

Legislative Assembly
of the Northern Territory

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LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Daly

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move leave of absence for the Member for Daly who is attending a funeral today.

Leave granted.

VISITORS
Dripstone Secondary College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Legal Studies students from Dripstone Secondary College accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 81

Mr BURGOYNE (Lands, Planning and Environment): Madam Speaker, I present a Bill titled the Environment and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2026, Serial 81, and table the explanatory statement.

This is a substantial Bill, but its purpose is straightforward. It brings together targeted reforms across the Northern Territory's environment, water, mining, waste and pollution control, container deposit scheme, heritage, marine pollution and petroleum laws to make the regulatory system clearer, more efficient and more effective.

The common thread is practical, efficient and contemporary regulation. Where a process is repeated without adding regulatory value, this Bill removes or simplifies it. Where the law needs a clearer pathway for a decision-maker, this Bill provides one. Where environmental or water risk requires a timely and enforceable response, this Bill strengthens the tools available to the regulator.

Importantly, this is not a Bill that dismantles environmental safeguards. The core frameworks for environmental impact assessment, environmental approvals, environmental (mining) licences, pollution control, water allocation planning and heritage protection remain. The Bill is about making those frameworks work better, with less administrative inefficiencies, clearer responsibilities and regulatory effort directed to the issues that matter.

This approach is consistent with the government's Rebuilding the Economy Strategy. One of its central priorities is to make the Territory the best place to do business, including through regulatory reform that improves certainty and response time frames. However, good regulation is not simply about speed. Territorians also expect strong environmental standards, well-managed water resources and confidence that development is responsible. Clear, proportionate and dependable regulation supports both investment and the Territory lifestyle we value.

The size of this Bill reflects the breadth of the portfolio. The reforms come from practical experience administering these laws. Some remove duplication, some close gaps, some modernise compliance tools and others state more clearly how established processes are to operate. Together, they form a coherent program of regulatory improvement.

The first major group of reforms concern environmental impact assessment under the *Environment Protection Act 2019.*

The Act establishes the principal duties, thresholds and decisions for environmental assessment, while the Environment Protection Regulations 2020 contain much of the detailed machinery for how an assessment progresses in practice. As the framework has matured, it has become clear that some of that procedural machinery should be supported more expressly in the Act itself.

The Bill does that by establishing clear statutory authority for procedural mechanics of environmental impact assessment. It provides specific regulation making powers enabling the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority—NT EPA—to impose procedural and substantive duties on proponents, suspend or

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terminate an assessment that cannot progress and confer an assessment function on another person or body where appropriate.

The Bill also confirms that the NT EPA may initially screen a referral before the formal assessment process under section 55 is engaged. The NT EPA may refuse to accept, or not proceed with, a referral in circumstances prescribed by regulation, such as where the referral is incomplete, lacks information needed for assessment or does not adequately describe the proposed action. This allows deficiencies to be addressed early while preserving the requirement to assess proposals that may have a significant environmental impact.

These amendments do not lower the threshold for environmental assessment or reduce the matters the NT EPA must consider. They make the relationship between the Act and the detailed assessment procedures clearer and more dependable for proponents, the regulator, decision-makers and the community.

The Bill also contains savings and transitional provisions to retrospectively validate past Acts, decisions, directions, requirements and approvals made by the NT EPA, the minister or a proponent under the EP regulations before commencement of the amendments. The validation provision is necessary to protect existing projects and decisions. It is directed to ensuring that acts done in good faith under the operating framework are treated as valid and effective as if the broadened regulation-making powers had been in force at the time.

A second major group of reforms improves environmental mining regulation under Part 5A of the *Environment Protection Act*. Mining is a major contributor to the Territory economy and environmental regulation must remain strong, clear and workable throughout the life of a project. Part 5A provides a modern environmental licensing framework, but operational experience has identified areas where applications and licences can become fragmented or where the legislation does not provide the most direct administrative pathway.

For example, related applications can exist over the same, or substantially the same, site or mining activity. An operator may also lodge a new licence application when, in substance, amendment of an existing licence would be the more appropriate course. A new licence creates more instruments to administer, greater potential for overlap and additional complexity for compliance and enforcement.

The Bill provides express powers to deal with that. Related applications by the same mining operator may be required to be consolidated and the minister may also consolidate them on the minister's own initiative. Where a new application would be more appropriately dealt with as an amendment to an existing environmental mining licence, it may be treated that way. At the licence stage, related licences held by the same operator may be consolidated into one instrument.

The Bill also broadens the existing amendment power so that, where the statutory power is engaged, the minister may amend the environmental mining licence itself and not only its conditions. This is important where the scope or structure of an existing licence needs to be updated, including as part of a consolidation, rather than requiring another licence to be created.

Where a mining operator asks for an amendment, the minister will also be able to review the licence more broadly and make related amendments where necessary to appropriately manage environmental impacts. The point is to allow a licence to be considered as a coherent regulatory instrument rather than forcing the decision-maker to look only at the particular words identified in the operator's request. The ordinary consultation and publication safeguards for substantive amendments continue to apply.

The Bill also recognises how modern mining projects are commercially structured. More than one mining operator may be appointed in relation to the same mineral and mining activity. Where operators are jointly appointed for the same activity, they will be jointly and severally responsible for compliance. Commercial arrangements should not create uncertainty about who is accountable to the regulator.

Stalled or obsolete licence and exemption processes are dealt with as well. The minister will have express powers to terminate an application in defined circumstances, including where required information that is long overdue has not been provided or the applicant is no longer the relevant mining operator. Show cause requirements apply where appropriate. This allows a process that cannot properly continue to be closed without treating the administrative closure as a refusal on the environmental merits.

Other Part 5A amendments make the licensing framework more workable. The Bill clarifies that a tailored condition licence may include conditions that are additional to, as well as different from, conditions under another licence type. It also provides clearer pathways following review of risk criteria and standard conditions

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and distinguishes substantive regulatory amendments from administrative corrections so that formal publication and reasons requirements are focused where they add value and do not impact transparency.

Consultation periods are also made more proportionate. For specified exploration and extractive activities, shorter minimum periods will apply than for full mining operations. The longer periods for mining operations are retained. Where an existing licence is being amended for a substantial alteration, the consultation period will align with the period that would apply to a new licence for the same type of activity. That removes an unintended incentive to lodge a fresh licence application simply because the amendment pathway could otherwise take longer.

The mining security amendments are equally practical. Where responsibility for a title or site changes and an incoming operator has provided equivalent security, the legislation will provide a clearer basis to refund unused security held for the outgoing operator without leaving the Territory exposed to the same environmental liability. The Bill and regulations also provide a clearer basis for dealing with other refund circumstances where appropriate.

Supporting mining amendments extend the existing Ranger Project Area arrangements concerning prescribed substances to mining closure certificates, align environmental officer appointments with public sector employment and strengthen information-gathering powers. These changes improve administration across the project lifecycle.

