Northern Territory to further the export of great products like mangoes, beef, cattle and livestock, but they all rely on water security.

It does not matter who you are in this Chamber or which electorate you represent; water security in the Northern Territory should be paramount. Just look at our tables; we always have a glass and a jug of water because we need to stay hydrated throughout the day. We need to have that same responsibility and care for our fellow Territorians and the country we represent. We were elected to provide leadership and support.

I urge the government to adopt and support this motion. After 15 months of governing and leadership, the government should be supportive of robust rigorous frameworks for water security and listen to people's concerns. Do not just have meetings in parliament and travel around to get photos and selfies; go out on country and listen to the pastoralists and those working on country, traditional owners, tourists and the people who thrive in the tourism industry about their concerns for water security. Government members will be shirking their responsibilities if they do not do that. The government needs to put water security into its policies so that it drives the way the government does business.

It will not benefit anyone if there are no robust water frameworks guiding the Northern Territory forward, particularly regarding the connection of environment, community, spirit and culture, and given the social expectations for water security.

I commend the motion.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing on this important motion and I support it in its entirety.

Water security is an incredibly pressing issue in the NT, and so far we have seen the CLP government being reckless with the granting of water licences beyond safe quantities. In the Northern Territory 90% of our water comes from groundwater. The science is clear on how these systems work.

In arid zones, like much of the Territory, water tables recharge extremely slowly due to limited rainfall and high evaporation rates. The current rules for the arid zone permit extraction of up to 80% of an aquifer's total groundwater storage capacity over a century. This is already dangerously high, and the impacts of such extraction are potentially irreversible. Studies have found that the rules governing groundwater licensing in areas without a water allocation plan are poorly suited to protecting ecological, Indigenous, sociocultural and other water use values.

What happens when we over-extract from these aquifers? The scientific evidence paints a disturbing picture. Excessive groundwater withdrawals cause groundwater levels to decline, resulting in seawater intrusion, land subsidence—which is when land gets very salty—stream flow depletion and wells running dry. These are not theoretical risks; they are documented realities happening globally and in Australia.

Perhaps most concerning is that it is simply not possible to avoid harm to groundwater-dependent ecosystems in arid zones if most of the water stored in an aquifer is extracted. Such extraction inevitably reduces or stops groundwater flows to the surface environment. Once the damage is done there is often no going back. The 100-year timeframe that applies under the arid zone rule effectively shifts the burden of harm into the future. If new permits are issued to projects that deplete aquifers, long-term damage is locked in—damage that will outlast everyone in this Assembly.

The challenge of determining sustainable extraction limits is recognised by groundwater experts in Australia as one of the highest-ranking challenges, yet the CLP government is eager to bypass science and consultation in favour of quick profits for its mates.

We have seen what happens in the precious ecosystems of Mataranka, where thermal pools and the Roper River depend on healthy aquifers. A senior NT water bureaucrat has already warned that over-extraction threatens permanent flows to the Roper River. This case is before the Supreme Court, with ECNT taking the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment to court over the Mataranka Water Allocation Plan which had fierce opposition from traditional owners and other groups.

Under the plan the Finocchiaro government proposes to allocate 62,000 megalitres of water each year from the aquifer that discharges into Bitter Springs and the Roper River. That is enough water to fill more than 24,000 Olympic-size swimming pools that would, if laid end to end, stretch most of the way from Darwin to Alice Springs.

Water is not just a resource; it is a complex system that sustains life across the Territory. Our underground water needs to be managed with scientific understanding, deep respect and a commitment to sustainability for future generations.

I highlight that under the federal Labor government's proposed changes to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC), each state and territory is set to have expanded powers and decision-making. These changes include the removal of the exemption that has prevented states and territories from having decision-making over the water trigger. We know that we cannot trust the CLP government with any decision relating to water allocation, and it is outrageous that the federal government would be handing over even more power. It is trying to wash its hands of decision-making; the federal government knows the irresponsibility of places like the Territory, but it is happy to do this anyway.

In the NT we also have the serious issue of communities not having access to safe drinking water. How is it that in this wealthy country there is not adequate drinking water?

During Youth Parliament in September two delegates, Malcolm and Tarrant from Alpurrurulam, spoke about the fact that their community has been fighting for safe drinking water for decades. There is a student magazine called *Student Spotlight*. Has anyone has seen it? Those students pull off a topnotch bit of journalistic work. In that magazine youth journalist Nokthor Tripura wrote an article on Malcolm and Tarrant's experience with water in their community.

I seek leave to table that article.

Leave granted.

K McNAMARA: It is a great article. Some excerpts from it are:

> *Both Malcolm Billy and Tarrant Anderson have grown up with unsafe drinking water and shortages shaping daily life. They said families often have to rely on bottled or sugary drinks because safe-drinking water from the tap cannot be guaranteed.*
>
> *'Kids who would normally be drinking water [go] to the shop and [buy] sugary drinks,' Malcolm explained. 'In class, they fall asleep because of it … even after school, they still drink the sugary drinks because there's no option for clean water.'*
>
> *While boxed water is delivered regularly to households in need, Malcolm told the Student Spotlight that only 3 boxes of water is given per household, which can sometimes include up to two families. And when the wet season comes, the community becomes cut off from the rest of Australia, effectively limiting their supply of clean water.*
>
> *…*
>
> *The community's elders have been raising the alarm for years, calling on governments and for people with power to act. But their pleas have gone unanswered. 'Some say that it's been happening since 2007, but some believe it was older,' Malcolm said. 'Every elder in our community has tried and fought for the water [issue] to maybe get the politicians or government to build a new pipe stream … to deliver fresh water.'*
>
> *'But nothing has been done for the past 14 years.'*
>
> *For 14 years, families in Alpurrurulam have lived with water greatly exceeding safe fluoride levels … double what health experts recommend. And for pregnant women and children under the age of 3, the water is unsafe for consumption, with potential side effects including damage to teeth and bones, and the brain development of young children.*
>
> *In December last year, the Supreme Court ruling was upheld that the NT government is responsible for providing safe drinking water to remote communities as their landlord. But nearly a year later, the teenagers said nothing has been fixed or changed.*
>
> *…*
>
> *Both young men's journeys are only beginning. Now set to be the first two students in years to graduate Year 12 from Alpurrurulam School, they said they want to keep helping, keep speaking, and keep pushing for their community to be seen. What they want from the government is simple—change, action, a pipe, clean water, and actual investment—not just 14 years of silence, avoidance, evasion and neglect.*

> *What they want for their community is even simpler: a chance for kids to grow up healthy, for families to feel safe, and for voices like theirs everywhere to be heard and to be respected.*

Serious action is needed now, particularly on the issue of safe drinking water. We cannot continue to allow young leaders like Malcolm and Tarrant to grow up without access to something as vital and basic as safe drinking water, so I fully support this motion.

Our changing climate in the NT means that water security will be the make or break of this place's liveability. It is important that the science is properly considered and listened to when making decisions about this.

The Opposition Leader brought up an interesting point about the ministry changing from Water Security to Water Resources. It says a lot about governments when they change the label of departments. There is a big difference between framing water as 'water security' and 'water resources'. One is about how you view it as an essential necessity for life and ensuring its ongoing accessibility; the other is all about extraction and what it can be used for.

This is essentially why we are in this situation to begin with, because we have governments and societies that view our natural world as simply a place of exploitation—exploit, exploit, dig, dig, remove, remove the water for as much money as possible. This is why we have vested interests with power over our governments to make decisions when they want to exploit our natural resources. It is backward thinking. In 2025 water is our security. Many people, particularly in the remote parts of the Territory, understand that this is important and they are deeply concerned about the direction the Territory is heading, particularly in regard to water allocation and water security.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I also support this motion calling on the government to take significant, long-overdue action to protect water, our most precious resource.

Water security is an issue that affects every Territorian, community, industry and future generation. If you think it does not apply to you, you are wrong. Every one of us has skin in this game, as does every person we represent. We must approach this issue with careful evidence-based decision-making, and that is why this motion is so critically important.

Water sustains our communities, environment, industries and way of life. It is essential for our health, livelihoods and cultural heritage. For Aboriginal Territorians, water holds a deep spiritual significance, connecting people to country, culture and ancestry.

Protecting our water resources is not only a matter of environmental stewardship; it is a moral and pragmatic responsibility to future generations.

I will share a story from Miliwanga Wurrben, an elder from the Big Rivers region who provided evidence to our Legislative Scrutiny Committee earlier this year. She said:

> *… I would like my people from all over the Northern Territory to understand what is happening. We are just a few people here who know what is happening because we are passionate about the water that we drink, the water for the animals, the fish we eat … We are passionate about the aquifers that are being destroyed by chemicals. These aquifers have a very special place where they have been set in place, like back in the Dreamtime … People say our Dreamtime is like a myth, like a fairytale story. For us it is not that at all … It is reality … Even scientists—people who study water, the earth, animals, plants … are far behind us. We have been before all this in those times.*

Her words are a stark reminder of the real and present danger to our water resources.

Water is not theoretical; it is a lived reality. It is a matter of life.

That reality was on full display yesterday when fishers, Mataranka residents and traditional owners from the Roper region travelled all the way to the Supreme Court to challenge the Mataranka Water Allocation Plan, which we have heard about in this Chamber already. Unlike Darwin, Mataranka received no rain during last week's cyclone—country is dry and springs are under stress—yet local people were forced to seek relief through the courts because they argue the minister failed to properly consider the environmental needs of the Roper River before allocating unprecedented volumes of water from the aquifer which feeds Bitter Springs and the Roper.

This case, of course, is not a one-off; it is the latest chapter in a long saga of Labor and CLP mismanagement, decades where both sides of government failed to protect the Territory's underground drinking water and the rivers, wetlands and ecosystems which depend on it.

Under the Mataranka plan the government proposed to allocate 62,000 megalitres a year from the Tindall Limestone Aquifer, which is enough water to fill 24,000 Olympic-size swimming pools, stretching almost from Darwin to Alice Springs. For the environment and the river itself, only 30 megalitres is allocated to sustain an entire river system in a region already experiencing extreme heat, evaporation and aquifer decline.

Environmental experts, traditional owners, tourism operators and ecologists have all warned that this is a Murray–Darling Basin-style disaster in the making. Traditional owners have said plainly, 'They are taking too much water, and we are watching our river and floodplains die and no-one is listening to us'. Scientists have warned that the government's own research shows that there is not enough water in this plan to maintain barramundi stocks or sustain endangered species like freshwater sawfish. Tourism operators have warned that failing to protect Bitter Springs will choke the region's economy because if the springs dry out, so too will the caravans and visitors who support local jobs. The CSIRO predicts that river flows in northern Australia could decline by 20% to 40% in coming decades due to climate change alone.

Clean potable drinking water is globally scarce, and Australia is the driest inhabited continent. Water is finite; we cannot make more of it. Once an aquifer collapses, contamination enters the system and once a spring dies, it may be irreversible.

Water is central to the stories of the Northern Territory. The Daly River is not only a vital water source, but also a place of cultural significance where families gather, fish and maintain cultural practices. The rivers of the Big Rivers region flow only during the Dry Season because of their feeder aquifer. Underground water and surface water cannot be viewed as separate systems. The Katherine River, which runs through the heart of our Territory, sustains agriculture, tourism and the communities of Katherine and the surrounding areas. In the desert, the iconic Todd River in Alice Springs flows intermittently, but it is a lifeline when it does, supporting local ecosystems and communities.

These rivers are not separate from groundwater; they exist because of groundwater. Surface water and groundwater cannot be separated scientifically, culturally, legally or morally. This is why the *Water Act* must be reviewed. It has not been significantly updated in decades and no longer meets the realities we face—a growing population, expanding industries and the escalating impacts of climate change.

We need a *Water Act* that ensures allocations are sustainable, recognises Aboriginal water rights and puts science, not politics, at the heart of decision-making. However, we cannot have a review without reform. If the review identifies gaps in equity or environmental risks, legislation must follow quickly, transparently and with full public consultation.

The Territory Water Plan is another critical tool. It is our first whole-of-government strategy for water security, developed through extensive consultation with communities, industries and experts. It outlines priority actions to manage our water resources sustainably from urban centres like Darwin and Alice Springs to remote communities, from agriculture to mining and from environmental conservation to tourism. The government must maintain its commitment to this plan and ensure that it is properly resourced.

The safe drinking water Act which was promised, drafted and shelved must come before this Assembly without further delay. Access to safe drinking water is a human right. It is astounding that there are people in the Northern Territory who do not have access to safe drinking water. We heard about the petition in the Youth Parliament from the amazing young people from Alpurrurulam. The Member for Barkly said that he is pursuing it, and I am interested to hear where it is up to. It is shameful that we live in a place where people do not have access to drinking water. In 2023 in the Central Land Council region 63 of 72 communities did not meet national drinking water standards. All of us here bear a responsibility for that.

We must impose a moratorium on all new water licences and allocations until an independent review is complete. There is nothing radical about that; it is just responsible. You cannot hand out more water when you do not know what you have left. You cannot over-allocate a finite system and pretend that consequences will not come. We cannot make more water. Once an aquifer is depleted and contamination occurs, it may be irreversible. A moratorium is the responsible path to protect finite resources while allowing a thorough expert review to proceed. That protects all of us.

Water is vital to every aspect of life in the Northern Territory—our health, economy, environment, culture and future. We are temporary custodians of a resource that does not belong to us alone. The decisions we make today will determine the Territory handed to our children and grandchildren and further into the future.

This motion represents a responsible and measured approach to securing the future of our water resources. I urge all Assembly members to support it and work together to protect and secure water for all Territorians now and for generations to come.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions.

This motion is important because water affects every one of us in this parliament and our constituents and communities. This motion was presented because a number of significant issues face the Northern Territory when it comes to the protection of water, our most precious resource.

We know that water is life. It shapes our communities, culture, health, environment and future, yet Territorians are losing confidence that this government is capable of safeguarding it. We have seen rushed decisions, contested allocations, weakened oversight and a pattern of ignoring scientific advice and community voices. If we continue down this path we risk long-term damage to our aquifers, rivers, drinking water quality and the cultural and environmental values that make the Territory what it is.

Today I recommit to calling on the government to take immediate, responsible and evidence-based action. The *Water Act* is more than three decades old. The Northern Territory's population has grown, our industries have changed and the science has significantly advanced. This Act needs to be contemporised. An independent review, not a political one—not a patch-up job, but a genuine review led by experts and based on rigorous science, transparency and proper consultation with traditional owners, communities, environmental stakeholders and industry—is needed. This must be done in partnership with the Commonwealth Government because water security is not just a Territory issue; it is a national issue. We need a modern *Water Act* that reflects the reality of a hotter climate, growing demand and the importance of protecting ancient aquifers and surface water to sustain our communities.

The second part of the motion calls on the government to commit to implementing the Territory Water Plan, which is the first whole-of-government strategic plan for water security in the Northern Territory. It was built on thorough consultation with communities, industries and stakeholders across the Territory. A plan is only valuable if it is implemented. We need a firm commitment from this government to fully deliver the priority actions already identified, not delay them, water them down or leave them sitting on a shelf. Territorians deserve a government that acts on its commitments and recognises that water security is a foundation to growing our future and liveability.

The third part of the motion calls on the government to honour the commitment to introduce a safe drinking water Act. For years Territorians, especially those in our remote communities, have been calling for stronger safeguards for drinking water. The former government committed to introducing a safe drinking water Act, which was led by consultations with the land councils, remote communities and health experts. This work was being developed by the Department of Health, with the legislation to be brought to this Assembly at the end of 2024. The work was well underway, but this government has failed to deliver it. Safe drinking water is not optional; it cannot be put on hold. Safe drinking water is a basic human right. The government has the opportunity to re-engage with the Department of Health on the development of the safe drinking water Act without further delay.

The fourth part of the motion calls on the government to introduce a moratorium on all new water licences and allocations until an independent review of the *Water Act* is completed. We are operating with outdated legislation, inconsistent protections and significant scientific work remaining in a blank area. This is not a safe basis for issuing large-scale water licences. We need a moratorium on all new water licences and allocations until a review is done and reforms are in place. This is common sense and precautionary. It protects communities, aquifers and the integrity of the assessment processes. Rushing through allocations under an outdated Act risks long-term damage that cannot undone.

These are not radical ideas. They are responsible, evidence based and what Territorians have been asking for: an independent review of the *Water Act 1992*; full implementation of the Territory Water Plan; a long-overdue safe drinking water Act; and a moratorium on all new water licences until the rules are fixed. This is how we restore trust, protect our water and safeguard our future.

The Territory cannot afford more chaos, uncertainty or decisions that gamble with the health of our rivers, aquifers and communities. Water is life, and it is time that this government treated it that way.

I introduced this motion to parliament some time ago, and the urgency has not gone away. When I travel to communities across remote and regional parts of the Northern Territory people constantly raise their concerns about future water security and the levels of safe drinking water. Anyone who has ever been to a land council meeting—whether it is the amazing Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Tiwi Land Council or the Anindilyakwa Land Council—will know firsthand that the membership raises these issues at every meeting, because they are representing their communities and raising the real-life concerns that many in our community face.

The government has a choice to make about whether it upholds the respect and honours that commitment and deliver a safe drinking water Act for the Territory. Our remote communities deserve it. It will not create much work for the CLP government because work was already underway when the Labor government went into caretaker mode. It was on the program to introduce a safe drinking water Act because we need to set a legislative benchmark to ensure that we deliver safe drinking water in our remote communities.

Just because you do not live in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs or Nhulunbuy does not mean that you should have a second-rate water system. People deserve to have clean drinking water in line with Australian standards. We urge this government to commit to delivering a safe drinking water Act.

Minister Burgoyne is the minister responsible for water security in the Northern Territory. He spoke about the importance of water security and safe drinking water, but he stopped short of giving us anything that would give remote Territorians hope that this government was genuinely committed to improving remote services and water security and quality for people living in the bush.

This is an important moment to see whether this government will support the establishment of a safe drinking water Act. Members for Barkly and Namatjira, we will remind people in the bush of how you vote on this and whether you will give your constituents the chance to have access to safe, clean drinking water in line with Australian standards. That is what they deserve. That work was being done and it is what we need to do.

Minister Burgoyne started throwing around claims and accusations about bringing the Commonwealth in when it should not be, but a huge portion of land in the Northern Territory is under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Through that legislative instrument the Commonwealth has a role to play in working with us to look at comprehensive reforms to modernise the *Water Act*. It has not been touched for three decades. People and practices change. Evidence-based reforms can be built higher because we have been able to do research over time.

We should all work together to celebrate and do that work. The Territory Water Plan is incredibly important. We should all work on these issues and do better.

