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CONTENTS

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (BEVERAGE CONTAINERS AND PLASTIC BAGS) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EXPANSION OF CDS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2825
Serial 37 2825
NOTICES 2844
QUESTION TIME 2844
Public Service – Pay Negotiation 2844
Sharing Our History, Securing Future Peace Study Tour to Japan 2845
Healthcare Workers – Pay and Conditions 2846
Healthcare Workers – Pay and Conditions – Supplementary Question 2846
Beetaloo Sub-basin Gas 2847
Alice Springs Flights 2847
EXCLUSION OF MEMBER 2849
Member for Gwoja 2849
Home Ownership 2850
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery 2850
October Business Month 2851
Corrections – Transgender Inmates 2852
Tourism – Cruise Ship Industry 2853
Waterfront Hotel Project 2854
Vocational Education and Training – Timor-Leste 2854
Fuel Tanks – Leaks 2855
Valerie Asche – Naming of New Suburb 2856
Corrections – Transgender Inmates 2857
Mental Health Week 2858
VISITORS 2858
Member for Fannie Bay's Daughter 2858
NAMING OF A MEMBER 2859
Member for Gwoja 2859
MOTION 2859
Commonwealth Oversight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaths in Police and Prison Custody 2859
MOTION 2880
Investing in Territory Roads 2880
ADJOURNMENT 2893

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (BEVERAGE CONTAINERS AND PLASTIC BAGS) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EXPANSION OF CDS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL
Serial 37

Continued from 3 September 2025.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I join my colleagues in speaking on the Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Legislation Amendment (Expansion of CDS and Other Matters) Bill 2025—finally, an environment-related Bill from the CLP government that I can support.

The Northern Territory Container Deposit Scheme, originally known as Cash for Containers, was introduced four years ago under Labor. Since its inception it has seen over one billion containers recycled and more than $100m returned to Territorians. The CDS has also created jobs, contributed to the Territory's economy and provided a valuable way for community groups, schools and charities to raise funds for their programs and activities.

The CDS has helped keep our landscapes and waterways cleaner and our wildlife safer from plastic pollution, and reduced the impact of landfill on the environment. This is an important scheme, loved by the community and stakeholders. With the inclusion of beverage containers of three litres or less in volume, such as wine, spirits, milk and juice bottles, Territorians and the environment will benefit even further.

I thank the government for taking this Labor-led initiative to the finish line. Territorians have been asking for this Bill. According to the 2023 Improving the Container Deposit Scheme in the Northern Territory Consultation Summary Report, 90% of the survey respondents supported the changes proposed in the original Have Your Say survey.

Suggested improvements included expanding the scheme to include plastic lids; plastic containers that hold up to three litres, including wine and spirit glass bottles; and harmonising the scheme with other jurisdictions across Australia. Those changes were committed to by the former Labor government, which began work on this phase of the scheme. I congratulate the CLP for continuing that important work.

However, this Bill also brings a few concerning changes that I will raise. I hope the minister can address them in his reply. This Bill makes significant structural changes to the CDS by transferring authority from the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority to the department and by shifting reviews from the Local Court to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

I understand the intention is to streamline processes and align the Territory with other jurisdictions. That is great; we all want the scheme to be as efficient as possible for all Territorians, but I am concerned about the practical impacts of these changes.

For example, the NTCAT has been handed a number of new responsibilities alongside this. Will it receive additional funding and training to handle the complex legal and environmental issues that come with these responsibilities? What resources or support will be provided to the departmental staff? Who will manage these expanded duties and disputes?

The department is also inheriting compliance licensing and enforcement functions from the NTEPA. Will those staff members receive additional training? Will funding be provided to ensure they can perform these duties effectively? Without proper funding, support and training we risk losing the efficiency and responsiveness that the NTEPA has brought to the CDS, which could lead to slower responses and weaker enforcements.

I raise this concern not to antagonise or embarrass the minister but to ensure that Territorians have the confidence that this government has carefully considered how to improve the scheme. I have mentioned throughout this speech that Territorians and stakeholders strongly support the CDS expansion. The Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) and the City of Darwin both praise the scheme and recommended its expansion into cities, regions and remote townships so that more Territorians can benefit. As someone from the bush who frequently visits the city, I wholeheartedly agree.

Unfortunately, this Bill does not include the expansion of the CDS into our regional and remote communities, and that is an ongoing discussion. This scheme is already reducing waste across the Territory, and by adding more containers to the scheme we are recycling even more single-use items. Imagine the impact if we expanded into our regional and remote communities. This scheme is extremely limited in regional centres like Tennant Creek and is up and running in only a handful of remote communities through the shires.

Expanding the CDS into remote regions is not just good policy; it is good for people and community pride. It will also allow remote towns to build local businesses, create jobs and keep their communities clean, vibrant and welcoming for visitors.

I urge the government to consider supporting the CDS in remote towns through targeted funding or grants so that communities can establish new depots and collection points. This would help them participate fully in the scheme. Investment like this can give rise to recycling initiatives that fund breakfast programs, school resources and community projects. The lack of expansion into remote communities is a missed opportunity to help close the gap and for economic opportunity and community wellbeing in the bush.

It is disappointing that the government did not include more collection points around regional hubs as recommended by the City of Darwin. This small but powerful change would encourage residents to recycle, reduce litter and keep more waste out of landfill. Imagine a pilot program allowing residents in public housing to collect and redeem containers with proceeds going towards shared power bills, cleaner gardens or even local community improvements.

If the government truly wants the scheme to succeed, it must look beyond the cities and invest where the impact will be the greatest. Expanding the CDS into the bush and public housing neighbourhoods would create jobs, reduce waste and bring pride and purpose to communities.

Before I conclude I will raise another concern about the process, not the content, of the Bill. In the original Have Your Say survey, 90% of respondents supported the proposed expansion, so why was this Bill sent to the scrutiny committee when others, like the Anti-Discrimination Amendment Bill, were not given the same level of consultation? At a time when hate speech is on the rise, there are amendments that deserve as much scrutiny and public input.

This Bill is a good idea that Territorians could clearly support. I hope that in the next budget cycle the government commits to expanding into remote communities through funding grants. Having access to depots would be a great opportunity for women's shelters or schools to raise money for programs, create businesses, create jobs and help keep our remote towns beautiful.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak in support of the Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Legislation Amendment (Expansion of CDS and Other Matters) Bill 2025. That is quite a mouthful.

Put simply, this Bill means Territorians will soon be able to recycle and cash in their empty wine bottles, spirit bottles, milk cartons and juice containers in the same way we already do with our soft drinks and beer cans and stubbies.

The Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment must be running out of space in his Akubra for all the feathers he keeps collecting as he continues to kick goals, but I hope there is still room because this is another feather in his cap.

Perhaps the best birthday present the Member for Casuarina could have is for more recycling in his community, which I know he loves. I regularly see him at Casuarina beach, picking up cans and other litter and tidying up his part of the Territory, and I commend him for that. Happy birthday to him.

This is a reform that Territorians can raise a glass to—responsibly, of course, and never before driving. Before we look ahead, it is worth remembering how far we have come. The Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) is a great Territory initiative that stood the test of time. When it began 2012 there were plenty of doubters. Some said Territorians would not bother collecting 10c bottles or cans, that the distances were too great and that it would never work outside the big cities.

Here we are, more than a decade later, with over 1.3 billion containers collected and returned. That is 1.3 billion containers not being burned, buried or left on our roadsides. That is litter down, recycling up and a whole new economy built on something as simple as a 10c cashback. That is the Territory spirit at work: a bit of incentive; a bit of local ingenuity; and a whole lot of determination.

You do not have to look far in Goyder to see how successful this program has been. Across the rural area the CDS has become part of everyday life. Litchfield Council collects cans and bottles at its three waste transfer stations and reinvests the money in the community for its Cash for Cans and community grants program. This scheme has helped hundreds of rural kids attend sporting competitions, represent the NT and Litchfield interstate and participate in local events that they might not otherwise have been able to experience.

I like to think that for every beer drunk—or soft drink, if preferred—the container can be taken to the tip and put it in the recycle bin. That is a 10c donation back to the community. If you would rather put the 10c into your pocket, you can always drop it off at the Humpty Doo Regional Recycling on Spencely Road and cash it in.

During my time on Litchfield Council between 2021 and 2024, this scheme helped fund more than 60 kids to take part in sports and youth activities and delivered over $120,000 in grants to community organisations. That money went to things like Rural Community Carols by Candlelight, Darwin Community Arts, new chairs for the Humpty Doo Bowls Club, the barbecue upgrades for NT Polocrosse—I often see the Member for Nelson cooking up a feed on polocrosse weekends—and family seating for the Litchfield Bears Rugby League Club. There was also a women's pre-season development program for the Litchfield Football Club, which was great to see increase their numbers.

Throughout the rural area, especially in our sporting and scout groups, the money is at work. These are real benefits with tangible outcomes every week. Cubs from the Humpty Doo Scout Group and the Swampdogs Rugby Union Club have made collecting cans and bottles part of how they fundraise. I have seen kids can-hunting after community events and on the side of the road, turning rubbish into pocket money and pocket money into pride. It is not just about recycling; it is a lesson in effort, reward and community responsibility.

I also note that even in this building we have bins collecting for the Down Syndrome Association, another great initiative and community group that does fantastic work. Its bins are across Darwin. The Member for Wanguri will talk about that later.

This Bill builds on that success. It expands the scheme to include beverage containers up to three litres—that is, wine and spirit bottles, plain milk containers, larger juice bottles and flavoured milk bottles. In short, if you can drink it and it comes in a recyclable container under three litres, it will soon be worth 10c to recycle. It might seem like a small change, but it will have a big impact.

Wine and spirit bottles make up a large portion of glass litter across the Territory, especially around public areas and rest stops on our highways or the side of our roads and at campsites. Outside of Darwin and Palmerston, there is no kerbside recycling for milk or juice containers which means that too often they end up in landfill or on the roadside.

With this expansion, we expect approximately 12 million additional containers to be recycled each year, approximately 2,000 tonnes of material that would otherwise go to waste. This means cleaner land, fewer injuries from broken glass and more money flowing back into community groups' and families' pockets.

One of the small but important changes in this Bill is that collection depots can now accept containers with their lids, caps or closures still attached. It is a practical tweak that makes a big difference. Too often people remove the caps, drop them on the ground or toss them in the bin, where they end up as micro plastics or landfill. By keeping the lid on, we keep the whole container intact and recyclable, with no bits lost and no mess left behind. It also means fewer sharp edges from broken glass and fewer small plastic caps scattered across our parks, gutters and bushland. It is a simple change that rewards good habits and cuts down on litter in one go.

When people return their bottles with the caps on, we keep those materials in the recycling stream where they belong. All those little pieces add up. Tens of thousands of caps that used to end up in landfill will now be processed and reused. It is another way that Territorians can do their bit to protect our environment without extra effort or confusion. Every sealed bottle dropped at the depot is one less hazard on the roadside, one less item washed into the creeks and one more example of Territorians working together to keep our country clean and beautiful.

One of the best things about this reform is that it makes the system simpler. Under the old rules, people had to remember what counted—soft drink, yes; wine, no; iced coffee, yes; two-litre milk, no; juice, maybe. 'Can I leave the cap on?' No, you could not, but now you can. It was like playing a game of recycling bingo.

This new approach ends all that. If the container is less than three litres and recyclable, cash it in. It is simple, consistent and easy for everyone to understand. Less confusion at home, fewer disputes at the depot and more containers being properly recycled.

Changes like this will take time to implement. This Bill provides for sensible transition periods—up to two years for wine and spirit labelling, and one year for milk and juice containers—to give producers time to update labels and packaging.

During our consultation as part of the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, some businesses—such as the Australian Beverages Council and Coles—raised concerns regarding the timeline. We believe it is achievable. Western Australia is doing something similar. There were also concerns raised regarding the potential cost impacts since milk is a household staple and that it would put more pressure on Territorians.

My advice to Territorians who are concerned about the cost of milk going up is if the cost of milk goes up by a few cents, recycle it and get your money back. For families across Goyder—from Lambells Lagoon to Manton—that is an incentive that did not exist before.

The Bill does not just expand the scheme. It also modernises how it is administered. At present, the NTEPA oversees the system. Under this legislation, that responsibility will move to the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, supported by the chief executive officer and delegates. It is a practical change, aligning the law with what already happens in practice and freeing up the NTEPA to focus on major environmental assessments and impact studies.

This will make decision-making faster, clearer and less bureaucratic. Reviews and appeals will also move from the Local Court to the NTCAT, meaning fairer and more efficient outcomes for everyone involved. In other words, we are cutting red tape instead of smashing bottles on the side of the road.

During the committee's inquiry, the Darwin City Council and LGANT raised the importance of improving accessibility. I pay credit to the Member for Arafura for raising that in his speech. They suggested adding more depots, mobile collection points and hubs in remote areas. I fully support that vision. Although the rural area has a depot in Humpty Doo, there is room to make the scheme more accessible across the Territory. If we make it as easy for people to drop off their cans as it is to pick up horse feed, participation will skyrocket.

The CDS has been a quiet job-creator. In the rural area, small operators have built thriving businesses collecting and sorting containers. They employ locals, partner with charities and keep waste out of the bush. These Territory businesses are built on practical solutions, turning waste into wages and litter into livelihoods.

During the scrutiny committee's consultation, and potentially in the original consultation, many people asked whether it is time to double the refund from 10c to 20c. The scrutiny committee has recommended it be considered at the next review. It is a fair point; 10c a decade ago is not quite worth the same as 10c today. Inflation has had its say and maybe it is time that the kids collecting cans had a pay rise. However, any change like that needs to be considered carefully, balancing environmental benefit and the cost to consumers and industry. Either way, the 10c refund has already proven its worth. If it ever increases, I can guarantee that there will be kids raiding the family esky before mum has even finished her drink.

Former Member for Nelson Gerry Wood recently reminded us that the Territory was one of the first jurisdictions in Australia to stand up to the beverage industry and introduce a CDS. It took persistence and a bit of Territory stubbornness, but it worked. Now the rest of the country is catching up. We are once again leading the way. In a few years I am sure that all the states in Australia will follow our lead and recycle milk containers and three-litre containers.

This expansion is about not only the statistics but also the difference it will make to people's lives. More containers recycled mean less litter in our waterways, fewer broken bottles on our tracks and cleaner public spaces for everyone.

It will also mean more fundraising opportunities for community groups. The Humpty Doo Scouts are a perfect example. It is a great scout group in my electorate of Goyder, full of wonderful kids who are growing up to be great leaders. When 20 scouts are armed with tongs and bags, you will not find a single can left in the park. Clubs I have spoken about like the Litchfield Bears, the Swampdogs and the Southern Districts Crocs have collection points at their home games that turn the cans and bottles into cash for their clubs. It is a simple yet powerful idea. A small effort multiplied across the community creates a big impact.

The people of Goyder love their land. From the floodplains at Point Stuart to the farms of Acacia Hills and Lambells Lagoon and the bush blocks of Humpty Doo, Virginia, Bees Creek and everywhere in between, we are proud to live close to nature, and that means we see firsthand the impacts of litter. I have seen glass bottles dumped along the Arnhem Highway, plastic floating in creeks and at fishing spots and broken glass on horse and motorbike tracks. I have said it before and I will say it again: if you dump in the bush or throw a bottle out of your car window, you are a grub.

This expansion helps tackle that problem, not through punishment but through positive incentives, rewarding people for doing the right thing. It is a win–win, with cleaner country, more recycling and a few dollars going back into people's pockets. It also supports the Territory's broader goals—promoting a circular economy, reducing landfill and encouraging sustainable local industry.

Because we are Territorians we can also find a bit of humour in it. Some have joked to me that this reform will make us the fittest recyclers in the country with all the bending over to pick up the 10c bottles one after another. The Member for Casuarina gets his steps by cleaning up the beautiful beaches in his electorate and many of my colleagues across the Chamber have done cleanups in their electorates, including me; I do get out. If we can get a bit of exercise while we clean up the Territory it is a double win.

Others have asked whether backyard barbecues will come with a built-in deposit return. I tell them, 'Maybe, but you will have to race the kids collecting them before you get your refund'.

This Bill is good environmental and economic policy and common sense. I thank the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment for bringing forward this reform. It expands a proven program, modernises its administration and rewards Territorians for doing the right thing. It is supported by the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, has been endorsed by industry after extensive consultation and is overwhelmingly welcomed by the public, with more than 90% of survey respondents backing the expansion.

For the people of Goyder, from the farmers in Marrakai to the families in Virginia, this means cleaner roadsides, stronger community organisations and a more resilient recycling economy. For the Territory as a whole it shows that we are still leading the way in practical, down-to-earth environmental action.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly and look forward to seeing Territorians continue to cash in their cans, bottles and soon their milk and wine containers, keeping our beautiful Territory clean, green and uniquely ours.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak on the Northern Territory Container Deposit Scheme. This is another measure for environmental conservatism that I think will greatly benefit the Northern Territory. It adds to the growing list of historic CLP achievements in this space.

As a CLP government we can be quite proud of the environmental parks we have created. Throughout history, we can speak to Limmen National Park, Limmen Bight Marine Park, Djukbinj National Park and Charles Darwin National Park—we should be particularly proud of that one, as we were the first jurisdiction in the country to create a national park in its metropolitan capital. That is a great achievement which set the standard for other states to follow in that high-density urban environments can still have protected parks. We should be proud of that.

Recently we have seen our government bring on Silkwood, which I think is a fantastic blend between protecting the environment and being open for families to enjoy. That is important, because someone like me will use Silkwood, and that will engrain in my children a love and enjoyment of nature. Those experiences go on to ensure they will also be environmentally conservative throughout their lives. I am speaking to the fact that the protection of the environment is not owned by any political movement; the environment is something we can all aspire to protect and ensure it is healthy and there for future generations to enjoy.

I grew up in awe of Sir David Attenborough, and I have feasted on his documentaries since I was a little boy. I still love any program he puts out; I enjoy going back and watching previous programs as well. His body of work throughout his lifetime, which is just incredible, began in media in 1951, when he brought the whole world into the homes of the English-speaking world, and today he brings it to the rest of the world, which shows his impact. He brought nature to our homes, and I think you would struggle to argue that there has been an individual who has had a bigger impact on creating the desire to conserve our environment, especially throughout the 20th century. He has continued well into the 21st century.

The fact that Sir Attenborough has 12 postnominals speaks to what he has achieved. He holds the Order of Merit, Order of St Michael and St George, Order of the Companions of Honour, Royal Victorian Order, Order

of the British Empire and no fewer than seven fellowships. That is an impressive record. It speaks to how much society values seeing nature, enjoying it in our homes and the impact it has had.

He was not the only impact on me. Another strong impact on me in my youth was *Captain Planet*. Growing up in the 1990s *Captain Planet* was a fantastic cartoon which, when I reflect as a man, had a strong impact on how I view the environment and the need to protect it. There was a heavy focus in that show on rubbish and litter. That has definitely shaped me today.

I will mention another man in my Army career: Warrant Officer Ewan Jack, who at the time was Sergeant Jack. He was my first sergeant when I was a brand-new, young lieutenant. I wrote a commendation for then Sergeant Jack on leadership because no matter where we were—if we were doing PT on base, on exercise or going to the movies as a troop—he would pick up rubbish whenever he saw it. It did not matter what time of day or what we were doing, he would always pick up any rubbish he saw. As a young man in my early twenties, I thought that was incredible. It was not just the rubbish; he was setting a standard for the young soldiers and for me as a young officer. The standard we walk past is the standard we accept. That was an incredible part of him that I thought deserved a commendation.

When it comes to my electorate, those things inspired me. It is not news to anyone that rubbish throughout my electorate of Drysdale is quite bad, frankly. When I came into this position, I wanted to tackle that because, as a resident of that community, I do not want to see the huge build-up of rubbish that we are dealing with. It is not just unsightly; there is a range of native birds which I enjoy and other native species that are already under enough pressure from things like cane toads and urban sprawl, so if we have something we can manage better that will ease pressure on those native species, particularly rubbish, I am all for it. We should do everything we can to protect the few wild areas we have left in Palmerston. It is also why I advocate for urban greenery. It is important to maintain our native species so that we can all enjoy them.

How will we tackle all this rubbish? I started picking up huge amounts of rubbish. There are photos where I picked up full ute loads of rubbish in my electorate. Will Clinton Howe change the rubbish situation by himself? No. However, I take that page from my first good sergeant. If you can make a little impact and push others to do the same, you are one more drop in that river and that river can make the change.

I like this Bill because it creates an incentive to go out. We see huge numbers of alcohol bottles in particular. It is fantastic that we will now capture wine bottles. Yellow is a popular brand in Palmerston. There are a lot of Yellow bottles, so creating a financial incentive will help.

We already have quite a few residents who pick up all the cans. I give a massive shout-out to them because it is a herculean effort. I have visited some of those residents and they have an entire operation going. It is incredible. They are fantastic community-minded individuals. Yes, they receive money, but I know they are not doing it for the 10c per can; they are doing it because it is good, meaningful work. It creates a little extra money which is great for them or can be donated.

I like how it is creating an incentive. The minister has done a fantastic job in bringing on this Bill. We have seen a huge range of reforms from the minister, and I thank him for this one in particular because I genuinely believe that it will help with the problem of litter in our community.

I thank the committee members who partook in this Bill's inquiry. I was keen to learn throughout the inquiry and I was interested to see where we could land. I was particularly interested in how we could economically make a greater incentive. We heard that aluminium prices are doing well. I was keen on the question of whether 20c will make a greater incentive. When it is reviewed by our government or a future government, it will be worth looking at whether the 20c refund is worth putting forward. Minister, at some point it should be looked at. We have not seen the refund increase for some time. If aluminium prices are doing well, the government should look at it in the future.

I am happy with the Bill. I hope that we can see improvements to the rubbish situation throughout Drysdale. We have beautiful native birds and a lot of small animals, so I hope that this makes an impact. I hope that it will create a cleaner, nicer environment where people can feel proud of being in Drysdale. It is an amazing community.

I commend the minister for his work in bringing this on. I thank Sir Attenborough, *Captain Planet* and Sergeant Jack for shaping me to see the great worthiness of this Bill.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, it is important to talk about this Bill. I acknowledge that the Member for Drysdale thanked a number of people, but I want to thank the person who made this happen: former minister and Member for Stuart, Karl Hampton. He brought in the Container Deposit Scheme in 2011. It is an important scheme for the Northern Territory, mirroring South Australia's cash for containers scheme to enable and encourage recycling and help people clean up their local community.

Whether we are in the great electorate of Drysdale or the wonderful electorate of Gwoja, we are looking at ways to encourage community members, groups and organisations to play their part in making our communities cleaner and have an economic opportunity to raise funds for important community events and to run associations.

The legislation originally passed in 2011 and came into effect in 2012. Madam Speaker, I believe you were around back then, in the good old days.

Madam SPEAKER: I was.

Mr PAECH: It came into effect in 2012. It has been a successful project. Today the legislation is about tidying up, reforming and continuing to build on the successful program that was delivered by a former Labor government. Today's amendments are well received and encouraged in our community. It is tidying up the legislation in the sense that it is adding additional measures. It is encouraging to see lids and other containers added.

Historically the program was well received but had its limitations. Practices change. We all know that in our community at certain times the flavour of the month might be cans or bottles. I acknowledge the amazing Alice Springs Town Council, which the Member for Araluen and I both served on. The Member for Braitling's father-in-law is the mayor. That council ran its own recycling system back in the day for glass bottles, particularly wine bottles. We know everyone does not mind a good glass of wine when they come home.

The local council recognised back in the day that there was an appetite for a scheme like that. The local Alice Springs Town Council led it and was quite visionary in that space, recognising the need for not only cash for containers but for glass bottles as well, and offered incentives and cash back for people who dropped them off.

There are many organisations in the local community which offer those services. In Alice Springs there is a great business, Recyclabill. They give you a yellow bin and you can fill it up with your cans and bottles; they can take it and collect the revenue from it. People feel good because it is about recycling as well.

Of course, there are bigger conversations from this legislation today about how we respond and move forward with recycling. On the committee we had a conversation about the amount of 10c and whether that should be considered at a later date to be increased. That is something we should do. In general principle, legislation should be reviewed or contemporised every five years. The government of the day determines whether that is something it would consider.

Cash for Containers, recycling and all those important measures are close to many Territorians' hearts. I would love to see the day when our local councils are in a position to fund second bins, particularly in Alice Springs, for recycling. That is a great way to encourage and educate people about those practices.

I thank the secretariat staff for putting together the committee's inquiry. As the Member for Drysdale highlighted, it was interesting to hear the conversations about aluminium and other material prices and how they fluctuate and have an impact in this space as well.

I add that any measure—whether by the Territory government, local government or the Commonwealth Government—to increase and provide an opportunity for people in remote communities to access this important program would be a great step in the right direction.

At the moment we require people to collect the cans and bottles and the lid tops, bag them up and travel into Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin or Palmerston. If we could work with our local councils and ask, 'Can people drop these containers off for you and you reimburse them the 10c?' the standard and tidiness of local communities in regional centres and remote communities, homelands and towns would increase.

On ABC radio this morning I heard someone from Alice Springs Town Council talking about the two recycling stations it has put in the CBD. The uptake of that is amazing. It encourages people because they are not

required to be inconvenienced by travelling out; they can drop off their bags of recycling on the way to work. It is exciting to see what we can do. I note that a topic on ABC radio this morning was hard recycling and hard rubbish in Alice Springs. The local council is looking at that and the costs associated with it. Whilst that is outside the scope of what we are talking about today, it is part of the bigger picture of how we respond and work towards recycling in the future.

Also in Alice Springs there was great work to recycle glass bottles—beer bottles, wine bottles, soft drink bottles and jars—crush them and then start using that in roads and footpaths. Many of the footpaths in Alice Springs have foundations of glass bottles. There are some amazing opportunities in recycling.

This is a great step in the right direction. Expanding those provisions from the existing legislation is welcomed. We look forward to encouraging all our community groups to take it up.

I hope that many members of parliament, like the Member for Drysdale, are reminded of *Captain Planet* and the importance of recycling because we all need to get on board with it and do a better job in supporting initiatives. I acknowledge that this is an important initiative, building on the original Container Deposit Scheme.

Mr KERLE (Blain): Madam Speaker, the Member for Gwoja sniped me. I was going back into the history of this Act to say that, yes, Labor minister Karl Hampton introduced the original Bill in 2010. Well done; you beat me to it.

People often ask me, 'Are there any good Labor policies that you support?' I always scratch my head, and often I cannot think of any because, as was said in the House yesterday, the previous government for the last two terms was hopeless, incompetent, a waste of space, misguided, tin-eared, not listening—any number of things.

But every so often, when you scratch back through the dim dark history, before most of the members of that government had any position of power, you find the odd gem that is good legislation. Introducing the Container Deposit Scheme is one of those bits of Labor work that I say was a good idea, and not because it is in line with socialist policy and controlling the means of production by the government, but on the contrary because it aligns with liberal values of using incentives and thinking about how people work and think—what incentives they respond to, putting a value on something that would otherwise be rubbish, as well as using people's natural bowerbird instincts to go out and pick up the rubbish that we would otherwise have to pay people to do. We all want a clean society. It would be better if people picked up their own rubbish.

I remember being a student at Batchelor Area School back in the 1980s, and we would go off on our little emu parades. I do not know if that still happens. I might need to talk to the minister for Education about that. When I was in primary school we did emu parades regularly. We would go to the nearby park, hold hands like little ducks and walk off together, led by the teacher. We would pick up rubbish, put it in our bags, bring it back and put it in the bin. That instilled in us the value of keeping our country clean.

I remember being a kid in the 1980s. Who else remembers the advertising campaign, Keep Australia …

Mr Mackay: I was not alive in the eighties.

Mr KERLE: Member for Goyder! There was a theme song, which I will not berate the House with. It got into your head. It was all about keeping Australia clean—pick up your rubbish and put it in the bin. That value was instilled deep in me as a child of the 1980s. I try to instil that in my three boys. Whenever they are annoying me to eat some snacks and food, I tell them it is important to pick up their rubbish and put it in the bin. Do not throw it on the floor; make sure the rubbish goes into the bin.

This Bill that was introduced in 2010 was half good. The other half of the Bill at the time criminalised Woolworths and Coles for using plastic bags. I agree we should not have plastic bags blowing around. Minimising the amount of plastic in our environment is a good thing, but every time I go to the shops to get milk and other cold products I put them in the paper bag, carry them to the car, and then the condensation splits the bag and I lose my groceries all over the floor and have to pick everything up. Then I say, 'Is this the best way to do this?' I digress.

The 10c fundraiser is great for our sports clubs, schools and people with a bit of time on their hands who get out and clean up our environment and remove rubbish from the streets. The Legislative Scrutiny Committee made a great contribution. It would be a good idea, and I support raising the 10c refund in line with inflation

to ensure the incentive keeps pace with increasing prices. It is nearly 15 years since it was introduced. Things have moved on a bit; a can of Coke is worth a bit more than it was in 2010.

Community groups in Palmerston would benefit from a scheme like this. Groups are always raising funds and are active in their community, looking for more ways to bring in a dollar to help them provide better services for their club and the community. The Palmerston Scout Group has a great scout leader. The Mayor of Palmerston, Athina Pascoe-Bell, is deeply involved in the Palmerston Scouts. The group is always out and about and would love the opportunity to make more money and bring in more revenue by picking up more rubbish off our streets.

Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Football Club is very active and a great part of the Palmerston community. Many families and kids are involved in the club. The more revenue the club has, the more services it can provide, the more coaches it can put on and the more gear it can provide to the kids. The club would love more opportunities to pick up rubbish and put money into its coffers.

The Palmerston Rugby Union Club, the Crocs, is a great club. Its clubhouse is in Moulden, and the teams train at the Moulden oval. I am working to fulfil my election commitment to improve the lighting at the oval. I am proud to say that this year the oval was not burnt, unlike the previous year under the previous government when it could not keep the sprinklers on. There is more work to do in that space. I am working with the club president, as the current sprinklers do not fully cover the whole oval.

The Northern Sharks Rugby League Football Club train there over the Dry Season but cannot run a home game there because of the patches of ground that are hard for people who are tackled on it. I continue to work on the election commitment to improve the lighting of that field so the Crocs can have its home games and run the Super 7s. For the Northern Sharks, I am working on it. I want that field to be green wall to wall throughout the Dry Season so teams can have home games, train at night and do all they need to do on that field.

The Palmerston Crocs Netball Club players train at the Palmerston netball courts in my electorate of Blain in the suburb of Moulden. They share that with Mash Netball Club. The two clubs train on the same courts and have their home games there. It is a bit of a challenge when you go there for a big game like a semifinal or a final and there are all these kids running around in uniforms. They are both fantastic Palmerston clubs, but make sure you do not get them mixed up because there is nothing worse than congratulating the wrong club—whoopsie! The Palmerston Crocs and Mash Netball Clubs love to fundraise and could always do with more opportunities to do so.

Palmerston Rovers Football Club is a fantastic soccer club that trains in the Member for Drysdale's electorate at the sports fields next to Gray Primary School. The member for Drysdale and I attended the club's junior presentation at the end of this season. It is an amazing club and its members are passionate. The club has a fantastic president, whose name escapes me at the moment. Club members would love to take advantage of this scheme and pick up the bottles that will come into scope with the increase to a three-litre limit.

