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Debates and Questions



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CONTENTS

VISITORS 4419
YouthWorX 4419
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT 4419
Filming by Media 4419
APPROPRIATION (2026–2027) BILL 4419
Serial 63 4419
TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 4419
Serial 64 4419
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR 4425
Hon Marion Scrymgour 4425
NOTICES 4439
QUESTION TIME 4439
Budget 2026–27 – Power Prices 4439
Budget 2026–27 – Cost-of-living Support 4440
Budget 2026–27 – Roads and Infrastructure 4440
Budget 2026–27 – Police Resources 4441
Budget 2026–27 – Prevention of Domestic Violence 4442
Beetaloo Sub-basin Development 4442
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR 4443
Hon Willem Westra van Holthe 4443
Population Growth 4444
Crime Reduction 4445
Budget 2026–27 – Closing the Gap 4445
Budget 2026–27 – Rebuilding the Economy 4446
Budget 2026–27 – Trade, Business and Asian Relations 4447
Land Release – Titled Lots 4447
Watch Houses – Transitional Custody Centres 4448
Budget 2026–27 – Palmerston Special Secondary School 4449
Budget 2026–27 – Town Camps and Homelands 4450
Budget 2026–27 Town Camps and Homelands – Supplementary Question 4451
Budget 2026–27 – St John Ambulance NT 4451
MOTION 4452
A Budget that Fails Territorians 4452
MOTION 4492
Estimates Committee 2026 4492
ADJOURNMENT 4493

Madam Speaker Lambley took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
YouthWorX

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of young adults from YouthWorX accompanied by their program leaders. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Filming by Media

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have given permission for media outlets to record the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply speech from the Chamber floor this morning.

APPROPRIATION (2026–2027) BILL
Serial 63
TREASURY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 64

Continued from 5 May 2026.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, at a time when many Territorians are doing it tough the CLP has delivered a budget that offers no plan, vision or future for the Northern Territory. It is nothing more than a maintenance budget which fails to deliver cost-of-living relief to Territorians who are struggling to pay their bills or to address the growing housing crisis. It administers more cuts to the infrastructure budget and fails to provide a pipeline of works to keep the economy moving and our Territory businesses afloat. It offers no plan to relieve the pressures of our overburdened health system.

Territorians deserve much better than this underwhelming offering from a CLP government that is struggling to deliver what Territorians need and what matters to them the most. It is a missed opportunity that will ultimately cost Territorians in the long run.

Widespread flooding has impacted communities across the Territory after one of the most testing Wet Seasons in our history. Some people are only just returning home; some will be out of their homes and their communities for much longer; and others are taking stock of what this means for their businesses, properties and livelihoods. Our road network has taken a massive hit, and we are still coming to terms with the scale of the recovery.

Meanwhile, like other jurisdictions, we are navigating broader global issues and pressures, particularly volatile fuel costs and uncertainty in supply chains. The remoteness and vastness of the Territory means that communities, industries, businesses and households are feeling the effects of these external events to a greater degree than our Australian southern counterparts.

None of these are an excuse for a lacklustre visionless budget that misses every opportunity to build a stronger, better and fairer Territory for everyone.

I have been up and down the track talking to people from all walks of life, all sectors of the community and across business and industry sectors. You can hear in people's voices how uncertain they are about the future. They simply do not know where their work is coming from and whether they can maintain their viability and face the rising costs or keep their staff on.

I am hearing from people about housing stress. Rents have hit an all-time high in the Territory, with the median weekly house rent in Darwin at more than $700 and $620 in Alice Springs. People are finding it harder to cover their rent, let alone the rest of their bills, particularly the thousands of Territory households on low or moderate incomes. I am talking about our retail and hospitality staff, cleaners, childcare workers, aged-care workers and hairdressers. These Territorians are the backbone of our community and our economy.

As the number of rentals available continues to diminish, affordability continues to diminish, housing supply has stagnated and the dream of home ownership slips further away from many fellow Territorians.

Meanwhile, interest rates and power prices are on the rise. Every time Territorians fill up at the petrol bowser or pull out their card at the grocery store, they are getting a lot less bang for their buck, and it is starting to bite. Families must make difficult decisions about how they prioritise their spending. Can they afford for their kids to play sport? Do they have enough stock in their pantry that can stretch a bit further? Do they cancel the camping trip they had planned for the long weekend?

The CLP is not acknowledging this reality or rising to meet the challenges facing Territorians. Instead, the Treasurer has delivered a budget that simply maintains the status quo. Regarding cost-of-living measures we can see that the economic stimulus is nil. The CLP has no vision for housing, health, education or outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians. If Territorians are flipping through the budget papers and looking for financial relief or a vision for the future of the Territory's economy, they will not find it.

This is a budget without a plan or care for Territorians' needs. The CLP government loves to put out glossy press releases that cherrypick statistics, but the numbers in the budget books do not lie. The Territory economy is losing momentum across every key indicator.

There was a telling omission in the Treasurer's speech. He made no mention of state final demand, the most basic measure of economic activity in any jurisdiction. State final demand is simply a total of spending across the economy of what households, businesses and governments are spending—the money that is used and what is being consumed. It is a strong measure of whether an economy is growing or going backwards, and under this Treasurer it is going backwards.

The Territory's figures show that state final demand has fallen by 2.1% over the year from December 2025, driven by collapsing private investment and weak business activity. This is not an obscure technical metric that is buried in the fine print; it is a flashing warning sign that the economy is stalling on the Treasurer's watch. It is no surprise that the Treasurer chose not to mention it. It was a deliberate omission. While the Treasurer talks a big game about growth, the reality is that the core measure of economic demand in the Territory is shrinking, and the Treasurer simply does not want Territorians to know the truth.

Let us look at the other statistics that the Treasurer failed to mention. Recent NT Treasury data shows that job vacancies have declined over the last year, and private sector investment has dropped dramatically. Wages and population growth are stalling. Yesterday, Territory budget day, Treasury released the latest building approvals for the Territory, showing residential building approvals falling by more than 30% in the year to March. Non-residential approvals did not fare much better, dropping by almost 22%. Meanwhile, the Treasurer's predicted gross state product surge of 7.8% in 2025–26 ended up coming in at 2.7%. These are clear forward signals of economic activity, and they are all heading in the wrong direction for the Territory.

The CLP inherited strong conditions but failed to deliver growth. The Territory was well placed for expansion, with major projects, strong national conditions and post-pandemic recovery momentum, but after two years under the CLP, Territorians are paying more and getting less. This budget clearly shows what many Territorians have started to suspect: the CLP government is presiding over a weakening economy without a clear vision for tackling it. It has allowed opportunity to slip.

Meanwhile, the CLP's misguided Corrections approach is putting our community and economy at even greater risk. Instead of investing in prevention, rehabilitation and community safety measures that reduce reoffending, the CLP is pursuing an increasingly costly Corrections model that drives up incarceration without addressing underlying causes. This places growing pressure on the Territory budget, diverting resources from productive economic investment and locking in higher long-term social and economic costs.

No-one expects the NT Government to fully alleviate cost-of-living pressures; there are many external forces at play, which I acknowledged. However, Territorians expect the government to pull the levers at its disposal. Unfortunately, this budget represents a missed opportunity from the CLP government, which is more focused on its social media profile than on genuinely delivering for Territorians.

The CLP is trying to dress up existing programs, such as the Sport Voucher Scheme, Learn to Swim vouchers and the Seniors Recognition Scheme as cost-of-living relief, but it is not telling Territorians that it has frozen and not increased all those payments. While the cost of living rises, the CLP supports going backwards in real terms and not matching the reality that Territorians are facing. Families are paying more to keep their kids in sport or swimming lessons, and seniors are watching their payments lose value year after year. The CLP's response is to put out a media release congratulating itself.

Territorians do not need a government that re-announces old programs and hopes that no-one notices that they have been left behind. Territorians need a government with purpose and vision. Instead, they have the

CLP, which has no plan to address rising interest rates, power prices and fuel costs in the long run. It has no plan to provide targeted support when Territorians need it the most. It is a government that pats itself on the back for standing still while Territorians are falling behind. The truth is simple: if support does not keep up with the cost of living, it is not support; it is a cut, and Territorians are paying the price.

Territorians have weathered many storms, and resilience is part of who we are. Whether it is natural disasters, global instability or the challenges of distance, we have consistently adapted and endured. We have always done this by working together, having each other's backs and turning adversity into opportunity. That partnership approach with willingness to seize opportunity and turn adversity into strength is absent in this CLP budget.

The numbers do not lie. There is one major project out to tender—just one—for the whole of the Territory. We are at the start of the Dry Season—the peak construction season—yet the CLP has been caught flat-footed without a pipeline of projects to support economic development for businesses and our communities. The CLP wants to claim that it is rebuilding the economy, but I suggest it gets on and start building because people's businesses, livelihoods and jobs are at risk. The budget clearly shows what Territorians on the ground have been telling us: the government simply is not getting infrastructure out the door. This is from businesspeople who have sat in meetings to tell us that they are concerned.

Last year's infrastructure underspend is sitting at $341m. That effectively represents hundreds of kilometres of Territory roads which have not been sealed under the CLP government. The story is also bleak in this budget, with a further $100m of razor cuts to the infrastructure budget on top of the $1bn of infrastructure cuts last year. This is despite the fact that the Treasurer was handed an extra $410m in Commonwealth grants and royalty payments. He can spruik a slight improvement to net debt but be assured that it has nothing to do with his financial management; it has everything to do with the fact that he has been handed a windfall by the federal government and through royalties yet still managed to deliver no plan, vision or care in this budget.

Budgets are always about choice, and ultimately the CLP government has sent a message to Territorians that it does not care if they are struggling to make ends meet or to keep their businesses afloat. Instead, they have prioritised spending on a Territory Coordinator that has yet to deliver a return on investment and more prison cells that ultimately cost the Territory many times, year after year. Territorians deserve so much more than a government that tweaks a few economic policy settings then vacates the space, leaving it up to the private sector to get moving. It is a complete and utter dismissal of responsibility at a time when Territorians desperately need a government that can work hand in hand with other levels of government with industry to get through these uncertain and tough times.

The Northern Territory relies on its road network to connect communities, keep shelves stocked, support tourism and enable industry to operate across vast distances. When roads fail, the impact is felt everywhere, and Territorians can see what happens when the network is not properly managed. One of the first budget decisions of the CLP government was to cut key road projects across the Territory just 12 months ago. Territorians were told that these were tough but necessary decisions by the CLP. More than a year on, it is becoming increasingly apparent that this was not about fiscal responsibility or discipline; it was about the government's inability to think or plan ahead. We have more than a billion-dollar roads budget, yet we are heading to the Dry Season with virtually no tenders out to market or major road packages aimed at delivering improvements for our road networks to keep our construction businesses and workers at the forefront. It is difficult to point to a single major ceiling project delivered by the CLP government that was not already underway.

Road conditions across the Territory have deteriorated after more than a year without clear direction. The network was already under pressure, and now we are seeing the cracks caused by the CLP's first abysmal budget just 12 months ago. Months of sustained wet weather has only made that worse. The result has been widespread damage, slow repairs and communities cut off for longer than they should be. This budget was an opportunity to leverage federal investment and to build a road network that was fit for purpose now and into the future. It was an opportunity to work in partnership with local councils and to build back local roads. It is an opportunity sorely missed.

Everyone should have the chance to own a home, but that dream is slipping further out of reach for too many Territorians because the CLP government refuses to act for everyone. On the CLP's watch, housing construction has stalled and affordability collapsed. For regional communities the challenge is even greater, with limited land release, high construction costs and no useable incentives from this government to continue to lock people out of buying their own home.

What we need in this budget are clear targets for affordable housing, particularly for essential workers. We need a clear path to activate funding from the federal government's Housing Australia Future Fund, but instead the CLP government completely failed to capitalise a significant bucket of funding. It had its hands off the wheel last budget, and now it is trying to speed up to make up for lost ground.

More Territorians are facing enormous housing stress. It is beyond irresponsible that the CLP has turned its back on them. We also need a clear plan for land release across the Territory that facilitates and accelerates housing construction. There is little in the budget that makes any tangible difference in boosting our housing stock. The CLP has tinkered around the edges and offered up the barest minimum possible at a time when we need boldness.

The Treasurer loves to spruik his government's homebuyer grants for new homes, and they are great initiatives for some Territorians, but the reality is that the new build or buy opportunities are extremely limited outside of Darwin and Palmerston. The Treasurer needs to come clean about how many Territorians in our regions have accessed these grants. I can tell him that it is only a handful.

The Treasurer needs to go back to the drawing board and look at other targeted, location-specific incentives—we heard that this morning from the Property Council—including his own town of Alice Springs to get more people in their own home. This is not just an issue of equity; it presents a massive economic risk for the Territory. We are in danger of losing essential workers—Territorians working in childcare, aged care and in shops, restaurants and hairdressing—because they simply cannot afford to live here. They cannot afford the housing.

Meanwhile, construction businesses are struggling to stay afloat. This budget was an opportunity for the CLP government to show it understood the scale of housing and the challenge that it faced and that it was prepared to respond with a clear and focused, tangible plan. The CLP failed to meet this challenge.

Quality accessible health services are a huge priority for Territorians, but not so much for the CLP government. Its Health budget represents another missed opportunity. There is no funding for the design and scope of a new hospital for Darwin. There is no funding for the Gunbalanya health clinic that the Health minister promised would be back in the budget. These are real, measurable investments that will significantly boost he quality and accessibility of our Territory health services. The CLP has fallen well short of this in the budget.

There is no plan to fix the maternity care crisis. We do not blame the government for the actions of the private insurer, but the situation has reached the point where Territorians deserve a clear, concrete plan for what comes next. This crisis is already shaping decisions about whether people stay in the Territory or not.

We all know a story of someone who came to the Territory for six months and stayed for 60 years. That only happens when people feel that they can build their life here. If we fail to fix the maternity care crisis in the Territory, we will lose essential workers, Defence families and valued members of the community because they will make their home somewhere else. We will lose those who might have otherwise fallen in love with the Territory to jurisdictions that have properly invested in critical services, especially maternity care.

This budget was an opportunity for the CLP government to reset its relationship with Aboriginal Territorians, who make up one-third of the Territory's population. It was an opportunity to make a genuine effort towards closing the gap on health, education, employment and justice outcomes but, again, the CLP failed Aboriginal Territorians. It continues to turn its back on remote infrastructure investment.

It has effectively stalled the $4bn remote housing agreement with the federal government. The CLP is trying to walk away from the commitments it had under that agreement, including land servicing and headworks that make those important new builds possible. Instead of driving a pipeline of new builds and upgrades, the CLP is leaving families waiting longer for safe, appropriate housing, with the construction sector unable to plan ahead with its own pipeline of works and its workforce because it is struggling to see what the government tenders look like.

The CLP government's failure to deliver the important pipeline of road upgrades has also had an impact on social and economic prosperity for remote communities, including ongoing issues with food security and access to critical services. The fact it has slashed a much-needed $8.7m upgrade of Alekarenge School and now downgraded it this year, a year later—the CLP cut it out of the budget last year and downgraded it now to just $3.5m—demonstrates how little the CLP government cares about the outcomes of remote Territorians. The Members for Barkly and Katherine should hang their heads in shame.

Investment in remote community safety has gone backwards, yet the government continues to defend its incredibly short-sighted decision to cut funding from community-led law and justice groups that are proven to reduce crime and increase community safety.

The CLP has broken its election promise to invest in the Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program. One of the biggest remote employment opportunities in the Territory sits with our rangers. This again shows how little the CLP cares about lifting the living standards and employment outcomes of Aboriginal Territorians.

The CLP has a significant opportunity to ensure that Aboriginal businesses, which already contribute more than $3.4bn to the Territory's economic activity and employ 11,500 Territorians, are supported to access the economic benefits in this CLP budget. It would be a significant show of good faith and a strong commitment to closing the gap if the CLP backed Aboriginal Territorians across major projects and supply chains and, ultimately, support long-term strength for the entire Territory. The future of the Territory economy, workforce and community depend on getting better outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.

No-one is asking the CLP to solve generations of failed policy overnight. What we are asking for is simple: treat Aboriginal Territorians as equal stakeholders. Sit down with them, listen to them, work with them and generally consider their views when making decisions that affect their lives and the future prosperity of the Northern Territory. At its core, this is about respect. Before any decision is made, ask a simple question: what if it was done to me without anyone bothering to ask for my view? That has been the CLP government's approach so far.

The privilege of governing comes with responsibility to consider the voices of all Territorians, especially those who do not reflect the makeup of your team. The CLP has an opportunity to reset its relationship with Aboriginal Territorians and work in genuine partnership with and back the aspirations of fellow Territorians to help grow a stronger and more inclusive Territory, not to divide us.

The CLP budget also misses the mark on education and training. Again, we are seeing maintenance without vision. Every Territory child and family, no matter where they live, should have access to early childhood education and care that is right for them. Every Territory child has a right to the highest-quality education and schooling possible so that they have the best chance of success in life. Every young person needs to access the right training and skills development pathway, and we need to build our local workforce to be even stronger.

Every educator who serves young people deserves to be safe and supported at work. Teachers, support staff, principals, specialist staff and all the volunteers who make up our school community are the backbone of our education system. They ensure that our kids get the best out of their schooling and set them up with skills for life, with the ability to gain and keep employment and to be productive members of society.

What we saw from yesterday's CLP budget was a failure to rise to the current challenges facing our kids, schools and teachers. Too many Territory students are disengaging from school and missing out on the basics that they need for adulthood. More students have additional needs, including disability and learning challenges that require specialist supports in our classrooms and school communities. Despite this, the CLP government continues to prioritise punitive approaches, like its failing $21m truancy program, over services and supports that address the reasons children fall out of the education system in the first place. Teachers and principals are bearing the brunt of these growing challenges without adequate support or targeted investment to keep experienced educators in our classrooms or to ensure that they are safe at work.

This budget was an opportunity to invest in more specialist teachers, counsellors and flexible learning options for students who fall behind in mainstream classrooms. We need investment in relieving the administrative burden on teachers and principals. We need funding to improve safety and wellbeing in schools and support teacher retention. We need genuine investment in the early years so that every child has the best possible start to life. We need more training opportunities so that young people have the skills that they need to get a decent job. Again, Territorians have been left with a budget that does the bare minimum without any real plan for better education and training outcomes.

The bilateral agreement under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to put our education system on the path to fix the longstanding challenges facing the most remote and regional schools in the country. We are talking about crumbling infrastructure; chronic workforce shortages; the struggle to retain teachers; and the need for genuine, consistent support for educators and administrators no matter where they are in the Territory. Most importantly, it is about delivering real support to students who need it the most.

This budget makes one thing clear: the CLP government is content with doing the bare minimum. The additional funding from the Commonwealth is not an excuse to do less; it is a call to do more, take on the reforms and tackle the systemic issues that we have held in our education system for far too long. It took seven years for that money to land, and now it is sitting idle.

Every Territory child, no matter where they live, should have access to a properly funded school with the resources that support learning and does not disadvantage simply because of a child's postcode.

Yesterday the Member for Port Darwin spoke about the challenges of a more complex world; she is right about that, but the Territory's future stability and economic prosperity depend on a high-quality, equitable and inclusive education system. This is the CLP's opportunity.

Do not let this funding cycle pass by without real reform; do not treat this as a chance to cut corners or redirect funds to Corrections. It is a moment to invest in our schools, not short-change them. We need the government to fight for our schools, teachers and the generations of Territory children who stand to benefit from this historic funding investment.

I spoke earlier about the CLP government's decision to prioritise Corrections funding. That decision comes at the expense of cost-of-living relief, hospitals, schools and infrastructure investment across the Territory. It also comes at the cost of long-term community safety.

The vast majority of Territorians want to know that offenders are not just locked up but are given the opportunity to be rehabilitated and truly address the cycle of crime. The vast majority of Territorians understand that putting people through a revolving door of crime serves no-one in the long term. That is what the CLP is offering. This is its short-sightedness and lopsided policies.

Just 1% of the Corrections budget has been set aside for rehabilitation and prison supports to help prisoners to turn around their lives. Just 12% of prisoners—barely more than one in 10—were engaged in education and training programs in the last year. Less than 1% of the Corrections budget is dedicated to alternative-to-custody programs. While there is clear evidence that alternative-to-custody programs can make an impactful change for the better to reduce crime and break the cycle, there is less funding for crucial health services to prisoners.

There were 1,200 receptions of a child into a youth justice facility at a cost of $3,400 per day, per child. That is not diversion, alternatives to custody or training; it is the cost of a day-to-day jail intake. This is a deeply flawed approach to justice that will ultimately lead to poorer outcomes for all Territorians. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the only growth industry in the Territory under the CLP government is Corrections.

At the end of the day, budgets are about choices that the government can make. The CLP government has made its choice clear to double down on a Corrections plan that is not working. Treasury has warned that the plan poses a long-term risk to the Territory's finances and that there is no clear final cost, business case for the Corrections plan or credible pathways to delivering safer communities in the long run. This may be the plan the CLP thinks will win headlines, but it is not the plan that builds the Territory, makes us stronger or rebuilds the economy.

In making that choice, too many Territorians have been left behind, including:

- young apprentices spending most of their income on rent and food
- young mums leaving the Territory to give birth interstate
- renters who could have taken up home ownership supports and have not been provided that support
- families already stretched to the limit who must again take a hit with rising interest rates, power bills and fuel costs
- small businesses that need the pipeline of work to keep their doors open and their staff employed.

These are the people who needed this budget to deliver for them and who have been overlooked by the CLP.

Instead, the CLP has chosen to pour millions more into a Corrections system that frontline workers and history already told us will not deliver the outcomes that Territorians deserve. At the same time, it has underinvested in the sectors that grow our economy to create opportunities, including tourism, agriculture,

construction, civil works, mining and the services that support our communities. The CLP has made its choice clear, and Territorians now and into the future will have to carry those consequences.

The Treasurer has delivered an underwhelming budget that fails dismally to meet the challenges that are facing the Territory today and the urgent need for Territorians tomorrow. It is a budget that does little more than maintain the status quo of previous budgets, despite significant shifts in global and national realities in the intervening years. It is a budget that fails to rise to the time or challenges facing Territorians across the NT. It is a budget that punishes rather than prevents; drifts, not drives; and lacks any clear direction and leadership.

Territorians are desperately crying out for a government that rolls up its sleeves and is prepared to do the heavy lifting because that is what is needed now—less photo ops and more action. The Deputy Chief Minister said it best a few weeks ago on radio, 'We have been in office now for two years, and we cannot blame the previous government. We need to get in and get this sorted.' I agree with the Deputy Chief Minister on that. For the sake of all Territorians, I echo these calls. The CLP needs to get in there and get things sorted for the sake of Territorians struggling to make ends meet; their economic future; our struggling health system; better education and training outcomes for all; and a stronger, healthier, safer and fairer Territory.

The CLP cannot afford to take its hands of the wheel. The CLP government needs to act now.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Marion Scrymgour

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Member for Lingiari, Marion Scrymgour. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I express my full support for the Finocchiaro CLP government's 2026–27 budget. This budget continues to put Territorians first and continues our ongoing work to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our unique Territory lifestyle.

After Labor left us staring down the barrel of a projected net debt of $13.97bn by 2028–29, the CLP government has brought the Territory economy back from the brink, which is showing clear signs of recovery with real momentum. Key national indicators show that our population is growing and housing and economic activity are increasing.

We have heard from the Opposition Leader who spoke about people struggling to cover their rent and us not delivering on housing, but it could not be further from the truth. Building approvals over the last 12 months have soared to 579, which is up from the previous year of 404 and from historic lows under Territory Labor. That is how you get the economy moving, and that is how you make sure there is more places for people to rent by increasing supply.

Unlike Labor with their reckless spending, undelivered pet projects and horrendous fiscal mismanagement, our government is being fiscally responsible, remaining focused on our priorities and delivering for Territorians. You could tell when the Opposition Leader spoke this morning as there was silence behind her; no-one supporting her and no-one inspired. We are inspired, and we are delivering for Territorians.

As a proud Alice Springs resident I watched with growing frustration as my home town was neglected throughout eight long years under Labor. Promises were made but nothing was delivered, and we were treated as an afterthought rather than a priority, with crime left to spiral out of control. The Finocchiaro CLP government has completely turned this around. We are seeing results across the board from reducing crime to infrastructure being progressed and delivered because under this government the good people of Alice Springs and Central Australia and across the Northern Territory are no longer being overlooked.

Real progress is being made on key infrastructure projects around the town. We have invested $9.8m in the first multicultural centre for Alice Springs, $14.96m in the new public library and $14.5m towards the first stage of works for the Gillen Oval multi-sport precinct.

Recently completed projects include the new skatepark, which included $1.8m investment from our government and the installation of four lights at Jim McConville Oval. We are seeing this across the Northern Territory.

Community safety is a top priority in restoring confidence among residents and local businesses. I always make sure that I get the taxi to the airport as I often speak to taxidrivers who—I think would argue themselves—know just about everything. The taxidriver spoke to me about the feeling around town and how people were more confident and crime had reduced. Every time I get in a taxi and speak to a driver, it fills me with confidence that the things that we are putting in place are starting to deliver those results. There is still much more to do, but we are starting to see things turn around.

The latest crime statistics show a 9.7% decrease in victims of crime Territory wide. I listened to the Treasurer this morning speak about the real numbers—the 2,000 less Territorians who are impacted by crime because of our changes. In Alice Springs there have been significant decreases, including motor vehicle theft, commercial break-ins, house break-ins and a decline in victims of assault.

These are all promising signs, and we will continue to do the important work with the Minister for Corrections and the entire team to make sure that we are putting behind bars the people who are doing the wrong things and that we are getting the rehabilitation right.

Paperbark in Alice Springs is a classic example of that. We previously had young offenders doing their bail supported accommodation in the centre of our town along a busy street, and thanks to the direction of the Minister for Corrections we now have a purpose-built facility by the Corrections facility where young people can no longer escape. We are delivering on the rehabilitation part of this as well as keeping Territorians safe.

As we continue our strong focus on crime, the Territory becomes a more attractive place to live, visit, work and invest. A safer Territory is essential to restoring confidence, enabling economic growth and driving population growth. When these people come to the Territory, they need a place to live. We are delivering that as well. Unlike Labor, the CLP government is taking strong practical action to deliver a safer community and a brighter, more secure future across the Northern Territory.

We are staying the course, and this budget continues record investment in law and order to ensure our hardworking police, courts and Corrections have the resources and tools they need to succeed.

I will now speak about the important projects that the 2026–27 budget has delivered for the agencies I am responsible for. I thank the chief executive officers and staff within each agency for their hard work throughout the development of this budget.

Starting with the Department of Corporate and Digital Development, in this budget I am pleased to announce two new key ICT projects that are being delivered as a direct result of the CLP government.

The first project addresses the increased demand for technology to create efficiencies by replacing obsolete methods used to roster shiftworkers. These are hardworking public servants who spend every day providing invaluable services to keep Territorians safe. This includes those on the front line, such as police officers, healthcare workers, emergency services personnel and Corrections staff. Almost all government agencies that have shiftworkers use different methods and systems for setting rosters and recording shifts worked, which creates inefficiencies, duplication and financial risk. Our government has identified that this practice is no longer suitable.

That is why I am pleased to announce that we are expanding electronic rostering to the youth justice and Community Corrections workforce in Corrections. This much-needed enterprise program, known as MyRoster, is already being rolled out in NT Fire and Emergency Services and the NT Police Force. I have it on good authority that youth justice and Community Corrections are excited to be the next cohort to receive this program.

By delivering this enterprise program that will be rolled out across all government agencies, we are addressing technological demand. Importantly, by ensuring consistency across agencies, we are improving transparency, workforce planning, productivity and payment accuracy along with preventing exploitation of the rostering system, which will save taxpayer dollars. The 2026–27 budget provides funding of $6.3m for the first two years and $1.5m ongoing thereafter to expand the system for broader use across government for all shiftworkers and agencies that operate rosters.

The second project will automate and enhance the central payroll system that pays all public servants. The current system has been in place for many years, and this program will make sure it is continuously upgraded to meet the needs of today's employees now and into the future. Last financial year alone 183,000 transactions were processed manually for employee leave. That is in addition to putting through the fortnightly pay for the whole NT Public Sector workforce. If people do not get their pay, we hear about it, so we are doing what we need to ensure everyone in the NT public service continues to receive that on time.

Ongoing annual funding of $5m will improve payroll service delivery and ensure government meets its pay and legislative obligations as an employer of choice. This supports a stable and skilled government workforce.

The Department of Corporate and Digital Development continues to deliver existing projects through the 2026–27 budget.

Funding of $23.4m continues to implement the Department of Education and Training's new education management system, which will have features and functionality required for early learning environments and schools. This will better provide visibility and portability of student-centric information, such as enrolments and attendance data, streamline processes in schools and strengthen data collection and management. My fellow minister, the Minister for Education and Training, is keen to see how kids are attending school and how we can help them get back into school and attend more often.

We continue to deliver the Department of Health's Acacia system, providing a single, integrated digital solution across the Territory public health sector. Let us be honest: the Acacia rollout highlights Labor's incompetence, with an enormous budget blowout of $61m for the system. Let us not forget that the Leader of the Opposition was the Health minister and the Minister for Corporate and Digital Development at the time, making her directly responsible for the Acacia system and this huge mess we have been left to clean up. We are cleaning it up, however. I am glad that the Minister for Health, along with my agency, rolled this out across the Territory. We must keep moving forward on this.

In the 2026 budget funding of $14.3m is allocated to build on the work already implemented in public hospitals and renal clinics by converting paper-based processes to electronic forms. For those who do not understand this important work—recently with my colleagues and the Minister for Health, we visited a renal dialysis unit in Alice Springs. They are still in many cases having to call people to make sure that they attend their session because if they do not a lot, of those people become ill. By ensuring that we have these electronic systems in place it does not matter whether they rock up to one service or another; it is there, and everyone then knows when they have had their last lot of dialysis, which will help people remain healthier for longer and will stop the duplication that sometime occurs when treating these people across the Northern Territory.

This next project is one I am excited about: the digital drivers' licence. We are bringing the Territory up to speed and into the digital age. There is $13.6m allocated towards the initial release of a modern, secure and international standards-based digital driver's licence that Territorians can use with government and private businesses within and across state and territory borders.

I am sure we have all been there when we rock up to the bottle-o on a Friday afternoon and have forgotten our licence, but I bet you have your phone. With the introduction of the new digital drivers' licence if you have your phone, you will have your licence, which will make everyone's life easier. It will be used across a lot of different platforms, not just when you go to a bottle-o. It will make Territorians' lives easier should they wish to take it up. This means Territorians can access their licence from their phone so, even if they leave their wallet or purse home, they will still have their identification on hand. The Territory is on track to join Queensland as the second jurisdiction in Australia to have a digital drivers' licence that meets international standards.

It is important that we support our emergency services from the Department of Corporate and Digital Development. Funding of $8.4m for the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre (JESCC) will upgrade core technology and digital and data infrastructure for the 000 call centre and relocate service from the Peter McAulay Centre to the government data centre.

The 000 call centre has been important for Alice Springs, and the JESCC in Darwin is just as important for the rest of the Northern Territory. If we can improve efficiencies and improve the way it operates that means that when people call 000, they will have someone answer them in a much timelier manner and have their issues dealt with as quickly as possible.

It has been said to me many times that when you call 000 someone needs to be on the other end of that line as quickly as possible to get the help needed in the hour of need. This will enable critical improvements in the JESCC for the NT Police Force, NT Fire and Emergency Services, St John Ambulance and Bushfires NT, enabling emergency services to better support Territorians when they need them most.

Funding of $5m goes towards implementing the fully integrated sacred sites data and client management system for the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, which is another important piece of work.

We are also continuing funding of $4m in 2026–27 to strengthen connectivity in Territory schools and provide our young people with the foundations for lifelong learning, because we are ensuring location is no barrier to education.

In Budget 2026 $3.8m is allocated to add more digitised government services to the online Territory Services portal for citizens and businesses, continuing to make it easy to do business with government. Recently I had to go in for a rego check, which has been made so easy. You go to your mechanic, they upload it online and by the time you go back it is all there, and you can get your rego for the next 12 months. It is a fantastic system working to improve the process across government.

Upgrades to the system that manages the NT Concession Scheme to support pensioners will be completed in 2026–27, making it simpler and more reliable for users. There is always plenty of feedback, and we are always working to optimise these services. The conveyancing project will also be completed in 2026–27 to include caveats and withdrawals, transfer of title and integration to the Territory Revenue Office system, otherwise known as RevConnect.

The new WebEOC system, which was a critical enabler during the recent flooding emergencies across the Territory, will be in place for cross-agency use in emergency management and natural disasters. This government is partnering with local and Commonwealth governments to deliver community infrastructure priorities to connect 37 remote communities and homelands with new First Nations community wi-fi services and support the foundations of digital inclusion.

We have also co-invested with the NBN to introduce fixed wireless services in Maningrida and will continue to leverage new technologies to expand connectivity across the Territory. Access to connectivity is essential, and the CLP government will continue the co-investment partnership with Telstra to deliver new mobile services for Territorians.

I turn to the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, starting with new land releases that will drive growth and development in Central Australia and the Barkly. Yesterday I announced that we have committed an additional $2m each over the next two years towards undertaking land investigations, infrastructure planning and concept design of enabling infrastructure. This will unlock Crown land to support a continuous supply of development-ready land across urban centres in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. This is a critical enabler of economic growth and is essential to supporting sustainable development.

I often talk in this House about when I was an electrician and saw firsthand in Alice Springs when we were working with builders day-in and day-out building homes in a new subdivision that when the land supply stopped, the future work of those builders stopped as well. There was an 18-month break between land being available and the next lot being available.

Our government is ensuring that there is always land available for builders to build. With our $50,000 HomeGrown Territory Grant we are opening the doors for Territorians who want to build their first home and to get as many homes across the Territory to deal with issues that people have been raising this morning. Increasing the supply means there are more homes for people to live in so they can put down roots and invest in the Territory. That is what we are doing to invest in the Territory.

The investment in enabling infrastructure will unlock Crown land to support a continuous supply of development-ready land. Increasing land supply will support long-term growth and address housing demand for skilled workers across the Northern Territory, especially in Central Australia and Tennant Creek.

The availability of industrial and residential land is essential to support population growth and emerging business in the region, including projects such as large-scale gold mining returning to Tennant Creek. I was in Tennant Creek at the beginning of this year speaking with one of those mines which was reopening. It was fantastic as they were saying to me, ‘We want our people to live in this community; we do not want to just be building short-term mining camps with a fly-in fly-out workforce’. That is what we want to hear, and we need to deliver the land so that they can build those houses.

The planning and delivery of enabling infrastructure and the development of land involves long lead times that require upfront and early investment to ensure land is available when it is needed and, importantly, it does not become a barrier to growth.

In Alice Springs $3m has been allocated over two years for land investigations, infrastructure planning and concept design to support industrial land releases and to inform the enabling infrastructure requirements to unlock the next stage of residential land release at Kilgariff Estate. In Tennant Creek $1m has been allocated across two years for land investigations, infrastructure planning and concept designs to inform capital investment that can facilitate the timely release of future residential industrial subdivisions.

Under our government there has been a number of land releases to market across the Northern Territory in 2024–25 and 2025–26. I will detail key highlights. In greater Darwin there have been Crown land developments at Northcrest, Zuccoli and the new suburb of Asche—which is more known as Holtze—and private developments in Marrara Gardens, Durack Heights, Zuccoli and Humpty Doo.

In 2025–26, 298 residential titled lots have been released, more than double the previous year; 234 additional residential titled lots are available on the market, selling off the plan; and 12 lots from Stage 1 of the Humpty Doo industrial subdivision remain available to the market.

Across all development areas there is the potential for more than 3,900 residential lots. We have the land, are working to develop it and want to ensure that we can continue to see that development, which is important for builders and the economy to keep happening.

In the Katherine Big Rivers region, 53 lots were released to the market in Katherine East—known as Casuarina Park—and we will continue there. In Tennant Creek there are six low-density residential Crown land lots available for sale, and we want to continue to deliver for Tennant Creek and the Barkly. In Alice Springs 36 lots have just been titled and are ready to go. There are other lots available for sale in Stage 2B at Kilgariff.

Maintaining that pipeline of residential land release ensures adequate land into the future and provides certainty to industry and the community. This government is creating more opportunities for families to build their lives in the Territory and enjoy the unique Territory lifestyle that we all know and love so much.

I am proud that we unlocked the Farrar West development and that progress continues on the Holtze land release. These developments will deliver more than 760 new residential lots. It was wonderful for our government to work with the Larrakia Development Corporation to get the Farrar West development over the line. It was raised with me early on when I became the minister. I have been proud to work alongside Larrakia Development Corporation to ensure the Farrar West development got up. There was a moment when, again, promises had been made, but no money was put there. We did the work to get this over the line.

The Territory's population is growing, and our housing supply must grow with it. As part of the greater Holtze land release the 2026–27 budget includes $20.65m for the design and construction of neighbourhood-level infrastructure works to create a serviced community-purpose parcel of land within a Territory reserve parcel to support the construction of a new residential aged-care facility, which is important now to the Territory.