Allocations and licences are important. We heard contributions saying that the CLP government is giving away water licences that would allocate enough water to stretch from Darwin to Alice Springs. It is a significant portion, equivalent to 24,000 Olympic-size swimming pools, that this government is giving away. Water is precious. Water is life, and this government is willing to give it away.

Minister Burgoyne said that the government would listen to the experts. Newsflash, mate—traditional owners, Aboriginal people living in the bush and who have done so for thousands of years, are experts; they know what they are talking about. They know their river systems, aquifers and lakes. They know country. Do not dismiss them and say that they are not experts. They have equal footing in having a say on issues about country and water.

A movement of people came from the Mataranka region to be across the way here at the Supreme Court. They are taking the minister to court for that dodgy licence. This is the same government that removed the ability of our mob and environmental organisations to have a say in the merits review process because it was afraid that they would pick up on issues with its water allocation plans. Government members talk about their amazing environmental reform, but we do not see it. We have to be serious. These water allocations put our beautiful areas of the Territory at risk.

Those amazing people from Mataranka are heartbroken. They are scared that the beautiful springs in Mataranka will be destroyed, diminished and left as puddles, not springs. No-one has bothered to talk to them in great detail. They are still waiting for Minister Burgoyne to honour his commitment to meet with them. I feel sorry for them because they will probably still be waiting in three years' time. They are out of sight and out of mind.

Water is connected to Aboriginal people through our connection to country. Our sacred sites are connected to water. Many of our sacred sites rely on water. Our trees and springs are connected to Dreaming stories.

This is not just about giving away water to make money so that the government can look good and say that it is delivering on the economy; we need to make sure that we have water for the future.

In Alice Springs we mine water. We do not have the same level of recharge as what we are using, so water is mined in Central Australia. The amount of rain we get does not recharge the aquifers at the rate we use water. We have to start having serious conversations about our levels of consumption.

I acknowledge the good work of community initiatives to monitor and evaluate water, find leaks and do all that work. That is important, but we also need to look at what we can do to recycle water, including greywater and sewer water, to be used for irrigation or to recharge aquifers, letting it filter through the natural limestone so that we can continue to grow our communities.

Water security does not come at the cost of economic development. We can have both. We need to plan to have both.

Again, I thank all honourable members who contributed to debate on this important motion. I thank all our hardworking community and environmental groups that every day stand up for country to make sure that country has a strong voice and is advocated for. We need country to be protected.

Everyone in this Chamber is about to go into the festive season. No doubt we will be at a rock hole, creek, river or swimming pool. Think about how precious water is and what we can collectively do to improve water security in the Northern Territory for future generations.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 15
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Mr Paech	Mr Edgington
Ms Uibo	Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Young	Mrs Hersey
	Mr Howe
	Mr Kerle
	Mr Mackay
	Mr Maley
	Mr O’Gallagher
	Mr Patel
	Dr Rahman
	Mr Yan
	Mrs Zio

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Select Committee on Pathways for Children and Young People

Continued from 14 May 2025.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I am glad to continue my contribution from May this year.

This is an issue that remains important to me. The development of our young people is something I have been interested in since my early days as a youth worker, and it continues through to what we do in this place.

I firmly stand by the action our government has taken to address crime, particularly with youth offenders. The simple fact—which can be a hard truth to face—is that going into the judiciary and Corrections system, as unfortunate as it is, is a better environment for some of these children. What do I mean by that? They have access to education. We continually say that if you do not have access to education you are robbing someone of their future. I know this because on many occasions when I was a youth worker I visited children in my

care—I was a foster carer whilst on shift—when they were in the Corrections system. This is a purely subjective experience, but you see boys you work with being genuinely proud of themselves for the first time because they are playing formal sport, learning to read or doing art and showing you their artwork. You can lavish praise on them for things that they would never have achieved being on the streets. It is a harsh aspect that, unfortunately, the system we have is left to pick up the pieces. I will let the minister elaborate on what is accessible in the Corrections system.

It comes down to this: what is society willing to accept when a young person starts breaking the law? They need to be removed from the rest of society to keep people safe.

I got into politics when I saw my young daughters threatened and nothing happened. We had a system where my children could be threatened seriously—physically threatened—and nothing occurred because of the offender's age. I will not allow that, and we did not allow that to continue. I will not subject any child in my electorate to having their life threatened and then the offender, simply because of their age, not having to face justice.

We must teach young people. Every culture on Earth throughout history has imposed rules and expectations on their young people. It does not matter whether it is Western society or another society. My experience on the Cobourg Peninsula, where we would stay with family friends, was there were incredibly strict rules on us as youths, and it was good. It is also why I believe in upholding culture, particularly Aboriginal culture.

It is important for young people to be brought up in their cultural environment with their cultural norms because that will create better adults. It does not matter where you go in the world; rules are placed on young people. If you go outside of those rules you have an action and a consequence to that action. It is universal across human nature. It is also why I rally against the idea that youths should not be dealt with firmly. They have to be dealt with firmly. I honestly believe a wisdom of human nature—because every culture did it—is to deal firmly with people who step outside the boundaries their culture or society accept.

We have a huge blend of cultures in modern Australia, and we need to come up with modern expectations. We had an experiment in the Northern Territory. If it had worked, that would have been great, but I do not believe it worked. It made the situation worse and created worse outcomes for our young people. That is why I stick to the policy direction of our government.

We are six months on from when this motion was first brought on. There are measures that we brought in at the start of being in government. It is early days, but the sky has not collapsed. The fact is that young people, be they young men or young women, need to know where the boundaries are. It is essential for their development. They cannot enter the adult world and commit crime and not face a tough consequence.

We need early implementation. In my electorate there are programs like Clontarf and Stars working in the primary schools, and I sincerely believe that is where the change needs to begin. We need to capture young people early and keep them engaged in the education system. That is where we will get real bang for buck in ensuring we have successful pathways for all our kids. The Education minister has worked on getting kids to school. The more the government can invest, especially in primary schools across the entire Territory—be it my electorate or the Member for Johnston's electorate or the Member for Gwoja's electorate; it does not matter. We have to engage our primary school students and capture them early.

Some DV prevention programs are doing good work with how we shape young minds about what is acceptable behaviour, especially from men, and their views of how they should treat women. The normal sexual life has been corrupted with the ease of access to online pornography and that kind of thing. There is great work being done by great people who are trying to make genuine steps. I am extremely supportive of all those programs being done very early on.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr HOWE: These programs are genuinely important. I worked with boys in the teen years from about the age of 12 to 13 up to 17. When they turned 18 they went out and left our care. That is an incredibly difficult age group to try to change behaviours. You are changing tiny steps, and that is why I genuinely believe we need to get in early with the programs. Primary schools are a great place to start.

Whilst we are talking about that, the support from Clontarf and Stars, particularly in my electorate, is incredible. The staff are role modelling what it means to be a man and a woman. I should state that Clontarf and Stars staff focus on Indigenous children, but they are role modelling for everyone in the schools. In my electorate there are non-Indigenous children who have the same level of disadvantage. The staff in the Education department, teachers and the staff at Clontarf and Stars are incredible and are role modelling for everybody. I salute them because they are doing good work and changing lives. I thank them all for that.

I turn back to Corrections. We have to draw a line in the sand at some point with young people. We have to say 'no'. I do not believe in the idea of raising children and not using the word 'no', because it exists in the real world and in adult life. 'No' is an important word, and we can touch on domestic and sexual violence; inculcating that idea of a boundary is extremely important. There is a deep philosophical meaning to the word and the understanding that certain boundaries are not to be crossed.

When all else fails, the government has to step in. That is not something I like doing because I do not think it is a great instrument for social change. Government is a blunt instrument for social change. On that note, funding programs where people are genuinely interacting face to face, mentoring and a part of a child's life is where you get the best bang for buck.

When it comes to especially violent offences, I am unforgiving in the fact that I say no, and I do so on behalf of my entire electorate. You do not get to conduct that behaviour and continue to engage in the rest of society. You need to be removed and taught the right way. There will be an uncomfortable consequence because you did not respect that boundary that was placed on you by wider society. I do not think that any culture anywhere on Earth would agree with youths committing violent crime anywhere.

Our job here is to decide what we do when that happens. This is where we differ; I think we all agree on that point. In this Chamber we break apart on what we do as a response.

The fact is the other method did not work, so we are trying our method. I support young people going into a Corrections environment to try to get them educated and having mentors, because by certain ages it is extremely difficult to engage with youths on the street. If you have not tried it, you do not realise how hard it is.

I support our government's direction. I support the minister. I will hand over to the minister shortly so that he can talk in more detail about the day-to-day life in the Corrections system for our youths. The fact is that they are getting opportunities.

Some people will turn their noses up at that, thinking, 'How is it an opportunity?' Going to school, even if it is forced, is an opportunity. A young person may not realise that. Learning that you cannot act this way and you will have your freedoms taken from you is an opportunity for that person. They might not realise it yet, but I sincerely hope there comes a stage in that person's life when they will say, 'I became a better person because of the consequence that happened to me. I now want to rejoin society, be a respected member of the community and give back.'

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I oppose the Member for Johnston's motion because it proposes establishing a select committee that is unnecessary and will only slow the reforms that Territorians elected this government to deliver. This government is taking decisive action on youth crime, we are strengthening accountability, delivering structured rehabilitation and resourcing the front line, which the previous government did not do. We do not need another committee to tell us what we are already doing and revisit decisions that we have made and implemented to keep the community and young offenders safe.

The Member for Johnston claims that the system lacks alternatives to detention; that is simply wrong. The Territory now has a suite of structured, supervised and targeted pathways. These are real pathways, not theoretical ideas.

This is unlike under the previous government, which wasted money. I have previously mentioned the Back on Track program as a classic example. There was $35m spent on that program, and 35 people finished it.

Sentenced to a Skill is one of our programs. It provides young people aged between 10 and 17 years who have been sentenced by the court with a structured, community-based program grounded in skill development, routine, education and practical life direction. Each young person is supervised by a community justice officer and plans are tailored. Young participants are engaged with school and family supports. Older youths enter vocational training to gain certificates and build employment readiness. Participants complete

white card and hospitality skills training and ranger programs and have mentoring and accredited modules. This is not a soft option; this is structured rehabilitation that demands accountability and effort.

We have also strengthened supervised community detention, ensuring that those on bail or community orders have safe enforceable alternatives with structured activities and behaviour reports.

Our boot camp program, backed by $15m of real money, operates across greater Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. These camps address criminal behaviours through structured, culturally informed and community-based interventions. They combine discipline, routine, health, education, mentoring and cultural reconnection. Seven categories of camps create tailored pathways for young people assessed for their suitability. They can do multiple camps. With strong involvement from NT Police, NT courts and youth justice teams, these programs tackle the underlying causes of offending—disengagement from school, lack of employment pathways, mental challenges, trauma and cultural disconnection.

The Member for Johnston continues to claim that youth justice lacks oversight or structure, but this is simply not true. Youth detention in the Northern Territory operates under a comprehensive model of care. Within the first four weeks a detainee entering the youth detention centre undertakes a full multidisciplinary assessment.

This answers the question that the Member for Nightcliff had about the psychological reports. She can note that they undertake a full multidisciplinary assessment and psychologists, case managers, health services, Tivendale School and operations all contribute to these assessments. The assessment covers physical health, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, disabilities, education, employment readiness and criminogenic needs. It includes an admission screening, a joint intake assessment, a clinical review, an education plan and a throughcare plan. When needs are identified, interventions begin immediately. Assessments are completed in-house, outsourced or referred to psychiatrists or as required.

Psychologists develop positive behaviour support plans, working with the young people and providing training for staff. Therapeutic counselling is delivered in detention and referred to external providers as part of coordinated throughcare upon release. When disability or cognitive impairment is identified, supports are integrated into case management, including assistance to access the NDIS.

Holtze Youth Detention Centre operates a highly structured rehabilitative day program. Education is delivered five days a week for 45 weeks by Tivendale School, with a strong focus on literacy, numeracy, behaviour, wellbeing and engagement. The structured day incorporates education, life skills, sport, health, cultural programs and targeted behaviour interventions.

During the September school holidays detainees engaged in barista training, white card accreditation, Road Safety NT sessions and skill-building activities. Options support community work programs, short courses, vocational training and return-to-school pathways through partners like DriveSafe NT, the Army Indigenous Development Program and Hoops 4 Health.

Cultural engagement is strong. Elders attend monthly through the Elders Visiting Program, with increased involvement from Central Australian elders who provide cultural guidance, release planning, support and mentoring. Youth detention staff recently presented at the Elders Visiting Program Forum, which I attended, emphasising the essential role of culture and connection.

Specialist assessment and treatment services deliver counselling, forensic assessment, the CHART behaviour program, substance abuse interventions, mental health support and positive behaviour planning.

The Holtze detention centre has capacity for 86 detainees and is moving to expand that. Since January 2025 detainees from Alice Springs have been safely transferred to Holtze within 24 to 48 hours to ensure a constant service and stability in wraparound support for those young offenders.

Participation in programs is high, averaging 85%, supported by 40 external providers delivering education, support, culture, mentoring, wellbeing and structured behaviour programs. This includes Basketball NT, Elevate Hoops, Hoops 4 Health, First Step Development Enterprises and others delivering physical activities and community reintegration pathways. Internal staff provide Step Up, Love Bites, CHART and Safe Sober Strong programs. Primary providers deliver alcohol and drug, sexual health and wellbeing programs.

To illustrate this engagement, Holtze Youth Detention Centre delivered 479 sessions in August, 536 sessions in September and 475 sessions in October. Counselling sessions reached up to 68 per month, the CHART program delivered 18 modules and the number of throughcare meetings increased to 35 in October. Visits remain strong, with more than 450 visits per month to the detention centre.

Incidents remain a challenge, but serious assaults have declined due to targeted intervention. In October the detention centre recorded 24 level 1 incidents—serious, yes, but this system is responding with structured programming and increased oversight.

This is the system that the Member for Johnston pretends does not exist—structured, resourced, clinically driven, culturally informed and delivering rehabilitation. Territorians told us clearly that they want action on youth crime, which the government is delivering through bail reform, resourcing frontline people, structured sentencing options, supervised community alternatives, cultural programs and a modernised detention system grounded in rehabilitation and long-term outcomes. The last thing the Territory needs is another committee slowing down the work already being delivered on the ground.

The previous Labor government was two years behind schedule and overspent the budget by millions of dollars in delivering the Holtze Youth Detention Centre. Imagine the benefit that some young offenders would have had sooner if the facility—which I went to and walked around—had opened on time and the education and programs that I mentioned started two years ago. Unfortunately, through the failings of the previous Labor government, that did not happen and young offenders did not have the benefit of those programs. They missed out because the previous Labor government was so incompetent that it was behind schedule.

The government has the programs, and we focus on rehabilitation. There is no need to establish another inquiry or committee. We will not support the motion.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the motion put forward by the Member for Johnston is about an important issue—the establishment of a select committee on pathways for children and young people.

In representing their electorates, everybody in this House has a duty to look at ways we can work across the parliament. Our children are our future, and if we do not do something to bring us all together we will start to see more of a rift in the Northern Territory. I acknowledge the Minister for Corrections' contribution that, being in government, the CLP knows better than everybody, but what about working together as a collective for the greater good? That would be the process proposed through the select committee. Madam Speaker, you have been in this House longer than I, so you understand the power of a select committee across the different partisan lines—Independent, minor party, government and opposition members—to dive into, dissect and unpick key themes and issues.

The Member for Drysdale spoke passionately about his background, experience and the things that drove him to become a member to represent his community. He did not always have positive experiences with young people, but has an earnest drive to create opportunities for young people to see them in a better light, even after seeing them at their worst. That came out strongly in the Member for Drysdale's contribution.

The Labor opposition remains committed to the future of young people and children. We may not always agree in this place on the best way to do that, which is why there is a proposal for a select committee of parliament to have that pure focus, take out the politics—which the general public hates about politicians—and break down to the core of what we can do better, not as a CLP government, Labor opposition, Greens or Independent member, but as a parliament. This motion provides an opportunity for us to cut through those different political allegiances.

This is not only sensible but also perhaps overdue, and I will take responsibility. I am part of the former Labor government. We speak a lot about our achievements, but maybe one of our downfalls was not putting as much focus on pathways for young people and children, which is the motion's focus.

Starting from a place of strength for young people is something I have always believed in as an educator. I carry that into my role as a local member. It is important to see young people as a strength—a pillar—of the community. Many people will have heard the saying, 'You can't be what you can't see'. Young people need to see opportunities and pathways.

Some young people may never have had exposure to positive connections or constructive pathways because, unfortunately, they have been in negative situations or a negative environment, under a negative influence or treated in a horrible way that no-one would ever want a child to be treated. There are many factors, and a diversity of young people in the Territory. If we start from a place of strength, how can we build young people into the resilient, strong community members that everybody expects?

I thank the Member for Johnston for the motion. This is the whole purpose of coming together as a parliament. What purpose do we have as members of parliament if we are not thinking about the future we leave for the people who are to follow us? The heart of this motion seeks a constructive, structured and serious way to

confront and focus on one of our most pressing responsibilities as a parliament—the wellbeing and safety of young people, the future of the Northern Territory.

I make this point plainly: a committee designed to identify better pathways and outcomes for vulnerable young people should never be controversial. It should be bipartisan—across all party lines, including Independents. Talking about children and young people should not become a proxy for ideological battles or political performances.

The committee should be regarded, as the Member for Johnston proposed, as a mechanism to help us parliamentarians get back on track and focus on positive outcomes for young people and not take the punitive approach that the CLP has led with since it was elected. That is a principle we wholeheartedly support. Young people should be at the heart of our decision-making. This committee would be a good step forward, creating a space where we could disarm politics, sit alongside one another and work through problems regarding service delivery and look at the evidence, and do so with integrity. This would allow us to focus on the challenges and work together to ensure we hear about lived experiences and absorb what frontline services and carers have been experiencing. Police, Corrections officers, case workers, health practitioners, families and, of course, children and young people would all have an opportunity to provide their insight to the select committee and say what they want the parliament to focus on.

A committee is serious work of the parliament. It is not supposed to be a distraction; it should be part of our core business. We should see the process-driven mechanisms of our parliament achieve outcomes, and I believe that is why the Member for Johnston has put this motion before the Assembly.

This reminds me of something much deeper—that is, the responsibility we owe to our children, grandchildren and so forth and the type of world we want them to grow up in.

The changes to the *Youth Justice Act* that the CLP government rushed through on urgency last year came from a place of demonising young people and children, not a place of care and strength-based focus. I am not saying that young people do not commit crimes. There has been horrific trauma across the community because of offences committed by young people and children, but we need to acknowledge their developmental needs and provide support mechanisms to ensure that our young people can grow into socially responsible adults.