The Greater Palmerston United Football Club often meets in the wonderful electorate of Goyder, which the Member for Goyder is passionate about. I could not make it to the club's end-of-year presentation this year, but I understand that the Member for Brennan did. This passionate club celebrated its 10th anniversary last year. The club has grown from almost nothing—just a couple of young guys, sports fanatics, who were crazy about soccer and saw some youths in Palmerston with a bit of extra time on their hands and a lot of energy, who loved running about, so they got together. Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro helped them get started and it has grown into a massive club. The club's members are kicking goals and doing well. They would love to earn more revenue by picking up rubbish and providing more services to the community.

One thing I like about this legislation is that it is bringing bottle caps into scope, so if someone forgets to take the cap off a bottle it will not be a hindrance. A Place for Plastic, which is based in the Member for Nightcliff's area, is a passionate local group that is all about recycling plastic, upcycling, reusing and reducing waste. It went to Berry Springs Primary School and got the plastic ninja students to dispose of a lot of old bottles. They cut up old soft drink bottles, painted them and turned them into planters. The students put potting mix into them and planted things, as well as decorating them. The students got all the bottle caps that normally would go into landfill and put them into an injection machine which extruded the caps and turned them into other things. Well done to them for that fantastic work.

The Member for Drysdale and I are incredibly passionate about having a great community that is a fantastic place for parents to raise kids. My dream is that parents in Palmerston—particularly in my suburbs of Moulden and Woodroffe, and I am sure the Member for Drysdale would agree for Gray and Driver—could be at peace

knowing that the streets are clean and safe. Parents would be comfortable and happy with their kids walking out the gate and down the street in bare feet to the local park to play on the equipment, run around on the grass and play in the sandpit. They would not have to worry about broken glass or the antisocial behaviour which became out of control over the last eight years under the Labor government. I will be fighting for that every day in this Chamber, as will the Member for Drysdale.

During the campaign and continuing on, there was no end to opportunities for us. Actually, since the change of government it is a little harder to find rubbish. Last year there was rubbish everywhere; it was not hard to find. People were always saying, 'There is a big pile of rubbish in this park because people are drinking'.

I remember one day I responded to a complaint from a constituent about a lot of rubbish on Emery Avenue. I went there with a couple of bags and my trusty picker-upper. I filled up three or four bags of glass bottles out of some bushes. There was a drinking circle which had taken up nearby under a tree.

The previous Labor government fully decriminalised public drinking and tied the hands of police. It told the public, 'It is not lawful to drink in public. We have the strongest laws.' The fact of the matter was there were no consequences and no offence. It was a distinction without a difference. Under the previous government it was technically unlawful to drink in public but there were no consequences. Police could turn up and there was nothing they could do; they could not even ask for people's names. They could not say, 'Who are you? What is your name? Where are you from? What are you doing here?' because there was no offence tied to drinking in public. The previous Labor government removed that, tying the hands of police, removing their powers and making them helpless in the face of antisocial behaviour in our community. That is why they were turfed out so vehemently at the last election.

We learned that lesson. We gave back powers to police and made sure that there is an offence tied to public drinking. For those who hear what I am saying and may 'tsk, tsk' and roll their eyes, it is important to have things like this in legislation. When there is an offence tied to something, it activates police powers. It empowers them to then take action. If there is no offence, police are hamstrung.

When there is a group of people drinking unlawfully in a park or a public place, in a place where families and mothers would love to take their children to play in the grass—I remember when my kids were little babies and toddlers, there was nothing better than getting out of the house, going to the park, sitting down having a rest and letting the kids run around on the grass and in the sandpit.

The trouble is that when the hands of police are tied and law enforcement is chained, criminals are free. Antisocial behaviour moved in, the drinking circles multiplied and there was nothing police could do. I am proud to be a member of a government that said, 'No, the community expectation is that parks and public spaces should be a safe place for mothers, children and families to go to and enjoy so parents can relax while their kids can run around and play.'

We brought back the offence of drinking in a public place so that police have powers to ask people who they are. If they have a warrant outstanding or if there is a bail condition or domestic violence order in place that says this person is not allowed to drink in the company of this other person, that is a safety measure. That is common when a domestic violence order is in place where there has been assault due to intoxication by alcohol. There might be two people who actually love each other and have a complicated relationship, but when one or both of them are intoxicated they lose their inhibitions and behave in ways that the sober version of themselves would not approve of. It is common for a domestic violence order to have a condition to say that the person cannot drink in the company of that person.

When there is no offence tied to unlawful drinking, the police have no power to ask who someone is. If police do not know who that person is, how are they meant to protect the woman in that situation from her partner who may be drinking and not acting like himself?

The Member for Drysdale was deeply impacted by the recent death of a woman in his electorate. It is alleged in the media that alcohol was involved in that circumstance. We need to do everything possible to protect women in the Northern Territory and keep children safe. There is still more to do, and we will continue; the job is not done yet. We will continue to work and act.

Another positive aspect about removing bottles from our community is that bottles lying around are often used as weapons. Many times I see broken and smashed glass from bottles; it is a constant problem in my electorate. When I ask people why they smash bottles and not put them in the bin, they say, 'If I leave the bottle there, even if I put it in the bin, it might be used as a weapon against me later. If I smash it into pieces,

it cannot be used as a weapon against me.' It is done on purpose. It is a safety measure by people in difficult circumstances who need help.

Bringing those bottles into the scope of this legislation is important. It provides an incentive for people to remove bottles without smashing them. We have all seen—I do not know who they are—these guys on the side of the road, riding their bikes with a little baby bike trailer behind them. They have the biggest bags of cans behind them; it is amazing. I take my hat off to those people, because they work hard, running around and collecting cans for 10c refunds. It is an honour to them; they are working so hard to keep our community clean and pick up all those bottles.

I look forward to all those community groups I mentioned, the good Samaritans in the community, the people who are running around responding to their natural incentives, chasing the 10c refund—maybe, hopefully, 15c in the future or even 20c; who knows—picking up all those bottles so they do not have to be smashed and so that the women in my electorate living in difficult circumstances do not have to be afraid that those bottles will be used as a weapon against them later that night.

While I am here, I shout out to Trevor Jenkins—the rubbish warrior—who set the standard so many years ago. He had a personal mission. I am not sure what motivated him; he made the decision himself to get out there and become a one-man cleanup band. I do not think he made any money out of it; he would just get out and pick up all the rubbish. If a bin was too far away he would put it in one place so it was easy for the council to pick it up. Thank you, Trevor, for all your hard work over the years, picking up rubbish. We appreciate it.

Before I finish, I will round off on where I started, which is on the liberal values of incentives guiding behaviour rather than the socialist tendency to use the heavy hand of punishment. Humans have a certain nature. Socialists always want to rule by control and punishment. They are not happy until they can enforce thought crime. We see that around the world, where speech and language are being controlled. That is the natural end point of those on the other side. That is their natural tendency. The liberals in the world seek to let people be free and have the marketplace of ideas flourish. They are not afraid of free speech and people speaking their mind.

Members interjecting.

Mr KERLE: I pick up on the comments and the eye rolling, but it is true. You are reacting because you feel that it is piercing your heart. You are feeling convicted.

J Davis interjecting.

Mr KERLE: I pick up on the laughter from the Member for Johnston …

J Davis: My heart is pierced.

K McNamara interjecting.

Mr KERLE: I pick up on the laughter from the Member for Nightcliff. You are reacting because you are feeling convicted. You know that you would love nothing more than to control people's speech and what they think.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, direct your comments through me, please.

Mr KERLE: I picked up on those interjections, but I will move on.

I note the opposition to the liberal values of free speech and letting the marketplace of ideas flourish. If someone has a silly thing to say that some may find offensive, they should be punished in the marketplace of ideas. They should face the consequences of what they have said. We should not seek to control their speech unless they directly incite violence.

This Bill seeks to work with the natural incentives for people to pick up rubbish, take it to a recycling depot and clean up our community.

I thank the minister and commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I strongly support the Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Legislation Amendment (Expansion of CDS and Other Matters) Bill 2025. This

Bill strengthens one of the Northern Territory's greatest environmental and community success stories: our Container Deposit Scheme, known to Territorians as Cash for Containers. It is a program that rewards environmental responsibility, supports local businesses and creates meaningful employment and social inclusion across the Territory.

I am proud to note that this Bill enjoys bipartisan support. It was referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee and there were no amendments, which is a clear reflection of our shared commitment to sustainability, community and opportunity for all Territorians.

This Bill expands the scope of the Container Deposit Scheme to include beverage containers of three litres or less, for the first time capturing wine and spirit bottles, plain milk containers and larger juice and flavoured milk bottles. This expansion will prevent millions of containers ending up in landfill or littering our beautiful environment while also increasing recycling and resources across the Territory.

The Container Deposit Scheme is more than an environmental initiative; it is also an economic driver and a social enterprise success story. Across the Territory, depots provide employment and training for hundreds of people in jobs that cannot be outsourced and strengthen local communities. Depots provide income, skills and pathways for Territorians of all ages and abilities. Every time a container is returned it supports local jobs and small businesses. An expansion of the scheme means greater opportunities in every part of the Northern Territory.

I am proud to say that one of the best examples of the Container Deposit Scheme's community impact can be found at the Down Syndrome Association of the Northern Territory's depot in Leanyer, which operates under the name Cash for Containers (C4C). C4C is a social enterprise that offers growing employment opportunities for young people with disabilities. Through the Northern Territory Government's recycling scheme, Cash for Containers has built a workplace that combines environmental sustainability with social inclusion.

The program provides casual employment for over a dozen people with disabilities, each contributing to the daily operations. They are sorting, counting, serving customers and learning workplace skills that foster independence and confidence.

The participants also collect the containers. The team driving around the Darwin and Palmerston area looks forward to those daily trips. For many participants, this is their first job—a first step into the workforce and a chance to earn a wage, gain skills and contribute to the community.

I will take a moment to acknowledge Kyle, one of the long-term employees at the Cash for Containers depot in Leanyer. Kyle has been with the program since 2013, over 12 years of continuous employment. He is a valued and respected team member whose dedication, reliability and enthusiasm embodies everything that the Container Deposit Scheme stands for.

Kyle's story is a reminder that when we create inclusive employment opportunities we do not just provide jobs; we build careers, confidence and community. Through his work at the depot, Kyle has gained independence, friendships and pride in knowing he is helping to protect the environment and inspire others. Kyle has inspired me.

Kyle's contribution over more than a decade is something we should all celebrate. It shows how programs like the CDS and organisations like the Down Syndrome Association of the Northern Territory change lives for the better.

I also acknowledge the many community members, schools and local businesses that collect and donate containers to support the Down Syndrome Association NT and their Cash for Containers work. Every bottle and can collected helps fund employment and keeps the program running stronger.

I give a special thank you to Top End Print, whose ongoing partnership provides merchandise that helps promote awareness and pride in the work that the Down Syndrome Association NT does. I pay tribute to the mentors and supervisors at the Leanyer depot and within the Down Syndrome Association, the people who train, guide and encourage employees every day. Their patience, skills and compassion transform this depot from a workplace into a place of growth, belonging and empowerment. To each of you, thank you for the remarkable difference you make.

With expansion of the deposit scheme, I encourage all Territory businesses, schools, sporting clubs and community organisations to start preparing now to collect the additional containers that will soon be eligible

for the refund. This is an opportunity to grow fundraising programs, strengthen community recycling and support depots like Cash for Containers in Leanyer by increasing the volume of containers being processed locally. By expanding their collection efforts, businesses and community groups can help ensure the reform's success while making a direct contribution to environmental protection and inclusive employment.

The Bill supports every collection depot in the Northern Territory. Depots across the Territory will also see increased container volumes, improved business viability and greater opportunity to employ local people. This Bill strengthens those enterprises and helps grow the local economy across the Territory.

The Bill embodies the best public policy, delivering environmental, economic and social benefit to all. It reduces litter and landfill, supports businesses and community, and empowers people through employment and inclusion. Every container returned, depot strengthened and job created makes the Northern Territory cleaner, stronger and fairer.

Once again, I acknowledge the bipartisan support for this Bill and its referral to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee without amendment. That reflects the quality of work behind it and our shared belief that good environmental policy and social policy go hand in hand.

In conclusion, the Bill is practical, inclusive and forward-looking legislation. It ensures fewer bottles in landfill, cleaner communities, stronger businesses and more employment, especially for Territorians living with disability.

I thank the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment for bringing forward this important amendment. I commend the department staff who have worked tirelessly to prepare the Bill. Their commitment to consultation, clarity and fairness has ensured that these reforms are practical, inclusive and build a strong engagement with industry and the community.

This is good legislation; the kind that reflects vision and careful work. It also reflects the leadership of the minister and the department; the generosity of community donors; the partnerships of businesses like Top End Print; and the commitment of mentors, families and employees such as Kyle, who remind us of the profound difference made by inclusive employment. It challenges us all—government, businesses and community alike—to do more, collect more, recycle more and support those who make a stronger Territory.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I welcome any expansion to Territorians' ability to recycle, so I wholeheartedly support this Bill.

The 10c container refund scheme has been a massive success in Australia, increasing participation in recycling and reducing litter and pollution across the country. The refund scheme encourages community members to recycle plastic waste that is pervasive when it enters our natural environment. Every container refunded is one less container in our creeks, streams and mangroves and on our beaches.

There is a refund facility just outside my electorate, TOMRA Recycling Centre, which contributed over …

Mrs Zio: That is my electorate.

K McNAMARA: Yes, it is. It contributed more than 100 million containers redeemed in the 2022–23 financial year in the NT. That equals $10m in refunds in the pockets of Territorians in one financial year alone, and it is growing every year.

My kids have recycled bottles there for pocket money. We enjoy going to that recycling centre. You just pop them inside the little thing and it counts them off. It is actually quite fun for kids.

A shout-out for what we heard earlier from another member about the Darwin Plastic Makers Space, which is a great space doing wonderful, creative and practical recycling and upcycling of plastic, as well as teaching the ethos of recycling to younger generations.

Those who know me know that I am concerned about the plastic crisis in our environment, particularly in our marine environment, and the effects of microplastics in our food chain and bodies. I genuinely love picking up rubbish. We have a saying in my family, 'If you see it, bin it'—within reason, of course. I have my personal rubbish grabber, which is helpful.

Long before I was in this job, I regularly picked up rubbish in public spaces. It is a practical, tangible way to make an impact on your environment. I first became conscious of the impacts of litter on the marine environment when I volunteered for Sea Shepherd many years ago. I was on a vessel in the middle of the Indian Ocean about halfway between Australia and India. On the radar at sea you can see there is no land; you could not be more isolated. Standing on the deck of the bow of the ship, when I looked over I could not count more than five seconds without seeing another bit of plastic float by. You are in the most pristine marine environment, yet the plastic in our oceans is everywhere. I have sailed over a lot of the planet; the impact of plastics in our marine environment was a devastating thing to see.

The debate on this Bill is timely for me to plug an event. This month before the rain hits, I have been running a big cleanup of the Nightcliff electorate through multiple events. We had a big one in the mangroves at Sunset Park at the start of the month. Thank you very much to all the volunteers who came. The mangroves act as a filtration system for our marine environment. A large amount of stuff ends up in there. You get pretty strange bits of rubbish. You pull out mattresses, computer parts and all kinds of things from the mangroves, which is devastating to our fish nurseries and things like that.

The reason I am running this cleanup event now is that every bit of rubbish on our streets ends up in the ocean. That rubbish from all our suburbs goes into our drains and ends up in our coastal areas. As a coastal electorate, we see the devastating impacts of that a lot on the Nightcliff foreshore.

This Sunday we are doing a cleanup at Chapman Road if anyone wants to join in. On 1 November we are doing another cleanup at Nightcliff swimming beach.

This Bill is good. It not only encourages individuals to do more for the environment but also empowers one of the most active community groups that exercise this scheme, which is Down Syndrome Australia, and does phenomenal work in keeping our Territory clean. An expansion of this scheme increases Down Syndrome Australia's ability to fund itself, making its work more impactful and the Territory a cleaner place.

Recycling with refunding is a pivotal part of our circular economy, an ideal economic structure the Territory should evolve to. Our economy is currently far from circular and resembles more of a one-way street for corporations, including political donors, but we can thank this scheme for helping us along our way to a sustainable economy.

While I support this Bill wholeheartedly, we must be honest about what it is and what it is not. The understanding and perception of recycling has changed over time. Recycling at its nut is kind of like bailing water out from a boat while someone upstream keeps drilling holes in the hull. We can collect every bottle in the Territory but if big companies continue producing billions of single-use containers with no accountability we are just running faster on a treadmill and going nowhere.

The real solution is not at the recycling centre; it is at the boardroom tables of beverage companies and packaging manufacturers. We need producer responsibility schemes, packaging reduction targets, and to stop asking everyday Territorians to clean up a mess that many of them did not make, while the corporations profiting from plastic face no consequences whatsoever. This scheme is important work, but let us not pretend that 10c per bottle is a substitute for holding big business accountable for the environmental crisis it has created.

I am in full support of this totally uncontroversial Bill. The popularity of this scheme is unquestionable, and its expansion is a no-brainer, so why on earth did the government recommend this to a scrutiny committee? What is so controversial about recycling that taxpayers need to fund MLAs and public servants to pore over every detail of this Bill? There has been no public outcry that forced them to scrutinise this Bill, unlike the outcry with the Territory Coordinator, for example, which did not get scrutinised.

Many other Bills with enormous public pushback and experts' criticism such as the youth and bail reforms and the anti-discrimination changes did not even get a look in from the scrutiny committee. This government has it backwards. How does the treatment of three-litre plastic bottles get more scrutiny than the treatment of our most vulnerable children? How does the treatment of bottle caps get more scrutiny than the treatment of sacred sites and First Nations people? This is not leadership; it is busy work.

Controversial acts like arming transit officers are passed on urgency, but deciding whether a big plastic bottle should be recycled is dissected within an inch of its life. If you ever need to ask yourself why Territorians constantly ridicule politicians, you do not need to look any further than this. If a government finds controversy in recycling bottles, while missing it in Bills that warrant scrutiny, its priorities are not just backwards, they are incomprehensible.

I love recycling; I want to see more of it. I want to change people's habits to reduce littering. I want corporations held to account for the plastic they create. The plastic problem is immense and devastating to our environment and human health, and it still receives far less attention and regulation from governments than it needs. Watching government members fall over themselves to congratulate the minister for this obvious no-brainer, non-controversial Bill, is ridiculous. This Bill, for some inconceivable reason, was sent to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee while they sat in complete silence as we passed enormous controversial Bills with hugely negative impacts on Territorians.

The scrutiny committee exists for controversial legislation. It exists for Bills that affect people's rights, freedoms and lives. Instead, this government runs scared from transparency and accountability, cherrypicking what gets scrutinised based on political convenience rather than public interests. If this is the government's idea of priority setting, Territorians have every right to question whether anyone in government even knows what they are doing.

I support this Bill. I wish I could support the process that brought it here.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I was not going to speak on this Bill. I had the opportunity to be on the scrutiny committee, and I support the Bill, as we did in the committee. I am also a great champion of recycling. I agree with the points that have been raised by other members regarding concerns about this Bill not going far enough. I also follow up on what the Member for Nightcliff said about concerns regarding the referral of this Bill to the scrutiny committee.

I remind the Chamber that the functions of the scrutiny committee are clear in the terms of reference. They refer to whether a Bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals, whether it is consistent with the principles of natural justice, whether it does not adversely affect rights and liberties or imposes obligations retrospectively or whether it has sufficient regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tradition. I cannot see where any of that is in this Bill. I feel like it is a waste of parliamentary resources. As everyone here knows, I was incredibly glad to see the return of the scrutiny committee, but I am concerned to see the way it is being used by this government.

I will not talk at length about the Bill. I support the Bill, but I will comment on some things that were said in the Chamber.

Member for Blain, I thank you for your political analysis, but I feel the need to correct it for the record. I speak not as a member of any political party, but as a student of history. The claim that socialists uniquely threaten free speech while free markets protect it ignores substantial evidence to the contrary. Major corporations routinely suppress speech that threatens their profits, whether it is through blacklisting workers who organise unions, pressuring platforms to remove criticism or using legal threats to silence journalists. We see that over and again, and I can give you myriad examples.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston, please direct your comments through me.

J DAVIS: Yes; sorry, Madam Speaker.

Trump has repeatedly called for the revocation of broadcast licences for news networks that have criticised him, suggested opening libel laws to sue unfavourable press and praised authoritarian crackdowns on protesters. The marketplace of ideas does not function when a handful of billionaires own the megaphones.

Historically, it was socialists and labour movements that fought for the free speech protections that we have today. The real threat to free expression comes not from any economic system but concentrated power itself, whether it is held by states or corporations. When a few tech CEOs can unilaterally ban a sitting president or algorithmically suppress entire viewpoints, that is not the free market protecting speech; it is unaccountable power shaping public discourse for private interests.

Let us not forget that in the champions of free speech in your own CLP, your Chief Minister routinely tells people that she does not want to listen to them if she does not like what they have to say. She says that if they do not like what this government is doing, they should leave. Where is the freedom of speech in that?

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, unlike previous speakers, I will talk about the Bill and its intent, because I think that is why we are here. I often hear that we are here to pass good laws. This is a good law. I commend the minister and his agency for all the work they did to bring this Bill before us.

As a bit of background, I have history in and passion about waste management technologies. People can google ‘Waste management technologies: opportunities for research and manufacturing in Australia by Brian O’Gallagher’, which was published in 1990. There is a copy at the National Library. That was when I was with the Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce in Canberra. That book was published three times because it was so popular.

It looked at research across the country. The key focus and message I was trying to get is that there is money to be made out of waste because people were throwing things away and they did not understand that there was a business opportunity with it. I went through various initiatives, research and companies that were doing innovative stuff at the time. You probably would not think that they were innovative now, but at that time they were. A key focus of that was recycling.

Recycling is a practical environmental initiative. I suggest that this is part of our government’s philosophy. We are committed to protecting the environment, but we are doing it with practical initiatives that people can get behind and do on the ground, not just theoretical philosophies. How can we get on the ground and keep the environment clean? This fits into that broader recycling strategy.

I also need to go back to when my parents were around; they were recycling. We have lost it along the way and got into this ‘throw away, dispose of everything’ single use of commodities. I agree with the Member for Nightcliff; overpackaging and all those things are wrong. We need to minimise that.

Let me get back to my father. He was a hardworking bricklayer. He worked hard and supported a family of six kids. I had a wonderful mother who did just as much work at home looking after everyone. My father would come to the end of the week and have these beer bottles, the big bottles. Victoria had Abbots Lager. He could not afford Crown Lager. He might have had the stout, VB or Fosters when it came about.

They got the big bottles and kept them. They stacked them up near the woodshed. Six months later, he would have a heap and take them up to the bottle-o and cash them in. That money went to pay for our school fees. He used to come home and say, ‘I am only drinking to put you guys through school’. Mum did not believe all that, but that was his rationale. It was true recycling; that is how they did it. Now when I look around, I see people just throw things away. They smash things away.

I was on the Darwin City Council. I was a big supporter and advocate for that council to do better in recycling. I heard what the Alice Springs Town Council is doing with glass recycling. That is magnificent. The City of Darwin did not do glass recycling; it should have done. I urged that it was big enough to think about getting a full glass recycling facility here, but I was told, ‘No, we can’t afford that. We can’t do that.’ It should do that. It needs to get a good 10-year plan to achieve that, then maybe go to the federal government or the Northern Territory Government and do that collectively, going forward. That would be a brilliant idea. I hope that the City of Darwin takes that up.

There was no use putting all those wine bottles in the yellow bin because we did not have a recycling facility. When the wine bottles came through, they were separating and taking them—particularly the green wine bottles—out of the proper recycling and putting them into landfill. We were better off putting the wine bottles into the red bin. People generally thought, ‘No, glass goes in the recycling’. It was a natural thing for people to think.

This container deposit legislation tells people, ‘You have your wine bottles, milk bottles, anything up to three litres. You can keep your lids on—whatever. You can get some money back. You can earn something out of this. Do not go smashing it up or wasting them.’ As the Member for Blain said, we are looking for incentives. This moves people along.

I see this as a fantastic opportunity. When I look at my electorate of Karama, one of the biggest issues I find is the litter and broken glass, and I walk every street and go through all the parks.

I will refer to Mr Dean White, who I call the unofficial mayor of Karama. He sends me photos of bottles or smashed glass on footpaths or around bus stops. Other residents see me at the playground and say, ‘Can we get the council to clean this up because the kids cannot play here. We have broken glass everywhere.’ It is a major scourge in my electorate.

Like others, I go to the shops in my own electorate. At the Karama shops I see smashed, broken bottles in the car park, cans and so on. I go out with a plastic bag, pick them up and put them away because it is not right. I will then report it to the store owners, but you have to do your own thing sometimes. You have to lead by example.

I heard from the Members for Drysdale, Casuarina and others that they are getting their hands dirty and doing the right thing. I heard that from the Member for Nightcliff, so I give tribute to that as well. It is important.

Thanks to the minister for transport, I have been able to get bins beside some bus stops where we had a lot of rubbish. Hopefully people will use them and not throw rubbish under the seat. We probably need to do a lot more on education, convincing people to use things. People must take personal responsibility for their own actions, but it is a good start.

Now we are generating an incentive. There is money in this. I heard the Member for Wanguri talk about the Down Syndrome Association people coming around. I have it at my house. They come in and put the crates there, and you put your cans in them. Now I will be able to give them wine bottles and everything else. They can make money out of this. It is not only them, but also the scouting groups; they can do it.

It is important that we think about all these things. We must give incentives. I take on board that we may look at upping the price to 20c when we review it. I would support that, as it would give more incentive. I think it is a fantastic idea. The fact that we have moved this means that we do not have to wait, and we have transitional arrangements in that we do not have to wait for the labels on the wine bottles for two years; the depots will still take them, and you can still earn from it.

The Member for Arafura talked about servicing remote areas. This legislation is for the whole of the Territory. Having been on a council, I know there are opportunities for local councils and authorities to come up with innovative ways of saying, 'Hey, you give us all your stuff; we can make money out of this.' They can earn money and can be the initiators saying, 'Yes, you can have a collection point here. We will refund you. We will work out an arrangement to get it to a larger distribution point.' That is the normal way of business.

The government does not have to do it; the more we do it at the grassroots the better. It can be owned by everyone and they feel empowered, so I agree that remote areas need it and we can look at ways to facilitate it. That is what I think we should do. All members, particularly our bush members, should ask their local councils and authorities, 'Have you ever thought of taking advantage of this? You can make money and increase your rate base.' I really like that idea.

Other benefits include tourism. If we can clean up the litter down our highways and so on, it will make it all the better for tourism. Caravan parks and camping grounds can be a source of collection. There is money to be made.

I understand that some of the glass we capture now will be crushed and sent to Adelaide, because that is where there are processing plants for road bases and things like that. I know we were doing a little bit in Alice Springs. I think as the volume gets going, we will need to see if there is an opportunity to do some of that here. If in my electorate we collected all the Yellow Tail bottles that I find around our parks, crushed them up and put them in a road base, we could build a yellow brick road. We need to do it.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly. Recycling is fantastic; it is a business opportunity all round, and I thank everyone.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all the people who have contributed. I acknowledge Mr Jimmy Cocking, who is in the gallery. I am sure he is happy to see the environment protection Container Deposit Scheme legislation passing today.

I thank all the members who spoke and the stakeholders who provided their feedback on the Bill to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee. I thank the committee for its inquiry into the Bill. I thank the many stakeholders who provided feedback during consultation on the reforms.

I acknowledge the feedback that the reforms could have gone further by increasing the refund amount to 20c. I sincerely take on notice what members have said in this Chamber about ensuring that moves with the times. This is a matter for future consideration.

The *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011* provides a platform for the Container Deposit Scheme to increase recycling. The scheme provides Territorians with access to a well-established network of collection depots and other collection points across the Northern Territory where empty containers can be exchanged for 10c each.

Now is probably a good time to pick up on the Member for Arafura's questions about the Container Deposit Scheme and what happens in some of the remote communities. There are depots in Barunga, Borroloola,

the East Arnhem region, Elliott, Mataranka, Jabiru, Kintore, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek, Wadeye, Yulara and Groote Eylandt.

Other members spoke about what local councils and community councils can do. There are people working for remote councils in the Central region who go to community members and say that they will pay them to collect cans around the community. They then take the cans that have been collected to Alice Springs as part of their weekly traversing in and out of the major towns. They ensure that local people who do not make it to town every week can still access this scheme. It is wonderful that some members of local community councils are taking it upon themselves to increase the scheme's effectiveness, and I encourage all other councils, if they can, to do the same to be involved.

Although the success of the scheme is evident through more than one billion beverage containers having been recycled since 2012, the reforms in this Bill recognise that the scheme can still be improved.

The primary aim of this Bill is to broaden and simplify the scope of containers for the Territory's Container Deposit Scheme. The Bill achieves this by expanding the scope of the scheme to include beverage containers of three litres or less in volume. As a result, wine and spirit bottles, plain milk containers and larger juice and flavoured milk containers of one litre or more will now be included in the scheme. These additional types of containers will join other beverage containers already in the scheme, including those for water, fruit and vegetable juices, soft drinks, sports vitamin drinks, flavoured milk, pre-mixed alcohol spirit drinks, beer and non-glass wine containers.

This will simplify the scheme for Territorians, making it easier for them to understand and participate in the scheme, by minimising unnecessary complexity and confusion. Soon Territorians will no longer have to sort beverage containers based on the type of beverage that was in the container; instead, the focus will simply be on the recyclability of the container—for example, aluminium, plastic and glass.

Recycling helps keep empty cans, soft drink bottles and beer bottles out of landfill and litter, as other members have said. The more than 100 million beverage containers returned by Territorians each year equates to about 400 containers per Territorian and $10m in deposits redeemed each year. That 100 million beverage containers also equates to almost 800 tonnes of aluminium, 800 tonnes of plastic and three-and-a-half tonnes of glass recovered for recycling through the scheme each year.

In terms of improving recycling rates and high-volume materials for recycling, it is estimated that expanding the scheme will increase recycling by a further 12 million containers per year. This means more valuable materials will be recovered, which will benefit the recycling industry, encouraging more infrastructure investment and jobs, including in the remote communities that have been spoken about.

Wine and spirit bottles have been in the Queensland container scheme since November 2023. As I said during the first reading of this Bill, it is only a matter time before other states follow the lead of Queensland and the Territory. New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia have publicly announced that they will expand their schemes to accept wine and spirit bottles and larger drink containers. The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment will continue to work closely with these jurisdictions and with impacted stakeholders in the year ahead.

The Bill responds to industry concerns by providing a two-year transitional period from commencement to include the 10c refund marking on wine and spirit bottle labels. This will reduce the impact of the scheme's expansion on industry, noting that in Queensland the 10c refund mark will need to be included on labels by January 2027.

Furthermore, Australian Food Standards Australia New Zealand is mandating energy labelling on packaged alcohol beverages, which could be actioned by the industry at the same time as these reforms. More businesses are already updating their labels to meet Queensland's requirements by applying a nationally consistent 10c refund mark. Businesses complying with Queensland's labelling requirements will then be compliant with the Territory's requirements and will also be for New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia when their reforms commence.

As the shelf life and turnover of milk and juice containers is a lot shorter than that of wine and spirits, the Bill provides a transitional period of up to one year to include the refund marking on labels for those types of containers being added to the scheme.

The Bill also requires collection depots to accept containers if lids, caps or other closures are attached. This change has strong community support and will enable Territorians to return containers to depots without

having to remove the lid or cap from the container. I have been in that position where you are furiously trying to remove all the caps after thinking you are doing the right thing by putting them back on top.