Another major theme is moving away from repeated paperwork where ongoing, risk-based regulation is more effective. That is most evident in the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998*. Currently, environment protection licences are generally issued for fixed terms and renewed periodically. In practice, the expiry date is not necessarily the point at which environmental risk changes or a licence condition needs to be revisited. It can instead generate a large renewal exercise for both the licence holder and the NT EPA, even where the activity and its risk profile have not materially changed.

The Bill allows the NT EPA to issue an environment protection licence that continues until it is surrendered or cancelled, while retaining the ability to specify a fixed term where that remains appropriate. Where a fixed-term licence is the subject of a renewal application lodged before expiry, it will continue in force while the application is being decided. This avoids an unintended gap in authorisation while a properly made application is before the regulator.

Moving away from routine renewal must not mean weaker oversight. The reform therefore goes hand-in-hand with stronger and clearer powers for the NT EPA to amend or impose licence conditions when specified circumstances arise. These include non-compliance; pollution risk; new information; changes to the licence or its holder; and circumstances where conditions need to be aligned for the relevant activity. The regulator can respond when the issue arises rather than waiting for an arbitrary renewal date.

The Bill also introduces enforceable undertakings under both the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* and the *Water Act 1992*. An enforceable undertaking is voluntary but, once accepted, it is binding. It can require remediation or restoration, monitoring, reporting, improved systems, training and other action directed to the alleged contravention and prevention of further harm. Acceptance is a matter for the regulator; a person cannot insist on an undertaking as an alternative to enforcement.

While an undertaking is in force, prosecution for the relevant alleged contravention is stayed in accordance with the scheme. If the undertaking is breached, the regulator may seek court orders and prosecution may resume. If it is complied with, the scheme provides finality for that contravention. This gives regulators a practical, outcome-focused option between informal engagement and prosecution where that is the more effective response.

The Bill enhances compliance plans while removing the underutilised performance agreements. Combined with enforceable undertakings, pollution abatement notices and prosecution powers, these measures establish a clear regulatory continuum from structured compliance through to formal enforcement. Pollution abatement notices are strengthened in an important way; that is, a notice may now require ongoing testing, monitoring or reporting of polluted land or water where environmental risk continues after remediation occurs. That is particularly important where the effectiveness of containment or remediation must be demonstrated over time.

The Bill also updates the protection against self-incrimination in the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*. Individuals retain direct-use protection for compelled information, subject to the exception for false or misleading information, while that information may lead to further evidence. Bodies corporate will no longer

DRAFT

receive the statutory evidentiary immunity. This improves corporate information gathering and aligns the Act with contemporary environmental enforcement frameworks.

A further practical amendment brings the commissioning of specified regulated premises expressly within the environment protection approval framework. Construction and full operation are already familiar regulatory stages, but an industrial facility may undertake testing, calibration and commissioning activities between those stages. Where that phase has the potential to cause pollution, the regulator should have a clear ability to manage it before full operation begins.

The Bill also removes the term 'collecting' from specified listed waste licensing entries, while transport and the other listed waste activities remain expressly regulated. This makes the licensing categories easier to understand and apply in practice.

The same approach to unnecessary recurring administration applies to the Container Deposit Scheme. Coordinator and collection depot approvals and supplier registrations will continue until surrendered or cancelled, subject to the existing suspension framework, rather than requiring periodic renewal simply because a fixed term has expired. The Bill also removes supplier annual returns as the relevant scheme information is already reported by coordinators and operators of collection depots. This reduces duplicate reporting while retaining the information and oversight needed to administer the scheme.

Across the *Environment Protection Act*, Container Deposit Scheme legislation, *Marine Pollution Act*, *Petroleum Act* and *Water Act*, statutory appointments made to public sector employees will automatically cease when the person's Northern Territory Public Sector employment ends. These straightforward reforms keep statutory authorities aligned with the employment on which the appointment is based.

The Bill also establishes the legislative foundation for clearer environmental regulation of dredging. Dredging is essential to ports, navigation and marine infrastructure. At the same time, capital and maintenance dredging can create environmental risks through sediment plumes, contaminant mobilisation and impacts on marine habitats, and those impacts can be cumulative where multiple activities occur in the same harbour environment. The present regulatory pathways do not always provide a clear and proportionate answer for dredging that does not itself trigger environmental impact assessment. The Bill addresses that by enabling capital and maintenance dredging to be regulated under the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* within prescribed dredging management areas.

This is deliberately an enabling and staged framework. Supporting regulations will set the management areas, thresholds, exemptions and notification requirements that determine when an approval, licence or notification is required. That allows the operational requirements to be calibrated to the scale and environmental risk of the activity rather than treating every dredging proposal in the same way.

Darwin Harbour is an obvious focus for this work. It is a working harbour of major economic, environmental, cultural and social importance. The department has engaged with the Regional Harbourmaster and Darwin Port Operations on the practical operation of a future framework, and detailed settings will continue to be developed through technical work and consultation. The framework is intended to operate alongside existing assessment and authorisation pathways, not duplicate them.

Water is both one of the Territory's most important natural assets and an essential enabler of economic development. The *Water Act* reforms, therefore, focus on clarity, continuity and better decision-making.

Water allocation plans sit at the centre of the statutory planning framework. The Bill will make the required content of a water plan clearer, including identification of the water resources being managed, their size or scale, estimated sustainable yield, management and use arrangements, and how water is shared between beneficial uses. It also allows a plan to specify more than one estimated sustainable yield where that is appropriate to the resource—for example, by season or water type.

The policy distinction is important. The size of a water resource is not the same thing as the amount of water that may be made available for take. Neither concept should be confused with the water that remains in the resource to support ecological, social and cultural values. The amendments make that statutory architecture clearer, so water planning does not depend on an artificial or mechanical allocation exercise that obscures those different concepts.

Consistent with that clarification, the beneficial use currently described as 'environment' is renamed 'aquatic ecosystems'. The *Water Act* already uses 'environment' as a much broader defined concept covering physical, biological, economic, social and cultural surroundings. Using the same word for one specific

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beneficial use has caused ambiguity. ‘Aquatic ecosystems’ more precisely identifies the water-dependent ecological use. This is a clarification of terminology, not a reduction in environmental protection.

The Bill also supports continuous and adaptive water planning. A water allocation plan will remain in force until it is revoked rather than simply falling away because a fixed term has ended. Periodic review remains part of the framework, and there will be an express pathway to amend plans as information, conditions and management needs change.

At the same time public participation is strengthened. Draft water allocation plans and draft amendments that are substantive will be published for at least 20 business days. The minister must consider submissions before declaring a plan or amendment. Public exhibition has become an important part of water planning in practice; this Bill puts that participation on an express statutory footing.

The Bill also improves administration of water extraction licence applications. The Controller of Water Resources will be able to require information reasonably necessary to decide an application and to terminate an application that cannot properly progress—for example, where required information or fees are not provided or an Aboriginal water reserve requirement is not satisfied. Contested termination attracts notice, an opportunity to respond and merits review; an application withdrawn by the applicant can simply be closed.

Aboriginal water reserves exist to preserve water for future Aboriginal economic development. This Bill strengthens the long-term integrity of that purpose. It will prevent a transfer that would effectively remove reserved water for the balance of the licence term, while allowing shorter-term dealings where the statutory requirements are met and the relevant eligible Aboriginal people have agreed.