Our approach also needs to focus on the frontline experts. I am sure that they have much insight, but because of the hamstrung way in which some of our services and public servants have to operate, they do not necessarily get to make the decisions and calls; they have to follow what has been laid out for them by the executive government.

There are alternatives to detention and imprisonment to support young people to get out of the cycle of crime. First and foremost, young offenders have to face consequences; it is not about giving anyone a free ride. We need to step them out of the justice system and provide them the skills they need that, unfortunately—this may be hard for some in here to imagine—they do not get at home.

Providing protections and guiding principles through a bipartisan committee to focus on the foundation of youth justice in the Territory is something we should all strive towards. Today we have a choice. Each of us can continue down a path where the principles of focusing on young people become the heart of what we do in our decision-making. Evidence-driven youth justice frameworks support the work of police and youth workers, judges in their decision-making, foster and kinship carers, families and, of course, the young people.

We do not want to excuse harm in the community, but we also do not want that harm create further harm. We want our young people to be grounded, creating a safer community and being part of that community. We want structured interventions, early support mechanisms and meaningful alternatives to justice to create long-term change. The only people who do not see this is, unfortunately, those in the CLP government.

We do not believe that young people, especially children as young as 10 and 11 years old, should be locked up. When we return young people to society, we need to provide them with the tools and support mechanisms to make better choices. If someone does not want young people to re-enter the community successfully, the easy way to do that would be to oppose this motion. I do not believe that is leadership. It is not justice for young people in the Northern Territory.

We want viable strategies that keep Territorians safe, not quick fixes or bandaids that will fall off later. If we fail in providing pathways—I say ‘we’, not just the government—out of offending for young people, we

condemn ourselves to a future where youth justice becomes the conveyor belt of delivering tomorrow's violent adult offenders. The committee approach could be the mechanism to interrupt that conveyor belt.

To understand why pathways matter and why detaining children without alternatives is ineffective we must ground ourselves in what the CLP has started to make sound like a dirty word—'evidence'.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in its work on intergenerational trauma and mental health tells us several things that must shape our decisions as decision-makers. The first is that trauma does not begin and end with a single generation; it has a ripple effect through families, reflected in behaviours, relationships, emotional development and the ways our children learn to interpret the world around them. A child exposed to chronic adversity often develops patterns of hypervigilance, mistrust, fear and impulsivity. These patterns do not disappear because a child is detained. If anything, without proper support those children become more entrenched in that environment and that thinking.

Second, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare identifies strong links between early trauma and mental health challenges and difficulties with impulse control, emotional regulation and risk assessment as well as executive function. This is not an excuse for offending, but it is a clear reminder that if we want to change behaviour we must address the factors that drive it.

The research is undeniable when the importance of connection is focused on. Children who are supported by stable nurturing adults, with pathways to education, mentoring, structured programs and cultural or community anchors are far more likely to turn around their lives. Isolating a child in detention without intensive rehabilitation does not build those connections, and too often, in fact, can sever those connections.

Finally, and most importantly, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare highlights that healing from intergenerational trauma takes time—not a single electoral term, not a single budget cycle, but generations. That is the reality before us in the Northern Territory. It is a long project for us. We are all part of the journey, and it will go on after we leave this parliament. If we choose to accept the evidence that this parliament is presented with, we must also accept that it will take us generations to get back on track for our young people. There is no quick fix. There is no three-word slogan that will make it better. There is no magic program that will solve youth offending by the next quarter or by the next election cycle.

What we need is sustained effort, a parliament that is committed to the future of the Territory and a willingness to build a system that recognises the developmental needs of young people and supports them to change behaviour before it escalates. We must create and design pathways with young people that are meaningful, intensive and grounded in evidence. We must support programs that are based on cognitive behavioural therapy, mentoring, family support, structured routines and practical skill building. We must support our police, Corrections officers, youth workers, judges and justices by giving them the tools to think beyond detention, because when detention becomes the only option—or, dare I say, the desired option—reoffending becomes the only predictable outcome.

We must reject the deeply unhelpful rhetoric that has crept into public debate—the lazy habit of calling children 'evil' or 'bad'. That kind of language does not help anyone; it only lowers the expectation of children and young people. We need to lift the bar and raise our own leadership status and expectations when we talk about addressing long-term harm in our community.

It does not make communities safer to lock up kids or young people.

A member: Yes, it does.

Ms UIBO: No, it does not.

It does not provide support and relief for police. It does not break the cycle of crime. When we talk about medium and long-term solutions, that is the key: breaking the cycle of crime. We all know what a cycle is; it goes round and round. If we are to ever break the cycle and stop reoffending, all the elements I have spoken about in my contributions are things we need to think of.

What better way to channel the ideas, concerns, questions and initiatives of the whole of the parliament than through a select committee? What is currently happening in the Northern Territory is not a future we should accept. We need to ensure that any environment our young people and children are in does not become the environment to breed and grow our young people into youth justice.

The motion before the Assembly proposes practical constructive work. It asks our parliament to examine the alternatives available to police, Corrections officers, judges and justices; the gaps that are in those alternatives for young people; the programs needed to prevent reoffending; and the opportunities we can build for children to choose safer, more responsible pathways. This is precisely the kind of work that a parliament should be doing, not passing punitive legislation without evidence and thinking that we know better than the experts. We should sit together in good faith to understand what works in the NT for our kids and what must change.

Our Labor opposition offers the olive branch in this process. We remain committed, willing and eager to face the hard work that is required to rebuild youth justice and keep our community safe while giving every child a genuine chance to have a better quality and maybe different life in the Northern Territory. We are prepared to work with the government, the crossbench and the experts to repair the gaps that have been created over decades. The earlier principles of the *Youth Justice Act* were removed. To restore the framework we need to focus on rehabilitation, evidence and long-term outcomes.

Our Labor team is prepared to approach this work seriously, respectfully and constructively, but we cannot do it alone. That is where the select committee comes in. We would love to support strong leadership in this space, not lazy politics. We want to ensure one thing is guaranteed through this process—that our young offenders of today do not become the violent adult offenders of tomorrow.

We can choose to be grounded and responsible, with evidence-based programs and initiatives, and follow that with compassion. Accountability starts with us, representing the 25 electorates of the Northern Territory. We have to do our work so that future generations can create safer communities that are protected by smart decision-making and not through lazy political slogans.

I support and welcome the motion. We are ready to contribute fully to the work ahead. I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing forward this important motion.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I support the motion put forward by the Member for Johnston. It is not a controversial motion that will take away anything from the government. In fact, it is an opportunity to bring everyone together to talk about their experiences before they came into this parliament and to talk as members for our electorates across the Northern Territory, sharing experiences and elevating voices from our communities. We all meet with our local communities and are told different ideas and solutions. People should be encouraged to bring these to this parliament to discuss.

It is disappointing to hear that the government will not support the establishment of the select committee. It would not take away anything or change legislation; it would simply be a select committee stood up to do the important work of looking at what is being delivered across the Northern Territory for youth justice, the options available to people and how we can have a better system that provides the appropriate supports for our children. It is disappointing that this will be voted down. The government will pretend that it has all the answers and ignore the voices of the community.

I will be clear about some of the comments raised. Violence in any form is not acceptable. Violence is not a part of Aboriginal culture. Violence is not a part of any culture.

Our young people need support and care. They need the opportunity to grow, change their behaviour and live a better, safer and happier life. Some young people on the streets never had these opportunities. They have never had a bed to call their own and a fridge full of food. They have never known what a life outside of poverty looks like and what a pathway to a happy life looks like.

These are young people who grow up thinking that going to prison is a part of their story. We have to ask ourselves why life for some people in our communities is better in prison than it is outside. We should all be ashamed of ourselves. When people think going to prison gives them the opportunity to have tucker in their bellies, air conditioning and a bed to sleep in, we have a problem as a society. There is not one person who should not feel ashamed of themselves that this is the position that we have to resolve tonight. That is the truth of it.

We need to change the trajectory. If we are to have a serious conversation about reforming the justice space, we need to change the trajectory of our kids. We must address the social determinants—housing, giving people a home for the first time, allowing people to live free from violence away from violent perpetrators and away from overcrowding; and health, getting people mental health assistance, addressing chronic illness or helping people work with our communities to understand whether children have learning difficulties.

These are social determinants that we have to address. Education is key, but punishing and fining parents, dragging kids to school and not addressing the challenges that they face will not fix our problems. Giving people the opportunity to have a job, work every day and feel empowered is important, but this government is not interested in employment. These are the things that will change our youth justice space. Trauma and intergenerational disadvantage need to be addressed if we want to change the face of youth justice in the Northern Territory. That is how we can put our young people on a pathway to success, not a pathway to prison.

Let us take a moment to think about the CLP legacy in youth justice. It is clear and devastating. It will be a legacy of kids in cages that created a system of trauma rather than healing and which punished children instead of giving them opportunities to grow. When you cage a child, strip away their hope, ignore every expert's voice and ignore elders, you are not solving the problem; you are creating it. The CLP knows this, and the sad reality is that it does not care. That is what putting a young person in a youth detention centre without any tangible program to help them is doing.

Reducing crime is more about opportunities and programs; it is not just about punishment. It is about prevention, early intervention and opportunity.

We need early intervention and family support. We need to look at programs for families experiencing hardship, domestic violence and substance abuse; parenting and mentoring support, especially in remote communities; culturally appropriate engagement and programs; community-led initiatives designed with elders and leaders; and sports, arts, cultural and leadership programs that strengthen identity and country.

We need to look at diversion and restorative justice, expanding diversionary programs for minor offences and implementing restorative justice processes to repair the harm while keeping young people connected to family and community.

We need education and employment pathways, with flexible learning programs, vocational training, apprenticeships and job opportunities to give our young people purpose and pride.

We need to look at mental health, with support to deal with substance abuse and access to safe culturally supported mental health, drug and alcohol programs.

We need trauma-informed care across schools, police and youth services; spaces for supported community engagement; after-school programs, youth hubs and safe recreational spaces in urban and remote centres; and youth engagement officers who connect with young people constructively, not punitively.

We cannot arrest our way out of youth crime or ignore the root causes. We cannot cage children and hope that the next generation will somehow be stronger. Our young people deserve hope, opportunity and care. Our communities deserve safety, respect and justice. Our Territory deserves a system that supports, rehabilitates and empowers young people, not one that continues to harm them.

If we act now with programs that are community led, culturally safe and trauma informed, we can change the story; we can break the cycle of disadvantage and give every child a chance to thrive.

Violence is not the answer, and cages are not the solution. Every child deserves to live a life full of hope. We owe it to our kids, our community and our future to do better.

The establishment of a select committee would provide an important platform for Territory organisations, communities and victim–survivors to express how they feel and provide solutions to change the nature of youth justice in the Northern Territory.

We need to look at rolling out more positive behaviour programs. The Member for Drysdale spoke about reaffirming positive relationships, and that is important; I agree with him on that. We need to look at having programs in schools to talk about and normalise behaviours. You can be a man and do different roles, and you can be a woman and do different roles; we need to break down the stereotypes. It is important. Initiatives like Girls Can Boys Can should be rolled out to every Territory school to normalise and let kids know that they can do whatever they want. If a boy wants to be a hairdresser or a makeup artist, let him. If a girl wants to be a mechanic, engineer or electrician, she should be able to. We need to remove the barriers, those gender norms that tell people they cannot do it because of their sexuality or gender. Rolling out these programs is important.

I would love to see more programs like Brother to Another supported and rolled out across the Territory. It is a fantastic program that is making a difference. We need more alternatives to custody. Labor stood up the life skills camp in Alice Springs and the Groote Eylandt healing centre. They are changing lives. The Corrections minister had the opportunity to talk about what was happening in this space, but he did not. We need more than a weekend camp to change people's behaviours. We need programs that empower young people and give them the time to sit down and talk with community organisations, elders, leaders and respected people in the community. Let them feel comfortable to talk about it. We need to look at rolling out restorative justice practices. We need to equip our young people with more skills to mediate conflict situations among young people in our communities.

The Corrections minister delivered an ordinary speech. It was underwhelming, with nothing new and nothing that will change the trajectory for young people. The CLP changed the law and lowered the age of criminal responsibility, but it has been unable to tell us how many people have ended up in the criminal justice system since that legislation changed.

This is an opportunity to bring people together and hear from experts about how we can provide positive change in our communities.

I ask members not to be afraid and support this motion. It will provide a platform to do things better and elevate the voices of our community. We were elected to represent our communities; this select committee would amplify their voices and give people the chance to provide a solution.

Do not let your legacy be one of kids in cages.

J DAVIS (Johnston)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank everyone who contributed to the motion; it is of deep importance of every person in the Chamber.

I have a long speech, which I will not read out. We heard different views about why we are in the situation we are in with young people, what is happening now and what we need to do about it.

This motion did not call for prescribing a solution. It said that we do not have the solutions and we need to work together. Member for Drysdale, I would love to work with you to work out what will make things better. In our differences is our strength. If we are committed to the young people in this community and making change, we need to work together across our differences. I am not someone who says that you are wrong because I do not agree with you; I say, 'Tell me about that', and ask you to explain it to me.

I have worked in this area for decades. I have strong views based on my experience about what will work. It is not about being soft on crime; it is about real accountability, change and the things that will make us all safe in the long term.

This motion says, 'Hey, everyone, let us work together. Let us do our job. Here is a mechanism so that we can create change.' It does not ask people to do anything differently.

Thank you, minister, for running through what is happening. I am aware of what is happening, and I am saying that I think we can do better.

Legislation is changing across Australia. At the same time that they are toughening their laws other jurisdictions are putting things in place to create change so that they do not having a revolving door of locking up young people.

Those young people will come out. Guess what happens next? They will go back in again. That is what statistics tell us. Why would we keep doing something when we know that will happen? We do not need to do it like that. This motion simply says, 'Let us do our job. Let us work together across our differences, with our different ideas, the wisdom that is in this Chamber and the other wisdom we can call on to make a real difference to the people we are responsible for in the Territory.'

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6	Noes 15
Mr Brown	Ms Boothby
J Davis	Mr Burgoyne
K McNamara	Mrs Carlson
Mr Paech	Mr Edgington

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

Motion not agreed to.

PAPERS TABLED

Auditor-General's Report No 4 to the Legislative Assembly

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General's Report Number 4 to the Legislative Assembly.

Auditor-General's Report No 5 to the Legislative Assembly

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General's Report Number 5 to the Legislative Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge a significant milestone for the Catholic Church in the Territory and for our Indigenous communities on the ordination of Dean Chisholm.

On Thursday 23 October 2025 at St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral in Darwin, we celebrated the ordination of Mr Dean Chisholm to the diaconate. A proud Indigenous man, Dean became the sixth Aboriginal permanent deacon in the Northern Territory. This remarkable event was presided over by Bishop Charles Gauci. The ceremony was both solemn and culturally rich, blending Catholic liturgy with First Nations traditions, including hymns, prayers, a smoking ceremony and a Tiwi dance.

With more than 150 years of Catholic history in the Northern Territory, this ordination stands as a powerful reminder of the strength, faith and leadership of our Aboriginal community, and the union of faith and culture created a moment of shared pride. Dean received his deacon stole, decorated in honour of his mother's Eastern Arrernte heritage, symbolising his deep connection in both faith and ancestry.

A long-time member of the St Martin de Porres Catholic Aboriginal Community in Casuarina, Deacon Chisholm's ordination reflects years of humble service and devotion. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Deacon Dean Chisholm, his family, Bishop Gauci and the Darwin diocese for their spiritual leadership across the Northern Territory.

I honour a remarkable Territorian, Frank Alcorta—a man of courage, intellect and unwavering service. Frank recently passed away aged 89 in Bargara, Queensland. He was born in the Basque region of Spain. He migrated to Australia at 23 and worked across outback Queensland before enlisting in the Australian Army.

Frank served with distinction in the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment and was one of only 105 soldiers who faced more than 2,000 enemy troops at the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966. Sergeant Alcorta showed exceptional bravery, leaving the safety of his armoured personnel carrier to assist Delta Company under intense fire. His courage was later recognised through a government recommendation for military honours.

After the war, Frank made the Northern Territory home, arriving in Darwin in 1974 with his wife, Arantxa, and their daughters. He taught at the then Darwin Community College and became a foundational journalist at the *Sunday Territorian*, later serving as deputy editor and senior reporter at the *NT News*. He also helped establish the NT Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Association.

Frank was described as a sharp and principled journalist, deeply connected to the Territory. He was the first Territory reporter to interview Lindy Chamberlain in jail and served as a speechwriter and adviser to the Territory's first Chief Minister, Paul Everingham. Frank's time on the *Sunday Territorian* was marked with good old-fashioned journalism. He knew how to get an exclusive, respect off the record and protect a source. Those who worked with him remember a charming gentleman of high intellect.

On retirement he and his wife moved to Bicheno, Tasmania, where he would joke he was the youngest resident. Sadly, his wife passed away a few years later.

Frank Alcorta was a soldier, teacher, journalist and, above all, proud Territorian. His legacy is one of courage, service and lasting contribution. May we remember him with gratitude. Frank is survived by his wife, Lourdes, and his daughters, Lorena and Elena.

I pay tribute to Darwin's last World War II veteran, Mr Colin Heard, who passed away at the age of 101 on 14 October this year. The passing of any of our Defence veterans is poignant, but Colin Heard's is particularly sad because his passing marks the end of an era. He was the last pilot of his squadron group.

Colin Heard often told people, 'It was just a matter of turning up behind the line; that is all we did.'

Born in Adelaide in 1924, Colin Heard was 10 when his mother died. His father, a baker in Broken Hill, brought him up. He was selected by the RAAF at the age of 19 to fly P-40 Kittyhawks in World War II. He signed up in 1942 around the time of the Battle of Coral Sea with three other young men from Naracoorte. Only Colin Heard came home.

Colin served in 78 Squadron in 1943 and 1944 during its operations in New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies, conducting strafing and dive-bombing missions. On one mission his aircraft caught fire and he ditched into the sea where it sank in seconds. He managed to tread water wearing a lifejacket for just under an hour until he was picked up by US allies. In February 1944, while on a 12-aircraft strafing mission, the gun blast tubes blew out on Mr Heard's aircraft. Again, he was miraculously not injured and landed safely.

Colin Heard was involved in more than 80 operations. When then Prime Minister Scott Morrison asked him what it was like being in World War II, he answered, 'Exciting'.

He was a flight lieutenant when he was discharged in November 1945. Postwar he was a flight instructor briefly with the Air Force, then took over his family's clothing business.