The Bill makes several administrative changes to improve the functioning of the scheme. First, the Bill transitions the powers and functions of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment and the chief executive officer and delegates of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment.

Second, the Bill transfers the review of statutory decisions under the Act to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This enables affected people to apply to the tribunal for a review of a decision rather than the Local Court where this function presently sits.

Third, this Bill makes a range of minor amendments to clarify matters and update the Act and regulations in line with modern drafting principles. These minor amendments do not impact the substantive operation of the Act and regulations or the scheme itself.

The amendments to broaden the scope of the scheme will commence by gazette notice, anticipated by mid-2026. This will allow sufficient time for businesses and industry to make the necessary adjustments and ensure Territorians continue to have a positive experience at collection depots. The other amendments will commence on the day after the Administrator's assent is declared.

In summary, this Bill helps to rebuild the economy by supporting the waste and recycling industry, encouraging greater investment and infrastructure, and providing job opportunities in the Territory. The Bill improves our outdoor lifestyle and protects our natural environment by removing litter and reducing landfill.

Going to some of the comments from earlier, before I wrap up—because I was taken aback by all the contributions today—I note questions were asked about why the responsibilities under the Act are being moved from the NTEPA to the minister and the department. These changes are consistent with existing delegations and will create efficiencies by more appropriately placing responsibility for administering the scheme with the department rather than the NTEPA.

Questions were also raised about the implications of transferring reviews to the NTCAT. I note for members that there have been no reviews before the Local Court and we are not expecting resourcing burdens on the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The Member for Goyder spoke about collecting rubbish, something I also enjoy doing in my community. I commend the Clontarf Academy in Alice Springs, which every year around Clean Up Australia Day gets out with the Mayor of the Alice Springs Town Council to collect containers in the Todd River in Alice Springs. I have been there for the last five years. Over my time of collecting containers I have noticed people collecting the aluminium cans especially. Every year I see an increasing number of spirit bottles left in the Todd River because you cannot currently get a refund for those. I am extremely excited to see a reductions in those containers left in our environment as a result of these scheme changes.

The Member for Drysdale spoke about David Attenborough and *Captain Planet*. I also watched *Captain Planet* as a young person and can understand the impact that had on many people who watched it. He also spoke about being the change you wish to see. It made me think of my daughter; if we are walking down the street and I see any of my children kick rubbish, I always say, 'If you can kick it, you can pick it up'. They are words we live by.

The Member for Gwoja spoke about Karl Hampton and the Alice Springs Town Council, which brought in that effective wine bottle scheme that was closing the gap during that time. I had a chuckle to myself researching the history of that. Gerry Wood, who was spoken about earlier, had a media release stating exactly that. This was in 2012, so we are now 13 years down the track. He said the Northern Territory needed to get on and ensure that this gap in the scheme was dealt with. I am glad to say—hopefully Gerry is listening today—that we are dealing with that as we speak.

The Member for Blain, amongst other things, spoke about our bowerbird instincts. I found that amusing, with my father being a birdwatcher, or twitcher. We would often see the bowerbirds collecting things.

I deliver mail around the electorate and have strapped a milk crate onto the back of my bike. In two weeks I have collected 67 cans by picking them up as I ride past them on the footpath. Unfortunately, it is again becoming an issue in our community, which is why schemes like this are so important. We need to make sure the rubbish left by others is collected.

The Member for Wanguri spoke about the benefits of employment through the scheme, especially for community organisations. The Member for Nightcliff spoke about picking up rubbish in the environment. I also thank the Member for Johnston for her contribution. I enjoyed the quote from the Member for Karama about his father working extremely hard to provide for school fees and recycling glass bottles.

It has been wonderful to hear how this scheme impacts everyone.

I acknowledge the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for its work in drafting the Bill and modernising the legislation, and the officers in the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment who contributed to the development of this Bill. I also acknowledge the hard work of the recycling industry.

Finally, I thank Territorians for their strong support in making the Territory's Container Deposit Scheme a success. To the many Territorians who have embraced the scheme and invested their time collecting containers and visiting depots to redeem deposits, thank you.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment)(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.

NOTICES

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Statute Law Revision and Repeals Bill 2025, Serial 40.

Mrs HERSEY (Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Legislation Amendment Bill, Serial 41.

Ms BOOTHBY (Tourism and Hospitality): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Tourism NT Amendment (Integration of NTMEC) Bill 2025, Serial 42.

QUESTION TIME

Public Service – Pay Negotiation

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, I welcome two of my friends from Victoria, Craig and Jackie, who are braving mango madness for the hot Wet Season. I hope you enjoy parliament, all the way from Victoria.

Madam SPEAKER: Welcome to Parliament House.

Ms UIBO: Minister, two in three public servants voted down your poor pay condition offer. In response, you said they should be grateful for what they have. You publicly attacked and blamed unions and then refused to return to the negotiating table. What you did not do is listen to public servants who were telling you that your deal was less than acceptable.

Will you give a guarantee to public servants that you will now take the time to listen to their concerns about pay and conditions and return to the negotiating table in good faith, rather than resorting to the usual CLP finger-pointing and verbal attacks?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I reject the premise of the question because upon coming to government we had a debt we could not jump over. We went to the negotiating table in good faith and have negotiated along the way, for a long time. We have many negotiation agreements to do under this government over the next couple of years.

We negotiated in good faith that this was a 3% deal over four years which, over the four-year period works out to be 12.55%. That is an increase when we have CPI at 1.6%. To say that the commissioner and I have not negotiated in good faith is rubbish and I reject it.

We have fiscal integrity and we have to negotiate within the constraints of what we have. We confidently said we have a 3% deal on the table. That was voted down. What we should be saying is that the previous government did not negotiate and sought a pay freeze. It did not have its union mates lobby for a higher pay increase. People got a couple of bonus payments …

Ms Uibo: Education got a good deal. Enjoying that, aren't you?

Mrs HERSEY: I pick up on the interjection from the Opposition Leader, who asked me the question. I am answering her question about what is happening. She might want to pipe down and listen.

As I said, we have been negotiating in good faith. The unions did nothing under the previous government. They stuck with their union mates and did not do anything to make sure that this industry got a better deal. The offer is 3% and CPI is 1.6%. We have been negotiating in good faith. We have now put that to …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; will the minister return to the negotiating table and listen to the concerns being raised by public servants?

Mrs HERSEY: As I was saying, we have been negotiating in good faith. This was put to a vote and it was voted down. People knew that there were fiscal constraints and that 3% was the deal they were getting. It is not up for negotiation any further now; it was voted down. It has now gone to Fair Work. It was the one and only deal on the table and they chose to vote it down. Our submission is on its way to Fair Work and that is where it is at.

Sharing Our History, Securing Future Peace Study Tour to Japan

Mr KERLE to CHIEF MINISTER

You announced the Sharing Our History, Securing Future Peace Study Tour to Japan, giving Year 9 and 10 students the chance to visit Okinawa, learn from history, experience the region firsthand and represent the Territory overseas. Can you update the Assembly on what this initiative will mean for local students in my community, like Palmerston College, how they can apply and how this program will inspire the next generation while strengthening the Territory's ties with Japan and our role in the Indo-Pacific?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain is passionate about opportunities for Territory kids. Palmerston College is a great school, just like all our other schools in the Territory. The CLP government is giving our kids a unique, unbelievable and unprecedented experience to grow and develop. We called this program Sharing Our History, Securing Future Peace, and it is a partnership between the Northern Territory and Japan for six Year 9 and 10 students to travel to Okinawa next year.

Applications are already open; they close on 12 December. This means we are running a Territory-wide competition for all the Year 9 and 10 students to get involved. They will have an historic visit of Okinawa and meet with senior Defence leaders and officials. They will get a greater depth of understanding about Japan and the Northern Territory's relationships in Defence, trade, education and tourism.

People need to understand that Japan is one of our closest allies; it is a central partner. In fact, it is the Northern Territory's largest trading partner, so there is a strong relationship between the two. We have a long-lasting, eternal relationship given our shared history. Our Defence history is unique. We experienced war on our doorstep, and our young people need to know that story. They need to understand our history and how it has shaped us as resilient and forward-looking Territorians who are deeply connected with our Asian region.

We are asking our Year 9 and 10 students to reflect on an important question: how did the Second World War shape the partnership between Australia and Japan, and how can it continue to grow in the future? This is about moving forward together and enhancing ties. Young people across the Territory can submit an essay, video, song, poem or presentation—whatever they like. Young people are innovative, and we look forward to their applications. The winners will be announced in February next year so they can travel to Okinawa.

This has been a passion project of mine since we came to government; it is one of the first things I tasked the department of the Chief Minister to prepare—along with about a million other things—but we were finally able to launch this in September this year, around the time I was in Tokyo. That was my first overseas visit, for good reason: Japan is our largest trading partner, and we share a strong Defence history. This is giving great opportunities to young Territorians, no matter where they live, to have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Healthcare Workers – Pay and Conditions

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

We all know how critical our healthcare workers are and what an incredible job they do for our community under difficult circumstances. Acting Chief Minister Gerard Maley told radio listeners on 22 September that the government had reached pay and conditions deals with the police but not with healthcare workers. When asked why, all he could say was the government's focus is on rebuilding the economy, restoring lifestyle and dealing with crime—the same tired lines the CLP team always falls back on.

Your government can do more than one thing at a time, and that should include fighting for essential services, which are currently overstretched and desperate for support from the government. Why are healthcare workers not a priority for your CLP government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I can see that there is a bit of a theme happening here today. I am happy to update everyone on that theme.

I refute the premise that we do not support our allied health workers. Our public servants do a fantastic job, particularly those who are on the front line each day when they go to work. They should be rewarded, and they have been, in the negotiations that are occurring.

They all come under the one agreement, which was the 3% deal on the table. I am happy to go over exactly what I said before. A 3% deal is a 3% deal; it is not 'let us negotiate higher'. Thanks to the previous government we have no more money to negotiate with, so we have to make sure that those negotiations are within the fiscal restraints. I have the Treasurer over my shoulder every time I am in those negotiations.

We have to make sure we are being fiscally responsible for the Territory, which is something the previous Labor government had no idea how to be. The fact that we came to government with an $11bn debt rising on the way to $17bn means Labor members should all hang their heads in shame. There should be more ramifications for them. They are sitting on that side for a good reason.

As I get back to the premise of the question, this was a 3% deal, over four years, 12.55% compounding. That was a good deal, particularly when we have CPI of 1.6%. As I said on radio, we value the public service. In private business you have to work, negotiate with your boss and maybe get a pay rise of a small percentage. This is 3% over the four years—12.55%. We have been negotiating in good faith. The sector knocked it down and it has now gone to Fair Work. We are waiting to hear what will happen to that from the Fair Work Commission.

Healthcare Workers – Pay and Conditions – Supplementary Question

Mr YOUNG to MINISTER for PUBLIC SERVICE

You say that you are negotiating in good faith for pay conditions for our healthcare workers, but you are bypassing negotiations and have gone straight to the Fair Work Commission. Why?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am not sure that the cloth-ears on the other side understand what that good faith is. Sorry if you find that offensive. I will withdraw that remark. I said that we have been negotiating. This went to a vote and it was voted down. People said no. That was a negotiation in good faith. It was voted down; they said no. It has now gone to Fair Work, from which a result will come in good time.

Beetaloo Sub-basin Gas

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

The NT has the potential to become a powerhouse of the nation through the Beetaloo. Our government has been crystal clear that we cannot rebuild the Territory economy without affordable, reliable and abundant energy for homes and businesses. The Beetaloo has enough gas to power the nation for the next 200 years or more, but that does not mean anything if you cannot get it to the market.

Having pipelines and other infrastructure built in time to address forecasted Territory and east coast gas shortfalls is essential. Can you inform the Assembly of the work our government is doing to get Beetaloo gas to market?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina knows how important the gas industry is to rebuilding our economy. He has been to the Beetaloo and seen with his own eyes the power of work that is happening in that area.

Just last month at NT Resources Week our government announced the approval of the APA Group's pipeline licence for the Sturt Plateau Pipeline. The pipeline will connect Tamboran Resources' pilot project in the Beetaloo to the north–south Amadeus pipeline which will get gas into the Northern Territory, and that is what we need. It has already commenced construction of that pipeline. In fact, I will go there next month to see how it is going with that 37-kilometre pipeline to connect Tamboran to pipelines that already exist.

Ms Uibo: Make sure you know your travel expenses.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mr MALEY: This will be great news for the Northern Territory because the gas industry provides direct and indirect jobs. It does not matter who you are or where you are, if you want a job in the gas industry you can get it. The gas industry will pay your rent or mortgage, buy you a new car and let you have the lifestyle that you want.

The pipeline will cost $70m. APA has already spent $2.5m on local suppliers and contractors in the Northern Territory.

This pipeline and the associated work are expected to maintain roughly 150 jobs, which means 150 people working in the Northern Territory and spending money here. This is super important because we have a gas shortage due to the previous Labor government failing to build the infrastructure and get ready for the gas that we need.

The pipeline will support an initial 40 terajoules of gas to the Northern Territory early next year. This is an important moment for the Beetaloo development. The Beetaloo pipeline will get the gas out of ground and to market. We know there is a lot of gas, but unless we get it to market at a competitive price, it might as well stay in the ground.

This is about jobs, local suppliers getting work and people spending money in the Northern Territory. It will do wonders for the Northern Territory. We are in a shortfall—we just heard about the economy. Gas pays for your wages, the education system, the health system and police, and it pays to keep the community safe. As a government we are doing whatever we can to support the gas industry because we know how important it is to rebuilding the Northern Territory economy.

Alice Springs Flights

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY referred to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Your party talked tough at the last election about standing up and taking the fight to airlines about airfares in the Northern Territory. Your government stands by and posts selfies and talks big and acts tough showing off the airlines coming to Darwin, but last week we learned that your government has done nothing to stand by the people of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) when we lost an important flight from Alice Springs to Adelaide.

Can you outline what your government is doing to attract more airlines into Mparntwe? We do not want to hear your big talk; we want to see your action. Tourism Central Australia has reminded the government:

> *… the Northern Territory government, who has the main relationship with the carriers, need to be always mindful of: making sure that we don't lose services, and we certainly call on the Northern Territory government to stay vigilant and make sure that the services aren't lost.*

What are you doing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our entire team spent the weekend in Alice Springs listening to the people of Alice Springs. I can tell you that it is starting to look, feel and sound like a different place from under Labor. It was thriving.

We are talking about coming into a hot season. This week we have been talking a lot about being ready for summer, and a lot of work goes into that. The plan is that it will be a much better summer than it was in previous years under Labor because of the work that we have been doing to reduce crime.

We came to government just over a year ago and put forward a heap of legislation to change the way the Territory was, reduce crime and make sure that places like Alice Springs do not have the reputation that it had under Labor nationally, for all the wrong reasons. That was serious work. It is now starting to show signs that we are moving in the right direction because crime is going down and the economy is going up.

There is much more work to be done, but tourism is a big part …

Mr Paech: Airlines are going. What are you doing?

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Ms BOOTHBY: Tourism is a big part of the work that has to be done. It is one of our five key pillars for growing the economy.

We value our tourism industry in Alice Springs. Those hard workers need to be supported. That is why we spend so much time in Alice Springs, have two ministers there and have a Police Commissioner there. We genuinely believe that it is the heart of Australia. For many years, people in Alice Springs have just been talked to—talk, talk, talk. It was, 'We will do this and we will do that', with nothing delivered.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; my question was to the minister for Tourism, and she is talking about 'talk, talk, talk'. We do not want to hear her talk, talk, talk; we want to hear about her action. What are you doing to stop airlines pulling out of Alice Springs? That is the question. You are defending and you are failing.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you have made your point. Attorney-General, you have plenty of time.

Ms BOOTHBY: Honestly, he was a minister in the previous government for a long time. I think he was the Deputy Chief Minister, and he failed his home town.

I remind the Member for Gwoja that airlines and aviation activation sit under the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations.

Mr Paech: Are you passing the buck? You are that useless.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Ms BOOTHBY: I will allow the minister for Trade the rest of the time left to answer the question.

Mr Paech: You could not even answer it. What a shame you are.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are on a warning. Your interjections are too much.

Ms CAHILL: Madam Speaker, it speaks volumes that the Member for Gwoja has not caught up in relation to which department is doing the work in this space.

I can categorically say that we are increasing connectivity to Alice Springs. What about the flight to Cairns? That has been an outstanding success.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr Paech: I do not care about Cairns; I care about Alice Springs.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, take your seat.

Ms CAHILL: It is an Alice Springs flight, Member for Gwoja. Perhaps you might want to check that. More importantly, I can tell you that the cost of flights has significantly …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, there is no point of order. The minister has …

Mr Paech: I have not even had the chance to speak to it.

EXCLUSION OF MEMBER
Member for Gwoja

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Gwoja, you are arguing with me. You can go out for an hour, please.

Mr Paech: It is sad because you cannot even answer a question about Alice Springs …

Madam SPEAKER: In silence—you will leave the Chamber straightaway, Member for Gwoja.

Mr Paech: You do not even care about Alice Springs. You cannot even answer a question about flights.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, have you completed your answer?

Ms CAHILL: I will quickly say that the Qantas flight he referred to was always seasonal. This is not an unexpected or unplanned reduction. It will be back in full in March next year.

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! You just excluded the Member for Gwoja …

Madam SPEAKER: I did.

Mr MALEY: Then he spoke to you and argued with you after. Under Standing Order 48: Dissent from Ruling, I ask you to take action on that. It is disgraceful that you made a ruling and on the way out he continued to yell and be argumentative. I strongly believe that is a breach. There needs to be clear action taken. If you direct someone to go out, they cannot keep talking as he was doing.

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, Standing Order 48 is for a motion. If you want to pursue this, you will have to put something in writing and have it seconded.

Mr MALEY: Madam Speaker, can I …

Madam SPEAKER: Can I just speak? I hear what you are saying. I am not impressed with the Member for Gwoja. He was asked to leave in silence and he kept arguing. Let me sit on this. He is out for an hour and I will make a determination over the duration of Question Time as to how I will proceed, if that is adequate.

Mr MALEY: I just ask that you take that, Madam Speaker—49.

Madam SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 49, he has already been excluded for one hour. I hear what you are saying. Just let me deal with this. We will continue with Question Time.

Home Ownership

Mrs ZIO to TREASURER

Over the last year, this CLP government has worked hard to turn around Labor's housing crisis. Through our HomeGrown Territory program we have helped more than 1,000 Territory families into their first home and we are growing our housing supply with more than 290 new builds in the pipeline and counting. In the amazing electorate of Fannie Bay, our government has helped 70 Territory families put down roots here for the long term, and I know our government is working to help even more Territorians into homes of their own.

What is the CLP government doing to build on our housing success to help more Territorians achieve the dream of home ownership? What is the federal government doing to get more Territorians into a home of their own?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay is correct in what she says. I am glad to see people in her electorate putting down roots and wanting to stay in the Territory to contribute to our growth.

Since the CLP was elected, we worked hard to fix Labor's housing mess and give Territorians hope in their future again. That is why the CLP wasted no time introducing the most generous home ownership scheme in the country when we came to government over a year ago—the HomeGrown Territory grants.

I am proud to update the Assembly that the CLP government recently celebrated its 1,000th successful application under this program. That is 1,000 people applying to build or buy a new home. The 1,000th application for this program was from Anusha and Praveen, who will now build their first home and put down roots in the Territory. They are proud Territorians, having lived here for more than a decade. Anusha works in childcare, and they have been raising their family here for that entire time. With our government's support, they will build their first home.

We are doing our bit to help more young Territory families get on the property ladder and build a life here by extending our $50,000 and $30,000 grants for new builds. This is giving a new generation more time to keep saving for a deposit, find the right block, contract a builder and potentially free up another property for someone else to rent.

At a time when we are rebuilding the economy, reducing crime and restoring the Territory lifestyle, the federal government's Home Guarantee Scheme is locking young Territorians out. Unlike the CLP scheme, the federal government scheme caps eligibility on property prices at $600,000. Over the last year Darwin has seen the strongest annual increase in prices compared with any other capital city in the country, yet the federal government has not raised this cap by a single dollar. Whilst other capital cities saw a median 42% increase in their cap under the scheme, this senseless one-size-fits-all policy makes no sense.

We are not Norfolk Island or regional Tasmania, where the cap is just $50,000 less; that is why I have written to the federal government to lift the cap to $850,000 in line with the median increase of Australia's other capital cities to ensure people looking to get a start in the Territory have the same opportunity as those in southern states.

It is time Territory Labor's representatives stood up for the NT, like I did when I wrote to the federal Minister for Housing on this matter. It is time those opposite demanded action from their federal counterparts to lift the cap.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Gallery

Mr BROWN to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY

Business owners in Alice Springs are deeply disappointed by your government's decision to scrap the art gallery in Alice Springs, saying that it would have meant everything to the town.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the interjections!

Mr BROWN: Minister, did you bother to consult with the business owners before scrapping the gallery? Did you bother to speak to them about it when you were in Alice Springs on the weekend, or did you just leave them to find out via social media?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what a great question. This has been brought up a lot this week. Territorians know the history of the ATSIAGA—the Alice Springs national art gallery; it has been named a number of things over the years—because it has been an ongoing saga in Alice Springs for a long time, nearly a decade. The previous government was going to bring it forward, and it was a huge monstrosity. Maybe if it had been built at the time it would have been an amazing project for Alice Springs and would have brought in many people from around the world.

Years on, nothing happened under Labor. When we came to government, the Chief Minister immediately said, 'Right, we will move on this. We either do it or we don't. This is what it will take.' I do not need to go through the story about that because the Treasurer and our other minister in Alice Springs, the Member for Braitling, have gone over this time and again. We had to draw a line in the sand. The federal government said, 'We won't fund it. We keep moving the goalpost. Let's keep changing it,' so of course it could not go ahead.

I do not think the blame should be on the CLP. This is squarely at the feet of the feds. Where is Marion Scrymgour now? She has not said boo about this, and she is the local federal member. She should be fighting for Alice Springs and the Northern Territory, but she said nothing. She should be fighting for Alice Springs; that is where she lives and who she represents. Where is she on this matter? It is devastating for people in Alice Springs. They should be disappointed.

When we were there on the weekend, people said, 'Yes, we are disappointed, but do you know what? We have been hearing about this gallery for the last 10 years and, quite frankly, we're glad there may be a line in the sand shortly.' Of course, a couple of days later, there was.

It is disappointing that the art gallery will not go ahead. Now, at least, Alice Springs as a town can move forward. There is a lot of investment going into Alice Springs from the Northern Territory Government …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the Member for Arafura clearly asked the minister; did you bother to consult with business owners before scrapping this important project?

Ms BOOTHBY: Labor never used to like consulting with people of the Territory, but we, as a team of 17, spent the whole weekend in Alice Springs …

Ms Uibo: Why did you not make the announcement there?

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

Ms BOOTHBY: We met with several business owners in that time. We attended functions and were out talking to people in businesses on the street and in the mall. We consulted with business owners throughout that whole period, not to mention in the four years that we were in opposition. We have been discussing these things with Alice Springs for a long time.

To accuse us of not consulting with businesses in Alice Springs is disingenuous. If you were in Alice Springs speaking to those people, you would know exactly where they sit with this situation. It is on you and the federal government.

October Business Month

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

October Business Month has been the Territory's premier business event for over three decades and is continuing to inspire and empower local enterprises. This year's theme, Play to Our Strengths, highlights digitalisation, workforce deployment and business resilience—key priorities for driving economic growth and innovation across the Territory. With more than 200 events delivered by over 75 partners, can you update the Assembly on how October Business Month 2025 is supporting businesses to grow, connect and succeed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know what a passionate advocate the Member for Wanguri is for the small businesses in her electorate. I appreciate how she is always standing up and fighting for them.

This year's OBM has been incredible. This iconic event was established 31 years ago by the previous Perron CLP government. We have been backing business for such a long time.

More than 200 educational and program events have been put on through this October Business Month, delivering information and support to businesses across the Northern Territory online and in person. It is critical that this information gets out to our regional businesses.

I was privileged to attend two keynote events recently, one in Alice Springs and one here, with the incredible Carolyn Creswell, the founder and CEO of Carman's Kitchen, who was superb and so generous with her time, sharing her business secrets with aspiring businesses and entrepreneurs in the Territory.

We are thrilled that as a government we can bring people of this calibre to the Northern Territory to sit face to face and talk with our Northern Territory businesses. It is a great opportunity for them to learn.

We also celebrate Territory business successes. It was great to hear from entrepreneurs across the Territory such as Anneliese Grazioli who is the Hanky Panky Lounge and Bar Kokomo operator; Dan Richards from Humpty Doo Barramundi, who I had the privilege of spending some time with in Osaka, where his product was on the world stage; and Paul Graham from Asbuild, an Alice Springs businessman who is doing incredible work. They were generous with their time, sharing their expertise and knowledge and the dos and don'ts of how you do business in the Territory. That is what OBM is all about.

It does not stop there. There are programs on digital marketing; practical sessions on topics about how to build your own website in an hour—I think AI might be involved in that—business forums; workshops on building financial literacy; you name it. If you are running a business and you want to know how to get that business up and running, and what the pitfalls and the solutions are to mitigate against risks, OBM has something for you.

Best of all, OBM events are free of charge. They are 100% backed by the Northern Territory Government and they are designed to ensure that small, medium and growing-into-large businesses have the resources they need to be successful in our Northern Territory and expand across Australia.

Corrections – Transgender Inmates

Ms UIBO to CHIEF MINISTER

You were recently quoted saying that you and your government have banned trans women from being accommodated with other women in prison; however, internal department documents state that you have not and you still operate your government under the 2021 version 4 directive and that still applies in Corrections. I condemn your divisive comments about our Territory trans community. Why have you misled Territorians and the public and stomped down on minority groups to get a headline instead of leading for all Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, let me be clear; under Labor, if you identified as a woman and you were a man, Labor was happy to put you in the women's section of the prison. That presents obvious concerns and challenges, and it was borne out in the horrific national reporting of the news broken by the *Australian* in New South Wales and South Australia, where women in prison have been horrifically victimised.

In October 2024, a couple of months after the election, that policy was changed. Labor did not let Territorians know about that change, so how does our community feel about what Labor did? This is about protecting the dignity and safety of women. It is fundamental …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, I have not said which point of order.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, why are you standing up?

Ms UIBO: Standing Order 110; relevance. The question …

Madam SPEAKER: No, there is no point of order. The Chief Minister is only one minute into her speech. You need to give the Chief Minister an opportunity to answer the question you so eloquently put to her.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is typical of Labor. Its members ask the question, but they do not like the answer. It is typical of the ideological way in which they do business, the social engineering that they are obsessed with. It is not just Territory Labor that drank the social engineering Kool-Aid and ended up in opposition; this is happening across this country.

What I have been talking about in the last couple of days has been borne out by the facts. The facts have shown that women have been horrifically victimised in interstate prisons, and my point is to reassure Territorians that we are clear in our policy, in our direction and in the way in which Corrections manages these things. I do not know what you are reading or what you might think, but at the end of the day, I am expressing explicitly what happens in the Northern Territory. We have no men in women's prisons across the Territory. We have three people who identify as trans in the men's section. At the end of the day this is about dignity.

I have no concern about how people live their life. People can live their life in any way they can and any way they want. A government steps in when it impinges on other people's rights or when it is a government-controlled facility—for example, a prison. We have a duty of care as the Territory. We have a duty of care over people in our prisons. That is why we have a youth prison, so young people are not mixed up with adults; we do not do that. It is why we have a separate section for women, and we do with …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Why have you misled the public when your policy does not match your headline statement?

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, Chief Minister.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have answered that question, and you are wrong. I have moved on because you are wrong and I am right. That is just the way it is, and you cannot accept it. That is fine, but I have answered the question. I could not have been clearer on this issue. Everyone else in this country understands where the Territory stands on this issue.

Tourism – Cruise Ship Industry

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY

The Territory has kicked off a new cruise ship season following a record-breaking year for visitation and spending, which has been confirmed by many taxidrivers living in Karama and Malak. The cruise sector brings enormous benefits for local businesses, especially during the shoulder season when many operators rely on that trade. Can you update the Assembly on how the cruise industry is supporting the Territory's tourism recovery and how it fits with the government's broader work to rebuild the economy and create jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love how the Member for Karama highlighted that the taxidrivers have been talking in Karama and Malak, because they do a mountain of work to get people in and out of the city when the cruise ships are here. I thank all the people in the tourism and hospitality sector who live in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon, because they all do a fabulous job.

We have an amazing tourism and hospitality industry in the Northern Territory. We love our cruise ships because they come at a time when it is traditionally very quiet with tourists in the Northern Territory. They come across the harbour looking spectacular and bring a lot to the Territory economy.

The 2024–25 season was the biggest cruise ship season on record. There were 129 ships in Darwin, which is a monstrous number. There were 145 in total across the Territory. They do not just stop in Darwin; they stop in a lot of other places along the coastline. That is fabulous. That is delivering $181m to the Northern Territory economy and 527 local jobs. That includes some of those people in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon.

I will also highlight passenger satisfaction. At the moment, it is sky-high, which means that the tourism and hospitality industry in the Territory is putting on a really good show for the tourists on the cruises. We had 91% of passengers rate their visit as excellent, which is top marks. We also had 61% who shopped in Darwin, which is an amazing result. More than one-third dined in our local restaurants and cafes. That is good. They used to cop a bit of flak for not spending money here, but they did this time. Well done to our tourism and hospitality industry.

By the end of 2025—this is really good news—we are expecting another 60 expedition ships carrying 11,000 passengers to be here, which is fabulous when it gets really hot and we do not have as many tourists from other places around the world.

Next year we already have 104 ships scheduled, which is 70,000 visitors. That is what is scheduled, but we still have more added to the books over the year. It is a very good number.

I highlight that this is different from what it was under Labor. People may remember that under Labor we had a crime crisis in the city. Ship captains were telling passengers not to go to Darwin city. That was disgraceful. Do you know why? It was because of the crime crisis. When Labor members were asked about this on radio, guess what their answer was? 'We are working with the operators to change the times and days the cruise ships come in.' That is not tourism. That is a Labor legacy which we had to fix. We have done that.

It is exciting that the cruise ship industry is alive and well, and it is looking like a bumper season again.

Waterfront Hotel Project

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

You stated to the media that Larrakia Nation and sacred sites at Stokes Hill will not be affected by the hotel development at the Waterfront, but I have been advised by Larrakia that sacred sites at Stokes Hill will be significantly impacted by the height of the hotel. What authority do you have to speak about the sacred sites on Larrakia land and why are you pushing forward to desecrate our sacred sites now?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of conjecture in regard to the Waterfront process that has been undertaken. I want to be clear with everyone in the Chamber so they can understand the process this has gone through. Back when the Waterfront was first designed and constructed, it had to get an AAPA certificate. That AAPA certificate highlighted any sacred sites that were nearby and where people could and could not build.

For those who are unaware, there is an 11-storey building at the Waterfront, and a process has now been undertaken. A builder has wanted to construct a hotel which has gone through all the processes. There is a certificate in regard to the Waterfront Corporation that now can be transferred and have additional people added to it regarding the construction project. It is now up to the proponent whether they proceed with that project.

I will be clear: we want to ensure that sacred sites are protected. The Waterfront certificate that allowed that to be constructed is there in perpetuity. We are ensuring that we know where those sacred sites are, and the construction obviously happens so that it does not impact them. This is important.

Going forward we will continue to work with all relevant people and stakeholders in this to ensure that we continue on. I look forward to working with anyone in regard to this as we progress.