I often listen to my colleague the Minister for Health who talks about the pressure that the health system is under because too many people who should be in aged care are in our health system. This happened under the previous Labor government. It has been neglected for too long, and I am glad to say that the land is ready to go. Working with the federal government, we will deliver that residential aged-care facility, which will mean that people who are in hospitals can come out, freeing up space for people who need to be in our hospitals. It will also take the pressure off our hardworking health services.

The scope of the new capital funding includes signalisation of the intersection of Linco Road, the new entry road; the power, water and sewerage extension; and stormwater infrastructure. This funding is in addition to the existing capital works project of $52m for the district-level infrastructure that connects the Holtze land release, which now includes the suburb of Asche, to the Palmerston infrastructure network. It is important work that will mean this suburb can continue to grow for many years to come.

The weed management team has been busy in the Environment department. There is $2.25m towards weed management in this year's budget, which includes $750,000 a year ongoing for the management of buffel grass in Central Australia. This has been spoken of a lot around Alice Springs and Central Australia.

As the minister I delivered the Territory's first-ever Buffel Grass Management Strategy, which outlines a strategic path forward to manage its impact on the environment now and into the future. I am proud of that. Lots of groups had great interest in this. Working with the weed advisory committee, we got a pathway forward. We put out the draft proposal, and I heard from the community loud and clear. We changed that draft proposal into the final plan so that, for the first time in the Territory's history, if anyone wants to import buffel seed they will require a permit. This is not often spoken about. For years under the previous Labor government its unfettered introduction was allowed in the community. Under this new plan people will require a permit. That is not spoken about enough.

The Buffel Grass Management Strategy is in place, and it is important for us all to work together. I keep talking about us all working together. This is the beginning, and if we can all work together we can start to reduce the impact that this weed has on our environment, especially our urban centres in and around Alice Springs, whilst acknowledging its importance to the pastoral sector.

In 2026–27 the Land Development Corporation will work on the delivery of 11 new lots at the Marine Industry Park precinct, one at the East Arm construction and six at Holtze Industrial Estate Stage 2. It will complete the construction of two new residential dwellings at Kilgariff Estate to ensure that homes are available for new homebuyers. It will progress master planning on future stages, and construction will commence for the final stage of Zuccoli Village, which is 85 lots. We spoke about how important it is to continue land delivery, and we are doing it.

The fuel shocks and mounting global pressures have been a wake-up call for Australians' reliance on overseas energy. I think we have all seen that, which is why the Beetaloo Sub-basin gas production is important for ensuring Australia is less reliant on overseas energy markets. Our government is making it clear that the Territory is open for business, and we are focused on rebuilding our economy and unlocking the benefits that will flow from the Beetaloo Sub-basin. The need for reliable, domestically secure energy has never been clearer, and the Territory is stepping up to the plate.

We all know that the Territory recently endured exceptionally extreme weather events that had profound and lasting impacts on Territorians. This is why supporting communities impacted by recent flooding is a core priority of this budget.

I am pleased to report that we are unlocking funding and progressing work on flood mitigation, which Labor allowed to sit idle for eight years. Under this government we are getting on with the job. There is $10m which was originally allocated for flood mitigation in Alice Springs, of which $1m has been spent on the engineering feasibility assessment. We have done the work over the last 18 months; we looked at all those drains and at what we will do to ensure that we get this right because we know how important this is.

The remaining $9m is on the 2025–26 capital works program for Alice Springs flood mitigation, of which $7m is allocated to undertake rectification works to address immediate drainage issues. This includes a number of drains around Alice Springs. These works are expected to begin later this year, subject to approvals from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. I am moving heaven and Earth so that we can begin this by the end of May because it has been spoken about for far too long.

The remaining $2m has been transferred to the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure to lead the next phase of technical and feasibility work associated with The Gap. I have spoken about that in this parliament many times. We can do lots of work to increase the flow in the Todd River up and down where the town is, but there is a pinch point at The Gap. We are now doing the hard work with DLI to ensure that we have the feasibility work, what it will cost and what we need to ask the federal government for to improve access for pedestrians as well as motor vehicles and to increase the strength of that national highway through The Gap when we are impacted by floods.

I thank my good friend the Member for Katherine, Minister Hersey, who is the minister responsible for the $100m flood recovery fund. This is important because the $4.9m that was allocated for Alice Springs flood mitigation remedial works in the first tranche of the fund was on top of the drains that we could not get to with the money that was allocated under the previous government. That has been carried through by us and can now be allocated. Work can now be instigated. This frees up additional funding because not all drains in the original scope of works could be funded.

Mrs HERSEY: 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 BURGOYNE: I thank Minister Hersey once again.

Our government knows how important water security is for all our communities across the Territory. It is why it is important that we invest in water science projects, which will ultimately benefit all Territorians. In partnership with the National Water Grid our government has secured more than $530m in total funding, comprising $509m for construction projects and $21m for water science.

Major water infrastructure projects to support industry growth and tourism include the Darwin regional water security project and the expansion of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme into the Northern Territory. A lot of people do not know that the final stage of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme in WA will come to the Territory. That is exciting for the Northern Territory. We are working with the federal government and the WA Government to enable that economic driver, the water, in the Northern Territory so that we can see more growth. There is the Tjoritja water security project.

We are also investing in remote communities, with 18 remote water infrastructure projects underway, including upgrades to the Galiwinku and Gove Peninsula water supply networks, which is important. I acknowledge the Member for Casuarina, who has been working with Nhulunbuy (Gove), ensuring we do the right work as that town transitions. Some of these water supply projects complement that work.

Since 2021 the Commonwealth's National Water Grid has invested more than $19m in 10 water science projects in the Northern Territory, supported by a co-contribution of $1.97m from the Territory government. The department of Water Resources deserves a shout-out. It was onto this early with the National Water Grid money. Water Resources put in submissions to make sure the Territory was at the front of the line when this money was being dished out. That is why we have been so successful over a long period to get so much money into these important water projects across the Territory.

This is a practical and responsible budget, as has been said many times. It is important that we deliver a practical and responsible budget for Territorians with everything that is happening in the world. It continues to deliver for everyday Territorians during our year of growth, certainty and security. It is not about short-term fixes; it is about delivering real results now and into the future that have a positive, long-lasting impact for every Territorian. It continues to tackle the structural challenges we inherited and strengthens the foundations needed for the Territory to grow now and into the future.

If I had a dollar for every time I spoke about foundations, I would be a rich man. It is what everything is built upon. I always say that when you are building a home you need strong foundations. The foundations in the Territory are strong, but it is what we do now to build upon them that matters the most.

We are governing responsibly. We are listening to Territorians; that is important. When you head around the traps, you need to be willing to take all the advice you get—good and bad—listen to it and act on it. We are getting on with the job of delivering sustained long-term growth across our great region. We have made real progress since our first budget, and we know there is still a lot more work to do, but we are up for the challenge.

I commend the 2026–27 budget to the Assembly.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I speak on behalf of the people of Johnston and every Territorian who has ever looked at this amazing place and thought, 'We deserve better than this'.

This is not a traditional budget reply because I do not want to spend my time tearing down what the government has done line by line. The more important conversation is about what our Territory could be. I want to talk about possibility and the Territory we could build if we were brave enough to choose it.

The Northern Territory is an extraordinary place. We are home to the oldest living culture on Earth and to some of the most breathtaking landscapes and ecosystems anywhere in the world. Darwin Harbour's biodiversity rivals that of Ningaloo Reef. We are home to the world's largest intact savannah woodlands, some of its last free-flowing rivers and Australia's largest terrestrial national park. Our communities are incredibly diverse and vibrant. Our people are deeply resilient. These are the things that Territorians tell me they love about this place. These are the things that make people stay, and these are the things that make people come here.

People deserve a government that fights to protect these things, not one that sells them off, piece by piece, to the highest bidder. The Treasurer has told us that this is a budget for everyday Territorians. I will talk about the everyday Territorians I speak with. Every day I hear from frontline workers who are burnt out, not because

they do not care but because the system that they are holding up for all of us is crumbling beneath them. They are doctors, nurses and social workers who have worked one too many shifts in a double-bunked emergency department, watching people suffer consequences that were completely preventable.

This government claims record health funding, but the budget papers tell the real story. The government has cut funding for primary healthcare, including in remote communities, and cut funding for disease prevention. These are things that we know in the long term, down the track, we will all be paying for.

Every day I speak to Legal Aid and NAAJA lawyers carrying caseloads of 30 to 50 people in a system that was broken before they arrived. I speak to teachers who are the last safety net for vulnerable children because there is no net underneath them. I speak to police and paramedics responding to unmanaged mental illness and alcohol harm, not because it is their job but because there is nothing else. I speak to women fleeing violence who are being turned away from shelters in the jurisdiction with the highest rates of domestic and family violence in the country. This budget delivers no domestic and family violence infrastructure framework—none. That cannot be an oversight; it must be choice.

I speak to renters, more than half the people I represent, who cannot find an affordable place to live. There is nothing for them in this budget. I speak to community service workers, the people who hold this Territory together, who are undervalued, underpaid and invisible in these pages. These are the everyday Territorians this budget is supposed to serve, and they are being left behind.

I say plainly that this is not inevitable; remaining in a state of critical underfunding is a choice. Building bigger prisons while cutting youth justice by $13m is a choice. Increasing funding for police public safety officers nearly fivefold while cutting domestic violence services by 10% is a choice. Subsidising multinational gas corporations while turning away women fleeing violence is a choice.

The government said that when you question spending on arresting and locking up people, that is soft on crime; however, I know that the hard work of making communities safer is investment in people and prevention. When it comes to that work, there is no money in this budget.

I will describe what this budget could have been and the Territory I believe in and should be working towards. It is a Territory where no child sits in detention on remand. Now at least 70% of the children in our prisons are there on remand, not convicted of anything. In February the average time a child spent on remand was 86 days. That is an increase of 28% from July last year. We are spending more than $3,600 per day per child to hold them in a system that will make their lives worse. That is not tough on crime; it is wasteful, harmful and wrong, and we will all pay the price for it.

We know what works. There are many examples in Australia and beyond of alternatives that will make us safer. Programs like Project Kealahou in Hawaii are trauma informed, culturally competent, community based and helped achieve zero girls in youth detention. The evidence is there and the alternatives exist. It is a choice not to use them.

We could invest in early intervention, community-based justice and in the families, schools and services that hold children safe before the system gets hold of them. That is how you reduce crime.

We could have a Territory where a woman fleeing violence can always find a bed—not sometimes or if she is lucky, but always. That is not a radical statement in a jurisdiction with the highest rates of domestic and family violence in the country. It should be the minimum of what we offer. I have heard that hundreds of women in the Territory every month are turned away from domestic and family violence services because those services are under-resourced. This budget does not address that. We can and must do better.

We could have a Territory where healthcare reaches people before they reach crisis. With sustained investment in preventative care, we could have a safer and healthier Territory not just for now but for generations into the future. We could cut hospital wait times dramatically. We could ensure that people in remote communities have access to care before preventable conditions become emergencies. We could stop flying people to Darwin multiple times when a single coordinated visit would do the job.

This is not magical thinking; it is what happens when you spend money on the front end instead of on the back end.

We could have a Territory where everybody has a safe place to live. We could halve the public housing wait list and then halve it again until overcrowding is ended, not just reduced. We could invest in renters and make the Territory affordable, fair and a safe place to call home.

We could look to the future, not the past, in how we power our Territory. We have an extraordinary opportunity. The Territory could lead the world in the sustainable rollout of renewable energy; lower power prices; homes that are comfortable, affordable and safe to live in; and jobs that do not disappear when a gas contract expires. Instead, this budget cuts environment investment by 20% and continues to subsidise an industry that provides only 2.4% of Territory jobs, while healthcare and social assistance provide 20%. If we care about jobs—and we do and should—we must invest in the industries that actually provide them.

We could have a Territory where environmental regulations are strengthened, not gutted; communities receive services alongside infrastructure, not years after; and the GST funding that we get because of First Nations disadvantage actually reaches First Nations communities transparently and accountably.

We could have a Territory where all public appointments require transparent, merit-based vetting; where the Auditor-General has standard performance review powers, as in other jurisdictions; and where the government can transparently show how much of our GST funding is actually reaching the remote communities and First Nations people whose disadvantage helped justify it.

The government will tell you that we cannot afford this, but that is simply not true. We can end the hidden subsidies to the gas industry—hundreds of millions of public dollars directed to multinational corporations—that could instead fund hospital beds, house families and keep communities safe. We could redirect the more than $6m a year given to the Office of the Territory Coordinator, a body designed to centralise power and bypass environmental law in service of profits.

We could stop underwriting private industry risk. The ship lift commits hundreds of millions of dollars with no meaningful return to the average Territorian. The same applies to gas contracts designed to prop up projects that would not stand on their own without government backing. We could have a Territory where the Auditor-General has standard performance review powers and where we could see where the money is going and Territorians could know that it is being spent in their best interest, not the interest of industry and others.

Almost 80% of our budget comes from the Commonwealth, and more than half of that is GST revenue. That funding is intended to address disadvantage. That is the money that this government is directing to prisons rather than into the services and supports that reduce disadvantage at its root. That is not responsible choices.

Last year when I asked the Treasurer how they measure whether this funding is being used as intended, whether GST revenue is actually reducing disadvantage and how they measure it, the answer was, ‘We don’t measure it’.

Budgets are about choices. This government is choosing to spend money meant to address disadvantage on locking people up without even measuring whether it is doing what it set out to do. We can demand a fairer share from the Commonwealth. More than 50% of our budget comes from GST—we are totally reliant on it—but it is not keeping pace with inflation. Things like the petroleum resource rent tax do not deliver anyone in Australia a fair return. There has been a lot of talk about a 25% export tax, and without something like that, gas that belongs to us and exported to other places does not benefit us. We do not get the profit from it.

The government’s budget this year shows that expected royalties from mining and petroleum will barely change over the forward estimates, even as subsidies continue to grow. We are told that asking the oil and gas industry to pay its fair share would cost jobs. Not only is that claim unlikely to be true, but what the government forgets to mention is that mining accounts for around 2.4% of jobs in the Territory—a tiny proportion of the jobs here.

We could also fix simple inefficiencies. We can fund single care coordinators—I have mentioned that before—to organise treatments. I hear over and again about people who live in remote communities who are flown in and out of Darwin multiple times for appointments. It is a waste of their time, a waste of the clinician’s time and a huge waste of our money.

We could invest in prevention. Underground power reduces outages and avoids repeated repair costs. Disaster mitigation means floods do not decimate communities. Climate adaptation is not an optional choice for us; it is essential to avoid the escalating financial and human cost of increasingly severe disasters. If we borrow to invest in housing, healthcare and prevention, that is a responsible debt. Cutting essential services to prioritise external creditors while subsidising billion-dollar industries is not fiscal responsibility; that is a value statement and a choice.

We have the capacity to fund the basics and build a Territory where all people are safe, healthy and housed. We need a government willing to choose that. The better life gets here, the more people want to come to the Territory and choose to build their lives here. We are then better placed to address things like the critical staffing shortages which are breaking our essential services. A more stable workforce means less burnout and fewer experienced people leaving after two or three years because the system ground them down.

All this makes life better for those who already call this place home, some of whom have done so for tens of thousands of years. It is not complicated or radical; it is what good government looks like. Why has this government not chosen it? Is it because the donors who fund their campaigns—the property developers and the mining and gas lobby groups—expect kickbacks? Territorians are paying the price.

We, our kids and our communities deserve better, and better is possible. It is a no-brainer. The Territory can afford this, but what is missing is political will. Who is the everyday Territorian this budget is for? I believe that every Territorian deserves to thrive in our beautiful Territory, not just the privileged, powerful and connected.

All Territorians deserve members in this Chamber to have the courage and political will to make this beautiful Territory even better. That is what this budget should be doing, the budget we should have and one that is for all Territorians.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I support the Territory's 2026–27 budget and commend the Treasurer for the work done in delivering this budget—a budget for the everyday Territorian.

This budget builds on the foundations of our first budget, continuing our work to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our iconic Territory lifestyle. It is a budget which tells a story that, in spite of inheriting an absolute mess from the previous Labor government, our Finocchiaro CLP government made a plan, stayed the course and is delivering results for Territorians.

In our year of growth, certainty and security, our budget demonstrates what is possible when a considered and disciplined approach is taken by a government focused on improving the lives of everyday Territorians as we work to ensure the Territory reaches its full potential.

When this government came to office we inherited significant challenges, including almost $12bn in debt, a Corrections system at breaking point and a community safety crisis that had been allowed to spiral out of control for years. It is not a new place that a new government would choose to start, but instead of bemoaning the mess left to us, we made a plan and stayed the course, and the results are speaking for themselves.

After years of being last place in the CommSec State of the States report, in just one year the work done by our Finocchiaro CLP government saw the Northern Territory rise to fourth place for overall economic performance in the October 2025 report. We were number one in Australia for population growth, up by 1.3%, and 75% up on our decade average; number one for housing finance, up by 24.1%; and number one for dwelling starts, up by a massive 30% in an environment where were set to see a decrease prior to coming to government. Home prices were up by 6%, the fourth strongest in the country. That is a great result for the everyday Territorian who might be looking to move house supported by our HomeGrown Territory Grant.

Then there are our exports of $13.1bn, which shows the Territory is a valued international trading partner in a world that is increasingly looking for exactly what we have to offer.

The word is out: the Territory is back, and it is not luck that has led us here, nor is it a coincidence; it is what happens when you have a government that knows what it is doing and gets on with doing it.

There is no question we are in challenging times. The world is unsettled, conflict in the Middle East is driving energy uncertainty and pushing costs up across the supply chain. Those pressures are landing on Territory families and businesses every day.

This year the Territory was hit hard with floods, successive tropical lows, cyclones, communities cut off, families evacuated and businesses unable to trade. In that challenging and difficult environment our government stepped up, not back, with more than $100m invested in a disaster response and recovery. When Territorians need help, that is what governments are for. We invested $7m in immediate welfare payments alone to support Territorians in their time of need, and we are continuing to do that in this budget as we work to support the lives of everyday Territorians who deserve the best.

It is not reckless spending; instead, we are demonstrating disciplined, targeted investment in the things that matter. That includes the services, infrastructure and programs that keep Territory families safe, Territory businesses growing and communities connected. We are supporting private investment by ensuring that we create the right conditions, that we de-risk projects and that we show them that we will partner with them, but they need to step up and invest alongside us.

Community safety remains this government's number one priority. That is why this budget delivers a record investment in law and order of $1.73bn, backing safer streets, stronger communities and a more secure future for Territorians. The investment builds on last year's budget and will ensure our commitment to deliver a safer Territory remains front and centre—a commitment that has already seen a 9.7% reduction in crime across the Territory and a 9% reduction in domestic violence. Many people would have considered that to be an impossible result 12 months ago, but here we are 12 months down the track, seeing a significant reduction in a situation that had reached crisis point under the previous government.

House break-ins are down by 23%, and motor vehicle theft down by 16%.

These are not just statistics, because behind every one of those numbers is a real person—a Territorian who did not have their home broken into, a woman who did not have to make a call for help and a family who slept throughout the night without fear.

Real community safety is not just about what happens after a crime has been committed; it is about stopping it from happening in the first place. This brings me to the work done by the Department of Children and Families, which has worked hard as we developed this budget to make sure that our focus remained where it needed to be, creating a safe environment for families and for children and ensuring we deliver and continue to reduce domestic violence statistics for a better outcome for families into the future.

On becoming Minister for Children and Families, I made it clear that we could not continue to simply do more of the same. We needed to do things differently if we want to achieve results in reducing crime, rebuilding our economy and restoring our iconic lifestyle. I am incredibly proud of the work that has been done by the Circuit Breaker team, because they have shown that if things are done differently, we can make a difference, and that is why this budget backs them with an $8.3m investment.

I will put a face to the name in this program to demonstrate just how much it is achieving. I will refer to a young man in Alice Springs, and I will call him Nathan. That is not his real name, because we want to protect his privacy. Nathan was referred to Circuit Breaker after concerns about antisocial behaviour, school absences, substance use and exposure to domestic violence at home. He had no coordinated support, no-one pulling it together and he was slipping through the cracks, but then Circuit Breaker stepped in and changed all of that.

A family responsibility agreement was put in place with clear expectations not just for Nathan but for his whole family network. They sat together and worked out priorities, got him back to school, sorted out his identification and held a family meeting to agree on who was responsible for what at home. He was connected to mental health services, and Tangentyere Council's employment service stepped in to help him find part-time work. Six months later, his school attendance had risen to 80%. NT Police confirmed that there has not been a single further incident. His family said that for the first time in a long time they felt confident enough to ask for help when they needed it. That is one young person, one coordinated response and a completely different trajectory.

Multiply that by 314 young people across the Territory, and you will understand why that $8.3m investment is delivering real results for our community. Many of these young people have grown up surrounded by domestic violence and family instability, and Circuit Breaker steps in before the behaviour escalates, before the young person ends up in the child protection system or youth justice system. It is working.

Overall, this budget is investing $392.9m in the Department of Children and Families, because a stronger Territory starts with stronger families. This investment includes $63.5m for domestic, family and sexual violence responses, prevention, early intervention and recovery. It includes $4.8m for behaviour change programs, working with people who use violence in community settings; $5.2m for specialist DFSV services supporting victim–survivors to heal, recover and live without fear; and $2.6m for a new co-responder model connecting police and domestic, family and sexual violence specialists launching in Alice Springs and rolling out to Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

I note that, unlike the indication given by the Member for Johnston, there are infrastructure upgrades built in, including an expansion of safety house programs and upgrades to the Wugularr safe house. Sometimes the

information may not be as evident as you would hope it to be, but it is there, and the commitment is strong to ensure that these infrastructure requirements can be delivered.

The number of Territorians accessing specialist homelessness services due to domestic and family violence was 16% higher than the national average in the Territory, and those numbers demanded action. This government is acting.

This budget invests $77.7m in homelessness services because a safe, stable home is the foundation for everything else. Since this government came to office, homelessness services operating in the Territory have grown from 67 to 103, expanding reach to urban and regional centres so more Territorians can access support closer to home where they live.

The homelessness hotline received more than 2,500 calls—a simpler, more connected front door for Territorians who need help. The $2.95m Territory-wide central intake service delivered by Lutheran Care is getting people to the right supports faster. We have made sure that these critical programs remain funded in this new project. The everyday Territorian is every Territorian, whatever their circumstances may be. This budget delivers for them.

Over $7.8m is available for assertive outreach across five regions and is delivered by our valued partners such as Anglicare NT, Mission Australia, the Salvation Army and Larrakia Nation.

This budget is investing $143.4m in out-of-home care, which represents an additional $10m in that space. Although removing a child from their home will always be the last resort, the government must act when a child is not safe. This investment means that we can care for those children as we work hard to reunify them with their family where possible. It invests $49.4m in family support and $24m in child protection.

When disaster struck—this year it struck hard—the Department of Children and Families was with the Territorians who were impacted when they were evacuated from their homes, sheltering in evacuation centres and living in places that were not their familiar circumstances. With more than 9,000 Immediate Relief Payments made of around $7m, we made sure Territorians were safe. We will continue to work with those Territorians over the next few months to ensure they get home.

That takes me to the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. There is significant investment in businesses through this budget. Being a safe business is what we want for everybody. With small business being the backbone of our Territory economy, we have listened to what businesses are seeking. We need to work with them to ensure security for their businesses and the environments they are working in.

This budget delivered a safer business, stronger economy, better lifestyle package of $4.4m—two practical programs which are designed to make Territory businesses safer and stronger. The precinct activation program will make the spaces around our businesses safer, better designed, better lit and better for people who uses them every day. When a precinct feels safe, customers come back. When customers come back, businesses grow.

The resilience by design program gives individual businesses fast, practical support to deal with immediate safety barriers on a fifty-fifty co-contribution basis and is the next evolution of what was the Biz Secure program. Safe businesses are open businesses. Open businesses create jobs, jobs build the economy and a strong economy gives every Territorian the lifestyle they deserve.

In a world of geopolitical uncertainty, conflict in the Middle East, shifting trade relationships and supply chains under pressure, the Territory's location, resource wealth and deep relationships with Asia are not weaknesses; they are strengths. We will build on those strengths, and we are determined to back the relationships with our Asian neighbours.

The Rebuilding Aviation Connectivity for the Economy program (RACE) commits $6.5m per annum through to June 2028 to secure more routes, competition and choice for Territory businesses and families. More flights mean lower fares for Territory families and more tourists spending money in Territory shops, restaurants and tourism businesses. In these difficult times it is more important than ever to support our airlines to keep flying. It means our exporters will get to new markets and investors can see firsthand what the Territory has to offer. We know that once they see it, they want to be part of it.

The inaugural NT Investment Summit brought together more than 160 business leaders, investors and government decision-makers from 13 partner markets. Agreements were signed, investments were progressed and the message went out loud and clear that the Territory is open, connected and ready for

business. In this budget we are doing it all again. The second Investment Summit will be held from 13 July to 16 July with more media coverage and more Territory business participation.

The WorkerConnect program is backed by $200,000 in this budget and now connects 21,535 job seekers with 1,111 Territory employers, more than double since this government came to office. Under DAMA III (the Designated Area Migration Agreement) this government negotiated 420 endorsements since March 2025, giving Territory businesses access to up to 7,139 skilled overseas workers, a 50% year-on-year increase. This government is putting Territory businesses and jobs first.

The Business Growth Program is investing $900,000 to help Territory small business grow with grants of up to $10,000 to engage expert consultants and build real capability. This year it has already supported 57 businesses across every region of the Territory. In a tough economic environment where every dollar counts, that kind of targeted practical backing makes a real difference.

This budget also delivers directly for Territory families and communities across the Territory. I spoke earlier about the HomeGrown Territory Grant with more than 900 applications lodged, helping Territorians into home ownership in a housing market that is finally moving again. A total of 222 new remote homes have been delivered in the past 12 months, reducing overcrowding and improving living standards for families in the bush.

Free drivers' licences and trailer registration are saving more than 40,000 Territorians money out of their own pockets and no car registration increases.

Back-to-school vouchers have been continued. The work done by my colleagues in their department is exceptional; they have backed the everyday Territorians with their contributions to this year's budget.

As the Minister for Health alluded to earlier, we have a $16m mental health unit expanding critical care and the meningococcal B vaccine rollout—a lifesaving vaccine program that has delivered 8,178 doses, protecting young Territorians from serious illness and it continues to be a commitment by our government.

Our international education sector now contributes $189.5m directly and indirectly to the NT economy and generates $287.1m in export revenue every year. Backing our international education sector is a part of this budget. Each student contributes an estimated $50,448 to the NT economic output, sharply up from previous years. They are not just students; they are also contributors to our economy, workforce and communities. Many of them will stay. Many of them will and already have built businesses, raised families, put down roots and become Territorians. This budget continues to invest in attracting them, supporting them and keeping them here through StudyNT scholarships, accommodation grants, wellbeing programs and education provider support.

Earlier I spoke about us being on the doorstep to Asia, and part of that doorstep is our access to our international education students. They are the fastest growing student market in the world, and they are happening here. This Finocchiaro CLP government is making sure the Territory is ready to welcome them. We welcome them coming to learn, study and hopefully stay in our beautiful Territory.

I finish with something simple. This Territory has been through a lot, but Territorians are tough and resilient. When they have a government that actually backs them, does what it says, delivers what it promises and is honest with them about the challenges, they do remarkable things. Crime is down; the economy is growing; population is up; housing is moving; businesses are finding their feet again; women are safer; children will be protected; workers are finding jobs; and, most critically, investors are coming back. That is not an accident; that is a plan being delivered backed by a solid sensible budget. It is about growth, certainty and security. That is what this government stands for, and that is what every Territorian deserves.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support the Treasurer's Appropriation Bill and will speak about my portfolio responsibilities for People, Sport and Culture.

I recognise the Treasurer and the work of staff in the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Department of People, Sport and Culture for their efforts to produce the budget.

The fiscally responsible 2026–27 budget enables our government to continue to deliver our commitments to reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. It is a budget for everyday Territorians, putting money where it is needed most, making everyday life easier and cleaning up Labor's debt mess. My department has an important role in supporting actions in the government's plan to restore the Territory lifestyle, contributing to rebuilding the economy and supporting communities.

In 2026–27 our Finocchiaro CLP government is proud to deliver real, practical cost-of-living relief for Territorians, with a $290m investment in concessions, subsidies and targeted household support. When I am in the community I hear time and again that families are doing it tough, seniors are watching every dollar and everyday expenses, such as groceries, power bills and sport and school costs, are becoming harder to manage. That is why we are putting more than $40m directly back in the hands of Territorian families, households and seniors who need support now. I will outline many of these under each section of my department.

It is important to note that my department is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, vibrant and healthy community for all Territorians. It promotes active lifestyles through accessible sport and recreation programs, encourages engagement and participation in arts and culture initiatives and supports creative expression. It ensures that people of all abilities, including those with disabilities, as well as diverse backgrounds and identities, can connect, engage and thrive in the Territory. It delivers programs for all Territorians across various sectors, including veterans, disability, seniors, multicultural affairs, youth, gender equality and diversity, concessions, sport and recreation, libraries and archives and arts and culture.

Our government is committed to ensuring that veterans and their families receive the support and services they need. In 2026–27 we will continue to deliver our annual investment of $850,000 in Operation Thrive, the action plan to implement the Northern Territory's first Defence Veterans Strategy. Operation Thrive supports veterans and their families with transition, employment and education; health and wellbeing; and respect and recognition.

In 2026–27 we will continue to invest in the successful Veteran Community Grant Program that enables community organisations and businesses to support the veteran community through a variety of programs, events and activities. We will also continue funding the Cowork Coplay program in Darwin and Katherine for partners of current and ex-serving members of the ADF to create opportunities to foster connections, pursue employment goals and boost wellbeing.

Under Operation Thrive, our government will fund a second round of veteran community higher education scholarships in 2026–27. Five scholarships are available to members of the veteran community commencing their studies in semester 2 at Charles Darwin University.

In the coming year the department will continue to fund projects and initiatives that support veteran health and wellbeing, employment and recognition. We understand that a veteran's life can be challenging, and the Northern Territory Government will continue to invest in providing the supports our veterans community much deserves.

The Finocchiaro CLP government values multiculturalism and the many ways it strengthens the social and economic life of the Territory. Our government recognises that our success is built in no small part on the tenacity, skills and entrepreneurship of our communities. That is why we are committed to making sure everyone feels valued and supported to participate fully in community life through work, education, volunteering and the everyday connections that make the Territory such a unique place. These connections help build a stronger, safer and more inclusive Territory, where everyone has an opportunity to contribute and succeed. That is why our government is investing in multicultural facilities and events that celebrate our diversity, bring people together and create more opportunities for Territorians to connect across cultures.

This year we look forward to releasing a 10-year multicultural strategy and action plan that is aligned to our government's priorities to restore the Territory lifestyle and rebuild the economy. This strategy affirms our action and commitment to members of our multicultural community, giving them the certainty they deserve.

We will continue to invest $1.45m in grants to support programs, events and activities that celebrate and support our multicultural communities and improve and upgrade multicultural facilities. We will continue to support major community events such as the Darwin Harmony Soiree and the Alice Springs Big Day Out in Harmony. We will continue to invest in qualifications assessment for newly arrived migrants.

Our government continues to strengthen the Territory's regions, and in 2027 we will deliver the first purpose-built multicultural centre in Alice Springs. We heard yesterday from the Treasurer at the budget luncheon that tenders are expected shortly on that project. It was clear at a recent event that I hosted for the multicultural community in Alice Springs that there is excitement building about the centre.

In addition, we will invest $1.5m to ensure that multicultural communities in Katherine have access to a dedicated community space to celebrate and share their cultural heritage with the broader community.

Although it has taken some time to find the right location, we are getting close to an announcement. I believe that this will be yet another election commitment delivered and warmly welcomed by the community.

I thank my Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs. Our most recent meeting at Parliament House was a fruitful, important event. I look forward to receiving valuable advice in the year ahead.

The Territory's vibrant multicultural community is valued by our government, and our investment will continue to support our communities and promote the Territory as the place to live.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next General Business day I shall move that this Assembly calls on the government to undertake an independent review of greyhound racing in the Northern Territory, including animal welfare outcomes and public funding of the industry and, on the basis of that review, develop a plan to end public subsidies to the greyhound racing industry with appropriate support for the dogs, workers and participants affected.

QUESTION TIME

Budget 2026–27 – Power Prices

Ms UIBO to TREASURER

With your budget confirming that Territorians should expect significant increases in power prices, families and businesses alike are bracing for another hit to the cost of living. People deserve certainty and honesty about what is coming, yet you have failed to clearly outline the size and timing of these increases. When will you let Territorians know exactly how much their power bills will go up? Will you be upfront with Territorians about the true cost of your decision in this budget?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is good to clarify some of the myths floating around about power prices. There has been some commentary from the opposition and in the media about cost-of-living measures. There are 57 million reasons for cost-of-living help. There is $57m additional to what was in the previous budget. There is a reason that is there. That $57m is to deal with the increases in power costs in the Territory.

In the Territory we subsidise power costs considerably. The Leader of the Opposition will know that from the time she was in government. If we charge what it cost to generate, then the mums and dads across the Territory would be paying significantly more for their power.

We put $57m additional money into the CSO this year so that Territory families are not hit by the increase in cost of generation. There is the reason for that increase in cost of generation. Some of it comes from Cyclone Fina in December last year. Cyclone Fina went across the edge of Darwin, but then it went across into the area past Wadeye and walloped the Eni Blacktip floating platform and put it out of action. All of a sudden, we lost gas supply to Darwin to generate power from Eni. We had to purchase gas from Central—the gas team in Central Australia is supporting everybody in Darwin—and from INPEX and Santos when needed whilst we wait for the Beetaloo to come online. Of course, that has driven up the cost of generation. It now costs more to generate power because we are not getting the cheap gas we were getting from Eni.

We have increased the CSO by $57m, and the price of power has gone up—as it has year on year—with CPI plus a percent. That is the increase in power to everyday Territorians—mums and dads.

We are providing $2,000 for every Territory household to subsidise power so that they are not paying the cost of generation. That is real cost-of-living relief. That is a commitment we have given to Territorians because we will not slug mums and dads with huge increases in costs because we know times are tight. That is why we have increased that CSO. There is $57m available to help everyday Territorians.

Budget 2026–27 – Cost-of-living Support

Mrs CARLSON to CHIEF MINISTER

Territorians are feeling the pressure from rising fuel, grocery and household costs, and families in Wanguri are no different. While global uncertainty continues to put pressure on prices, this budget is focused on restoring discipline after Labor's eight years of spending spree while still delivering practical relief for Territorians. Can you update the Assembly on what cost-of-living support is available to people living in my electorate of Wanguri?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, people in the Member for Wanguri's community are feeling the pinch and want to know that the government is there to support them. This budget for the everyday Territorian makes their life better. That includes a significant increase in cost-of-living relief. Not only do we have $290m in cost-of-living relief alone; we added $57m to the status quo that was Labor and put in another $206m to the community service obligation, which means Territorians are paying nearly $2,000 less on their power bills than what it costs to generate, which is huge. That is $2,000 back in the pockets of the people of Wanguri, the mums and dads and the people who need it most.

It does not end there. I was amused by the Opposition Leader's speech earlier. She obviously put the budget through ChatGPT, and it spat out her speech because she clearly did not read the Budget and Regional Overview, which you have, Member for Wanguri. It shows extensively across pages 10 and 11, for those playing along at home, all the cost-of-living relief our government has delivered.

It includes two $100 learn-to-swim vouchers; free swimming lessons for kids in schools; $1,560 worth of childcare subsidies to childcare centres; $200 Back-to-School vouchers; two $100 sports vouchers; abolition of annual roadworthy inspections, putting money and time back in the control of Territorians; our election commitment for the pharmacy scope of practice, meaning people do not have to spend all their time trying to go to a doctor, as they can go to the pharmacy and get cheaper, quicker care.

We have the $50,000 and $30,000 home-building grants, which has spun $217m through our economy and will put 509 families in new homes.

We have power concessions for seniors; the $550 prepaid cards; we give first-year apprentices $1,000 to get themselves geared up and on the road; and we have contributed $19m to make sure that every Territorian is getting five-and-a-half cents a litre cheaper fuel at the bowser. This budget is a cost-of-living relief budget because it delivers a $57m increase on last year, recognising that we need Territorians enjoying their lives and supporting their families. We can take care of the rest because we are reducing crime, rebuilding the economy and restoring our lifestyle.

This is a budget for the everyday Territorian because it makes their life better.

Budget 2026–27 – Roads and Infrastructure

Mr SMELT to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

We have a shared passion for infrastructure development, especially roads, but industry is crying out for more work, with tenders drying up and larger contractors now bidding for smaller works. With record levels of Commonwealth funding in the budget papers, when will we see tenders at market for sealing and upgrades on the Buntine Highway, Port Keats Road and Tiwi Islands roads?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Nightcliff has a good history with DLI; he worked as an engineer in the roads division prior to coming to parliament. He understands the difficulties and issues we face with delivering roads across the Territory.

The work is rolling out the door, and this year's budget has a record cash commitment of $2.7bn to the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure for works. There is $2.2bn specifically for DLI, with some of the other cash being for Power and Water, Jacana and TGen.