He instigated the building of the Naracoorte Swimming Lake which opened in 1961 after three years of planning, frustration and fundraising by the volunteer committee.

Mr Heard met his wife, Helen, in Naracoorte and they had three children, Adrian, Sam and Mary. They decided to move to Darwin about 11 years ago to be close to their son, Dr Sam Heard, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Dr Heard speaks with great pride of his father and mother moving into Pearl as its oldest residents and still being quite active. As Dr Heard said, 'They had a lovely time there and loved living in Darwin'. He said that his father stayed active and bright.

Colin Heard was a generous father with an unmatched life force. Sadly, when his wife, Helen, passed away about three years ago, it was just short of their 70th wedding anniversary.

The loss of Colin Heard is a loss for our nation. I am reminded of the lyrics from the Eric Bogle song, *And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda*. I know it is a song about World War I, but there is a poignant truth in the lyrics:

But as year follows year, more old men disappear

As we close these chapters let us promise to never forget the sacrifice of what this generation of brave men and women gave to our country.

Our deepest sympathies go to Colin and Helen Heard's family. They are survived by sons, Adrian and Sam, and daughter, Mary, six grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Vale, Colin Heard.

I congratulate Talia Appleton and Matt King who are incredible Darwin cycling champions.

Talia Appleton competed at the 2025 UCI Road World Championships in Kigali, Rwanda, on Thursday 25 September. She secured ninth place in the under-23 women's road race. This event was held over eight laps of a hilly Kigali circuit totalling 119 kilometres. The course featured two steep climbs, most notably the 1.3-kilometre Cote de Kimihurura, which featured a cobbled ascent, adding to the race's difficulty. The tough race saw only 10 of the 85 starters, including Talia, reach the foot of the final climb together. Talia finished just 31 seconds behind the winner, securing a top 10 result for Australia. This remarkable result showcases Talia's exceptional talent and determination on the international stage.

Her journey to this achievement is especially inspiring having been a late addition to the Australian team. Despite the unexpected change Talia embraced this opportunity with confidence and focus, delivering a performance that has made all Australians and Territorians proud. Her dedication, adaptability and sportsmanship exemplify the spirit of cycling. We look forward to witnessing her continued success and growth in the sport. Congratulations, Talia; your future in cycling is incredibly bright.

Matt King competed in the 2025 UCI Mountain Bike XCM World Championships Cross Country Marathon in Valais, Switzerland, on Saturday 6 September. The cross-country marathon event is part of the larger 2025 UCI Mountain Bike World Championships held in the Swiss Alps from 30 September to 14 October. The marathon race was a 125-kilometre course from Verbier to Grimentz following the scenic Val d'Anniviers. Valley riders faced a challenging 5,000 metres of climbing, including the highest peak of the route, Pas de Lona, at 2,787 metres in the last stages of the race.

A total of 172 riders from 25 countries competed in this race. Matt raced alongside Australian marathon riders Monique de Abreu and James Kelly. Matt finished 96th out of 111 finishers with a time of eight hours, 54 minutes and 25 seconds.

Congratulations, Matt, on an unbelievable effort. We look forward to following your journey as you continue to excel in your sport.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about the language being normalised in this Chamber.

Yesterday Minister Jinson Charls said:

> *I … repeat it again, although it got me into trouble earlier: telling lies again and again will not make a lie true.*

Minister Jinson Charls is not just repeating a phrase; he is referring to the comments he made earlier this year in this House when he quoted Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels. I quote what Minister Charls said:

> *There is an old saying: tell a lie often enough and it becomes the truth.*

He drew directly on rhetoric historically associated with Nazi propaganda to attack members of this House. He may not have repeated the reference word for word yesterday, but he deliberately pointed back to his Nazi quotes that he said in this House. He made it clear that he still stands by the earlier comment, the one that caused concern because of its direct link to one of the darkest and most hateful regimes in human history. That matters, because when a minister continues to defend or recycle language tied to Nazi propaganda, even indirectly, it risks normalising that language in our parliamentary debates.

Mr HOWE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This is clearly misleading the House. The Member for Daly needs to understand this quote. The minister was referring to something the Nazi said …

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Drysdale, there is no point of order.

Mr HOWE: It is misleading the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry; he is just arguing a case. You may not like it, but he is entitled to argue his case.

Continue, Member for Daly.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 31; I find it offensive. What I am getting at is he is drawing a long bow saying that Minister Charls was referring back to something—an inference. He is drawing the inference; no-one else is.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, Deputy Chief Minister, but there is no point of order. Take your seat and let the Member for Daly resume.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have made a ruling.

Mr YOUNG: I ask those opposite …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, stop interjecting, please.

Mr YOUNG: I ask those on the government side—who are clearly triggered by this—to look at the *Hansard* from yesterday. It clearly states what he said. Go back and read it, then make your point.

What the minister came in here yesterday and did, and I am calling out—what I am trying to get to is that I called out yesterday not because I was offended, I was not offended, but because this parliament must hold a line. We cannot allow this type of rhetoric with roots in hate, genocide and the deliberate manipulation of truth to become casual tools in political argument.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Let the Member for Daly be heard in silence.

Mr YOUNG: To my colleagues, regardless of party and whether you are in government, the opposition or the crossbench, none of us should accept this as normal.

Nazi references do not just stay here; they are repeated on our streets, which can set a dangerous precedent. We owe our communities, multicultural communities, Aboriginal communities, survivors and descendants of survivors better than what we have been hearing from Minister Jinson Charls. This is not about politics; it is about responsibility, leadership and ensuring that the Northern Territory parliament never becomes a place where references to Nazi ideology are brushed off, defended or recycled without consequence.

What concerns me is that the minister did not just use the line, ‘Telling lies again and again will not make it true’; he linked it to the comments he made earlier in the year when he drew on rhetoric associated with Nazi propaganda. That kind of language has no place in our parliament directly or indirectly. Once we start normalising it, we lower the standards for everyone.

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I start my Christmas adjournment to thank a few people.

We are almost at the end of the year; we have one more day to go. I thank the community of Nelson which supports me. When I do my roadside stops or am at the markets or the shopping centre or just going down to the Howard Springs dump on my normal weekly dump run, there are lots of people out there. Also, when I am delivering my newsletter, people often stop and say hello, and I thank those people. I am proud to be the Member for Nelson and represent such a great community in parliament.

I have been in the rural area my whole life. I go to Howard Springs Primary School, which is my old primary school. I go to Taminmin College with the Member for Goyder, which was my high school. The Member for Wanguri went there too. When I was at the awards this year I said that a little fun fact is Taminmin College is the most represented high school in parliament, because there are three members from Taminmin here.

I acknowledge the many community groups that help make the rural area such a great place, and I will name a few.

The Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association plays a huge role in supporting seniors across Palmerston and the rural area. The Member for Goyder and I regularly go to their monthly morning teas at Humpty Doo Golf Club to talk and hear what the seniors have to say about their life and experiences; it is great. The association has morning teas and all sorts of things. There is the seniors week that we go to, and there is an upcoming Christmas party. It brings the community together. I try to get my mum to come along as often as I can.

The Rural Garden Club also brings the community together. Some of the gardeners are a bit younger than the seniors, but sometimes it has the same people. We go to various houses in the rural area and the community garden, and we hear all sorts of stories about gardening. I thank the committee and Di Spencer; I enjoy going to those events.

There is also the Litchfield Orchid Club, the Litchfield Lions Club, the Rotary Club of Litchfield/Palmerston, the Humpty Doo Fibrecraft Guild, the Litchfield Community Library, the Smile-A-Mile rural playgroup and, of course, the mighty Litchfield Polocrosse Club.

I thank the schools in Nelson and their principals: Emma Hansen of Girraween Primary School; John Harris of Taminmin College; Narelle Dahl and Damien O'Brien at Howard Springs Primary School; Matthew at Good Shepherd Lutheran College; and Sonya at Palmerston Christian school. I believe that education is the key for our young people, and they do a great job looking after those schools.

I also thank the administration staff at the schools. They work behind the scenes. We know the schools would not run as smoothly without the administration staff and teachers. They all do a great job.

I have been to many school assemblies, fetes, book weeks and World Teachers' Day events. I am truly thankful for all the great work schools do supporting our children.

There are many amazing groups within Nelson, including the Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club; Litchfield Bears Netball Club; Southern Districts Football Club; Southern Districts Crocs Netball Club; Southern Districts Cricket Club; Swampdogs; Litchfield Football Club; Howard Springs Tavern Fishing Club; Palmerston Game Fishing Club; Top End Motocross Club; and Noonamah Horse and Pony Club. All these groups that work around Freds Pass and Palmerston also look after our children. Education and sport are two important parts of the rural lifestyle, which I enjoy.

Freds Pass is a great facility. It is in the heart of the rural area. Even if you do not use it, one of your friends or family members would go there. Almost everyone in the rural area would visit Freds Pass for some reason throughout the year.

I thank the Country Liberal Party, including outgoing president, Natasha Griggs; the new president, Nathan Land; all the Wishart branch members; Bob Shewring; and all the members who came together to support me and the Member for Goyder through this year.

I also thank the Member for Goyder and his staff, Megan and Sharia. We all work together. Our offices do things together. We turn up at the same events. It is good to have someone like Andrew to support me when I am doing stuff. His knowledge of the rural area is almost as good as mine. He has been there a long time as well and knows the people. He brings wisdom and youth and essentially does not stop working. Thank you, Andrew, Megan and Sharia, for the stuff you do.

My electorate staff, Jessie, Darien and Kate, help a lot. We do not get to our electorate offices as much as we would like when we are ministers. The electorate staff do a great job, and I thank them.

I thank my wife, Sharon, and my children, Lara, Lily, Sharia and Daniel. We have a whole household; there are nine or 10 there on any given night. We have all moved in together, and my mum lives next door. We have a big extended family. There is also Sage, my granddaughter. There are three generations of Maleys living in the one house, and that is what the rural area is about.

I thank my ministerial staff: Abi from upstairs; Lucy; Kyrrie, who has left; the two Olivias; and Ken. They are all doing a great job. The work they do, preparing, helping me out and supporting me is tremendous. I hope you are listening; I thank you and value your work, your input day-in and day-out and all the extra hours that you do, going over and above. When we go away on trips it is great to have their wisdom and knowledge. I do not know everything, and it is a great to have a strong team supporting me.

We have 17 MLAs. I thank the ministers for your support and the backbenchers. We are great solid team and I enjoy working together. We have a lot of fun together. When we need to we all contribute to all sorts of things, so it is great to have such a good team working together.

To all the staff in Corrections, Mining and Energy, Agriculture and Fisheries and Recreational Fishing—those government departments and agencies—thank you for your work. It is great to have portfolios I enjoy. I think they are making a difference to the Northern Territory because they are all important. I enjoy working with the staff I meet with on a weekly basis.

We know that in the land of opportunity Nobles Nob goldmine is up for the first time in 20 years. All that work is being done. Thank you, Elliott, for helping me with the electricity market reform work, which is a big body of complicated work. His wisdom and knowledge of all things electricity and mining has been great.

We are dealing with gillnetting and committed to phasing it out this year. We have said many times that we will continue to work towards that. Fishing in the Northern Territory is a big industry. Lots of people and families do it for fun. I take my friends and family out; it is a great pastime.

There are a lot of people to thank for helping me throughout the year. I thank the Chief Minister for her work. I thank all the staff on the fifth floor; they do a great job and we all work together in some testing times, making important decisions in a timely manner when time is of the essence. The pressure is strong, but we all work together because we are a strong team.

I thank my horses, my dogs and my family at Howard Springs; we have a great life together. I love everyone; thank you.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, the Member for Gwoja's sartorial elegance has lifted up the place. Congratulations to him for that.

We just went through Cyclone Fina, but prior to that there were typhoons in the Philippines and Vietnam that caused a lot of loss of life and catastrophic damage and have set those countries back a bit.

My good friend Mr Sean Mahoney is the owner and CEO of the International College of Advanced Education. Prior to coming into parliament, I worked for him as a subcontractor as his international business development manager. His school, which has been open for 26 years, is the largest hospitality training college in the Northern Territory. The Attorney-General has attended its graduations. There you can see students doing commercial cookery from more than 20 countries, and they support our local businesses. Sean has been heavily involved in that.

Prior to those typhoons he was in Vietnam and the Philippines and was lucky to get out a day before everything shut down. When he came back a couple of weeks ago, he reached out to say that something needs to be done for the typhoon victims in Vietnam and the Philippines. He came up with the idea of a fundraising lunch at his college, charging $60 a head for a two-course lunch, including wine and beer.

He connected with me, and we put our heads together. We had only a short time to get it together because it was scheduled for last Wednesday, which do not forget was in the lead-up to Cyclone Fina. The key to a fundraiser is having people come to it or donate prizes to be bid on; that is how you raise the money. This was a private sector initiative. We both reached out to our extensive networks—I have extensive networks in the business community and others; Sean certainly has a wide network—to get people to attend.

The end result was last Wednesday 42 people came to the lunch, which is a small number in some ways, but we reached out and targeted people we thought could donate or, more importantly, bid and generate money.

One example is Lance Martin from Practical Safety Australia. He donated two boxing gloves signed by Manny Pacquiao who is the Filipino leading boxer and world champion. They were put up for auction. Chris Clarke from Real Estate Central was the main auctioneer. They went for about $900, a good raising of money.

Steve Sarev is a logistics person who donated a brand-new mini Starlink. It also sold for about $900, which is fantastic. This is what we do.

We had support from a range of groups. I reached out to the NT Vietnam Business Council. I also went to the Holy Family Parish in Karama because it has a large Filipino community, as well as Vietnamese contacts. I pay tribute to John Rivas, the Honorary Consul-General of the Philippines. He got behind us and supported us as well. Ruby Restaurant, a Vietnamese restaurant in town, and Hannah Spa donated vouchers. All these were auctioned and it was fantastic.

We hoped to get the Chief Minister there because I had a special auction item that I wanted her to be the guest auctioneer for. Unfortunately, Cyclone Fina was happening. Although she wanted to come, obviously there were emergency meetings occurring, and we fully understood. I stood in as the Member for Karama representing the Chief Minister. I worked with my northern suburbs colleagues. This is the key: the Members for Wanguri, Sanderson and Casuarina and I also donated a prize, but I was the guest auctioneer on behalf of the Chief Minister. May I say, we did bloody good. I will tell you what we auctioned. The Member for Gwoja may appreciate this.

This book I am holding is by Reggie Sultan, a wonderful person. I had this in my office. I give these away as book awards, and I have the whole range. This is *The Seven Sisters*, which is fantastic in itself, but people will say, 'A book is a book'. I drew their attention to the fact that the book has a photo of the original *Seven Sisters* painting. I could then say that the northern suburbs team had the original painting, which we donated. We got it from Reggie, and we all put in to donate it. We had the book and the original painting, but there is always another set of steak knives; you have to get the full value proposition if you are to earn money. I also threw in a free copy of my newsletter, and that went down well. I reckon that was the icing on the cake.

There was short, quick bidding. I sold this by saying, 'You won't get another opportunity like this. The Chief Minister would have done this, but I am here for her. Come on, let us be generous.' The first bid was $1,000. I looked them in the eyes and said, 'You cheapskates. Come on, you can do better than that.'

There was another person who was running late, but he gave us proxy. We put $1,250 on his behalf. If he had known that he probably would have shat himself a bit. Immediately after that it went to $2,000. I thought, 'Okay, that is not too bad'. We left it at that. We knocked it down at $2,000. I thank one of the Vietnamese companies—I will not name it—which put up the money because it understood. I guarantee you that if the Chief Minister had been there, I could have probably got it up to $3,000, so she probably needs to kick in another grand anyway.

Having said that, I thank Sean. His ambition was that we would probably get $5,000; we got almost $10,000. That money will go directly to the Red Cross to be split evenly between the Philippines and Vietnam.

This was people coming together as a community. I thank my northern suburbs colleagues and everyone. Other people who could not come to the lunch still sent in money because they wanted to donate. This happened only last Wednesday. We had a short time to pull it together. I give full credit to Sean and his team. He charged only $60 per head, so I guarantee you that he subsidised those meals for everyone. People had a fantastic time. This shows the charity and generosity of Territorians and the local business community. I congratulate them, and I wish everyone all the best.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, as we come to the end of the year I make what has become the Christmas adjournment. I take a moment to be thankful for all the work and thank my communities across Gwoja for being strong, loving and supportive. Everything we do in this place, every fight, win and step forward, we do it together.

This year we have stood side by side to support families, celebrate our culture, back our young people and honour our elders. We have enjoyed incredible sports weekends in the bush. Bush mob are the best—strong, deadly and proud. We have seen many of our community mob travel overseas this year for arts exhibitions, sports events, conferences and cultural exchanges. Every time I see our people representing the Territory and doing great things, my heart is full. You make me so proud everywhere you go.

A big thank you to all the mums, dads, aunties, uncles, brothers, sisters and grandparents from Gwoja who hold our families strong. The love and care you give to our kids and communities is everything. You are the backbone of Gwoja.

This year, working alongside Aunty Marion Scrymgour, we have delivered projects that matter such as football lights at Kintore and Ti Tree and new shade structures and upgrades to visitor centres in our communities. We have seen the new 20 rooms at the visitors park in Alice Springs. We pushed for and secured more bitumen on the Tanami Road, making travel safer for everyone.

This year also marked important milestones in Gwoja, moments that remind us of who we are and what we stand for: 40 years since the handback of Uluru, a moment that changed the nation forever; 50 years of bilingual education in Yuendumu where language, learning and culture walk side by side; 40 years of Pintupi Homelands Health Service in Kintore delivering trusted community-controlled healthcare; and 21 years since the first person in Australia was dialysed on country in Kintore, thanks to the strength and vision of Purple House. These anniversaries tell stories of our resilience, our leadership and our right to make decisions for our communities. Next year I cannot wait for the 60th anniversary of the Wave Hill Walk-off, an event that shaped the rights of Indigenous Australians, particularly in the Northern Territory. Across this country these stories continue to inspire us today.

I look forward to working with all our communities next year and making life better. We have more to do and, as bush mob never shy away from hard work, we will do it together. We need the CLP to step up next year to help fix our houses, air-condition our homes, repair our roads and treat our children better. The work cannot wait. Next year I am excited to continue working with Aunty Marion to secure bitumen for the Imanpa and

Santa Teresa Roads; wet areas and play areas in Hermannsburg, Papunya and hopefully Kintore; more safe, healthy and strong places for our families; and laundries in Utju, Docker River and Kintore.

To everyone in the Gwoja electorate, I wish you a safe and happy Christmas. Please look after each other. When you travel make sure you carry water, tell family where you are going and take care on the roads.