Mr Young: You are an absolute joke.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, please refrain from interjecting and making insulting comments across the room.

Vocational Education and Training – Timor-Leste

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Our government is committed to rebuilding the economy and delivering a better quality of life for all Territorians. Vocational education and training is the backbone of our workforce, crucial for equipping

Territorians and our closest offshore neighbours with the skills needed to drive regional growth and position the Northern Territory as the best place to live, work and do business.

Can you update the Assembly—and the Member for Fannie Bay's daughter, who is in the gallery joining us today—on the steps the government is taking to increase workforce participation and skill development through VET, particularly how we are fostering a strong and stable workforce in partnership with our nearest neighbour, Timor-Leste?

ANSWER

Now that the Member for Fannie Bay has totally embarrassed her daughter, we all welcome her to Question Time.

Madam Speaker, as a former tradie I know the important work that the VET sector does in rebuilding our economy. I share the Member for Goyder's vision of a robust Territory that is equipped with the skills and knowledge to rebuild our economy and strengthen the vital relationships with our nearest neighbour.

Earlier this year the Chief Minister launched our new economic strategy, a comprehensive roadmap designed to rebuild our economy with clear priority areas and measurable annual targets. Priority area 2 of this strategy is to build a bigger, better workforce. Securing the future of the Northern Territory means investing in people and developing a skilled, scalable workforce, which is essential to achieving our broader ambitions for economic prosperity and population growth.

A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending the second International Skills Week in Dili in Timor-Leste, which is just a 55-minute flight from Darwin. It was evident that VET holds great value in Timor-Leste, with strong government and community support for training and employment outcomes. It was interesting to have conversations with the people there who said that they are also trying to deliver and build their region, just as we are, with a skilled workforce.

An estimated 1,000 participants and 57 international delegates from 10 countries were in attendance. There was a lot to learn and celebrate as Alan Yang from China and Siew Peng Wah and Columbus Hu from Malaysia led a dynamic panel spotlighting skills ahead of WorldSkills Shanghai 2026. It was great to see firsthand the significant opportunities for mutual learning and collaboration with Timor-Leste as part of our workforce pipeline.

Through CDU and Crest NT training partnerships, our Territory is actively engaged in delivering Australian aged-care qualifications in Dili, which I saw firsthand and got to speak to the students there. They will complete their final practice at the end of this year and are hoping to come to Darwin early next year.

Nationally, the aged-care sector requires approximately 35,000 new workers annually to meet demand and address attrition. Along with the NDIS, there is a need for an additional 83,000 full-time equivalent employees, so it is critical that we secure a highly skilled, well-trained workforce to guarantee our most vulnerable citizens are being well cared for.

Fuel Tanks – Leaks

K McNAMARA to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

On 4 September you publicly declared that US military fuel tanks on Darwin Harbour were safe, and you approved all 11 for operation. The day before, you received evidence that they would leak in almost all circumstances, but you approved them anyway. Now, your own department confirms groundwater is still leaking through the safety liners under multiple tanks with repair works ongoing.

Why did you approve the entire facility for operation last month, despite the ongoing leaks, and mislead the public by claiming the tanks were secure?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, a building permit was not obtained prior to commencement of construction of the tanks. In accordance with current legislation, a building permit cannot be issued retrospectively. Do you know who we have to thank for that, Member for Nightcliff? The former Labor government.

Michael Gunner is the one who went out there with his planning commissioners, with his little hard hat on—it obviously was not protecting much—and said, 'Look at these beautiful tanks we're building!' Do you know what they forgot to do? They forgot to get a building permit. How stupid can he be, standing in front of the construction project, saying it will be the best thing since sliced bread, and he had not even done the hard work?

In the absence of a building permit issued prior to construction, Crowley has provided evidence that the construction meets standards appropriate for its purpose and location. Verification of this from an NT-registered structural engineer confirms that the tanks meet the relevant Australian standards for construction—not me, an independent structural engineer.

Taking the evidence into account, I made a declaration under section 65(1A)(a) that occupancy certification is not required for the fuel facility. The engineers have applied parameters to determine the project's compliance with the National Construction Code and relevant Australian standards.

The result is—listen up, ABC, if you are listening, because I was upset on my drive into work when I heard the misquote of what the tanks are graded to—the tanks have been constructed to withstand wind speeds of 249.5 kilometres an hour, which is consistent with Australian standards referenced in the NCC. This means the tanks are constructed to withstand winds equivalent to a Category 4 cyclone. The NCC does not require structures other than post-disaster structures …

K McNAMARA: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. As they are still leaking, why did you mislead the public by claiming the tanks were secure when they are not?

Mr BURGOYNE: Crowley has obtained full environmental approval for the project and has demonstrated that the bunds around the fuel tanks have the capacity to contain the fuel in the tanks. A condition of Crowley's environmental approval for Project Caymus is to include impermeable release prevention barriers.

The environmental regulator did not have any evidence that any offence under NT environmental laws has occurred at the facility. Crowley has designed and implemented an environmental monitoring program that involves the monitoring of surface and groundwater at the facility. Crowley has engaged a qualified environmental auditor and submitted an environmental audit program which has been approved by the CEO of the environmental regulator.

Valerie Asche – Naming of New Suburb

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

We know that when a population grows so does the demand for new housing. With that comes the creation of new suburbs. With the CLP's first home owner and FreshStart New Home grants extended until September 2026, our own demand for housing is likely to increase. Recently, the first new suburb in over a decade was announced, named after the great Dr Valerie Asche. Can you explain why naming suburbs holds such significance for the Territory lifestyle and why Dr Asche was chosen as a fitting namesake for our new suburb?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is a timely question. It is wonderful to speak today about such an incredible Territorian.

Can you believe that the Northern Territory has not had a new suburb named since 2013? It was a pleasure to stand alongside the family and friends of Dr Valerie Asche AM as we unveiled the sign for the new suburb of Asche. Dr Valerie Asche's daughter, Wendy, was there along with many other family members and Valerie's dog, Freya. She made it to see the unveiling.

Dr Asche was a distinguished microbiologist and researcher, dedicating much of her life to studying disease prevalence in the Northern Territory. Her contributions to medical research and public health have left a lasting legacy in our community. One thing I did not know until I spoke to Wendy was that melioidosis, otherwise known as Nightcliff gardener's disease—where the moist soil can get into cuts and cause issues—was something that Dr Valerie Asche researched in great length.

Following the unveiling, her daughter, Wendy, shared with me that her mother had often been overshadowed by Wendy's father's achievements—Austin Asche—and that made this recognition all the more meaningful, being a moment to honour Dr Valerie Asche for her own remarkable work and impact across the Northern

Territory. Given that the new suburb encompasses Palmerston Regional Hospital, it was a fitting opportunity to honour individuals who have made such significant contributions to the health and wellbeing of Territorians.

This continues throughout the suburb, with streets named after Larrakia traditional bush medicines and Territorians who have played key roles in advancing health and healing in our community. There are 87 registered suburbs in the Northern Territory. Of these, 12 commemorate women. However, Asche, as I am told by the department, is the only one named after a Territory woman in her own right—someone recognised for her individual achievements, not through association with other figures or shared honours with partners or family.

Although Dr Asche was married to a former Northern Territory Administrator, she carved out her own legacy through professional and charitable work. Her influence continues through the Val Asche Memorial Prize for Academic Excellence, which is awarded annually by the Menzies School of Health Research. This scholarship recognises outstanding achievement by students in public health and health research, ensuring her contribution in medical science lives on.

The naming of the suburb is a powerful tribute to a woman who made a profound and lasting difference to health research in the Territory. I extend my sincere thanks to Valerie's daughter, Wendy, and to Val's friends and family, and even Freya, Val and Austin's beloved dog. It truly was an honour to share such a special moment with you all.

Corrections – Transgender Inmates

J DAVIS to CHIEF MINISTER

You said in the Chamber earlier that you explicitly changed the NT Corrections policy on the management of transgender, gender-diverse and intersex offenders. I have a copy of the Corrections policy change which identifies that this was purely a machinery-of-government change. Can you explain specifically what policy change occurred in 2024?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have been clear about this. The policy position that has changed between the Labor government and the CLP government is that you cannot just identify or nominate yourself as a woman and end up in a women's correctional facility. In the Northern Territory, fortunately, we have not had any issues like we are seeing interstate. A number of issues and concerns have been talked about across the country. The New South Wales Commissioner of Corrective Services reached out to our Corrections Commissioner for the details on how we manage these things.

I reinforce that we have been explicitly clear. This is about ensuring protection and dignity for women in our prisons. The Northern Territory Government has a high duty of care for people in custody. For example, it is the same for child protection, when young people are in the care of the minister or the CEO. There are a number of areas—even in our health system—where we have responsibilities and duties of care to people.

This is not abnormal. It is distinct from how people can live their lives. This is about making sure we have safe and dignified spaces with clear policies on how Corrections officers, who are imminent professionals in this, can work through some of these complexities, but at the end of the day it is not complex. If you are fundamentally equipped as a male, then you should be in a male prison. That is our policy. We have been clear about it. I do not know how much more I can say.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I asked what specific changes there were in the Corrections policy. I am happy to table what the policy currently says—what I have seen. My question is, what has changed? It is not about policy position. What has changed in the Corrections policy?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have already explained that to the Member for Johnston, just like I explained it to the Opposition Leader. We have made it explicitly clear, and we now have other state leaders and jurisdictions looking to the Territory for leadership on this issue. This is about having a clear policy so that Corrections can implement it, and it is about ensuring women's safety and dignity in prison.

Mental Health Week

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH

It is Mental Health Week, and we know the statistics: one in five Australians experience mental health illness every year; and 45% of Australian adults will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime. I have no doubt that those numbers are even higher in my electorate of Drysdale.

In the Northern Territory mental health conditions contribute to 16% of disease, compared with 7% nationally. Residents experience the highest rate of mental health-related emergency department visits nationally. Suicide rates are the highest in the country. In the Northern Territory we face unique challenges such as remoteness and social disadvantage.

How is the government helping people who suffer from mental health-related disease so that they can be the best, strongest and most empowered versions of themselves that they can be with the right medical care?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale is committed to ensuring we get better mental health outcomes for Territorians.

I had the distinct honour to speak last week at the 2025 NT Mental Health Week Community Awards. These awards celebrate the contributions, courage and compassion of these inspiring individuals and organisations who work to improve mental health and wellbeing.

I congratulate all the nominees and winners of the awards, because I know the contribution, commitment and work they are doing in the community. Mental Health Week encourages all Australians to look out for friends and family, support their work mates and know that it is okay to ask for help. Everyone has a role to play in mental health and wellbeing in our community.

This year's theme, 'Take a Little Step', highlights how small actions can significantly enhance mental health and wellbeing. Activities like taking a walk, making a special meal or chatting with a friend might seem minor, but those positive effects on social and emotional wellbeing can be substantial. I encourage everyone to just take that little step. For me, being from Tennant Creek, I take a little step as often as I can by umpiring football; this is what keeps me active, connected and grounded in the community.

Our government is committed to investing in mental health and suicide prevention initiatives. This work is supported through a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth and dedicated local services. Across the Territory this includes ongoing funding of the Medicare Mental Health Centre in Darwin, additional funding for a centre in Alice Springs, multidisciplinary youth-focused mental health services and community-led pilots.

We are supporting key Territory-wide services, such as Strongbala Minds Walk-In Talk-In Space in Katherine, Mparntwe kids hub in Alice Springs, enhanced headspace centres, aftercare for people bereaved or impacted by suicide and the annual Northern Territory Suicide Prevention Community grants. Our long-term approach is guided by the NT suicide prevention implementation plan and the NT Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan 2024–29, which ensures coordinated and locally led appropriate care across the Territory.

I give a shout-out to the Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia. I went to its dinner last week at Silks. The work MIFANT is doing on the ground in the Northern Territory is to be commended.

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

VISITORS
Member for Fannie Bay's Daughter

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge the Member for Fannie Bay's daughter in the gallery. On behalf of honourable members, welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

NAMING OF A MEMBER
Member for Gwoja

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I will address the matter of the exclusion of the Member for Gwoja from the Chamber at 2.23 pm. Under Standing Order 49, I initially asked the member to leave the Chamber for one hour, given his disorderly behaviour.

The Deputy Chief Minister asked for the member to be named, and I have considered that. It is not something I want to do, to name any member for their disorderly conduct, but I am bound by a set of rules called the standing orders. The standing orders clearly outline the conditions on which people should be named if necessary. Some of those include the following:

(1) persistently and wilfully obstructed the business of the Assembly

(3) used objectionable or disorderly words, which they have refused to withdraw

(4) persistently and wilfully refused to conform to any Standing Order

(5) persistently and wilfully disregarded the authority of the Speaker

The Member for Gwoja was in breach of that; therefore, I am using Standing Order 51 to name the Member for Gwoja. I move that the Member for Gwoja be suspended from the services of the Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The period of suspension will be for 24 hours; therefore, the Member for Gwoja can resume his role in the Assembly at about 2.23 pm tomorrow.

I issue this with a great sense of reluctance. I do not want to be naming people or throwing people out of the Chamber, but there is a code of conduct and a set of rules that we all have to adhere to. It is my job as Speaker to enforce those rules and make sure that people are heard in silence and with respect.

On that rather negative note, we will continue the business of the day.

MOTION
Commonwealth Oversight into
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Deaths in Police and Prison Custody

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls on the Commonwealth Government to urgently establish a national independent body with the resources and power to enforce minimum standards and to investigate, report, monitor and enforce change in relation to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in police and prison custody in Australia.

Before I begin, I acknowledge that I will be mentioning the names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed. I also acknowledge that there may be concerns about discussing this matter while investigations are underway, although I note that investigations are always underway in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody because it is an epidemic.

This motion speaks to something far broader than any single case. This is about systemic reform. This is an opportunity for the Northern Territory to show leadership and call on the federal government to do its job.

I am not here to debate whether there is a crisis. The crisis is undeniable, and it is accelerating. A death in custody is when someone dies in jail, a youth detention centre or police custody. Of the 99 deaths examined by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 30 years ago, it was found that many could have been prevented if proper duty of care had been exercised.

More than 30 years later, shamefully, we remain in the same position. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, 602 Indigenous people have died in custody since the royal commission concluded in 1991, and this number could be even higher due to lags in real-time reporting as states and territories all have different procedures before they notify the Australian Institute of Criminology.

There have been 12 Aboriginal deaths in custody across the country since the start of 2025 alone. Let me be clear about what these numbers represent. There are more than 600 families left grieving, 600 communities left without answers, 600 precious lives that could and should have been protected by the system that was responsible for their care. We heard the Chief Minister say in this Chamber approximately half an hour ago that when people are in the care of the state, it is our responsibility to look after them. That is exactly what I am talking about.

The president and all seven commissioners of the Australian Human Rights Commission are united in their demand for immediate reform. When every member of our nation's peak human rights bodies speaks with one voice, we must listen. Social Justice Commissioner Katie Kiss has said:

> *Our people are dying in a system that has failed them from the beginning. The need for transformational reform is undeniable.*

During the commission's recent visit to the Territory it heard repeatedly that a law and order disaster was unfolding for Aboriginal people. This concern has been raised consistently across the country. Without an evidence-based and human rights-based approach to justice and Corrections, the massive overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody—and dying in custody—will remain a national shame.

First Nations people make up just 4% of Australia's population but account for 20% of deaths in custody. If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, you are five times more likely to die than other Australians in exactly the same conditions. These are not statistics; they are people. They include John Pat, Kingsley Richard Dixon, Lloyd James Boney, David Gundy, Mulrunji Doomadgee, Ms Dhu, Kumanjayi Langdon, David Dungay, Rebecca Maher, Wayne Fella Morrison, Tane Chatfield, Tanya Day, Nathan Reynolds and, in the Northern Territory, Kumanjayi Walker and Kumanjayi White.

They are sons, daughters, fathers, mothers and community leaders. They should still be here with us today but instead, their families live with unending pain and the knowledge that too often, when their loved ones died, no independent body was there to investigate, hold institutions accountable or to demand change.

This is not a new issue. In 1991 the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody delivered 339 recommendations. Three decades later, most of these recommendations remain unimplemented. In those three decades, more than 600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody, and that number might be even higher. Commissioner Kiss has demanded the full implementation of the recommendations of that royal Commission and the 2023 Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability that crosses this issue.

Disability Discrimination Commissioner Rosemary Kayess has stated that each death is not just a heartbreaking loss for families and communities, but a national shame underpinned by too many ongoing systemic failures.

Racial injustice and disability injustice are inextricably linked with many of these tragedies. It is time to take seriously the overrepresentation of First Nations children and adults with disabilities in the criminal justice system and urgently act to address this situation.

Of the 600-plus Aboriginal deaths in custody since 1991, not one person has ever been held to account. This is deeply shameful. In the Northern Territory, police investigate when a death in custody occurs, even when it involves one of their own. The Chief Minister has backed this position and the Police Commissioner has confirmed it.

Many Territorians assume that there are checks and balances. The NT Ombudsman can investigate complaints against police but not criminal conduct. Where criminal proceedings may commence, the Ombudsman must step back. Because the Ombudsman is an office of the NT Government, it cannot be considered fully independent. Independence is critical when harm is inflicted by a government service.

The Coroner examines circumstances of death, but not criminal responsibility. If there is suspicion of crime, it is referred back to the police, the institution whose conduct may be in question. We are left with police investigating police, a system riddled with conflicts of interest that cannot maintain accountability, uphold human rights, change behaviour or deliver the trust and justice that Territorians deserve.

Human Rights Commission President Hugh de Kretser said:

> *Since colonisation, Australian law has too often delivered injustice for First Nations people. Police have often been the agents of this injustice, helping to administer laws and policies like those that enabled the Stolen Generations … When police investigate themselves, it breeds mistrust and increases the risks of poor investigations and lack of accountability.*

This is not a criticism of the police; it is a criticism of systems whereby someone in a position of having caused harm must investigate themselves. That does not engender trust in a system that we are expected to trust.

He went on:

> *While coronial inquests provide some independence, they rely on police-gathered evidence.*

This problem is only magnified in a jurisdiction as small and interconnected as we are in the Northern Territory.

International human rights standards are clear: independent bodies, not police, must investigate police misconduct. Our structures fall well short. Territorians deserve better, as do all people across Australia.

Human Rights Commissioner Lorraine Finlay pointed out:

> *We have seen avoidable tragedy after avoidable tragedy in custody. In some instances, it is made worse by the fact that serious concerns about certain facilities have been highlighted repeatedly over the years. This includes evidence given by the Commission before the United Nations Committee Against Torture.*
>
> *We cannot wait any longer for these issues to be addressed. By failing to urgently respond to the crisis in our justice systems, we are failing our communities entirely.*

Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman stated clearly:

> *It is a matter of deep distress to me that after more than 30 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to die unnecessarily—in unprecedented numbers—in custody. There can be no doubt structural and systemic racism are at the heart of the problem.*
>
> *Our National Anti-Racism Framework includes clear recommendations for reform, including in the law and justice sector. If implemented, these can make significant progress to ending this national shame.*

That is why I am asking our parliament to join together in calling on the Commonwealth to establish a national independent body to oversee and investigate Aboriginal deaths in custody. This does not just affect the Northern Territory; this is a national crisis that affects every state and territory.

The Northern Territory has a unique opportunity to lead. With the highest proportion of Aboriginal Australians per capita, we understand this crisis more intimately than any other jurisdiction. We have the standing, the experience and the moral authority to demand federal action. Today we can show the rest of Australia what leadership looks like by calling on the Commonwealth to establish an independent oversight body that families across this nation desperately need.

Reform is critical to build trust, integrity and fairness for all people in our criminal justice system. We need an adequately resourced independent oversight authority to investigate all police contact deaths. Successful models exist worldwide, including Northern Ireland's Police Ombudsman.

If we are serious about justice we must be serious about accountability. A national independent body would deliver independence—not police investigating police or prisons investigating themselves, but the following:

- a body free from any perceived or actual institutional bias
- resources and power: the ability to compel evidence and conduct thorough investigations and enforce change
- consistency: one standard across the nation so that families in the Northern Territory are not treated any differently than families in New South Wales or Queensland
- transparency: public reporting that prevents governments from burying findings or delaying action

- change: mechanisms ensuring that recommendation are implemented and monitored not just filed away.

This is not about blame; it is about truth, justice and the right of every family to know their loved one's life mattered enough for their death to be properly investigated, learned from and used to prevent further deaths.

Why is it that deaths in custody require additional attention and scrutiny? When we take a person into custody, we are exercising all the power and might of the state against individuals. We train and arm police and Corrections officers and give them additional legal authority and protections to use force against our own people. We use the power of the state to forcibly control and take control of people almost always against their will. Taking a person into custody is the greatest example of using this state power to deprive a person of their liberty and autonomy—two of our most treasured values.

When we as a state use this power to forcibly take a person into state control, we must be held to the highest standards of how we treat those people. When we take control of a person, we now bear full responsibility to protect that person. When we take a person into custody, we are now responsible for their health, physical safety and mental safety and, in more than 600 cases, their lives. We must not wield the power of the state to take control of people and then ignore the responsibility that comes with that power. The best way to make sure we are consistently meeting the required standards and ensure people are not unnecessarily dying while under our control is to create strong and trusted accountability systems.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are dramatically over-represented in our prisons, in watch houses and in deaths in custody. This is not by chance; it is the result of systemic inequality and intergenerational trauma. Legislation plays a role in driving up incarceration rates, including in the Northern Territory with its soaring imprisonment rates and Aboriginal people dramatically over-represented.

Australia's first formal truth-telling body, the Yoorrook Justice Commission, in its report this year said:

> *The over-representation of First Peoples … in these systems is not about criminality, but systemic bias, including institutional racism and discriminatory policing.*

When we have dramatic over-representation in prisons in the NT, with 88% of adults and 95% of children locked up being Aboriginal, we dramatically increase the risk of harm and even death. When lives are lost in the care of the state, our duty of care is at its highest. To fail at that moment and deny independent scrutiny is to deny the humanity of those lives.

Australian governments must embrace fair, humane and effective criminal justice laws and policies to end the national disgrace of First Nations deaths in custody. We need human rights Acts in all states and territories and nationally to protect the rights of all people, including First Nations peoples.

There is an urgent need to invest in prevention to stop people from entering the justice system in the first place. Our governments need to respond genuinely to the commitments they have undertaken to meet the Closing the Gap targets.

Commissioner Kiss and President de Kretser are calling for independent oversight authorities to be established in all jurisdictions to end the practice of police investigating deaths in police custody. Over several decades the commission has advocated for the establishment of independent entities to investigate police conduct across all jurisdictions. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody clearly established that investigations into police conduct must be independent of police with transparency throughout and formal complainant support, including legal assistance.

We cannot keep repeating this cycle—another death, another grieving family and another coronial report gathering dust. Without independent oversight, nothing has changed and nothing will change. When nothing changes more lives will be lost.

This is not just an issue for Aboriginal people; it is an issue of justice, democracy and human rights. It speaks to who we are as a nation and what future we want to build.

The families of those who have died in custody have been calling for this reform for years. Aboriginal legal services, human rights experts and the four Northern Territory land councils have all added their voices. The entire Australian human rights community stands united in this call. This parliament has a chance to join them and say clearly that the Northern Territory supports accountability, transparency and justice for all people. Social Justice Commissioner Katie Kiss said it plainly: 'Enough is enough'.

This is a chance for the Northern Territory to lead on an issue which affects people across the whole of Australia.

This motion is nothing radical. It is something that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been calling on for decades. It is our government's responsibility to call on the Commonwealth to advocate for them to do their job and keep all our communities safe.

I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Mr MALEY (Corrections): Madam Speaker, I make it clear that I am completely disgusted and offended by the words of the Member for Johnston that the police are not trustworthy. My father was a police officer; how dare you say he is not trustworthy.

The Member for Barkly was a police officer. I know he is offended by your words. Will you apologise to him? Are you saying he is not trustworthy? How embarrassing! It is disgusting …

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, direct your comments through me, please.

Mr MALEY: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I was getting fired up. How dare she call the police untrustworthy. The police are the first people to run into danger and the first people Territorians call when there is a problem. I bet that the Member for Johnston has had to call the police; I bet one her friends has had to call the police, yet she says that they are not trustworthy. She used the words, 'Police are agents of injustice'. That is embarrassing.

The police do a great job, and I support them completely. I know the people on this side of parliament support the police 100%. They had their hands tied by the former Labor government. They have not been able to do their job properly, and now that we have unshackled the police they are out there doing their jobs and keeping the community safe, which is what Territorians want.

I am sure that people have been into the offices of members opposite and said that the community is unsafe and out of control, yet the Member for Johnston is calling the police untrustworthy. I hope the police listened to that and heard what she said. I hope she looks at herself in the mirror and says, 'Gee, I should be embarrassed', because she should be. Those words are disgusting, and I am personally offended by them. I just spoke to the Member for Barkly, and he is personally offended by them. How dare she call someone in this Chamber untrustworthy.

We do not support the proposal for Commonwealth oversight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in police and prison custody. Every death in custody is a tragedy, and I wish to begin by expressing this government's sincere condolences to the family and the communities of loved ones lost. The loss of life while in the care of the state warrants thorough review and continuing reform, and we believe that the current framework built on Territory accountability and rigorous oversight is appropriate and effective.

In the Northern Territory every death in custody is subject to a coronial investigation, accompanied by an independent police inquiry. There are two oversight bodies that look at these deaths in custody. These processes are not just token processes to see what happens. The police do a great job; they are thorough in their investigations, no matter who it is. They are there to look after Territorians. They swear an oath to serve and protect, and that is what they do.

We had reviews and talked about health, infrastructure and training that has happened as a result of these reviews, so even though the Member for Johnston says that nothing has happened and enough is enough, things are happening. There have been many improvements in the Corrections system which stem from the coronial recommendations, demonstrating that there is local oversight and that the change is working.

Recent data says that our prison population in the Territory is about 2,850 individuals, with approximately 80% of those identifying as Indigenous. It is important to acknowledge that most Aboriginal deaths in custody in the Northern Territory are due to medical conditions, not suicide or violence. I am not sure where the Member for Johnston got her numbers from—maybe she has plucked them out of the air—but over the last five years there have been 38 deaths in custody, with 26 of those in the Northern Territory being Indigenous and 12 non-Indigenous.

While Indigenous people make up the most of our population, non-Indigenous prisoners experience a higher likelihood of death in custody overall, with their rate being 1.8 times higher than Indigenous people. If she was really honest with herself about deaths in custody, perhaps the member would have said that. Why are

we limiting it to one group of people? Why are we not referring to all Territorians? Does the Member for Johnston think that other Territorians are unequal or that there is a divide? No, there is not. If you are a Territorian, you are a Territorian; if you are an Australian, you are an Australian. I am not sure why the Member for Johnston is trying to divide the Northern Territory.

Of the deaths I spoke about, 25 were due to natural causes, and five were due to suicide—two Indigenous and three non-Indigenous. The natural causes are preceded by long extended periods of diagnosed and managed illnesses under the care of Corrections. These deaths are not sudden or unexplained deaths; they are a result of longstanding health conditions.

From my experience, people who go into the Corrections system come out healthier. They get medication and access to healthcare; they get access to rehabilitation programs and counsellors, which they choose not to when they are in the community. For some reason people choose not to get medical help. That would not be me, but some people choose not to, so when they come into custody they have serious health issues, and they need treatment. Unfortunately, sometimes these conditions are so far advanced that nothing can be done.

Once someone is in custody, our Corrections health team provides constant care which is not accessed by their own choice in the community for some reason, no matter where they live. The Health minister does a great job providing healthcare across the Northern Territory.

Suicide deaths in custody are tragic and the families are hurting, but so are the Corrections staff. These people who the Member for Johnston just referred to are not just numbers to those Corrections officers; they are people they know and talk to. Sometimes when they get out of custody, they know who they are—I will not say they are friends, but they are acquaintances; they talk and know their background, yet those people pass away.

I know the statistics are bad, but compared to other jurisdictions our system is performing better than most. The Territory has the highest imprisonment rate in the country, and still our deaths in custody remain lower than in other states and territories.

One thing that can be overlooked is the strength of our Corrections system and the high standard of medical care provided to those prisoners. I have been to the prison and walked through the medical centre. I understand and see how they work. I have spoken to the nurses who work there and some of the inmates. They get their treatment and medication. I am sure the Member for Namatjira, who spent 18 years working in Corrections, knows exactly what I am talking about. If anyone in this Chamber is an expert in prisons it would be my friend, the Member for Namatjira.

Tragically, when people get released, they disengage from medical care, which is another recurring challenge. They come into custody and are provided healthcare and get their treatment and medication. They are released and, for some reason, they choose not to keep doing that.

To go back to the emotional toll on Corrections and Health staff who deal with these people, having anyone die in your care would be devastating. I am sure they are deeply affected by those deaths. The Corrections officers are not just faceless agents of the system; they are professionals committed to safety, dignity and rehabilitation. They do a great job, and I give them 100% of my support. They work in a challenging environment, and we are here to support them.

We are doing the work with resolve, trying to make sure that prisoners break the cycle of reoffending and go out into the community better and healthier people. The administration of that justice is a core responsibility of this government, and we take it seriously.

We listen to the recommendations of these oversight bodies. They are already there, but we do not have an unlimited amount of money. The Member for Katherine spoke about that. We were left an horrific debt by the previous Labor government—if you plan to create a body to oversee this, what do you have to cut? Will you cut the health, education or police system? You have to balance things. What will we cut to have this body?

There are already two other bodies. We have the Coroner and the police—but a third oversight body; we would have to cut funding to teachers, health staff or police. We will give police an extra patrol car to go out on the road. It is a difficult balance to work but the Northern Territory Government—this side of the government—is about making decisions for the best interests of Territorians no matter where they live.

We will not be supporting this motion.

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing on this important motion for the Commonwealth oversight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in police and prison custody and that the Assembly calls on the Commonwealth Government to urgently establish a national, independent body with the resources and power to enforce minimum standards and to investigate, report, monitor and enforce change in relation to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in police and prison custody in Australia.

I pick up on the behaviour of the Deputy Chief Minister before. I find it concerning …

Mr Mackay: Now you are concerned about behaviour.

Madam SPEAKER: We will not get into this. If people start interjecting, I will remove them from the Chamber. There has been a lot of heat in the discussion this afternoon. It is time to tone it down and be respectful.

Mr YOUNG: I find it concerning that the Deputy Chief Minister has shown his unhinged behaviour towards a member of parliament in this Chamber. The Deputy Chief Minister tries to intimidate, yells, screams and points at the Member for Johnston …

Mr Maley: What are you doing?

Madam SPEAKER: Just pause for a minute. In this Chamber, you can yell as loud as you want provided it is directed through the Chair and is within the context of the debate. I will allow you to continue, but I will exclude the next person who interrupts because I have had enough of this bad behaviour today.

Mr YOUNG: They do not like to hear the truth. We have just seen the Deputy Chief Minister lean over his desk and try to intimidate, scream, yell and point at the Member for Johnston when trying to reflect on her speech, when he could have just put that in his speech in a respectful way, instead of trying to intimidate her. We are supposed to be members of parliament and leaders in the Northern Territory. The behaviour we have just seen from the Deputy Chief Minister is concerning and speaks of bigger problems in this place and of him.

It is not okay to come in here and intimidate people. We need to ensure that this is a safe space for everyone to come and speak.

Members interjecting.

Mr YOUNG: Again, they are interjecting because they do not like to hear the truth.