Water Advisory Committee provisions are also simplified. Rather than prescribing unnecessary detail about establishment and composition, the minister will be able to establish a committee for a particular purpose and appoint the people suited to that work. That allows advice to be tailored to the resource, region or issue being considered.

The *Heritage Act 2011* amendments are discrete. They clarify notice and reasons requirements and distinguish participation in public consultation from the separate question of who may seek review or appeal a heritage decision.

People who make public submissions will continue to receive written notice of the relevant decision and the reasons for it. Making a submission alone, however, will no longer confer review or appeal standing. People who qualify under another statutory category retain their rights. Transitional provisions preserve specified entitlements that have already arisen and proceedings already underway.

Less repeated administration is matched by stronger ongoing oversight. More flexible licensing is matched by clear amendment, cancellation and enforcement powers. More proportionate consultation for lower-scale mining activities is matched by retained longer periods for mining operations. Continuing water plans are matched by periodic review, amendment powers and statutory public consultation. New compliance tools come with procedural safeguards and court oversight.

That is what better regulation looks like. It is not regulation for its own sake, and it is not deregulation at the expense of the public interest. It is a system that is clearer about what must be protected, clearer about who is responsible and clearer about how decisions are made.

The government has consistently said that rebuilding the economy requires the Territory to be a better place to invest and do business. In this portfolio that means regulatory efficiency, clearer approval pathways and smarter administration, while maintaining the standards needed to protect our environment and public confidence. The Territory should be a place where investment can proceed with certainty because the rules are clear, not because the rules are weak.

The same reforms support restoring the Territory lifestyle. Stronger pollution controls and monitoring help protect land and water. Clearer dredging regulation supports responsible use of Darwin Harbour. More durable and transparent water planning supports communities, industry and the environment. Aboriginal water reserve protections support long-term economic opportunity. Targeted heritage reforms retain public participation and access to decisions and reasons, while clarifying review and appeal standing.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, the NT EPA, the Controller of Water Resources, the Heritage Council and officers across the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment and other agencies.

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I also acknowledge the businesses, Aboriginal organisations and other stakeholders whose practical experience has informed these reforms.

This is a large Bill with a practical purpose: clearer laws; less unnecessary processes; greater certainty; and stronger tools to manage risk. It supports responsible development, effective environmental and water regulation and the government's work to rebuild the economy and restore the Territory lifestyle.

I am pleased to commend the Bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a first time.

ASSOCIATIONS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
Serial 72

Continued from 26 August 2026.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 makes amendment to the *Associations Act 2003* following a review of the Act announced by the CLP government in March 2026.

The purpose of this Bill is to modernise the regulatory framework for incorporated associations and ensure it remains fit for purpose for the 1,500 associations across the Territory. Changes of note include clause 4, removing operative definitions of 'incorporated trading associations' and 'trading associations'.

Clause 5 requires the director to maintain a register of incorporated associations and copies of key documents lodged under the Act, with the information provided to be published on the agency website.

Clause 12 strengthens conflict-of-interest requirements for committee members. The changes broaden disclosure requirements to cover any material of personal interest in a matter being considered by the committee. A committee member with such an interest must disclose it and, subject to exceptions, must not participate in discussion or vote on a matter.

On that, it would be interesting to know what the CLP Cabinet might do if it was to adopt the same principle of declaring conflicts of interest publicly and make sure that the public knows that Cabinet members do not vote on conflicts of interest in those deliberations.

Moving on to the Bill again, clause 15 provides the director with new intervention powers in disputes and governance matters, including the ability to direct the association to convene a general meeting where a dispute or governance matter is affecting the proper conduct of the association's affairs. It also allows the director to attend and participate in a meeting convened under the provision without voting rights. It enables the director to direct an association to engage its internal dispute resolution process outlined within its constitution.

Clauses 16 and 17 change the auditing arrangement for Tier 1 associations. Tier 1 associations will no longer be required to present an audited statement of the association's account. However, an audit can still be required if members pass a resolution requiring an audit or if the director directs that an audit occur.

Clause 19 gives the director a new power to require an incorporated association to undergo a special audit and provide the resulting audit report to the director.

Speaking more broadly, volunteer-run clubs and associations are a key part of our Northern Territory community. They are our sporting groups, multicultural groups, recreational groups and environment groups et cetera. They are a big part of the community represented in small and effective ways.

Territory Labor supports modern standards of governance, transparency and accountability for incorporated associations across the Northern Territory. The changes must be proportionate because these associations are often small volunteer-run organisations that rely on people giving their time and effort to support their local communities.

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The legislation will require ongoing scrutiny to ensure it is fit for purpose for small organisations and the members that belong to them, ensuring the powers of the director are timely and obligations are streamlined.

The CLP government said that the Bill will maintain a simple low-cost incorporation model while strengthening oversight where the scale or risk of an association warrants it. The opposition will hold the government to this commitment. I am sure that Territorians are wondering why the CLP government does not hold itself to the same standards that are outlined in this Bill.

Our focus as a Labor team will be to ensure that the regulatory framework is transparent, proportionate and workable for the small but mighty and important Territory-run volunteer organisations now and into the future.

Ms BOOTHBY (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, we all know that there is nowhere like the Northern Territory. A big reason for that is our Territory spirit—our strong sense of community, warm hospitality and compassion.

At the heart of that are thousands of volunteers in sporting clubs, community organisations, faith groups and incorporated associations. They are the backbone of our unique Territory lifestyle and the heartbeat of the NT. It is the mums and dads, young sports fans and retired players who give up their weekends and their retirement to give back. It is the fundraisers, the people in canteens, the welcome teams and the volunteers behind the scenes at our local sport and major events. More than 300 volunteers at the Alice Springs Masters Games rallied to make the friendly games a resounding success despite the severe weather. It is with these people in mind that I speak about this legislation.

In a single sentence: our legislation aims to make it easier for our volunteers, community groups and organisations to give back and grow.

In my area of Palmerston we have a huge network of volunteer groups who strive to do just that—for example, our senior groups, such as the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association, which I have been proud to support over many years with my colleagues in Palmerston.

It is groups such as the Palmerston Probus Club and the Probus clubs over the Northern Territory. This year marked 50 years of Probus in Australia, and I was honoured to represent the government in celebrating its 50th birthday not too long ago.

There are groups such as the Palmerston Men's Shed, Palmerston Dementia Alliance and the Palmerston 50+ Club whose members meet every Tuesday to hang out with each other and keep themselves from being lonely. They connect to each other and make our community stronger and we want to make it as easy as possible for those people to do just that.

There are many sports clubs keeping our kids active. I am proud to be Patron of the Palmerston Magpies Football Club, which this year celebrated 55 years of football in the Northern Territory. The club members are good at it, with the under-15 girls beating the Waratahs in a convincing open to the season last week.