I acknowledge all the people, organisations and stakeholders who have supported me and our communities this year. For many it has been a tough year, especially our domestic violence survivors, the legal community, environmental advocates, child protection workers and people in the education sector. Thank you for your courage, strength and commitment to the Territory.

I ask those who can give a little this Christmas to do so .Whether it is donating to a local service or helping a family who is doing it tough, generosity and kindness go a long way. Many people in our communities will struggle this season with finances and wellbeing, so let us support each other when we can.

I also send strength and love to those spending Christmas without someone they love. You are in our hearts.

To our frontline workers, police, ambos, nurses, teachers, firies, child protection workers, night patrol staff, health workers, aged-care workers and disability support workers, thank you for keeping our community safe and making the sacrifices and commitments you do every day. Thank you for spending your Christmas caring for others.

To my electorate staff—Katharine, Jo, Josie and Scotty—thank you for everything you do for our people. To the opposition staff, your support is always appreciated. To my hubby, my family and my friends, thank you for your love, patience and unwavering support. Wherever you are this festive season I hope you are surrounded by love, kindness and good times.

I also give a shout-out to our amazing staff at the Legislative Assembly. Thank you for always making parliament that little bit easier. To our security staff, thank you for always being the smiling face on the front gate when we drive in of a morning. To our cleaners, thank you for always greeting us with a smile when you are doing your amazing job. To the secretariat staff of the Legislative Assembly, thank you for putting up with everyone in this parliament when we do our committee work. It is important.

I acknowledge my Labor family. Thank you for being strong, resilient and always welcoming.

As we head into the holiday season I wish every member of the Legislative Assembly a happy and safe Christmas. May you spend it with your family, friends and that amazing community we get to call the Territory.

To all my mob in the bush—Gwoja and beyond—I wish you a happy and safe Christmas. You are strong, blak and deadly. Happy Christmas.

Mr YAN (Namatjira): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is difficult to think it has been 12 months since we were breaking for Christmas. The last 12 months have flown by. There have always been good and bad times, but I think there has been more good than bad, and I look forward to Christmas and the next 12 months.

I must thank my electorate of Namatjira. It is quite a diverse electorate, from the people who live in town and the rural mob—who, as the Member for Nelson said, are proud that they are rural, and rightly so—to all the people in town camps. Doing this job now makes it difficult to get out and visit everybody, particularly the people in the bush, all the time like I used to do. I miss getting out in the bush because that is where you see the real parts of the Territory.

I thank my electorate office staff, Kochy, Shane and Ash, and the two labs that are part and parcel of our office. If you ever come to the Namatjira electorate office, Kochy has his support dogs with him. Lots of visitors pop into the office just to visit the dogs and have a bit of time out, which is wonderful. They are a part of the office and, hopefully, they will be for a long time.

I cannot thank my team in my ministerial office enough. I am backwards and forwards quite a lot, but they are the rocks that hold the office together. The work that they do to keep me organised and ensuring that information flows so that I can do my job effectively is beyond belief. A huge thank you to Julian, Em, Sally, Sonia and Jason for all the work that you do up there to support me and, at the end of the day, in support of the important work that we do here.

I cannot thank my Cabinet wing colleagues enough because this job is not about one person; it is always about a team. I work with an exceptional team, and I am proud of them. I thank my team, not just my Cabinet colleagues but also the wider wing.

My Treasury team—after delivering the first budget last year I now realise the amount of work and time that goes into that—is an exceptional group of people who work tirelessly, and I thank them.

My team at DLI do not get the credit that they should get for the work that they are out on the ground doing. It probably goes unnoticed; they are behind the scenes delivering stuff. That was evident this last week with Cyclone Fina. We saw our Power and Water crews doing that work on the ground, but what was probably unnoticed was the DLI team doing road assessments and building assessments and checking things to make sure that stuff is safe and roads are open. That team gets traffic lights working, for instance. That was great work by my DLI team, and it goes unnoticed, so thank you.

Thank you to our DLA team, the Legislative Assembly team. Your work is appreciated by me. I do not think any of us could do the things that we do without the support of the DLA, from committees to the general staff around the place, the security guards and cleaners. As the Member for Gwoja said, a whole team keeps this place running, making it easier for us to do what we have to do.

The great thing about Christmas is getting out to my communities and bush schools. It is a treat for me to do that every year. I am hoping that I do not get dragged back up here for some reason and can get out to the bush schools. Christmas in the bush is different from Christmas in town. It is special out bush, and I think anyone who has not experienced it needs to get out there and see it.

Ever since I won the seat of Namatjira, I have done prizes for my bush schools for the kid, or kids, with the best attendance. I get them pushbikes, scooters or skateboards, depending on the community. I told every school I go to that if every kid can come to school every day of the year, they will send me broke because I will have to buy a lot of pushbikes and scooters. I have gone from giving out one pushbike at each school to now giving out two or three because there are so many kids—which is great to see—at school getting those great attendance rates. That is from tiny little schools like Bonya up to the bigger schools that we see in places like Santa Teresa. It is so much fun.

The bush schools that I need to get out to—hopefully over the next week or two before they break for Christmas—are at Finke (Aputula); Titjikala; Santa Teresa; Amoonguna, which is nice and close to town; and towards the Queensland border, with Engawala, Atitjere and Bonya.

I stand with my hand on my heart—my other communities will probably yell at me for this—and say that Bonya has a special place in my heart. It is a great little community; it is in the middle of nowhere, and there are great people there. The principal and teachers at the school do a wonderful job. That school might have only six or eight kids in any one day, but the stuff they do out there in that remote area is phenomenal.

I look forward to getting out to do those best attendance prizes this Christmas. I look forward to being here in February doing an adjournment speech to read out the names of the kids who had the best attendance at those bush schools in my electorate.

I wish everybody in this Chamber a merry Christmas and a joyful and happy holiday season. I look forward to seeing everybody in the new year.

For all Territorians—who, if they are smart, are not listening and are probably enjoying a nice meal and kicking back with their feet up—if you are travelling, I implore you to stay safe on our roads and, more importantly, do the right thing on Territory roads over the holiday season. Our road toll is shockingly high, and we want everyone to stay safe over Christmas. We do not want to see anything happen; nobody wants that. For every Territorian, have a great Christmas, and stay safe.

I look forward to being back here with everybody and wishing everybody the best in the new year.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is time for a brutal history lesson for the Member for Daly and for anyone in the Labor Party or crossbench who wants to continue this falsity of an attack on Minister Charls. The attack for simply stating a plain truth says more about their tactics than his integrity.

‘Repeating a lie does not make it true’ has become a phrase that represents the democratic values we must defend. Why? It is because the National Socialist party, the Nazis the Member for Daly referred to, said the

exact opposite. When Minister Charls says, ‘Do not repeat a lie; it doesn’t make it true’, he is going directly against that ideology.

For the Member for Daly to attack that says far more about his beliefs. This is the man the Labor Party put second in command, a man who said he would ban protests if they did not agree with him. He then attacks a minister if they say what the Nazi Goebbels, who was the propogandist who stirred up the hatred with his lies that sent six million Jews to their death—when one of our ministers says that his lies are wrong and will never be true, the member decides to attack him. The Member for Daly needs to have a hard look at himself and his philosophical ideologies.

There is a common thread—the National Socialists; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; the Chinese Communist Party, which officially has a Marxist–Leninist socialist ideology; and the Labor Party of Australia, whose key objective is to obtain a socialist Australia. This is why I care. The member’s ridiculous attempt to cancel the minister falls directly in line with history. Pick up a history book, Member for Daly, and realise when the liars of the world get their lies out and try to make it truth, like he is doing to Minister Charls, he is repeating that same socialist history. That is why I fight it. My great-grandfathers fought them, and I will do it in this Chamber.

It is a disgusting low point to try to link the minister to that regime when he says, ‘Do not do it; do not repeat the mistakes they made. Do not lie and lie until it sticks because horrible things happen in the world.’ The socialists killed more than 100 million people last century, and that does not include the wars they started.

The Deputy Opposition Leader, the second in command of the Labor Party, is trying to attack anyone who is against the Nazi regime’s belief. He said that he would cancel protests he does not agree with.

This is what liberalism is about: we will not fall back to the 20th century and the horrors that were committed. I will fight the Australian Labor Party with every breath in me so that we do not return to those times. The fact that the second in command of the NT Labor Party would even breathe ounces of that old regime is an utter disgrace.

Minister Charls is a man of huge integrity and a family man. He is respected across the community. I will not see his good name and reputation destroyed for stating the truth that if you repeat lies, it does not become truth.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak on something in anticipation—something the Member for Drysdale might appreciate tonight; it is also a sombre adjournment speech. I will do my Christmas speech tomorrow.

I speak in anticipation of 9 December, which is the World Prevention of Genocide Day. Its official, longer, title is the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and the Prevention of this Crime. It is a day that demands from this parliament not merely reflection, but a moral reckoning.

Genocide does not arrive fully formed; it does not announce itself; it builds; it creeps. It is enabled by silence, normalised by complicity and cemented by the failure of those with power to act.

The 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines it precisely: the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group through killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction, preventing births or forcibly transferring children. These are all part of the definition of genocide.

Dr Gregory Stanton, founder of Genocide Watch, identified 10 stages through which genocides develop. They begin with classification and symbolisation; the division of the us from them. They proceed through dehumanisation, when victims are equated with animals, vermin or disease. Organisation follows, then polarisation, preparation, persecution and extermination. Finally comes denial. This framework is not merely academic; it is a warning system. When we see these stages manifest before our eyes, we have a legal and moral duty to name them.

World Prevention of Genocide Day exists because the international community swore never again after the Holocaust. It exists because humanity failed the Armenians, Tutsis and Cambodians. For survivors and their descendants, this day is sacred. It honours the dead, validates the grief of families who lost everything and reminds us that prevention—not merely punishment after the fact—must be our collective commitment.

Public awareness is not symbolic; it is preventive. When ordinary people understand how genocides unfold, they become witnesses, not bystanders. History offers us searing lessons. The Nazi genocide systematically murdered six million Jews, alongside Roma, disabled people and others deemed unworthy of life. The industrial machinery of death—the ghettos, trains and camps—was enabled by a society that had first accepted the dehumanisation of its victims.

In 1994 in Rwanda 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered in 100 days while the world watched. Radio stations broadcast kill lists. Neighbours murdered neighbours. The international community, which had the intelligence, capability and legal authority to intervene, chose not to.

I will also speak about genocides that remain insufficiently recognised in our national consciousness. Between 1915 and 1923 the Ottoman Empire perpetrated systemic extermination against its Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Christian minorities. Two-and-a-half million souls perished through death marches, massacres, starvation and forced conversion. The Armenian genocide of April 1915 saw the arrest and murder of intellectuals and community leaders as the opening act of annihilation. In Australia recognition has come slowly and incompletely. New South Wales became the first state to formally recognise the Armenian genocide in 1997; South Australia followed in 2009 and Tasmania in 2023—each expanding recognition to include the Assyrian and Greek genocides, yet the Northern Territory has not joined them.

I have been approach by the Armenian National Committee of Australia and I am in communication with the Armenian, Greek Orthodox and Assyrian community representatives about supporting their formal recognition in this parliament. These communities deserve acknowledgement. Their ancestors deserve remembrance. The truth of history must be spoken.

History is not only behind us; it unfolds now. In Gaza over 45,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel since October 2023, more than 14,500 of them children. In my maiden speech in this Chamber I said a quote from that time when we were elected that if you were to attend a funeral for every child killed in Gaza you would be attending funerals for just over 30 years. That is over 50 years now. If you were to attend a funeral for every little child killed—many of them under the age of one—you would be attending a funeral every day for over 50 years.

The United Nations office for human rights has verified that 70% of identified victims are women and children. This is not collateral damage; this is systematic destruction.

All 12 of Gaza's universities have been razed to the ground. More than 80% of schools have been damaged or destroyed. The UN has named this as 'scholasticide', the deliberate obliteration of education and the future it represents. How can a people pick themselves up and continue when they cannot educate their children?

Ninety-four per cent of hospitals have been damaged or destroyed. The healthcare system has collapsed.

One hundred per cent of Gaza's population faces acute food insecurity. The United Nations has declared famine. Children are dying of malnutrition.

Water availability has dropped to less than five litres per person per day. Over 84% of water and sanitation infrastructure has been destroyed.

The world's leading genocide scholars have spoken with devastating clarity. Professor Raz Segal, director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University, called Israel's assaults a 'textbook case of genocide' as early as October 2023.

Professor Omer Bartov of Brown University, one of the world's foremost Holocaust scholars, stated in September last year that Israel is carrying out 'genocidal actions, ethnic cleansing and annexation'. He described the systematic destruction of everything that allows a person to sustain themselves physically and culturally.

The International Association of Genocide Scholars voted 86% to declare that Israel's actions meet the legal definition of genocide.

Despite these warnings and the broken bodies of children pulled from the rubble, the world has failed to act. Now we are told there is a ceasefire. There is no ceasefire in Gaza. What was declared on 10 October was not peace; it was diplomatic cover for continuing genocide. Since this so-called ceasefire began Israel has violated it nearly 500 times in 44 days, killing 342 civilians. I watched a video the other day of a little six or seven-year-old, hysterical, bleeding, covered in dust, trying to find her parents. There was a little baby

younger than one in the dirt, and the medics could not stem the bleeding. Do not tell me there is a ceasefire in Gaza; there is not.

The bombing has not stopped. This is not a ceasefire; it is genocide under diplomatic cover. This is extermination dressed as conflict resolution. The international community, led by the United States, enables it.

Australia bears its share of the shame. Despite the federal government's outrageous claims that we do not supply weapons to Israel, investigative reporting—as I have said already in this House—revealed 68 documented shipments of F-35 fighter jet parts sent directly from Australia to Israel. These are exclusive components for the F-35 bomb bay door mechanisms. These parts are shipped on commercial flights and contribute directly to the aircraft raining destruction on Gaza. This is not neutrality; this is participation. Australia must impose an immediate comprehensive arms embargo on Israel. Anything less makes us complicit.

We cannot speak of genocide prevention while remaining silent about genocide foundation. Australia was built on genocide. The evidence is overwhelming, with more than 400 documented massacres of Aboriginal people between 1788 and 1930 and more than 10,000 First Nations people lost in recorded frontier violence alone; the population reduced by 90%. Then came the stolen generations. One in three Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families with explicit intent to eliminate Aboriginal identity. That is part of genocide, yet Australia has never formally recognised or acknowledged this genocide.

Aboriginal people are 17 times more likely to be incarcerated. We have stats about the life expectancy gap. Victoria's Yoorrook Justice Commission did find this year that genocide was committed against Aboriginal Victorians, yet federally and in the NT we remain in denial. Genocide prevention begins with truth. It requires us to name what is happening in our history and our present. It demands action not rhetoric.

On this coming World Prevention of Genocide Day I call on members of this parliament to recognise the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides. I call upon Australia to acknowledge the genocide upon which this nation was built. I call upon our governments to end their complicity in the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Never again must mean never again for everyone.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I update the Assembly on the actions I have taken and continue to take on behalf of my Tiwi communities following the devastating impacts of Cyclone Fina, particularly on Tiwi College and Pickertaramoor. From the moment the scale of the damage became clearer I have been in direct contact with Principal James Faraone, affected families and community leaders and the dedicated staff who call Tiwi College home.

I acknowledge plainly that no emergency response is ever perfect. Events like Cyclone Fina test systems and stretch resources in ways that cannot be predicted to the minute, but it is equally true that Territorians have a reasonable expectation of support, and Tiwi College is no exception.

The damage to the college is significant, with buildings damaged, water and infrastructure compromised, staff accommodation made unsafe and teaching and learning spaces rendered unusable. The early assessments indicate that the repair bill may reach half-a-million dollars—a cost that no small school, particularly one in a remote community, can reasonably absorb on its own.

I commend the rapid reopening of schools across Darwin. Even those that required repairs and clearing could welcome students again within days. This is a testament to the government workers, Power and Water and local contractors and dedicated school staff across the Territory, but equity matters. Remote schools deserve the same urgency, attention and practical support as schools in urban centres.

The fact that Tiwi College had to evacuate staff to ensure their safety demonstrates how severe the impacts were on that college. The idea that the college may be ineligible for funding support simply because the school made the reasonable decision to evacuate staff rather than wait for official direction is both unfair and inconsistent with the intent of disaster recovery frameworks. Principal Faraone acted to keep his people safe. That decision should not penalise the school.

It is for this reason that I have written to the minister for Education and the Chief Minister requesting that the government meet urgently with Tiwi College to discuss a fair and reasonable pathway forward. The college cannot and should not be left to carry this burden alone.

My goal is not to criticise for the sake of criticism; my goal is to ensure the Tiwi Islands receive an equitable response, one that recognises their vulnerability, their remoteness and the immense value that Tiwi College brings to education and opportunity for young people.

As the local member, I will keep working constructively with the government, the department of Education and the college to ensure that support is delivered where it is needed. Recovery will not happen overnight, we understand, but it will happen faster and fairer if we all work together.

Tiwi College is a pillar of its community, students, families and staff. They deserve a commitment from this government that they will not be left behind.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I reflect on the year that was 2025 and give my thanks to the incredible people who have supported not just me but also our government to achieve many things for Territorians. I will always say that I never want to be known as a career politician. I am here to help people, help my community and ensure it is a better place than when I came into this parliament.

After a solid year of work and policy change, I can truly say that Alice Springs is a better place to live, work and invest than it was 15 months ago. Our town has seen huge things occur over the last 12 months. I congratulate many people across the departments for ensuring that this year Alice Springs is set up to deliver on the CLP government's commitments.

In 2026 we will see our multicultural centre and Gillen ovals start to be developed. The Alice Springs Town Council has announced the location for its new library, thanks to the CLP government's commitment of $15m.

A new skate park in Madam Speaker's electorate of Araluen will also be delivered due to money put in by this government. Many may not realise it was the former mayor, Mayor Paterson, who came to this government with a vision to improve liveability for our town. The council was short by about $1.8m to deliver a new skate park and family recreation area—the skate park play precinct. It was not going to happen. It was the strong advocacy of the Member for Namatjira and me that ensured the investment for our town could go ahead.

I sincerely thank the MPH builders, which are delivering the project, for all their work, as well as Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro for seeing that after years of broken promises our town needed delivery of projects. As we move into 2026 that is exactly what we are poised to do.

We have a reinvigorated tourism space, with the Masters Games taking centre stage once again as a premier event in our town. The truckies reunion was held for the first time in years, bringing back many from the road transport industry to our town. These things did not just occur; they required the hard work of public servants working diligently to deliver upon these promises of our government.