Mr Edgington: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35. We are in General Business debating the motion by the Member for Johnston. All the Member for Daly wants to do is talk about the Deputy Chief Minister. Can he get back on track and talk about the motion?

Mr YOUNG: I have 16 minutes. I am getting to the point, and I will finish off on that.

Madam SPEAKER: Can I respond to the point of order? I do not think there is a point of order, but I take the general point that we need to focus on the topic instead of each other. Please continue.

Mr YOUNG: As I was saying, I was listening to the Member for Johnston's speech and she did not at all say that she does not trust the police. The Deputy Chief Minister should not make those accusations. I suggest he goes back to the *Hansard* and reads her speech. We are talking about the Commonwealth oversight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander …

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35. As I said, we are here to debate the motion put forward by the Member for Johnston. If the member wants to defend the Member for Johnston about other issues not relevant to the debate …

Madam SPEAKER: No, Member for Barkly; there is no point of order. He has just started his speech; he is a few minutes in. He has the call.

Mr YOUNG: The Member for Barkly also is backing his Deputy Chief Minister for the behaviour that was just displayed. As I was saying, the Member for Johnston did not say that she does not trust the police. *Hansard* will reveal that.

Since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody there have been 609 Indigenous deaths. This year alone there have been 75 deaths in custody nationally, including two in the NT within the space of just one month.

Kumanjayi White, a 24-year-old Warlpiri man with a disability, died in Alice Springs on 27 May 2025 after being restrained by police on the floor of a Coles supermarket. Every Territorian should expect that their child, parent, cousin or sibling will be safe if they have contact with the police or the justice system—to be safe no matter what the justice system looks like.

Our community needs to trust that the government takes safety seriously, especially safety within systems that are meant to protect us and keep us safe, regardless of people's background. We need to continually ask ourselves how we can make our system safer and how our responses are safer.

Just as if there was a death in a workplace, school or sports centre, we would expect those places to take a step back to talk to the community and the families and look for better ways for working together. It is clear this government is not willing to listen.

Kumanjayi White's death is a call to action. It is clear the CLP does not have a plan to take action and prevent future deaths in custody. It is not willing to rebuild the trust between Aboriginal communities and take the necessary steps that will protect some of the most vulnerable in our community.

When the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was announced, its purpose was to address the community's concerns that deaths of Aboriginal people in custody were too common and poorly explained. Over 35 years later these questions are still being raised—questions the CLP is not willing to answer. The CLP has been in government for a year now. What measures have we seen that demonstrate that it is serious about keeping Territorians from being left in the dark?

It passed legislation on urgency with no consultation with the community or services and stakeholders best placed to provide advice. It shut out frontline services which have the evidence of what works and what is ineffective. Territorians have had enough of secrecy from the CLP.

It has taken away resourcing from programs that work and systematic reform for the NT Police—programs that would reduce over-incarceration of Aboriginal Territorians and build a pathway towards positive relationships between the community and the justice system.

Territory Labor supports the establishment of a national independent oversight body to investigate deaths in custody. It was the former Labor government that introduced legislation for the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). The OPCAT legislation and establishment of the National Preventive Mechanisms was a Territory Labor initiative which took steps to improve our justice system. Our former Labor government consulted on how OPCAT would work and how it would lead to a better independent framework to hold the justice system to account. My colleague the former Attorney-General, Chansey Paech, facilitated access for visitors from the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture to our youth justice facilities.

It was the commitment to OPCAT and supporting the critical work of NPMs that would lead to progressing minimum standards, monitoring and reporting of the care and protection of Territorians held in places like detention centres, Corrections facilities and police watch houses. It was a Labor initiative that contributed to creating an effective, strong and safe justice system that welcomes oversight, encourages open and constructive dialogue and improvements based on the lived experience of Territorians, independent advice and the evidence of what works and where we can do better.

This an opportunity to do better and protect the lives of every person who is involved with our justice system. Our police are incredibly committed to community safety, and this is in no way a criticism of their vital work. This is about supporting their efforts. We would expect the establishment of a national oversight body to be built on a foundation of evidence, community input and recommendations from past coronials, royal commissions and inquiries as to how best to implement such a mechanism and serve the community.

For the NT Government to work with the oversight body to rebuild trust and improve our law enforcement practices so that they create safe conditions for police officers and the people and communities they serve, the specific functions and powers of the proposed national body would need to be carefully worked through, particularly the powers to compel and enforce changes and how that would work practically.

Although we support independent investigation, reporting and monitoring, the powers must be workable and clearly defined. Independent investigations provide the essential element of impartiality that is missing when police investigate police.

Trust in our justice system is extremely limited in many Aboriginal communities. It has been eroded by generations of trauma, colonisation, the Stolen Generations and repeated injustice before the law. That mistrust will not heal on its own. It requires accountability, cultural sensitivity and a willingness to listen to those with lived experience.

The CLP has been in office for just over a year, and it has already broken promises to Aboriginal communities. Trust in this government is at an all-time low.

NT Police have commenced and are undertaking important reform work to rebuild trust and relationships with Aboriginal and remote communities. It is putting in considerable effort to improve its ways of working and to take the next steps for cultural reform. The NT Police Force acknowledges that it is an important period of transition. That is a huge body of ongoing work. It is taking action.

The CLP refuses to acknowledge this incredibly important work. It has no regard for the efforts of NT Police to undertake this work and take the restoration of trust and relationships with Aboriginal and remote communities seriously. The CLP ultimately does not respect the path and ongoing efforts of NT Police in the implementation of recommendations from the coronial.

Coronial inquests cannot on their own drive systematic reform or repair the mistrust between Aboriginal communities and the justice system at the pace and depth that is needed. Too many recommendations from royal commissions and coronials remain unactioned.

The CLP claims that it is committed to making the Territory a safer place. We ask the CLP to listen to the community, Central Australia and Yuendumu; they are calling for fairer justice. This is not too much to ask; it is the bare minimum. A national oversight body would not replace but complement existing mechanisms. The review of evidence, investigation, reporting and monitoring would be enhanced through reliable, impartial, transparent and accountable oversight.

Territory Labor is committed to better ways to make the Territory safer. Prevention is the key to making the Territory safer for all Territorians. What does that look like? It means investing in long-term solutions that change our systems and services for the better. Deaths in custody are preventable.

The Central Land Council urged the government to establish an independent police conduct commission. It said:

> *… the NT was the only state or territory that does not have an independent body to investigate police conduct. As a result, the NT has failed to overhaul the culture of its police force.*
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> *…*
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> *… no independent oversight makes the desolation and sorrow gripping his community so much harder to bear.*

NAAJA, which works directly with some of our community's most vulnerable people, believes there is a need for an independent oversight body to deliver true accountability and transparency in cases of police misconduct towards Aboriginal people and to drive structural change in the police force. The Acting CEO said:

> *Let's not wait for another inquiry, for another 12 months—we know that a person losing their life over a shoplifting incident is not acceptable …*

The CLP does not want to know how to build trust in the justice system for Territorians, because it knows its laws and policies are not making communities safer. The CLP knows that it is doing everyday Territorians a disservice by preventing reforms which would make the NT public service gold standard. The CLP has shown time and again that it has no interest in sitting down with people in Aboriginal remote communities to listen and develop place-based, community-led programs, and rehabilitation and diversion services that are meaningful and specific. If government responses are failing to serve some of our community's most disadvantaged, how can the rest of the NT trust that these systems will not fail them as well?

We need to shift the focus from incarceration to strategic initiatives like:

- crime prevention plans; appropriate oversight of the use of restraints
- stopping unsafe restraint practices; reducing overcrowding in prisons, which prevents rehabilitation of offenders
- addressing unmet mental health and disability needs
- funding frontline specialist services; delivering accessible and engaging education
- holding people to account while providing effective rehabilitation, diversion and community-based responses.

The President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Hugh de Kretser, released a statement in which he said:

> *… what's clear is that a system in which police investigate police deaths in custody is fundamentally flawed.*
>
> *…*
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> *Community trust is critical for effective policing. Communities experiencing disadvantage need the best of policing and yet often receive the worst. It's why the response to these, and other deaths in custody, is critical.*

Let's take a look at the NT context. We have high rates of incarceration. Removing the option for prisons to be the last resort for children and young people, the reintroduction of spit hoods and increased rates of people coming into contact with the justice system make it more important to lay the foundation for a future and a government that prioritises prevention and takes appropriate action to put offenders on a better path.

A national oversight body would increase consistency and provide uniform standards across jurisdictions. Let's ensure the NT is on par with, if not better than, our state and territory counterparts. Territorians do not deserve investigations that could result in re-traumatisation.

Echoing recommendation 27 from the landmark Yoorrook for Justice report, a national oversight body could take responsibility for independent police oversight to investigate and determine all complaints about police investigation and report on all police contact deaths and serious incidents and—on its own motion—monitor, audit, systematically review and report on the exercise of police powers and make those reports public.

There are so many good police officers in the Territory who are doing wonderful things to keep our communities safe. They are an essential part of the Territory. Extra scrutiny and evaluation of public services will only increase the public's trust in those systems and make those services safer for Aboriginal people, our community and everybody.

In closing I again thank the Member for Johnston for bringing this important motion before the House. We know this is a national issue, but it is also a Territory issue we have had for quite some time.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I did not intend to speak this afternoon but after some of the things I have heard in the Chamber, I feel compelled to speak. It seems there are a lot of experts on Corrections and deaths in custody in this Chamber. I wonder how many have actually worked in that system and been involved in deaths in custody. Sadly, I can say that I have been.

I will not be lectured by the Member for Daly on harassment and intimidation. Those of us who were in the last Assembly are well aware of the things that took place one evening outside Parliament House. For him to claim that is hypocritical.

There was a comment that the police are untrustworthy. The Deputy Chief Minister was pretty upset about that, and I would be too. The Deputy Chief Minister's father was a police officer. To come into this Chamber and say that police are untrustworthy is abhorrent. Also, I feel for the Member for Barkly being told that he was untrustworthy because he was a police officer. It is disgusting.

Our police officers are pillars of our community. They are the people who keep us safe. As well, an adage for prison officers is that they face what you fear. As the Deputy Chief Minister specifically stated, our police officers run towards danger when everyone else is running away from it. To call them untrustworthy is disgusting.

I need to touch on a couple of things because I was worried about the commentary from the Member for Daly. He was making comments about a death in Alice Springs. I will not talk about it because I want to make sure that I do not prejudice the ongoing investigation. He spoke about the police involvement in such a way that it could be seen to be prejudicing that ongoing investigation in Alice Springs. That is concerning. When people in this parliament comment on ongoing investigations and speak ill of people involved in those investigations, it has the opportunity to prejudice that ongoing investigation. The Member for Daly needs to take that into consideration when making comments.

I will talk about the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, specifically Corrections. We know that the 1987 royal commission was desperately needed. I back that. Of the 339 recommendations provided by that royal commission, the Territory accepted all of them bar two. There were two that we could not accept about housing prisoners in places closest to where they live. With the geographical locations of our prisons, it is something that could not be done. I had to study that royal commission when I became a prison officer. I spent quite a bit of time on it. I think recommendations 57 and 58 were the two that were not supported.

Everyone is speaking ill of police and Corrections regarding deaths in custody, and I would like to flip that on its head. I have been involved in a number of deaths in custody, as I have said. I have been in front of the Coroner on a number of occasions because of those deaths in custody. I am proud to stand here and say that nearly every time I have been in front of the Coroner, the Coroner has had positive things to say about police and correctional services in the way that they work with the individual to support them prior to their death.

I am touching wood when I say this, and my Corrections colleagues will probably not be happy with me for saying it, but there has never been a successful suicide in the Alice Springs Correctional Centre, the site that sits at Owen Springs. There is a reason for this; it is because of the way that the staff work and take into consideration elements from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. It drives away the bullet train and how they work with individuals.

In my years in Corrections, I worked with a number of people who were terminally ill. Generally, 95% to 98% of the instances of deaths in custody, within the Correctional Services area, are natural causes like chronic disease or terminal illness. I have watched the staff, how they deal with people who are sick and how they work with the families to do everything they can to make sure that there is dignity for that individual, with access to family and understanding the cultural requirements of those people. That is what is forgotten.

What is not being talked about is the work of Corrections staff and police in these circumstances, because it is not just Corrections. I have been in the Coroner's court when dealing with deaths in custody, and I have seen the Coroner praise and congratulate the police for the work they did with the person leading up to their death, when it was considered a death in custody. That is forgotten, and I need to make that clear so everybody understands that.

Corrections and police go above and beyond working with people when they know they are chronically or terminally ill to make sure that everything is done to make the last days, weeks or months of their life as comfortable as possible, providing access to family and country wherever possible. That is firmly embedded now in Corrections, and I believe the police force also utilise some of the ideas of Corrections. I support our police 100%. I have worked closely with police for over 25 years. The work they do and the way they go about it is exemplary, so to say that they are untrustworthy is abhorrent.

I would like to touch on this but not labour on the point. The Member for Daly spoke about rehab and support for Correctional Services. We are turning that around as a CLP government. I can tell you now, because I was in Corrections when it happened, that Labor was sending Corrections backwards. The rehab and support was not there, and that is one reason I ended up in this Chamber. I watched the work that we did for a number of years to turn Corrections around and start driving the employment, education, vocational education and programming opportunities for people to make them better when they got out. Labor got into power in late 2016, and it was like somebody threw the anchor out on a ship; it all came to a grinding halt.

That changed my focus, all the work that I had been doing for years in Corrections was effectively stopped—all that positive work. Labor went into a 'rack 'em and stack 'em' model. They were not interested in doing anything else. That was one of the drivers for me to be in this Chamber today. I could see what Labor was

doing, and I did not agree with it. I wanted to get in and be able to do something to make a difference to what was happening in Corrections. I am proud to stand here and say that we, the Finocchiaro CLP government, are making those changes.

The Member for Daly talked about some of the changes that have taken place in youth justice and Corrections around staff and the ability for them to protect themselves. I will not make an apology for that, and I do not think anyone in this Chamber should, because we put the safety of staff at the forefront. The staff are there to look after people in their care, whether that is Corrections, Police or youth justice.

Previously, under the last government, the laws were changed in such a way that disempowered the staff, and they effectively became punching bags. I am proud to say that those laws were changed to protect those staff members and give them protection so they can go to work and come home safely, because everyone seems to forget about that. Those staff need to go to work and come home to their families safely.

I put on the record the positive work done by Police and Corrections dealing with deaths in custody or working with people who are ill, suffering chronic illness. Everyone is quick to criticise, but nobody sees the other side. I am glad to provide some of that commentary from the other side because it is quickly forgotten about. Everyone is quick to demonise everybody else, and that needs to stop.

As the Deputy Chief Minister said, we need to consider the issues for people who are dealing with deaths in custody. When people have to respond to and deal with those things it is traumatic and takes a huge toll on that person, their family and the larger workforce. People are quick to forget about that, and they should not.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Johnston for bringing this motion to the Chamber. I strongly support this motion, and I have spoken many times about deaths in custody in the Chamber.

This is about working with police and the elders of our communities. I am standing here to work on and support a system where police can work in the system they know best. It is nothing to do with whether it is today's CLP government or the past Labor government for many years, rotating around controlling police in what they need to do. We want to see fair justice in this. I am standing from the other side of this—from outside my office. I strongly support considering this and working on this together for a fair outcome in this system.

Last week I was at the Police Remembrance Day memorial in Gove. I stood there with them, and I shook their hands and supported them. I said, 'Yolngu want to stand with you and support you, so hopefully the government of the day will stand with us and work together'. I just wanted to add that bit of story.

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody happened in 1991, over three decades ago, but we have not seen any real improvement or systemic change since this time. We have not seen justice, and people are still dying.

When I think about the loss of my brother on the beach, the loss of Kumanjayi Walker and Kumanjayi White for the Yuendumu community, and the loss for every family and community who had a loved one die in custody, I do not feel there has been justice for our loved ones.

The police investigating themselves does not give people confidence that there is transparency. It puts unreasonable hardship on the police members to investigate themselves. When Zachary Rolfe was charged with murder, there was great upset within the police community about the charges laid and the investigation process.

An independent body, sitting separately from the police and the government, which could investigate was needed—there should be no perceived bias and no perceived intent to protect one group or another. When there is no clear and transparent process, it causes great division across our communities. Instead, there should be an independent investigation.

I have spoken before in the Chamber about my *wawa* on Elcho Island, and Kumanjayi Walker and Kumanjayi White. These deaths all happened outside of a police station or a prison cell. My *wawa* was shot on his country, on a beach in Galiwinku on Elcho Island. Kumanjayi Walker was shot in his family home. Kumanjayi White died in a supermarket. They died in places where they should have been safe. Their deaths showed us that no-one is safe.

A few years ago I was sleeping in a house when police stormed in during the night looking for someone. In that instance, the police apologised and left, but there is potential for something to go wrong. There is systemic racism and personal racism. We know this from experience and because the recent coronial findings made it clear. We worry for our families and that we have not seen justice or systemic change that makes people safe when they are in police custody.

I have also spoken about Kumanjayi Langdon previously. He died in the watch house after being arrested for drinking in a public place, even though he was causing no harm or disturbance to anyone else. In his case, the former Coroner, Mr Greg Cavanagh said:

> *Kumanjayi Langdon, a sick middle-aged Aboriginal man, was treated like a criminal and incarcerated like a criminal; he died in a police cell which was built to house criminals. He died in his sleep with strangers in this cold and concrete cell. He died of natural causes … but he was entitled to die in peace, in the comfort of family and friends. In my view, he was entitled to die as a free man.*

Right now this government is locking people up in unsafe environments. Sometimes people are not getting their medication or access to regular health workers. There is a duty of care for these prisoners that is not being met. The Attorney-General has said that she does not care about the trauma that watch houses cause people.

When I visited the Palmerston watch house, the prisoners looked at me with hope. They were thinking that I was there to help them, and I wanted to help, but there was nothing I could do. I felt angry and upset that there was nothing I could do other than appeal to this government to fix the problems they are creating.

We have heard of assaults and women being kept in the middle of the men's prison in Alice Springs. People being held in watch house cells with no time outside in the fresh air and lights staying on all day and night for more than five weeks at a time. Lawyers have begged judges for the clients to appear in court in person so that they can have some time outside their cell. I am not sure whether the CLP members understand that this is a breach of human rights. The people in our watch houses and jails are still people who deserve a humane approach. A humane approach will help people to rehabilitate.

The government cannot understand this issue well because it is Aboriginal people filling the watch houses and the prisons. Non-Indigenous people tend to get bail. The case of Jake Danby is a clear example that people who are non-Indigenous do not spend weeks and months in watch houses and jails. They get bail and even when they are convicted of a crime, they are sent home.

It is Aboriginal people who are suffering in this system. The government members are not Aboriginal people. It is not their families or their clans who are suffering under this system, so they do not understand the damage that is being caused. I am trying to tell the government of the day, and I have been saying this for the last three terms over two governments, that it is causing damage to my people and all the people who are stuck in a system that is broken.

Despite the royal commission and numerous coronials, we have not seen significant systemic change. We need thorough investigations that compel governments to bring changes that keep everyone safe. It is clear to me that this government does not want to keep everyone safe. The Attorney-General has said it clearly, so it is critical that we have a national body that investigates, reports, monitors and enforces change.

Although this government might not bring in this change for the good of people in custody, maybe it will bring this change for the good of the police officers who do not need to be investigating each other.

The motion we are talking about is something I would rather see done the way we worked on the VAD.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr GUYULA: Everyone from the government, Independents and the opposition worked together to solve issues relating to VAD. When people put motions forward, there are always people supporting and people not supporting. I do not understand what we need to do here. How can we work together? If we listen to one another, things will get better.

I represent the Indigenous people, not just my own, but the countrymen around the place. I know more than any of the non-Indigenous government departments. I have acted when there is fighting going on in the communities, with spears and other weapons were being used. The police were walking and I said, 'I will stand in front of you and go over and talk with the people'. The people listened to me, and it has worked for the last eight or nine years.

In a community families were fighting, and the guy wanted to throw a weapon—some kind of bar—at the police car, but I called him and said, 'No, don't do that. I am Yingiya, your family member. Don't do that; it will only make it worse for you. Back up and go away, and when the police go back to the station, you can go and see them and tell them that you are sorry.' He said 'Yes, I will do that'. He said sorry, and everything was solved.

This is where the support from our elders needs to be part of this. I have been calling on this for a long time. We look after the policing as well. We do the policing and run the governance in the Yolngu system, but we are never recognised. If we work together, we will create a clear pathway that is different, rather than just one side, one party or someone else from somewhere.

Do not forget that our Indigenous people are incarcerated at higher rates because something is wrong and is not working well. When you work with the us, the Indigenous leaders in the communities, we will start to see progress. I believe this. I know and have done it. The police have walked with me and thanked me for being beside them.

There was a guy with a gun in Milingimbi who ran off into the bush. The police tried to search for him and could not find him for a couple of days. All of a sudden, they started to bring in a taskforce to come and find him. When I saw them I said, 'I know where he is and which family I can approach to bring him back'. They stood and waited for me to get the family to call him. He walked out, and we handed him to the police. We can work together without any killings and crimes happening.

This is what I believe the motion is about. I am supporting the motion because this is what I would like to see federally, not just one party, and hopefully to include Indigenous leaders and work together. The government and opposition should stand and work together to solve the issues, not say, 'We know what is best for these people'.

I have seen failure over the last three terms. I urge the governments to listen to one another. Maybe the Westminster system does not work this way, but in Yolngu law we work together to solve issues. I brought this message to the government to solve issues for the community, so that Indigenous and non-indigenous people can all live together in a safe community.

When the family of Kumanjayi White called for an independent investigation, the police said that this could not be done. It was his family calling, elders and leaders; they wanted to solve this issue. They said only by giving outsiders the powers of investigation under NT law could it happen. Let us take this opportunity and create a new pathway for a national body that could include people from Darwin to investigate in all jurisdictions so that justice can be properly done.

I stand with this because nothing else worked. I represented my people. It started from my electorate and now Indigenous people from around the Territory are calling for me to support and represent them, to get the word out. I have always been told, 'No. She'll be right. We know what we are working on and how we can fix this,' but it has never happened.

We all need to walk into communities and talk to families to solve issues and try new things to turn around a better future. We know jails are full; the records are high and shows something is wrong. Please listen to us.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the Member for Fannie Bay's husband, who is a police officer and a man of great integrity—a man I would sincerely trust with executing the laws factually and upholding the duty he has been given. I also acknowledge the Treasurer's and Member for Barkly's careers and the Deputy Chief Minister's father as we go through this.

I acknowledge the families and their grief over any deaths in custody. There are families grieving in the Northern Territory. There are communities grieving, and on behalf of our government—and the human side of every Territorian—I say any death is a tragedy, and the death of young people is a tragedy. We acknowledge the grief those families and communities are going through.

I speak against the motion and aim to outline, using the policies and laws currently in place, why I will be opposing it and why I think we have quite a strong justice system in the legislation. Outlining what we currently have in place, I hope to logically put forward the commitment to justice, transparency and accountability. This topic is emotional. I think the ultimate responsibility when we govern—it is easy to be caught in the emotional side of these topics, but we need to step back and logically look at how best we can govern for the people of the Northern Territory.

I emphasise the importance of the coronial process. I truly believe it is legally sound. There has been a continuous push since self-government to increase the cultural sensitivities of the Coroner's Office to ensure that it is publicly trusted. Public trust is so critical. I will oppose this because, even if it is not the intention, there is a theme that has come through to erode the public trust in a number of positions, and this motion, if passed, would erode public trust in our NT Police and our internal justice system.

I will come back to self-government and a decentralisation of power, especially federal, and why I think we are best placed—to get to the point that the Member for Mulka spoke about, I do not believe a federal structure would be best to get there.

The coronial framework in the Northern Territory context is governed by the *Coroners Act 1993* which mandates independent investigations for all deaths in custody. When a death in custody occurs, the Coroner is mandated to investigate. The NT Coroner is a judicial officer and is—this is an important part—independent. It is independent of government and police. We have that structure currently.

The NT Police acts as the lead investigative agency under the Coroner's direction and on behalf of the Coroner. The Coroner obtains full authority over the scope, conduct and outcomes of each investigation. Neither government nor police can influence the scope, conduct and outcomes of each investigation.

I will focus on the police side of that. Our government has full confidence in the NT Police. I make that clear. It is perfectly placed, and I have full confidence in its ability to conduct investigations with integrity and impartiality.

Officers are trained in forensic procedures, trauma-informed interviewing and investigative best practices. When it comes to my electorate of Drysdale and when these things are going on, I want local police officers—local constables, local Aboriginal liaison officers and local interpreters—because they are trusted and known within the community. Palmerston is a big place, but it is a small, tight-knit community. We know the police officers. We know their faces.

There is an incredible amount of work from NT police to ensure that all people feel that they can trust their conduct. Great initiatives are happening at NT Police to grow our numbers, especially Territorian Aboriginal police officers, which is fantastic. I want local Territorians policing and investigating in Drysdale. Even for things like a death in custody, I want the local knowledge and nuance that is the Territory. I do not want anyone from Canberra or another state to come into my electorate and conduct those investigations.

It was brought up that the Member for Johnston's motion discredits police. Even though that is not the intention, it does and police officers will feel that. It undermines them, as these officers across the Northern Territory are trained and have this duty which they take seriously. A lot take it that they are a slave to the facts and their duty of justice. Like all human beings, that will not always be perfect. That is why we have the Coroner's Office, the Ombudsman and a few others to cover when those issues arise.

I want local police. Investigations can be covered by NT Police without fear or favour with respect to the rule of law. I expect NT Police to demonstrate cultural awareness and engage respectfully with Aboriginal families and communities, and there are protocols ensuring investigations are procedurally sound and culturally sensitive. Our police officers are best placed to deal with the issues and events that happen in the Northern Territory because they are trained in the Territory. I stand firm on the fact that the best way to overcome this problem is to recruit more within the Territory, from communities all over the Northern Territory.

Further on the independent oversight, we have the NT Coroner, the DPP and the NT Ombudsman. These three bodies maintain their independence.

The NT Coroner provides judicial independence and transparency in determining the cause and circumstances of death.

The NT Ombudsman, under the *Ombudsman Act 2001*, has the authority to investigate complaints regarding police conduct and systemic issues. If there is misconduct—I am not saying that it does not happen—we

have the Ombudsman's office to oversee that. If systemic issues are raised, which there have been, the NT Ombudsman is there as an independent body to investigate. The Ombudsman can initiate own-initiative investigations into the conduct of police. This reinforces public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the process. Any findings of possible criminality will be referred to the DPP for review and recommendation of charges relating to the death. A final report and any recommendation from the Coroner must be provided to the Attorney-General on completion without delay.

I have just outlined that I believe we have a thorough independent system in the NT. It is not just one; it is layered. We have layers for people to hear grievances and to ensure that police are policed.

I will go back to some events in the past that I think speak to this issue, and some of the learnings we can take. The 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody made 339 recommendations, and many have been adopted into NT practice since that period. Some of these include mandatory reporting and a large body of work into culturally appropriate engagement, which is very much ongoing. That is a continuous journey, and I have been trying to learn it my whole life in the Territory. I continually try to get better at it as well. Our police are always striving in that.

We continue to refine the coronial process in light of these recommendations. The Kumanjayi Walker inquest demonstrated the seriousness with which these matters are treated. A review of the *Coroners Act* has also been flagged to ensure the sustainability and maintain the rigorous standards of the office. The fact is we can always get better internally without having to go to the federal government.

It is worthy to do a national comparison as well. All Australian jurisdictions require coronial investigations into deaths in custody. The NT's dual Coroner/Ombudsman oversight model is among the strongest nationally. The NT exceeds minimum national standards in public inquests, published findings and Ombudsman review. It aligns with the international best practice and UN guidelines on transparency and cultural competence. I have listed a few, but feel free to read them.

The coronial system is benchmarked against other jurisdictions for continuous improvement as well. What I am getting at is that nationally we are doing well compared with other states.

I will speak about cultural sensitivity and community engagement. The NT Coroner's Office provides culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and NT Police have the expertise and access to interpreters to consult community leaders when appropriate. We have made it clear that we want to grow that capability. The word I just used, 'capability', is what the government believes it is. We are creating a more capable police force by growing our Aboriginal force that serves within NT Police and, may I add, across the entire judiciary, including the commissioner's office and the NT Ombudsman's Office. It will improve capability.

The Ombudsman's role in police-involved deaths—the Ombudsman is notified and reviews how NT Police conduct investigations into deaths in custody, especially when police investigate their own officers. The office has the authority to conduct own-motion investigations should it see fit. It examines thoroughness, impartiality and cultural sensitivity of investigations and provides an independent channel for families and communities to raise concerns. In high-profile cases, the Ombudsman's involvement has addressed community concerns and ensured transparency, which is essential in addressing perceptions of police investigating police and reinforcing public trust. Once again, we see this layered combination we already have in the legislative framework that ensures the public trust in the position.

The coronial recommendations lead to changes in police procedures, corrections policy and health protocols. That is an automatic process that comes down from the Coroner.

The NT Government supports ongoing training in cultural competency and investigative integrity. It is committed to reducing deaths in custody through prevention and systemic reform, and the coronial process promotes accountability, learning and prevention of future tragedies. We have a thorough system in the Northern Territory.

It is easy to get caught in the grief when these events happen; it is human. However, our job is to govern and we need to step back and ask if bringing Canberra in is the best option for Territorians. I adamantly believe it will never be, on anything. I am strong in my belief that we need greater independence. I am a firm believer in the eventual statehood of this jurisdiction and do not want Canberra meddling with the Northern Territory.

We have a case before us with the unfortunate death of Mr White. We have already spoken of this. This is to the Member for Daly, who holds a high office as Deputy Leader of the Opposition: we should not be leaning

into cases that are currently under investigation and involved in the judiciary. I ask that the opposition ensures we have a fair judicial process. We do not know the facts. We have all heard hearsay about what happened. I have spoken to an alleged victim, but I will not state any of that here because it is up the judiciary, not this House. It is wise for us all to refrain.

I know this will not stop, but motherhood statements on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are disingenuous. In my electorate the views of all people are incredibly broad. The views of Aboriginal people in my electorate are broad when it comes to matters of how the judiciary should act and how law and order should be conducted. It covers the entire spectrum. I know it will not stop, but for the record, it is disingenuous to make motherhood statements based on any racial group or other simple identifier.

The NT Government and I stand firmly behind the coronial process. I have full confidence in NT Police to conduct investigations with integrity and cultural sensitivity. The NT Coroner and Ombudsman provide robust and independent oversight. They are committed to justice, truth and dignity for every life lost in custody and call to uphold these standards and build a safer, more respectful Northern Territory.

To the NT Police, know that this government and I fully back you. You are the right hand of the law, and we support you the entire way. Thank you.

K McNAMARA (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion from the Member for Johnston, calling for federal oversight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody. Since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, more than 600 First Nations people have died in custody in this country, including at least 23 this year alone. These are not statistics; they are grandparents, children and parents whose lives were cut short by failures in duty of care.

One of those 600 lives was Kumanjayi White, a young Warlpiri man who died in police custody in May this year. The last time we gathered in this Chamber, his grandfather, Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves, sat in the galley observing the parliament. Mr Hargraves and his family, community and supporters have been calling for an independent investigation into his grandson's death, but those calls have fallen on deaf ears. I am grateful to the Member for Johnston for putting this matter back on the agenda and to Mr Hargraves and his family for their tireless advocacy, bravery and resilience.

In response to concerns about motherhood statements, I agree that we cannot paint First Nations communities as one monolith. When I refer to Aboriginal people it is to specific groups, families and organisations that have said things.