They are not alone. Clubs like the Mash Netball Club are cultivating well-rounded young people. There is the Pirates Softball Club; Power Basketball Club; Palmerston Rovers Football Club; and Palmerston Raiders Rugby League Club, which has also fielded teams in the rugby union competition over the last few years. The amazing Greater Palmerston United Football Club's junior base is growing faster than the lavender bush we see along the Stuart Highway. Satellite City BMX Club continues to win, and is it any wonder why with BMX champions like Abigail, Isabella, Brock and Jack Miller; Brad and Riley Fletcher; and Dean, Penny and Gordon Ralph. There are so many great people in that club.

These clubs are not just producing our next generation of athletes. They are teaching kids teamwork, discipline, confidence and respect. Behind every team are the parents, coaches, committee members and volunteers making it all happen.

These changes relate to reducing their administration burden. Less red tape means that there is more time for training the next homegrown Jake Weatherald, Daniel Rioli, Stevie-Lee Thompson or Briseis Brittain. That is exactly what this is all about.

Our changes will also support those organisations which promote some really niche hobbies, interests and activities. Some of these clubs are our hidden gems, bringing people together without the need or capacity to meet the reporting obligations of larger organisations. They include our budding gemmologists, just like

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those at the Top End Gem and Mineral Club. I am a proud patron of that club. We attend regularly with the Member for Karama, who often joins me as well.

It includes quilters like those at the Darwin Patchworkers and Quilters Club and the Alice Springs Quilting Club, which just held a fantastic exhibition at the Araluen Arts Centre. I met some of their volunteers just recently at their exhibition and they are doing a fabulous job. I entered the People's Choice Award and that was a tough one. Just a hint though, there was a cool Japanese quilt work that I decided to vote for.

It also includes generations of fishos at clubs like the Palmerston Game Fishing Club. Right now, it is giving Territorians the chance to reel in $1m with the $1m tagged fish, while also giving people a chance to skill up and to make new friends. More time out on the water and less time at the computer is what this Bill is all about.

What about the Palmerston branch of the Country Women's Association? I am also excited that the Darwin and CWA NT branches were recently announced as the hosts of two major CWA events with the support of our government, and that includes the 2027 ACWW Pacific Area Conference and also the 2032 World Conference. That is a huge conference to have right here in Darwin. These organisations are about more than meetings and scones. They are about meaningful service and social connection. They are doing a great job at both.

It might also include local market associations or business groups like the Palmerston Regional Business Association or the Palmerston Markets Association which does a fantastic job. My colleagues—the Members for Spillett, Drysdale and Blain—and I are out there every Friday night at the Palmerston Markets with all of the different stallholders, having a great time. If you have not been out there, Madam Speaker, I invite you to come along. We only have two markets left. You should come and enjoy it.

It could also include our faith groups. I refer to the work that our faith communities do in the Northern Territory. So many of them give back through relief, through op shops and community events. They also challenge people to think bigger than themselves and to make a difference and care for one another. I saw this first-hand at the Ignite Conference 2026 held at Mackillop Catholic College in Johnston earlier this year. There were hundreds of young people talking about their personal responsibility, community service, faith and family.

I also see this at places like Zion Church and Crossroads Christian Church in Bakewell, strong community organisations who make strong communities. It is the strong communities who are the foundation of mission, which is our mission as well, to reduce crime, rebuild the economy and restore our lifestyle. That is why I am so pleased to be able to speak on this Bill and support the Associations Legislation Amendment Bill.

The Bill relates to making life easier for our community volunteers. At the same time, it is about giving certainty to community organisations when it comes to their governance and reporting obligations. Our changes remove the mandatory audit requirement for eligible associations for many groups having to organise an annual audit, let alone pay for it. It can be a big cost and an even bigger burden.

The legislation also clarifies the need for committees and boards to disclose conflicts of interest. It introduces new powers for early intervention when associations run into governance problems, compliance issues or membership disputes.

Small volunteer-run associations should not face the same administrative burden as those with a more complex operation. We are balancing the needs, demands and resources of smaller associations with the need to operate fairly and transparently.

Territorians do not want to be wading through red tape; they want to enjoy their lifestyle; they want to raise their kids to be active and they want to contribute back to the community. Our changes give Territorians the ability to do more of that, less unnecessary red tape, stronger governance and more time for volunteers to get on with their job. That is what this Bill does and we are backing those who make the Territory the best place to live, work, visit and invest and of course, volunteer.

I thank the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations for bringing forward these red tape reduction reforms because this minister knows, and we all know, that Territorians want less government in their faces. Well done to you and to your department and with that, I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I support the Association's Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

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This legislation is important for the cultural associations, the sporting clubs and the community organisations, that form the backbone of our Northern Territory community. I particularly recognise the volunteers who give their time, energy and often their own money to keep these organisations running. Behind every incorporated association are people with jobs, families and other responsibilities who put their hands up to organise the events we attend, they raise the funds, they coach our children and they support the wider community. They do it because they care and because they want to make a difference.

Our volunteers should be spending their time building stronger communities and not drowning in paperwork. This morning on my way here, I took a phone call from an association and—they did not know about this legislation coming to the House and I spoke about it and she was really impressed with the time saving that going to cause their little community. That is why making the regulatory framework more practical and proportionate is so important. I am proud to represent the electorate of Wanguri and our electorate and the broader northern suburbs are home to people from many different cultures and backgrounds. Multicultural communities are one of the great strengths of this Northern Territory and their associations play an important role in preserving culture, celebrating traditions and supporting their members.

I acknowledge organisations such as the Cyprus Community, the Nepalese Association of Northern Territory, Darwin Malali Association, Australia, China Friendship Society of the Northern Territory, the Italian Sports and Social Club and our Portuguese and Timorese Social Club, just to name a few. These organisations represent much more than committees and constitutions. They represent belonging, friendship and the connection to their culture, their language and their families.

One of the great examples is the annual Cyprus Community Wine Festival, just recently held. This wonderful event celebrates Cypriote culture through music, food, dance and the community spirit. What makes it very special is that it welcomes Territorians from all backgrounds, creating an inclusive celebration that brings our multicultural community together. Events like this just do not happen overnight. Hundreds and hundreds of hours of volunteer work go into making the Wine Festival a success each year and myself, the Member for Casuarina, the Member for Karama and the Member for Sanderson often volunteer with the members in the lead up in preparing the food and also on the night and happily do so.

There are months of planning, organising entertainment, coordinating food and drinks, arranging equipment and managing volunteers. Much of this work is done by people who have already worked a full day and willingly give up their evenings and weekends. I would much rather see the Cyprus community spending those hours making their wine festival even better than dealing with unnecessary administrative requirements.

I also acknowledge our wonderful Nepalese community. The Nepal Festival is one of the largest and most colourful cultural celebrations on our community calendar. It showcases traditional food, music, dance, colourful costumes and the rich cultural traditions of the Nepal region. It is a fantastic celebration that brings together families and people from different backgrounds to experience Nepalese hospitality and culture.

Behind this festival are dedicated volunteers who spend countless hours organising the performances, food stores, entertainment and the activities that go with it. These are people who make Darwin's multicultural community so special. They provide opportunities for our younger generations to connect with their heritage and for the older generations to pass on their knowledge and experiences. These are activities our community associations were established to deliver, and these are activities we should be supporting.