I sincerely thank my ministerial office staff, Phil, Racheal, Kym-Marie and Jodi. We had incredible people assisting throughout the year, including Kia, Alicia and now Ebony, to keep the public up to date with everything that is occurring across the NT. To Jack and Mitch, for all the photos and everything you do, thank you.

In my electorate office I thank Rowie and Michelle, along with Jen who has helped out when she can. Your tireless work ensures that everyone who comes into the office seeking help is heard and that help is delivered when it can be.

I often talk about the whiteboard in my office with the lists of people we have helped over the years. It is those people who keep me going. There are days when you miss your family and everyone is having a crack. When I walk into that room I see the people who are still in this country because of the help we have provided with visas; a woman who now owns her own home thanks to our advocacy and the old couple who do not have to worry about a tree falling on their home thanks to the work of our office. These are the little things that I love about being an elected member. It is having the time—which is becoming increasingly strained, I might add—to help and support our community, which put us there in the first place.

I thank the hardworking people of Braitling for another year of challenges and success for our beautiful part of the Northern Territory.

Thank you to my parliamentary colleagues. I genuinely appreciate all your work and assistance in ensuring we can achieve things for our communities and the Northern Territory as a whole. From saving sporting ovals to delivering events, ensuring local projects go ahead and money is spent across the NT on important infrastructure projects, I would not want to go through this with anyone else.

It truly is what makes us different that is our biggest strength. To see a conservative political movement with people from all over the world who came to Australia and the NT to make this place their home always fills me with great pride.

Thank you to all my parliamentary colleagues, the staff at Parliament House, the security guards who keep us safe, the cleaners I often see working late and working multiple jobs to support their families, the departmental staff and the CEs who work tirelessly to deliver for Territorians and, of course, the DLA staff.

Merry Christmas. I look forward to seeing this parliament return in 2026 refreshed and ready to deliver for Territorians.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I pay tribute to a local Alice Springs business celebrating 25 years of operating. This business was opened by a local couple in July 2000. The business was opened on a small budget with great hopes. This humble couple saw an opportunity to open a unique shop in Alice Springs. They had little experience in retail, let alone managing a store.

Their first shop was in Gregory Terrace in Alice Springs, now the site of Central Clinic. They extended in 2005 into a purpose-built premises on Parsons Street.

Over 25 years they have employed hundreds of people of all ages, many young people on a casual basis and many older people. Proudly their store manager, Karen, has been with them for over 20 years and Marg and Jeanie have been with them for around 10 years. Their excellent staff and excellent customer service is noted by their customers.

The shop was named after their son. It is called Mad Harry's. The couple is my husband and me, and we are proud to have owned and operated Mad Harry's for a quarter of a century. We have been through 25 years of the ups and downs of running a business in the NT. It has been an amazing ride. We have no regrets despite the seven-days-a-week operation and the enormous challenges that come with operating a business. As we were told 25 years ago when we started Mad Harry's, if it was easy everyone would do it.

Craig and I love our town and our community. We thank the people of Alice Springs for getting behind us and supporting our business, Mad Harry's, and we hope we have been behind you, all the way.

Now for my Christmas wish, which I did not intend to do teary. On this second last day of sittings for 2025, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the wonderful people I have worked with and worked for.

The staff at the Araluen electorate office, Holly, Ashleigh, Annalisa and Mia, are a great team of people I can rely on 100%.

To the wonderful people of Alice Springs who seem to maintain some faith in me as their local member of parliament, thank you.

To David, my executive officer in the Speaker's Office, who followed me from Alice Springs to Darwin, thank you.

I thank Russell, the Clerk of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, and his amazing team for a great first 12 months of working together. It has been rewarding for me and a great privilege to be the Speaker of the Assembly.

To all the staff at Parliament House who support us, thank you. A big thank you to the staff of Hansard and the cleaners. Everyone mentions the cleaners and Hansard—you cannot not do that in your adjournment speeches for Christmas. To the security team, the finance crew and all the staff of the Department of the Legislative Assembly, thank you.

To my parliamentary colleagues, for the first time in many years, I can honestly say it has been enjoyable and rewarding to work with you this year. I wish you all a safe and peaceful Christmas.

To my daughter, Alice, and my husband, Craig, it does not happen without you. Thank you for your patience and love.

Happy Christmas to all Territorians.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I honour two remarkable Territorians whose recent passing has left a deep sense of loss across my community and the Territory, Mrs Julie Ann Thornton and Mr John Ladbury Wilkins.

Mrs Julie Ann Thornton was a much-loved member of the Wanguri community whose passing has been deeply felt. Julie's life began in Mullumbimby and took her across regional New South Wales before she

made the Northern Territory her home in 1975, arriving shortly after Cyclone Tracy to contribute her nursing skills to a city rebuilding itself.

In 1984 Julie met Peter John Thornton at one of her bosses' Friday night work parties. A mutual fondness of each other grew, and over time they became an item and later married on 14 February 1987. Julie and Peter went on to raise their daughters, Cassandra and Jessica. Later Julie embraced her greatest joy, her grandchildren, Payton, Dash and Mila Mae.

Julie built an outstanding professional reputation as a financial planner with the National Bank of Australia, where she helped countless Territorians secure financial independence and long-term comfort. She was widely respected for her integrity, empathy and dedication, earning multiple awards for her exemplary service. The Member for Brennan and I both worked in that field with her.

After her retirement Julie poured her energy into family life and her creative passions. A gifted quilter, sewer and knitter, she founded the much-loved Darwin Bitches and Stitches group, bringing friendship, creativity and joy to many.

Julie lived with courage and optimism, overcoming significant health challenges, including surviving a western brown snakebite with remarkable tenacity. She was woman of warmth, humour and a depth of generosity.

To Peter, Cassandra, Jessica and Julie's adored grandchildren, the Wanguri community stands with you. Julie's legacy of love, creativity and her service will live on with all who knew her.

I also pay tribute to Mr John Ladbury Wilkins, a man whose live was filled with service, adventure and community spirit. He was born in 1933. John lived and extraordinary life, beautifully captured in his memoir, *Young John's Own Adventures*. Across its pages we see him as a son, brother, telecommunications engineer, ham radio operator, a Sunday school teacher, church elder, pilot, handyman, exam supervisor, sports lover, traveller and, above all, cherished member of his family.

In Darwin John was perhaps best known for his enormous contribution to community wellbeing. He was a regular volunteer at Food for Life. He provided meals, support and fellowship to those who needed it most. He was also a reliable source of transport for community members who could not drive, ensuring they stayed connected to essential services and social life.

Even in his later years John remained active and engaged, still supervising university exams well into his retirement. John loved to travel. He lived in Papua New Guinea for four years; travelled to Hawaii and the Philippines with mission work; made trips to the UK, Canada and the US with Avril; had wonderful trips with his son Stephen on his yacht *Xplore* in the Antarctic and South America; and made many trips to Indonesia with his wife, Jenni, to visit her family. This travel was proof of his adventurous nature.

John was a people person in every sense—warm, humorous and quick to build connection. His community, family and especially his loving wife, Jenni, feel his loss deeply. On behalf of the Wanguri electorate, I extend my heartfelt condolences to Jenni, the Wilkins family and John's many friends. The Territory is the richer for his service and kindness.

On a different note, as the proud Member for Wanguri, I celebrate a uniquely Territorian story, the national recognition of the Wanguri barramundi fish featured on a special edition $1 coin released by the Royal Australian Mint. Although this collectors' coin will not enter everyday circulation, it firmly places our local identity on the national stage and honours a story deeply rooted in our community and culture.

Standing proudly in the grounds of Wanguri Primary School is our beloved Big Barramundi, a vibrant four-metre sculpture named *Damabila*, the Larrakia word for barramundi. *Damabila* is not just public art; it is a cultural statement, an educational symbol and a source of genuine community pride. The species was purposedly selected to honour the traditional saltwater people, the Larrakia and Wangurri owners of Darwin and north-east Arnhem Land, whose connection to sea country stretches back countless generations.

The sculpture, created by Chilean-born Darwin artist Techy Masero, was built from steel and cement and completed in 2010, when its colourful mosaic tiles were added with the help of Wanguri Primary School students. It is a true community collaboration of emerging cultures and generations and artistic traditions. Madam Speaker, I invite you to come and see that fish if you would like to one day. Come and visit.

Today *Damabila* forms the official logo of the multicultural Wanguri Primary School whose motto, 'Hooked on Learning' captures both the spirit of the sculpture and the aspirations of its community. Australia is famous for its big things—the Big Merino, Big Golden Guitar, Big Prawn, Big Galah and Big Mango—yet few carry the cultural depth, community participation and educational meaning that *Damabila* does. The Royal Australian Mint decision to feature the Wanguri barramundi celebrates that significance and honours the spirit of our northern suburbs. This special edition coin reminds us that local stories matter. They reflect the resilience, diversity and deep cultural roots that make Wanguri an exceptional place to call home.

I also recognise an exceptional educational leader in our community, Ms Leah Crockford, Principal of Leanyer School and the well-deserved recipient of the 2025 Principal of the Year Award. Ms Crockford was awarded the recognition here at Parliament House at the 2025 World Teachers' Day and the Teaching in the Territory Excellence Awards, hosted by Minister Hersey.

Ms Crockford is an accomplished Northern Territory principal whose career exemplifies excellence, innovation and deep commitment to the student achievement. Since 2011 she has led Berry Springs Primary School—which is where I went to primary school—and Leanyer School, transforming their cultures through evidence-based pedagogy and collaborative co-teaching models. Her leadership has produced sustained academic improvement, with Leanyer primary's 2025 NAPLAN results exceeding national standards in reading, writing and numeracy, and their excellence was confirmed in the 2024 school review.

Ms Crockford's influence extends across the Territory through the NTPA executive, the independent public schools network and the Education and Training executive board, where she supports leaders in urban, rural and remote schools. Her whole-school curriculum reform, Science of Reading implementation, strengthening of student voice and expanded cultural competence have earned national acclaim, including the Global Teacher Awards, the Chief Minister's Public Sector Excellence Award and a CBA Teaching Fellowship.

Leanyer School featured on the front page of the *Australian* as the Territory's top school for NAPLAN growth.

Leah Crockford sets the standards for educational leadership in the Northern Territory. I congratulate her and thank her for continuing her service to the children and families of the Wanguri electorate.

I will say most of my thankyous tomorrow, but my husband will probably be asleep or at work. I have not checked which shift he is on tomorrow. I thank him—because he is off today—for all the things he does in supporting me, doing all the housework. He is pretty good at it on his four days off. If you are looking for a husband get one who has a four-day roster, because the house is clean every four days; it is pretty good. He works tirelessly for the federal government, and many of you have probably seen him on your extended trips. He does exceptional work leading a team. He is a bit stressed sometimes, but he keeps me afloat. Thank you, Aaron, for everything you do in supporting me in this role. Goodnight, and I will see you later.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I thought for a minute there we were getting the Member for Wanguri's husband on offer.

It is with appreciation that I acknowledge the tremendous work of our support staff in Parliament House and in my electorate. As we approach the Christmas break, it is a fitting time to pause and give thanks to those who make our work serving the community not only possible but also smoother, lighter and more meaningful. Without their dedication I know that my job would be considerably more difficult.

I start by thanking my electorate officer, Jen, who is the yin to my yang. She is a calming influence and keeps the office ticking over, tending to constituent concerns, diary matters and much more. Jen recently had to whip off to America, where she became a grandmother for the first time. Her daughter lives in America and was having issues with her pregnancy. She gave birth to a beautiful baby boy, Cassius Roy Graves, three weeks early. Congratulations, Autumn, on your first baby. Jen was excited to make it there.

Thank you to Angie Walker for backfilling while Jen has been away. Angie's professionalism, attention to detail and ability to slip into the role has been a godsend. She had a good trainer; she worked for the Chief Minister when she was in opposition for 10 years, so she is efficient.

I extend a heartfelt thanks to the staff in my ministerial office, Amanda, Chrissy, Mandy, Zac and Leilani, for their dedication, energy and constant support. They keep me grounded, organised and fully across the Education and Training and OCPE portfolios. I am grateful to have such a committed team walking alongside me in my role as Education minister. I farewell Mandy who is moving on at the end of the week.

To all the staff in the Chief Minister's office, thank you for your tireless hours of work helping our team to deliver our commitments.

Thank you to the team in Education and Training. I acknowledge Susan Bowden, the CE; Tony Considine; Aderyn Chatterton; Paul Van Holstyn; and all the team in the department of Education. This year we have achieved a great deal in delivering our election commitments. I sincerely thank them for their hard work and unwavering support. They have had to be agile, pivot and have had a huge agenda, but we are just warming up; next year will be a big year also.

Commissioner Nicole Hurwood, Megan Townsend and all the team in OCPE who worked tirelessly throughout the year on the many enterprise agreements. The workload has been immense. I thank them for their contribution.

I also thank the drivers, Sam, Trevor, Andrew, Zidi and John, who ensure we get to where we need to be, often at odd hours and under demanding schedules. Your reliability and good humour make the long days that much easier. I have a standing joke with Sam. I also have a little gift for him. In jest, and with a lot of fun, I will be providing Sam with a map. He will know exactly what I am talking about.

I thank the security team who are always smiling. Their professional vigilance and warmth ensures that we can go about our duties safely each day. Even when we have issues in Katherine, I have not set the alarm or on the nights that I am working late in the office, I receive a call 'just checking in'. I thank them all and wish them a merry Christmas.

Thank you to the volunteers—Lyn and Bob Piper, Lyza, Cassie Russell-Pell—who deliver our newsletters, which will be out by the end of next week.

Thank you to Natalia, Nicole and Mateo for the pride they take in cleaning the office. They go about their business quietly and play an essential role in keeping this building running. Their efforts often go unseen but never unappreciated—not to a clean freak like me anyway; I love it.

To the many volunteers we have that help, including with the newsletter drops, thank you.

As we adjourn for the Christmas break, I wish all my colleagues, members of the opposition and members of the crossbench a safe and happy festive season. May you enjoy these special moments with the people you love, and I look forward to returning in the new year with renewed energy for the work ahead.

I also give a big shout-out to the CLP executive, members and our branch in Katherine.

To the DLA staff, thank you for your tireless work, and the people working in Hansard keeping our records alive.

I thank my family. They spend a lot time on their own when I am away. I thank my husband, Dean, and my son, William. I also thank my dogs, River and Darcy, who are ever so excited when I drive back in the yard; they are almost talking to me. Dog lovers will know what I am talking about. Our families have to put up with a lot that they did not sign up for, but I know that my family are proud and supportive of the role I do.

I have exciting news: my husband and I will become grandparents over the holidays. My son James and his partner, Kiara, are having a baby in Melbourne on 12 December; the baby will be born before I visit. My daughter, Hannah, and her partner, Jake, are having a baby on 29 January. They are close; we are excited. I will not be a 'grandma' or a 'nanna'; I told them that I will be a 'Jo-Jo'. I am not quite ready to be a grandma or a nanna, but we will see how that turns out in the new year. We are excited. My other son William is excited to become an uncle. I think my son will have a boy—who will give him the curry he gave me—and my daughter will have a baby girl that is beautiful like she is. That is what I am hoping for from Santa, and I told my son that too.

I will return to the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award ceremony which I spoke about last night but did not finish. I recognise the outstanding contribution of the Duke of Ed volunteers through the presentation of distinguished service medals and acknowledgement of five and 10 years of long service. The 10 years long service medal went to Ashley Cole, Joseph Hart and Lee Upton. The five years long service certificate went to Lisa Budarick, who is from Katherine; Joshua Burgoyne, the Member for Braitling; Cate Driver; Samuel Dyke; Cheryle Edwards; Jennifer Frank; Shannon Holborn; Belinda Howie; Susan Kennedy; Sean Kenny; Deb Lamb; Thomas McCall; Prue Rathborne; Sara Rose; Katrina Simmons; and Vincent Thorbjornsen.

The awards night was fantastic. I acknowledge volunteer NT committee members Hon Daryl Manzie, Chair; Spencer Harvey, Vice Chair; Lee Upton, Treasurer; Shannon Holborn, Secretary; Hon Joshua Burgoyne; Natasha Fyles; Bronwyn Haack; Belinda Howie; and Brigadier Douglas Pashley. I thank everyone involved for their ongoing commitment to our young people and this exceptional program.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, tomorrow I will thank people and reflect on the year gone by, but tonight I welcome to Bellamack the Koffee DecK which is a new cafe located between Ebony-Rose Hair Design and the Bell Bar at the corner of Forrest Parade and Chung Wah Terrace.

The Koffee DecK is the vision of Priya, who is a local Palmerston mum and was previously a teacher at Woodroffe Primary School. It is open 7 am till 1 pm Tuesday to Sunday and is fur baby friendly. Everyone in Palmerston and the surrounds, please come by and grab a coffee or drop in on your way to work to support the Koffee DecK; it is amazing.

I thank the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association Inc which recently had its AGM. Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association (PLSA) has been operating since 1997 and was originally established to provide morning tea and minor events for the seniors of Palmerston. Having become incorporated, its scope was expanded to include providing events for seniors of both Palmerston and Litchfield. The association is supported by the City of Palmerston, Litchfield Council and many other sponsors. The PLSA is a fixture of the Palmerston seniors' landscape and hosts regular morning teas in Palmerston and the rural area. It also organises the annual Seniors Fortnight during Seniors Month.

The Palmerston members regularly contribute towards the association's raffles which are well attended and well received.

At the AGM, the patron, Natalie La Pira, continued; thank you, Natalie. The new president for this year is Neville Driver. I thank Marg Lee for her service as President of the PLSA. The vice president is Janette Ashby; secretary, Valerie Wilkie; treasurer, Sheryl Sephton; and public officer, Neville Driver. I make special mention of Neville Driver, who is an efficient organiser, drives a hard bargain and gets the best for the PLSA out of all and sundry.

The general committee members are Glenda Bradbury; Christine Cardow; Geraldine (Gerry) Crowhurst; Maryke Lawton; Helen Lemcke; Gillian Marnell; Barbara Murray; Glenda Reid; Jennifer Segav; and Diane (Di) Spicer.

At the AGM several people were recognised for their distinguished service and given various awards. Gerry Crowhurst received the 10-year service award. Gerry, we thank you for your service and for all you have done for the PLSA.

Recognised with life membership were immediate past president, Marg Lee, who has been a staple of the PLSA and various seniors' groups around Palmerston. Thank you for your service, Marg. Also recognised for life membership were Sheryl Sephton and Janette Ashby. Thank you to everyone involved with the PLSA and the committee for all your hard work.