The Member for Johnston detailed why it is essential that we have independent oversight, but it is worth restating and highlighting the following. First and foremost, many in our community, particularly many First Nations people in my community and others—I will get on to this word 'trust' that has caused such an issue in this Chamber today, but before I do, I will read out some of the things that have been said and once again mention the behaviour of the Deputy Chief Minister in this place. The overt aggression, threats and bullying is so unbecoming of a person in this position, and we are all fed up with it. I wish for once that he could act like a grown-up in this place.

When I say 'trust', this comes from constituents, people who have explicitly said, 'We have lost trust', and 'We distrust'. Institutions investigating themselves usually breed mistrust. There are many in our community who do not trust the NT Police to objectively investigate their own conduct. This is not unreasonable. Independent oversight is a cornerstone of transparent, accountable government and must also be applied to the NT Police.

The NT Government claims that internal investigations are sufficient and that independence might compromise further actions, but this is demonstrably false. Every other Australian jurisdiction uses independent commissions without this problem. Independence provides community confidence in the integrity of investigations, which we desperately need.

There is widespread support in the community, particularly in the legal community, and amongst First Nations organisations for independent oversight. In July this year the family of Kumanjayi Walker, alongside more than 20 First Nations organisations, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) and the Central Australian Women's Legal Service, signed a letter calling on the Territory government to establish a police ombudsman in the NT so that there can be independent investigations of police misconduct and deaths in custody. In the letter they said:

> *The Coroner formally found what Aboriginal people in the NT have always known—that no-one is holding NT Police accountable when they use excessive force and hurt Aboriginal people, and that there is entrenched systemic and structural racism within NT Police.*

Also in July the Central Land Council called on the federal government to withhold funding from this government until it establishes an independent police conduct commission into the death of Kumanjayi White. Warren Williams, the CLC Chair, said:

> *We don't trust this government and its police force to keep us safe …*

I will unpack what Mr Williams is saying. He highlighted that the NT Government gets an enormous amount of funding from the Commonwealth Government for Closing the Gap to improve the lives and wellbeing of First Nations Territorians. He wants the federal government to stop giving money to the CLP until it establishes an independent police conduct commission because, as he said:

> *Our lives are worth less than a chocolate bar to those in power and money is the only language they understand.*

Mr Williams can see what many in the community see; that is, this CLP government does not take closing the gap seriously. The Attorney-General said that closing the gap 'cannot come at the expense of community safety'. That sums up the CLP's attitude perfectly—we can only close the gap in the NT as long as it is not inconvenient for non-Indigenous Territorians. It is okay to enable neglect and excessive force that leads to deaths in custody in the first place, all in the name of so-called safety for the non-Indigenous population. These unbelievable comments paint First Nations people as a risk to the non-Indigenous community and fuel the racism and violence that results in deaths in custody.

This brings me to my second point. We know that there is institutional racism within the Northern Territory Police. That was a central finding in Coroner Armitage's report into the death of Kumanjayi Walker, released earlier this year. Time and again we have seen instances where Aboriginal people in police custody are subject to neglect and violence that their non-Indigenous counterparts are not subjected to. Too often that neglect and violence results in injury or death.

Coroner Armitage was clear in her inquest report that NT Police bears the hallmarks of institutional racism. She said that Zachary Rolfe, who shot and killed Kumanjayi Walker:

> *… was racist, and he worked in and benefited from an organisation with the hallmarks of institutional racism.*

How can the community be expected to trust an institution that bears the hallmarks of institutional racism to investigate deaths that result from that racism? It is not good enough.

Third, the conditions that people in prison are being held in are enormously dangerous and putting their lives at risk. People are being held in overcrowded prisons and watch houses without air conditioning, privacy, dignity or proper sanitation. It is a ticking time bomb in there.

The NT Police Association said in a statement that conditions in prison are 'out of control' and that 'it is not a matter of if but when a serious custody incident occurs'. When the Police Association is sounding the alarm we must act, yet this government continues down a path that is making tragedy inevitable. This crisis in our prisons and watch houses is a direct result of the CLP's harmful tough-on-crime agenda, addiction to incarceration and failure to address the causes of crime.

It speaks to the issues that Mr Williams raised. The CLP government does not value the lives of First Nations people in the NT. We need to take serious steps to prevent deaths in custody. When they occur we need well-resourced, independent oversight to understand the cause of death. We need to listen to the demands of the families of those whose lives were taken, to help them get justice. We need to listen to the recommendations of experts like Coroner Armitage to make systemic changes to our justice system and protect human life and dignity.

Thirty-four years after the royal commission, we are still counting bodies, hearing families beg for basic accountability and watching governments ignore expert recommendations. This motion is not radical; it is the bare minimum. Independent oversight, transparency and accountability are not threats to justice; they are its foundations. The Commonwealth must step in where this government has failed. Our families deserve

answers, our community deserves safety and every life lost in custody deserves a truly independent investigation. I strong support this motion and urge all members to do the same.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak in opposition to this motion. I begin by sincerely acknowledging the tragedies which touch families and communities deeply. They call on all of us across government and society to act with the utmost seriousness and respect.

The motion calls on the Commonwealth Government to urgently set up a national independent body to have the power to investigate deaths in custody involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I understand where this call comes from. It appears to come from a genuine concern from families and communities who want answers and from a shared hope that we can prevent future deaths. That is a goal we all want to achieve.

As the Attorney-General I have to say that creating a national independent body is not the right solution for our Northern Territory. It is not about ignoring the problem; it is about recognising that the Northern Territory has unique circumstances and needs a local approach.

Before I go on I will correct the record for the Deputy Chief Minister, who mentioned the number of deaths in custody. He talked about the number being 38 deaths in custody over the past five years. We have just had it confirmed, and he would like me to correct, that it was actually 38 deaths in custody since July 2011, which is 14 years, not five years.

Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro has been clear—I agree—that investigations into deaths in custody must be handled by people who understand our local laws, communities and the challenges we face.

The Northern Territory is different from other parts of Australia; our Indigenous communities have their own cultures and connections, and our police and justice systems operate in a unique environment. A national body without deep knowledge of this local context could make things worse instead of better. Investigations are led by Northern Territory Police with oversight by the Coroner.

The role of the Coroner in the Northern Territory is to independently investigate certain deaths and whether any preventive recommendations can be made. The coronial process is focused on fact finding, rather than assigning blame. When a death in custody occurs, the Coroner must hold a public inquest. At the end of the inquest, the Coroner delivers formal findings and may make recommendations to government aimed at preventing similar deaths.

In addition to this robust coronial process, independent bodies like the NT Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption, provide important checks and balances.

These systems are designed to ensure investigations are fair, transparent and thorough. To say that only a national body can do this work is to overlook the important and often difficult work done by our local investigators, the Coroner and oversight agencies. These professionals are committed to justice and accountability, and know our communities well.

Starting a new national body would not be easy; it would take a lot of time, resources and effort to set up. Without the strong understanding of Territory laws and communities, it risks delaying justice and frustrating families who need answers quickly, especially in their time of grief.

We need to remember that one size does not fit all. The issues faced by Indigenous people in the Northern Territory are different from those in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane. Our remote communities are all different. We know that because we go to communities to meet and speak to Territorians. Our legal arrangements and cultural diversity require solutions which are tailored to the Northern Territory.

I acknowledge the calls for more transparency, such as quicker release of CCTV footage or clearer communication with families. These are reasonable requests, but we need to find the right balance between openness and protecting the integrity of investigations. We have seen that local authorities can conduct thorough investigations, hold people to account and bring about real change.

What families and communities want is justice that is not only fair but also timely and culturally respectful. A national body disconnected from the Territory's unique realities risks making justice slower and less meaningful. We must be careful not to lose sight of the importance of local knowledge and connection.

My focus as Attorney-General will remain on strengthening our existing Northern Territory systems and ensuring they have the independence, expertise and community trust that is necessary to do this important work. I think we can agree that we owe it to the families of those who have lost a loved one in these circumstances, and Territorians more broadly, to build a system that works for Territorians and their families and is grounded in respect, local knowledge and accountability. Frankly, the federal government and a national body would not have a tailored system that could do that. It would be a lot more red tape and resources and take a lot more time.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to the task that of improving those systems. The Coroner's reports come across my desk regularly. They then go out to all the departments and the departments work on the things that the Coroner suggests need to be improved. It is a thorough process, and it happens with all the presented Coroner's reports. We will continue to do that.

We want to prevent deaths in custody, and we want to support families through that incredibly difficult process.

J DAVIS (Johnston)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank all members who contributed to this debate, although I must say that I am deeply disappointed but perhaps not surprised that the CLP is not supporting this motion.

Let me be clear about what we are asking for. This motion does not call on this parliament to establish a new body. It does not require us to allocate funding. It does not ask us to implement complex reforms or navigate constitutional questions. It simply asks this Assembly to add our voices to a call that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities—I agree with the Member for Drysdale that we cannot lump everyone into one generic group—in speaking for themselves across Australia, as well as families, legal services, the four Northern Territory land councils and the entire Australian human rights community have been making for years: that the Commonwealth establish an independent national body to investigate deaths in custody. That is it.

I am just asking members to use their voice to stand with grieving families and support accountability and transparency It is a simple thing that we could all do together.

This motion is not a radical ask. There is nothing partisan about calling for independent oversight when someone dies in state custody. There is nothing controversial about saying that police should not investigate police or that families deserve answers or that after 609 deaths—I stand corrected, as I said 602 earlier—and 30 years of inaction it is time for the Commonwealth to act.

Some members of this Chamber suggested that calling for independent investigations somehow means that we do not trust police. That is a complete mischaracterisation. Asking for independent oversight is not about mistrust; it is about appropriateness and the principles of justice.

An example is when a serious workplace incident occurs at a worksite. We do not ask the construction company to investigate itself. We have NT WorkSafe conduct an independent investigation. That does not mean we do not trust the construction company. It means we recognise that no organisation should investigate itself when serious harm has occurred under its watch. It is a matter of basic conflict of interest, transparency and public confidence and safety.

The same principle applies here. When someone dies in police custody or during a police operation, asking police to investigate police creates an inherent conflict of interest. It denies families of independent answers and it fails to meet the international human rights standards that Australia has committed to uphold.

I thank the Member for Drysdale and the Attorney-General for outlining clearly their conviction into the current existing processes, but the issue remains. We have six times as many Aboriginal people dying in the care of the state compared with non-Aboriginal people, and what we are doing is not stopping it—not here and not across Australia.

Let me be clear: this is not about blaming police; it is about addressing systemic failures. This is about trying to stop deaths that should not be happening. In fact, robust independent processes are good for police as well. They protect officers from accusations of cover-ups, provide public confidence in findings and remove the impossible burden of investigating their colleagues in traumatic circumstances. Independent oversight strengthens the integrity of our justice system and supports the vast majority of police who do their jobs professionally and with care. I join with other members of this Chamber in acknowledging that.

This should be the easiest thing in the world for each member of this parliament to support. Instead, we have heard that the CLP will not support this. It would rather the Northern Territory says nothing—the jurisdiction with the highest proportion of Aboriginal Australians and the highest proportion of Indigenous people locked up in the entire world, the place that knows this crisis most intimately. What message does this send to the families of Kumanjayi Walker and Kumanjayi White? What does it say to the Aboriginal communities across this Territory who have been calling for reform for decades? What does it tell the Australian Human Rights Commission, when even a simple motion of support is too much for this government?

This is not about politics. This relates to people. It relates to the 609 Indigenous Australians who have died in custody since 1991 and to the 12 more deaths just this year. This relates to 95% of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory being locked up at rates that should shame us all. This is about saying that when the state takes someone into custody, exercises all its powers over them and that person dies, there must be independent accountability.

If the CLP opposes this motion, history will not look kindly on this decision. When people look back at this moment, they will ask: where did the Northern Territory stand? Did we take the opportunity to lead or did we look away?

The families who have lost loved ones in custody have been calling for this for years. They are asking for what every Australian should expect—that when one of their family members dies in the care of the state, there is an independent, properly resourced investigation that can deliver true accountability and change.

All I am asking this parliament to do is support that call, add our voice and show leadership. This should not be difficult or controversial. Six hundred and nine deaths are 609 too many, and 30 years of inaction is long enough.

To the CLP members, I heard those of you who chose to speak today. I say to you that it is not too late. You can still choose to stand on the right side of history, support accountability and justice and use your voice for this thing that matters so deeply to so many people in the Territory. If you will not, let the record show that when this parliament had the chance to call for independent oversight of deaths in custody, when we had the opportunity to show leadership to the rest of Australia on an issue that affects Aboriginal people across this nation, the CLP said no. Territorians, Aboriginal families and our democracy deserve better than that.

To those members who will support this motion, thank you for having the courage to speak up, stand with families and communities and recognise that justice and accountability are not partisan issues; they are human rights.

The Assembly divided:

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

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION
Investing in Territory Roads

Mr YOUNG (Daly): Madam Speaker, I move that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly recognises the importance of investing in the regional and remote road network across the Territory to drive economic development and improve connectivity, flood immunity, safety and access for all Territorians.

I could not begin without first re-emphasising the fantastic work of the constituents of my electorate across the Thamarrurr region earlier this year. They came together, petitioned and successfully ensured the CLP government committed to upgrading Port Keats Road. It was a special occasion and an honour for me to stand outside this building and be handed this petition in person. It encapsulates how vital the upgrading and sealing of this road—and any road for that matter—can be for towns, communities and homelands in regional and remote areas.

Port Keats Road—connecting Wadeye, Palumpa and the nearby homelands—is vital to the region's economy, mobility and future liveability. It is vital to ensuring that students from homelands can access schools and community members can access services, but more importantly, ensuring the safety of road users.

It is astonishing that it took enormous pressure from the community and stakeholders to secure a commitment from the CLP government and Minister Yan to move ahead with this vital project.

I remember when they first raised concerns with me, as the local Member for Daly. They had heard quietly that the CLP Treasurer, Bill Yan, was to cut the funding for the road in the budget. In good faith, they wrote to the Treasurer and did not get a response. They came to me and asked if I could follow up on that. I suggested that they write again to the Treasurer; again, they received no response.

That is what the Thamarrurr Development Corporation Board members told me. I spoke with the CEO and met with the board members, and the Treasurer or his office did not even have the courtesy to write back to give them an answer. Where did we end up? The community came together and organised a petition. Hundreds of people from Wadeye, Palumpa, Wudapulinama and other homelands around there signed the petition because the Treasurer, Bill Yan, could not be bothered to get back to community.

What was more disappointing in his response was that he suggested that I dragged people here from Wadeye to hand me the petition. I did not drag anyone here. To suggest that the people of the Thamarrurr region need to be dragged here on my direction was offensive to those people. They are following what is happening in their region. When I spoke to the board members about his comments and showed them *Hansard*, they were highly offended. This came from the grassroots—the people who peacefully came and traditionally danced that petition to me on the steps of Parliament House to bring to this Chamber.

It was tabled in this parliament, as many of you would have seen, to then go to the Public Accounts Committee, from which there was a resolution. All of a sudden, when we had people coming together and hundreds of people signing the petition, the Treasurer realised how important this infrastructure is for the West Daly region, and we finally got a response from him that it would be staying in the 2025–26 budget.

What have we seen from there? The Treasurer sent a letter about the petition to the Clerk to ensure that the $90m to upgrade Port Keats Road, including $18m of Northern Territory Government funding—the other 80% of that funding comes from the Commonwealth Government—would be in the budget to ensure that vital road infrastructure is completed over time.

I mentioned this time and again. This road is above politics. Port Keats Road has always been a staged approach. The Treasurer will have a go at me about not getting that completed when we were in government, but the reality is that we got sections of that road completed. We had the road completed from Saddle Rail Creek towards Daly River, which is a huge section of the road where it floods across the floodplains. I had the honour of opening that with former Infrastructure minister, Eva Lawler. Before I was even the Member for Daly the CLP member, Gary Higgins, who I regard highly, had a section of the road completed.

What I am saying to the Treasurer is that this should not be about politics; it is about ensuring we put the infrastructure in so that people can access services and schools and that it is a safe road to drive for all. We ensured the budget was there and that it would roll over to whoever came to government, which was the CLP in this case. It was concerning when community members from Wadeye—more broadly, the Thamarrurr region—came to me because they heard that funding to that road had been slashed.

That is why debating this motion is essential. Collectively, we need to talk about why roads in regional and remote areas are crucial and why the CLP government cannot leave them out of the bigger picture for the Northern Territory.

The Infrastructure minister said:

> *We are delivering on things that specifically matter for Territorians.*

The question still is, which Territorians are he referring to? Under Bill Yan's watch, a whopping $1bn of funding was cut to upgrade or build new infrastructure across the Territory, including the Regional Roads Productivity Package, the Stuart Highway upgrade for Pinelands industrial precinct access and Central Arnhem Road future priorities.

Improving roads is about access and connectivity across our regions. Across my electorate of Daly, hundreds of kilometres of roads link rural and remote communities, and there is a lot to see on my long drives. I am sure that the Treasurer is familiar with those roads, especially to Daly River.

I return to Port Keats Road as a prime example. Like many bush roads throughout the Top End, Port Keats Road is accessible for only four to six months of the year, depending on how big or late the Wet Season is. When the rains arrive during a severe Wet Season, communities can find themselves isolated and cut off for days or weeks. That impacts the residents and businesses in our region, as well as others, because it affects their ability to travel, raises living costs beyond affordability, hinders access to essential services and prohibits economic development. Could those in this Assembly honestly imagine trying to operate a school, clinic, store or business in these circumstances?

There is anguish because the weekly barge freight service from Darwin to Wadeye has ceased. I acknowledge that the NT Government has launched an expression of interest process to secure a potential new barge provider, but I still have not seen or been briefed on where that is at. The government took that expression of interest out, and from my understanding—maybe Minister Edgington or the Treasurer can confirm in their response—it would be made public around 6 October, which has now passed. The community is still waiting to see where the expression of interest is at for the new barge. It is great that Northline is going to Wadeye to ensure supplies get out for the shop, clinic and a building infrastructure program in the region, but we need to see where the barge is at.

We had early rains along Port Keats Road, and many people are worried that the road will be cut off a lot earlier. The trucks are commissioned to provide that service until the end of December, which is not long away, but it is long enough away that the road may close before then because of the early rain. There have already been a number of downpours, and the road is chopped up as it is. People are concerned that the truck will not get through, and that means food supplies are cut off. I acknowledge that the shop has backup in the back of the store, but there is also the issue of the clinic and people accessing medications to ensure they are healthy.

There are building programs happening there. We need a plan to get a barge service up and running as soon as possible because once the road is cut, people will be cut off. If services cannot continue in Wadeye, people will have to come to town to access them.

Without a functioning barge service, the region is without a critical supply lifeline and will need to rely on road freight. That means the road needs to be shored up ahead of the Wet Season, and the upgrades to Port Keats Road need to be carried out as soon as possible.

I remember not that long ago passing the first truck, taking freight to Wadeye on one of my recent trips there. This is why I will not stop talking about the issue of Territory roads; it is not an isolated issue in the Daly electorate. It is a clear example of why we need to invest in our regional and remote roads. Territorians should not have to go without access to the essentials or face the consistent threat of shortages, especially in already remote areas.

This story extends to broader parts of the Territory. Central Arnhem Road and the sealing of that track to Nhulunbuy is a massive talking point for the Leader of the Opposition. It is also an issue for the Member for Mulka, as the electorates of Arnhem and Mulka border each other, and many communities within their electorates are along that road.

It is not to say people in urban areas cannot be affected at stages too. The Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways are national lifelines for fuel and food supplies, with a single closure isolating entire regions and

costing millions. I recall last year's tropical low, which brought heavy rainfall and flooding across many areas, including the Victoria River and Daly districts. It also caused the critical infrastructure corridors, which we rely on to keep supply chains running, to close. These infrastructure corridor closures led some of our major supermarket chains to face potential shortages. While these incidents occur, they are not as common as in remote and regional areas. For freight efficiency, emergency management, equal access and future economic development, we need to stop treating remote roads as second-tier assets and start recognising them as the backbone of the economy.

I want to talk about safety. The Member for Goyder has frequently raised this issue of road safety, especially in the rural area where we have high rates of deaths caused by road accidents, unfortunately, which is a tragedy. We know the impact that has on our emergency services. The Member for Karama spoke about his son who is an ambulance officer. The impact on families who have lost loved ones in road accidents extends to our emergency services and their families. They are impacted, as the Member for Karama spoke so passionately about earlier this year. I thank him for that; it was a touching speech.

The Northern Territory continues to experience some of the highest, if not the highest, rates of road fatalities of all jurisdictions. We owe it to every Territorian to make our roads safer. Thirty people have lost their lives already on Territory roads this year. These numbers represent more than just statistics; they represent mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, children, friends and neighbours who will never come home.

It is a reminder that we need to remain ever-vigilant about road safety—whether in urban, rural or remote areas—by putting on seatbelts, obeying road rules, not driving under the influence, keeping to the speed limit, staying alert and staying off our phones. We are all responsible for doing the right thing every time we pull out of our driveway. So many crashes on our roads are avoidable and preventable, but it takes everyone to play their part.

The government's part in this is twofold. The first is to introduce a range of measures to curb illegal and negligent behaviour on our roads, as the former Labor government did. The Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2018–2022 highlighted several simple changes to make a long-term difference. As part of this plan, we Introduced a blood alcohol concentration limit for supervising drivers, increased maximum penalties for failure to undertake a breath or saliva test, increased police powers to give breath or saliva tests and started drug testing drivers in 2020. We also followed up with a Towards Zero Road Safety Action Plan 2024–2028, which the current CLP government is undertaking.

The second part is to invest in safer roads to prevent accidents. Investment in widening, sealing, guardrails and overtaking lanes truly saves lives. It also prevents and reduces the cost of emergency responses, not just financially but also the mental health cost for families and first responders. We have a duty of care to look after all people, especially first responders to those crashes.

Ongoing maintenance to fix potholes, faded lines and corrugations is not headline-grabbing work, but it is essential to ensure that Territorians can get from A to B safely. Across my electorate, locals, road trains and many tourists use the roads.

Ensuring roads are up to scratch is crucial to keeping people safe and so that when something goes wrong, the emergency response is efficient. Every moment counts after an accident occurs on our roads. If an incident occurs on a rural or remote road, access for first responders can be hindered if the road is not suitable for all weather conditions. This needs to be addressed through increased investments. I know of several stories within my electorate, not just as the local member but before this role when I was living there, of accidents occurring on remote roads. Those roads do not have phone service, so who will you contact if you have a serious accident? Not a lot of people.

A member: Starlink.

Mr YOUNG: There is Starlink, but people do not have it on their cars, as the Member for Barkly stated. A lot of people do not have it at these incidents, and we did not have Starlink around at the time I am talking about, from 2013 onwards. There were a couple of accidents where people had to walk tens of kilometres from where the accident occurred; in one instance someone walked more than 20 kilometres to get help. Unfortunately, there were a couple of deaths in that accident. I knew two of those old people who passed away. There was also one young person who passed away in that accident. I did not know him personally. The families of all those people were distraught that they could not get any help because of the lack of phone service in those regions.

We should all be advocating to Telstra to ensure that they upgrade phone services for major roads where a lot of those serious accidents happen. Every moment counts after an accident occurs on our roads. If an accident occurs on a rural or remote road, access for first responders could be hindered if the road is not suitable for all-weather conditions. These incidents need to be addressed for increased investment.

It is known that the key to growing the Territory's economy is by strengthening the regions. A key part of doing that is by investing in our roads, the critical infrastructure that ensures that our resources are produced and essential construction and maintenance vehicles can move around the Territory.

In my electorate the agriculture and pastoral industries are highly reliant on well-invested, well-maintained roads to ensure their businesses remain viable and contribute to the Territory economy.

Rural members, like the Member for Goyder—and I am sure the Deputy Chief Minister—would be aware of the mango roads. The Member for Goyder might have been a counsellor at the time; yes, he is nodding his head. Everyone played a part in advocating to the federal government on that issue to ensure that the mango roads upgrades were done. I quote from a media release at the time:

> *An investment of $20.1m to seal gravel roads is needed to boost the mango industry and improve productivity and the Territory's horticultural competitiveness.*
>
> *Litchfield Council in partnership with NT Farmers and the Mango Association, recently completed an economic analysis study on the benefit of sealing 15.2 kilometres of roads on which key farms and regional packing sheds are located. The study found that it is a wise investment and a necessary one if the industry is to ensure top grade fruit and grow Asian and Middle East markets.*
>
> *The Litchfield's mango industry accounts for almost 24% of the Australian mango output with product sent to markets in South Australia, NSW and Victoria and growing overseas markets.*
>
> *Litchfield Council Mayor Maree Bredhauer said mangoes are the main horticultural crop in the NT, worth a combined annual total of about $88.5m. Unsealed roads create significant problems for Growers.*
>
> *"Bruised fruit, reduced mango tree pollination and safety of large vehicles are just a few of the issues faced by our local mango growers. Fruit is being downgraded after travelling on these roads and these packing sheds process fruit from the local farms and farms as far away as Katherine. Six rows of mango trees located on a gravel road don't flower and the additional dust creates the perfect environment for dust mites." the Mayor said.*

This is a key pillar of the Territory economy that relies on good investment on our roads for our mangoes and our tourism industry. Better access to our regions means greater tourism businesses and job opportunities. Across my electorate we have great places to visit by car, four-wheel drive, boat or otherwise. As the shadow minister for Tourism, I want the CLP government to incentivise people to choose the Territory as the next drive, caravan or campervan holiday and encourage them to explore further off the beaten track and experience the outback Territory adventure in our regions.

The former Territory Labor government invested in developing a suite of strategies to encourage the growth of the tourism industry, including a specific drive tourism strategy. No matter if it is a long-haul trip with the family, caravan, RV trip in your retirement or an adrenaline-inducing adventure trip in a four-wheel drive, the Northern Territory has it all. That is why this strategy provided a new holistic approach to drive tourism, with a key component focusing on enabling infrastructure, including road signage, safety stops and identifying key roads for sealing to realise their full tourism potential.

The sealing of the Mereenie Loop in Central Australia is one key example. It has the potential to increase visitor numbers and nights stayed and create opportunities for new tourism businesses, particularly Aboriginal businesses there. An added benefit will be the reduction in operation costs to tour operators currently using this road.

Upgrades to priority roads in Kakadu National Park—particularly the routes leading to Jim Jim Falls and Gunlom Falls—will significantly enhance visitor access during the Wet Season. These improvements include better drainage systems and road resurfacing, which will enable safer and more reliable two-wheel drive access. As a result, more tourists can explore these iconic locations, thereby increasing economic benefits for local communities through tourism-related activities and services. This promotes the park's natural beauty and supports sustainable economic growth in the Northern Territory year round.

We could look at other key roads that are essential for tourism but need ongoing investment. Explorers Way is the most travelled cross-border drive route. It is the Territory's key connector in the two largest domestic drive markets: Victoria and New South Wales.

Mr BROWN: 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 YOUNG: Explorers Way route is a key connector between Central Australia and the Top End, offering a delightful drive experience, especially for Territorians. As the Northern Territory's main road, it is heavily used by road trains, trucks and caravans. To ensure safety for all road users, the CLP government must regularly invest in the number and locations of overtaking lanes. This investment will not only improve safety but also enhance visitor experiences along Explorers Way. By ensuring a smoother and more continuous journey, we can encourage visitors to slow down and spend more time enjoying our beautiful regions. This approach will prevent them from feeling stuck behind a long line of vehicles, enabling them to reach their destinations on time.

Outback Way is also labelled Australia's longest shortcut. There is a long-term vision to seal this route in its entirety across multiple jurisdictions. Ongoing investment would support regional connectivity, strengthen a range of industry opportunities and foster sustainable development across the heart of Australia, especially surrounding the tourism sector.

Savannah Way is a scenic drive that connects Cairns to Broome, passing through the Top End, showcasing how beautiful our savannah landscape is. This route includes key sites such as Nitmiluk, Elsey, Keep River and Gregory National Parks. While it is considered one of Australia's iconic drives, significant investment is needed to upgrade the road along the route.

I am sure many of you have been down the Binns Track, which commences at the South Australia border and concludes in Timber Creek. It is a Territory signature four-wheel drive track, passing through several regions. It connects Savannah Way, Outback Way and Explorers Way. It also offers visitors a great alternative route for long-haul journeys and the option for shorter side trips if they prefer.

Finally, there is the Arnhem Land loop drive. While investing in Central Arnhem Road to Nhulunbuy is already crucial from a tourism perspective, Arnhem Land is a highly desirable Aboriginal tourism destination and an undeniable leader in the Aboriginal tourism sector. This can be unlocked by the right investment and through working with traditional owners from Arnhem Land.

Given the importance of drive tourism, it is on this government to continue investing in enabling infrastructure that enhances the driving experiences. The former Labor government started the work, so all you need to do is finish it. The remaining question is whether the CLP government will deliver. From what we saw at the last budget, I am sceptical.

Roads are the arteries of the Northern Territory. When they are invested in and maintained, the Territory thrives. When they are neglected, the economy and the Territory suffer, as they bear the brunt of the cost, whether it is replacing car wheels, facing higher prices or shortages at local shops. Every road is an investment in safety and equality of access for all Territorians.

I go back to Port Keats Road, because that road is important. It is one of the main issues brought to me when I head to Port Keats from people who live in Peppimenarti, Daly River, Palumpa, Wadeye and homelands. I even have people in Pine Creek ask me because the families are connected through that region and want access to the Thamarrurr region. There are even people who live in Darwin who are from the Thamarrurr region and want access.

I urge the CLP government to give Thamarrurr Development Corporation—I do not mind if it does not come through me; that does not worry me—an update on where the road is at and when you will put a shovel in the ground. Will it be next year? Will it be the year after? I know that you are still doing negotiations with the traditional owners regarding gravel access, which I understand has progressed and traditional owners have approved that. The government has walked back regarding water. I spoke to some of the traditional owners there. They have concerns that the government did not want to pay for water access, which is a shame, because anywhere else you would pay for water access for traditional owners. That is what I have been told.

Mr Maley: Not true.

Mr YOUNG: It is. You can call out 'not true', but that is what traditional owners are concerned about. I am not sure whether that has been resolved or not through Minister Bill Yan. I urge him that this piece of infrastructure is too vital to delay any longer. We have seen the barge issues. If we had started the road, we would not have this issue. It will take time.

Mr Edgington interjecting**.**

Mr YOUNG: I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Barkly. I mentioned that the first section of the road was done by Gary Higgins. The second section was done by us, Labor, which I had the honour of opening. Then the budget was allocated for the next government to build that road—it did not matter who was in government—but there has been delay after delay from this government and the Treasurer.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table a letter from Bill Yan to the Clerk, responding to petition number 8 to upgrade Port Keats Road. I am following this carefully.

Leave granted.

Mr YOUNG: I thank everyone who will speak on this important motion. Whether you live remote, in the rural area, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Darwin, Palmerston, Berry Springs, Timber Creek or on the WA border, roads are vital for all communities across the Northern Territory. We should be investing in roads no matter where people live.

I commend this motion to the Assembly.

Mr YAN (Logistics and Infrastructure): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to discuss Territory roads, and we recognise the importance of investing in regional and remote roads across the Territory.

I have been in the Territory for 35 years—probably a little longer than the Member for Daly—and most of this time was spent in the bush. I know the importance of roads, particularly managing fleets of vehicles roaming across the Territory. We understand that the backbone of the Territory is not just the people who call it home but the roads that connect them. The roads of the Northern Territory are not just bitumen and gravel; they are the lifelines of our community, the arteries of our industry and the backbone of our future growth.