Our sporting clubs are equally important in building stronger communities and developing our young people. In Wanguri and across the northern suburbs, we have clubs such as the Tracy Village Football Club and the Casuarina Football Club. These clubs are much more than football; they teach young Territorians teamwork, discipline, respect, commitment and the importance of looking after one another. They build confidence, create friendships and give young people opportunities to achieve their potential and their dreams.

Who knows—the next great AFL footballer or Territory sporting champion could be running around on one of those local football fields now. Our future sporting heroes do not just start their careers in big stadiums of Melbourne and Adelaide; they start at local clubs with volunteer coaches, supportive parents and committee members who believe in them. Behind every training session and weekend match are volunteers coaching, fundraising, preparing the grounds, running the canteens and keeping our clubs operating.

I would much rather see these volunteers spending their time developing our young footballers than struggling through that unnecessary paperwork. Not every child will become an AFL star, but every child deserves the opportunity to participate, build confidence and learn valuable life skills. Our grassroots sports is not just about developing champions; it is about developing future leaders of our community.

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I have always believed that a job of a community organisation is to support its members and serve its community. It is not to become a paperwork factory. Of course, accountability and proper financial management are important. Members deserve to know their associations are being managed responsibly, but there must be a sensible balance. We cannot expect a small cultural association or sporting club run by a handful of volunteers to operate with the same administrative resources as a large organisation employing professional staff.

One of the important features of this Bill is to move towards a more proportionate regulatory framework. The Bill provides for a tiered approach to financial oversight, recognising that associations differ in size and their financial resources and complexity. It includes reforms to audit requirements for smaller associations, which some I have just mentioned, while maintaining stronger oversight where appropriate. This recognises that a small volunteer-run association should not automatically face the same financial reporting burden as a much larger organisation. The Bill strengthens governance requirements, including conflicts of interest, access to records and dispute resolutions. These safeguards are important, but they must be implemented in a way that is practical and easy for volunteers to understand.

Good governance should support community organisations, not be an obstacle to their work. Encouraging the next generations of our volunteers is what we should be doing. There is another important benefit of simplifying requirements and streamlining those processes, and that is encouraging more people, particularly younger members, to step forward and become involved in their community associations.

One of the challenges facing many organisations is attracting new committee members. We have talented, enthusiastic and capable people in our cultural communities and sporting clubs who want to contribute, but the thought of complicated regulated financial reporting and endless paperwork can discourage them from taking on committee positions.

By making these processes simpler, we can make volunteering and committee membership more attractive and accessible to the next generation. We can encourage young members of the Cyprus community, the Nepalese Association and the Portuguese Timorese Association to take on leadership roles and help shape the future of their organisation.

We can encourage more young parents and active members of the Tracy Village Football Club and the Casuarina Football Club to join committees and contribute to their clubs. We can make it easier for experienced committee members to pass on their knowledge and responsibility. Our community organisations need fresh ideas, new energy and younger people willing to take on these leadership roles.

We should be removing barriers to volunteering, not creating them. This is not simply about reducing paperwork; it is about helping ensure our cultural associations and sporting clubs remain strong for generations to come.

The real value of our community organisations cannot be measured simply through financial statements; it is found in the families enjoying the Cyprus Vine Festival, the colourful celebrations of the Nepalese festival and for the next generation.

Young footballer kicking their first goal for Tracy Village or Casuarina—I shout out to two young footballers from the Casuarina Football Club, young Kingston Casemiro and Zia Ramos are in Scotland as we speak. They are attending the Celtic football elite training club at the moment. Good luck to them. I hope to see them become the next young Matilda or Socceroo when they come back. These guys are so young and that is where we should be investing.

Behind all these activities are volunteers who give so much to our community. They deserve a regulatory system that recognises their contribution, protects their organisations and allows them to concentrate on what matters most.

Community groups exist to serve their members and their communities, not to serve bureaucracy. If these reforms help reduce unnecessary administration, encourage even more young Territorians to join a committee, become a volunteer and take on leadership roles, that will be a lasting benefit. Our stronger associations will be more confident with their committees and have more active volunteers. That means stronger communities and that is good for Wanguri, our sporting clubs, multicultural communities and, overall, it is good for the Northern Territory.

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I commend the Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations for bringing this Bill to the House. I support the Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 and commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr CHARLS (People, Sport and Culture): Madam Speaker, I support the Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

Our community depends on our art organisations, sporting clubs, multicultural associations, veterans' associations, disability associations, youth organisations, seniors' associations, faith groups and many other community organisations. These organisations bring people together, create opportunities and help make the Territory a place where people feel they belong.

Our laws should support their work through clear responsibilities, reasonable costs and practical assistance when problems arise. That is why I support this Bill.

The framework for associations in the Territory has remained largely unchanged for more than 20 years. During that time, the sector has grown in size, complexity and importance. This Bill modernises that framework while maintaining a simple, low-cost model for smaller, not-for-profit organisations.

For our arts organisations, that matters. Across the Territory, arts organisations create spaces where people share their stories, express their talents and pass knowledge from one generation to the next. Through music, dance, theatre, painting and community arts programs, they enrich our communities and help local talent grow.

Behind each performance or exhibition are people managing bookings, budgets, equipment and paperwork. Proportionate requirements help them direct more resources towards artists and community participation.

The same is true for our sporting clubs. We see players on the field and families on the sidelines. Behind each match are people organising registrations, maintaining equipment and preparing facilities. Our sporting clubs help children build confidence, learn teamwork and form friendships. They bring people of all ages together and strengthen connections across our communities.

Our multicultural associations also play an important role. As someone who came to Australia and made the Territory my home, I understand the importance of connection and belonging. These associations help people maintain their language, traditions and cultural identity while participating in the broader community. They welcome new families, organise cultural celebrations and help Territorians learn about one another. Their contribution extends beyond public functions to friendship, practical assistance and support during difficult times.

Our veterans associations hold a special place in our community. They bring together people whose shared experiences create lasting bonds. They help former and current Australian Defence Force personnel and their families maintain connections, find support and navigate the transition to civilian life. Through commemorations and community education they also help ensure that the sacrifice of those who served our nation is remembered and understood by younger generations.

Our disability associations make an equally important contribution. They bring together people with disability, their families, carers and supporters. They create opportunities for participation, share information and help ensure that the experiences of people with disability are heard. Their work helps identify barriers and promotes greater access to community life. Their members should be able to participate meaningfully in decisions and have confidence in how their organisation is managed.

Our youth associations help young Territorians build confidence, form friendships and develop leadership skills. For some young people, taking on a committee role is their first experience of organising a project, managing a budget or speaking on behalf of others. Clear rules and sound processes help create organisations where young people can learn responsibility, contribute and lead.

Our seniors associations create opportunities for friendship, recreation and connection. A regular gathering, an outing or a shared interest can make a real difference to someone's sense of belonging. Many seniors also bring years of knowledge and experience to committee roles, helping sustain these organisations and supporting fellow members.

These contributions extend across neighbourhood groups, charities and many other associations formed around a shared interest or local need. Their purposes differ, but they all need a framework that supports responsible management without imposing unnecessary costs.