I honour the Palmerston Cricket Club in the suburb of Woodroffe in my electorate, which recently held its annual general meeting. The 2026 committee has continuity and renewal, with new faces and familiar faces. I am pleased to welcome new committee members Hamish Martin; Tamika O'Brien; Laura Ryan; Dale Edwards; and Justine Edwards. I give a big thank you to the returning members for their continued commitment, Adrian Gallagher; Glen Chatto; Luke McMahon; Daniel Fett; Joel Carter; Briony Gallagher; Sarah Fowler; Brendan Rudd; Anthony Schuppan; and Mel Osborne. I also thank the outgoing committee members for their contributions over the past year.

The president is Adrian Gallagher; vice president, Glen Chatto; treasurer, Luke McMahon; assistant treasurer, Daniel Fett; secretary, Joel Carter; junior coordinator, Briony Gallagher; men's player represent, Hamish Martin; women's player represent, Sarah Fowler; social media manager, Tamika O'Brien; maintenance team, Brendan Rudd, Varinder Kumar and Anthony Schuppan; and general members, Mel Osborne, Laura Ryan, Dale Edwards and Justine Edwards.

Well done to the Palmerston Cricket Club. I look forward to another great season at Woodroffe Oval.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, this time last year I reflected on the festive note of the Treasurer's midyear report and I made a promise that I would turn up here in a Santa suit if I could report on

positive economic metrics, and I wanted to 100% stick to that promise, but, alas, it will have to wait until the new year because the Treasurer has decided to defer that until the new year.

However, it gives me the opportunity to speak about my other great love, which is music. I reflect briefly on the fact that whilst Christmas is a time for all of us to unwind to a large extent, for a lot of performers and entertainers it is a busy time of the year. They are working, sharing and providing the backdrop to Christmas for the rest of us to enjoy the festive season.

For most of us a lot of it starts with the Christmas Pageant, which happened on 15 November and went through the city. It was a wonderful event with a magnificent atmosphere. It was good to see so many people out there and the lighting of the tree. It is a unique and special event. Having a Christmas Pageant when it is that hot and sweaty makes you feel at home—Christmas in the tropics.

That is where it starts for a lot of people, but for me, I must confess, my Christmas season now is starting to become synonymous with the Stuart Park Primary music assembly. It is fast becoming the most important fixture in my musical calendar. It was such a pleasure again today to go and join the junior and the senior school band and play along with the mighty trombone section. We put on a stirring performance of favourites like *Tequila*, *Eye of the Tiger* and *Funky Town* as well as *Jingle Bells* and a range of others. Honestly, I cannot tell you how much joy it brings to me.

Maria Albion runs a fantastic school at Stuart Park Primary. Sylvia Siskamanis also does stellar work. Alastair Marshall runs the choir, and it is a wonderful choir to listen to. I could not have thought of anywhere better to be at lunchtime today. There was a huge mass choir, a beautiful guitar ensemble, a fantastic percussion ensemble and the junior and senior bands. They were ably supported by the Northern Territory Music School, which does not get enough recognition, in my opinion, for all the hard work it does across our schooling system.

To Tim Sinclair, Genevieve Meahan and Natalie Chin, who conducted all those ensembles, well done for all your hard work. It was wonderful. I note that Natalie is retiring at the end of this year. She seems far too young to be retiring, and she will be sorely missed. I know she will still be a fixture of the music scene of the Northern Territory.

As I have said before, Stuart Park is a wonderful school and preschool. My favourite moment of the year, other than the music assembly, was the Preschool Wheel-a-Thon. I love that the school is invested in professional development and has a great and active council, longstanding dedicated staff and consistent numbers. It is a melting pot of a school with a diverse student cohort. The staff of 40-plus people are committed to all the right things—literacy, numeracy and explicit teaching—which is the foundation for them to provide great extracurricular opportunities for the kids, like the music program.

I am delighted to spend a bit of my time still being a music teacher on the side. I can honestly say, hand on heart, to everyone in the Stuart Park Primary School community, thank you so much for sharing your community with me. It has been the joy and the highlight of my current job, without a shadow of a doubt.

Another organisation I am constantly grateful for, which I think all of us should be grateful for, is the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. I mention it regularly because I never want us to forget what an important fixture the orchestra is in our landscape, providing opportunity and helping us to grow a vibrant community.

On 19 November it was lovely to be at the orchestra's 2026 program launch to hear about all the concerts it has coming up next year. There will be about a half dozen of them in March, May, June, August and October through to December, looking at virtuosity and imagination; island songs; the movie hit stuff it does; Shakespeare and symphony, with poetry, loss and love; the Palmerston Classics; the Family Proms; Mozart and more; and music for curious young minds. It is wonderful to see young kids interact with the orchestra, as I saw recently in Palmerston. Towards the end of the year, the orchestra always has a Songs of the Season moment, when the rain comes, the frogs start singing, the voices soar and joy abounds.

If you cannot wait until next year, 6 December is this year's final Darwin Symphony Orchestra concert, Symphony of the Soul. It is a farewell full of heart and soul. Tchaikovsky's quote was, 'Without exaggeration, 'I put my whole soul into this', being his sixth symphony, and that is what the orchestra will play. The concert is also a farewell to artistic director and chief conductor Jonathan Tooby, who has poured his soul into the orchestra for the last seven years. He has done a wonderful service.

I am grateful to the Chair, Claire Kilgariff, for keeping me in the loop with the orchestra, and Dr Richard Mills, who is the new artistic director. It is a great coup that we have secured someone of his stature to be involved with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. Of course, I wish Jonathan Tooby the best with his future endeavours.

Another taken-for-granted fixture of our calendar is Carols by Candlelight in the Amphitheatre. This year is its 50th anniversary. Think about it: that is a long time it has been running. I encourage you all to go there. It is a wonderful event.

On 7 December there will be a 50-strong choir, 18 soloists and the Band of the 1st Brigade of the Australian Army, plus dozens of volunteers. The Darwin Chorale forms the backbone of that choir and does not get a lot of credit for it, but its members do amazing work. I have been to recent rehearsals at Robertson Barracks and everyone is working hard. It will be a fantastic event. Come for the food, festivity and fun, sing along and watch the fantastic fireworks.

It would be remiss not to mention specifically Nora Lewis, who is now Dr Nora Lewis AM, having been recently awarded an honorary doctorate from Charles Darwin University for all of her services to music, as well as Captain Natalie Dajski, leader of the 1st Brigade band, who is putting in huge amounts of effort making sure it will be a great family fun show for everyone.

Remember it also raises a tonne of money for Variety, so go out there. I think this year it is themed as the Golden Oldies concert. All the people who are on the soloists' register had to be long-term Territorians to get on the roster, so if you want to see some old famous names and faces of Darwin celebrity music, they will all be on stage. I would name drop them all, but I know I would miss a couple. Come out for that.

If you are looking for something a bit different, on 13 December there is the Navy Band, which is growing and we are seeing an expanded presence playing in lots of functions, including in Parliament House where we are seeing it all the time now as well. At my beloved Dinah Beach Cruising Yacht Association (the Dinah Beach Yacht Club) the Patron and the Noteheads are putting on jazz carols. It is an opportunity to kick back and enjoy a tropical Christmas. That will be a great atmosphere as well.

Well done to everybody at Dinah Beach for not just battening down the hatches, but rebuilding the place off the back of the cyclone the other day. There were a few different things to contend with in the aftermath of it, and the carols will be a great opportunity for all of us to celebrate together. I warmly encourage and invite everybody in the House to come along if you fancy some of those famous chicken wings alongside a few Michael Buble Christmas tunes.

If you are looking for something a little more conventional, the Arafura Wind Ensemble every year, close to Christmas, puts on its annual Salvation Army Carols by the Lawn at the church hall on Yanyula Drive and Lee Point Road. It is conducted by the indefatigable Stephen Pevely, who has been on the Darwin music scene forever and a day. He is a phenomenal clarinettist, wonderful conductor and generous individual. It is a great community event.

The band has become a pivotal part of the event's success. Along with the carols, there are always classic Christmas selections performed by the AWE. It is a fun festive gig close to Christmas Day. Those of you who cannot get away somewhere exotic and still want to sing Christmas carols and be surrounded by a bunch of people lighting candles in 35-degree heat and humidity, which will likely extinguish your candle, come along because it will be a fun time and a wonderful place to celebrate Christmas together.

I will not say an exhaustive list of thankyous. I simply want to say to everybody in this place, my colleagues, the staff, all the people who keep the building operational and the people who I probably appreciate the most, Hansard—who put up with how fast I speak and all the things that I say—thank you so much to everybody for facilitating and enabling the work that we do in this place. To all my colleagues, I honestly wish you all a safe and restful Christmas break. I hope that we all, God willing, have a positive and prosperous year ahead.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I pay special tribute to Mr Ken Simmons who tragically and sadly passed away on Sunday 16 November 2025.

Ken was dear to me. He was in his late seventies. I first met him when I got to know his daughter, Bridget, and her family, Dean and her two boys, Lucas and James. Ken was Bridget's dad and I met them during the campaign before I was elected. Straightaway we got on well and he told me how he used to deliver the phonebooks around the suburbs. He said to me, 'If you ever need any help delivering any of your flyers, let me know', so I took that opportunity. He started to deliver newsletters for me, more than five years ago, for the electorate of Brennan.

He passed away only a couple of weeks ago. It was a sad time. His daughter, Bridget, was by his side the whole time. It all happened quickly.

He was quite elderly for a letterboxer, but he would be out there every quarter delivering my newsletter, pounding the pavement and saying hello to every person he possibly could. A lot of people would chat to me and say, 'Who is that old guy who does your letterboxing? He is amazing.' He became part of our community and got to know a lot of people.

I am sad about his loss, and I will miss him greatly. All my love goes to Bridget, Dean, Lucas and James. I know he will be very much missed by not only our community, me and my office staff but also his family.

It is Christmas and the end of the year. I say a big thank you to my electorate office staff. Hollie has been with me from the start. She is an amazing worker but is also caring for our community and does a whole heap of work for it. I am grateful to have her in my office. Tahlia joined us just after the election to work part time alongside Hollie and me. She has been a great addition to the office. We said goodbye to Jade, whom I say I gave to the Member for Wanguri, because she went to work for her full time instead of a two-day-a-week job. I hear she is going great guns there too. Thank you, Hollie and Tahlia. You do an amazing job. I could not do this important role for Territorians without either of you.

I also say a huge thank you to my ministerial staff. I will not name them, but they know who they are. I could not be the Attorney-General or the minister for all the portfolios I have without them by my side. They are genuine and we all work as a team well together. We get in and get the job done. It works well. I am grateful to all the staff who work in my ministerial office.

Merry Christmas to all my department staff as well at the Attorney-General's Department; the Department of Tourism and Hospitality; NT Major Events, which will come together soon, as we talked about earlier; the racing department within the Department of Tourism and Hospitality; and Parks and Wildlife. Merry Christmas to all those people and thank you for all the hard work you have done over the last 12 months.

Merry Christmas and thank you to all the Parliament House staff as well. They always get a mention, but they deserve it—the security, the amazing building maintenance team, Hansard and the Table Office, who often have to read our scribbles on bits of paper, especially when we go through names. Thank you so much.

I give a huge shout-out and merry Christmas to the businesses in my electorate. Some of you may know them.

Blooms the Chemist at the Bakewell Shopping Centre does an incredible job donating so much of its good to the community, including the Palmerston and Litchfield seniors club, when we do packages for the troops and all sorts of other things. The people at Blooms are always there when you need them. Merry Christmas to the team at Blooms the Chemist.

Brumby's Bakewell next to the Woolworths does a mean potato-top pie if anyone wants to try that.

Across from the shopping centre is Supero Pizza and Kebab. I shout out to the people at Supero because there have been times when we had a delivery to our house. They deliver the pizza and they are amazing. Thank you, Supero.

There are quite a few takeaway outlets in Bakewell. Guzman Y Gomez (GYG) is also there. That franchise has new owners who are doing a fantastic job. A big shout-out to them and their team. The business is busy all the time, which is fabulous for the young couple who bought that franchise.

Nails Designed by James is a new nail artist in the shopping centre next to Guzman. I have been there. The people there do a fantastic job and are always busy. Merry Christmas to them.

We have a hairdresser called Hair by Alia. I met her a number of times. We have been there taking photos and doing media with her because she was a victim of crime over a number of months. I report that she is doing well and her salon is also fantastic. Merry Christmas to her.

We also have Ballantynes Fish and Chips, the Rosebery Mini-Mart and Incredible India. They do a fantastic job. My kids tell me that Incredible India has the best butter chicken, and that is what we get. In fact, we just order three butter chickens. It is easy and they love it, so thank you to the team at Incredible India and merry Christmas.

We have Your Smile Dental with Paul and Wei Ling. They are my kids' dentists, and they do a good job.

Our family shops at and are serviced by a lot of the places in my electorate, which we love.

We also attend the Top End Medical Centre at Rosebery which is also amazing. The doctors there do skin care; we all had our skin checked. They do a fantastic job.

Next door to that is the United service station which also has Pie Face. Sometimes the people there have a bit of trouble with some of the kids going around the place. It used to be a lot worse than it is now. There is a fantastic team at United. The staff are always smiling and happy to see everyone. It is a busy little service station. Merry Christmas to them as well.

Palmerston's sporting fabric is alive and well. We have amazing local clubs that make up the community we have in Palmerston. On Saturday mornings a heap of parents take their kids to sport. I want the clubs to know that the Members for Spillett, Drysdale and Blain and I all support them, wish them a merry Christmas and thank them for all the work they do.

I shout out to Alex and his team at Tennis Palmerston; Sharon and the crew at Mash Netball Club; Adrian, Briony and all the guys at Palmerston Cricket Club; Byrne at Palmerston Rovers Football Club; and Shaun, Chris, Nerissa and all the committee at the Greater Palmerston United Football Club. Rovers Football Club and GPU have a juniors soccer Palmerston derby, which is always such a good game. It is very competitive.

I also shout out to the Palmerston Crocs Rugby Union Club; the Northern Sharks Rugby League Club; the Palmerston Magpies Football Club; and the Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Football Club, which also has a union club. A lot of these clubs have men's and women's teams and do a fantastic job. Thank you and merry Christmas to everyone in all the clubs.

I attended the Palmerston Heart Foundation walking group Christmas lunch on 7 November. It was my first Christmas lunch this year. Everyone dressed up, and I was the only who did not dress up—it was a bit early for me—but I had a great time. Thank you to Jenny Conelius for organisation that Christmas get-together at Cazalys. The group's members walk around the Palmerston Shopping Centre every Friday morning and Monday—I do not often see them on Monday, but I see them on Friday morning. It is all inside and air-conditioned, so no matter if it is raining or hot, they are there. There is a huge group of them now. I say a merry Christmas to them and thank them for having me along at their Christmas party.

I shout out to the principals in my electorate, Danielle Banicek from Rosebery; Warwick Peter-Budge from Bakewell; Ben McCasker from Zuccoli; Michelle Garbutt from Mother Teresa Catholic Primary; Maisie Floyd from Palmerston College; Annette Pedersen from Palmerston College Year 10 to 12; Kristi Beynon from Palmerston College Year 7 to 9; and Lucas Hurley of MacKillop Catholic College. I wish them all a merry Christmas. The ones who are in middle schools or high schools will have a big change next year. Palmerston College will be no longer; it will be called Driver Secondary School and Rosebery Secondary School next year. I wish them all the best. They have had a huge year. We have been to some graduations already, and we are proud of all of them.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I place on the record my congratulations to the 2025 World Teachers' Day Awards winners. I am proud of the regional winners and one of the overall winners who were from the Arnhem electorate.

The Northern Territory Principal of the Year is Leah Crockford from Leanyer Primary School in Darwin. The East Arnhem regional winner, who is from the Arnhem electorate, is Genevieve Wild from Umbakumba School on Groote Eylandt.

The Northern Territory Leader in Education of the Year is Anica Beckett from Kintore Street School in Big Rivers. It also services and provides support for some students in the Arnhem electorate.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year is Josh Lander from Larapinta School in Central Australia. The East Arnhem regional winner is Rilmi Ganambarr from Laynhapuy Homelands School in my electorate. The Big Rivers regional winner is Hilda Ngalmi from Numbulwar School, who is a well-versed linguist and educator and with whom I had the honour and privilege to work when I was a teacher at Numbulwar School. She is also a family member.

The Northern Territory Corporate Based Support Person of the Year is Sue Rae from the Top End Corporate Office in the Top End region. The Big Rivers regional winner is Dianne Scannell from the Big Rivers Office in Katherine.

The Northern Territory Early Childhood Educator of the Year is Sarah George from Ross Park Primary School in Central Australia. The Big Rivers regional winner is Philippa Stansell from Ngukurr School in Big Rivers.

I worked with Philippa when I was a teacher at Numbulwar. She knows my family well. The East Arnhem regional winner is Amanda Avila from Alyangula Area School on Groote Eylandt.

The Northern Territory Inclusion Educator of the Year is Josh Keating from Henbury School in Darwin.

The Northern Territory Primary Educator of the Year is Roxine Smith from Gapuwiyak School in the East Arnhem region. Roxine is a phenomenal educator and a fantastic human being who is amazing with her students. If you go online you can see some of Roxine's story of teaching at Gapuwiyak. I do not think she knows how good she is. She is a fantastic educator. The Big Rivers regional winner was Rodney Gregg from Casuarina Street Primary School. I have seen Rodney in action in Katherine. He is a great educator as well.

The Northern Territory School Based Support Person of Year is Mary Noonan from Rockhampton Downs School in the Barkly region.

The Northern Territory Secondary Educator of the Year is Sophie Grambeau from Gunbalanya School in the Top End region, which is in the Member for Arafura's electorate.

Congratulations to each of the winners, particularly those from the Arnhem electorate. I look forward to seeing them all at the schools. If I do not get to their schools before Christmas, it will definitely be in the new year.

There are only two more sitting days until the end of the year. It almost sounds like a Christmas present for many people, doesn't it? There is still a lot of work to do.

I thank the people I represent every day in this House, as the Member for Arnhem.

I shout out to the people of RAAF Tindal. I have learned a lot about Defence by representing Tindal, which is only 15 minutes out of Katherine, where I live and where the electorate office is. It is a huge part of the Big Rivers region and the defence of Australia. It is home to the F-35 Lightning II. Some of the top guns in the country are based at Tindal.

I give a special shout-out to the outgoing Wing Commander of the 75th Squadron, Andy Nilson, and his wife, Pippa, and their lovely three children. They will, unfortunately, be leaving the Tindal family and moving to Canberra. Congratulations to Andy on the work he has done in two years of being the Wing Commander in charge for the 75th Squadron. He will take his final flight as the Wing Commander of the 75th on 8 December. I look forward to supporting Andy and his family in their final week in the Arnhem electorate.