We are investing $270m in Tanami, $239m in the national network highway upgrades, $200m in Central Arnhem Road and $166m in the Northern Territory's strategic roads package. We are continuing with the Outback Way program of $133m; $114m for the Buntine Highway, which the Member for Nightcliff asked about; $107m for gas industry roads, which goes towards supporting communities along those roads; $89.5m for the upgrade to Port Keats Road between Wadeye and Palumpa; $79m for the Arnhem Highway duplication between Stuart Highway and Kostka Road; and $62m to upgrade roads within Kakadu.

These are important roads, but we also must work in conjunction with the Commonwealth. Whilst we would love to roll all this out straightaway, we also have to wait for the Commonwealth to provide its funding. The Member for Nightcliff will know all about that. It is all well and good to say, 'I will do this road, and the Commonwealth will put up some money', but there is a lot of work behind the scenes in conjunction with the federal government to do it.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110. The question was specifically about the tender for market for those three roads.

Madam SPEAKER: I think he has covered two of the three. You still have a bit to go, Treasurer.

Mr YAN: I still have 31 seconds. I was answering the question before I was interrupted.

We have $400m for the ship lift, $110m for the school at Palmerston and $192m for the work camps in Darwin. Those tenders will be going out soon. My understanding is that those tenders will go out within the next financial year to get those roads underway. We understand what it takes to deliver roads, and I believe that we have delivered more bitumen in this year than the previous Labor government did in its eight years.

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, be quiet.

Budget 2026–27 – Police Resources

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for POLICE

Territorians know that a visible, well-resourced police force is critical to keeping our communities safe. In my electorate of Fong Lim families, small businesses and community groups want confidence that police have the resources to support and the presence they need to prevent crime, respond quickly and to restore safety. After years of pressure on frontline services, Territorians want action that strengthens frontline policing, increases police visibility in our communities and back officers with the tools they need to do the job.

Can you update the Assembly on how the CLP government is investing in policing to deliver more police, safer streets and stronger communities across the whole of the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the people in the Member for Fong Lim's community want a safe Territory, and that is what we have delivered for them when we build on the back of last year's budget, which was a record law and order spend. We have doubled down, and this year it is even bigger.

At $1.73bn, this budget for the everyday Territorian makes their lives better because the Territory is a safer place today than it was under Labor. People should never forget that.

We have reduced the number of victims by 10.2% in the short time we have been in government. That is people in your community, Member for Fong Lim, who have not had to endure the horrors of being a victim of crime which they otherwise would have under Labor.

We have delivered 100 more police officers on the streets. This year we have a record police budget, with a $46m increase from last year, which means 150 more police officers and 100 police public safety officers will go through the college this year to a fully funded total of 212. It means the police infrastructure that we need—new police stations and police housing—will be delivered and out the door. That is because community safety is our number one priority.

Member for Fong Lim, I know you understand that well. You understand the economics of the situation that the Territory Labor government left us in.

This morning we heard at the Property Council—the Opposition Leader was there—from the economist who was saying the Victorian Government's second-biggest spend at $50bn a year is interest repayments on debt. The Opposition Leader would have the Territory in the same position, which means we could not fund police to the extent that we have because of the way we are fixing the budget.

In the Territory we are proud that the number one spend is health, second is housing, third is education and fourth is infrastructure. The Labor government you were all part of—except for your new mate, the new Member for Nightcliff; think twice about what you have just done, Member for Nightcliff—would have us spend more on interest. The less we spend on interest means the more we spend on policing, which means a safer Territory for everyone. That is exactly what we want.

This budget delivers for the people who matter most: the everyday Territorian. They elected us on a platform to reduce crime. That is exactly what we did last year and is what we are doing again this year because people deserve to be safe in their homes, on their streets, in their businesses and in their community. This budget is an important budget where we say to Territorians, 'We hear you, and we are acting'. This truly is a budget for the everyday Territorians because it makes their life better.

Budget 2026–27 – Prevention of Domestic Violence

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for PREVENTION of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The budget papers indicate an underspend of $8m on family violence interventions. When 66% of assaults relate to family violence, more Territory women are seeking safe places to sleep at night and referrals to behavioural change programs are up by 35%, how can you justify this massive underspend?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Gwoja would be aware that often there is money carried forward in budget projections. It is given ahead of time so that it can be spent in outer years. In this situation that is exactly what happened. We get money from the federal government. It usually gives it to us in a nice little bundle and then the projects are rolled out. Sometimes those projects cannot progress because they require negotiation with the federal government, discussions and consultation across the community to make sure that we are delivering on the objectives of those particular areas.

What matters most in this budget is that we have increased the spend in domestic, family and sexual violence. We are working collaboratively across departments. There is $5m that has been given to the police budget for projects in the domestic, family and sexual violence early intervention space. We need to be looking at how we stop this terrible scourge before it starts.

We have announced that we are rolling out the co-responder model, which has worked so well in Alice Springs over the last 12 months or so to Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek. Police, Children and Families, Education and Health are working collaboratively with our non-government sector, which is focused on reducing the impact of domestic violence in our community. Dare I say it again—unprecedented. Under the previous government there was an 81% increase in domestic violence over 10 years.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I am appreciative to the member for the response. I am asking if you can confirm if it is simply a reallocation of funding or if there has been a deduction of funds.

Ms CAHILL: I am confident I have already answered that. Under the previous government there was an 81% increase. We have had a 9% decrease in domestic violence across the Territory in the last 12 months compared with the previous 12 months. There has been a 22% decrease in Alice Springs where all these programs we are investing in have been working collaboratively for the past year, demonstrating that real change is possible. We continue to drive real change in this space. We have not reduced spending. We have increased our spending in this space and will continue to do so.

Beetaloo Sub-basin Development

Mr HOWE for MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

In the media recently we have heard several major milestones in the development journey of the Beetaloo Sub-basin. Delivering on our commitment to rebuild the Territory economy is closely tied to development of affordable and abundant energy from the Beetaloo Sub-basin.

The Finocchiaro CLP government recently approved two mineral leases to Territory Sands as well as a $2.8m investment to project manage the Beetaloo to speed it up and make sure the Territory benefits. Could you outline how the Beetaloo is benefiting the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Drysdale knows how important mining is in the Northern Territory and supports the Beetaloo because he supports the Territory, unlike those opposite who drive down the Territory.

This budget gives an extra $2.8m to help project manage the Beetaloo to speed it up to get those benefits to the Northern Territory quicker. The Beetaloo rewards Territorians by making sure they have employment. They just issued a $10m to Territory Sands, a local business. Previously sand was imported from other states and overseas, but now a Territory business will benefit from the Beetaloo, making their money and bringing sand to the Beetaloo to make sure the gas comes out of the ground at an affordable rate.

That is just one company making money. Recently I thought, 'Who else in the Northern Territory is making money out of the Beetaloo?', and I have a list: Arnhem Earthmoving and Mechanical for civil works; PPP Consultants for environmental work; Qube Holdings for logistics; Top End Civil, an Indigenous-owned business; MS Contracting, which is helping with the camps; Heartbreak Hotel at the land of opportunity; NT Recycling; Territory Sands; MMC Mining for welding and fabrication; NorthTech SLE for welding and fabrication; Wilkinson Engineering for welding and fabrication; DITS for non-destructive testing; Fuel Calibration Services, making sure the gauges work accurately; GR Production Services for occupational health; Nobles for lifting chains and equipment; Hosepower; Blackwoods; and ENZED, which is doing hoses.

These are local businesses which employ Territorians, make money and pay wages out of the Beetaloo.

Not only is the Beetaloo helping to employ those businesses; the gas industry also helps the Territory in its creative arts. For example, they sponsor the Darwin Festival. The Member for Johnston was talking down the gas industry and demonising it, but I have a picture of her supporting the industry at the Darwin Festival and saying how wonderful it is. I table that document. The Member for Johnston is having a good time thanks to the gas industry.

I have INPEX's community engagement program, and it supports the women's shelter with donations and the Freds Pass Rural Show. The gas industry …

Mr Young: You are nothing but a bully.

Mr EDGINGTON: Standing Order 31; the Member for Daly called the Member for Nelson a bully. That is offensive and should be withdrawn.

Madam SPEAKER: He did not call him a bully; he said that you are bullying or something. I think it is best that you withdraw that, Member for Daly. Accusing people of being a bully these days is a pretty extreme accusation and has to be taken seriously.

Mr YOUNG: They are pretty sensitive, I know. I withdraw.

Mr MALEY: I would like to keep talking about how wonderful the gas industry is.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Willem Westra van Holthe

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I acknowledge in the gallery the former Member for Katherine, Hon Willem Westra van Holthe. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to the Chamber.

Members: Hear, hear!

Population Growth

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION, MIGRATION and POPULATION

You promised to grow the Territory's population by 4,000 per year. According to your own budget papers, population growth is forecast to drop over the next two years, and you are nowhere near the target that you and your CLP government set. Without any plan for maternity services, housing affordability or cost-of-living relief, how do you expect to attract people to the Territory. Is this something you advocate for in Cabinet given your colleagues seem to be actively working against you on growing the population?

Madam SPEAKER: What is that portfolio, sorry?

Ms CAHILL: International Education, Migration and Population. There are many, I know.

Ms Uibo: Migration and population.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I wear many hats …

Mr Young: She sure does.

Ms Uibo: They loaded you up.

Ms CAHILL: … and I am proud to wear every one of them because all those hats enable me to grow the Territory …

Ms Uibo: They want to keep you busy.

Madam SPEAKER: Can you pause, minister. Please listen to the answer, Opposition Leader.

Ms CAHILL: … and tell the story, not just across the Territory but across Australia and into the Southeast Asian region. I can tell you that a massive amount of work is being done in this space to grow our population, primarily focusing on our workforce strategy and development, where we are looking to encourage people to make the Territory their home.

We have delivered a massive number of programs in the first half of this year, but before I get to that I make the observation that in spite of all the hard work that has been done by our government on the DAMA III and the General Skilled Migration scheme, one of the biggest impediments to driving our population growth is the failure of the Labor government federally to process visa applications in a timely manner.

In spite of the fact that we have been recognised as having skilled migration shortfalls and have been granted 1,650 visas to attract skilled migrants to address our workforce shortages, they are having to wait anywhere from eight months to two years for those visas to be approved. Do not even get me started on the DAMA, which costs our employers who are sponsoring people a significant amount of money—about $20,000—and some of those visas are stuck in the queue for up to two years. That is not good enough.

We should all work together. I ask those opposite to spend a bit of time in Canberra persuading their colleagues that they should be making sure the Territory's visa applications are processed in a timely fashion.

Aside from that, we are delivering our Global Worker Attraction Program. I am excited to say that we have just delivered programs in the United Kingdom, where the lineup was out the door. There were people in the Irish state looking at coming to the Territory. They were so excited that they lined up before the doors opened and were thrilled at the opportunity that they might get to migrate to the Northern Territory.

We are holding public forums on our workforce development strategy to make sure that we attract the right people for the Northern Territory and our businesses get the skills that they need. We will continue to utilise the WorkerConnect platform. Migration is critical to the development of our economy, and that is where the focus is. I commend the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations for the work it is doing in this space.

Crime Reduction

Mr MACKAY to ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Territorians deserve to feel safe in their community. Territorians know that reducing crime requires not only strong laws but a justice system that delivers swift and certain consequences. Can you update the Assembly on how record case finalisations are reducing delays, restoring accountability, adding real consequences and putting victims first?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Goyder's community remembers that under a Labor government crime was out of control. It was a disgrace, and Territorians were leaving the Territory. We won in a landslide election to make sure we could put Territorians and their safety first, and that is exactly the work we have been doing over the last 18 months.

I remember being appointed the Attorney-General and realising that we had inherited a justice system that was in crisis. No wonder crime was out of control; we did not have a system that worked. Police, courts and Corrections were all disjointed. We had an Attorney-General who used to walk around with a shirt that said, 'Jailing is failing', for goodness sake. What a disgrace.

When I first became the Attorney-General, I walked in to the courts—I have done it a couple of times now—and listened to what was going on. I watched it in chaos and turmoil. So much work and investment needed to be done, so that is what we have done. Police, courts and Corrections are all working together, and there are record investments in our budget that we just announced this week of $1.73bn.

It is not just about stronger laws, which we have implemented over the past 18 months; it is about record investment in all those areas to make community safety number one.

All the work we have done is making a difference. Not only is crime trending down, which is great news for Territorians—we have always said that there is much more work to be done—but also a data release from the ABS demonstrates that 25,000 cases went through our courts in one financial year. That is a huge volume of cases. Demand has gone up because of our strong laws. Our government's record investment in judges, court staff and systems and process changes is making a difference. Of those 25,000 cases, 70% were finalised in six months. That is a huge turnaround.

On top of that the Northern Territory had a 29% increase in case finalisations compared with only 1.2% nationally. Our justice and court system is the best in the country. Who would have thought that, given it was a mess 18 months ago? We have managed to turn around the whole thing. We have streets that are a bit safer, but there is more work to be done.

The court system is functioning, and I say a big thankyou to all the court staff and the department staff who have done the hard yards. Chief Judge Morris said in a media release that the things we have done are starting to work. Thank you to all those staff. We will continue to invest record spending in our police, courts and Corrections because we need to make sure that offenders are off the streets and Territorians feel safe.

Budget 2026–27 – Closing the Gap

J DAVIS to TREASURER

The Northern Territory has gone backwards on seven of the 19 Closing the Gap targets, and only half of them are on track. What specific funding is in this budget that addresses successive governments' failures to make progress on the Closing the Gap targets that affect 30% of our 'everyday' Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will say again that this budget is for all Territorians. We have continued to deliver across the ministerial portfolios that deliver services.

Whether it be through Health, Children and Families, Education, the justice system or Corrections, every portfolio represented in this Chamber crosses over some of the Closing the Gap targets. There is money in all those budgets to deliver on the Closing the Gap targets.

It is not just money; work is required to be done by people on the ground. It is not a matter of just throwing money at things and hoping they will be fixed, because we have seen that all too often. The idea has been that to solve the problem we will just throw some money at it, make an announcement and hope that something happens. I saw that in my time within government when I worked in Corrections.

Closing the Gap targets are important and they are real. We need to work on Closing the Gap targets across every portfolio. Every agency has been funded appropriately to deliver on Closing the Gap targets where they fit within every minister's responsibility. I have no doubt that every minister in this room feels the same way that I do about Closing the Gap, but there is a lot of work to be done.

It is not just a matter of throwing extra money at those targets; it is about being smarter in how we use that money and those resources. We need to make sure that when we are working on those Closing the Gap targets that the resources are targeted and functional with real outcomes, because it is all too easy to throw some cash out there—'I will throw another $10m to Minister Cahill to do some stuff with Children and Families'. Without actual targets, responsibilities and outcomes aligned with that funding, we are just throwing money for nothing.

Our agencies are all funded appropriately and are funded for those Closing the Gap targets. Every minister is ensuring that the funding is targeted, we are seeing outcomes from that real funding and that money is not being wasted.

I reiterate that it is not just a matter of throwing money out there and hoping for the best. Previous governments have done that, and where have we got to? Those targets are worse. Our agencies and ministers are doing the work to make sure that funding is used appropriately and we see some real outcomes.

Budget 2026–27 – Rebuilding the Economy

Mrs ZIO to TREASURER

Can you outline to the Assembly how the 2026 budget is helping to rebuild the Territory economy after years of deficits, debt and declining business confidence under the former Labor government? How does the 2026 budget restore fiscal discipline; support local employers to grow, and hire Territorians; and invest in roads, housing, land release and infrastructure needed to attract private investment?

Can you also explain how measures, such as payroll tax relief, apprentice and trainee exemptions, trade and investment attraction and the Northern Marine Complex, will help create jobs, rebuild confidence and secure the Territory's long-term economic future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Fannie Bay understands all too well that fiscal discipline equates to a better economy, and a better economy leads to better outcomes for the people we represent.

The previous Labor government was growing debt by 22% year on year. Debt was getting out of proportion. I think we all remember 2019 when that debt was projected to hit more than $30bn, and we ended up with a new Treasurer.

Lower debt across the forwards—$2.75bn lower than projected from 2025–26—has real outcomes for the Territory. That is what we are aiming to achieve. We have better metrics, and the net-debt-to-revenue ratio has gone from an average of a predicted 130% to 116%. They are real outcomes that people can see.

It is not just about the economy; it is about supporting local businesses and building our workforce to generate more economic benefit. We have done that through payroll relief, which was announced last year. We have a $2.5m payroll tax-free threshold, which is the most generous in the country.

Even though we raised that threshold, we increased revenue from payroll tax because now businesses are more empowered and confident to employ more people; they are not afraid to do that, knowing they will not be penalised for bringing on more employees. Included in that is the apprentice exemption. There have been $25m in apprentice wages claimed, saving businesses $1.5m. That is improving our local job market.

Our roads pipeline is $2.04bn, which is a record spend.

We have land releases at Holtze, Farrar West, Kilgariff and Tennant Creek, and we are investing in that because housing supply means more people, which means more economic growth for all of us. We have seen 500 grants paid out under our HomeGrown Territory scheme, which is 500 families in their own homes. We also need more houses for workers.

For the bigger picture in the long term, we are progressing the Northern Marine Complex, with the ship lift being a key piece of that and the infrastructure that supports it with businesses and specialist marine services that will support not just the Territory but also the national Defence industry through the capability and Defence infrastructure. That will set up the Territory long term for economic growth.

Budget 2026–27 – Trade, Business and Asian Relations

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

Your budget shows that you underspent $2.6m in trade and investment funding. This funding is allocated for building the Territory's investment pipeline—money that was meant to attract and engage investors and businesses locally, nationally and internationally. At a time when the Territory needs more jobs, growth and confidence, this has been a clear failure of delivery by your CLP government.

How did you manage to underspend in such a critical program for the Territory, and what investment opportunities and jobs have been lost as a result of your inaction?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I love the opportunity to talk about the amazing work that the Trade, Business and Asian Relations department is doing.

I will make a little accounting comment first; the member opposite would know that often there are movements between departments, and we had a significant change in our government structure over the past 12 months. Filtering that down and getting it right took a bit of time.

There was no underspend in the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations. I can tell you that staff have been working their butts off to get investment and trade happening in the Northern Territory.

In July last year we ran our first trade and investment summit—the first time ever—where we said to people, 'We will not come to Canberra and do a little thing at Parliament House there; we want the investors to come to the Northern Territory and see firsthand what we have to offer.' Come they did. There were 160 people from 13 proponents who came and asked, 'What do you have to offer?' They then said, 'We see exactly what the offer is'. That is why we are seeing growth in this area.

A number of projects are on the brink of delivery, and a number of agreements have been signed. I signed a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia about critical minerals and strategic supply chain, which is being advanced through the Department of Mines and Energy. We are seeing real progress in that space. Arafura Rare Earths is about to reach FID whereby we will see the Northern Territory become the only competitor to China in the production of the magnets which are in everything we use. They are in our phones, jets, AirPods or iPods—I can never get that right—everything.

The Territory is in the best position. I recently came back from a trade mission with businesspeople to Japan and Korea. They are raring to go to do business with the Northern Territory, and they know that the Territory has everything we need to secure the future of not just Australia and the Northern Territory, particularly with energy, but the region as a whole. We have the critical minerals and the energy supply. Gas will turn on so much opportunity for the Northern Territory.

We are out there selling that story every day. We are working to attract the workforce through the workforce development program. Things are humming, and the Territory is looking pretty good. The Trade, Business and Asian Relations department is on it.

Land Release – Titled Lots

Mr O'GALLAGHER to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

Our Finocchiaro CLP government is committed to ensuring that every Territorian can have a crack at buying or building their own home, including many potential first homebuyers living in my electorate of Karama.

There have never been as many opportunities to purchase titled lots than there is now under this CLP government. This is all about providing certainty for Territorians and industry and supporting sustainable growth across the Northern Territory. Can you advise the Assembly how this government is delivering on land release to enable timely building approvals?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Karama is a local member who knows just how important this is to get Territorians into their first home. As we came to the Chamber today we were talking about Marrara Gardens in the member's electorate and how young families can now move there and set down roots in the Northern Territory.

To do that, they need titled lots. It is important that we get them out the door. I have an update for the Assembly. On 13 March this year 133 titled lots went out the door from the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment; it was our largest day for that. You could say that we have lots of lots. We are ensuring that we get land to market and that it is titled. That is important.

Once people have a titled lot they need a builder, and that builder needs an approval. There have been 579 building approvals over the last 12 months to March. We are proud of that. It is up on the previous year when there were about 400. We will continue to drive that growth across the Territory. It does not matter whether people are in Darwin, Alice Springs or anywhere in between, we are getting on with the job of ensuring that we are delivering land to market and that builders are getting their approvals on time.

I noticed the Member for Johnston speaking about the affordability of rent earlier. When I look at townhouse and unit approvals, I see that they are up, with 161 approved. That is up from 108 the previous year. We will continue to drive the unit and building approvals across the Territory so that there are options for families who are coming here.

Land release is important; I have spoken about this many times in this House. We must bring land to market and ensure there is a pipeline. in relation to Crown land releases, we have Northcrest, Zuccoli, Holtze and the private development of Marrara Gardens, Durack Heights and Humpty Doo.

In relation to total lots that are ready now—because it is important to speak about how many we have—there are 298 residential titled lots, which is more than double the previous year. There are 234 additional residential untitled lots in the pipeline that you can buy off the plan out at Holtze. We can see the titled lots ready to go, and there is the pipeline coming through. This means Territorians can start accessing that $50,000 grant.

I was at Holtze earlier this year, talking to a young lady called Georgia. Georgia has taken up that $50,000 first home builder grant and is building her first home in the Territory. This is what our government is enabling young Territorians to do—set down roots, make a life and build their first home in the Territory, and we are damn proud about it.

Watch Houses – Transitional Custody Centres

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS

Are people still being held in the watch house buildings under another name, such as transitional custody centres, in Darwin? How are these transition centres different to when they were called 'watch houses'? How many people are still being held in cold, overcrowded cells for weeks without appropriate medical access and reasonable time outside their cells? The Ombudsman wrote the report in November last year called, 'These conditions are inhuman'.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it could take me a lot longer than three minutes to answer. What happened in relation to these watch houses, Member for Mulka, is that when the police arrest someone and need to transport them to court, especially somewhere like Katherine, they will keep them overnight, so those numbers are fluid. Unlike your friends to your right, when they had them housed there permanently—literally in the hundreds—we on this side have invested in Corrections.

The former Attorney-General had the shirt 'Jailing is failing', but it should have said, 'I have failed the jail system'. He did it; he failed it. He moved those people there. We have invested in the Corrections system.

Since we came to power in the last 20 months, we have brought over 1,278 new beds into Corrections. What we have done is move those people out of watch houses, which Labor had said was okay and left them in there for months on end. We have created these beds and put them in this space because it is all about rehabilitation. It is about breaking the cycle of reoffending.

Under our watch, we have ensured that people—especially young offenders—go to school. There are industry skills—Sentenced to a Job 2.0—available for the offenders to learn what it takes to get up in the morning and have a routine. Under the previous Labor government, when they were locked in a watch house, that was difficult to do.

As well as that, we have put in G4S. We allow our experienced officers to work behind the wire, and G4S are out. More Territorians—locals—are getting employed. One of my friends got one of those jobs and is now full time for G4S.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. The question was: are people still being held in watch house buildings under a different name, such as transitional custody centres? How are these different to when they were called 'watch houses'?

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, minister. You have time.

Mr MALEY: I guess you are referring to the Darwin watch house, which is now used by the police again. When they arrest someone in Mitchell Street, instead of having to drive them to Palmerston and drive them back, that centre is now a transitional area where if you get arrested on a Friday or Saturday and have to go to court on Monday or Tuesday …

Ms Uibo: That is still in the police station; so you just changed the name.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mr MALEY: … or alternatively, you go to court Monday and have to go back on Tuesday, you will go here, which is quicker, easier and less transport for those people.

If that is what you were referring to …

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; I believe the question asked how many people are currently being held in the transitional centres—AKA, watch houses.

Mr MALEY: I think I answered that. It goes up and down; it changes. It could be zero today, two tomorrow or four the next day. It is an operational question, and it depends how the police do.

The police do a wonderful job arresting people and keeping the community safe; that is what they do. They put bad people into jail so they do not reoffend and commit more crimes. This is about keeping the community safe, rehabilitation and ensuring the people who are detained have an opportunity to come out better people—they go to a watch house, stay there and do not have to travel back and forth.

Budget 2026–27 – Palmerston Special Secondary School

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Last week you announced that in the 2026–27 budget the Finocchiaro CLP government will commit $110m for the Palmerston special secondary education school, which is needed and long past due, to be built adjacent to Rosebery Secondary School. You also announced, for the first time, the proposed design of the school, which includes 25 classrooms, a mini-Woolworths and a new music room to give students job-ready skills.

Mr Howe: And a pool!

Mr KERLE: And a pool!

Minister, what does the new school mean for families of students with a disability in the Palmerston rural area, and can you please provide an update of when construction will start and when the school will open?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are proud on this side of the House. I was given a petition in opposition by Francis De Silva, and I brought it to parliament. We have been working with Francis and an expert panel to get the construction and design of this building happening.

The tender will go out in May this year for this building, and we expect the sod-turning to be in October. This is an exciting announcement. I note that the Opposition Leader this morning said in her contribution that I should hang my head in shame as the minister for Education.

Ms Uibo: For not giving Alekarenge the money it deserved.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mrs HERSEY: Quite frankly, I am proud to be the first minister for Education in a long time who has not come from education background but my passion and desire for every Territorian to get the education they deserve no matter where they are …

Ms Uibo: What about the Alekarenge and Minyerri kids?

Mrs HERSEY: Opposition Leader, if you pipe down for five minutes …

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, stop interjecting.

Mrs HERSEY: This school will be built alongside the Rosebery Secondary School, and it will have 200 students. There is a huge need in that area for a special school. At the Driver high school there are 17 classrooms being taken up with the special education unit. We also have the Henbury School where those students go when they need to go to high school, so this school will be crucial for Palmerston and rural area for children with additional needs to go to.

It will have a mini-Woolworths. Children can do certificate I and II in some VET courses for them to get a job when they finish. There is a farm area and a pool where they can have hydrotherapy. They can do certificate I and II in retail and horticulture. There is a cafe. There are many things available for students who will go to the Palmerston special school—that is not what it will be called when it is announced. The first day of term will be in 2029.

I look forward to the opening of that special education precinct, and I am proud of the work that the Education department and the advisory group have done. A huge thankyou goes to Francis De Silva for bringing it to me as a petition. I am proud of our government for this announcement in our year of action, certainty and security. As the Treasurer said, this is a budget for the everyday Territorian.

Budget 2026–27 – Town Camps and Homelands

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

Your budget indicates a budget reduction of about $3m for town camps and homelands. Can you confirm if that is a cut, and how much of the funding in the budget is allocated to repairs and maintenance in Territory town camps?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Gwoja knows as well as I do, being a remote member, the importance of town camps but also remote communities, outstations and homelands. These are occupied by various people sometimes at different times and the issue that the member raises are important because there has been no reduction of funding regarding town camps and homelands. Under the federal funding agreement, as you would know, Member for Gwoja—you have probably dealt with these yourself—there are some ups and downs to funding, but the agreement provides for roughly about $120m over three years to support homelands.

Under the FFA the Northern Territory Government is required to maintain its contribution at a level that matches the Commonwealth over three years. In the 2025–26 budget the output was increased by $16.49m to the original budget. That increase in funding was used to carry out a backlog of repairs and maintenance to town camps, but also some of the remote homelands. There are ups and downs when it comes to delivering

repairs and maintenance to homelands and town camps. It can be weather conditions, availability of contractors, or cultural issues but I reassure you that $16.49m—you would see that increase for the 2025–26 budget—has been used as a catch up.

In my electorate alone—Member for Gwoja, you know this area well through Arlparra and Utopia—there has been significant upgrades in the Utopia area, Mungkarta in my electorate, Wogyala, and some upgrades are coming at Corella Creek.

When you look at the revised budget for 2025–26, that increase of $16.49m is the budget getting back to where it normally is, which is that figure in the budget has been consistent over a number of years. The key is to look at that increase of $16.49m for 2025–26 because that gives some explanation of the work that has been going on and carrying over. That work is still being carried over as we speak. That funding amount, looking at the budget line—you know as much as we do when it comes to federal funding agreements that are in the budget. Have a look at the funding agreement, and you will get a good explanation why.

Budget 2026–27 Town Camps and Homelands – Supplementary Question

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

Can you confirm how many new houses your government will build in Alice Springs town camps this year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not have that number in front of me, but I can take that on notice. As you know, a lot of the decisions are being made at a joint level between the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth, the four land councils and Aboriginal Housing NT. The decisions being made through the steering group are important because we regard that as an opportunity not only to engage with all our partners—being the land councils and Aboriginal Housing NT—but it is also an opportunity to ensure that the money and the building program goes to where it is needed most. I am happy to take that on notice and provide you with some answers.

Budget 2026–27 – St John Ambulance NT

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for HEALTH

The CLP government is working to improve the safety of all Territorians so they can lead healthier and happy lives. Access to quality emergency healthcare is vital to helping Territorians when they most need help. Strong health services mean communities are healthier, more resilient and better supported. A strong ambulance service is crucial to ensuring Territorians can get the medical attention they need in critical times and they need to know when that help is coming. How is the Finocchiaro CLP government acting to ensure we have a strong ambulance service and that our community is safer and our Territory lifestyle is protected?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Casuarina knows, just like every member on this side, how important St John Ambulance is to the Northern Territory. We know—everybody in the Chamber should know—that the work the paramedics are doing on a daily basis is incredible. Not only are they working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, quite often they are operating under extremely challenging circumstances. Just recently, paramedics were at the Alice Springs Hospital when there was some rioting going on outside the hospital. Our paramedics are exposed to all sorts of violence. The critical thing that paramedics is providing important healthcare to people. They are Territorians.

The Finocchiaro CLP government is providing a $10m support package to St John Ambulance. That is in this year's budget. Not only will that provide the opportunity to increase paramedics, but it provides additional support while we are in the middle of negotiating a five-year agreement with St John Ambulance.

This is important because not only are we providing our $68m; we are also negotiating a long-term five-year agreement with St John Ambulance to provide the certainty for Territorians. Territorians want to know that when they ring triple zero and they are in need of an ambulance, they want to be sure that ambulance will turn up.

When you compare the $68m to what we are providing in this year's budget, you only have to go back to 2023. St John Ambulance has been under a lot of pressure for a lot of years. Labor was providing $36.1m annually. You can get a feel for the increase in funding that the CLP government is providing.

In the meantime, there have been significant increases in the number of calls and ambulance presentations to St John Ambulance. Also, the demand for St John Ambulance services has increased significantly over the last five years. To be here today talking about an increase is critical to ensure that St John Ambulance has the immediate funding injection to provide those resources and certainty for Territorians. Our ambos are on the front line delivering services for Territorians.

This is all part of the $2.56bn budget that Health is delivering this year. We are delivering more nurses, beds and equipment, and we are supporting our paramedics on the front line.

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

MOTION
A Budget that Fails Territorians

Madam SPEAKER: Before we go to the Leader of the Opposition, I ask that debate regarding this be considered in view of Standing Order 83, A Motion which Anticipates Business already on the Notice Paper.

Although the wording of this motion is different, the debate that will ensue could be similar to the debate that we are having regarding the Appropriation Bill. I remind people who are contributing to this motion not to make it a budget speech essentially which would be duplicating what we are having later on and what we have already had today regarding the Appropriation Bill.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the clarity about Standing Order 83, so I will take note of that.

I move that this Assembly condemns the Finocchiaro CLP government for delivering a budget that completely fails Territorians, delivering no real cost-of-living relief, no pipeline of infrastructure works, no plan to support the growth and prosperity of critical job-creating sectors and no economic vision for the future of the Northern Territory.

When we look at the state of affairs in the Northern Territory, particularly the economy, we see that there needs to be some heavy lifting. This is the opportunity to lead the Territory's economy. That is what Territorians expect of whoever is in government. Unfortunately, we are not seeing that in the Territory.

Some of the points in my motion I have spoken to already. Madam Speaker, I am noting your point about Standing Order 83, so I will focus on some of the key areas which are priorities for our Labor opposition team.

I have been speaking to people across the length and breadth of the Territory about the cost of living. It is clear that every day more people and businesses across the Territory are starting to feel the pinch. Their hip pockets are starting to shrink, and more people are becoming concerned that the cost of living is impacting on their families, daily lives and businesses.

Measures that my team and I have spoken about publicly include air connectivity and connections, particularly the Northern Territory's ability to get ahead when it comes to services and routines. I know, Madam Speaker, in your home town of Alice Springs, air connectivity is important. From Alice Springs, you are two hours from some of the major cities in the southeast pocket of Australia. Air connectivity enables us to work, visit family and friends, access services that are not available in the Northern Territory and have holidays to have a break and come back refreshed and keep doing what we love in the Territory is important.

I put in a submission to the committee inquiry that the federal parliament is running, specifically inviting and wanting to see the federal committee members have hearings in the Northern Territory. I put a couple of examples in my submission about some of the cost-of-living pressures for people in my electorate, which is quite a remote electorate.

Bear in mind RAAF Base Tindal is also in the Arnhem electorate. It is one of the biggest and busiest Defence bases in the country. I am proud to represent RAAF Base Tindal. Even having a major RAAF Defence post just outside of Katherine, a regional centre in the Northern Territory, comes with challenges such as the cost of building RAAF Defence bases. The Darwin RAAF Base cost is significantly higher. Anyone who has done their homework or visited Katherine and Tindal lately knows that a significant amount of work is planned by Defence for Tindal. Some of the new development there is forward-facing for US Marines. The new Triton hangar has been completed and is now actioned. Tindal is the home of the F-35 Lightning II jet. That is the fast flash jet which will be participating in two big operations later this year.

With the cost of living, work and doing business in the Northern Territory, we know that Territorians are feeling the pinch across all our electorates. To have a budget that delivers or addresses some of those concerns—I notice the language that the CLP is using in the last day-and-a-half is 'everyday Territorians', as if CLP members have just discovered that everyday Territorians exist. I do not know which type of Territorians the government has been talking to—maybe not everyday Territorians—but it has discovered that everyday Territorians exist, so it is starting to now focus on everyday Territorians. That is great.

I wonder what the definition of an everyday Territorian is. If you live in the Territory you are here every day, so I am not sure who the government is targeting with this budget. I am not sure where the cost-of-living measures are. I heard some answers earlier today, which rattled off a list of, 'Well, this is what we are doing'. No—if it is existing programs, initiatives or vouchers, that is not cost-of-living relief; that is the general business of government being maintained. It is a maintenance budget that we saw yesterday, just over 24 hours ago.

It is ironic that the Chief Minister made her big song and dance about the federal government money that comes to the Northern Territory is purely a repairs and maintenance budget. She has done the same with Treasurer Bill Yan, who has been pushed to the front and urged into the spotlight to put forward the dismal Northern Territory budget. He is in the firing line and leading the charge for the CLP government.

Yesterday four ministers spoke about their portfolios, and not one of them sounded excited or like they believed their words about how good the Territory's budget, the CLP's second budget, is this year. It is two budgets down and there are two to go before the next election, and there is not one vision from the CLP about the future and Territory economy growth. There is no centrepiece to lead the way and be a legacy for the CLP government in this term. It is halfway done and there is no vision.

In just under two years it seems that the CLP is already out of ideas. Most of the projects that are being completed or finalised, particularly in the infrastructure space, were started, costed, planned, projected and maintained—if they have not been cut—by the former Labor government. Some of the projects that the CLP government did not cut in the budget last year have resurfaced. They were tucked away for 12 months and have been dusted off and brought back to look like the CLP is delivering them or planning the way.

The cost of living is simply not a part of the CLP's budget; we can all attest to that. To anyone who says otherwise, I would be happy to see projects, programs and initiatives other than what is already on the list from budgets of three, four, five or six years ago. They are not cost-of-living measures. There is a clear difference.

The infrastructure pipeline of works is another key priority for my Labor team. I use the expression 'pipeline of works' because it has been said to me by businesses, contractors and key industry stakeholders across the Territory. The use of that expression is physical as well as metaphorical. The pipeline of works in infrastructure is drying up in the Northern Territory.

I apologise; I do not have my budget books here. They are upstairs on my desk. When I get my budget pack there are two papers which I always read carefully. Madam Speaker, I am sure that you have your favourites as well. Ever since I was a backbencher in 2016 one of my favourite budget books has been the agency budget book which shows the costing for every line item in the government. That is what I was highlighting yesterday, in case anyone wants to know. My other favourite budget book as a bush member—which the Member for Barkly will know from experience because he is out there getting lots of selfies—is the infrastructure budget paper, which outlines the infrastructure plan for the Northern Territory. It used to list every bridge, culvert, road section and kilometre. This was my favourite budget book when I …

Mrs Hersey: It was a pipedream.

Ms UIBO: A pipedream—the Member for Katherine obviously has lost touch with her electorate because if anyone has driven from Katherine to Darwin, they would know that it is probably the worst section of the Stuart Highway I have seen in my 16-plus years of driving that road.