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Faith groups and faith-based organisations also make an important contribution to our communities. Alongside their spiritual role, they bring people together through friendship, compassion and practical support. They welcome new families, assist people facing hardship, visit those who are isolated and comfort families during illness and loss. As a person of faith, I understand how much that sense of belonging can mean, particularly for someone settling into a new community.

For faith-based organisations that operate as incorporated associations, these reforms support the same principles: clear responsibilities; proportionate requirements; and accountable management. This helps sustain the trust of their members and the wider community.

I acknowledge the volunteers who make this work possible. They are the people who are arrive early to set up, stay late to clean up, take the minutes, balance the accounts and make sure the next activity can go ahead. Many do this alongside work, study and family commitments. Often a small number of people carry a substantial share of the responsibilities. They put up their hand because they care about others and want to contribute to their community.

Fundraising is an important part of that effort. Behind each sausage sizzle, raffle, quiz night, cake stall and fundraising dinner are people planning, seeking donations, selling tickets and bringing supporters together.

Local businesses also play their part by donating prices, sponsoring activities and supporting community causes. Each dollar raised represents someone's effort and someone else's generosity. Those funds help purchase equipment, support programs, maintain community spaces and key participation affordable.

That is why the removal of mandatory audit requirements for tier 1 associations is a practical reform.

For a small association, audit costs can absorb a substantial share of funds that members and volunteers have worked hard to raise. Meeting those requirements also takes time from committee members. Removing that mandatory requirement can help eligible associations make their fundraising dollars go further and direct more resources towards their core purpose.

Members will retain the ability to vote to require an audit. That is an important safeguard, allowing them to seek that assurance when they consider it necessary. Sound financial management remains essential. Members, donors and the wider community should have confidence that funds are managed responsibly and used for the purpose for which they were raised.

The Bill also introduces practical tools to address internal problems at an earlier stage. Even organisations with a strong community purpose can experience disagreements. When those disagreements remain unresolved, decisions can stall, members can lose confidence and the organisation's work can suffer. The Bill allows the director to direct an association to hold a general meeting and to engage in dispute resolution where governance issues affect the proper conduct of its affairs.

These measures can help members address problems, restore proper processes and return their attention to the organisation's purpose. They can also help protect the community trust and years of effort that have gone into building an association. The Bill recognises that an organisation's legal structure should suit its size, scale and activities. Where another legal framework would be more appropriate, the director will be required to refuse incorporation under the *Associations Act*. This helps maintain a framework intended primarily for smaller, not-for-profit organisations.

The Bill also clarifies responsibility for certain leases when an association is dissolved, helping reduce uncertainty at that stage. These reforms matter to the people who keep our community organisations running and to those who depend on them for connection, participation and support. By making requirements more proportionate and strengthening the tools to address problems, we can ease pressure on committees and help make these roles more manageable.

I thank the members, volunteers, donors and local businesses who support associations across the Territory. Their generosity strengthens our communities and their effort deserves a framework that helps them carry out their work with confidence.

I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Mr O'GALLAGHER (Karama): Like all the other speakers, I support the legislation brought forward. Like all other speakers, including the Leader of the Opposition, I acknowledge the fantastic contribution that many of

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our community groups, multicultural groups, sporting clubs, religious groups, senior and youth groups and school groups make to our society. They make our society much richer. It is all the volunteers that come behind that and families that come together as part of that.

I think one of the most visible and tangible signs of these groups, particularly when they are fundraising at the Bunnings barbecues on a Saturday when I go there. I do not go to Bunnings to buy tools; I go there to buy a sausage and then I might drift into Bunnings and buy something else, but that is the motivation. There are groups there, including Tracy Village, basketball groups, hockey groups and everyone there. Some of the Greek community groups are there selling cakes as well. It is fantastic. It happens at Palmerston; it happens all round, but when you go there you will see volunteers coming together trying to raise money or help their club and this legislation is saying, 'Go for it. We will not overburden you; we trust you, know what you are trying to do and will make it easy on you.' That is the purpose of what we are trying to do, so next time you go to Bunnings, think about that.

Like others, I also look at the groups within my electorate. I acknowledge my northern suburbs team because we are often out together supporting similar groups. I heard the Member for Wanguri talk about the Cyprus group. Yes, we have all been there—it is fantastic—to a lot of the other groups—the Greek, Vietnamese and Filipino Groups. We are always there together. They want to be supported.

I acknowledge every member in this Assembly because a lot of members are patrons of various groups in their electorates and that is fantastic. It is not just for the government, it is for everyone. The Member for Johnston is patron of some groups. I am sure all of the opposition members are and that is great.

This is a whole-of-parliamentary support. Good MLAs would do that anyway. It is a natural part of us to go out and connect. I contribute and give credit to every MLA in this Assembly in that regard.

I have a little challenge. The Member for Brennan is the patron of the Top End Gem and Mineral Club, but not for too long though. No, because it actually lies in my electorate. We may have to do a transition or co-patronage of that. I cannot let her get away with this. This is at Knuckey Lagoon, for those who do not know where they are based and it is part of my electorate. She has been a long-term, fantastic patron, but it is time to move over. I am sure she will help me do it, too.

They do a great job. They have gems and minerals. You see young kids there learning how to polish stones from nothing and making wonderful art work to sell. That is a great group.

Another group I acknowledge is the Malak Markets. That is a volunteer group that, at times has struggled. It is a volunteers and they are trying to get all the associations up and struggle with a lot of the paperwork. This may make their lives a lot easier. I am hoping it does.

For those who do not know, the Malak Markets are run on Saturday evening during the Dry Season. It normally goes from about 5 pm to 9 am. They are great community groups. They try to get in music and stallholders. My northern suburbs team and other members of my government team have shared it with me. It is great food and a great atmosphere. I buy different food from different stallholders every time I go there.

The Member for Casuarina comes down. Do you know what his addiction is? He goes to the juice bar and he says, 'Can I have a mango shake?' He needs a mango shake because he is addicted to it. I do not know why, but he is. Well done, Member for Casuarina.

I have been the Chung Wah Society. I am addicted to their beef satees. They are magnificent and special.

We all have reasons for going to different places. At the Karama Library, every Monday, we have the Seniors Knitters and Natters and I pop in. They have about 30 to 40 mostly ladies—there are one or two gentlemen who come in—who are knitting. They are knitting quilts for charity and sending them off. That is fantastic.

They come together as volunteers, but it is also about creating a social network for people to talk to each other. Some of these people are lonely, but these volunteer groups get them together. It is for their mental health and wellbeing. They come together whilst also doing some fantastic work. A big shout-out to them.

Another one is the Senior Citizens of the Philippines Group. The senior Filipino ladies come together socially; they are magnificent. They sing, dance, eat, they sing, they dance, eat, eat, eat and sing, dance. I think it is that order. Once again, it is bringing people together. I always lend support to them; they are a fantastic group. Many of my colleagues have been out there with them as well.