I acknowledge the work of the 17th Squadron Wing Commander, Alex Smith. We are fortunate that he will be staying on next year.

I shout out to the people in the southern part of the Katherine area in Venn, which falls in my electorate. It has some of the many big stations in the Arnhem electorate as well.

I also shout out to the people of Mataranka; Mulggan Town Camp; Jilkminggan; Minyerri; Urapunga; Ngukurr; Numbulwar; Milyakburra on Bickerton Island; and on Groote Eylandt the communities of Alyangula, Angurugu and Umbakumba. I thank the people of the beautiful little homeland of Werenbun which is near Leliyn (Edith Falls) in Nitmiluk National Park and the families and community members in Manyallaluk (Eva Valley); Barunga; Wugularr; Bulman; Weemol; Gapuwiyak; Baniyala; Donydji; Raymangirr; and all the beautiful homelands on the East Arnhem coast that I now represent since the election last year. I look forward to getting out and seeing them all in the Dry Season by road or, hopefully, a little sooner if we get to fly in. It depends on the weather because there are no all-weather airstrips in those areas.

I give a little plug for the documentary that is coming out for National Geographic. It involves many of my constituents from the communities of Wugularr, Barunga, Bulman and Weemol. That documentary is focused on Chris Hemsworth, the famous actor. He and his family grew up in Bulman, which is surprising to many. The documentary is a beautiful story of Chris Hemsworth taking his dad there. His dad was a builder who worked in the community and his mum also worked in the community when the three boys were young. Two of them ended up being quite famous actors, as we know—Chris and his brother Liam. I feel bad that I do not remember the third one's name. The people of Bulman reunited with Chris and his dad, with the idea being that Chris Hemsworth was taking his dad back to the area where their family spent a lot of time, having a great childhood. His dad now has dementia, so it was reigniting some long-term memories. It was beautifully done. There were Northern Territory filmmakers on the shoot as well. You will get to see some of the amazing characters, whom I get to see all the time, on the big screen. It will probably be a popular documentary. Watch out for that one.

I thank my fellow members of parliament for the work that we do. Although we do not always agree on what the best outcome should be for Northern Territorians, I hope in my heart that people are all here for the right reasons.

Thank you to the DLA staff, including the Table Office, Hansard, the HR team, the Finance team, the awesome security crew, Kaye and the Library team and the amazing crew at the Speaker's Corner Cafe, especially Flo for always looking after us and keeping us caffeinated.

To the staff in the opposition office: Mary; Shlok; Rachael; Jarryd; Clare; Isobella; Emily; Reuben and Michael, who have moved on; and the office boss, Fiona, who keeps us all in line. Thank you for doing an amazing job and supporting our Labor opposition team.

To my crew—the Members for Daly, Gwoja and Arafura—thank you for your faith in me. Sometimes I am probably not quite a colleague but a bit more like a bossy mum, so thanks for putting your faith in me as your leader. To the wider Labor family in the Northern Territory and across Australia, thank you all for your support in a big year.

I acknowledge the best of the office crew that I have had in many years. Melina, who left my office in the Arnhem electorate after five years of amazing service, thank you for your good work and I know you will do great things in your new job. Thank you to my electorate officer, Jessie Aranui, who is phenomenal. I look forward to continuing the great work with Jessie in the EO.

Of course, I give a huge thank you to my amazing family, particularly my dad who is often watching online. A big shout-out goes to Mick. Thank you for all your support, dad. I love you. Thank you to my sister, nieces, nephews and friends for putting up with me and not ever getting to see me. Thank you to my amazing in-laws for your great support.

To my phenomenal husband, for all the work you do with looking after our beautiful children, Rae Rae and Phoenix, thank you. I know it is a lot of pressure on you, but the work I do, which I love, is supported by you and I could not ask for anything more.

I wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I have risen on a number of occasions in this Chamber to address the culture of bullying, political pointscoring and intimidation in the Territory Labor Party. Labor members still have not got the message, so I am doing it again.

The Member for Daly rose earlier and once again attempted to mislead the parliament, spinning words and demonstrating a lack of critical thinking, reading and speech comprehension and personal reflection. He also commented about standards and doing better. The standard he walks past is the standard he accepts, and that standard is bleak.

The former Labor candidate for Spillett, current Labor Party member and AWU organiser, Mr Caleb Burke, has recently been the recipient of numerous allegations of bullying, abuse and inappropriate behaviour towards women in his role as the former coach of the Palmerston Rugby Union Club women's team.

On 15 October the *NT News* reported on Mr Burke stepping down as coach of the Palmerston Rugby Union Club women's team after making inappropriate comments towards his playing group at training. Although Mr Burke claims he only told a player to 'shut the—bleep—up' at the conclusion of Thursday night's training, it is my understanding that this incident goes further than this and he allegedly berated a woman in front of her children and other families and kids of all ages.

The comments from club players and friends suggest that this is not the first time Mr Burke has acted inappropriately towards women. The comments showed the real story. I quote:

'I agree with you. Yes, Caleb has apologised, and good on him, but this was not the first incident that has happened where Caleb has lost his cool. To all you people who think he has done something great, think again. Women and children do not deserve to be disrespected because one cannot control his emotions.'

Someone said, 'Wait, is that all he said?' Someone else commented, 'No, it wasn't'.

The next quote is:

'Caleb knows the truth here, and he hasn't been completely honest with his audience. This isn't his first rodeo talking to women like this. It's become normal to him, hence why he didn't learn from the first time the club spoke to him. Caleb needs to get a grip, stop looking for pats on the shoulder for making a mistake and tell his audience the real version, because it ain't half the pooh-pooh he was going on about in his post.'

Another person commented, 'Why haven't you been held accountable for the abuse you've also slung at the kids? Disgusting.'

I seek leave to table the *NT News* article from 15 October.

Leave granted.

Mr MACKAY: What did the Labor Party do? Did it end its association with someone who clearly does not respect women, as demonstrated by his actions? Did the Member for Daly write to his party to ask it to remove Mr Burke's membership? No. Instead, the federal Member for Solomon, Mr Luke Gosling, decided to send Mr Burke as his representative to an event in Palmerston to mark Remembrance Day.

I might not be able to predict the future, but I can say this: if the Territory Labor Party continues to be the party of bullies, people who do not respect women and are full of hatred and preselect Caleb Burke in 2028, it will never govern the Territory again.

May the Member for Daly take some time to reflect on his poor behaviour in the past, instead of trying to laugh it off, and grow some integrity and call on his party to kick out Caleb Burke. Perhaps he should just resign so that the people of Daly can have real representation for once in four years.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I shine a light on the incredible things happening across schools in the Casuarina electorate. We have so much to celebrate.

Nakara Primary School and Dripstone Middle School students travelled all the way to Sydney to represent the Northern Territory at the International Tournament of Minds. That is a huge achievement and shows how talented our Territory students truly are.

Our teachers continue to shine brightly as well. A bunch of them were nominated in the Hot 100 Darwin Apple for the Teacher competition. Let us give them all a shout-out:

- Ms Courtney Davis from Nakara Primary School
- Miss Claire, Miss Siobhan, Ms Thompson, Mr Josh and Miss Marina from Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School
- Ms Airlie White, Ms Charleen Conroy, Ms Eliza Sellars-Jones, Mr Tim Webb, Mr George Triantafillos, Ms Shanae Kuo, Mr Michael Kondaridis, Ms Ramya Mohan, Mr Ammar Mohammed and Mr Greg Cilento from Dripstone Middle School.

Their passion and dedication make such a massive difference to our kids and their futures.

We recently marked World Teachers' Day, celebrating more amazing educators. Congratulations to Nakara Primary School's Monique and Mrs Pick and to Henbury's Brittany, Georgina and Josh.

I have to say that I was incredibly proud to see Henbury School's Josh Keating named the Darwin Region Inclusion Educator of the Year and the overall NT winner. Huge congratulations, Josh; you truly earned it.

I give a massive shout-out to the Eco Warriors at Nakara Primary School. These kids are legends. They joined me in two cleanups along Rockland Drive near Royal Darwin Hospital, an area where people dump a shocking amount of rubbish every day. Thanks to Principal Liza Parr, teacher Elishia Trikilis and bus driver Mr Andrew for supporting the kids.

The incredible Eco Warriors are Jake Jamvold, Ivy Einoder, Katerina Trikilis, Archie Steer, Andros, Azayah Rainger, Kip Kopf and Astrid Macabuhay. These students collect rubbish, sort recycling and cash in 10c containers to support Down syndrome charities. Their responsibility, community spirit and pride are truly inspiring.

Dripstone Middle School continues to lead the way in STEM and innovation. For the second year in a row its science fair won the NextGen in Natural Resource Management Award at Territory NRM. This was accepted by Ms Roopa Bandi along with the school captains, Jack and Claire.

I give a huge congratulations to Year 9 students Khadim, Kian, Tye, and Arsenii, who were highly commended for their biodegradable fishing lure, Biolure 2.0. Massive congratulations to Ms Swaroopa Bandi, who was named Secondary School STEM Educator of the Year at the 2025 Radicle Science Awards. Leading a science fair with more than 650 students is an extraordinary achievement.

Dripstone also shone at the Radicle Awards with projects such as Mystery of Black Holes, Vertical Farming and Hydrogen Fuel.

Year 9 student Aryan P has done our electorate proud by winning the national Biosecurity Game Development Challenge. A huge achievement which was awarded by Minister Burgoyne.

In sport Dripstone's Sophie Minchinton had a brilliant season with the Frillies at the Darwin Golf Club, earning Women's Player of the Season. She is a rising Territory star to watch.

Henbury School also had a fantastic term. Its annual art exhibition ran from 17 to 21 October and transformed the school's stage area into a vibrant gallery. The theme this year was Dreaming Our Futures: Stories that Bridge Time, encouraging students to express culture, imagination and connection.

We were honoured to welcome artist Sarrita King who chose Jade Obajdin's *Upside Picasso* for the Critics' Choice Award. People's Choice Awards went to Trisvina Lewis, Chantelle Edwards, Kasey Deeble, Elexis Erojo, Zach Rogers, Ruby Thompson and Yellow 4 Class.

Henbury also took part in the OzHarvest Christmas Food Drive, teaching students empathy, compassion and social responsibility.

Five classes participated in Darwin's first Mini Paralympics, showing resilience, teamwork and courage. Thank you to teacher Amanda and all staff involved.

I shout out to Chloe, a Year 11 outreach student who organised a Bandanna Day barbecue for Canteen. Great work, Chloe.

I look forward to Henbury's Christmas stall featuring wooden Christmas trees, candles and textiles which are all made by the students themselves.

We also celebrated excellence in early childhood education in my electorate. Congratulations to Dawn Davey from Goodstart Tiwi who was named Outstanding Leader at the 2025 NT Education and Care Awards. The centre was also a finalist for the Enabling Environments Award which was a real credit to the team.

I acknowledge the strength and spirit of our Casuarina community during Cyclone Fina. I saw neighbours helping neighbours, looking out for one another, sharing resources and supporting those doing it tough. It truly showed the best of who we are as Territorians.

A huge thank you goes to our emergency services and the Power and Water crews who worked around the clock. Your efforts clearing trees, restoring power and supporting families have been incredible and deeply appreciated.

As the cleanup continues, I will be back out in the community lending a hand wherever I can. I remind all residents that my office is always here to help. Please reach out if you need assistance.

Tonight we celebrate the heart of Casuarina—our cultural leaders, teachers, students, artists, athletes and every resident who showed strength during tough times. They are the pride of our electorate and represent the best of the Northern Territory.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to acknowledge some of the recent events I have attended around the Territory.

What a fantastic evening I had at A Night in Italy, a wonderful cabaret dinner filled with classic Italian songs, incredible performances by Rick Romeo and Petah Cavallaro and a great celebration of culture and community. Thank you to Max, Felix and all of the Italian Sports and Social Club committee.

I joined a wonderful evening celebrating St Dimitrios with the St Savvas Greek Orthodox Palmerston parish community. It was a joy to join Father Christos and the committee for such a warm and welcoming dinner dance fundraiser filled with faith, food, music and dancing. Thank you to the St Savvas committee.

Sincere thanks to Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro for hosting the Navratri Festival at Parliament House, an important and much-loved Gujarati celebration. Two years ago she promised she would host the event, and she stuck by her word. Thank you for supporting the diversity that enriches our Northern Territory.

Thank you to the Gujarati Cultural Association of Darwin (GCAD) and President Hiranch Patel for coordinating this wonderful event. I also thank Minister Boothby and the Member for Casuarina for attending the celebration.

Thank you to Michael Koulianos, President of the Greek Orthodox Community of Northern Australia, for the kind invitation to commemorate the 85th anniversary of Oxi Day. It is important that we continue to commemorate Oxi Day and honour the courage, resilience and sacrifice of the Greek people during World War II. Also in attendance were my colleagues the Chief Minister, Minister Cahill and Minister Hersey to celebrate this important day with the community.

The Northern Territory's rich cultural diversity was on full display during my recent visit to the Gurudwara Sahib Alice Springs temple. With more than 100 people in attendance, it was a vibrant and uplifting opportunity to celebrate community, culture and connection. I was joined by several colleagues, including the Chief Minister, Minister Burgoyne and the Members for Fannie Bay, Casuarina, Karama, Wanguri and Blain.

There was a wonderful celebration of Japanese culture at the Japanese Cultural Day event, from calligraphy and origami to summer kimono try-ons and the traditional tea ceremony. A big thank you to Janet Truong, President of the Australian Japanese Association of the NT Inc, for putting together such a beautiful and authentic event. I thank Minister Boothby, Minister Hersey and the Member for Wanguri for being there and supporting the community.

I thoroughly enjoyed an evening with the vibrant Nepalese community where they thanked their volunteers. A special thank you to Sanzeev Gorkhali, the ex-President of the Non-Resident Nepali Association of Northern Territory, for hosting this wonderful event and for recognising the hardworking volunteers whose dedication and spirit make such a difference in our community. I thank Minister Boothby for being there and supporting the community.

The Buddhist Society of the Northern Territory once again brought people together through incredible food, performances and warm hospitality at the International Food Fair. A big thank you to the organisers and volunteers for creating such a vibrant Territory atmosphere with excellent food from all over the world. Thank you to Dr Bandula Abeywickrama, president, and the committee members for coordinating such a wonderful event. I also thank Minister Boothby and the Member for Wanguri for being there and supporting the community.

A big thank you to Reinis Dancis, President of the Latvian Association of Darwin, for hosting a meaningful event to mark the 107th anniversary of Latvia's independence and for bringing the community together to honour this important occasion. Thank you to Her Excellency Samija Serifa, Ambassador of Latvia to Australia, and Valda Liepina, Chair of the Board of the Association of the Museum of Occupation of Latvia, for their attendance. I thank the Chief Minister and the Member for Fannie Bay for being there.

I was privileged to represent the Chief Minister at the Islamic Society of Darwin's Mosque Open Day and Interfaith Day. It truly highlighted how diversity strengthens our Territory community. The Northern Territory continues to foster strong connections built on understanding, respect and unity. Thank you to Michael and Sophia from the Islamic Society of Darwin for their warm hospitality. I thank the Member for Wanguri for being there and supporting the community.

I was honoured to join our Sikh community to mark the 556th Birth Anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The celebration serves as a reminder of the core principles and an opportunity for devotees to express their devotion through prayers, communal meals and community service. Thank you to Harpal Singh, the SANTI leadership team and all community members for your warm welcome and hospitality.

Our brothers and sisters from the Filipino community recently went through an incredibly difficult time. In just a matter of days the Philippines was hit by two severe typhoons, a powerful earthquake and thousands of aftershocks. Families lost homes, stability and their sense of safety.

Bangon Pilipinas was a chance to come together and show that when our Filipino family hurts, we all feel it. It was beautiful to see the spirit of Filipino people. Their resilience is stronger than the typhoon. Filipinos stand tall in the face of any adversity and their strength is incredible.

I pay my respects to those whose lives were lost. I also honour the survivors, responders, community leaders and all ordinary Filipinos who showed extraordinary strength.

Thank you to Pedro Bernadino, President of the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club, and Henry Yap for an invitation to Hamutuk, which means 'together'. It was great to see families coming together to celebrate due to a shared passion for soccer. Thank you to the Timorese community for continuing to share your culture and friendship with us.

The Chief Minister hosted a reception to celebrate 2025 Annakut Mahotsav. It is a wonderful celebration that reflects gratitude, kindness and compassion. It invites us to reflect and appreciate the blessings, relationships and shared experiences that enrich our lives. My warmest thanks to Ketan, Anand and the BAPS NT community for your hard work and for creating such a positive uplifting event. I thank Minister Yan, Minister Cahill and the Members for Wanguri, Casuarina, Blain and Fong Lim who came along to celebrate with the community.

I celebrated Christmas with the Darwin Malayalee Association at the Italian Club along with the Members for Wanguri and Casuarina. It was a lovely evening with music, dancing and cultural performances from Kerala and delicious food. Thank you to Monsi Thomas, President of the Darwin Malayalee Association; Shilvin Mathews, secretary; Baby Abraham, public officer; and all the committee members for their invitation and their efforts in coordinating the event.

I also had the pleasure of representing the Chief Minister at this year's Diwali celebration hosted by the Indian Cultural Society. Diwali, the Festival of Lights, symbolises the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance. It is a time when families and friends come together to light lamps, share stories and enjoy the rich flavours and traditions of Indian culture. Thank you to Vice President Meeta and other committee members for welcoming me.

The Member for Daly was in attendance. When everyone talked and communicated about the celebration, he came there and read out a speech that spread hatred. There were many wonderful people who attended that event, and many people came along and apologised. I do not think that is a place where you go and talk this kind of hatred. I need to say that I think many members of the community did not appreciate that kind of behaviour from the shadow minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; I find it concerning that the Member for Sanderson is making imputations, when at the event the community actually clapped and cheered for my speech. That is what happened. They clapped and thanked me for that.

Madam SPEAKER: You cannot use a point of order to provide more information.

Mr Young: I want to make sure people know on the record because that is what happened.

Madam SPEAKER: There is nothing offensive about …

Mr Young: You left straight after.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, there is no point of order. Given what has gone on in this Chamber today, I do not think that even hits the radar.

Mr CHARLS: My advice to the member, through the Speaker, is please do not spread this hatred. We will continue to work with the community to build the community.

I thank the Member for Drysdale for having my back. To the Labor opposition, I quote the Minister for Multicultural Affairs in this Chamber: telling lies again and again will not make it true.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.