Mrs Zio: Why didn't you fix it?

Ms UIBO: I wish that the CLP government would fix it, Member for Fannie Bay, but it sounds like the Treasurer, the minister for Infrastructure, must fly over that section of road a lot coming up from Alice Springs and never driving it, because it is by far the worst and the most dangerous road that I have driven on in nearly two decades.

I even asked someone I was travelling with, ‘Am I looking at this from a different perspective because of where I am living, my job and the advocacy I have to play?’ The person I was travelling with said, ‘Absolutely not’. They have driven this road longer than I have been alive, and it is a seriously dangerous road. I have had a conversation with one of the members of the CLP government. I will not out them because I am sure they have the same concerns and hopefully they are articulating it to their teammates. That road is one of the most dangerous.

I drove the whole section a couple of weeks ago from Darwin to Katherine, Katherine to Tennant Creek and Tennant Creek to Alice Springs. I drove back a week later from Alice to Renner Springs, Renner Springs to Katherine and Katherine to Darwin. I have driven the whole road.

Mr Edgington: The land of opportunity?

Ms UIBO: I did not go to see the Member for Barkly; I apologise. Next time I will; I will be there in July.

The sections of road I noted—and I become sceptical when someone says that the road is bad—because I have driven on some bad roads. I am a bush member, and I can see the ups and downs. The roads are especially bad after the Wet Season. That is the nature of those unsealed roads in the bush which we are continuing to advocate so they become sealed.

I was sceptical of anyone, particularly when they are talking about the Stuart Highway, who say the road is bad. The road is bad, and I have said to people when I have heard someone is travelling to watch out for the potholes, they are dangerous. I have never had to say that before to anyone travelling to and from Katherine, past Mataranka in my electorate on the Stuart Highway before you turn off on Central Arnhem Road or further down on the Roper Highway.

I have never had to warn people about the potholes on the road because my fear is that if we get some more of our drive market back—I know the fuel shock and crisis globally has put in doubt our tourism season, particularly this year, and I will feel the pinch with some of my electorate businesses which will go through some tough times. I am concerned about what may or may not come this Dry Season.

I am worried that a caravan or an inexperienced driver will be driving along the Stuart Highway and will either get caught on a pothole, have a tyre pop—I passed four cars a week ago at night, all pulled over in pairs changing tyres. Everyone was safe but were all changing tyres. I heard the truckies on the two-way radio talking about the potholes.

I have never had to warn people about the danger of the highway of the Northern Territory, our main highway of connection, the Stuart Highway. I am worried that an inexperienced driver or someone in a small car, someone towing a boat or caravan or trailer will have a tyre pop and something go wrong. I have that fear in my mind, and I am often travelling that part of the road on my own—I try not to travel at night but the last three times I have travelled unfortunately it has been at night. I am alert and aware of the dangers of the road but my worry is that not every driver will drive to the conditions so please drive to the conditions and get those roads fixed.

The pipeline of roads and works—I picked up my budget infrastructure paper, and it was as skinny as the Treasurer’s speech. I thought surely that is not the annex of the budget infrastructure book, and I doublechecked all the titles. I flipped it open and I was disappointed as my most favourite budget paper, as a bush member has completely dwindled away to a couple of pages. That physically represents the concerns that I have heard, and my team has heard regarding the drying up of the infrastructure pipeline.

When I was in Central Australia, construction and civil works businesses that I met with were extremely concerned and sceptical. They are keeping on employees, apprentices and trainees in hope for some of those government tenders to go out for the normal, forward-facing works and jobs that they apply for, but they are not having that same sequence of doing a job getting ready for a new job and then off they go with the work.

This is a huge concern, and I say to the CLP government, particularly the Treasurer—who is also the Infrastructure minister—if he is not hearing those same concerns, get out there in Alice Springs as well as everywhere else and talk to those construction companies about those real concerns, because that skinny budget paper on infrastructure planning for the Northern Territory was abysmal and disappointing. That is from me, a bush member who always looks for what is coming up in my electorate, let alone the concerns and burden on our Territory businesses in civil works and construction.

One of our priorities is education, jobs and training. That includes the workforce, which I have spoken a bit about, keeping it here, growing our own, having the right settings in the Northern Territory to attract and retain skilled workers, and having them ready for our industries. We back that. One of the few things we agree with the CLP government on is that the Northern Territory should be looked at uniquely when it comes to attracting and retaining migrant skilled workers for the Northern Territory.

The Member for Port Darwin spoke about the DAMA (Designated Area Migration Agreement), which we are in the third iteration of. We were the first jurisdiction in Australia to sign the DAMA, then other parts of the country followed. Forgive me for rubbishing the Gold Coast, but I do not see it as a regional area. But apparently, they have the status.

Every time I get a chance, whether I am in Canberra or here, I say the federal government must change and make sure there is equity in regional incentives. The whole of the Northern Territory, including Darwin, is considered regional on the maps they look at in Canberra, so why is the fastest-growing city in the country—the Gold Coast—considered a regional area? That blows my mind. I maintained that argument formerly in government, and now in opposition, and I will continue to maintain it.

I thank the Member for Port Darwin and her department for their work in signing the third DAMA iteration for the Northern Territory, but we need to maintain a strong and active pursuit of skilled migrants in the Northern Territory and support international students not to have a specific cap from the southeast coast. The Territory is unique and we love it, but we want people to come here, stay here, live here and love it.

International students are so important for the fabric of the Territory's community, but they also put down roots here, get jobs, grow families, bring family members because they love the Territory, and we encourage that not to be inhibited by a specific cap when it comes to international students and skilled migrants. Our team supports that, so we keep advocating for it.

Our fellow colleagues, Luke Gosling and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, are of the same mindset. We need to all sing from the same page in the hymn book when it comes to attracting more international students, not having caps on our Territory numbers as well as those skilled migrant numbers. We agree on that one small thing with the CLP government.

Education, training and jobs are key to all that and are forward facing. When you have a pipeline of infrastructure works, you can get your apprentices through. You have your second, third and fourth-year apprentices, who have some great stories. Some apprentices have finished their qualifications and started their own businesses in the Territory. What a great story. I heard that in Alice Springs as well. You probably know some of those businesses and companies.

Having that as a key priority we were underwhelmed when we looked at some of the projects and programs for education and training. The Member for Katherine mentioned my speech earlier today and the specific piece of infrastructure for one of the schools that has missed out last year. The millions of dollars for Alekarenge School has come back on the books but it has been sliced in half. Why do the children and staff at Alekarenge School deserve half of the funding that they were allocated over two years ago? That is what I said to the Member for Katherine and why she should hang her head in shame.

I am sure the Member for Barkly, who, it looks like, is reading up on the budget books over there because he probably does not want to speak out against his team, agrees. Whether it is a Labor government or a CLP government, Alekarenge School deserves that investment infrastructure. It should be the full amount. I had $7m and I believe it is $8.7m. The Member for Barkly, I am sure, can correct me. I make the point that it is over double what is in the budget books now.

One of our other key priorities for the Territory Labor team is partnerships with Aboriginal Territorians. We have seen the hurt, frustration and the lack of willingness caused by the CLP government with many Aboriginal Territorians, organisations and corporations across the Northern Territory because the idea of looking equally at Aboriginal Territorians and seeing them as key stakeholders is not in the vocabulary of the CLP government. We are talking about one-third of Territorians.

It is a shame that no partnerships or real investment in Aboriginal affairs—I do not have it; again, my books are upstairs. I could not even find the agency line item for the horribly named Aboriginal strategic partnerships group—or whatever it is. It has been completely downgraded. It is not its own office under the CLP's decision of last year. I could not even see where the budget for that specific division is now—it is not an office, just a unit somewhere in the ether of the CLP government's many departments they changed over under the machinery of government.

I felt a pang of sadness that all the work from that unit, division—whatever it is called now, poor thing—is not front and centre. It is not about driving partnerships with Aboriginal Territorians that focus on leadership and solutions. There is almost no commitment whatsoever.

We know the CLP broke its own election commitment in 2024, leading into its first budget of 2025, when it made an election commitment in black and white—it was Bill Yan, the Treasurer, when he was the shadow Treasurer—of the $12m for the Aboriginal ranger grants program. It was a small amount of money in the bigger scheme of life in the Territory budget, but an important and critical commitment.

Labor made the commitment, and so did the CLP. Bang, off you go in your first budget, CLP, in May 2025 and it was completely cut. We asked question after question of the CLP government, which is supposed to, in that prior election period, do its own fiscal responsibility costing when it comes to election commitments. It does not have to do it itself; it just puts it through Treasury. It broke and lied about that commitment to Territorians. That shows that it has not learned from the mistake of last year because that money has not been reinstated in the budget of yesterday. That is an extreme slight and shame on the CLP government. That is just one example.

One of our five key commitments is health. The CLP government has shown in nearly two years of governing the Northern Territory that it is only reactive to health. This is interesting because health affects everyone across the Northern Territory. It is almost like education. Everyone has an opinion on education, and everyone has an opinion on health. It is one of the biggest areas. I commend the President of the Australian Medical Association of the Northern Territory who spoke strongly on ABC radio this morning about how lacklustre and disappointing the CLP's budget on health was this year.

We heard from the Health minister yesterday and in other commentary in Question Time that there is a record spend in Health. Most of that money has come from the federal government, and so it should—I am not dismissing that—but the lack of planning by the CLP in health services and health infrastructure across the Northern Territory is frightening. It is deeply concerning, and Territorians are starting to question whether the CLP cares about our health system. Does the CLP care about our health workforce? Will it govern in a way that we would expect of any government—Labor or Liberal—when it comes to investing in healthcare for Territorians?

We saw not the lack of regard and lack of respect, but the sheer politicking of last year's CLP budget which cut the $20m that was allocated for the Gunbalanya health clinic in the Member for Arafura's electorate but kept the CLP's Barkly commitment of $20m for a new Borroloola clinic. Both were much needed, but guess what? The government member got what he wanted, and the opposition member did not. The people of Gunbalanya (Oenpelli) missed out because of that disgusting politicking of health—'We will not worry about that; that is not a government member's seat. Let us punish the people of the Arafura electorate in the Gunbalanya community.'

The government did not put it back on the books, and I am sure the Member for Arafura will talk strongly on this. It is a shame because the Health minister promised that the next budget would have it. This is the next budget. Yesterday was the next budget. The Gunbalanya health clinic is not in the budget books. If any the member on the other side cares about what the CLP team is doing for health, at least ask this one tiny question: why are we not supporting health infrastructure in all parts of the Territory?

The Northern Territory Government is the government for the whole of the Northern Territory; it is not just the government for the CLP seats. Think about that, and perhaps in the next two chances you get you could rectify the lack of pointed focus in infrastructure planning to support our workforce and health services in the Northern Territory.

Maternity services was a sore point for the Health minister yesterday, with the question and desperate attempt to try to shift the blame—'Where is Labor in talking about maternity services?' He is either not doing his work, or he has closed his ears and his advisers are not telling him. We have been talking about the loss of the private maternity services for well over a year and a half, if you count from when the CLP must have first learned of it in October 2024 when it came to government. The Health minister could have asked me—I still had the federal Health minister's phone number—but he waited until after the federal election. There was an admission by the Health minister yesterday, 'We waited until after the federal election'.

Mr SMELT: 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.

Ms UIBO: The process of asking the federal government to give assistance—I do not care if you have to beg because if it is for the benefit of Territorians, do it. I will do it from opposition, but clearly the responsibility lies with the Northern Territory Government. Do your job and ask the federal government. Do it when you learn about the problem; do not wait and say, 'Let's hope that the federal Liberal government will get in and then we can be matey-matey with them'. No. I do not care who is in government in Canberra. Do your job, and ask for that assistance. Make sure the Territory does not miss out.

Tasmania did not miss out. Tasmania went straight to the Health minister and got the assistance needed for Tasmania. The Northern Territory rested on its laurels. The CLP did not bother to hammer the federal Health minister. No, it waited until, 'Oh no, now we have to actually do something because our team did not get in federally. Now we have to talk to the federal Labor government again.' You could have done it six months before the federal election and got the Northern Territory a win.

It beggars belief the work that we have done in opposition in uncovering some disturbing behaviour by the CLP government in not actioning or accepting proposals that were made by two private obstetricians who worked—past tense because they are not working there anymore—in the Darwin private maternity ward. They came up with proposals on how to keep the maternity services in the private hospital running. The proposals went to the CLP government. It either did not reply or accept. I am still unsure regarding that. Maybe the Member for Barkly, in his Health portfolio, can shed some light. I have tried to find out whether it was declined or just not answered.

To completely dismiss has become such a routine for the CLP government. If I were to do a count back of all the correspondence I have done as either the Member for Arnhem or as the opposition leader that I have not had answered—I understand because I have been in government. I know that it may take a couple of weeks—there are probably only three ministers who—I am sorry for them. I write to them regularly—bother to respond. There is probably one minister who chooses not to. That is the leader. As an example, for every 10 pieces of correspondence that I send, I might get one response.

It is a sheer lack of respect for the job I do as well the job representing the electorate that I am honoured and privileged to hold in this parliament. I am getting them an answer. It was at its worst—I have heard about nasty governments, but I have seen and experienced it now—at the height of the floods and the pending cyclone when there was a lack of information, care and respect from CLP ministers in getting any information out. I had to go to other sources. When there is a crisis, all bets aside, it is about saving lives, property and livelihoods.

I thank some ministers for doing their job and getting back to me quickly, but there are others who should hang their heads in shame. It became a disgusting political game when it came to what we could have done together in getting messaging out and responses back and then the recovery process.

I thank the Member for Katherine for the work she has done in the $100m recovery phase. There are other things that she has done that I do not agree with, but I support the work she has done in that space, such as bringing Mr Ken Davies PSM out of retirement again. He is well respected and efficient across the Northern Territory. Everyone from all sides of politics would agree. Spearheading that recovery has probably been one of the small saving graces of the CLP in the aftermath.

There are a lot of people hurt, frustrated and extremely unhappy with the government's response to the floods, from the east to the west and from the south to the north. It needs a lot of remedial work in terms of public relations, let alone recovery and forward planning. I thank the ministers who did not let politics get in the way of communication, information, response and care and thought for the people of Arnhem who I represent and for my role as the Opposition Leader in doing bipartisan work when the time calls for it.

They are our five priorities, as a Territory Labor opposition; cost of living, infrastructure and housing, which go hand in hand, health, education, jobs and training and Aboriginal Affairs. They are the areas our team is concentrating on and they are the areas we have been unpicking initially and the reason I put this motion up today in General Business about the lack of economical vision. This comes from the Chief Minister who leads the CLP government, and we have not seen a centrepiece of economic prosperity in the budget, last year or this year.

The lack of growth to support the Territory's economy and the language being used is tricky and misleading, and our regions—I understand you come from an important region, but the Central Australian region has nothing that will drive their economy or grow the Territory's economy. There are some good things in the budget on infrastructure pieces and the maintenance budget. There are also other projects and programs which were there already and it is expected the government will do them.

There is nothing big for my region in Big Rivers nor my electorate of Arnhem, but that is because the CLP is malicious and small-minded and wants to punish the people of Arnhem because they have a Labor member representing and speaking up for them.

Mrs Hersey: The upgrades at Maude Creek.

Ms UIBO: Yes, Maude Creek, that is one of the smallest rivers, and I said I supported the Member for Katherine in some of her work. Once again, it is maintenance work. That bridge is already there, the road is already sealed, how about we get off the track. The Member for Barkly is probably the only one who actually travels out bush. Why not go and listen to him and understand the importance of our road network, infrastructure planning and, I may be too optimistic, but next year the budget paper will be thicker with infrastructure planning. In fact, I double checked I had the right booklet.

I am flabbergasted that the CLP members are trying to spin their maintenance budget as the language they are now using, 'A budget for everyday Territorians'. Who are those everyday Territorians are and what the criteria is they should be looking for. That is new and being developed by the government, and it has been their vision because I am desperate to see where there is something which will grow the Territory's economy. Where will we see the growth of jobs supporting those sectors.

In the short time I have remaining—I know CLP members love to blame the former Labor government over eight years of mess; they love taking credit for the things we did well. It is as if the eight years did not exist. Without taking accountability or responsibility for their abysmal budget, they start playing the blame game. They are almost bipolar in the sense of presenting what is good and bad for the Territory, and they love taking credit for some of the successful Labor projects and infrastructure, which were started, costed and planned, but which were delivered in the CLP's timeframes.

I commend my motion to the Assembly.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, this motion is entitled 'A Budget that Fails Territorians'. Specifically, the motion contends that the Assembly condemns the CLP Finocchiaro government for delivering a budget that 'completely fails Territorians'. Delivering four things is the claim: one, no real cost-of-living relief; two, no pipeline of infrastructure works; three, no plan to support the growth and prosperity of critical job-creating sectors; and four, no economic vision for the future of the Northern Territory.

That is a subjective claim, the idea that this budget completely fails Territorians, but it can be fairly quickly objectively dispensed with. Prima facie, the reality of it is that we are providing cost-of-living relief measures, as there is $290m or something in there. There is extra, indeed.

No pipeline of infrastructure works—again, that is just hyperbole. There is mention of exhaustive infrastructure works, and the Leader of the Opposition has just pointed out at great length everything articulated in Budget Paper No 4, so once again that is flat out wrong.

No plan to support the growth and prosperity of critical job-creating sectors—I think you will find, again if you go through the actual papers, there is extensive reference to the five sectors that we, as a government, have been focused on from the beginning and continue to be focused on.

Finally, the most generic charge, that there is no economic vision for the future of the Northern Territory. That is a fair enough claim. That is a philosophical argument that you are making, and that is a philosophical argument that I think is worth debating. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to discuss it.

As rightfully pointed out, it is unusual to have the opportunity to discuss budgetary matters in the middle of a discussion of an Appropriation Bill. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for affording the Assembly—with her precious time on General Business day—the opportunity for us to zoom out and think more broadly about budgets beyond critiquing just the virtues of specific commitments. To think abouts budget, success and failure, indeed, is a useful exercise for us all, noting that we have precious time when giving budget speeches to talk about the nuts and bolts of what might be happening in or for our electorates.

Let me begin by saying budget time is always a complex time of the year for me. It is no secret that I have a lot of opinions about our economic affairs. This time last year I deliberately chose to abstain from providing economic commentary in May, because I did not want to provide mixed messages in any form, and it was for the Treasurer to articulate a message and a vision for the Northern Territory CLP Finocchiaro government. That is precisely what he did last year.

I am delighted this year to have the opportunity to get behind my learned colleague, Treasurer Yan, in support of this budget. I find it remarkable that people would make a claim that this budget has no economic vision. On the contrary, what it has is—for the first time in a decade—some semblance of logical consistency. It is actually a coherent budget, not a fantastical wish list of *Utopia*-esque nonsense. It is a continuation of last year's budget, consistent with the priorities that government has articulated from day one.

Here is the rub of it. You may not like those priorities. You may not like the prescription for how we are trying to rebuild the economy, reduce crime and restore lifestyle, but it is unfair to suggest that the budget has no vision and that it is a maintenance budget. Do you know what it is? Not a maintenance budget, but an honest budget. It is the first one in donkey's years that makes any sense, where the gap between Budget Paper No 1 and Budget Papers No 2 to 6 is not total fantasy. That is the reality of what we are dealing with for a change.

Isn't it a crying shame for the opposition that we cannot just keep on milking from the magic money tree to keep announcing what is new, special and razzle-dazzle with this budget? That is not how budgets work. That is why we are tens of billions of dollars in debt, because it is the former Labor government which had not real economic nous and demonstrated over a long period that it thought budgeting just meant spending money.

Budgeting is about institutionally saving money, stopping the wastage of money and figuring out how to make money as well. That is where the former Labor governments have failed us.

This budget is logically consistent, coherent and bridges the gap between budgetary rhetoric and reality for the first time a decade. I will return to that concept of the gap between rhetoric and reality substantively and exhaustively soon.

First, notwithstanding the fact that this is a discussion, not about budget 2026–27 but about the higher order arguments. It behoves us to consider some of the remarks that have been made in relation to this budget, noting that the motion is titled 'A budget that fails Territorians'. To contextualise both the motion and subsequent contributions that will come in the ensuing debate, what we have heard so far is this budget is a no plan no future maintenance budget. I do not think so. I think you will find that anyone with a serious economic or accounting head—or any basic financial acumen for that matter—would recognise that there is a much shorter gap between Budget Paper 1 and Budget Papers 2 to 6 in this set of budget papers than in any of the papers for the preceding decade.

No direct relief for cost-of-living pressure—again, just a prima facie role. Missed opportunity—those are pretty rich words considering a decade of wasted opportunity in terms of repositioning our fiscal and financial affairs.

It is pretty ridiculous to say things like lacklustre and visionless. What we have is a plan that we are sticking to. I am sorry it is not a fun-time plan, where we keep reinventing new nonsensical things that never manifest in reality. It is a real plan, and it is a tragedy that there are not more members around to hear about that concrete plan at the moment.

Housing stress is something that was reflected on in generic terms. Seriously, whose fault is that? Where is the housing that was meant to be created over a pipeline of delivery over the last decade? We have to start getting a grip on reality in relation to some of the debates we have here, particularly on economic affairs where we demonstrate disgraceful lack of subject matter understanding, let alone expertise.

My favourite one is population growth is stalling. Oh, my God! I cannot have this conversation again. I do not know how many times I have to explain it in this place. The bottom line is we are stabilising the population situation which the former government was tanking. I could go through these numbers again and again, but I will just be referencing old speeches and wasting precious time in which I want to be talking of other things today.

The bottom line is we are stabilising population growth in and around 1.1%, which I do not think is great, and we can do a whole lot better. I imagine we will. However, the former Labor government, in the last four quarters before we took over office, quarter on quarter was dropping under 1% population growth year on year. We were down to 0.7% year on year population growth in the last quarter of data available before we took over. How many times and how many ways do we have to explain this?

Budgets are about more than spending. The Leader of the Opposition clearly does not understand the basics in that regard. Do you know what? Thank goodness the cavalry from Nightcliff is rolling in! That fellow can apparently count. I think he is an engineer by trade. I am waiting in earnest to hear the Member for Nightcliff's

contribution because, Lord help us if he does not provide something on the literacy and numeracy front from the opposition benches.

Razor cuts is not helpful language. That kind of rhetoric is dragging down the quality of debate and the understanding of the issues. Show me 'razor cuts' in this budget. Why is that kind of language being bandied about again? It is for dumb political gains. It is ridiculous.

'Capitalising on windfalls' is another one. It is the pot calling the kettle black. The entire last eight years' worth of Labor budgets were essentially saved by the grace of accounting adjustments and GST recalculations from the federal government. Labor did not make any money in any of that time.

More prison cells—yes, 100% you got us. We are building more prison cells or at least trying to allocate money to figure out how to build more prison cells because, like it or not, we need more prison cells. We probably need a whole lot of other things as well to get to the root causes of crime and to rebuild our society and economy, but now $15m to start thinking about how to sensibly plan new men's and women's prisons is not a bad investment. Here is the rub of it: it is what should have been done and what was purported to have been done by former Labor governments. Yes, you got us; we are interested in building new correctional facilities so that people are not sleeping like sardines in watch houses.

I cannot talk about the delivery of major projects again; I have done too many of these. Even a broken clock is right twice a day, so, sure, a couple of the Labor projects in the major projects—the portfolio of 75 major turkeys—came good, but I think we can all safely say that the majority of those were fantastical promises on paper and had little substantively to support them.

The clear plans for land release is another one. What did the former Labor government do with its own Bringing Land to Market report? What happened to all the work that Dick Guit did? I mean, we are reinventing the wheel year on year, and it is part of the reason why the Northern Territory cannot economically emancipate itself.

The new hospital—hollow criticisms and no actionable solutions from the other side. That is the thing. I will say this without bringing another debate into it: at least there are some members of this Assembly who are offering alternative economic ideas. Some of them I think are not grounded in economic reality and mostly involve fairy dust and organic vegetable collectives; however, at least they are new ideas. The fact is that from the actual opposition benches, I am yet to hear a single economic idea of any worth or credibility in relation to how we grow the economy, grow demographically and create sustainable opportunities for people. It is just more of the same—spend more, spend on things that we spent on and keep spending on; ask for more money because more money will fix the problem.

More money will not fix the problem. That is why this is a budget grounded in reality. The Treasurer had to do actual hard work and say, 'I cannot overnight redress all our debt proposition, but what I will at least slow down the rate at which we are accumulating debt'. That is a laudable objective because you cannot pull a hard handbrake and crash the economy and society and remove the entirety of the bloated public sector. That is not what we are seeking to do. We are trying to reprioritise frontline workers, get rid of back-office staff and create a more efficient and productive economy over time. It starts with turning around a massive barge at this point, and I do not envy the task the Treasurer has in that regard. I think he is not getting a fair shake. I do not think the critique coming from the other side is fair in that regard in relation to explaining our budget position.

The narrative that we will lose—insert key worker, healthcare worker, nurse or whoever it might be—and the suggestion that former Labor governments over three lots of leadership had any idea how to attract or retain population are laughable. Stop talking about it until you come up with a better set of ideas. Seriously, stop talking about it; you are embarrassing yourselves.

Lectures on education from ministers who presided over the systemic decline of public education offerings in the Northern Territory are unbelievable. It is shameful. I think our minister for Education is giving it a right royal crack. She freely admits that she is not a teacher and does not have an education background, but she believes that everybody should have access to opportunity and is doing her level best to try new ways to make it happen.

The focus is on fundamentals, which is what we have to go back to at a time when our public schools are obviously empirically not doing as well as they were in the past, despite the heroic efforts of educators.

Labor's economic model over the last decade speaks for itself. There were half-hearted signals to market on how to make money and begging the Commonwealth for more. How is that plan going for you? The reality is that trying to get resources out of the ground and attract private investment as fast as possible and hoping that the Commonwealth will work with us and is generous, is not new; we are doing the same as what those opposite did. We are all trying to do it more efficiently and productively, but that will not happen overnight.

In the meantime, we are in charge of managing our economic affairs. That means not just spending money but also having a vision and a plan for how we utilise our funding, stop wastage and position ourselves to be a more attractive investment proposition. That is what my learned colleague's budget does.

I am sorry, but some of you need to be better tooled up on understanding what a budget is, how it works, what can be done and what cannot be done. It is not just about spending or asking for more. Cherrypicking singular commitments to try to make a case is just weak. For example, the case this morning that the only growth sector is correctional services is rich coming from three lots of governments that presided over unconstrained public sector growth which was disinhibited and cannibalised the prospect of private sector growth in the Northern Territory. That is the reality of it. Everyone here knows it, and it is time to face up to it.

My learned colleague and the Minister for Public Service are facing up to it. That is what we are doing. We are paying our wages bill without putting it all on credit for once. We are trying to prioritise frontline services. We are trying in earnest to start turning around our wages bill, which is the single-biggest drain on our finances.

'The Treasurer has delivered an underwhelming budget'—I am sorry that it is not razzle-dazzle and fireworks enough for you. Maybe if we spent another $15bn it would be exciting, but that is not what we will do. We will keep chipping away and trying to slow down the rate at which we waste and speed up the rate at which we improve productivity and growth. That will take time.

In the short run it means that state final demand might not look as sexy as you want it to look. Here is a hot tip: do some research and look at the other periods of state final demand when it has been negative in the Northern Territory's growth cycle. We are not hiding those figures; we are just not trumpeting them from the rooftops because at the moment they are not that exciting to talk about. We expect them to improve. The forward estimates indicate that they will improve. There is an economic cycle to these things that suggests they will improve.

An economist called Alfred E. Kahn in 1966 wrote a paper that was influential called 'The Tyranny of Small Decisions: Market Failures, Imperfections, and the Limits of Economics'. I will not go into it exhaustively, but the bottom line is that it builds the case for how individual small choices and transactions cumulatively delivered unintended large undesirable or suboptimal outcomes.

That is kind of what happened over eight years of Labor management of our books. I do not think it was necessarily maliciously negligent in intent; it was more ineptitude than malice that got us to where we are going to. You can divide that period—that epoch—into three rough zones. There was 2017 to 2019, which we will generously call aspirational budgeting. From 2020 to 2022 there was, frankly speaking, fairly insubstantial budgeting. Then in the last phase of 2023 to 2024 there was let us generously call it exigent budgeting—trying to save the furniture before you get turfed out.

It is a great opportunity for us today to think about those three epochs because they teach us a lot. In a nutshell, they show us that the Territory Labor governments, three times over, which held power from 2016 to 2024, presided over a period that was characterised by significant fiscal volatility and the growing disconnect between—as I began my speech—budgetary rhetoric and economic reality and outcomes.

Whilst budget speeches emphasise budget repair and jobs of the future, what the actual data revealed was a deepening reliance on federal GST transfers and a burgeoning debt profile. Here they are; eight years of budget speeches. Here is the one we are not allowed to talk about today. I will not talk about it. I will come back and talk about how awesome that one is later.

Let us talk about what is wrong with these eight budgets and why we are in the hole we are in now. I will not go through it line by line. What I am doing is pointing out my top 10 indicators of the difference between budgetary rhetoric and economic reality and why we are in the hole we are in now.

The first one is the structural deficit paradox. In 2016 Labor promised to address structural deficit inherited from its previous government, presenting a plan for budget repair—a roadmap to fiscal sustainability. Back

then, you might recall, debt was less than $2m. The reality is that rather than repairing the budget the structural deficit widened.

By 2024 we are projecting fiscal balance deficits through to the end of the decade. The government's inability to align expenditure with its modest revenue base meant that repair was perpetually deferred. That is what happened; they just kept kicking the can down the road.

What my learned colleague has done today—last year not as much as I would have like, but today in this budget—is he is starting to face that harsh reality. It is not much fun getting in front of the media and saying, 'I do not have shiny trinkets and promises for you all, but we are starting to do the work of repair whilst trying not to also gut the place of its last bit of life'.

The second point where there is this massive gap between rhetoric and reality is on actual net debt per capita. Successive Treasurers kept arguing over that period—three of them in a row—that debt was a necessary tool to fund critical infrastructure social services during economic downturns. In short, 'We will spend our way out of the problem, and we have to spend our way out of the problem; it is the only way out of the problem'. That is, in essence, what happened eight times over. Read eight of these in a row, and that is what you find.

In reality, by 2024–25 net debt was projected to reach $12bn, eventually climbing to $14bn by 2029. On a per capita basis, as a result, we were left books where the NT is the most indebted jurisdiction in Australia. That debt to revenue ration, of cited as a measure of sustainability, blew out to beyond 120%, leaving our credit rating extremely vulnerable.

Fortunately, it has stabilised for the present purposes. Again, it is not lazy debate for us to say we were left with a disastrous state of affairs. That is the honest truth; this place was fiscally mismanaged over the last year and possibly a period before that as well. The fact is that is the ship we are trying to turn around at this point.

The third one I alluded to before; this over reliance on GST windfalls. Over those eight years, Labor often framed budgets as a result of 'disciplined financial management'. I am sure we have all heart that one before. The actual budget improvements—the reality of the situation—were almost entirely driven by external factors; specifically higher than expected GST, relativities and pool growth from the Commonwealth.

Without the federal government covering approximately 70% of our revenue and costs, the Territory economy would have been insolvent. The reality is that accounting and GST recalculations, more than anything else, are what created windfalls in this set of eight budgets.

The fourth one I will not go into in detail—the failure to achieve population growth targets. If you go through those budgets you will find reference, particularly in 2018, to the population growth strategy and the laudable objectives to boost the population to 27,000 and then 300,000 by 2030 to secure more GST and drive domestic demand. None of that happened. I can talk about it in forensic detail another time. I will simply say now that, once again, understand that the Territory has struggled with chronic net interstate migration loss. The periods when we had positive interstate migration are when we had correlated with stimulating housing supply, which is one of the things we are trying to do again now.

The Darwin ship lift—I just cannot. The reality of it is it started off as $100m, and it is now $850m. There are so many reasons it should not be what it is now. I freely confess to the fact that I am not privy to enough of the information to make all the assessments and judgments on this, but what is clear—and it is a matter of public—is that the project has become a symbol of infrastructure mismanagement. It has been characterised by significant delay and is now thought of as lacking in transparency regarding its commercial viability. We did not start that process, but we are now trying to deal with that total—I will not use the word I want to use.

The sixth gap between rhetoric and reality is on private investment, and stagnant private investment. I am the one pointing out that private investment is not what it should be here right now. We are having those conversations because we can have a mature discussion about our economic fortunes, but do not think that private investment suddenly collapsed when we came to office. It has essentially been stagnant from 2016 onwards. Each budget speech from that point onwards talks about unlocking private investment through Territory-led projects.

Aside from the Barossa gas project, private investment has basically always been tepid through that period. I will talk about state final demand again, but the bottom line is that over those eight years, today getting on your high horse and saying, 'State final demand is negative now, so what will we do?'—yes, it is at 0.3 now

and it will be at 0.8, and then it will bounce back over the forward estimates and the cycle and will improve again. Suggesting that it was always going gangbusters in the last eight years is pure nonsense.

The failure of projects being revoted is another critical one that we just do not pay enough attention to. What we are talking about here is, basically, each year hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure spending was revoted—that is, pushed to the next year—because projects failed to ever get started or were delayed. This has created this phantom stimulus, where the government gets the headline for the spend without ever actually delivering on the jobs or assets on any proposed timeline.

Contrast that with each one of these, where each time around it is like, 'We are proud to announce record infrastructure this year, record-breaking stimulus to the construction sector'—it is not real. Those promises are just not worth the paper they are written on. That is the bottom line.

Another one that we are on our high horse about in a massive way is the cost of living and the utility price squeeze. Again, go and do the actual work on the numbers and you will see where government has kept claiming to protect Territorians from inflationary pressures by subsidising power and water. In real terms, that is not what happened. In real terms, Darwin remained one of the most expensive places to live in Australia because of a range of structural factors, and the government's decision to maintain high dividends from government-owned corporations like Power and Water arguably, in some ways, helped paper over budget deficits and acted as something of a stealth tax on residents. That is what happened there.

Darwin is an expensive place to live, work and do business. The only way you change that over the longer term is by bringing in more inputs to the system, more capital, more ideas, more labour et cetera. You cannot do that unless you create a more robust investment climate and a place that is more backable. That is why you must do the hard work of ripping off the bandaid and slowly turning around the debt position, signalling to market that we unequivocally back the extractive minerals and gas industry. Only then do you have a fighting chance of creating an investment climate that people want to honour.

Mr YAN: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move an extension of time for the member to finish his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Dr RAHMAN: Housing supply and homelessness are the ninth major point of a gap between rhetoric and reality that I want to draw out.

None of us wants to see an absence of housing. Nobody wants there to be homeless people. None of us wants to be punching down on our social services sector, and I do not think that is what we are doing or intending to do in any sort of malicious or nefarious way. Equally, let's not make out like eight years of Labor governments were stately in their pursuit of resolving all these issues.

Significant funding was allocated to remote housing and urban renewal to address NT housing crises over that period, but it was not done in a particularly coordinated robust or reliable fashion. We know that because we are continuing to do the same thing, repeatedly to try to resolve problems that are not intractable but have not been effectively resolved.

The reality is the NT continues to have the highest rate of homelessness per capita in the country. The reality is that waitlists for social housing are stagnant and the private rental market has become increasingly unaffordable, particularly in Darwin and Alice Springs—that is the case. The delivery of remote housing has been plagued by bureaucratic bottlenecks and failing to meet the urgent needs of Indigenous communities.

Again, that is failure to understand economic basics. By way of footnote, when we created Cullen Bay, you are right, not everybody could afford to live in Cullen Bay. Same as right now, not everybody can afford a $750,000 house with a $50,000 home grant, but the knock-on effect of creating Cullen Bay is that you create headroom in the market for people to move out of Fannie Bay into Cullen Bay, and for people to move from adjacent suburbs and so on and so forth—you get the point here.

You have to create supply, and you have to do it where it is economically viable. I will not talk about the budget or the specifics today, but once again more of those $50,000 grants are happening in Northcrest, in the electorate of Fong Lim, where houses are being built and people are taking up the option than anywhere else. Those people who move into those suburbs are coming from the northern suburbs, by and large, which creates capacity in the northern suburbs; not necessarily social and affordable housing, not necessarily *Utopia*-esque solutions, but that is what you do. You must create more supply.

I was not fully in love with the plans we had for generating supply. I would do some of these things slightly differently, but the fact is we are doing something that is demonstrating results. It is working. There is large uptake. The uptake has slowed down in some regards, and it may slow down some more, but either way we are building new houses. Existing people are moving into them, and it creates more houses for other people to move into.

You cannot start with social and affordable housing all the time. We are doing work on HAFF round 3. Once again, where was the work being done by the last government on making sure we had enough HAFF money to fill in holes in the ground? My favourite hole in the ground—and it breaks my heart because I am powerless to do anything about it; it is so buggered at this point—is Shiers Street. The last Labor government knocked over all that social and affordable housing, promised to put something in that gap and now there is a giant bloody hole in the Narrows that I cannot do anything about in the short term. It is because of the failure of long-term planning of the last Labor government. They should have acquired the planning, approvals and the funding to replace like-for-like in that space. Instead, you have people in the Narrows going when will we see something other than just bare grass out here.