DRAFT

If you go to the Malak Oval on a Saturday morning or a Friday night. Where Darwin Olympic is, you see all the sporting teams come across from Darwin and Palmerston. These are small groups of junior team that are coming together to make our society richer. That is good. There might be 200 people at a time there. If you look at any of the other ovals on a Saturday morning, there are heaps of people and lots of different clubs participating together, with volunteers again driving it and often fundraising. Let us get behind them.

The other one where people are active is at our Katherine, Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek agricultural shows. It is the volunteer groups behind them that make those shows exciting. They get people organised—'You come here. You do the cake stalls over there. Someone has to do the judging of this.'

At the Darwin show I had to judge the animals or something because the Member for Nelson bailed. We always cover each other; there are no worries about that. It was a privilege to do it. I had to choose the best goat and the best rabbit. The danger is that there is normally only one winner. I had to say that it was a hard choice and everyone was a winner before I even announced it, because a lot of young kids and families were watching me. However, it is a great thing to do.

I speak on behalf of all members in this Assembly when I say that we are all behind our volunteer groups and want to see them get together. Be they sporting, multicultural, religious or school groups, across the whole board we wish them all the best.

I commend the minister for bringing forward the legislation.

Mr HOWE (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, it is fantastic to speak to this Bill and acknowledge the incredible work that the associations across Palmerston do in my electorate.

I echo the calls of other speakers in saying that the work these volunteer groups do is amazing. I have said before that government top-down approaches are limited in the social impact they can have, but grassroots organisations can build esprit de corps in our community. People are willing to give their time, and money a lot of the time, to improve the lives of those around them. I acknowledge some of those individuals today and the incredible work of these organisations.

I will start with Autism NT, which is based in my electorate. I acknowledge the advocacy it does across the Northern Territory for children with autism. I particularly thank Niki Lehmann who is a tireless advocate. Ever since I came into this role, Niki has been an amazing advocate for families across my community and the Northern Territory. She has helped me understand what those families need from me. I thank Niki and her team for the incredible work they are doing. Keep it up. I look forward to working with Niki long into the future.

I also thank Deaf Connect. Deaf Connect is an incredible organisation that does many things. Deaf Connect invited the Member for Wanguri and me to a social connection night. It was a heap of fun and everyone was incredibly welcoming. Oly and I are clearly not deaf, so engaging in a social night with the deaf community was a heap of fun. It presented new challenges for us and everyone was patient and lovely in helping us. The interpreters there helped us communicate as well. We played games using Auslan, learning Auslan as we went. That was fantastic.

I bumped into a group from Deaf Connect who had gone to the Palmerston cinema. I used some of the skills I had learned on the night to ask how they were doing. It was a lot of fun. Those connections are important.

I thoroughly enjoy language, so engaging in Auslan gave me a lot of satisfaction. It is great to see the impact Deaf Connect has on the community. I look forward to being a strong supporter of Deaf Connect and the objectives they are trying to reach with our deaf community.

We have many other organisations doing great work such as the Palmerston and Litchfield Seniors Association, do a humongous amount of work. It is a large organisation with a large membership, and there is so much on that the committee and membership do to improve the lives of our seniors. They are always putting out information; they have a great newsletter and social events constantly and moving around locations as well. A huge thankyou on behalf of the entire Palmerston team for the work that PLSA is doing.

One of my favourites as well is the Palmerston 50+Tuesday Club, which meets in my electorate in Grey at the community hall and it is a fantastic group of seniors from around Palmerston. The club is incredibly inviting and our team, the Members for Brennan, Blain and Spillett regularly go there. We can have tea and coffee and enjoy a chat with our seniors. The club is doing some great work as well as the Palmerston Combined Probus Club.

DRAFT

We have got a strong seniors community in Palmerston, which is fantastic. From my view, and our Palmerston team, our seniors built the Territory. What we have and inherited is their legacy of a life of hard work and we want to make sure we build on that. We thank them for their life's work in making the Territory what it is.

Some of our charity organisations such as the Lions Club of Palmerston and the Rotary Club of Litchfield and Palmerston are doing incredible work. Rotary make sandwiches for schools, and this is important stuff, but it seems so small, but they are making thousands so that children in Palmerston are not hungry at school. That is such a beautiful act of kindness and humanity and shows that slapping together margarine and cheese and two pieces of bread makes a difference to someone who has gone to school without food or have not had dinner.

I thank those volunteers who come in on a Sunday and give up hours for children they will never meet. They are not asking for credit; it is pure humanitarian wanting to help young people in our community, which is an incredible and special thing. I thank them deeply.

A big shoutout goes to the Palmerston RSL Sub-branch as they are doing incredible work supporting our veterans. The Minister for Veterans has touched on it, and I echo his sentiments. We have a lot of veterans in the Palmerston and rural area. There is a wide array of needs for veterans across the entire health spectrum and social connection and the RSL is a place for men and women to have those bonds with people that understand what they are going through and have experienced those things before. They help link each other with support and help the social network. They continue to uphold, as they are the guardians of the sacred traditions we have in the military, the days of honour where we respect our fallen and our servicemen and women. They are the custodians. It is a role they take extremely seriously. I thank the entire committee at the Palmerston RSL and the president for his ongoing work. They are doing a real push to encourage younger families and veterans of my generation to get involved. I look forward to working with them on that.

I thank the Country Women's Association Palmerston Branch for the work it is doing and the Northern Territory Emergency Service Palmerston Volunteer Unit association.

The Palmerston Regional Business Association has for a long time been a big proponent of Palmerston business, as I am. It was great that the Member for Blain and I attended its AGM. We sat on the couch and took questions from business owners. The enthusiasm in the room was great. We can get genuine change through our businesses. The businesspeople on the ground want the community to grow and they want to create jobs. I thank them for their ongoing work.

The Attorney-General touched on the Palmerston and Rural Market Association. We have the best market in the Territory. The work that goes into making that a reality every week is humongous. The stallholders are incredible. Every Friday night we have Hyper the Clown entertaining the kids and live music performances. We have an incredible fruit and veg section and lots of stallholders. It is the vibrant beating heart of Palmerston city as well—not the not the other one, but Palmerston city.

Then we have our sport. We talk a lot in this Chamber about young people, but our sports clubs are doing the genuine hard work of mentoring and engaging with our youth every week and every day across Palmerston. There is the Palmerston Regional Basketball Association and the Palmerston Power Basketball Club on the ground, working with young people who want to get into training. There are all those mentors outside of parents and teachers. A lot of that comes through sport where young people get other adult influences in their life that can be impactful. These clubs all have local volunteers. They are just mums and dads giving up their time to coach one of the local teams. I take my hat off to them.

The Palmerston Netball Association's Palmerston team is super keen to get behind and support netball. It is an incredibly popular sport at Palmerston. We have a young population with lots of kids. Our team is keen to get behind the Palmerston Netball Association. The Palmerston Crocs Netball Club and the Palmerston Magpies Netball Club do fantastic work with our girls across Palmerston. I look forward to working with them over the next few years to make netball the best it can be throughout Palmerston.