The Member for Daly stated—he is right—that roads are our key pillars for investment. I ask why the previous Labor government did not invest in them over the eight years it was in office. If Labor was as serious about roads as the Member for Daly says, why did it not invest in them, rather than the millions of dollars it unashamedly wasted on pet projects?

Our roads are the passageway to the Territory's lifestyle, and we love our lifestyle like no-one else in the country does. They are advanced and unique. The Northern Territory Government manages 22,000 kilometres of road across our jurisdiction, with almost 70% of these roads being unsealed. As I announced in the 2025–26 budget, the CLP government is investing more than $2bn in roads and transport infrastructure across the Northern Territory. This includes:

- $289m for the Tanami Road upgrades
- $223m for the National Highway network upgrades
- $205m for the Central Arnhem Road upgrade program
- $122m for strategic remote and regional roads
- $181m for NT industry roads
- $161m for the Outback Way corridor for the sections of the Plenty Highway and Tjukayirla Roadhouse
- $117m for the Buntine Highway upgrade program and rest areas.

As the Member for Daly spoke about, there is $89.7m for Port Keats Road. Even if I wanted to deliver that road tomorrow, I could not because I am waiting on approvals from the land council.

We are also investing:

- $80m for the Arnhem Highway duplication between Stuart Highway and Kostka Road
- $66m for upgrades to Kakadu roads to support tourism
- $57.5m for the Tennant Creek–Townsville corridor priority projects
- $42m for upgrades in the Tiwi Islands to support economic and social development, which the Member for Arafura will be happy about
- $41.6m for the Newman–Katherine corridor priority projects
- $30m for remote community access roads
- $28m for Sandover Highway upgrades
- $23m for the Roystonea Avenue duplication.

These key projects are committed to across the Territory for highways, remote community access roads and flood-resilient infrastructure designed to withstand the challenges we face in our unique climate and weather conditions.

We are working across the Territory with contractors to delivery more than 80 active project packages. That is real boots-on-the-ground work on our extensive road network. I shout out to those contractors engaged through DLI to do the works on our roads across the Territory. They are doing great work in challenging and very remote conditions, and they are delivering for the people of the Territory.

Stage 2 of the Carpentaria Highway upgrade finished in August, and stage 3 is on track to be completed by December. Once complete, it will deliver 175 kilometres of high-quality sealed road from the Stuart Highway, improving access and helping to grow our resources, pastoral and tourism industries. There is still work to do there. It is also a key link to provide health and social services to the significant population in the remote communities of the Roper Gulf region.

This is the kind of work that changes lives. It means freight can move faster, emergency services can reach people sooner and families in our regional towns can travel safer. Every kilometre sealed is another kilometre of opportunity. The CLP government is delivering that.

Yesterday we announced the next stage of upgrades for Tanami Road, another 21 kilometres of sealed road, with a second package for an additional 34 kilometres now under assessment. The Tanami Road is another critical economic enabler; it is a connector for communities and will open opportunities for future development. It is another great step forward and part of our broader plan to seal more than 1,100 extra kilometres of road across the Territory this financial year. Again, this is the kind of work that changes lives.

I make this point loudly and clearly: we cannot build 21st century roads on 20th century revenue. If we want stronger, safer and more resilient roads, we must first build a stronger and more resilient economy to fund them. The CLP's infrastructure program sticks to the government's promise to fund and deliver programs based on what is affordable and matters most now. This approach is reflected throughout the budget. It supports a range of projects that have been identified as priorities across the Northern Territory.

If press releases built roads, the previous Labor government would have paved the entire Territory road system in gold. However, as I have to remind my colleagues and those opposite, Territorians do not drive on announcements. We inherited roadmaps filled with delays, unfunded promises and poor planning caused by rushed decisions and policy by media release. Labor's plan for Territory roads was like one of the roads it promised to fix: full of potholes; lots of detours; and going nowhere fast.

When we looked at the pitiful program we inherited, we had to make difficult but responsible decisions. The budget blowout bandits opposite were simply not being honest with the people of the Territory. I am sure that some Territorians may have felt aggrieved by these decisions, but the truth is that there were many projects on the list that were never going anywhere. I have mentioned it many times in this Chamber. There was a $5.2bn infrastructure program for which Labor had budgeted only $250m or $260m cash to deliver. That delivered only three projects. Some projects sat on the program for years. To be blunt, there was never money to get them done. As a true Territorian would say, Labor's infrastructure was all hat and no cattle.

We have cleaned up Labor's wish list of unfunded projects to ensure that we can deliver what we need now. We are doing it in partnership with those who know how to get the job done: the civil contractors; engineers; and local business owners who live and work in the Territory. The CLP government has focused on building strong relationships with the civil contractor industry, the men and women who work hard to deliver those all-important roads for Territorians. We rely on the industry to deliver a significant portion of our infrastructure program, and ensuring collaborative and proactive engagement with that industry is critical.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure has increased its engagement and hosts a number of regular forums that allow for two-way communication to understand the challenges and identify the opportunities to improve project delivery and efficiency.

One of the key things I did when becoming the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure was to ensure department heads were engaging with industry on a regular basis, because the only way they could improve delivery is by improving communication. We need to know what the issues are for industry, and operators need to know what the issues are for the department. Through that, we are starting to have better collaboration and productivity, which is delivering for Territorians.

I have committed to meet regularly with the new president and incoming board of the Civil Contractors Federation of the Northern Territory and have an open-door approach to progress better ways to do business and provide value for the Territory.

Our commitment is not just about grading gravel and laying bitumen; it is about the kind of Territory we want for our future. That means a strong, viable and connected jurisdiction that is open for business and full of opportunity.

Delivering road infrastructure projects in regional and remote parts of the Northern Territory comes with challenges, especially when accessing resources needed for construction. This is essential to getting roads built properly, and we are committed to working respectfully and closely with traditional owners and landowners to find solutions to get those all-important projects moving.

It is a critical part of the process for the government and the communities that rely on these projects. Like any other proponent, government must negotiate with landowners and traditional owners to secure gravel, water and access for vital infrastructure projects.

The Member for Daly briefly touched on some of those negotiations and the way we have to work with traditional owners and the land councils to deliver these projects. Let us be up front: these negotiations can be complex. Even when a project is fully funded and ready to go, cultural and legal approvals can cause work to be delayed before it even hits the ground.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act was established in 1976—almost 50 years ago. It is unique legislation, administered by the Commonwealth Government, yet applying only to the Northern Territory, where it covers nearly half the Territory's land mass. This arrangement creates significant challenges for government projects and private proponents seeking to invest in the Territory. It also places limitations on Aboriginal people and traditional owners and can restrict their ability to fully participate and benefit from economic opportunities on their own land.

While the legislation may have been fit for purpose when it was first introduced, it is worth asking whether it remains fit for purpose today. I understand the federal minister for Aboriginal affairs may be reviewing parts of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, which is great, because that Act needs to reflect the needs and wants of traditional owners and the people of the Northern Territory today.

The complex and often outdated provisions of the Act can delay project delivery, as we know, even in cases where traditional owners are supportive, such as building or upgrading roads to remote communities. Here is the hard truth: for too long these delays were ignored or glossed over by the previous Labor government, leaving communities frustrated and contractors idle. This is a critical point: too often projects have been delayed not due to lack of funding or government will but because of the time needed to work through the necessary cultural and legal processes.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure is facing a serious backlog of projects it cannot move forward until it receives approvals from land councils and other statutory bodies, and that list is long. At this moment more than 100 projects from this one agency are waiting in line. Almost half of them have already been delayed because negotiations and consultations are still ongoing and a quarter of these projects have been sitting in the system for over two years. Incredibly, some have been waiting more than a decade.

That is the legacy we inherited: projects promised; headlines made; and delivery stalled. I must say that the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure is being proactive in how it works and engages with land councils to deliver these projects. That is great to see. That collaboration between the department and the land councils is delivering all-important projects for people in the bush. The land councils understand this, which is great, and it is wonderful to see that we are starting to make headway on this.

That comes down to a direction from the minister, and it is something that Labor possibly could have done when it was in government but chose not to. It probably did not understand the importance of developing close relationships between agencies and land councils to deliver important projects for all Territorians, particularly people in the bush.

We understand how frustrating this is for communities, contractors and workers who just want to see these projects delivered on the ground. When communities are waiting for safer roads, better housing and vital infrastructure, even short delays can feel far too long. It is important to recognise that these delays are sometimes about more than money or machinery.

We remain committed to working with landowners, communities and their representatives to navigate these challenges because better roads benefit everyone. Unlike Labor, we will not throw up our hands and paper over the problem; we have taken action to reshape the infrastructure program to get it back on track to deliver for the people of the Territory. Action must be taken to cut red tape where we can and enable projects to get moving.

Sand, gravel and water might not sound exciting to everyone in this Chamber, but they are the foundation of every road built across the Northern Territory. Without reliable access to these materials, projects stall, costs blow out and jobs are put at risk. That is why we are creating certainty on how we source essential materials. This is critical. It keeps construction on schedule, budgets in check and the Territory's infrastructure pipeline flowing.

In July this year the Approvals Fast-Track Taskforce confirmed what industry has been saying for years: the rules about extractive minerals are too complex and slow. It called for a practical, risk-based approach to cut duplication, manage environmental and safety requirements properly and get projects moving faster.

This government is listening and acting. The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure is working directly with industry stakeholders and other government agencies to identify where the real bottlenecks are and how we can fix them. This collaborative approach will form the backbone of a new extractive minerals strategy designed to improve efficiency, reduce costs and deliver long-term certainty for the construction sector.

We all know that the further materials have to travel, the higher the costs and the bigger the risks. Every extra kilometre adds to delays, squeezes margins and drives up the final bill. We are sitting at about $1.1m to $1.2m per kilometre to deliver a sealed road in our remote regions.

By enabling minerals to be sourced close to project sites and by streamlining the approvals processes, we can make it faster, safer and cheaper to deliver the infrastructure that builds strong communities and supports local jobs. The CLP is doing what Labor would not or could not. We are taking a proactive approach to planning, streamlining approvals and giving industry the certainty that it needs.

Territorians want projects delivered on time and on budget. That is my mantra with the agency. They want a government that backs local business, grows opportunity and makes the Territory a place where it is easy to build, work and get things done.

Roads and infrastructure investment is about transformation. Every dollar we invest in roads is a dollar invested in local jobs, local businesses and regional development.

The CLP will build confidence. We will drive growth and return the Territory to a position of economic strength because a strong economy builds the roads that build the Territory. I have heard concerns from the industry that it wants things to move faster. We have some processes to iron out to get that tender process moving for efficiency and consistency.

I know that we and the department can do better. We have good people who want to build on success, but too many of them have been burnt out and stretched under the weight of pressures from the previous government. For too long we have been bogged down by blowouts and doomed by delay.

We are turning the page to a new chapter where our people are encouraged to think differently, make pragmatic and well-informed decisions and push forward with purpose. I have instructed the department to undertake a blitz on road and civil packages to increase momentum for the industry.

We have 20 procurement activity plans waiting to go to market, and I want to see them moving faster to expedite our part of the process when we can. There are 10 packages at market, with businesses preparing submissions for works across Darwin and the regions. Five packages are being shortlisted, and 20 are being assessed. That is 55 packages of work moving through the pipeline, preparing to roll out across the Territory.

I have just approved a further $6.6m for urgent maintenance works to be rolled out immediately across key sections of the network. This includes resheeting on Fleming and Oolloo Roads in the Top End and works on the Buchanan and Buntine Highways, the Barkly Stock Route, Kintore Road and the Plenty and Sandover Highways in Central Australia. Some of these roads are in an atrocious state and need urgent work. It did not end up this way overnight. There were years of neglect from the previous government, not investing in roads in the bush. We are doing the work now to fix those roads for the people in those communities, the pastoralists and the people who do business on them.

We are driving our economy for better infrastructure, and our government is cleaning up that mess by doing the hard work, which starts with building the economy that builds our roads. That means investing in sectors that grow Territory revenue, like agriculture, gas, mining, critical minerals, tourism and Defence. We are removing red tape, attracting private capital and enabling local businesses to grow. Every dollar generated in the Northern Territory is a dollar that we can invest in roads and the infrastructure that connects all Territorians to opportunity. Contrast that with the last decade of Labor—spiralling debt, shrinking private investment and economic drift that left our roads unfunded and our communities stranded.

To all Territorians, the road ahead is long, literally and figuratively. The CLP is putting the brakes on waste and pressing down the accelerator on delivery. We are rebuilding confidence in the Territory economy, and when the economy grows, roads get built; it is that simple. With the right investment, leadership, collaboration from stakeholders and values we can deliver a road network that makes every Territorian proud, reduces isolation, unlocks economic opportunity and saves lives. That is the Territory we believe in. Let us commit to a roadmap that begins with economic strength and ends with infrastructure that lifts every corner of the Northern Territory.

Yesterday I received news from the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure. There were issues at the Calvert crossing on Wollogorang Road. Those issues had been there for a long time and were neglected by the previous government. There were contractors on the ground who sent some pictures, and I must say that it is the strangest thing I have ever seen. The causeway at the river crossing kept being washed out and destroyed. It turns out that it was from a freshwater spring, but that freshwater spring was not near the Calvert River; it was on top of the hill where the road comes down to the river. It was a unique set of circumstances where there was a spring on top of the hill, and the water ran down the road and turned it into a river. The contractors working on that project came up with the most unique solution I have ever seen. They are repairing that crossing to make it safer for people travelling on our road network.

That is just one example. Our contractors are coming up with solutions to problems that probably only exist in the Northern Territory, and I cannot thank them enough for the work they do.

We are working towards delivery of our roads program. I am working collaboratively with the Commonwealth Government to make sure the funding is flowing to deliver those packages, but I cannot deliver for everybody straightaway. We have to deliver our road program in stages because of the debt left by the previous government. That $1.4bn hole in unfunded liabilities and time-limited funding that was ending has put huge pressure on our budget, and because of that we have to be pragmatic about how we deliver our roads and infrastructure programs.

The $5.2bn infrastructure program that was left to us was effectively press releases with pie-in-the-sky funding attached to it. Labor was putting out projects by press release, and when it came time to deliver them many years later the costing did not reflect the real costs of delivering the projects.

I have been clear with DLI about taking these old projects off the program and putting them to the side. I understand that people in our communities get upset by that because they see their project taken off the program. Those projects will be back on the program at some stage, but when they do I guarantee that they will be costed appropriately, so when we come to deliver them costs will not blow out from $10m to $50m like just about everything Labor did. Projects will be costed appropriately.

The department is under no illusion that it will deliver projects on time and on budget. To do that requires effective and proper planning to make sure that when these programs and projects are released, they have the appropriate cash awarded to them so that we do not end up in the position Labor put us in with cost blowouts left, right and centre.

It was wonderful to talk about Territory roads. I travel all over the Territory and have done so for 35 years. The roads of the Territory have taken me to wonderful places, and I have met magnificent people on the end of those roads. I look forward to continuing to travel on our road network. As the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, it gives me an even better excuse to drive around our roads.

Again, thank you to all our contractors and the people who are doing the work to deliver for us.

Mr GUYULA (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Daly for bringing this important motion to the Chamber. I have spoken many times about roads, and I know that the Member for Daly has experienced the poor condition of the roads in my electorate, as well as elsewhere in the NT.

Improving roads has many benefits, as the motion states, driving economic development and improving connectivity, flood immunity, safety and access for all Territorians.

Improving roads is critical for our residents and Aboriginal people who live in regional and remote areas and drive these roads regularly. Every time a budget paper is released that talks about the hundreds of millions of dollars budgeted for the Central Arnhem Road, I say that we need to focus the work on the areas of the road that connect the homeland residents to the towns.

In my electorate is the far end of the Central Arnhem Road from Darwin. From Nhulunbuy to south of Gapuwiyak is the stretch of road that connects homeland communities to the hub towns so that communities can have permanent resident populations who can live on our ancestral country and benefit from living on their own land. By this, I mean when the Yolngu live on our ancestral country, we live on the land that we have responsibility and decision-making power for. We can use our land for our economic benefit through running tourism, fishing or other businesses.

It is also healthier due to the freedom to hunt on country, which is important for exercise and a healthy diet. It is also important for our mental health. It places connected clans in one place, where there is no inter-clan conflict or gangs. Children attend school and feel comfortable because they are on their country with supportive elders and clan-based classrooms. There are no uncomfortable situations, teasing or bullying.

In homeland towns we have strong leadership because the authority on the land is recognised. For this reason, Yolngu elders and leaders from across the NT know that living on land is important to the future of our people.

When we see young people getting into trouble, taking the wrong path towards drugs and alcohol, we know that they are better off on country with elders, away from unhealthy habits and pathways. This is why we want to make sure that new houses are built, businesses can run, schools and health centres run and road access is possible year-round from homelands.

This year Central Arnhem Road was officially closed for four weeks due to poor conditions and flooding. Prior to the closure, many cars had become stuck trying to get from homelands to towns for supplies. Once the road became impassable many people were stuck in Gove or Gapuwiyak, causing seasonal overcrowding in already overcrowded houses and placing pressure on families. Some airstrips could not be used, and people remaining in the homelands were cut off from medical support and food supplies. Teachers were unable to get to schools, and nurses could not visit. For anyone wanting to travel to Darwin, an expensive flight was the only way to get there.

It is not just the Wet Season that creates problems; we see many road trains using these roads, and the trucks gouge the surface, leaving rough conditions. Cars are constantly requiring repairs, maintainence and spare tyres. Many people do not have an income to maintain a four-wheel drive that needs constant repairs, and families become stuck without reliable transport. There are people like me who have vehicles that are relied upon to help people get to town, funerals and ceremonies. The mechanical burden is extreme for anyone who must travel on these roads because for most of the year the roads are in poor condition.

This also relates to the Ramingining Link Road, which has not seen good repairs for many years. The Ramingining Link Road services two communities. It is also the same for many of the roads that connect homeland towns to Central Arnhem Road.

It is important for the residents of all the towns and homelands to have roads that are in good condition for the majority of the year. Commercial and charter flights are expensive in the region, which leaves many people with only the option of driving. Poor road conditions put people's lives at risk, so we need to see more from the government in carrying out the repair and upgrade work that is needed for our roads so that residents can travel safely and remain living on country.

With better roads we will see improvements in our regions that will benefit everyone.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, following some heavy days, I wish to elate the Assembly by going on a journey. I invite you to feast your minds on a great tale of roads.

The curtain opens, and Troy is burning. The walls have fallen, and our noble hero Hector lays slain by Achilles after a day-long battle around the Trojan walls. They were so matched in combat that it took Aphrodite's hand to lay a stone under Hector's foot so he would fall to bring the battle to conclusion. Achilles' body now burns, and he laments in the underworld, proclaiming, 'I would rather be a poor farmer for one day than king of this underworld'. Agamemnon, the great leader of the Greek army, lies in the bath after his wife has slain him. General Odysseus, the mirror of nobleness to Hector, begins his 10-year journey back home.

We shift to the character we will follow in this story. Aeneas, a prince of Troy, as the city burns and chaos reigns, flees with his father and young son. They journey across the sea and arrive in a new land called Latium, which is central Italy. Aeneas and his lineage go on to found cities throughout Latium for generations. The generations come to a man named Numitor, a direct descendant from the Trojan prince who fled, who rules in a land called Alba Longa, the homeland of the Romans.

Numitor had a brother, who was envious and jealous of his power and usurped him. He forced Numitor's daughter Rhea into chastity and to be a priestess. The god Mars had a child with Rhea; in fact, they had twins, Romulus and Remus. Mars represented the fury of war, the opposing force to Aphrodite who was everything good in war; Mars was the opposite—rage, vengeful and bloodthirsty. The uncle feared the twins that would come from this god.

The boys' uncle ordered that they be drowned in the river Tiber. The boys were placed in a basket and, as they flowed down the Tiber, they were struck by the root of a fig tree. There was a she-wolf, Lupa. She-wolf Lupa was fierce. She was the carnivore of the night. She took the two boys, Romulus and Remus, and decided to nurse them. Here were the sons of what will be Rome, nursing on the she-wolf. When the boys were ready for speech, the she-wolf handed over their care to a humble, hardworking farmer. He was loyal to the rightful king, Numitor.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. Unless she-wolf Lupa is riding along a Territory road and, rather than a wolf pack, it is a dingo pack, I would rather hear about investing in Territory roads. I am a big fan of Greek mythology. I did ancient Greek studies as part of my university degree, so I appreciate the way the Member for Drysdale is bringing in some culture and heritage, but I would love to see if Romulus comes to a Territory road. I would appreciate if we could stay on track so we can get to the importance of Territory roads.

Madam SPEAKER: I concur. Everyone is allowed a certain amount of latitude in their contributions to these debates. We need some relevance, Member for Drysdale.

Mr HOWE: I agree with the Opposition Leader on how important NT roads are. I look forward to bringing Rome's relevance back to the Territory.

The good shepherd, Faustulus, and his pious wife raised the boys who grew up and replaced the usurping uncle. They went on to found their own city. The boys argued on the founding of this city and, upon calling the gods, it turned out that Romulus picked the correct spot, but the argument continued, with Romulus slaying his brother Remus. The city of Rome was founded.

We enter the monarchy period of Rome during which little road building was conducted. There were street works but not an outward expansion of roads. There was no expansion of commerce or of the Latin language, values and ideas.

But a new period of the republic ushered in. In this period, in the second half of the republic, there was Rome's great expanse of road building. It was astonishing. The standard road came in at 4.1 metres, which was enough for a chariot going two ways. As the republic grew, initially for legions to march on, trade flourished. That is an important aspect. Trade began to flourish throughout the Roman republic.

As times went on, engineering feats became even more spectacular as they encountered the need to build bridges and tunnels. As the Roman Empire period began, it hit its full stride, with 400,000 kilometres of road and 80,000 kilometres being 4.1-metre paved roads with drainage systems. To put that in perspective, from Darwin to Alice Springs is 1,497 kilometres. Their 400,000-kilometre network was worth 267 Darwin–Alice Springs roads and 53 Darwin–Alice Springs roads worth of fully paved 4.1-metre highways. It is impressive.

This allowed for military dominance. The spread of ideas and the explosion of Christianity across Europe was enabled by the Roman road network. There was communications, trade and—the important thing which is relevant to the Northern Territory—the integration of economies, different cultures and people, urban growth and heightened health outcomes in urban centres as grain supplies into the cities became far more reliable. There was even the beginning of holiday destinations and an explosion of art as artists could then travel across the empire. The expression, 'All roads lead to Rome', is founded in this.

Now to our great Northern Territory. We are a place so unique that we are, in many ways, far more ancient than Rome, yet at the same time we are a new and young people. This is a unique position we hold in the world.

Like ancient Rome did, I believe we can prosper through a strong and resilient road network. I believe we can connect all our communities. I would love to see the day when every Territorian can travel on a safe sealed road that is resilient to the harsh conditions we encounter. More so, the spread of commerce, trade, art and ideas travel with a strong road network. In this way we can outdo great empires of the past with what we can achieve.

We can usher in great knowledge to be spread across the Northern Territory. We can bring food, health security, jobs, wages, skills and economic growth. This is all possible through our road network. Like Rome, with Defence being such a strong part of the Northern Territory economy, we can send clear messages to any foe in the world that our Defence Force will use those roads and defend the north if need be.

As the Treasurer said, we should also heed the warnings, especially of the later Roman Empire, which saw overspending and the printing of money which caused rampant inflation that essentially caused economic collapse and ended the empire in the late fifth century. That is an important warning the Treasurer touched on. We find ourselves in a precarious economic situation in the Northern Territory, and we must build roads but not indebt ourselves to the point of no return. That is an important lesson we must heed.

I commend the Treasurer on his plan. I stand firmly with him. I believe we can continue to deliver on the growth of our great Northern Territory. The best days are well in front of us, and the investment in roads will help usher in a golden period for the Northern Territory and its people. Like Rome, may all roads lead to the Northern Territory, for our people.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I will speak on this important issue of investing in Territory roads—not Roman roads, which was a great history lesson from the Member for Drysdale. I appreciated the analogy because, as a former educator, I try to link what people know with what has happened in the past and try not to repeat mistakes. Let us hope that we can all learn from the Member for Drysdale's contribution.

This is something I am passionate about. There are a lot of unsealed roads in the Arnhem electorate. Approximately 70% of the Northern Territory road network is unsealed. There is a lot of work still to be done, so let us hope that the CLP government will be committed to investing in Territory roads.

It is not just the important Stuart Highway from the north to the south, linking us from the beautiful Arafura Sea to the South Australian border, but also east to west, with the Victoria Highway out west and the road to the Barkly Tableland, which the Member for Barkly travels on a lot.

Central Arnhem Road and Roper Highway are particularly important to me. A huge amount of work was done under the Labor government, which helped seal sections on the Roper Highway. There is only 40 kilometres left to seal of the Roper Highway.

One of the most significant parts of that road sealing was the 15 kilometres from Wilton River bridge to Ngukurr community. It is phenomenal work that was finished last year. It has had a huge impact on road network safety for residents of Ngukurr and Urapunga, those travelling to Numbulwar and all the service providers. The Ngukurr Bulldogs travel weekly to Katherine for the Big Rivers Football League. The sealed road allows health service providers, community members, sporting groups and amazing artists from the outstanding art centre in Ngukurr to connect with the rest of the Territory and the country.

One of my huge gripes is with the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure. In his contribution he mentioned a huge list of road network improvements underway, many of them sealing or widening, which is important. Our stations need safe roads to export cattle and service the local, national and international cattle export trade. Our cattle product is well respected and internationally renowned.

The list the Treasurer provided included projects that were already underway, budgeted for and tendered or procured under the former Labor government. We want the CLP government to continue that road network investment and recognise the importance of the road network for the whole Northern Territory not just in Darwin and Palmerston, where the majority of CLP members sit.

My biggest gripe with the Infrastructure minister is him cutting the $20m that was budgeted for the Phelp River bridge. I again invite the Treasurer to come to Numbulwar and Ngukurr to speak with constituents who are affected by that swipe of a pen. It took me seven years, as the Member for Arnhem, to get that $20m allocation, and it will probably take me many more years, but I vow to the people of Arnhem that I will continue to advocate for the Phelp River bridge.

Road safety creates economic development and tourism opportunities. I will make sure that every part of the Northern Territory is not forgotten by the CLP government.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to a wonderful Territorian, Terry Baldwin. He was a much-loved pioneer, and we will feel his loss. I acknowledge everyone in the gallery this evening. Terry has had an important role in each of their lives, but of course the greatest role he played was as a father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

To Tim and Sandy, thank you for giving us the opportunity to do this. To Steven, thank you for travelling to Darwin. I know Jan cannot be here tonight, and she will be missing us. To Warrick and Shahn, Jared, Annalise and Foti, Lincoln, Hally, Charlie, Yianni, Angelina and everyone in the gallery, thank you so much for being here.

It truly is an honour to pay homage, but just how do you pay tribute to such a legend? Should I talk about his pioneering efforts with the Territory's buffalo industry, Terry and his wife's hand-building of the iconic Bark Hut Inn—arguably, one of the best-known pubs in the Northern Territory—his championing of Aboriginal station workers and the need to address climate change or perhaps his vision and generosity to the Junior Police Rangers?

Terry Baldwin is the definition of living a full and meaningful life. In 1950, 22-year-old Terry crossed the Tasman by ship from New Zealand to Sydney and immediately embraced the opportunities that presented themselves to the young, fit and entrepreneurial former coalminer and wool classer. He came to Australia with 40 pounds in his pocket, and in just a few months he had grown it to 7,000 pounds. How? Because he worked damn hard.

At the time he arrived, there was mass flooding across New South Wales. Terry got to work harvesting the wool from the perished sheep. As Terry put it, he picked up a lot of dead wool. He recalled that in one place he recovered 47 bales of wool from 3,000 head of sheep. Terry decided to hit the road soon after and made his way up the gulf. He started shooting crocs for skins, and after a year or so he headed to Darwin from Cairns. Terry got into shooting buffalo in the Top End for their hides and continued with his croc shooting from a dugout canoe.

His stories from those days are captivating. You just need to hear his oral history or read his first book, *The Last Roundup*, to get an idea of how colourful and Territorian Terry really was. I love this extract from his oral history, talking about harpooning crocodiles from a dinghy. I quote:

'I have never missed; I have never gone overboard. Thinking back on it, if you have a lot of weight there, you give it a hell of a big push and just imagine missing or something and floundering on top of the croc. I do not think I will go croc shooting again—did some crazy things, you know?'

He certainly did. If you love a good Territory yarn, you have to read the book.

Terry left the Top End intending to make his way back to New Zealand, and he made it as far as Alice Springs. In his words, he made it there stone broke. That was in 1953, and it was then when he met a lovely English lass, Kathleen, fell head over heels in love, and they married and moved to Darwin. Then, as told by their grandson Reece in his eulogy:

> *Here they had a son that for their own reasons they decided to adopt him out because they thought they were not staying together.*
>
> *However, love prevailed and although Fred—their first son was adopted he did join the family many years later much to Kath's relief.*

Reece continued:

> *From Alice Springs, the English girl and the Kiwi lad ventured to Darwin, where Terry's entrepreneurial spirit took flight …*

Terry Baldwin had a natural business instinct. He started working the cranes in Darwin, through which he made a fair living. Another legendary Terry Baldwin story was when he drove a crane all the way from Adelaide to Darwin. Imagine being stuck behind that on the Stuart Highway; you would have a few words to say as you chug along behind the crane. Reece summarised it well:

> *… you can imagine the sight of Terry driving that GMC crane truck. Open cab, no air-conditioning—all the way from Adelaide to Darwin in the early 50's—talk about a road trip!*

By the late 1950s Terry, Kathleen and their sons, Steven and Tim, were living in Fannie Bay. Ever the adventurer, Terry decided it was time to do some croc shooting again, even though he said that he would not. This time he had in mind to sell their skins for exotic leathers—another prescient business instinct.

Off to WA he went, and even though being a seafarer frightened the hell out of him, he got a lugger and a crew. He was the first to get a permit in WA to shoot crocs. As Reece told it:

> *So—picture this: Terry, with no prior seafaring experience, captaining a pearling lugger off the coast of Broome, 12-metre tides—shooting crocodiles with an Indigenous crew and a Scottish engineer whose only claim to fame was that he had been locked up in the Broome jail 23 times for drunken behaviour.*

This eight-month adventure not only filled his pockets but also his spirit with invaluable skills and experiences and a longing for more.

I will skip forward from here. There are so many more anecdotes, but it is safe to say that all of his adventures led to one thing that he had dreamed of as a boy: farming his own land. In 1963 Terry and Kath realised that dream, paying 7,000 pounds for Annaburroo Station on the Mary River flood plains—Annaburroo, meaning buffalo. It was here where he really came into his own, transforming the station and leading the way in buffalo capture. In *The Last Roundup* the late Kathleen Baldwin wrote:

'Terry lived and breathed buffalo in the early days. He had a great affinity with them—his star sign was Taurus—even though he started hunting as early as 1952.'

Again, it is worth picking up the book if you can find a copy. Terry's matter-of-fact but still colourful descriptions of buffalo shooting are glorious, terrifying and funny. Characters loom large, like Yellow Charlie, and I acknowledge Yellow Charlie's son is in the gallery with us this evening. Left-hand Johnny features with brothers Nugget and Whiskey and, of course, 'Micky of two wives'. Terry wrote:

'The bull was going at full gallop, blood on his nose straight for yours truly. I held the rifle out like those guys on TV do with their revolvers, trying to line up that small vital spot, the brain, as it bobbed up and down. Bang—nothing happened; he was still coming full pelt.'