Finally, and probably the most important one, public service bracket creep. The government in 2019 announced a hiring freeze and efficiency dividends to curb public sector costs. The reality is that employee expenses continue to be the largest single drain on the budget and by 2024 our public service had grown so significantly—also remembering all this crazy consultant spending that we were doing that we have reined in—that has created a rigid bucket, when nearly every dollar we have in revenue gets tied up in wages leaving little room for the strategic economic pivots that keep being promised in budget speeches repeatedly.

Just a quick recap. Budget rhetoric, actual reality, net debt, logic about manageable sustainable—no, we are the highest per capita in Australia. GST reliance: we are working in strategic partnership—no, we are 70% vulnerable on the Commonwealth. The ship lift: $100m, $850m—go figure.

Population: 275 by 2030—no, chronic into net negative interstate migration loss. Infrastructure and Budget Paper 4, apparently a favourite one: the favourite hobbyhorse of the Leader of the Opposition. Record delivery—here are eight lots of record delivery. Massive revotes is what she got, and project delays.

The fact is the Territory Labor period was defined by a transition from aspirational planning to crisis management in budgeting. That is what it was, where the reality of the NT small volatile economy eventually caught up with their high-spending rhetoric. Once again, I am sorry that my learned colleague's budget is too maintenance for you. It is a sincere, honest attempt to start bringing fiscal integrity back to our budgeting and to signal to the market that this is a place that is trying to grow sustainably and is prioritising a coherent narrative: make the place safer for everybody first.

It is a record spend on correctional services, crime and police. I will give you this for free: everyone knows I am much of a social conservative, but I am the most fiscally conservative guy in this building. I would have us be much tougher on fiscal discipline, but the Treasurer has made a call and balanced it. We are all behind it, and it is a sensible way forward.

To suggest there is no logic to it, economic vision or narrative—no. Here is the vision: make the place safe; make communities want to stay here; and make it easier for people to do business here without worrying about their businesses getting smashed to bits. That is the narrative from the top down, from the woman who has been here for 5,000 days and her team surrounding her. Those of us who have been here for five minutes are happy to get behind it and give it a go, because the fact of the matter is, what happened over the majority of those 5,000 days was not compelling in terms of delivering an actual return, socially or economically, for the people of the Northern Territory.

Borrowing to pay the bills is not something that we just pointed out today; in 2018 Labor's own Langoulant report was scathing in its reality check about frontline services, population stagnation and the $12bn Boundless Possible nonsense, which was nothing more than a marketing campaign, not a strategy for population growth. We are actually tackling that issue.

Education—record spending versus bottom decile outcomes. Once again, despite having the highest per-student funding in Australia, the NT's educational outcomes are the worst. We are actually facing that reality and trying to turn that around, working under the auspices of the minister for Education.

Regarding public sector growth, non-frontline bureaucracy grew significantly. We know it did—do not pretend it did not—and we are trying now to prioritise frontline workers.

The budget speeches talked about rising costs and affordable housing. You need to look at what happened with CPI over that period and understand that our CPI often outpaced national averages and as a result we still have the same systemic problems in housing that will take longer to turn around and yes, will take cooperation with the federal government. If you would like to help us with that, it would be fantastic. If you just want to throw stones and be unconstructive, stay out of it.

I will not get into it in detail, but the bottom line is that the speculative industry fiascos that we pursued over eight years—rocket launches and amphibious aircraft—is the reality of what diversification looked like under the former government. That diversification resulted in spend on consultants, overseas travel and project management costs for negligible return on investment. It essentially demonstrated to market we were commercially incompetent and will risk taxpayer equity on high-stake ventures, when core infrastructure like roads—which we all want to see fixed—were deprioritised.

The fact is state final demand will turn around, but it is not what we would like it to be. It is not a case of, 'It is not our fault'. I am saying it is the reality of what we inherited, and I explained that at length today, because I think it is important to finally get on the record that it is not our fault. We inherited a lot of these structural problems because of poor, negligent, incompetent decision-making.

Our state final demand always goes down after periods of construction of major projects. It happened post-Ichthys and post-COVID. There is a downturn now that we can see is happening.

The bottom line is that the Labor government can get a participation award for its efforts, but it failed economically on budgets. The irony is that this is the first budget in donkey's years, in a decade, where we are not failing Territorians and are finally being honest with them about the state of our finances and about a way forward.

On the basis of all of that I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to flesh this all out in detail, because it will be extremely useful for all of us going forward so we stop wasting time peddling fantasies about what Labor did in its eight years of managing our economy.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, every time I come here, I talk about investing in remote regions to stop people from coming in for services. Instead, they should be out in their communities receiving that service, such as the MVR and health services, which would create jobs out there.

When I look at the budget, I do not see anything specific except funding to boost internet services in some communities and some money for Kakadu. I have the fourth biggest electorate. There is nothing specific about Maningrida, and the Gunbalanya health clinic is out the door. I have asked members on the other side to come and look at the clinic, because it is not fit for purpose. It was just the building the community chose to use as a clinic back in the 1980s. Right now, it is falling apart and crumbling. There is money to restructure it and put some safety measures in place just to make it work, but they need a new clinic out there.

We just want to see a clear plan for our remote communities and regional hubs. I have looked at the budget as fast as I can, and I will look at it at the weekend, but it is more about punishing instead of preventing in the judiciary space. I heard the Member for Fong Lim say, 'We need more prison cells', but arresting the person is not addressing the root of the problem.

It is like the last quarter in a footy game, because he has all these things going wrong in the first and second quarter: poverty; homelessness; stealing. In the last quarter he is arrested and going to jail. I do not see any funding into preventative measures that we need. We need services out there to keep people on the straight and narrow, but instead we are funding the end of it. The people are just getting arrested and thrown into jail, without a clear pathway out of it.

In the education and training sector, the budget does not deliver for students, families, or teachers in the communities. Everything that is in the existing settings, it is still in that pathway. For our remote communities we need extra. We have the worst chronic illness, homelessness and overcrowding issues. We need to throw extra money at these sectors of the community so that it does not compound and people do not jump on cars or planes to come in with their families and spread out into the carparks and bus stops, making everyone unsafe.

If we could look at funding some of these services in these communities, especially big communities like Maningrida, Port Keats, Bathurst Island and Wurrumiyanga. Having an MVR or health clinic is what keeps people in their community. Then they will only come in for the Show—which is coming up—then go back home.

More investment is needed in early education, skills and training pathways. The budget has ignored calls from the education and training sector on where to invest. I still have not looked through this, and I will save the majority of my contribution for the budget reply, but it does not look like some of these sectors are being funded to their full capacity.

Early years services have been given less than 2% of the Education budget. The number of Territory children now attending preschool has worsened. The number of Aboriginal children attending preschool has also worsened. The NT is the only jurisdiction that is going backwards in terms of meeting the closing the gap target; the Member for Johnston said that yesterday. The CLP cut funding to the continued implementation of the Preschool Reform Agreement.

The budget fails to relieve any burden on our education system, especially in our remote communities. The Better Fairer Schools budget is being used for outside the classroom, getting people to swimming places. It should be used for resourcing classrooms, books, getting extra teacher assistants. I have heard they have been using some of that to get those swimming classes in communities where they need more than $200 for them to jump in a swimming pool to get that training.

Mrs Hersey: That is untrue.

Mr BROWN: People like in Minjilang have to go down to …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 1; conversations are happening across the parliament and not through the Chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I agree. Can we stop the interjection and let the Member for Arafura be heard in silence.

Mr BROWN: That is not enough, $200 per child in remote places, especially isolated places like Warruwi and Minjilang. I am more than happy to talk with the Education minister about how we can get that happening, to get them into major hubs to get that swimming lesson happening.

No investment in remote housing for teachers. We know the schools are increasing in class size and there are more teacher assistants. Teacher assistants come from the community anyway, but people going to communities need adequate housing to teach.

There is no new CLP investment in the budget to support apprenticeships and traineeships. The CLP has failed to strengthen partnerships between school training providers and industry. I have spoken to CDU about the CDU hub at Katherine, and look, credit where credit is due; they have the inmates who used it to clean up Katherine, and they are going through VET courses in the near future.

Expanding access to VET school-based apprenticeships regardless of location so that online learning can be invested in, supporting cultural responsiveness pathways for Aboriginal students that align with community priorities and local economic opportunities.

I have a little stakeholder feedback from NTCOSS, which was unflattered by the budget. Sector announcements on today's budget found key shortcoming in relation to housing, early support for children and families, education, healthcare, mental health, alcohol and other drugs services, youth services and addressing the domestic violence and sexual violence crisis. We are seeing rehabilitation investment in jails but nowhere in the community. It is about keeping kids in school, more youth engagement programs around the regions, like the SHAK in Darwin, and investing in youth transition housing models.

Every Territory child and family, no matter where they live, whether it is remote or urban, must be supported to access early education and care that is right for them, and culturally appropriate as well. Every young person needs access to the right training and skill development and pathways. This is a good one for my community of Maningrida; there is a lot of potential there, but hopefully there will be some training for the young ones and teenagers coming up to give them something to do.

Every Territory educator deserves to be safe and supported at work. Teachers, support staff, principals, specialist staff and all the volunteers are the backbone of our education system. They ensure our kids get the best out of schooling and are set up for life, with the ability to gain and keep employment to be productive members of society.

This budget does not seem to prioritise our regions and remote areas. As a result, to gain or access services, they will come to Darwin for dialysis, chronic illness, healthcare, jobs and MVR services. They will be out on the streets, and there is a pub everywhere. That is where the social problems happen.

I want the government to invest in the bush and regional centres.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that this Assembly' and inserting, 'condemns the Labor Party for its legacy of debt, delay and decline and for leaving the CLP government to clean up the mess to restore fiscal discipline, rebuild the economy and deliver the practical relief, infrastructure and jobs that Territorians deserve'.

I will speak to the amendment to the motion. The Leader of the Opposition, after Labor's loss at the recent election, admitted to Territorians that they felt let down by the former Labor government. I think that is clear to see. Territorians made that crystal clear when they overwhelmingly voted for change in 2024.

When Labor was in power we saw constant leadership turmoil, internal infighting, a government distracted and responsibility abandoned. It left behind a weakened economy, shattered trust and a budget blackhole with no credible plan to fix it. Territorians could not see a way out of it. The Member for Fong Lim covered that well in his contribution.

Let us not forget that all of this happened while the Leader of the Opposition sat at the Cabinet table as one of Labor's most senior figures. She was not a bystander in this; she was part of that failure. Labor promised a $40bn economy by 2030, but it delivered a phantom pipeline or, as has been discussed, a pipedream and an economy weighed down by debt and years of mismanagement. Labor's plans and big projects either failed or were left on a program with no funding or plans for delivery.

Who could forget some of those projects? There was a water-bottling plant, with lots of Territory money invested that disappeared; where did that go? There were amphibious aircraft and signs on rockets; that was a cracker—Boundless Possible. There was the prawn farm, with significant investment; we have a great road that does not go anywhere at the moment, but the pastoralists in that area are happy with it and reckon it is great.

One of the projects we are dealing with now and fixing is the ship lift. That started as a $100m commitment from the CLP back in the day. It was capped, and private investment was supposed to then take that on and develop it. Labor took that project, and God knows what it did with it. We are now dealing with that outcome. What started as $400m became $820m, which is now $850m.

We know from the work done by the Public Accounts Committee; its findings were that no businesses cases were done by the previous government. Where in the world would any government or any private company invest that sort of money without a business case.

I believe the Leader of the Opposition said sometime today that there was no business cases provided for the prison work regarding the new work camps, which includes planning for the new men and women prisons. I can tell you now that we have done the work and there are business plans that have been well looked at prior to making any decisions. Unlike what seems to happen with those on the other side, where they come up with an idea and say we will go and do that, throw a pile of cash at it and hope for the best. We have seen how that has worked for the Territory.

Back to the Darwin ship lift facility, we will continue to develop this, and it will become a significant piece of economic infrastructure for the Northern Territory. As the Public Accounts Committee found, we cannot step away from it because if we did then we would be throwing $600m away, and we will not do that, we will not be wasteful in that respect. We will continue with the project, deliver it and make it a showcase for the Northern Territory as part of the larger Northern Marine Complex.

That is where the previous government were short-sighted—'We will build a ship lift, and all the sign-offs and information we got from the pack'.

The sign-offs and those decision points all seemed to happen just weeks before the closedown period for an election. It is funny that just before an election that a decision is made, commitments are done with no business cases, and we all continue on our merry way, and we now pay the price. That is where the short-sightedness falls, there was no planning apart from just the ship lift. The ship lift is a piece of infrastructure, but it needs the enabling infrastructure alongside it to help develop and grow; that is where the marine precinct will work. We will need the workshops, sheds, tradies and the maritime service expertise so that

once a vessel is taken out of the water, there is someone there to fix it and there is a place to do the work. Within this now and the planning we have done—through the marine precinct—we are to provide additional area for the literal capacity and barge capacity. That will be key not just for shipping, but also for Defence on return.

That is just on the ship lift. I will now move onto the Infrastructure program. The Leader of the Opposition said that there was no pipeline and was talking about cuts. I will go back to the one salient point which is that you cannot cut something that was not funded. Labor was making announcement after announcement in that Infrastructure program. We used to receive it every week in the four years that we were in opposition. Every week there would be a new announcement or something stuck on the program, but they were never funded properly and that is the key here.

We have a $4.2bn Infrastructure Program and we have funded it to $2.7bn with cash this year. When we entered into government, I specifically remember the Infrastructure program as this huge, unworldly thing with all these rats and mice projects on it, with all these announcements and press releases from the previous government. We had to tidy that up.

There was a huge amount—it was about $4.8bn if I remember correctly—on the program. When we entered into government their budget had $300m in cash to deliver on that program. That would have delivered the last parts of the Tiger Brennan overpass and the Mandorah marine facility. That is all that $300m would have delivered, and that is without the rest of the stuff they had on the program. What we have done is cleaned up that program so that the stuff that is on there is deliverable. It is something that we can get out the door over time for the benefit of Territorians, and we have cashed it appropriately to ensure that we can deliver that.

That is not to say that some of those projects we knocked off are gone forever. They still sit there, on a spreadsheet. As we can afford to—this is a key point—we will bring those projects back. There is no point having a pipeline of fallacy that is sending the wrong signals to the marketplace. You can put $10b worth of stuff on a program and the marketplace is sitting there thinking, ‘They will deliver all this sort of stuff’, but you will not because you can only deliver what you can cash.

What we have on our program is realistic; it is what is deliverable. That is key.

I picked up on one of the comments in the statement from the Leader of the Opposition, that Budget Paper No 4 was skinny, with not much in it. We did some checking. Labor’s Budget Paper No 4 was 37 pages; ours is 33 or 34. There is only a few pages’ difference. To say it is considerably skinny I do not think is quite right, because there is not much difference. We might have had fewer pictures in ours and maybe less waffle at the front and in the back, but the content inside that book is still the same. That is key.

I always say that we will put forward a program that we can deliver. We will not send the wrong signals to the marketplace.

Let us talk about debt. When we came to government debt was increasing and spiralling out of control. The debt per capita was horrendous, and it is still not that good.

Let us look at where the debt was going. Debt under Labor in the last four years of its government was increasing 22% per annum. That is a staggering figure. We did the hard work. As my colleague the Member for Fong Lim said, this budget shows that the hard work is paying off because that debt growth has changed from 22% per annum to 4% per annum. That is an 18% reduction in debt increase.

It is a big ship or barge to turn around. We cannot just pull a plug and stop spending because we would send our economy spiralling out of control and send the Territory backwards into oblivion. We will not do that.

We are doing the hard work. We are pulling that debt back. We will see it flatten out over the next two years and then we will finally start to see a reduction. The Member for Fong Lim spoke about state final demand and what those numbers are. I am happy to stand here and explain it for those who do not quite understand.

Yes, we have seen a slight reduction in this budget we are delivering, and we see a 0.08% reduction in the following financial year. That has to be taken into context. It comes off the back of the work done by Santos on Barossa. When a lot of construction work is taking place we see an increase in our state final demand. That is reflected in those numbers. Barossa has now finished construction and is moving into delivery. As these things happen we see a drop in our state final demand. This happened after INPEX; it was a significant drop then. Bigger projects have a greater effect on a smaller economy like ours, so we see a reduction in state final demand. It is clear and open in our budget.

As we move forward we will see a significant increase in our state final demand, which will then start to outpace the rest of the nation. That is somewhere we want to go.

If we can get a few things done during this next budget cycle and the one after, we may see an uptick in that state final demand. We certainly hope we do. We will be doing the work to make sure that happens. We are doing the things to restore fiscal discipline. We are doing that hard work to rebuild our economy and deliver practical relief.

For those opposite to say that there is no relief from families in the Territory is just flatly wrong. There is $270m in this budget for cost-of-living relief for Territorians. They are big numbers. It is a $57m increase. A lot of that comes from the increase in costs to generate power through no fault of the Territory's. Those weather events have caused issues, and we have lost gas supply from Eni. The cost of generation has gone up.

We have had to buy and source gas from elsewhere. I am glad that we have done that and that we have partners in the industry who have worked with us to do it but it comes at a cost. We have to buy gas at a higher price which then costs more to generate the power to keep the lights on across the Territory.

Rather than passing those costs of generation on to mums and dads, Territory taxpayers, we are subsidising through the community service obligation those price increases. It is over $2,000 per household. If that is not real cost-of-living relief, I do not know what is. I do not know what else those opposite expect.

Along with those power prices—it has been spoke about ad nauseum today—there are back to school vouchers, learn to swim vouchers, free swimming lessons, vouchers for our seniors, the removal of the requirement for rego inspections which puts a few extra dollars in everybody's pocket, our contribution to the reduction in our fuel excise which is 5.7 cents per litre reduction—a cost to the Territory of over $19m. These are real outcomes for Territorians.

I will not take financial advice from those opposite. I saw what they did when they were in charge of the finances over eight years. Now we are doing the work to fix those issues they left behind for us. It is not easy. It is hard work to try to turn that around, but we have to turn it around because if we do not, the Territory will end up in a bad fiscal situation.

I look at the fiscal situation of some of the other states and territories and some of them are quite dire and do not allow them the flexibility to do the things they need to do to support their constituents. We are lucky because of the discipline we showed last year and this year. When the floods hit, we were in a position to make those quick decisions to roll $130m out to support the people in the Territory who have been affected by floods and weather events, to deal with the infrastructure issues and to start repairing the roads.

If we were like some of the other states and had continued our borrowing and had huge debt positions, we might not have been so lucky to immediately make that decision and roll out that support to help the people who desperately needed it. That is why we are doing the hard work. Those opposite did not do the hard work. They were only interested in borrowing and spending more money because they seem to think that just borrowing and spending would solve the problem. It did not solve a problem. It created a hell of a problem that will take decades to deal with. You cannot just walk in and start paying back $13bn worth of debt overnight but the work has started.

We are seeing a reduction in our debt through tight fiscal management. We are seeing an increase in our own sourced revenue. We are doing everything we can to support business to grow our own sourced revenue and to make more money for Territorians so that we get into the position where we do not have to borrow just to pay the wages and do the day-to-day stuff.

This year is the first time in many years we have not had to borrow money to pay public sector wages. Sadly, we will have to do that in the upcoming budget, but years after that we will be in a much better position. We need to get the debt under control and grow our own-source revenue so that the Territory has the flexibility to do those nice-to-do things.

I explained it today, in doing some work with the press, by applying it to your home budget. You have maxed out your credit card but your wages are only this much, so you have to forgo some things to pay back that credit card. Once you have paid back the credit card and you still have your wages, you can afford to start doing the things you might like to do, such as go out to dinner or buy a new pair of shoes. That is in simplistic terms, but it still applies to a budget for a government. You cannot spend beyond your means because if you

do it will get to a point when it will catch up with you and you cannot do the things you would like and need to do for the people you represent.

I will not take advice from the Leader of the Opposition on finances; I have seen what the opposition did with our finances over eight years.

I am proud of the work we have done over the last two years and what we delivered yesterday. I look forward to doing more hard work over the next few years to deliver better outcomes for Territorians and put us in a far better position economically so that our kids and grandkids have a place that they want to stay in that is growing and, of course, is safe. We will restore the lifestyle that we all love and which has eroded over time. That is something I am working towards, and it is worth working towards.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, my speech will be fairly short and concise, but it is important that I take the opportunity to speak. As a prelude to my speech I seek leave to table some crime statistics and official signage from the department of Housing.

Mr Paech: No.

Leave not granted.

Mr Paech: If someone says no you cannot table it if you are a backbencher.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: That is true. Those opposite do not want to see the crime stats. This is pettiness at its best. I wanted to quote some facts, year-on-year stats, but they do not want that to happen. That tells us a lot about this rabble of an opposition.

I have to praise the Leader of the Opposition—not the Member for Gwoja who was petty then—and her party members for consistency. Both in her budget reply this morning and their speeches this afternoon, they have consistently confirmed that they live in an alternative universe devoid of reality.

I will echo a lot of sentiments that were already expressed by the Member for Fong Lim and the Treasurer because we all have the same sentiment when we hear this rubbish. To help me do that, let me put on some rose-coloured glasses to quote some of the musings we heard from the Labor opposition today.

The Leader of the Opposition stated clearly that she believed our budget contains no plan, no vision and no future. She also said that it was a missed opportunity. She claimed hearing about all the issues of concern from Territorians who have apparently been failed by the CLP when she has walked up the track.

Many members on this side observed this morning that these claims were heard in silence by this Assembly, without a single chant of solidarity by her parliamentary colleagues. Their silence is telling because they do not believe what they are hearing either.

I will respond to these consistent, yet flawed, claims by taking off these rose-coloured glasses and wearing a pair forged in reality and common sense. We will not be lectured on missed opportunity by a former minister of a failed Labor government that oversaw an escalation in crime, destruction of our economy and a significant reduction in our lifestyle. May I say, I cannot even table some facts to prove that because those opposite are scared of them. They are scared and weak. They cannot face the facts.

We will not be lectured on how to budget to spend Territorians' money by a rabble opposition which, when in government, acted like the Emperor with no clothes. It rolled out a list of phantom projects with no funding provided and, worse, spent money on roads to nowhere for projects like Project Sea Dragon. When in government that same rabble Labor opposition contractually committed Territorians to funding more than $800m for a ship lift project without ever having a business case to justify such an investment.

Mr Kerle: Shame!

Mr O'GALLAGHER: It is a shame and a half.

How could we forget the building of a shade structure with one minor fault—it did not provide shade. It is a simple little fault, but that is okay.

I think we heard this phrase too. We will not be lectured by a Leader of the Opposition who claims that our budget is underwhelming and wants to return to the Labor days of spend, spend, spend on thought bubble

projects with the only business case being, ‘This might generate a media opportunity’, and zero fiscal responsibility. Shame, shame, shame!

Although I was not allowed to table the crime document, I will read from it. This is good. Let us understand that law and order is a key focus of our budget and for our community. People want to know that we will continue down the path we started. We made some initial gains, but we have a lot more work to do.

I will quote the stats for Darwin because that includes my electorate. Comparing the 12 months ended February 2026 with the 12 months ended February 2025, total offences are down by 13%; total offences against the person are down by 12%; assault offences are down by 13%; robbery offences are down by 15%; total property offences are down by 14%; burglary, dwelling, house break-in offences are down by 47%; burglary, non-residential, commercial break-in offences are down by 43%; motor vehicle theft and related offences are down by 27%; and other theft, except for motor vehicle, offences are down by 15%. Therefore, do not tell me that we have not started on the right path; we have, but we have to keep going.

We admit that there is a lot more work to do. That is why we are investing more in this budget to keep going down that path.

We had a debate about the security of neighbourhoods and so on, and certainly in my electorate. I have mentioned public housing with certain public housing tenancies. I say again that 95% of public housing is fantastic, and I am a big supporter of public housing per se. However, there is a group that has been destroying our neighbourhood. I have said it many times and I will say it again—the Labor opposition does not agree with me and the Member for Johnston does not agree with me—public housing is a privilege, not a right. These are public assets.

The Member for Daly came at me because he referred to a time when I quoted the density of housing, and that was the issue I was talking about—the over-density of housing. He has the temerity to say that I breached privacy. I am sorry, but I was allowed to say that speech. The Speaker agreed that I was allowed to say that speech. He said I breached privacy, but another thing those opposite do not want me to pull out to show you is a picture of the public signage by the department of Housing on its housing complexes. It has a big sign saying, ‘Public Housing Property: No Trespassing’. That is on the units, so do not tell me that is private; it is public knowledge. Everyone going past there says, ‘Hang on; that is a public housing property’, and could probably deduce that the people living there are public housing tenants. That is good.

Most of them are fantastic; I am not belittling all tenants. I am just saying the identification of public housing as a public asset is not a problem at all and if you drive down the streets of Karama and Malak, you can tell quickly. Some are kept in good condition, but for others it is obvious, and everyone knows they are public housing, which is where we have failed at the moment because there have been no consequences.

I am happy to go out to my electorate, show and tell people what I have done, and the speech I gave previously. I will put that on Facebook. I am proud of it. I will stand up for it. I would love to put up the Member for Daly’s response as well, in uninterrupted, total contrast. It would say, ‘here is the choice of the CLP, we recognise and want to improve the security of neighbourhoods, we are out there to defend you’. On the flip side, to go back to Labor party policies: ‘No, you cannot do anything like that. You cannot enforce consequences.’

Labor party policies degenerated us into this whole mess. The biggest issue we have, and Labor do not like us saying it, is we have had to fix the mess from the last eight years. It is our problem. We must do it. This mess was generated from eight years of inept government and total neglect. Labor destroyed our economy, escalated crime, and destroyed our lifestyle. All I can say is that I am against the proposal by the Leader of the Opposition; I do support the amendment.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, given how hot that was, and the Member for Karama nearly blowing his lid, I will keep this quiet and respectful.

I acknowledge the Treasurer delivering his second budget. It is a mammoth, complex task. Sitting around that Cabinet table and trying to advocate for your portfolio areas and the investment that you want, amongst competing priorities and challenges, is a difficult job. I have been around that table myself.

The Treasurer has done so and delivered the government’s budget. I accept and acknowledge that the government is in power, this is its budget. We are the opposition and have differing views in several areas. Nevertheless, we are here to discuss what is in the Territory budget, and we think there could be some other areas of investment or reform. The Member for Fong Lim spoke at length around a series of investments or

areas that could be considered. I agree with some things that he said, but some things need to be challenged along the way.

Every Territory government is always faced with the legacy issues that we have inherited over many years since self-government. That is not saying there is not work to be done. Of course, work needs to be done, and governments need to be fiscally responsible and take into consideration decisions around financial management, and good debt versus bad debt and what that means.

There are several ministers who have challenging portfolios. The roads and housing portfolios are difficult areas. The Territory government is around 70% funded through Commonwealth government grants. This means for every $10 coming in, $7 is Commonwealth money, and $3 is Territory government. That could be through taxes, charges, royalties or investments.

Growing the Territory's own-source revenue is important. The government, opposition, and all of us must look at how to grow that slice of the pie to have money coming to the Territory that can be spent freely and is not tied to grant agreements or specific areas.

There is good and bad debt. I acknowledge that good debt is often for stimulating and growing the economy and delivering assets that return investment to the Northern Territory and grow our own-source revenue and ability to reinvest that money into other areas of the Territory's economy.

There are key areas we could see that investment. One of those was the State Square gallery so that eventually it would be a premier arts facility that would attract visitors every year. One of the things we need to do is grow our tourism experiences. More flights, people, life and money comes into the Northern Territory when we grow that tourism space, and that is important. We need to keep an eye on that and look at the investments, and we will have the opportunity to talk about that when it comes up in Estimates. The arts sector injects more than $750m into the Territory economy every year. It is an amazing investment, and we want to see more of that coming in.

The Territory has always had legacy issues with ageing infrastructure and the need for investment. The Territory is like no other jurisdiction. We have a small population scattered across every corner of the Northern Territory. It makes it hard and expensive to deliver services, and it is important to take that into consideration. I know it was a challenge for the previous CLP government when in government. Fortunately for them they made that bottom line look better heading into the 2016 election because they sold the TIO and the Port of Darwin, which gave them a short-term sugar hit to fix the bottom line of the budget. It did not fix the structural issues around the Territory's budget constraints and financial management. That will be an issue for this government, future governments and everyone in the Territory. We need to look at that.

We also need to create a participatory economy in the regions. One of the things I often see as a bush member, and I know that members of my parliamentary team on both sides will see as well, you can be on a pastoral property that would have recently sold for $38m or $56m, and across the fence on the other side is land we are not seeing the value of. We need to work with Aboriginal Territorians to unlock the future prosperity of the Northern Territory. Whether that is looking at environmental practices or working with Aboriginal communities to unlock the potential in the bush, it is incredibly important.

The bush holds a number of successes to the Territory's future, and we all need to work through that and understand what it looks like and how it can work. It has to be a partnership, with Aboriginal people working with the Territory and the Commonwealth to look at that space, because that will be integral to the future prosperity of the Territory.

The Territory does not currently have a price on water. That is an additional $30m to $40m a year that could be coming to the Northern Territory Government for it to invest in areas that matter. We need to have a conversation about what a price on water looks like and how it works for mining and resource companies, because water is a precious finite resource, but it is also an economic generator if there is a price on it.

Imagine having an extra $30m to $40m coming to the Territory every year that the Treasurer could invest in growing businesses or building more critical infrastructure. It could be set at a competitive rate that does not deter people from parking and doing business in the Territory because people are already making significant profits from Territory resources. It is an area that I encourage the government to consider. We need to see the potential investment in that area.

There are things that we would do differently. We are in opposition; the government is in power. I am not here to argue today. The government has put forward its budget. There are areas that we will ask questions

on in Estimates. One of the critical areas it is imperative to invest in is the area of life and death. We should never cut corners in or cut the budget of the Territory health system because it delivers important services.

There are many people who have raised concerns and disappointment about the Territory government's budget when it comes to health and areas they would have liked to have seen more investment in. We need to step that through carefully and considerately to see what that looks like.

It is disappointing that the government has not invested more money—as the Member for Mulka raised—in law and justice groups, a great initiative to allow Aboriginal elders to sit with the judge at the time of sentencing to consider options and look at peacekeeping, mediating and alternatives to custody. We have seen firsthand that they work. The evidence is clear that they work. It is disappointing that we could not see those initiatives being funded in a more appropriate manner.

We want to look at where we can increase that. I do not always agree with the Member for Fong Lim, but I am not an economist. I will not pretend to be one. The key to the Territory is population growth. It is important. We need it—more people, more money. People spending in the Territory is important.

Not all debt is bad debt. Some debt is important because it enables us to stimulate the economy and ensure we are building critical infrastructure for future generations. I have been talking to people out bush about the budget. People say that you do not sell your house to pay off the mortgage because then you are homeless. We need to have a conversation that not all debt is bad debt.

This is the Treasurer's second budget. He survived his first budget and delivered his second budget. We will have the opportunity to flesh that out and ask questions in Estimates.

The Territory has a unique landscape that is rich in minerals and natural resources, and we should be celebrating that. We need safeguards and protections for the environment and vulnerable people in the community. We need to continue to deliver critical infrastructure and grow our own-source revenue. I do not disagree with that. There are things that we in this parliament can all agree on. That is one of them: how do we grow the Territory's slice of the pie so that the Territory has autonomy and control on how we spend?

Different governments of the day have different priorities, and I accept that. You have made clear your priorities in your budget. We will speak to our priorities in our reply to the budget that was tabled this week. I do not think we should just being throwing mud across the Chamber about this. I have listened to the Treasurer. The Members for Barkly and Fong Lim have spoken. There are aspects of what you have said tonight that I do not agree with and there are parts that I do agree with. As years go on, you will have different mechanisms for how you want to manage the budget. Was I happy with everything we did when we were in government? I would be lying to you if I said I was. No. I think that some of you over there are probably not happy you did not get what you wanted in the budget. That is just the nature of doing a Territory budget; you cannot get everything you want, and you need to take time. There are a number of projects I would have like to have done, but I had the previous Treasurer telling me I could not do it.

I am thankful for the ability to respond to this tonight. I think it is an incredible challenge for whoever is in government to manage that. It is hard when you are out on the doors or in the bush, in communities or talking to businesses, because people will always tell you that there is investment needed across multiple areas and industries in the Territory. It is hard to manage those, but we cannot lose focus that everything we do in this place needs to be about stimulating and growing the economy.

Growing the economy means jobs, more money coming into the Territory to grow investment so we can look at things like building new hospitals. I think a great spot for a new Darwin hospital is the old Berrimah barracks site between Darwin and Palmerston, next to the airport. Maybe we can hit up the Commonwealth for that piece of land and get it for free.

Mrs Hersey: Start advocating.

Mr PAECH: The Member for Katherine is agreeing with me, I think.

Mrs Hersey: Advocation.

Mr PAECH: I know. I am scared; it is quiet in the Chamber. I do not know if I am saying the right thing.

But it is important. Like I said, I am not an economist. I do care about the Territory and Territory jobs. I want to grow Territory jobs and important social and economic infrastructure, but the future of the Territory must

ensure that every person in the Territory is empowered socially and economically to be included in the economy so that we can grow it. I do not want to see specific regions of the Territory left behind.

People often talk about places outside of Darwin not being particularly economic generators. I want to put that to bed tonight. I think it is seven of the next major projects when it comes to natural resources and minerals that are in the regions. The regions are what powers the Northern Territory, whether it is one of the gold mines, the natural resources, places like Arafura in Central Australia with phosphates—they are rare earths. The Member for Port Darwin spoke about that earlier today.

All of these projects are in the regions. I think that is incredibly important. We should also have a conversation at some point—my bush colleagues will probably agree with me here, but it would be great to see something like royalties for regions in the future, keeping a portion of that investment in the region where it came from. A lot of these projects that keep the Territory's own-source revenue going come from those regions, so it is important.

That is not to say that economic opportunities do not come from Tennant Creek, Palmerston, Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs, but the bush is a significant generator, and it holds up the Territory. Of course, we want to work with anyone who is interested in growing jobs in the bush, because that is important for a few reasons. It is important for families to have a strong, secure, stable income. They also pay income tax, so we get to see that economic opportunity developing there.

I welcome any conversation about migration strategies that will grow the Territory's population. That is important. Projections made 20 years ago show places like Alice Springs flagged to have 40,000 to 50,000 people by now. We must look at how we can grow investment in the regions. I acknowledge the importance of that.

Again, I am keen to have those conversations. There is a number of areas where we can look at increasing the economic opportunity in the Territory. I encourage the government to work with the Territory's four land councils around working with Aboriginal people to have a participatory economy to grow those regions. I think there are lots of agricultural opportunities as well. For our pastoralists to work with remote Aboriginal community and traditional owners to look at what the opportunities are.

I acknowledge the pastoral industry is important in the Territory, one I am proud to have spent time over the years getting out and talking to and hearing from them firsthand.

There will be alternative industries that may knock on the Territory's door. We saw the aviation centre in Alice Springs during COVID; it was the largest at the time.

I look forward to having this conversation with members. I thank the Member for Casuarina who was looking to give me an extension of time.

A member: I want to hear more.

Mr PAECH: No, it is all good. I thank everyone. It is an important conversation. I look forward to Estimates and working with everyone on how we can grow our own-source revenue, but it cannot come at the cost of the Territory's environment or cultural importance and significance—sacred sites and places that are important to everyone.

It is important there is lots of conversations going on at a federal level around the port of Darwin. It should never have been sold off. I think the federal government are looking at that; let us see what that brings in. There are lots of opportunities in the Territory. We all know that it is the land of opportunity.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to what can only be described as a breathtakingly audacious motion from the Leader of the Opposition.

I thank the Member for Gwoja for his calm and considered speech, but it seems the Opposition Leader has nothing else to do. It seems she looks at her job description and reads no matter whether something is good or bad, whether it is what the majority of Territorians wanted or asked for, always work to belittle, manipulate and destroy everything the CLP does as a government, even if that includes misleading Territorians in an attempt to get more votes at the next election.

The reason I call this an audacious motion is that it attempts to rewrite history, ignore reality and distract Territorians from the record they created.

Let us be honest, this budget is not lacking vision; it is exposing their ongoing lack of vision. Now, they want to stand up as the moral authority on economic competence. It is astonishing those opposite would come to this Chamber, after more than 20 of the last 26 years in government, and somehow lecture this side about economic management, infrastructure delivery and the cost of living. It would be funny if it was not so insulting to Territorians.

Let us be clear from the outset that this motion is not about the future of the Northern Territory; it is about the opposition desperately trying to escape their past. Territorians remember who was in charge, who let Territorians down, the debt, the drift and the missed opportunities that left our economy fragile and our communities doing it tough. Now, after two decades of complete and utter mismanagement, that same party has the gall to lecture this government about an economic vision. That takes some nerve.

The people in Fannie Bay, Parap, The Gardens, Ludmilla and Coconut Grove do not need lectures from a party that presided over those years of drift; they need roads, services, safe neighbourhoods and a government that gets things done.

Let us talk about the cost of living. Those opposite claim that we have completely failed Territorians. When those opposite say there is no real cost-of-living relief they are not just wrong; they are deliberately misleading the public, or maybe they have not read the budget books at all.

The Leader of the Opposition talks a lot about cost of living, which is funny because the opposition fails to mention the cost of living in Labor's last budget in 2024. There were no new cost-of-living measures announced under Labor despite residing for eight years, the skyrocketing increases to current home insurance and rent, to name a few things.

In contrast, immediately on coming to government the CLP delivered on our promises, rolling out a new suite of cost-of-living measures. Relief does not have to be reckless to be real or a one-off sugar hit to matter. Relief has to be targeted, responsible and sustainable. This is what this government has delivered.

The opposition members want to pretend that the Territory's challenges began when they left office. They did not. Those challenges have been years in the making and because of ongoing delays, poor discipline and an addiction to announcing plans without the capability, courage or confidence to deliver them. They were baked in over years of poor economic stewardship—years when spending was not matched with sustainable growth and tough decisions were avoided and structural problems were kicked down the road.

This budget confronts those realities head on. It delivers targeted, responsible relief, not reckless sugar-hit spending designed for headlines rather than households. It focuses on stability, keeping essential services strong and on ensuring that relief measures are sustainable, not just today but into the future. Governing is not about short-term applause, it is about long-term responsibility. That is the fundamental difference between this side of the Chamber and those opposite.

The opposition also claims that there is no pipeline of infrastructure works. Again, did they even read the detail or are they again trying to mislead Territorians? It is an extraordinary statement when this budget commits over $2bn to capital works. The difference is that this government is not interested in vanity projects, media release infrastructure or schemes designed to win a headline and fail in delivery.

I am not sure if those on the other side of the Chamber have been listening, but the members of the CLP Finocchiaro government are only interested in projects that can actually be built, support local contractors, keep people employed and improve roads, transport, housing and essential services across the Territory.

Territorians know that infrastructure does not materialise out of thin air. Infrastructure requires planning, prioritisation and, most importantly, financial discipline.

What did we inherit? A situation where announcements were plentiful, but delivery was patchy, projects were promised without a credible pathway to completion, and the books were stretched and confidence was slipping.

This budget changes that. It focuses on deliverable projects, prioritises infrastructure that supports jobs, unlocks economic potential, and strengthens our regions. It does so in a way that restores confidence for investors, industry and Territorians themselves. Again, a real pipeline is not a list of media releases, it is a program of works that is actually funded and is built.

For a minute, can we be honest about why those opposite are so agitated? This government is doing what they never could not. We are restoring discipline, backing the right priorities and making decisions based on the Territory's long-term interest, not the short-term convenience of a political announcement.

The opposition says there is no plan to support critical job-creating sectors. The Leader of the Opposition talked about a lack of economic stimulus in Budget 2026–27. She must have glossed over the part of our budget where we are saving local businesses up to $68,750 a year through our increase to the payroll tax-free threshold. This was something that, before the election, industry and local businesses were crying out for and something that, once again, Labor ignored.

Labor's own forecasts, when it was in government, showed it failed to get Territorians into work faster, with employment growth lagging behind into its forward estimates and unemployment set to increase.

The plan is right there in the Budget: infrastructure, services, housing and the economic conditions that allow investment to follow. You do not grow an economy by grandstanding in this Chamber; you grow it by creating confidence, maintaining stability and building the foundations that business and industry rely on.

Those opposite literally had decades to set that foundation, and they completely failed. Instead, Territorians got stagnant growth, fiscal drift and an economy that was too often held together by hope rather than hard work. That is the legacy of the former Labor government in this Territory and Territorians have every right to be sick of their lectures. This is perhaps the most revealing part of the opposition's argument because it exposes their failure to understand what drives the Territory economy.

Our budget backs the sectors that matter, which are resources, tourism, Defence, agribusiness and emerging industries that will define the next decade. We are creating conditions for investment, not suffocating it with uncertainty. We are working with industry, not against it. We are ensuring that Territorians—not just outsiders—benefit from growth. Those opposite had the opportunity to diversify the economy, build resilience and set up the Territory for the future, but instead they delivered stagnation. Now they criticise the government that is doing the hard work to fix it.

This motion also falsely claims that there is no economic vision for the Northern Territory. Economic vision is not about grandstanding in this Chamber, fantasy budgets, unsustainable commitments or pretending that you can spend your way out of every problem without consequence.

Let me tell this Assembly exactly what our vision is: it is a Territory that lives within its means; a Territory that attracts investment, not repels it; a Territory where young people can see a future, not feel that they have to leave to find one; a Territory where infrastructure supports growth, not headlines; and a Territory where government is a partner in progress, not a barrier to it. That is what this budget delivers. It is not flashy, reckless or designed to win a news cycle. It is designed to rebuild confidence, restore credibility and lay the foundations for sustained growth. A Territory where investment is welcomed and where Territorians can build a life, business and a future without being held back by the incompetence of those opposite.

This is precisely why they are so uncomfortable, and that is the core problem for the opposition. They are not offering credible alternatives or solutions; they are offering grievance, blame and a tired political script that Territorians have heard too many times before from a party that had the chance to lead but too often chose to drift. They know that when this government succeeds, when we stabilise the finances, grow the economy and deliver for Territorians, their record will stand in even sharper contrast.

When we talk about budget failures, Labor's failure to address the rise in crime across the Territory features highly on the list. Labor's budget was widely criticised as being too late to address our crime crisis; something it failed to admit was even happening until the eleventh hour, right before the 2024 election. Labor governed for press releases; we govern for the Territory. Those opposite talk about change; we make change happen. They talk about responsibility; we practise it. They talk about growth; we create the conditions for it.

I will quickly address the tone of this motion. To say that this budget completely fails Territorians is not just wrong; it is insulting. It shows the opposition's inability to understand the budget papers and what Territorians have asked us to do in government. It is insulting to the businesspeople who are working hard every day to grow and create jobs. It is insulting to the families who will benefit from targeted support. Importantly, it is insulting to the public servants and stakeholders who have contributed to a budget built on careful consideration and responsible planning.

Territorians deserve better than this kind of empty hyperbolic politics. They deserve honesty, accountability and a government, and an opposition, that deal in facts rather than fear. The truth is simply that those

opposite are long on criticism but short on solutions. They are quick to condemn but are slow to reflect. They are far more interested in scoring political points than acknowledging their own role in the challenges that we face today.

This government will not be distracted by that. We will stay focused on the job at hand, repairing the finances, strengthening the economy, supporting Territorians and building a future that is not defined by missed opportunities but by real tangible progress. I say this to the opposition: if you want to talk about failure, look at your own record. If you want to talk about vision, explain why you failed to deliver one for two decades. If you want to earn the trust of Territorians, start by being honest with them. This budget is not a failure; it is a reset, a responsible plan and a clear statement that this government is prepared to do what those opposite would never do. We make the tough decisions necessary to secure the Territory's future.

Territorians are sick of the lectures, blame-shifting and recycled outrage from a party that spent too many years in power and too little time delivering. Territorians are ready for something better.

Budgets are never perfect, but I can hand-on-heart say that this one is honest, responsible and focused on the things that matter. It is built on the simple principle that governments should make life better, not more uncertain. This government is doing that, not with spin, excuses and hollow political theatre, but with delivery.

I say to those opposite: do not come in here pretending that you have a record worth defending because Territorians remember. Territorians know who they can trust to manage a budget. The only failure here is Labor. The only missed opportunity here is the eight years wasted under Labor. The only thing going backwards is the Leader of the Opposition because she had her chance to be constructive, listen to Territorians and deliver new ideas to help drive the Territory forward, reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle. She has done none of that, and Territorians should not be surprised.

For all these reasons I reject this motion, and support the amendment placed on the record.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for expanding this conversation to the big questions: what is a budget? Who is it for? I agree with him on one thing: that budgets are about more than just spending. That is right; they are about people and whether the people we represent can access the services they need to live safe healthy lives. That is a responsibility entrusted to us as their elected representatives. It is the responsibility of anyone in government whatever their political party.

I note the motion and the amendment, and in response I am interested in looking forward to working together in this Chamber for all the people across the Northern Territory whom we represent, not wasting the limited time we have with political attacks which both parties continue to engage in.

The budget is not some force of nature beyond our control. The budget is a set of decisions by the government, and it tells Territorians—the people who have elected you—what it is doing with their money. It tells Territorians what the government prioritises, how the government plans to spend their money and what kind of future this government is trying to build. The economy is not separate from the health of our society; it is a reflection of it.

The Member for Fong Lim also said that, like it or not, we need more prison cells. Member for Fong Lim, that is not a fact; that is a choice. It is a choice to keep pouring billions into prisons as a bandaid while ignoring the root causes of crime. What makes that claim more extraordinary is that the Member for Fong Lim also told this Assembly that he is the most fiscally conservative person in this building. There is nothing fiscally conservative in spending about $1.3m a year to keep a child in detention where they are at much higher risk of recidivism once they leave while refusing to invest in the early intervention that would stop that child being there in the first place. It is just not fiscally smart.

I agree with the Member for Fong Lim that we need to be economically responsible. That is why we need a people-centred budget, not as a soft alternative to economic responsibility but as the most strategic, effective and future-focused way to build a stronger and fairer Northern Territory. People are the economy.

Speaking of people, this government has spent a lot of time since the budget announcement talking about everyday Territorians. I want to clarify what that means because every time this government says 'everyday Territorians', there is a question hanging in the air: which ones? This budget is not constrained by scarcity, despite what the government will try to make you believe. It is defined by choices. The question is not whether we can afford to support people; it is about who this government chooses to support.

Everyday Territorians are the renters who cannot find an affordable home. They are the workers turning down jobs in my electorate; they come to me and say that it is because they cannot find somewhere to live. They are the families stuck in overcrowded housing with no way out. Which everyday Territorians who are looking for safe housing does this budget back? It is not them.

The gap between social housing and the private rental market remains untouched. The $608m allocated to remote housing, land servicing and essential services is welcome but it needs to be matched with the services that make housing work. We have heard that from you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It needs to matched with maintenance, tenancy support and community infrastructure.

With $40m we could establish a Territory affordable rental fund to deliver hundreds of affordable homes for key workers, low-income renters and people transitioning out of homelessness. That would be an investment that grows, leverages funding and delivers lasting housing. Instead, this budget leaves those people locked out.

Everyday Territorians are the people in remote communities who have seen infrastructure promised time and again without the services needed to make it work. They are the local workers who could be employed in their own communities but are shut out by fly-in fly-out models. Which everyday Territorians is this budget backing? It is not them.

The 59% of infrastructure spend going to remote and regional communities is the right priority on paper but infrastructure without services has a long history in the Territory, and it has not worked. With $30m we could fund locally led jobs and services, community health workers, educator aides, housing officers, designed and delivered by the communities. We could restore proper operating night patrols and provide real transparency regarding where funding goes. We could establish a transparent reporting mechanism so that Territorians can see exactly what proportion of GST revenue reaches remote communities which is what we get it for.

Everyday Territorians are the children sitting in detention on remand, not convicted of anything, waiting for weeks or months. They are the families trying to keep those children on track without the support they need. They are the lawyers carrying impossible caseloads, watching young people fall through the cracks. These are the everyday Territorians that this budget is not backing.

Instead, when we talk about money, this budget has committed $250m to new prisoner work camps—I am interested to hear what that means—while we spend more than $3,600 a day to lock up a child. With that same money, we could fund a network of community-based youth support hubs across the Territory, in Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine and key remote centres, with youth workers, mental health care, family support and after-hours programs which prevent offending.

With the $50m allocated to design new prisons, we could fund therapeutic alternatives to remand that cost less and work better, bringing us into line with the international human rights law and standards that outline that remand should be a last resort for children. We could properly resource legal services so that people are not set up to fail. This budget does not choose prevention. It chooses prison and labels it as safety.

Everyday Territorians are the women calling a domestic and family violence services and being told there is no room and they are the workers in those services, burnt out and underpaid and leaving faster than they can be replaced. This budget does not back those everyday Territorians. In the budget papers, funding for domestic and family violence services is cut by 10% in the jurisdiction with the highest rates of domestic violence in the country.

The budget delivers a $4.25bn infrastructure program and not one dollar of that is to domestic violence services that have to turn women away. With $50m, less than the cost of the new prison design that I just mentioned and a fraction of the Corrections infrastructure spend, we could ensure that no woman is forced to stay in an unsafe situation because there is nowhere for her to go.

We could invest in crisis accommodation, outreach in remote communities, perpetrator programs that reduce reoffending, a workforce strategy to recruit and retain specialist domestic family violence workers because the Territory loses people faster than we train them. This is not expensive. This is fiscally smart. Every dollar spent on domestic and family violence prevention saves an estimated seven dollars in downstream costs in health, justice and child protection.

Everyday Territorians are the nurses and health workers doing back-to-back shifts, burnt out and stretched beyond capacity. They are the people sitting in emergency departments for hours waiting for care that should

have been available long before things reach crisis point. This budget does not back those everyday Territorians. There is no dedicated mental health budget line in the Treasurer's speech.

With $80m redirected from Corrections infrastructure, we could build a real community mental health system; Step Up Step Down facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs so people can get support without going to an emergency department; mental health nurses embedded in remote community clinics; and an alcohol and drug treatment expansion that actually meets the Territory's need rather than a fraction of what we currently serve. This budget funds the consequences, not the causes.

Everyday Territorians are the households paying high power bills. They are the workers who could have secure jobs in renewable energy. They are communities who need reliable, affordable power, and these everyday Territorians are not who this budget backs. The budget continues to back the gas industry, and the scale of that commitment is staggering. Hidden in the budget papers are more than $2bn in liabilities and subsidies tied to gas development, including the Beetaloo. Hundreds of millions have already been spent with no return to Territorians to date, and even the most optimistic projections show royalties delivering less than 1% of Territory revenue.

At the same time, the Territory is carrying growing debt projected to reach $12.5bn, while underwriting private industry risk. We are borrowing money to subsidise an industry that is unlikely to ever pay us back. That is not a sound economic strategy, it is a public subsidy model where the risk sits with Territorians and the benefit goes somewhere else.

While that risk grows, investment in the things that actually reduce cost of living; housing, energy, services, is being left behind. With $50m we could fund remote community microgrids, Territory-owned rooftop solar and renewable workforce, lowering power bills, strengthening environmental resilience and creating real jobs. Instead, this budget continues to back an industry that has not delivered and expects everyday Territorians to carry the cost.

Everyday Territorians are the parents trying to get their kids to school, juggling work, transport, cost of living and everything else that comes with raising a family. They are also the kids who are falling behind, not because they do not want to learn but because they need more support to get them there in the first place. They need education that is appropriate and accessible and meets their needs so that when they are there, they stay. They are the teachers doing everything they can with limited resources, trying to keep students engaged and supported.

This budget does not back those everyday Territorians. It offers a small investment in literacy and numeracy, but that will not help get kids back into the classroom. Instead of supporting families, we see a continued focus on punitive approaches like fines for school non-attendance.

With real investment, we could support families to get kids to school and we could support kids to stay there and learn. We could invest in transport, community-based support and early intervention that actually addresses the reasons children are not attending. We could support teachers to do the job we know they are passionate about and trained for and build a properly resourced teacher workforce that stays in the Territory instead of burning out and leaving—support that works with families and children, not against them. You cannot punish your way to better education outcomes and you cannot fix education without the teachers to make it work.

If this budget was truly for everyday Territorians, we would have no child in detention on remand because there is nowhere else for them to go, no women turned away from a service that is there to keep them safe, mental health care before crisis point, homes that people can actually afford, remote communities with services and an energy system built for the future. That Territory is possible now within this budget. It does not require fairy dust; it just requires the political will to make different choices, because when this government says 'everyday Territorians', this budget shows us they are not talking about everyone. The cheapest, smartest and most effective way to build a stronger Territory is to put all people at the centre of every decision we make.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I had not anticipated to speak on this motion, let alone the amendment. I do so not to grandstand or try to set any sort of record, but because the Treasurer and the government whip asked me to speak. This has morphed into an important debate that is about more than just piling on the current budget; it is about what works and what does not, what constitutes success and what constitutes failure. We are starting to flesh out some issues underpinning this matter. It is about more than short-termism now, and that is why I am speaking again.

Before picking up on a couple of points made in the debate, I will simply frame the debate again. The amendment that the Treasurer has moved is not one that I ordinarily would want to jump on the bandwagon for, but this is an opportunity to sincerely condemn Labor for its legacy of debt, not just as a throwaway, but genuinely because this is the line in the sand. This government is two years into its term in August. We will not spend the next year and the next budget talking about what happened for the last eight years. I commit that I will not. You must draw a line in the sand somewhere in relation to this discussion and this debate.

What is obvious to me, and the reason I chose to speak on this at the length I did today, is that there is still a huge amount of misunderstanding. It is maybe not denialism; it is a fundamental misunderstanding that we have inherited a miserable position, and that miserable position is the function of choices that were made. I am not suggesting—hand on heart—that those choices were made maliciously, but they were conscious choices. Some may have been made as a function of ineptitude rather than malice, but they were made nonetheless, and the cumulative consequence of all those decisions—the tyranny of small choices, as I was pointing out today in the Kahn paper from 1966—is to result in where we are now, being under enormous amounts of debt.

Before I turn to debt, I clarify that the amendment is to condemn Labor for its legacy of debt; for delay and decline; and for leaving the CLP to clean up the mess, restore fiscal discipline, rebuild the economy and deliver the practical relief, infrastructure and jobs Territorians deserve. I do not have the time to break down every component, but the fact is I could.

In a nutshell I will talk about the legacy of debt first, with reference to what the Member for Gwoja just said. It is important to talk about delay and decline, or the forwarding on of what was happening in infrastructure. Where decline pertains to people, I could not agree with you more, Member for Johnston, that budgets are about people. We do not have enough of them, which is why we are in the mess we are in, and I will get to that in a second.

We have been left to clean up the mess. I will tell you what, not for nothing—a little footnote for the other side—it ain't much fun being a backbencher in a government that has to clean up the mess; we are cleaning up an even worse mess in some ways. I am not enjoying the mess we inherited, and I want you to understand once and for all what that mess is about so that we can agree on common terms and move forward on what we might do to actively stop creating more mess.

Restoring fiscal discipline—we are not bandying those words around. You can see the Treasurer is doing something about restoring fiscal discipline. I will come back to fiscal conservatism in a second because the fact is that I am the fiscal conservative in here. If I had my way, things would be different in terms of what we would do to turn the ship around faster, but I do not have my way, and the reality is that you should be thankful I do not in some ways.

Fiscal conservatism at this point is required, but fiscal integrity and discipline is required more. The Treasurer is doing that in the most manageable way possible. Would I spend all this money in the way we are spending it on a range of things? No, I would not, but I watched Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng just about tank the UK economy overnight by doing too much too soon, so I understand that sometimes it takes a long time to turn a barge around.

Practical relief is what we have in our cost-of-living stuff. That is the practical relief side of it—infrastructure, which we have bandied about in this house a lot, and the jobs Territorians deserve. You can say jobs, jobs, jobs as many times as you like, but no genie is coming to create those jobs. Whatever your past Treasurers might have said to you, it is just not how it works. Those jobs will come downstream when investment and economic confidence returns and when we restore some fiscal integrity to our marketplaces.

This speech is jumping around a lot more than my usual ones. The bottom line is that I am passionate about the subject matter. I have been asked to speak on the matter because this is our last best chance to frame discussions about why we are where we are and where we go from here.

There will be a next round of conversations that are coming next year, the year after and probably for a decade going forward about how we start institutionally making money, saving money, stopping the wastage of money and not just spending money.

I already gave a version of the speech where I explained budgets are about more than spending money. I will come back to some of the more workable propositions that came from the Members for Gwoja and Johnston, both of whom made many good points.

The first is the point made by the Member for Gwoja that not all debt is bad debt—absolutely. I have been saying from day one that not all debt is bad debt. However, $14bn of debt in a place with only 265,000 people, 27,000 public servants and no serviceable workforce or industry is bad debt. That is not good debt; that is too much debt. Serviceable debt, yes, it would be …

Mr Kerle: Borrowing to pay the bills.

Dr RAHMAN: I take the interjection from the Member for Blain; you do not want to be borrowing to pay the bills in perpetuity. What you want, at a certain point, is to start making money in some form. We need to have those conversations more honestly about what we are willing to risk to make money to spend on the things you want to spend on.

The first thing is I could not agree more; not all debt is bad debt. When we are having this conversation we are maligning two things: debt and credit, which are two different concepts. This is not an economic lecture, but the bottom line is that you want to, ultimately, borrow money to productively use to grow the economy and create not just growth for growth's sake—that is cancer, malignancy—but for the sake of creating productive opportunity.

I have spoken about my vision, which is my personal take, on an architectural opportunity for the north of Australia where we focus on public health, housing, education and infrastructure again to create common opportunity for people to pull themselves up by the bootstraps across all segments of society. That is my personal hobby horse. I can talk about that another time.

The bottom line is we are all using different language, but basically we want to create a place where people can get a leg up. None of us particularly want to destroy the Northern Territory lived or built environment either, or the natural environment for that matter. I will come back to that. The reason I am bringing it into debate is the fact is that a lot of our wealth creation prospects are tied to taking risks on our environment.

I will not foreshadow debate tomorrow. At some point on the Notice Paper there will be a discussion about minerals titles legislation and what we are willing to do to explore to give ourselves new opportunity again in resource extraction. That is a conversation I will be part of and I get behind. The fact is that is what the Northern Territory is built on.

My grandad was a hydrologist here. My family are all invested in mines and energy. The fact is we have not opened a new mine for over 10 years. The only one that opened was Core Lithium because we got out of its way. The fact is we need more mining if we are to grow the economy here, based on the fact that our natural resources are something that we can work with.

Gas and mineral extraction are two different conversations, but I am not into gas either. The bottom line is that gas is the biggest game in town. The major difference between the opposition and this side now is we have been unequivocal in our support of it in the sense that we are saying, 'No confusion. All signals to market are that if you can find it and get it out at the right price point and make it add up, we will back it and get out of your way in making it happen.' The other side could not decide which way they want to go on this.

I have said publicly as a political candidate, and I can say it as much as I like: I am not anti-gas, anti-fracking or anti-mining; I am pro things that add up. If it does not add up economically, why are we doing it?

The fact is there is still a real possibility that our gas ventures will add up. That is why we are still going down this road. There is no doubt about the fact that we have extended a huge line of credit and basically given a series of extractive industries the opportunity to demonstrate that this will work for everyone in the long run.

The multiplier effects of those industries are significant if they pay off. That is the thing; you cannot just pull the rug out at a point. I am not on the Public Accounts Committee, but those of you who are made the choice and decision that the ship lift will go ahead. It does not matter what crappy conditions we decided to persist with it for the last eight years; at this point, it will go ahead. I am simply not privy to the information to argue with that case at this point, so I will not.

It is basically the same proposition with gas. No matter what Senator Pocock wants to say—can I just say, I am a huge fan of his, as a rugby player predominantly, I mean, so I feel like I am nerding out—the bottom line is that debate is now becoming unconstructive.

It is not about starting from this point having a discussion about extraction of gas and what needs to be done to make it worth everyone's while; it is about looking at the totality of the situation and what has been invested

by many people, not just in financial terms but in labour, ideas and opportunity cost. The fact is that we will not just suddenly switch that off. We are maintaining consistency on that position until such time that it is obvious that it cannot persist and/or something horrible happens which makes it unviable.

Here is the thing about the 'something horrible happening' part. I know I am jumping around, but again, I want to come to water pricing, because that is a great idea, but not one that Labor was interested in discussing when in government. We will come back to that in a second. The bottom line is that we must have ways to make money, and we are not honestly discussing the ones that are in front of our faces that could create the possibility, the multiplier effects and the opportunity to refund and reorganise our spending priorities. What is mostly being spoken about in the context of the budget debate, or budget philosophy, is spending priorities, but not anything to do with, for example, risk, investment, overall structural reform or how we might reorganise our economic affairs.

Let me come back to some of the concrete points. The first is that not all debt is bad debt; I agree. Put simply, right now we have way too much debt. We have so much debt that, unfortunately, it is inhibiting anything else happening productively. That is the reality. You have to at least start the process of reducing debt so that you have a fighting chance of providing people with confidence to reinvest in this marketplace.

The Treasurer is not hiding anything. He is not hiding state final demand, private investment or where our growth prospects are. He is saying, 'I've been dealt a crappy hand and am doing my best to prioritise, consistent with the government's priorities, keeping on the same course of law and order and maintaining confidence in community safety as being the number one priority'.

We are doing that because we are hearing it loud and clear still. Even I hear it. I get frustrated about it. I have constituents coming in, and I want to talk about other, bigger stuff, but they say, 'No, I am still pissed off about the state of drunks on buses', or 'I'm still annoyed about X, Y, Z antisocial behaviour'. I say, 'Public safety officers are coming; they are on their way, and that should hopefully help. Let's see how that goes.' People are not already at one with the idea that we have solved the law and order problem. That is why the budget is devoted to basically continuing on the track of improving community safety and investing in police and Corrections. This is our mantra at this point. If we fail, we will have a consistent position of dying on this hill because we are staying true to our course.

I am waiting for the day when it starts to pay off so that we can move on to some of the other stuff—the more downstream rehabilitative stuff and the structural economic reform stuff. I want for that future as well, but for all of us to get to the next pass, we have to get past this hump. This hump is one that, honestly speaking, just about no-one in this room is super responsible for. It is other people who are above our pay grade, who were here for the last 20 years and made a series of imperfect choices, some lazy—probably not many were malicious—that genuinely cumulatively added up to the tyranny of small choices which resulted in astronomical levels of debt, stagnant population growth, low levels of private investment and imperfect arrangements with the Commonwealth. They do not want to own our problems nor pay us to fix them properly.

If you want to move forward on this, stop moving motions every day which are just about short-termism and getting something inflammatory on the Notice Paper—'I move that on the next General Business day, I want to prosecute this hobby horse that I am pissed off about now on the basis that it will track well for media today'. That is what we are dealing with here. If you want an honest conversation about budgets, reform and the economy, let us have it. Then we can actually make out like a grown-up parliament rather than a place of dysfunction and despair.

That is the way forward for us, but it will not happen if we just keep saying, 'He said, she said'. I assure you, this will be the last four-and-a-half—and then another 10, I assure you—minutes of me talking about the last eight years of Labor budgets. After that, we have to start agreeing on some terms; otherwise, we will keep going round in circles.

The Member for Johnston is 100% right on this. Budgets are about people, and that is the whole reason I came back to the Northern Territory. You could see from the other side of the planet that we had no vision for people, labour, migration, population, higher education and training—the tertiary sector—or talent acquisition. We do not have enough people to do the things we need to do in the Northern Territory.

We are not just short of doctors, teachers and nurses; we are short of bass players. If you do not get along with the one guy who plays the bass in this town you are not doing a gig.

The bottom line is that we need more people. I am glad the Member for Gwoja and I—we do not like each other and do not agree on anything—agree that we need more people. The more people we can get in this

place the less likely it is that he and I will have to interact with each other. We can interact with those other people instead.

Mr Paech: Hear, hear!

Dr RAHMAN: Hear, hear!

The fact of the matter is that budgets are about people, and I am supporting this motion, which is clean cut. At the beginning of these proceedings you would have seen there was a motion moved by the opposition. There were suggestions of that being amended. I did not want it to be amended because I said, 'Let the opposition have its motion. Let us talk about budgets and budget failure at large.' Then, once we have reached this point, it has been moved, because clearly we have exhausted that, we are condemning the former government for the mistakes that it has made in relation to debt, delay and decline.

Nothing is more obvious and ties this together more than population decline. We are all talking about the same thing. Every one of these lunches and breakfasts we go to at budget time, every conversation we have and every little news sound bite is always about how we do not have enough workers and do not have anyone sticking around—how will we attract and retain people?

Let us start having the conversation for real. We are mostly doing what we have already done. I think the Member for Port Darwin, the relevant minister in this space, is doing a better version and a better job of working on some of those areas with global worker attraction and whatnot. We are targeting better markets, making more savvy use of online mechanisms, and WorkerConnect is working better. We are definitely doing better, but we are basically doing the same.

If you want to do something new and better, work with us. You know who controls the levers on migration? The federal government. If we want more cooperation with the federal government on terms of migration for the north of Australia to create greater labour supply to support us across all sectors and industry, we need your help on that. We cannot do it alone. That is the reality of it. All significant manoeuvres in economic reform through Australian political history happened through behind-the-scenes horse trading.

If you want more people, skilled workers and workforce then band together with us to ask for it. We will not get it by ourselves, and you do not have the numbers to get it. Together we actually could.

The whole of the north of Australia for that matter, including north Queensland and northwest Australia, is in the same predicament. None of us can get the right people or keep them once we have them. The fact is that we all require better terms on migration for the north of Australia. That is the job I came back here to do.

If I get nothing done in this parliament, other than make a modest contribution on that before I lose my seat, then I will be happy. But before I go, I would love it if all of us could agree on that one thing and move forward on it. Right now, we know the federal government controls the levers on the two biggest things that matter to us: all of our pocket money in GST and grants; and the terms on migration—labour and capital. If we are moving ahead on labour and capital, we need cooperation across this parliament.

The trouble is sometimes, unless you are willing to …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Mr MALEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! This is a group point of order.

Madam SPEAKER: This is a rare sight, multiple people wanting to extend your speech.

Mr PAECH: Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time be granted to the member. I would love to continue to hear from the Member for Fong Lim, who I do not hate; I might dislike him, but I want to hear his contribution.

Members: Hear, hear!

Dr RAHMAN: I thank the members who are present and are tuning in.

There is a serious set of points to be made here. It is often said of student politics that it is hard fought because there is so little at stake. It is where you learn to cut your teeth and beat up on each other. The trouble is in a 25-person Assembly, when we are all trying to wear a lot of hats and have to individually know

6,000 peoples' names and the names of all their pets in order to get back into the building, we sometimes lose the wood for the trees on the higher-order political stuff.

It is great to see fresh faces in the room. I hope there is a future where we can work more cooperatively together. It is why I came here. I know that there is a time for us to be combative, but I hope that we can become a parliament again that boxes and punches above the belt and fights clean. If we do, we have a better chance of staging better fights and, ultimately, bringing in more people to watch them. Currently, a lot of Territorians are checked out as to what is happening here.

We are having this discussion, and I do not know what poor sucker public servant is still there at 6.15 pm watching us at this point, but there are not many people watching this debate now. We need to find a way to communicate to our constituency a shared vision on how to grow the Northern Territory economy not for the sake of not growth but for the sake of creating opportunity for people. We have to find a way to respectfully disagree on our prescription for that.

There is a tough law and order—more stick than carrot—approach to that on this side of the House. You can respectfully disagree with that—that is fine—but offer me your alternative instead. Offer me something concrete that is more than just platitude, specifically on economics. We are not just making serious policy choices; we are doing things that are reactionary and short-term in this place. The pace at which that has been happening has been getting faster, worse and is hollowing out the productive capacity of the Northern Territory. We lose people, ideas, money and confidence when we fail to cooperate; that is what ends up happening.

On the matter of fiscal conservatism, I make it clear that I am not pretending to be anything I am not; everybody knows that I am a liberal democrat. The bottom line, and what I am talking about in fiscal conservative terms, is that we need a smaller, tighter and more productive economy. Now we have a giant, bloated, ineffective edifice that does not generate enough activity or productivity. Everybody was too scared to do or say anything about it, but we are doing something about it. We are not doing it in a dim-witted, ham-fisted way like some past governments did when they said, 'Efficiency dividend—slash 20%'. Predictably, you hollow out the real workers when that happens, and management sticks around; it is management 101.

If you want to talk about it, we must have an honest conversation together about what we need to run the public sector so that we create options for the private sector. It does not pay off to be in the private sector in the north of Australia. We must create conditions for people to want to work in the private sector because it is not just competitive with but can be better than being in the public sector.

This is not about bashing public servants. The reality is that we need public servants—a civil service—and in a place that is state controlled, we need more of them than other places; that has always been the case. When you are a frontier economy, that is what you need. Nobody in their right mind will tell you that we have the mix right. You cannot have 265,000 people and 27,000 public servants with productivity that is this low; it is not feasible or realistic. Let us talk about it together and have an honest conversation about productivity reform, public sector reform and structural economic reform.

My learned colleague maybe is not using the words that I am using in this regard, but he is doing that. Give him some credit in that regard. The fact is that he has had to find a way to slow down the rate at which we are accumulating debt, and to also figure out a way to add value and keep investing in frontline services. No-one in their right mind is saying that public health, housing, education or infrastructure are tracking amazingly; nobody thinks that they are. We are all trying to make them better, but the way to do this is not to say, 'He said, she said', or to go backwards and forwards with, 'You did not do anything about private maternity services'. How about at this point, we all put down our weapons and agree that collectively we might have a better chance of bringing back confidence to our health ecosystem—private operators in that space, cooperation with the federal government and whoever the relevant ministers are—if we find more constructive ways to have the debate, and then with a considered position take it to people who can help and work with us.

It will not happen overnight. I am not in the business of supporting things like this which are just about punching down; I am supporting this because I think it is worth supporting today. I want the Notice Paper to read that this was the gamesmanship we started this discussion with, and I want the record to show that we evolved to a position where we as the government are condemning the last three lots of Labor governments for some of the poor choices they made, because that also holds us to account. Come back later and then say, 'You condemned us for X, Y and Z. What have you done to make it better?'

I will use my time here working with all the people here I can to try to make sure we do better on cleaning up the mess, restoring fiscal integrity, slowing down the rate of debt and/or starting to repay it, returning market confidence and ensuring that we turn around and arrest demographic decline. It will not happen overnight, but we have to start somewhere.

I have a couple of niche points that are important to clarify. The Member for Johnston pointed out that it is not a given that we need more prison cells. I am sorry, but I respectfully disagree. At the moment it is pretty clear that we need more prison cells because we have people who are surplus to capacity and we cannot accommodate them. It is that simple. I am not hoping that we keep jailing people at the rate that we have been for ever and a day in the north of Australia. Nobody wants that, but we need more space and capacity in the correctional services system.

There is a master plan that the minister is following through with. We have to give it a go. It is as simple as that. Some of these decisions could and should have been made—if I wanted to be an arse about it, I could pull out where these Treasurers tell you all about how they are investing in the long-term future of Corrections capacity, but that did not happen. We have a plan. We are now trying to build more prisons, not because our master plan is just to imprison everyone in the Northern Territory, but so that we can create the necessary space required to accommodate what is an expanded prison population. It is about facing reality.

Scarcity was a point brought up. We are restrained by scarcity. It is ridiculous to suggest that we are not. There is only so much money and so many people. We have an abundance of space and probably natural resources that we cannot find unless we facilitate the conditions to find that stuff and get it out at the right price point. Scarcity is a significant constraint. It is not productive in government or in opposition to just say, 'Give me more. I want more.' I agree that some things are time-sensitive and important to your community. Fine; fight for those things. I am not saying that if the Jabiru Airport is about to tank it, there is not a strong business case to salvage it and not to fight for it—I am just using that as a case in point—but the bottom line is that we are constrained by scarcity. Do not throw temper tantrums regarding small stuff. Pick the fights that are worth picking. A starving lion does not hunt mice. Preserve your energy. Wait for a gazelle or an antelope and then take it down. That is the reality of it. That is the way we work with scarcity.

Mr Maley: What about a goose?

Dr RAHMAN: I am not getting into geese today.

Budgets are about choices; the Member for Johnston is right in that regard. The choice I want you all to start thinking about is how to enlarge the size of the pie. There are so many ways to do that. In the short run, our best viable bet is in the extractive industry space. I have a slightly different philosophy from the deputy leader in this regard, but I am broadly on board with the fact that we have fantastic natural resources and have to find a way to capitalise on them. That could be stuff that is in the ground or in the sky. I am not interested in the cherrypicking and the culture war stuff. That will not help us grow the size of the pie. If you want to grow the size of the pie, having a coordinated position that we take to the federal government would get us a lot further than just slinging mud at one another.

There are a lot of legs in the idea of pricing water. Nobody has had the guts to do it. If you want to have an honest conversation regarding that, you can have it with me. I am the one guy who turns up to all the unpopular places. At every Environment Centre talk, I am there because somebody has to be there. We could price water. That is just one idea. There is a range of things. Bring new ideas to the table.

I look forward to contributing to other General Business motions and to the opposition bringing substantive ideas to the table for us to debate sensibly rather than us just cherrypicking inflammatory topics to fling mud at one another.

I support the amended motion. Labor deserves condemnation for its fiscal mismanagement over eight years, but I hope that we can move forward constructively from this point.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I speak against the amendment.

I appreciate the contributions from the Member for Fong Lim. There is a lot to unpack there. I look forward to debating those topics with you in the next two-and-a-half years.

At a time when Territorians and Territory businesses need a government that actually steps up and delivers real cost-of-living relief, action on the housing crisis and economic stimulus, this CLP government continues to let them down.

Since becoming the Member for Nightcliff I have had many conversations with Territorians across business, industry and our community services sectors and the message is clear: the government is doing nothing to address the real social and economic challenges facing the Territory. I can only presume those opposite are hearing the same thing; we speak with the same stakeholders, we attend the same events, so the question is, why are they so unwilling or unable to do anything about it?