You will have to read the book to find out how this story ended. Suffice to say, Terry contributed a lot more to the Territory after that, but it is a cliffhanger; it is on page 99 if anyone gets their hands on a copy. You will have to find out how it ended.

It was not all adventures and antics. Terry, Kathleen, their boys and the station team worked hard, and Terry was often thinking ahead. As Reece said:

> *His innovative approaches to buffalo capture were legendary—from the hair-raising early days of lassoing them with a rope on a bamboo pole—standing on the front of a Land Rover—to rolling them with vehicles to becoming an early adoptee of the emerging helicopter mustering concept.*

Terry was not just keeping up with the times; he was setting the pace.

Terry Baldwin's pioneering role in the buffalo farming and meat industry in the Northern Territory is the stuff of legends. I note Terry's lifelong desire to see a buffalo hall of fame in the Northern Territory.

On the occasion of his 90th birthday in 2018, then Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Vice President Michael Swart told *Sunday Territorian*:

> *Terry continues to be widely revered and respected for his enormous and innovative contribution to helping build our important buffalo sector up here, and for showing others how to survive and thrive on a bush block, using local Aboriginal labour …*

For a time, when buffalo and cattle prices were low, Terry and Kath ran a Darwin pet meat shop in McMinn Street. When they built the Bark Hut Inn, they value-added to the industry by keeping buffalo steaks front and centre.

I will get to the Bark Hut Inn soon, but first I acknowledge that while Terry's contribution to the local buffalo industry was paramount, he was also perceptive in pursuing crocodile farming. In his 1981 oral history Terry discussed seeking a permit to start a croc farm. He said:

'If we are successful, we will look at tanning and marketing them here, so we are still, believe me, very active on the croc thing. It is only just starting. We have quite a lot of crocs—mainly freshies, some salties—on the property so that under some system the government might or might not implement increasing numbers, putting some back, getting the tourist rub off and having a market and industry.'

Sadly, the Annaburroo croc farm did not happen, but the Bark Hut Inn sure did. It was built over a few years with Terry's own hands, blood, sweat and, I am sure, tears, using more than 700 trees. The Bark Hut Inn was in fact an idea born from Kathleen. Plans had been announced of a possible highway dissecting Annaburroo, and Kathleen thought she would like to set up a small humble kiosk to serve cups of tea to all the expected passers-by.

Of course, there are many amazing stories about the construction of the Bark Hut Inn, which is much more than a small kiosk. It was the use of the ironwood trees, the sourcing of the timber, the outside factors and the team of professionals—family and friends—who built it. They started in 1976 and finally, on Anzac Day 1980, the Bark Hut Inn opened for business. It is synonymous with the Arnhem Highway.

It is also arguably the original home of the 'buff burger', which is another innovation of Terry's. His son Tim said that during the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign (BTEC) days, Terry would turn a buffalo worth about $300 net at the meatworks into about $2,000 worth of buffalo burgers and steak sandwiches—a smart businessman.

Terry was a great supporter of youth, and his dedication to the Junior Police Rangers was legendary. I acknowledge that a beautiful contingent of JPRs are here tonight to pay their respects to a great man. He gifted the JPRs the land for their base at Goanna Park, which was carved out of Annaburroo Station in 1985. He spent almost 40 years doing whatever he could to support the JPRs. It was a program he fervently believed in.

He received the Order of Australia medal in 2009 in recognition of his lifelong passion supporting youth programs and building up our youths.

JPR coordinator Josef Hart and his daughter Samantha, who are JPR graduates, recall great memories of Terry from his vigorous support of the program to his simple and sensible teachings:

'He always welcomed JPR groups on induction night. At Goanna Park there is a man-made lake dug and built by Terry. He took us out to the lake as a group where he asked us to each pick up a small rock on our way to the lake's edge. He then asked one of us out of the group to throw our rock into the water. He described the rock as being you, and each ripple the rock produced after hitting the water's surface was an action or an effect we leave in our life.

‘He then asked for two people at once to throw their rocks into the water about two metres apart. He showed us, as each rock created ripples, how they would crash into each other’s. These are the effects you have on those around you and the connections that you make.

‘He then asked for the remainder of the group to throw all their rocks at once and to watch all the ripples crash into each other. He reminded us to always be kind and to lend a helping hand throughout life, as you never know whose life you will have an impact on.’

Terry would always teach the JPRs that there were no problems, just solutions. The JPRs aptly named a leadership award after him, given to the graduate who excelled in leadership over the length of the course.

Terry Baldwin devoted himself to the betterment of the Northern Territory. I was honoured to receive a personal annotated copy of *The Last Roundup* from Terry many years ago. Before Terry became ill he was politically active and wrote books and theses about a huge range of topics from climate change to the Beetaloo to his amazing history.

I always stood up straight to attention when he came to the office. My book is annotated, covered in lines, highlights and tabulated. He told me exactly which bits I need to read first. Former deputy leader Barry Coulter and former minister Stephen Dunham are here tonight. Barry was reflecting that he too has his own annotated, marked-up copy, so I feel a little less special now knowing that he was handing them out like cookies. Nonetheless, I cherish mine. It is a cracking book.

He always had wise words. I think the last time I saw Terry was when I went to visit Steve in Tennant Creek with the Member for Barkly, and he was visiting. He was living with Tim and Sandy at the time, and he had the world’s biggest smile. I do not think I have ever seen Terry or a photo of him where he is not beaming ear to ear.

There is no doubt that the last few years have been hard on Terry and the family. I shout out to Sandy who was so dedicated in the way that she would visit him every day. That is not to take away from anyone else. I do not know everyone’s personal story, but I know Sandy well. She is big-hearted and a loving person.

Terry is now at rest with his beloved Kathleen and his eldest son, Fred, on the land that he loved so much. I will leave you with some of his own words from his oral history:

‘Problems are made to be overcome. Mountains are made to be climbed. Build yourself a mountain. If you have not got a goal in life, you just float around like a tumbleweed, drifting around. You are a loss to the community. If you smoke pot, be the biggest pot smoker in the world. Make a million, dig a hole or climb a hill, but give yourself a goal. Yes, it is a magic country.’

Rest in peace, Terry Baldwin—born a Kiwi, but undoubtedly at heart and soul a pioneer and a true Territorian. We will all miss him very much.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I honour the life of Mr Terry Baldwin OAM, a true pioneer whose story has left an indelible mark on the Territory and on all who knew him.

Born in New Zealand in 1928, Terry began his life working in the wool trade, becoming a certified wool classer, a qualification that would serve him well throughout his life. With an adventurous heart and ambition for something greater, Terry made the move to Australia. In the early 1950s, after finding success in New South Wales, he journeyed north to the Northern Territory—a place we all love—where he would make his enduring home and legacy.

His first stop was Alice Springs, where fate introduced him to his beloved wife, Kathleen. Together, they decided to set down their roots that would grow deep in the Territory soil. Terry’s vision and determination soon drew him further north to Darwin, where he established one of the city’s first crane businesses—a bold move that cemented his reputation as a man of initiative and enterprise and a man of the Territory.

It was through this spirit of innovation and courage—which was formidable—that he became a true pioneer of the Territory. Seeking a place to call his own, he purchased Annaburroo Station, where he built a thriving cattle and buffalo operation—and it is great to know that he was a Taurus. For decades Terry and his family worked the land, employing and collaborating with Aboriginal families in the area who played an integral role

in the success of the station. Together they forged a livelihood that reflected the Territory's resilience, hard work and sense of community—a true reflection of the potential of the Northern Territory.

In 1980 Terry once again demonstrated his entrepreneurship and ambition by opening the Bark Hut Inn, which we all know as a landmark and which Terry built with his own hands over several years. The Bark Hut Inn quickly became an institution in the Northern Territory, an iconic stop along the Arnhem Highway where locals and travellers alike gathered for a meal, a yarn and a taste for authentic Territory hospitality. Even though the inn is no longer owned by the Baldwin family, Terry's vision, spirit and love for all things Territory can still be felt in that place today.

In 2009, in recognition of Terry's deep commitment to community, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to youths in the Northern Territory, a lasting legacy. His honour was well-deserved and reflected in his decades-long support of youths in the Territory, particularly the NT Junior Police Rangers, who in their fledgling years of running camped at Annaburroo Station without permission. Intrigued about what the young group was doing, Terry promised he would donate a piece of land to them to use on the property. True to his word and generosity, Terry donated that parcel of land to the NT Police Junior Rangers after selling Annaburroo Station. To this day that piece of land, Goanna Park, continues to serve as a place of learning, leadership and connection for generations of young Territorians and will continue for the future.

Terry embodied the essence of what it means to be a Territory pioneer: resilient; generous; visionary; and unafraid of hard work. His contributions to industry, community, youth and development have left a legacy that continues to shape our Northern Territory.

From my family to Tim, Sandy, Warrick and Reece—the family I knew growing up as a young kid, running around in Batchelor, with Warrick in the same class—our family sends our deepest condolences.

On behalf of the Territory Labor team, it is an honour of a life that many can respect of Mr Terry Baldwin OAM. We extend our deepest sympathy to family, friends, former colleagues and those who had the privilege of knowing this remarkable man. May his legacy live on in the land and the people he loved so dearly.

May he rest in peace.

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I speak about a great Territorian, Terry Baldwin.

I will have to read page 99 of that book. I tried to do that with a feral pig, and it did not turn out well for me, so I know how hard it is to do something like that.

Terry was a great man with an adventurous spirit. His innovation and resilience shaped the Northern Territory. He loved and was passionate about the Territory, and he really wanted to see it grow and develop. He purchased Annaburroo Station in 1963, where he became a pioneer buffalo catcher.

He developed that station from what it was to what it is. It consisted of just a corrugated iron house, pushed out windows and a dirt floor when he bought it. That would have been rough in those days, but that is what it took—a determined and resourceful man to live there and do what he did for the Northern Territory.

He built an airstrip and began shooting his buffalo and transferring that meat. They started the business, initially from Terry Baldwin's home, and really grew the Territory. His work and great vision opened the Bark Hut Inn, and we know how quickly that rose to fame and how iconic it is. My family used to stop at the Bark Hut, and we have great memories there. Terry used to catch a lot of buffalo around that area. The only thing I have ever caught from the Bark Hut is a couple of hangovers.

When I was preparing for this, I rang my father. I said, 'Dad, I am getting ready for a speech about Terry Baldwin. What can I say?' He said, 'Son, he was a great man and a good bushman'. He said that he was resourceful and that when he used to pull in there when he was travelling around the Northern Territory, Terry would be talking to a group of tourists. He also described him as a great storyteller. He said that the tourists would sit around, listening to stories about the Bark Hut Inn and the Territory lifestyle. I can just imagine what those stories would have been.

My dad said that he had a few beers with him; I do not know what would have happened out there with those two together. He also said that he was a law-abiding citizen. He managed to do what he did, following the law, and was just a great bloke.

I also spoke to my brother about Terry because in Years 10 and 11 at Taminmin High School, we spent a lot of time shooting pigs and chasing buffaloes around and Woolner and Marrakai, which is all similar country around that Mary River region.

He reminded me that in 2001 he took my brother to an area of land called McKinlay River Station, which is on the other side of the Arnhem Highway. He said to Pete, 'This is a great block of land. It is only 470 square kilometres in size, but it is a great block.' That led to my family's involvement in buying part of that cattle station, and we still have a little bit now through my brother. I go out there as often as I can; we spend a bit of time in the bush, and I take my children there. We go camping and pig shooting, and there are wild buffalo running around. I try to instil in my family that it is a great area; it is close to town and iconic to the Northern Territory.

My children used to attend Junior Police Rangers when they were at school. Terry Baldwin has touched three generations of my family: my dad; my brother and I; and my children. I take that to heart as I have been here for a long time and am passionate about the Northern Territory. My passion grew from doing rural stuff, like catching buffalos, shooting pigs and trying to catch the elusive barramundi. That is part of being a Territorian and the lifestyle, and I hope my children do that.

We heard about the accolades and Order of Australia medal; it is fitting for such a fella who touched many—for me, three generations of the Maley family. I say thank you, and it was an incredible honour knowing him. I look forward to meeting the family later.

Mr MACKAY (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge in the gallery the friends, family and Junior Police Rangers who have come to hear us speak about a great man.

Earlier this year I was privileged to attend Terry's farewell at the Bark Hut Inn. The inn was full of friends, family members and those lucky enough to have met Terry throughout his 96 years. It was humbling to see all the lives that Terry had touched, and I had the pleasure of meeting some of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are in the gallery. Terry's influence on them shined through as they shared their stories, memories and moments they will forever remember and treasure.

I am sure Terry is one proud man, knowing they will carry his legacy and the spirit of the Northern Territory forward. The Northern Territory has truly lost one of its great pioneers, a man whose adventurous spirit, innovation and resilience helped shape the Northern Territory in the Top End for over six decades. Gary Shipway from *NT News* titled his tribute to Terry Baldwin, 'The adventure ends for Territory pioneer'. That is a fitting tribute describing Terry's life. He lived every day in his 96 years to its fullest and was always keen for an adventure.

Migrating from Kiwi land, shearing dead sheep after floods to earn a living, Terry became a Territorian in the early 1950s. He ran a crane business, was a pioneer in the buffalo industry, a crocodile hunter, a wildlife guide and much more. He was a father, a husband, a grandfather and great-grandfather.

Terry may be gone, but his legacy will live on, and his impact will be felt for generations to come.

I seek leave to table a copy of Terry's service booklet and eulogy to ensure they are preserved for future generations.

Leave granted.

Mr MACKAY: Terry was best described by the phrase, 'Once met, never forgotten'. He was a true character to those who knew him.

My fiancee, Mel, had the privilege of meeting Terry when she worked at Adventure Bound in the early 2010s. She was 20 years old, fresh off the cattle station. She said that Terry always made everyone feel welcome and safe. She would jog around the complex and down to the highway, where she would be flagged down by Terry for a cup of tea and a yarn. Her best memory of Terry was one afternoon when they were chatting about his and Kath's book *The Last Roundup*. To this day, she remembers the two pieces of advice he gave her: one, that buffalo know exactly where the tips of their horns are; and two, brahmans charge in a straight line.

She still uses this advice daily when our pet brahman comes chasing up for his hay every afternoon and she side steps because she knows he will always run straight. She told me that if she ever comes across an angry buffalo, she knows to climb a tree.

Terry was a fantastic advocate for the Territory, especially the rural area I represent, the Junior Police Rangers and our environment. He would reach out across political parties on a range of issues and was valued by Labor and Country Liberal Party governments throughout his life. Dr Chris Burns, the former Labor Member for Johnston in 2008, reflected on Terry during a debate saying:

> *Terry is great bloke with a great vision. He is another one with a heart for youth.*

I am told by the former Member for Drysdale, Steve Dunham, who joins us in the gallery, that when Terry's son, Tim, was elected as the Member for Victoria River in 1994, then Chief Minister Marshall Perron rejoiced, telling Tim, 'I am glad you have finally been elected. Now you can answer all of your dad's many letters for me.'

Terry's impact is also evident in the more than 1,200 young men and women who have gone through the Junior Police Rangers program over the last 40 years. That is 1,200 Territorians whose lives have been shaped by this great man. He would attend camps, provide advice and donate his time in addition to the land he carved out for them at Goanna Park.

At inductions he would impart on the new Junior Police Rangers that there are no problems, only challenges and solutions, which I think is something that is worth reminding ourselves of every day; we can always work together, and we can always overcome anything.

His legacy also includes the building of one of my favourite pubs in the Territory, the Bark Hut Inn, which Terry built in 1980 with the timber of 700 trees sourced from the property and nearby properties, before going on to sell the inn in 1986. Terry also oversaw the development of Annaburroo Station and was a tireless advocate for the buffalo industry.

I will share some words on behalf of Michael Swart, a long-term neighbour of the Baldwin family:

'The Swart family has been involved in the Wildman area since the late 1960s. In 1976 the family bought Wildman River Station and became neighbours with Terry, Kath, Tim and Steven Baldwin.

'Terry was a terrific neighbour, offering advice and assistance whenever required. He operated a pet meat supply shop on McMinn Street, and we became one of his suppliers of buffalo meat when the abattoir market was depressed.

'Terry would meet everybody with a, "How you going, brother?". It felt strange when he had three-plus decades on you.

'We had a small bit to do with the construction of the Bark Hut Inn, with Terry harvesting timber from Wildman and the construction of a trellis fence for the bougainvillea.

'Terry was a thinker. Coming out of a period of low beef prices, he would turn his scrub bulls into at least $1,600 with a meat slicer and value-added through the Bark Hut Inn. The cut was thin, so chewing was not too hard. Terry was a true pioneer in the buffalo industry, designing portable panels using the old flat-end railway sleepers—not quite portable, but buffalo proof.

'Terry, thank you for your contribution to the Northern Territory.'

I conclude by quoting from the eulogy delivered at his funeral by Reece:

> *As we bid farewell to Terry Baldwin, we're not just saying goodbye to a man; we're celebrating a life that embodied the spirit of the Northern Territory. He was a visionary who saw opportunity in the rugged landscape, a pioneer who wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty, and a community leader who gave back at every turn.*

Rest in peace, Terry. Thank you for all you have done.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I pay tribute to the late Terry Baldwin. I heard about Terry on many occasions. I did not know him personally, but in the Northern Territory if you have been here long enough, six degrees of separation turns into two degrees of separation, and a connection can be made without ever meeting somebody.

My family and I lived at Jabiru for a few years in the early 2000s. I probably had two regular drives in and out of Jabiru, and the Bark Hut was a must-stop for a toilet break and an ice cream. It was a great spot and part of our journey for years. It is a memory that my family and I will never forget.

I have come to learn that you can understand the measure of a man through the stories of those who knew him. His passing was felt deeply across the Northern Territory, particularly among those who had the honour of working with him, learning from him or being shaped by his influence. I have been told that he was one of those individuals who seemed to lead quietly but left an enormous mark. In every account a few qualities are mentioned time and again: integrity; patience; and his deep belief in the potential of others. These were not just values Terry held; they were principles he lived by every day.

I did not know Terry personally, so I did a fair bit of research preparing for my speech. I came across a post on Facebook from somebody who knew Terry and had found out that Terry had passed. On this post there were many comments, kind words about Terry and his legacy, but one statement was repeated by many people in different ways. It simply said, 'My thoughts are with the Baldwin family. Terry Baldwin was always the perfect gentleman and always so helpful.' In my books, those are some of the greatest words that people could use to describe a man.

From all of these kind words you could tell that Terry Baldwin represents the best of what community service can be. It was easy to see that Terry did not seek recognition or praise; he simply believed in helping people and did it with consistency, humility and heart. His impact extended to families and communities across the Northern Territory.

Perhaps one of the greatest legacies is the Junior Police Ranger program. As we have heard, shortly before he sold Annaburroo Station, Terry stumbled upon a fledging group of Junior Police Rangers (JPRs) who may or may not have had permission to be camping in the spot they were in. Terry questioned—maybe with a grumpy tone—why they were there and why they had cut trees down to make shelters. It was at this point that Mr Bob Bradford, the first sergeant of the JPRs, explained that all the timber was collected from the ground. I have heard that this calmed Terry, so he stayed and watched for a while, seeing and hearing about all the adventures and resilience that was built into the program. It inspired Terry.

A few months later Terry summoned Bob to his house and made the offer to give the JPR program the land that is now known as Goanna Park to the JPR Land Association so they could have a permanent home. This offer was snapped up pretty quickly. Terry's involvement did not stop there. He would attend the camps and not just listen but give advice to the young people over the next 40 years. He would continue to support the JPR program by whatever means he could, including mowing lawns, spraying weeds, fixing broken water pipes and advocating for the program.

At camp inductions, Terry would impart on the new JPRs that there are no problems, only challenges and solutions, which we should remind ourselves every day.

Terry helped nurture and grow the JPR program into a lasting source of pride for the Territory. Through the program he gave young people a chance to build discipline, character and confidence. Terry made the camps more than just a learning environment; it became a place of belonging and purpose.

My son was a JPR for the three-year program from 2021 to 2023. That experience gave us the opportunity to witness firsthand the legacy that Terry left behind. My son learned that leadership is not about authority but about service and respect. Those lessons were woven into the fabric of the program, and they are gift that Terry gave to hundreds of Territory families. They resulted in my son, who spent most of his holidays at Goanna Park, being presented with the Most Dedicated Award for those three years in the program, which my family and I are proud of.

Terry's influence reached far beyond the training field. He taught young people what it meant to care for their community, take pride in where they live and to look after one another. He modelled professionalism and kindness. That combination made him an exceptional person and a remarkable mentor and friend.

His lasting impact can be felt in the more than 1,200 young men and women who have completed the JPR program. They are a living legacy—young Territorians who stand taller, speak more confidently and give more to their communities because of Terry Baldwin.

Over the years, Terry remained deeply involved, helping with maintenance, mentoring youths and reminding each new group of rangers that there are no problems, only challenges and solutions.

In 2009 Terry's contributions were formally recognised with a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to youth.

I have been told that one of Terry's farewells was, 'Go forth and do wonderous deeds'. It is fair to say that he lived those words every day. He adventured, mentored, served and leaves behind a Territory that was made better by his presence.

On behalf of this Assembly I offer our sincere condolences to Terry Baldwin's family, friends and anyone who worked alongside him or made a connection with him at Annaburroo Station or through the youth programs at Goanna Park. We honour his dedication, spirit and belief in the potential of young Territorians. Terry Baldwin's legacy will continue to live on in every act of service that embodies his example. May his name always be spoken with respect and gratitude.

Vale, Terry Baldwin.

Mr EDGINGTON (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I reflect on a remarkable Territorian, Terry Baldwin. Tonight is an opportunity for me to speak on behalf of the family I have known for many years, particularly Steve, who is here tonight, and Terry's grandson, Jared.

I have been asked to read out two specific things. I will start by reading a poem from his grandson, Jared. I will also reflect on the eulogy that Steve has given me to read.

Firstly, here is the poem by Jared:

Terry Baldwin, a simple farm boy from NZ
Millions of dreams in his head
Adventure, vision and love
Business and legacy but family all above
Hunting, fishing, mustering and a lot of drive
In a land where wildlife and wild men thrive
Terry and Kathleen, his wife
An example of what you can do with one life
And as he always said, 'Magic'.

I can still reflect on the first time that we met Terry at the Outback Caravan Park. After that, he rang me and, as we have heard before, he wrote to me as well. This is the eulogy put together by Terry's son, Steve. It is an honour to read this tonight. Thanks, Steve, for the honour of reading this out tonight:

'I am speaking on behalf of Steve and Jan Baldwin and their children to celebrate the life of a true Territorian, a wonderful man and a dear friend for so many—my father, Terry Baldwin.

'It is hard to condense a life as big as dad's into a few short minutes. He lived a life of action, integrity and deep commitment to the place and the people he loved.

'Terry was not just in the Northern Territory; the Territory was in his blood, in his heart and in every story he told, and he told a few.

'Dad's story is one of relentless motion, bold choices and resilience. He was born in New Zealand into a family of farmers. New Zealand, however, could not contain his adventurous spirit, and he moved to Australia in the early 1950s at 21 years of age, equipped with a wool classing certificate, a hunger for opportunity and a craving for his own land.

'He worked on the big stations in northern New South Wales during the 1953 drought and could not get over the fact that Australians did nothing with the thousands of dead sheep. In New Zealand it was common practice to pull the dead wool and, with his knowledge of the wool market, he got permission to take all the wool he could.

'Following this huge windfall, he headed north in his new truck to shoot crocs in the gulf before heading for the unforgiving heat and vast spaces of the Northern Territory. This turned out to be one of the most important choices he ever made, as dad's journey led him to Alice Springs where he met the equally intrepid Kathleen—a quiet, independent woman who had travelled all the way from London and backpacked from Perth to Alice Springs on her own.

‘It is the greatest of ironies that a New Zealander who sought the raw wildness of the bush and a Londoner who chased the adventure of the desert found each other in the middle of this enormous continent. They were a perfect balanced team—the bushman and the city woman building a life together under the biggest skies on Earth. Mum, thank you for being the calm heart that made our home a sanctuary, particularly for all the times that dad was away out bush.

‘Dad initially had one of the first cranes in Darwin and used to load the sailing luggers with stores to supply the coastal Arnhem Land communities as well as all the scrap from the sunken war ships. We have photos of Tim and I playing on the wharf as toddlers, with his crane in the background. Dad also took the big guns out of the concrete bunkers at East Point.

‘In 1961 he went to Broome and hired a lugger to go croc shooting in the Buccaneer Archipelago and later flew to New Guinea with his rifle to see if there were enough crocs available to hunt.

‘However, dad’s itch for land was forever present, and in the early 1960s our house on East Point Road was sold and we left Darwin in an Holden FJ panel van looking for good sheep land in New South Wales. This plan to leave Darwin was foiled by the house sale falling through, and we returned to Darwin where mum and dad bought Annaburroo Station on the Mary River in 1962. Dad always described Annaburroo as a dry block with no fences and an old hut with dirt floors but alive with buffalo, crocodiles and barramundi where he harvested with the help of Aboriginal staff.

‘In those first years, it would take dad four to six hours in his Land Rover or blitz truck to get to the station, and he would stay for two to four weeks at a time building an airstrip, workshop and butcher shop and harvesting buffalo, barramundi and crocodiles for meat and skins, mostly sold out of a freezer in our East Point house.

‘In the early 1970s there was talk of the new Arnhem Highway coming through to the uranium mine at Jabiru and the formation of Kakadu National Park, including a bridge over the Mary River, just a few kilometres from the station homestead.

‘This was when mum decided she would like a little shop on the highway, as she would be moving to the station soon when Tim and I finished high school—not so easy, as it turned out. At the time you could not subdivide a small block out of a pastoral lease, which made dad furious.

‘We ended up having to buy five acres at a public auction at the Greek hall, with Tim and I waving protest banners. The owners of the Jim Jim store missed out on the five acres at South Alligator and eventually had to close. Dad does not do little, so he went and cut down 700 trees, and mum ended up with the Bark Hut. It opened in 1980 and became a retail outlet for our buffalo meat, or as dad used to say, paddock to plate, as well as getting us into tourism, running croc spotting tours on Corroboree Billabong.

‘Dad’s years in the bush gave him a deep appreciation of the land. He understood the beauty and the harshness of the Top End and worked it with a dedication and resilience that were second to none. He and mum shared incredible adventures, which we are lucky enough to have captured forever in their book, *The Last Roundup*, a true testament to the spirit of the Northern Territory’s pioneering days. That book, and his others on world politics and global warming, reflects the wonderful storyteller he was—a man who could paint a vivid picture with words.

‘He used to humbug many a minister in this building about his concerns on global warming and its impact on the Mary River. Dad’s commitment extended far beyond his own interest. He was a great Territorian in the truest sense of the word, constantly seeking to build and improve the community around him.

‘After selling Annaburroo Station and the Bark Hut, dad kept a bit of land near Mount Bundy and set out to build an oasis, planting 1,000 rainforest trees a year and building a huge dam which he called, “Go Up Town Park”.

‘Around this time he made his connection with the Junior Police Rangers, became their patron and gifted them the land that they now operate from at Goanna Park. While the Territory knew him for his work on the land, many of you knew him for his true passion and service to youth. Dad possessed an extraordinary belief in the potential of every young person. He understood that sometimes all a kid needed was structure, discipline and a strong consistent role model. Over the next 38 years he was always pleased to see Junior Police Ranger graduates go off, well equipped for their future.

‘It was for the lifetime of devotion to the rangers and the Territory’s youth that he was rightly awarded the Order of Australia, which confirmed for him the recognition of the JPR kids, the value of the rangers program and the vital role of community service. He was always chuffed to have been recognised.

‘We mourn the loss of his presence, counsel and distinct laugh, but we take comfort in knowing that Terry Baldwin lived a full, rich life grounded in the values of hard work, community service and an unwavering love for the land and the future of the Territory.

‘Our last big family event was in late March when we buried dad, joining mum at the family cemetery at Go Up Town Park. He installed the headstones for himself and mum in 1995 and had a sign with four stars on it saying, ‘Gone Up’. He always said it was four-star accommodation.

‘As we say goodbye, let us remember dad not with sadness but with gratitude for the time we shared. The sun may have set on his own last roundup, but his story, character and contribution to the Northern Territory will be remembered for generations to come.

‘Go up in peace, dad; you have earned it.’

I thank the Baldwin family for the opportunity to read that. It encompasses Terry’s life and his contribution to the Northern Territory. Terry Baldwin will always be remembered for his efforts to invigorate the Northern Territory. On behalf of everyone here, I thank the Baldwin family for being here. My knowledge and friendship with Terry—he did a lot for the Northern Territory.

Rest in peace, Terry Baldwin.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to pay tribute to the late Terry Baldwin. It is equally an honour to read a couple of lines from his grandson, Reece, who cannot be here tonight. I welcome all the family, friends and the Junior Police Rangers. Reece shared some fond memories at Terry’s funeral. He said:

‘Grandad always took a keen interest in us grandchildren and in everyone he met. He would ask about our opinions on the world, politics and the future. He was innately curious and had a hunger for knowledge that never dimmed. He would cheerfully bombard our friends with questions about themselves and their perspectives on the world.

‘Grandad wanted to know that what he was leaving behind would help the next generations—a concern that revealed his forward-thinking nature, even as he remained deeply rooted in the traditions of the land.’

Reece also outlined evidence of Terry’s love for his family. He said:

‘As grandad grew older he started to lose some of his memories, but never his enthusiasm or capacity for joy. I visited him about five years ago. He had been a witness when Rhiannon and I married about eight years before that. He asked at that time if I was married, and when I told him I was he said, “Oh, yes, I remember—Melbourne”. Then he asked if we had any kids. I told him that I had two boys. He did that thing where his whole face lit up, and he clapped his hands together and yelled, “Fantastic!”

‘I got to tell him that same story three more times over the next couple of days, and never once did his response change. It was, at its core, one of the most purely joyful expressions I have ever witnessed—a moment that captured his enduring delight in family and in the continuation of life’s journey through new generations.’

That was from Reece at the funeral.

I want to add my comments to the family, friends and Junior Police Rangers. It has been wonderful to listen to the contributions tonight. I particularly loved the story about how he used to bail up the tourists and talk about the Territory and how he had them captured by his stories. It reminds me of that old-school Territory character that the tourism industry is known and loved for. That will definitely be something we will keep hold of; it really means something.

From hearing these stories, it sounds like he was not just an incredible Territorian and human; he was also full of life. I want to read his book, so thank you for reminding me that there is one out there. I think we should also create some sort of Netflix series or movie out of his life. Move over, *Crocodile Dundee*. Terry sounds

like a classic Territorian who we can have enshrined for years to come, especially with the tourism industry and his love of life in general.

Thanks again for the opportunity to speak and to Reece for allowing me to read out those words of his story.

May you rest in peace, Terry Baldwin.

Madam SPEAKER: I convey my respects and condolences to the family and friends of Terry Baldwin. Being universally referred to as a good bloke when you are gone is the ultimate Australian compliment. He sounded like such a character. I appreciate you sharing him with us tonight.

I also acknowledge the three former ministers here: Tim Baldwin; Steve Dunham; and Barry Coulter. Thank you for joining us.

May you rest in peace, Terry Baldwin.

Members stood for one minute's silence as a sign of respect.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, everyone.

Vale, Terry Baldwin.

Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.