The Territory is facing a massive and growing infrastructure deficit, built up over years and now made worse by cuts, delays and underspending. Despite a billion-dollar roads budget, there is no clear pipeline of projects and no sense of urgency to get works out the door. After two years there is still no long-term infrastructure plan, no clear priorities and no roadmap for the future; simply a dot point list of projects. Territorians are entitled to ask basic questions about which roads matter most, which corridors will drive growth and what the plan is to improve connectivity and resilience. Right now there are no clear answers.

Infrastructure investment is one of the most powerful drivers of economic growth in the Territory. It creates jobs, supports local businesses and lays the foundations for long-term prosperity. Without a steady, long-term pipeline of work, businesses cannot plan, workers cannot build careers and investment stalls. The $1bn ripped out of last year's budget is a massive investment gap that has had a significant and ongoing impact on Territory construction businesses and jobs.

The CLP has doubled down on this approach by further slashing $100m out of the Infrastructure budget. What is even more concerning is that those opposite have failed to get any of the remaining funding out the door. The clear message from the CLP government is that it has left it to private business to do the heavy lifting when it comes to stimulating and growing the economy. It is unmistakable evidence of a government that has completely taken its hands off the wheel.

We are a small jurisdiction; there will always be a need for government to step in and support with economic stimulus through strategic public investment. On the back of a severe Wet Season, cost-of-living pressures and global instability pushing up fuel prices, communities need that investment more than ever, yet the CLP government continues down the path of slashing infrastructure investment at the same time as failing to get work out the door.

Currently there is only one major road sealing project at tender in the market. We are hearing up and down the track that businesses are contemplating shutting up shop and moving interstate. We know many have had to make hard decisions to lay people off. The government needs to act now to get public investment moving as quickly as possible because Territorians depend on it.

There are endless examples in the budget of where this government has dropped the ball and failed to grasp the importance of long-term strategic investment. A sample of some major projects that have stalled on a CLP watch include the Mereenie Loop Road, which could be backing our tourism industry down the Red Centre.

Central Arnhem Road—where is the investment to assist Nhulunbuy and those communities transitioning with the closure of the mine? Buntine Highway—where is the support to back the investment in the Bradshaw range and other military facilities in the region, as well as the pastoralists in those communities? Port Keats Road is another key corridor that has been on the budget paper for years. We still do not have a clear picture of when that will occur. From the response today, the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure is assuring us that tender will go out next financial year.

Similarly, with the Tiwi Islands roads. This is being followed closely by the Member for Arafura. The Tiwi Islands have a short construction window of a handful of months when construction can occur on the islands. If that tender is not out as of almost tomorrow, another year will be lost for that project. We cannot afford to keep missing the construction window on the Tiwi Islands, given the impacts it has on those communities socially, economically and environmentally.

Other projects scrapped by the CLP government include the Gunbalanya health clinic and morgue. Again, the Member for Arafura has been watching this one closely. This is critical health infrastructure for that community. In terms of the fiscal responsibility that has come up today, it is not fiscally responsible to pay for the travel for those community members to come to Darwin on such a regular basis, especially to access something as basic as healthcare.

The Alekarenge School upgrades have been massively downgraded. This is one of the most disadvantaged communities in the Territory and one of the most run-down schools has had funding for a much-needed upgrade cruelly scrapped.

Jabiru Futures, to support the transition to a tourism town, had $30m scrapped. The Alice Springs art gallery should have been a significant economy-boosting, job-creating project, but the CLP has made a political decision to scrap it rather than support the people and the economy of Central Australia.

If the Territory is serious about catching up on its infrastructure deficit it must also get serious about building and retaining a skilled local workforce. That requires certainty. It requires a clear pipeline of projects so that apprentices, tradies and contractors can build long-term future careers here at home. Infrastructure is not just about concrete and bitumen; it is about people, skills and opportunity. Investing in roads is one of the most direct ways to ease cost-of-living pressures, yet it continues to be overlooked as the projects continue to be revoted on the budget papers.

The Territory needs a clear, funded, long-term infrastructure pipeline that sets priorities, has timelines and is delivered on the ground. It needs a government that will work in genuine partnership with industry and local government, fast-track projects that are already funded but sitting idle and invest in training and apprenticeships alongside infrastructure delivery. Above all, it needs leadership that understands infrastructure is not a cost but an investment in our Territory's future.

This government's hands-off approach extends to housing investment across the Territory. Every Territorian should have the chance to own their own home, but on the CLP's watch we have seen housing construction stall and affordability collapse. There are several drivers—limited land release, high construction costs and no focus on boosting our stocks of affordable housing.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 83, or I will take Standing Order 35: Relevance to Subject. I just note the ruling you made at the beginning, and although this is a wonderful budget speech, I wonder whether it is related to the motion at all. I am waiting for it to get to the amendment.

Madam SPEAKER: For this motion, I have allowed absolute latitude for everyone. At any point I probably could have shut all of you down for Standing Order 83. Given that, I will let people proceed. We have only 25 minutes of the debate left. Let us listen and be respectful.

Mr Young: And be nice. People are new. There is no need to be rude.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, please, you be nice too. Let us have some calm, and focus back on the Member for Nightcliff.

Mr SMELT: This budget delivers the bare minimum without any real genuine commitment to addressing the housing crisis that is a reality for too many Territorians. Decent housing is a fundamental human right and an enabler of better employment, health and education outcomes, which is why it is beyond belief that this government seems to be actively working to deny people a decent home, rather than addressing chronic housing shortages across the Territory …

Mr Edgington: You are opposed to housing developments.

Mr SMELT: … and the highest rate …

Mr Edgington: You cannot have a bet each way.

Mr SMELT: … of homelessness in the country. There is little in the budget to boost …

Mr YOUNG: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20; the Member for Barkly keeps interrupting.

Madam SPEAKER: I will keep that in mind when you start interrupting again, Member for Daly. I take your point; it was interrupting. Cease your interjections, Member for Barkly.

Continue, Member for Nightcliff. We are getting to the witching hour now.

Mr SMELT: It appears we are.

There is little in the budget to boost public housing stock or ensure existing stock is up to scratch. There is, however, a mysterious $1.5m line item to de-densify public housing sitting in the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet's budget. I am interested to know from the government what that scope is: is it paying consultants?

Mr Maley: Lee Point.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson!

Mr SMELT: Is it making repairs? What is the scope of that $1.5m?

The Chief Minister needs to come clean with the community and explain what that money is for. She should also tell us how she intends to deal with the fact that this will put more people into unstable housing conditions or homelessness.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Cease your interjections, please.

Mr SMELT: The vast majority of public housing tenants look after their places and are good neighbours and contributing members of our community.

There are many ways we could improve the way we design and build public housing across the Territory, but the CLP is not interested in trying. The budget includes $22.8m in Housing Australia Future Fund projects; this is woefully inadequate. Without greater investment in affordable housing, we will see more Territorians slip through the cracks. The housing future fund is a significant bucket of Commonwealth funding designed to support community housing providers to boost affordable housing stock.

Mr Maley: Lee Point.

Mr SMELT: Unfortunately, the CLP government has sent a clear message that it does not support more affordable housing in our communities.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence!

Mr SMELT: At a time when we are seeing more people facing rental stress, this is an irresponsible and short-sighted choice—and it is a choice. A choice to spend more money on prison beds, while denying more hardworking Territorians their own home, which should be the focus.

The budget provides no additional cost-of-living relief for Territorians at a time when people are finding it harder to cover bills, particularly the more than 50% of Territory households living in rental accommodation. The Rental Affordability Snapshot released by Anglicare last month paints a concerning picture. Only 257 private rentals were advertised across the NT. How will we grow the economy with that few rentals? No listings were affordable and appropriate for Territorians on youth allowance, disability support pension, age pension or even for a single person on the minimum wage. For a couple with children where both adults were working full-time on a minimum wage, only 5% of listings were affordable and appropriate. Average advertised rent also rose to $713. This clearly demonstrates that the private housing market is simply not affordable for people on low incomes.

The result is more Territorians pushed in to housing stress, overcrowding or homelessness, putting greater stress on our broader housing market, health facilities and justice and police when people do not have stable and reliable housing.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: That is enough. Stop your interjecting. If I hear someone say ‘Lee Point’ again, they can take an hour out of the Chamber and go and have a look at Lee Point.

Mr SMELT: I highly recommend a visit.

It is pleasing that the CLP government has signed up to the 10-year $4bn remote housing program with the Commonwealth Government. It is a legacy of the former Labor government, but fine for them to claim to it so long as they are building more houses in our remote communities.

While there is allocation in the budget to roll out the program, we are extremely concerned by what we are hearing on the ground: this CLP government is now trying to dip into funding that has been solely allocated

for new housing to pay for sub-divisions and land servicing. This is not on. The terms of the remote housing agreement are clear that every cent of that agreement must go to housing.

The NT Government's attempt to divert some of that money to pay for work they are responsible for has meant that critical work has stalled. They need to be clear with Territorians about whether they will meet their targets under the remote housing agreement, and if not then why not. We will continue to monitor the roll out of this project carefully.

Tourism is a vital part of the Territory economy. It is a critical, job creating sector that delivers significant financial and lifestyle benefits to our regions and cities. It is also a key employer for Aboriginal Territorians who can offer immersive tourism experiences that sustain future generations and support their communities, participating in a sector that benefits their community and families economically, socially and culturally.

There are over 1400 tourism businesses across the Territory; small businesses collectively employing thousands of Territorians. This year, tourism operators are truly feeling uncertain about what should be their busiest time of the year. While the tourism hospitality industry is an optimistic and resilient sector, we need to acknowledge when times are tough. At the moment that they need support, this CLP government has stepped back.

Across the board, the tourism industry is under near unprecedented pressure, especially our small and family operators. They are facing a perfect storm of the most severe wet season on record, rising fuel prices, and declining aviation access. These negative impacts are flowing right through to operators and visitors alike. The rising fuel costs alone are increasing operating expenses for businesses, transport, logistics, generators and remote operations. This has been forcing operators to make difficult decisions such as cancelling routes, increasing their ticket prices or even cancelling their services altogether. This is seriously impacting operators who are already cash-strapped up to the disruption of the past Wet Season.

Mr O'GALLAGHER: 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 SMELT: I appreciate the Member for Karama and apologise for not mentioning you yesterday when I was referencing the City of Darwin, my former colleague. It is great to see you and join you here, Member for Karama.

At the same time, visitation is weaking. Travellers' willingness to come to the Territory is softening and further constricting operators' ability to trade. The drive market, which is an incredibly important part of visiting and seeing the Territory, is under threat. We know this because we are hearing from operators that bookings are down on last year or are being cancelled altogether. Industry is telling us that forward bookings are down by 39%. Some are even predicting a significant downturn of 50%.

Across every part of the Territory, from Central to the Top End, every operator is worried. We are hearing directly from operators and key stakeholders across the industry that they are not getting clear communications or any real support. They are trying to plan, keep staff on and keep their businesses running. They are being left to figure it out on their own.

Aviation access is also getting worse. To date, Qantas and Jetstar have announced flight cancellations in and out of Darwin, with the impact of Virgin's cancellations still unfolding we have also been informed that airlines have reduced over 45,000 seats coming into the Territory because of a reduction in services. This is a direct hit to the tourism and hospital industry before the peak season has even properly begun.

Let's look at the government's response. Earlier this year, the minister announced the Territory Visitor Economy Strategy 2032, but industry has not seen action to match the rhetoric. I am hearing from operators and people working in the industry that this was an excellently produced, developed and consulted strategy. There is great support for this work, which makes it even more surprising and unclear why this government has not backed it in with funding in this budget.

It must be because the minister has lost sight of tourism being the jobs factory for the Territory. The industry is asking for support—practical, targeted support—such as bringing back the previous Territory tourism voucher, implemented by the former Territory Labor government during COVID. 'We are all here; we can go on holidays.' These vouchers provided immediate demand to a cross-section of the tourism industry in the

Territory. Different circumstances call for different measures. That is why, along with industry, we called for solutions that matched different circumstances.

The minister has provided no information or announcement on any targeted relief for operators. It is truly a shame. Whether it is to ban stimulation, aviation support or targeted relief, there has been no clear plan. When we turn to the budget, the gap becomes even clearer. Last year, the CLP government cut tourism funding by 23%, Territory events by 12%, and the screen sector by 30%. This year, even with all that has been building for weeks on the back of severe weather events, fuel issues, aviation issues and the new visitor strategy, we see nothing new from the CLP government.

There is no new infrastructure, no new investment and no clear pipeline to support growth. In fact, many of the projects being pointed to—such as the Nitmiluk National Park public art installations and Kakadu National Park road upgrades—were initiated under the former Territory Labor government. Even the minister's barbecue announcement stems from the former Territory Labor government's NT Parks master plan.

The question is, where is the new investment for tourism? Where is the vision and funding to back up the strategy for this critical sector? Tourism businesses are not just numbers. Behind every business is a Territorians, a family, and they are under pressure. Territorians want and need a government that invests in people's success and a future where every Territorian has the chance to thrive no matter where they live.

Tourism is an economic lifeline for our regions, with unique environments and remarkable natural diversity to harness for adventure, and opportunity for visitors to connect deeply with Aboriginal Territorians, the oldest continuous culture, through their own business ventures. Right now, the sector is at the mercy of a Tourism minister who has done nothing to act on the vision given to her by the stakeholders.

The Territory is being held back by inaction, lack of direction and short-term thinking. Territorians deserve better than stalled projects and empty promises. That is why I am speaking against the amendment.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nightcliff for his first debate on the floor. I will be gentle, it being his second day. Member for Nightcliff, I think you will find when I think there is something to say and be called out, I will say it.

There are a few issues I take with what was presented. I will start with the first one. It seems that the people of Nightcliff have, once again, elected a whole-of-the-Territory local member. There are strong bush members on each side of the floor who can fight for their electorates. I encourage the Member for Nightcliff to focus on his electorate—the wealthiest electorate, I believe—which is also why the good working people of Drysdale do not need to be lectured on class division and what they need as the working people.

On infrastructure investment, the people of Drysdale do not forget the long list of promises—what was it, $5bn in unfunded infrastructure projects? Will we sit here and say that the CLP is not investing in infrastructure? What we are not doing is coming up with fairytale lists of $5bn. In Drysdale that list was never delivered. You could go to the school and be told, 'This is on the infrastructure list', year after year. Guess what? The people realised that was never coming.

When we took government, we found that there was only $300m allocated to the $5bn worth or something. They were completely farcical infrastructure lists. It was straight up—I cannot use the word 'lying'. It was a misrepresentation to the people, and they realised.

We talk about what is actually happening. I am keen to know the Member for Nightcliff's position on gas. It is a clear …

Members interjecting.

Mr HOWE: I note the interjections. We heard about the Member for Nightcliff's position on solar. We have heard thoroughly today what the importance of gas will be. I am keen to hear—not from the Leader of the Opposition because I know she supports gas and sees gas as a future pipeline. I want to know the Member for Nightcliff's views on gas in the Northern Territory and the position it plays.

Also his views on housing—such advocates for housing, yet they will block 800 houses from entering the market. As I debated with the last Member for Nightcliff, the greatest …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mr HOWE: … rent relief in the Top End now would be Lee Point being developed, with 800 leases coming to the market. It would be the single-most powerful tool to lower prices.

I ask the new Member for Nightcliff: what is your position on Lee Point? If we are opposed to it, do not then be coming in and saying that the government is not doing enough about prices. The simple, fastest and—he is a smart man, he is an engineer, he knows that when you build houses the effect on the market is lowering that demand. It is simple.

I want to know your position on gas—not from the Leader of the Opposition; I know she understands the importance—Lee Point and the effect it would have even in my electorate. As the Member for Fong Lim clearly articulated, when you create supply in one area of the market it will flow through. That would ease some of the issues in my electorate in Drysdale.

Member for Nightcliff, I thank you for your maiden speech. I believe you spoke from the heart on many issues. I take genuine issue with this: $1.8bn is what the PAC just uncovered on the ship lift infrastructure spend. Every PAC member and I saw the evidence and signatories, which were former Chief Minister Michael Gunner and former Chief Minister Eva Lawler, who personally signed that.

Members interjecting.

Mr HOWE: I note the interjections.

The Member for Nightcliff said yesterday that they are his mentors, specifically Michael Gunner. As we have just uncovered, it was the greatest transfer of public to private wealth in NT history. It is not that there was no business case; departments recommended against doing this. There was no evidence trail, and we cannot see because it is Cabinet-in-confidence. I do not know how much even Cabinet members would be privy to what actually occurred, but I know the backbenchers were not privy to it, which would be the Members for Daly and Arafura.

We saw a $1.8bn transfer, personally signed by Michael Gunner. Member for Nightcliff, I have to call out when I see an issue. If that man is your political mentor, I would ask you to seriously reconsider who you think is worth following, because we have to put the Territory first. The Territory is more important than our parties.

I have a lot of respect for the Leader of the Opposition, and I would say maybe take her up as your mentor as opposed to the man who made the most questionable deal—it is not even questionable; it is $1.8bn of public money we will never see again. Leading that inquiry, I will call out that it was disappointing to hear his name mentioned as an inspiration and mentor.

I agree with the Member for Nightcliff on some things. I do not like things going soft either. I like a hard, strong market and our tourism market is important. The fact is: we see some threats to that in the coming season and there is a litany of issues for that. It is a major risk for the Northern Territory. Fuel prices are having a big impact, and I am waiting with eager anticipation for the federal budget because the biggest thing eating away at our wealth in Drysdale is inflation. It is the single greatest tax on the working-class people of Drysdale that exists. Inflation has not been properly addressed today.

There are levers the NT can pull, but whilst national inflation stays at the rate it is, there is nothing any jurisdiction can do. The RBA President stated this week, ‘Every Australian household is poorer because of inflation’.

Unless the federal government can control its spending, and we are doing our part controlling our spending here, every Territorian will continue to get poorer. Inflation has been a massive piece missing from the debate. I will speak to it more when I speak to the budget; however, for the people I represent, inflation is eating away at our economic state. It makes the wealthy—those who are asset rich—wealthier, and people in my electorate of Drysdale are getting poorer. That is why we must control inflation in this country.

I thank the Member for Nightcliff for his first contribution, and a little taste of spice from me.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Estimates Committee 2026

Mr EDGINGTON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly resolves that:

1. There be appointed an Estimates Committee of the Legislative Assembly (known as the committee) for the purpose of examining and reporting on:

   (i) the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation 2026–27 Bill (the Appropriation Bill) and related budget documents

   (ii) Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, Serial 64

   (iii) activities, performance, practices and financial management of the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation with reference to those corporations' Statements of Corporate Intent of 2026–27.

2. The membership of the committee will be three government members, one opposition member and one crossbench member to be nominated in writing to the Speaker by the relevant Whip or crossbench member. Nominations to the Speaker should occur no later than Monday 11 May 2026.

3. The committee may hold hearings on the following days:

   Tuesday 9 June 2026
   Wednesday 10 June 2026
   Thursday 11 June 2026
   Monday 15 June 2026
   Tuesday 16 June 2026
   Wednesday 17 June 2026
   Thursday 18 June 2026

4. The total time for the hearings of the committee may not exceed 60 hours.

5. The maximum time of the appearance of the Chief Minister and the Treasurer shall not exceed eight hours. The maximum time of the appearance of the Auditor-General shall not exceed 30 minutes. For each other minister and the Speaker the maximum time of their appearance shall not exceed seven hours.

6. The committee will publish a schedule of the days and times of hearings and the times allotted for hearings from ministers, the Auditor-General, the Speaker and board chairs by Friday 15 May 2026. The committee may only amend the published schedule with the consent of the Leader of Government Business.

7. The committee shall examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill by portfolios in accordance with an agenda published by the committee, and the proposed expenditure shall be considered on an output-by-output basis for each portfolio unit, except that the Auditor-General's Office shall be examined separately from outputs relating to the Chief Minister's portfolio.

8. At the hearing for the Auditor-General's Office:

   (i) questions relating to the Auditor-General's Office shall be put to the Auditor-General

   (ii) no agency-related whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy questions shall be asked, except questions strictly relating to the office's appropriation or administrative arrangements.

9. All questions should conform to Standing Order 109, and answers will be concise and directly relevant to the question asked.

10. Answers to questions taken on notice during the hearings or additional information about an answer given by or on behalf of a minister, the Auditor-General, the Speaker or board chair, are to be written and given to the Estimates Committee Secretariat by Monday 13 July 2026. Answers or additional information so received are authorised for publication.

11. The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly is authorised to publish a transcript of the committee proceedings, whether or not it has been edited, as soon as practicable.

12. Evidence taken in public by the committee and documents presented to the committee are deemed to be authorised for publication by the committee unless the committee orders otherwise.

13. At a hearing of the committee the chair may, after a warning, order any member of the Assembly whose conduct, in the opinion of the chair, continues to be disorderly or disruptive, to immediately withdraw from the committee for a period of one hour.

14. Following their second reading the Bills stand referred to the committee for report by 18 June 2026, after which consideration in detail will take place followed by the third reading.

15. The Assembly's routine of business for Thursday 18 June 2026 is:

    (i) 2.30 pm—prayers and acknowledgement of country

    (ii) report from Estimates Committee and consideration of the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill 2026 and the Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

    (iii) government business notices and orders of the day.

16. When the committee's report on the Appropriation Bill is presented, the Assembly shall immediately consider the question that the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation (2026–2027) Bill stand as printed and the report of the Estimates Committee be noted.

17. The following time limits shall apply to the debate on this question:

    - ministers, Leader of the Opposition and shadow ministers, 20 minutes

    - any other member, 10 minutes

    - the maximum period for consideration shall be five hours.

18. When the question on the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation Bill is agreed to, the following question is proposed and put immediately: that the remainder of the Bill and the Treasury Legislation Amendment Bill stand as printed.

19. When the Bills have been agreed to by the Assembly, their third reading may be taken into consideration immediately.

20. This resolution shall have effect, notwithstanding anything contained in standing and sessional orders.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I honour the life of Mr Linford Morgan Feick whose life was tragically taken when he confronted an alleged shoplifter at his family business in the Nightcliff Supermarket on 23 April 2025. I would also like to place on the record words on behalf of his family one year on from his heartbreaking passing.

A year has passed but for Linford's family, his friends and for many members of the community the loss remains heartbreaking, profound and ongoing. Linford Feick came to Darwin in 1976—a young man from Canada. He left his home at the age of 18 to discover the world. After meeting and marrying the love of his life, Margaret, in New Zealand, the couple chose Darwin as their home, as the place where they would raise their family and contribute meaningfully to the community they quickly grew to love.

I am truly grateful that Linford and Margaret chose the electorate of Fannie Bay to build their lives and their family, and I am sure I would not have had the chance to meet, spend time with and appreciate just how special, strong and loving this family is.

Linford believed in hard work to earn an honest dollar and in doing so he and his wife Margaret worked, saved and sacrificed to finally buy their own business, and they opened the Nightcliff Supermarket in 1994. It was through hard work, sacrifice and quiet determination that Linford and Margaret built something truly special. Today it is a Darwin icon, and it is affectionally known as your local friendly grocer. The Nightcliff Supermarket was never just a supermarket. It was a place where people were known, where stories were shared and where community was built day by day over decades.

The Feick family asked me to provide some specific words to this Assembly, which I will now read:

'As a family who lived in Darwin for over 50 years we are overcome with the daily reminder of the violent loss we have suffered. Being first-generation Darwinites our friends have become our family, and we would like to acknowledge that the hurt of what happened to Linford not only lies in us but also with those who have welcomed us into their lives. We would like to thank Laurie Zio and Lia Finocchiaro for their continued support.

'It is important for the wider community to know we are yet to feel any kind of closure. The journey continues, and the hits keep coming. There is no compensation for what has happened in our lives. It is overwhelming. As a family unit we are sacrificing our quality of life and family quality time due to the commitment of continuing to run the business to maintaining ours and our staff's livelihood during the most destitute of times.

'The morals of our society are depleting. Stealing, violence and racism are being enabled by a system that will not take accountability for the problem. Acceleration of progression of violence starts at home, and parents need to be held accountable for teaching the next generation of our society regardless of background. Everyone is sick to death of this antisocial behaviour. How has violence and antisocial behaviour become normalised. Why is this okay? Who wears the consequence? Our community—that is who.

'Again, this has not only affected us; it has also affected the upstanding members of our community. We are not just a corner family supermarket but the heart of the Nightcliff community. This is reflective of our family's high morals of what community should be: united.

'Regardless of the sacrifices we have made over the years. We have built a Darwin icon, and we are at a loss for what lies ahead. Spending three decades interacting and providing a service directly with the community, we have observed the decline of moral standards within a minority of our society which has become a daily problem for the majority who are hardworking law-abiding citizens.

'Overall, our hearts are hurt, and our minds are fearful for what lies ahead, and for the home we love and the community we are a part of. We are not the only ones asking why.'

The Feick family speaks of the difficulty they had in accessing counselling services and the financial burden that has followed, but, most powerfully, they speak about safety. Previously, the Feick family held pride in creating a public space where people felt safe. Sadly, they feel this is no longer a reality. They describe ongoing incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour at their Nightcliff store, incidents that occur far too frequently and, in some cases, are accompanied by threats invoking Linford's death. No family, no worker and no small business owner should ever have to endure that.

The Feick family firmly believe that criminals should be held accountable for their actions, with serious consequences and without a cost or sacrifice to victims. Speaking firsthand as a family who has suffered the ultimate consequence of a judicial system decision that could have been prevented, they would like to remind us that the man accused of taking Linford from them was a predator who should never have been released back into society, unmonitored and unwatched. But he was allowed, and consequently he continued to destroy lives, and left a family asking, 'How is this possibly okay?'

As a family who has worked hard and positively contributed to the community, the Feick family paid the ultimate sacrifice. In return for all the good, they lost their patriarch. Linford Feick was taken from them in the worst possible way. The Feick family have nothing but disappointment and hurt from what they have spent their lives building, all because of a decision that, sadly, has been normalised for people who have violent records.

The judiciary system has negatively affected the day-to-day lives of Linford's surviving family members, and it has left his grandchildren with transgenerational trauma. No family, no worker and no small business owner should ever have to endure that.

This is where we must be honest as a parliament. For too long Territorians have been asked to accept a system that did not put community safety first and antisocial behaviour over time has become normalised. For too long the consequences of that approach have been carried, not by offenders, but by victims, families and small businesses like that of the Feicks. The Feick family is now living with those consequences. They ask: how did this become acceptable? Who is held accountable? Why are victims left to carry the burden? These are not unreasonable questions. They are questions this house must confront.

As a small business the family would like to see regular police engagement, including increased installation of CCTV stations, so that they are not responsible for the cost and burden of policing their own areas. They do not have training for that.

I am proud to be part of a government that recognises these concerns and is committed to restoring community safety, strengthening accountability and ensuring that the rights of victims are never secondary. Unfortunately, we must also acknowledge that changing behaviours and rebuilding confidence takes time, but for families like the Feicks, the impact is immediate, ongoing and deeply personal.

The Nightcliff supermarket is more than a business. It is the heart of a community—a place built on values, connection, respect, generosity and care. Today the heart continues to beat, but it does so with grief, resilience and a call for change.

Linford was a humble man, a devoted husband to Margaret; a loving father to Joanne, Nathan and Ben; and proud Poppy to his grandchildren, Maddy, Elisabeth, Eloise, Hannah, William, Grace and Lachlan. Linford sacrificed his time to create a future for his family. He was known for his gentle nature, intellect and extraordinary ability to connect with people. He remembered names and faces, and he made people feel seen. He was a role model for the community, a pillar of strength and determination to maintain a community bond. Nothing was ever too much to ask from Linford. He listened to what people wanted, and he would strive to provide.

Linford, in the true sense of the word, was a provider. He provided his time, his love, his understanding, his knowledge and his wisdom, especially to the people he held close to his heart. He was a man who was respected and loved by his community, a man of high morals and stature. He was a paragon of commitment and fortitude, a true gentleman.

Resilient to life's changes, Linford always chose to see the positive in any adversity. A sometimes incongruous sense of humour, he would find amusement in the illogical or the absurd. Linford was lucky enough to be surrounded by people who loved him dearly, not just his family but everyone who had the privilege of engaging with him. He lived with integrity, humility and quiet strength. Even in adversity, he chose optimism. Even in challenge, he found humour.

After decades of hard work, Linford was looking forward to retirement, time with Margaret, time with his family and time to enjoy the life he had built. He had grand plans and frequently spoke of finally getting time to spend with the whole family on an overseas holiday. But after a life of building his family and after 30 years of running a business, the Feick family have been irrefutably denied of having a husband, a father and a poppy in their lives.

Tragically, his reward for his hard work was taken from him. In his last moments, Linford's final words spoke of love and pride he had for his family. He was proud of each and every one of his family members, reassured in knowing that he and Margaret had created a generation of children and grandchildren who would follow in their moral wake. There will never be the right number of words to describe who Linford was and what he means to them all. For now and forever, he will be the voice of reasoning, the warmth in their hearts and the embrace of humanity, and the unequivocal endurance needed in their lives.

A year on, we remember Linford Feick not only for the life he lived, but for what he stood for: hard work, decency and community. We acknowledge a family who continue to carry loss and responsibility with strength and dignity. To Linford's wife, Margaret, his children, Joanne, Nathan and Ben, and his grandchildren, Maddie, Elizabeth, Eloise, Hannah, William and Lachlan, please know that we honour Linford's life. We hear your words. We will not forget, and we stand with you.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and congratulate proud community member Wesley Campbell from the deadly community of Yarralin. Over the last two weeks, Wesley has begun his university journey towards becoming a teacher. This is a significant achievement, and our local community could not be prouder of him.

Wesley has already successfully completed his first university unit, Exploring Diverse Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing, taking another important step in his dream to working in the education space as a teacher and supporting the next generation of Territory students. Wesley is a local legend. He is strong in his community, supporting health education and sport as well as the local council.

To Yarralin School and the community, thank you for supporting Wesley and for doing a great job in the local community. Wesley, you are strong, you are deadly, and the future is bright. I look forward to seeing you in the Territory's schools.

I also acknowledge and celebrate a remarkable piece of public art that has been bringing the heart of the nation from Central Australia to the streets of Melbourne. *Field of Light: Beyond the Desert*, marks 10 years of the internationally recognised *Field of Light* installation at Uluru. Importantly, it highlights the incredible talent and storytelling of the Anangu artist Valerie Brumby alongside Wurundjeri muralist Alex Kerr.

Valerie's work carries something deeply powerful and cultural and talks about connection and the spirit of country. Through her art, she shares stories grounded in Anangu culture, knowledge, identity and lived experience. Her contribution to this mural ensures that this work is not just something beautiful to look at, but is something that carries meaning, history and the spirit from the heart of the desert into one of our biggest cities in Australia. Inspired by Bruce Munroe's iconic *Field of Light* installation at Uluru, this mural transforms a city wall into a space of connection, linking people back to country, story and culture.

It is artists like Valerie Brumby who remind us why the arts matter so much. They preserve culture, create understanding and bring communities together. In the Territory, we know our artists are more than creative, they are storytellers, cultural leaders and ambassadors for our communities. This mural is another example of the Territory's culture and talent being recognised on the national stage, and we should all be incredibly proud.

To Valerie Brumby, congratulations and thank you for sharing your strength and the beauty of Anangu culture with the world. To everyone in Melbourne, I hope they have enjoyed the beautiful creation that has been created by Valerie and Alex on the corner of Swan and Carroll Street in Richmond. When we invest in art and culture, we invest in identity, connection and truth-telling. Thank you.

Mr MALEY (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge and express my deep condolences to the family of Bruce Connolly, and to friends in this industry who he devoted his life to.

Bruce was a champion of the Territory and wider Australia in the agricultural industry. His passing leaves a void and blow to the industry. Bruce loved the Northern Territory and truly believed in its people and its future. He spent time riding across the beautiful Territory on horseback when he was in his twenties. However, it was not until February 2016 that the Territory drew him back on a more permanent basis, when he was employed as farm manager at Tipperary Group of Stations.

I travelled to Tipperary Group Station in January 2025 to meet with Bruce and the now-Administrator, David Connolly; both David and Bruce were a wealth of knowledge. His passion and understanding of the land were evident. He showed us their cotton crops and how they were utilising their crops at Tipperary Station.

Today, the word 'pioneer' is overused but is truly fitting in the description for Bruce's impact on the cotton industry and agriculture in the Northern Territory. During his work at Tipperary Group of Stations, Bruce led the development of the cotton industry after the moratorium on growing GM crop was lifted in 2019. With decades of experience growing cotton around Australia, he knew that it could be successfully grown here. He also saw massive opportunities for the Territory in integrating cotton and the cattle industry.

At Tipperary Group of Stations, Bruce initially grew cotton in a small paddock and, as a result of his hard work and success, production was significantly expanded. Thanks to the work of Bruce and the wider industry, in less than 10 years cotton production in the Northern Territory grew from zero hectares to over 10,000 hectares in the 2023-24 season.

In 2023 the Northern Territory's first cotton gin was opened to support the growing industry. The gin was a $70m investment in the Territory which supports jobs in the region. Bruce recognised the importance of

sharing his knowledge and helping others. He encouraged farmers to diversify their operation and supported them as they tried growing cotton. For many, he was a highly respected mentor. Bruce was helping the emerging cotton industry, proudly promoting the industry and the benefits it would bring to the Territory.

He was a founding member and inaugural President of the Northern Territory Growers Association, a board member on NT Farmers Association, and board member of Cotton Australia. His work enhanced the skills and knowledge of the emerging industry, and he also helped bust the myths of cotton around the Northern Territory.

I spent time with Bruce this year with the Member for Goyder in his new role at Duxton Farms; his knowledge and deep passion was evident. I valued the opportunity to hear his vision of agriculture in the Northern Territory. Bruce will be missed, but his contribution will remain. I know that industry will always remember him, especially when cotton grows in paddocks across the Northern Territory. I extend my condolences to Bruce's family.

This year I went to the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade AGM, and I congratulate Lachlan for becoming the captain of that volunteer fire brigade.

The fire brigades in the rural area do a tremendous job. We have had a lot of rain this year, so the fire season across the rural area will be intense. The members of the Howard Springs and other volunteer brigades will have their work cut out for them. I want to thank them for the work they do and what they will be doing this year. We support them and will do what we can.

On Monday I attended International Firefighters Day with the Chief Minister and some other members of parliament to recognise the work that firefighters do across the Northern Territory. They are the ones who run into danger to help you or your family and protect life and property. I acknowledge the work of our firefighters.

The Humpty Doo Golf Club hosted an Anzac Day event. I was lucky enough to attend and lay a wreath, along with hundreds of other people. I have been going there for a few years now and I think this was the biggest turnout. It goes to show that people in the rural area and across the Territory respect Anzac Day for what it is and there is a growing trend to remember what it means to the Territory.

After that I attended the Lions ceremony at the village green, along with the Member for Goyder, where they held a parade. I thank all the school groups and rural organisations who turned up and marched with our veterans on that day. Again, the numbers were high, and I thank the people who organised that.

Mrs HERSEY (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I put on the record some words about the life of William Daw, or Bill as most people call him. Bill recently turned 60, just a short time before he retired and finished his work at Red Cross.

I first met Bill when I was a hairdresser in Katherine over 30 years ago. Bill was the photographer at the salon I worked at and had a small studio where I had some photos taken with my first-born son, James.

In conversations with Bill over the years about his life, I was not aware that Bill grew up on stations out west with his parents, Lynda and Bill Senior, on Pigeon Hole, VRD, Carlton Hill Station in the Kimberley and Rosewood Station. The first 35 years of Bill's life, he grew up in the cattle industry where his family-owned Florina Station.

Bill has been a long-term serving leader in the Northern Territory with a career spanning government, community development, emergency management and regional economic leadership. Before all of Bill's work with the Red Cross, he was General Manager of the Katherine Region Tourist Association for approximately five years. He was Chair of Godinymayin for eight years before it was built, and he was instrumental in getting the funding to build the Godinymayin Cultural Centre where it is today, and handing over to Craig Lambert, who was the Chair for many years after. I did not realise until recently, in conversations with Bill, he was actually born in Katherine.

Bill was also instrumental in building the current Visitor Information Centre in Katherine, along with Fay Miller, who was our previous Member for Katherine and also a mayor before she had her life cut short by a terminal illness.

Bill Daw has been the Director in the Northern Territory for Australian Red Cross, providing strategic oversight across emergency services, migration support programs and connected women's initiatives. I have been to

many shows at the community of Katherine's Connected Women's programs, which have brought great joy to our community. The multicultural feasts have been a culinary delight under the leadership of Ushani Loku Arumage in Katherine, under Bill's oversight in Darwin.

Bill has played a central leadership role during multiple major emergency events across the NT, including cyclones, flooding and large-scale evacuations, ensuring the safety, dignity and care of many vulnerable communities. Bill has been instrumental in strengthening the Northern Territory's evacuation centres model in partnership with government, creating a nationally recognised scalable approach to disaster response. He is widely respected for his ability to build and maintain strong relationships with government, Aboriginal communities, and key stakeholders across some of Australia's most remote regions. This would have a lot to do with the fact Bill is a born and bred Territorian and understands the culture and landscape.

You could not get more of a champion of place-based, culturally informed service delivery, particularly through programs such as Connected Women—as I spoke about in Katherine and Darwin as well as the Galiwinku Baby Hub. When I was out there visiting the Shepherdson College with their 100 years of bilingual education I called in and saw the hard work happening at the baby hub.

Bill has demonstrated his commitment to empowering Aboriginal communities through collaboration, cultural respect, and long-term partnership approaches. He has been recognised for guiding complex program transitions, including the successful handover of long-standing services back to community-controlled organisations. That is true leadership in empowering others.

Bill has been an alderman and a Deputy Mayor of Katherine, where he contributed to local governance and community leadership over many years. His has extensive experience across public and private sectors, including regional tourism leadership, vocational education and training, and small business ownership.

Bill is known for his practical leadership style, calm under pressure, solutions-focused and deeply committed to community outcomes. He has been a recipient of the Australian Red Cross Distinguished Service Award, recognising his outstanding contribution and leadership. I commend him for his ongoing leadership.

Bill has many networking connections across the Territory and was a trusted advisor and connector, with strong relationships across Northern Territory and Commonwealth Government agencies.

Bill has consistently put people first, particularly in times of vulnerability, crisis or transition. Bill's retirement has come after years of dedicated service, and he is leaving behind a strengthened humanitarian footprint across the Northern Territory. I thank Bill for his dedicated service, and I am sure he will be missed terribly at Red Cross.

Enjoy your retirement, Bill. I am sure you will get bored pretty soon and will move into doing something else back in the workforce, but enjoy your grandchildren and travel a bit first before you do that.

On Anzac Day the Katherine Town Council and RAAF Base Tindal had an amazing dawn service in Katherine. It gets bigger and bigger each year. This year the SADFO Alex Smith from RAAF Base Tindal spoke at the dawn service about what Anzac Day means. He gave reflection and connection to what we just had endured during the Katherine floods, and the resilience of the people. He mentioned the likes of Ben Hockey and Trent de With, who did a remarkable job throughout our recent flooding.

I attended the Anzac Day service at St Joseph's Primary School, where their school leaders held the service. All the kids had made little Anzac Day wreaths and put it on the little cenotaph they have there with the flags on display for their school assembly. I also attended the Kintore Street School Anzac Day ceremony and the kids did the same thing. The kids made little Anzac Day wreaths and, in their school class groups, they put them on the actual cenotaph they have there and did the flag raising ceremony.

Jen, my electorate officer, attended the service at Katherine South Primary School, and Harriet attended the one at Casuarina Street. There are so many. I cannot quite get to all of them, but I managed to get to the Katheirne High School in the middle of the day, where the school leaders run the assembly. They do a great service there, attended by the mayor and some of the aldermen. The Leader of the Opposition was there as well.

Anzac Day is about making us think about how lucky we are to live in this country. We in Katherine have the dawn service and then we have a parade in the main street. Given that we have a strong military presence, it is a great parade with the RAAF Base Tindal taking part. All the school groups marched as well as the

soldiers and the Katherine Vehicle Enthusiasts Group, who had all the old cars out there with servicemen and RSL members. It is a fantastic day.

The highlight for me is when they do the flyover. There are many people who complain about the planes and the noise, but that flyover is amazing. That screams to me of the freedom we have in this country every day. It is great to hear those jets taking off and flying around Katherine when they have the exercises. I thank the RAAF base for the incredible work that the servicemen and women do who represent us in times of need, and for the service they provide to our country when they travel overseas.

I also thank Mayor Joanna Holden and the Katherine Town Council, along with our acting CEO who organised the Anzac Day Service. It is a great day.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Madam Speaker, I also thank the Members for Fannie Bay and Nelson for their condolence motions in regard to Linford and Bruce. I also pay a quick condolence to Artemis Klonaris who is the sister-in-law of Sylvia Klonaris, one of the councillors in the City of Darwin. The Member for Casuarina and I went to the funeral at the Greek church.

I also attended the funeral of Vic Ludwig, a great St Marys legend, at St Mary's Cathedral with the Chief Minister and the Member for Sanderson. Vic and I used to meet at the Northlakes shops a number of times. A group of guys got together. The last time I saw them was about three weeks ago. He was a great fellow. I pass on my condolences to the whole family, especially his son, Steve, who I know. I also had the pleasure of attending the wake at St Mary's Football Club.

Before I move on, I pass on my condolences to the Burke family—Denis, Sam and our Chief Minister—on the passing of Annette. There is a big funeral for her tomorrow. Vale Annette. I will not talk about her; I will let others do that.

Having said that, I will talk about a practical issue which I suggest any MLA to feel free if they want to take it up. When I was walking around my electorate, as you know, I hand out my newsletter, I came across a number of people who were struggling to get their lawn done. One of the reasons was they did not have a mower. Either the mower they had was broken and needed fixing or they could not afford one, and it was holding them back. Their yards were getting on a bit. They take pride in their place, and they wanted to do something.

On the Easter weekend I was out and there was one lady and her son—unfortunately the father had passed away not long ago; he used to do all the mowing. They were getting stuck. I volunteered to go over with a mate of mine. We took our mower over and mowed the yard to help them get started.

That got me thinking what I could do to help these people. The other week I purchased a community lawnmower. I went to the Big Mower, negotiated a bit of a discount from them and took their advice on a robust lawnmower that is easy to start so people can service my electorate. I got one that can do the houses around Malak and Karama but probably not Knuckey Lagoon—you need a tractor out there or a ride-on. We got a mower, and I posted about it online. I said, 'There is a free loan of a lawnmower'. I have offered through my electorate a place where people can make a booking. At a mutually convenient time, I will take the mower out there. I will give them one full tank of petrol, and I will give it to them for half a day, either the morning or the afternoon. We have had some uptake on that. Just the other Friday morning, I got a call. They have to book in, and I check them out to make sure that they are okay and that they will not just sell it off somewhere.

Dwayne in Karama said, 'Brian, I am saving up for a mower. I just do not have enough at the moment, but I am worried about the verge. It is getting a bit big and starting to look untidy'. I said, 'You are a perfect candidate'. I dropped it over on a Friday morning. Perfectly loaded up. He took it. I went off to a school council meeting up at Karama Primary School. I came back a couple of hours later. He had done a wonderful job. I give him full credit. He had the mower fully cleaned and ready to go for me to pack up. I said, 'That is great, fantastic. If you get a bit stuck again and you have not saved up enough, come back to me. Do you mind if I post this episode on the Facebook site to promote the service?'. He said, 'No. Go for it. Other people will want to take it up'.

As a result of that, I got an inquiry by Messenger from another resident who said, 'Brian, I have a surplus Honda 4-stroke mower. Can you hook me up with Dwayne and I will donate this to him?'. I did the old messaging trick and handed over and got them to talk to each other. Lo and behold, that afternoon, Charlie from Karama delivered a mower to Dwayne. He did not have to save up for it. Dwayne got a mower, and Charlie got rid of his surplus mower. What a great solution.

Taking this to another level, I have had other people who seem to want to borrow everything. Some people are stuck for a trailer. They want to clean their yards up, but they just do not have a trailer. I will go out on the quiet and say, 'If you pack it up and bag it up—I am not mowing or cleaning—I will come around and you can load it into my trailer, and I will take it to the tip for you'. That is just another little extension of that service.

I was approached by Jess Ong at ABC Radio who must have seen the Facebook page and wanted to talk about it. I thought that was a great opportunity to promote the service. It is only available to residents in Karama, Malak and Knuckey Lagoon. That is why I say other members might want to look at their own initiatives. It was fantastic. I went in there and jokingly said, 'I have to be careful'. Someone had warned me, 'People want to borrow your mower. All they will do is syphon your petrol out given the cost of fuel.' I do not think that will happen, but I saw the joke in it.

It is a free service. It is on loan. I am doing it as a trial. I will see how it goes; if I can expand the service and get others involved in it, I will. If I can get some private sector sponsorship behind that too—maybe the lawnmower shops want to start helping me out—we will see how we go. I will not become the equipment hire place for the whole electorate. It is just these little things to help people out. It is an initiative. We just have to think about what we can do practically for people. You can talk a lot but if you do little practical things and they come behind and grow it themselves, that is a wonderful thing, and I take great heart in that.

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I recognise some extraordinary achievements for women connected to the Port Darwin electorate and to wish them luck in the upcoming NT News Woman of the Year Awards nominations. They are Shannon Kieran, who is up for the Rising Star (Under 28 years) award, and Gella Catis from Stomp Shoes who is up for the Stars of Retail, Tourism and Hospitality award. I have done my best to support her business over the years, and I am proud to show off her merchandise at every possible opportunity. When I attend the awards, I will make sure I do just that. Congratulations also to Jenny Davis, who is up for the STEM award.

I am excited to recognise some of the young kids from our electorate. Congratulations to the recipient of the St Mary's Primary School citizenship awards that were announced last week. The early childhood lower class award went to Maxen Hickey for being a kind a caring student, who treats both peers and staff with respect, is always helpful in class and consistently tries his best.

Congratulations to Oscar Lewis, who is in the upper primary class, who consistently demonstrates the 'four Rs' in the classroom and the playground, is always respectful and ready to learn and includes others with kindness and fairness. Oscar participates in all activities with dignity and enthusiasm, shows great honesty and integrity in everything he does and is a wonderful role model for his peers. He will be an exceptional leader as he grows into his high school years.

Congratulations to the Larrakeyah Primary School recipients. In the middle upper school, we had Zen Denson for showing school values by being a positive leader, taking responsibility for our environment, and helping keep our school clean by picking up rubbish, which is important. In early childhood lower, the award went to Joyce Giri for being kind, working hard, helping others and trying her best.

I had the honour of picking winners in the Easter Hat Parade, which was a challenge because all of the students did an amazing job. As they say, there can only be one winner in each category. I was delighted to present the award for the best Easter hat to Lucy Cullen from preschool, Aimera T from Transition, Cassius P from Year 1, and Oscar V from Year 2. The overall winner—and this was a tough one to decide—went to Debargha Roy, who did a fantastic job with his Easter hat creation.

Generally, it has been a big couple of weeks for Larrakeyah Primary School. It is such an incredible school, the students are amazing, the teachers are fantastic, and the leadership shown by their principal, Fathma Mauger, is exceptional. It has been rewarded with Larrakeyah Primary School being named in the top 50 shortlist for the Global Schools Prize 2026. This is an initiative of the Varkey Foundation, celebrating the world's most innovative and impactful schools that are reimagining education for the future.

Larrakeyah Primary School was selected from almost 3,000 nominations and applications from 113 countries around the world—an extraordinary achievement. Not only did Larrakeyah Primary reach the top 50 in the Global Schools Prize, but they are also in top 5 for AI transformation. The work Larrakeyah Primary School has done is extraordinary, and it is transforming primary education through their program called IntelliLearn, a custom-built AI writing platform designed by its own teachers. Unlike generic AI tools, IntelliLearn provides curriculum-aligned, scaffolded feedback with voice-to-text features that particularly support the school's large EAL/D population, which is around 50% of Years 5 to 6. It is an amazing initiative the school has developed.

The results being achieved with this platform are exceptional, with 92% of Year 5 and 100% of Year 6 students meeting or exceeding literacy benchmarks, and 86% of EAL/D learners achieving at or above-expected writing levels. Student surveys show that 92.1% stayed on task, and 85.5% found it easy to use. Keeping 92.1% of your students on task is no mean feat. They are to be commended for the work they have done.

This is not the first time Larrakeyah has been noticed, with the school's achievements spanning national and international recognition. This is worth a recap of what they have done: in 2025, winner of Best Use of Technology; in 2022, Best STEM Program at the Australian Education Awards; Primary School of the Year (Government) Excellence Awardee in 2025; named among Australia's top 34 schools; a top three World's Best School Prizes finalist, Healthy Lives in 2022; and the only NT Government school accredited as a Cambridge International School.

The top 50 will be narrowed down to 10 category winners, who will each be awarded $50,000. Of those, one extraordinary school will receive the Global Schools Prize and $500,000 to scale its impact. Finalists and winners will be announced at the Education World Forum to be held in from London 17 to 20 May this year. We will all be sending all the best vibes for Larrakeyah Primary to be successful.

If that was not enough, Larrakeyah has also been named the top-ranked public primary school in News Corp's prestigious list in the Northern Territory. The school boasts an average Year 5 NAPLAN score of 512, with 36% of its students in the top socio-educational quarter, which is an extraordinary achievement. The principal, Fathma Mauger, credited the school's success to blending academic excellence with a continuous focus on wellbeing.

I can attest to the fact that as a school they have such a well-rounded approach to their students and are invested in the outcomes of their students' education as well as their personal wellbeing. I am so excited and proud to be connected with this extraordinary school and all the educators who work there.

Well done, Larrakeyah Primary School, and fingers crossed for the awards that are announced in a couple of weeks.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I frequently speak about our arts sector, not just for the intrinsic value of the arts but also in relation to the return on investment for arts. I rarely speak about things before they have happened, so I thought I would do a bit of that today to entice some of you to come along to things that are coming up soon. I think they are worth checking out if you have time.

The hope is that amongst our heavy schedules we can also find time to contribute to supporting our hyperactive arts sector, not just because it is cool and different, but also because it pays off well for us. In May budget week, that is not a terrible thing to be investing in.

What is worth foreshadowing, first and foremost, is over this weekend on Friday, Saturday and Sunday the Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival is on. Although I am not the Member for Nightcliff and the government does not hold that seat, I think all the people in Nightcliff should know how invested the government is in the Seabreeze Festival. It is a wonderful celebration of arts, community, theatre and food in one of the most beautiful and picturesque parts of the Territory.

For all of you who are around in the two-week sittings and who might not be around all the time for events like this, it is a great event to pop into. I look forward to seeing the Member for Nightcliff at the festival, which I am sure he will be frequenting.

I will make my presence known on Friday, if not Saturday and Sunday, at 6 pm, to drop in with the Darwin Beach Choir, which as I pointed out last time is a choir for the musical and tone-deaf alike. They are a great mob to have a sing-song with. Genuinely, that is how they bill themselves. It is so much fun to hang out with them. Thalia Hewitt, a wonderful speech pathologist who works in our healthcare system, teaches everyone the song, then you all do it together. There is no judgement, and it makes you feel warm and fuzzy at the end of it. Whether you can carry a tune or not, I encourage you to do it. I will be there Friday at 6 pm for anyone who wants to have a sing-song next to me.

The Minister for Arts wears a lot of hats, as we all know, and nobody could begrudge him, given the number of events he goes to, for missing the odd one here or there. This Saturday he is already booked, so I have the opportunity to sub for him on a few different things and to represent the Minister for Arts.

At 1 pm on Saturday, the Darwin Chorale will be doing their Best of British Pop concert in the AANT Centre. If you do not want to sing along but want to genuinely be uplifted, that is a great opportunity. It is a concert of hits, legends and anthems. If you would like to hear some Adele or Beatles tunes, it is fun.

On a serious note, the chorale is everywhere, and we take them for granted. I do not know how many speeches we have heard tonight about the value, merit and the importance of Anzac Day. What would you do on Anzac Day if they were not there to sing the National Anthem for you in the morning? Or for the many other ceremonies that we go to—all those people in the blue shirts are the backdrops to all the events, particularly the ones in Darwin. I know the same is true of other parts of the Territory, but in Darwin where there are an awful lot of these events, there is only one choir that sings the National Anthem for you at these events, including at our formal occasions in the House.

If you have the opportunity at 1 pm on Saturday, take a moment to check out the chorale doing the kind of thing they love to do when they are not singing the National Anthem. I think they would appreciate it.

I have given a ton of speeches about the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, I will not say anything more other than they are putting on another spectacular concert this Saturday night. It is called Island Signal, Island Song. It has some local stuff and some high-brow stuff. The important thing is they are not just about classical music; they are a binding force for us in terms of social cohesion, keeping our healthcare workforce happy and giving them something to do. If those guys disappeared, we would all be cactus, so do your best to make it to a DSO concert sometime. I think they would love to see more people from the Assembly at one of their concerts.

Might I also recommend, if you cannot get to the one this Saturday, then 27 June—when I know we do not have other things on—is the big outdoor one at the Amphitheatre. It is a fun one, when they do all the movie and pop stuff, and there are 5,000 people there. It is a great atmosphere. Bring your picnic rugs, have some drinks and a nibble, bring your family and enjoy yourselves. I am giving you plenty of notice about that one. Its value transcends generating classical music.

What I would like to do tonight, more than anything else, is point out an organisation I have not mentioned before and which I do not think many of us are even aware of. It is the Darwin Musical Theatre group. I went on Friday to watch the opening night of their production of *Chicago*, and seriously, it was smoking hot. It was amazing. That production is running until this Saturday, and it is a top-notch show.

Here is the thing: it is running for nine days at Browns Mart, and it is a big-ticket show. They sold out their run of shows, then they added extra shows and sold out again, and they are not even inviting any of us. There are no dignitaries on the list; they are sailing under the radar. This is indicative of the kind of thing that generates activity.

I turned up just as a punter because a few people said, ‘You need a social life; come and watch this show with us.’ I turned up, and it was spectacularly good. I do not know that you can get a ticket, quite frankly, but if you can for Friday or Saturday night, go along. It is fantastic.

Here is the thing about the return on investment stuff—and I have said plenty about economics again, so I will not bang on again: these guys do not get a dollar from us. They have no grants, subsidies or official representation; they are basically volunteers. We are always talking about how much we care about our volunteers. For volunteers, this was top-notch stuff, and the quality of the production was significant. I do not often call out individual names in these speeches, but I want to call out some of these guys because they were amazing:

Production team, Yolande Davidge and Seven Mills; costume designer, Kylie Lefebvre; props master, Eleanor Blackford; sets, Zanzibar Collective; photography, Harley Mason; marketing, Holly O’Donnell; and stage management, Lily Daniel.

Well done. It was a top-notch show to put on. I have played in a pit orchestra version of *Chicago* before, and it is devilishly hard. I was almost roped into this one, and I said, ‘I ain’t getting involved; that will be a nightmare to be part of.’ They did a phenomenal job on what is a top-tier score.

Dom Serov was on piano and conducting; Jenny Young on clarinet; Caleb Markle on saxophones; Graeme Hen on trombone; Andrew Stechmann on bass; Carolyn McNair on Violin; and Anthony Sherwood on percussion.

I might add, doing all of that 'wup-wup-wah' stuff at the beginning, which everyone loves and knows from *Chicago …*

Mr Kerle: How is Hansard meant to transcribe that?

Dr RAHMAN: Good luck, Hansard, with that one; that is a fair point.

Robin Kidney was doing that work on trumpet. Do you know when we last saw Robin Kidney? It was playing the *Last Post* when we were all up at six in the morning at the Anzac Day ceremony. Support our arts crew who cover lots of bases. He did a phenomenal job in that show as well.

Across the board the levels of talent were just phenomenal. Georgia Olsen, Josephine Marchant, Harley Mason, Holly O'Donnell, Pip O'Shea and Caleb Schatz who did all the lead role stuff were amazing. Everyone was just in awe of the high quality of the production. Likewise, the female ensemble—who sometimes do not get their plaudits, but I reckon are the backbone of that show—included Nikki Glennon, Maddison Kemp, Stefanie Ream, Gracia Razafimamonjy, Tully Gelfling and Samantha Lewis who were just fantastic. Finally, you cannot have a *Chicago* production without a bunch of guys in the male cast, who were phenomenal. To Cristhian Jara, Eloy Mason, Patrik Ralph and Jon Zhou, well done. It takes such a lot of commitment to put on a show like that. These guys are making money for the Territory, making art and creating growth.

That area would just be dead, that whole zone. For nine days in a row there would be nothing happening in Browns Mart, no-one buying drinks and no-one necessarily going to eat in the CBD after watching those shows. We must get behind our arts sector, not just for the intrinsic value of arts but because it pays off. We were all talking this week about how to make money; this is the way to make money.

The shows were all sold out. If you can get yourself a ticket on Friday or Saturday, by all means do so because, seriously, it would be worth your while. It is a great night out. Even if you cannot, I encourage you all to support the Darwin Musical Theatre crew. They will be doing shows during the Darwin Festival and the Darwin Fringe Festival. I think they will be a real fixture in our landscape if we can find a way to get behind them. Maybe that does not mean giving them big chunks of money or grants or whatnot to start with; maybe it just means showing up.

Take a chance on something different. Check out the Darwin Musical Theatre and, if you have a chance this weekend, the chorale, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and the Seabreeze Festival.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I will raise the Member for Fong Lim and talk about the Never Never Festival, which will be in the great electorate of Arnhem. It will be hosted at Mataranka and will coincide with the annual Mataranka Rodeo—however you want to pronounce it. I am the product of watching American movies from way back. The Mataranka Rodeo is happening this Saturday evening. It is exciting because there is a huge community collective in organising the rodeo this year. In past years there have been some of the various commercial rodeo services that travel around and do the circuit. This was all new to me until I became the local member 10 years ago.

Hats off to the Member for Fong Lim who will attending the Seabreeze Festival in the great electorate of Nightcliff, now with our local member Ed Smelt. I will proudly be down in Mataranka supporting the electorate that I am humbled and privileged to represent.

For the record, in case I can entice anyone—like my friend the Member for Drysdale and his family to come down and spend time in the fantastic electorate of Arnhem—these are the events for the Never Never Festival. I acknowledge the Member for Katherine is a first-time sponsor. It is great that she is using some of her sponsorship from the Katherine electorate. In the Arnhem electorate we will say yes to anybody's money as long as we have a good community festival. It is fantastic to see the CLP government finally supporting some good things in the Arnhem electorate. We would love it if more projects could be budgeted for, of course, but I will take the sponsorship from the Member for Katherine. Thank you for your support of a great community event over the weekend.

For those of you brave enough to travel down the potholed Stuart Highway to the community and township of Mataranka, it is a beautiful close-knit community connected to the wonderful Never Never region. Thankfully, a huge amount of work from Parks and Wildlife and some cleanup has occurred because that area was affected by the recent flooding. The Mataranka thermal pools are now open. It is a little cloudy, but that is okay. It is great and safe to swim, which is awesome. I believe Bitter Springs, if it has not already opened, is due to open soon.

Thank you to Parks and Wildlife for some big work. I know our tourism operators in Mataranka, particularly those who rely on the drive market, will be keen to host campers and people staying in cabins and motel rooms. Filling those rooms up this weekend would support our local Territory businesses who we expect will do it pretty tough this tourism season.

The Never Never Festival lineup begins this Friday 8 May with the deck chair cinema at 7.15 pm at Bitter Springs Cabin and Camping Ground. BYO drinks and chair, and you can order your pizzas before 5 pm at the Territory Manor. They do great pizzas. We had them at a community event at the end of last year, and I can attest to the pizzas.

The next day, Saturday 9 May, will start with the bushman's breakfast at 7.30 am at the Little Roper Stock Camp, with billy tea and Johnny cakes. It might be worth your while staying away from Alice Springs for a weekend, Madam Speaker, and having some time with us.

Then the main event, the Mataranka Rodeo, will start from 4 o'clock. It is hosted by the Mataranka Fishing, Sporting and Recreation Club and will have everything you would expect from a rodeo: bulls; broncs; bareback barrel racing; food stalls; full bar; and, if you are brave, at 9 o'clock get your dancing shoes on, chuck those hats off, as we have live music by DJ Casey Bishop all evening. I usually exit about 9 o'clock. Maybe in my younger years I might have stayed on for a few dances, but definitely not anymore, unfortunately. DJ Casey puts on a good show, and anyone who has been to Mataranka Rodeo can attest to that.

The next morning starts off with a bush church service in the Stan Martin Park. That is the lovely little park across from the BP Mataranka Roadhouse. The church service starts at 8 o'clock. Everyone starts to set up then for the Mother's Day Market at 9 o'clock in the same park, with local food stalls and gifts. Often Mataranka School and even Jilkminggan School have students selling enterprise business goods, so all the money goes back to the school. I always spend a bit of money supporting them. They do a cracker bacon and eggs breakfast. That was always my little way of getting up early, setting up my stall, going across, getting the bacon and eggs, and that is usually run by the Mataranka fishing and sport and rec club.

Thank you so much to the various sponsors for supporting. Each year it gets a little bit bigger and better. There is still a lot of water at the back of the sports ground. I have been reassured that it will go ahead, they might just have to make some arrangements to ensure it is safe at the back there.

Anyone who is competing in the rodeo knows they put on a fantastic, fun and professional rodeo. I am one of those people who stands at the gate and blocks my eyes and covers my face and hopes no-one hits the ground, so I am probably not the best spectator, but I enjoy the atmosphere and seeing people hit those records and everyone cheering on.

It does not matter where you are from. We get some Darwinites down. You are welcome to come past the Berrimah Line/Coolalinga line and come visit us there. Please, if you have an opportunity to spend money locally, particularly with our tourism operators across the Territory, spend your weekend supporting businesses because we know when times are tough, Territorians get behind each other and this is a perfect excuse, in my eyes.

Ticket prices are reasonable. We know cost-of-living pressures are quite big. Adult tickets are $25, pensioners are $15 and kids over five years are $10. A family pass is $60, and that is for two adults and three kids. You can squeeze an extra kid in there if you have a friend. You can buy those tickets at the gate.

There is an option for camping sites too. Often the mob coming in from all over, who are part of the rodeo, will camp as part of it. There may be friends and family there supporting you. They can camp on the grounds, it only costs and extra $20 which is reasonable.

A big shout-out to the Mataranka Never Never Festival committee members. They have been working tirelessly towards this weekend. I believe tonight is their last committee meeting. They are probably having a couple of pizzas at Territory Manor. It would be a great way to celebrate the last meeting for a good community event. Thank you to all the community locals, particularly the sponsors who are not in Mataranka supporting this event. I look forward to seeing some of the action and records, hopefully. Kids start from early on too.

My electorate officer's son is competing, and her youngest son is going in for the first time. Do not worry, Madam Speaker, they go in and hold the jackets and something happens and they pull them up. They are all vested up and have all the headgear and coverings for the arms and elbows, legs and knees. It is fantastic.

Staying in Mataranka for that weekend will be good because it puts money back into the local businesses that will probably need that extra support from us. It is also a great way to have a yarn with visitors and locals alike.

A big shout-out to Ben and the team at the Mataranka Homestead. They did a huge amount of work with the cleanup from the floods. It was phenomenal. I was there the Anzac Day weekend. There were a lot of locals there supporting the local business. It was great to see Territorians turn up to support each other, putting on a feed. They are also doing live music every weekend with different bands from Darwin and local bands from Katherine.

Nathan 'Whippy' Griggs, the whip cracker, who has a world record in cracking the most stockwhips in a minute. I cannot tell you what it is, but I will make sure I have that for you soon. There is a great show, and everyone comes together to support each other.

A shout-out to Ben and the crew. They went through a tough time with the flood. Des Barrett and Telka have the Little Roper Stock Camp as well recovered from the flood thankfully. We need everyone to get behind and support them.

If you are coming, Member for Drysdale, you can camp at Little Roper Stock Camp. They have animals. The girls will love it; Alice will probably enjoy it too. It is great for families, couples, individuals and friends. It will be a fun weekend. If you have not done the Mataranka Rodeo, this weekend could be your weekend.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I agree with the Leader of the Opposition on this rodeo. To the Member for Fong Lim, I am proud to say that I have taken part in the *Chicago* production. It is exciting.

Tonight I speak of Anzac Day. My sincere thanks to every veteran throughout the Northern Territory. That includes a humble veteran I know quite well, the Member for Arafura. I highlight the Member for Arafura's service. I speak often about service. It was a major part of my life, and I know it was for the Member for Arafura as well. We are both Army boys. You are united in a way that only another veteran understands. I sincerely enjoy serving in this Chamber with the Member for Arafura. I love that we both served in the Army and have a deep love for the country. I acknowledge him tonight because he is humble about his service. Thank you, Member for Arafura.

Before I get into it, I speak all the time at my schools about what the military can afford. Something both the Member for Arafura and I have discussed on multiple occasions is the opportunities the Army gave us. It is a great launching platform for Territory kids. I am a huge lover of NORFORCE. The one thing I did not achieve in my career was a posting there. I tried but, as many officers will know, your career plan is—you are told.

It is an incredible unit with amazing capability. I genuinely would have loved to go there. It has huge potential, something I love sharing, especially with those at Driver Secondary School about some of the opportunities that exist.

Palmerston gets behind Anzac Day. It has been fantastic. We are getting thousands of people who come to the Dawn Service. I find it warming to see so many people coming to remember the sacrifice made well over 100 years ago and the sacrifice many people, particularly young men, gave. It still shocks me that wherever you go in this country, no matter how small the town, you will find a memorial with names on it. It shows, in a way we can imagine, how widespread the great war was and the impact it had.

It is heartwarming to see so many people of all backgrounds coming to the dawn service.

We then have the march, which is great as well. I take my hat off to the new RSL president, Kris Civitarese, for his first Anzac Day. This is quite a moment for the RSL, this appointment of Mr Civitarese is a passing of the baton in some sorts from the Vietnam veterans to the younger veterans. That includes men and women who participated from Timor, Afghanistan, Iraq, the wider Middle East conflict and all the way through to the modern service personnel.

It is great to see the appointment of Mr Civitarese and a new generation of veterans taking up the baton and continuing the traditions of the past.

I thank Palmerston City Council for its continued support of the day, which is fantastic. It was a real honour for me; I got to march for the first time with my daughters, and they loved it. I put medals on them, which they thought was special. They loved seeing some of their friends on the march and even had some friends in the march from school. There are so many former service men and women in our Northern Territory.

That was a special moment for me as a dad, passing on those values to my daughters is important to me. I thank the marines for being there in Palmerston. They were looking shmick, as they always do. It was great to see them send out a company of Marines. They are welcome in Palmerston and the wider NT. It is not easy for American personnel in postings throughout the world, but I think here, in the Northern Territory, we try to make them feel at home. I commend and thank the community for that.

Big shout out to all the veterans across the Northern Territory. Genuinely, thank you for your service. If you are a veteran who has not been to an Anzac Day since getting out, I encourage you just to come down. Come down, no veteran cares how or why you left defence. You will not get asked; just come down and rip off that band-aid, even if it is just to come down and march. If that is all you want to do, that is all you have to do.

I know it can be a hard stepping stone for a lot of men and women, but just come down. Everyone will welcome you with open arms. We all just remember the service we gave and the mateship we enjoyed without any baggage. If you think you are carrying that, just do not worry; it will not exist, so come on down.

I will leave the Anzac Day bit there.

In my second part, I acknowledge the former Member for Nightcliff, Kat McNamara. I cannot not say something about someone who served in this place. Everyone here knows we were two opposing voices, and we had some sparks and lightning in our debate, but I thank her for stepping up, serving and being a peer with me in this Chamber. I genuinely wish Kat, her partner and children all the best for whatever is ahead of her. She is a passionate woman, and I am sure she will find success in the future.

I will miss Kat and our debates. We agreed on some things; I was reflecting on it today. We both agreed on green corridors, so we had common ground there. We shared a hatred of rubbish. As my constituents know, I genuinely despise rubbish for many reasons. It is such a damaging thing for the environment and local species we have in Drysdale. Being an urban environment, we must manage it as best we can. Kat, wherever you are now, thank you for serving in this Chamber.

On that note, I welcome the new Member for Nightcliff, Mr Ed Smelt. It is a huge decision to step up, and I welcome him into this great arena. I look forward to many future debates. It is a difficult position when you are a parent, which many of us are. As father of four boys, it is no easy feat. A huge shout-out to the First Lady of Nightcliff, because she is doing her part for democracy by holding the home front so that the Member for Nightcliff can be here. She works full-time as well.

I have seen the First Lady of Blain manage her boys as well. I am an all-girl dad, and boys and girls are different. I love my girls.

Welcome, Member for Nightcliff. May we enjoy many future debates.

Ms BOOTHBY (Brennan): Madam Speaker, in April 2026 AusCycling BMX National Championships were held in Shepparton, Victoria. Australia's best BMX racers descended on Shepparton for that GWM BMX Racing National Championships. That was a good chance for a lot of Territorians to proudly pull on the green and gold, to represent not only Australia but also, of course, the Northern Territory.

We had some of our own riders from Satellite City BMX Club. I want to name them here for the record, because I am proud of them. We sponsor them as Team Palmerston, between the Member for Spillett, Lia Finocchiaro; the Member for Drysdale, Clinton Howe; the Member for Blain, Matthew Kerle; and me. We are proud of this club. From Satellite City BMX Club, we had Izzy Miller, Phil Ballard and Ash Johns.

Some other epic notable mentions for the Northern Territory are Bonnie Grantham, Michael Smith, Mon Henry, James Greber and Brad Bellette. I look forward to seeing the photos that start to come through on the social media page.

We also had the NT females participate in the nationals on day 2. From Satellite City BMX Club there were Emily Ballard and Taylah Buganey, and we also had Lauren Winter and Nicole Sinclair. There were also more Australians competing from the Northern Territory. We had Jaxson Johns, Alex King and Michael Smith. I am proud of those riders. Well done on being at the championships and thank you for representing not only Australia but also the Northern Territory.

I love to support local businesses, especially when they are in my electorate. We have a new cafe at the Bakewell Shopping Centre, the Xin Chao Cafe. I had to ask the owners a couple of times to say the name,

and I think I now have it right. It is an obvious cafe when you drive into the car park. There is a huge sign. I walked in, ordered a coffee and looked at the menu and knew I had to come back. It has everything, but it also has Vietnamese cuisine, which I know a lot of people in Palmerston love.

We speak a lot about businesses having confidence in the Northern Territory. This family has come and done a fit-out at this shopping centre and is now open for business. I went there. There were plenty of people. There were indoor and outdoor tables all full of people. Thank you for opening and having the confidence in Bakewell. I am looking forward to seeing you many more times.

Palmerston Probus Club held its AGM recently. For those who do not know, Probus is a worldwide not-for-profit social community organisation. It mostly has retired or semi-retired people who go along. They focus on fun, friendship and fellowship. Each month they hold a morning tea at Cazaly's in Palmerston on a Thursday and generally have an informative speaker. They always have a raffle of some sort and lots of prizes and always share lots of laughs.

They also do social activities throughout the month. If you become a member, you will get to hear all about those and socialise with everyone. I do not know if many people know but there are over 1,400 Probus clubs in Australia and New Zealand. We have them across the Territory. The Palmerston one had its AGM. I thank them for their service and warmly welcome the newly elected executive committee. That is President. John Ainsworth, Secretary, Margaret Wright, Treasurer, Yvonne van der Maas, HUB Contact, Bonnie Morrison and Activities Coordinator, Bonnie Morrison. Bonnie does a mountain of work. She is amazing. Thank you so much to all those volunteers who will be taking up their time to be on the executive committee for such a great club.

The Bakewell Primary School Leadership Badge Ceremony assembly happened a few months ago. I want to highlight some of the students who received their leadership badges because they do an incredible job not just for their school but also for their community. Some of these have been excellent award winners. I am proud to mention on the record here tonight the Northern Territory Learning Commission. From Year 6 we have Charli Simcock, Demiella Espie, Charlie Cock, Charlotte Noyes, McKlnley Knight, Phoenix Hope-Cook, Tahlia Cole, Robyn Carter, Beth Schulz and Skyla Puttock. From Year 5 we have Chloe Mitchell, Arlo Claney, Evelyn James, Isabel Pazhayamadom and Blossom Osaro.

The Bakewell class representatives have an important job at Bakewell Primary. You can see them working hard when you go to the school assemblies. From Year 6 there was Ava Buckler, Logan Mackinnon and Charlotte Cardow. From Year 5 there was Josue Bedoya Arce, Gabriel Santos, John Cowan and Violet Hirst. From Year 4 there was Michael McGlashan, Chase McEnerney, Maia Manska-Lynch and Saige Mulu. Well done to the Bakewell class representatives.

I will mention the house captains as well because they proudly support their house every day at their school. There is a whole heap of little initiatives for them to be doing all the right things in line with the values of the school and trying to get lots of house points so that they can take out a whole heap of prizes at the end of the yard. Well done to the house captains of Blue Capes who are Archie Whalley, Evie Porter, Zac Noonan and Anna de Vries. For Purple Magpies, there is Jack Lowe, Akilina Demiri-Farnham, Chloe Moss and Zevvi Nicol. For the Green Pygmies, there is Lachlan Tedcastle, Liam Noble, Aldrich Korsika and Caitlin McConville. For the Yellow Woodies, we have Xavier Vanos, Kailynn Lorymer, Eavan Lamarque and Paige Caldbeck. Congratulations to all the students in your important roles in your school community.

Rosebery Primary School held its AGM on 11 March. I make a special mention of the people who have been nominated and elected and duly appointed on the 2026 committee. Terrance Kong is the chairperson and is a parent; Kim Goodwin is the treasurer and a parent; Penny Seamer is the secretary and a parent; Sofia Wilson is a parent member; Megan Cunningham and Megan Grant are teachers; and Danielle Banicek is the principal. A lot of these people have already put in a lot of years on the school council. They do an amazing job. There are a lot of parents who get involved. That is fantastic and a testament to the school.

Thank you to all those people for putting up their hands and for another year ahead of the important job of being the voice of parents of Rosebery.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.