Footy season is back. There is the Magpies Football Club. Even if you are not into football, come to Cazalys Arena for a night game because it is one of the most beautiful sunsets over a football field you will see anywhere. Even if you are not that into footy, just come for that and then enjoy some of the game. What is awesome about the NT is our footy season starts when the rest of the country's season finishes. We can truly enjoy football. If you are a footy fanatic you can get that in Palmerston, with what may be one of the most spectacular views from a football oval you will find anywhere in the country …

Mrs Zio: Challenge accepted.

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Mr HOWE: It is fantastic. You will have to come and see it for yourself, Member for Fannie Bay.

The Rovers Football Club is an incredible club that is growing at an amazing rate. President Byrne Haigh has done a fantastic job. He has a long-term vision for the club and you can see it coming together. The club has hundreds upon hundreds of players. I am stoked. I thank the government for supporting me in delivering the $1.25m for Palmerston Rovers and upgrading those facilities. There is a huge player base and many volunteers.

Recently I did the awards. It was great to give awards to each coach, player and manager for the teams. It is an incredible club, engaging many people in our community; many families are tied into it. That is what it really comes down to: they are not just clubs; they are the heartbeat of a community for a lot of families because outside of work or school the club is where they spend their recreational time.

I thank the Palmerston Cricket Club for the work it is doing. It is a fantastic club that is producing some great rep players. Our Palmerston team is committed to seeing the club grow. We support that club. The Member for Brennan and I were there recently and saw them training.

We also saw the NT women's seniors 40-plus cricket team. I proudly gave that team two flags because tit will represent the Northern Territory for the first time. We are fielding a 40-plus seniors women's team in the national competition, and I wish our ladies all the best. The Member for Fannie Bay and I also attended the ceremony of assigning players to their team divisions and the raffle to raise funds. It was fantastic that our government gave $10,000 to support those women so that they can have uniforms and everything they need to represent the Northern Territory on the national stage—awesome job. I look forward to hearing the results. There are some incredible players; age does not hold you back. I wish them all the best.

I thank the Palmerston Gymnastics Club which is doing great work in the Palmerston region. It offers programs for all ages. It does not matter what your age is, the club provides gymnastics access. I everyone in the club for all the work they are doing to maintain it. My children have used it and it is a lot of fun.

Palmerston Boxing Club is doing great work. I am a big believer in the power of sport, and boxing in particular. With the right mentors, these heavy contact sports encourage discipline. They allow people, especially young men, to learn how to channel aggression in a productive way that will improve their lives and make them better men. I thank the coaches and mentors working at the club for their engagement across the community and for putting on the boxing. I know it costs more money than it makes. I thank them for their ongoing commitment to the community to ensure young people and men and women of all ages who want to join the sport have access to boxing.

I think most Territory kids spend a lot of time in the pool, so it is fantastic to see the work that the Palmerston Rural Swimming Club is doing to ensure we have a swimming club that we can be proud of.

The Attorney-General spoke about the Palmerston Game Fishing Club. It is a massive club that is extremely popular in Palmerston. It is doing great work. It is a privilege to be invited to everything the club does to be a part of it and see what it has achieved. It is incredible what it has achieved as a club. I wish it all the best.

The Palmerston Pistol Club provides great facilities for pistol shooters throughout Palmerston who want to engage in that in their recreational time. I thank the club's members for their commitment. Many volunteer hours go into running any shooting club or shooting range. It is a lot of hard work. I thank those members who are committed to the sport of shooting, be it rifle, shotgun or pistol. It is a thankless job at times. I thank them for all the work they do in maintaining those facilities, ensuring it is run safely and providing training and mentoring to new shooters, which is important. At all these clubs, there are always committee members who are there ready and willing to provide the safety, training and mentorship that a new shooter needs. I thank them.

We have a large and active faith base in Palmerston. I will go through some of the churches. There is the Zion Church, which is doing so well. If you walked in you would not think it was a new church. It has hundreds upon hundreds of people. Its new building is already filled for a Sunday congregation. It is incredible to see hundreds of families there. The church has an incredible parents room where you can take your little ones. It is doing a fantastic job. I thank everyone involved in that church. There is a huge number of volunteers.

Crossroads Christian Church is doing fantastic work in our community. There is Hillsong Church and C3 Church, which is growing. It does not have a permanent home yet. I would love to help it find a permanent home. The church meets at one of the schools at the moment. It is an incredible growing congregation. There

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is Saint Luke's Anglican Church, Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church, the Palmerston Uniting Church, the Palmerston Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Palmerston North and Palmerston South Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Palmerston Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Cornerstone Christian Fellowship and Territory Baptist Church.

We have an incredibly vibrant active Christian church and faith group in Palmerston. The work a lot of those churches do can be seen. Some churches have different programs. They are seeing an increase in the number of young people looking for meaning and purpose. The churches are always there, willing to engage with them and support our community. I thank all the church leaders and, importantly, all the members of those churches for making our faith groups so strong in Palmerston.

I also thank the Palmerston Mosque for its ongoing support for the Muslim community of Palmerston and other areas. The mosque continues to grow strongly. It is always an honour to be invited to the mosque and partake in its celebrations. I thank the leaders at the mosque for their work.

We have incredibly strong associations in Palmerston. I am proud to stand with the government and say that we will make their lives easier so that they can do what they want to do, which is help and engage with our community. This way we can lower the administration and the bureaucracy.

It probably will not surprise anyone in this Chamber that I will gladly support a Bill that reduces anything to do with bureaucracy. I support this Bill and hope that it helps reduce the administration burden and gets our groups back to what they do best, which is supporting our people and communities and making the Territory lifestyle what it is.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Karama for letting this Assembly know that my favourite drink is a mango shake at Rapid Creek.

I support the Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026. I appreciate the minister and her team bringing this important small reform to our community, because the impact of this reform will be huge for small communities and associations across the Northern Territory.

When we talk about building a stronger Northern Territory, we often talk about roads, investment, business and jobs. However, there is another important part of our Territory—the thousands of people who volunteer their time to bring our community together. They run sporting clubs, culture groups, neighbourhood associations and community organisations. They organise festivals, coach children, raise funds and help families. Most of this work happens after hours around their jobs and family responsibilities.

These people do not ask for much. They just want fair rules, clear responsibilities and the freedom to get on with helping others.

The *Associations Act* was introduced in 2003. More than 20 years have passed. I thank the minister for bringing this reform after 20 years. The Territory has changed and associations have changed too. Some are small groups run by a few volunteers and others manage significant funds and more complicated activities. Our laws must recognise those differences. That is why this Bill matters.

It aims to reduce unnecessary paperwork for small organisations, while strengthening good governance and accountability when greater oversight is needed. Let me explain what that means in everyday language for all Territorians.

First, the Bill removes mandatory audit requirements for Tier 1 associations. Imagine a small cultural association organising a community celebration in Darwin. Volunteers collect membership fees, arrange a hall, prepare food and raise just enough money to run their event. Every dollar counts. That small association must pay for a mandatory audit and some of the money raised by volunteers goes towards administration rather than community activities.

In this Bill the mandatory audit requirement for Tier 1 associations is removed. However, members can still vote to require an audit if they believe one is necessary. That is an important safeguard. Less red tape does not mean less responsibility. Committees must still manage money properly and remain answerable to their members. We are simply recognising that a small volunteer group should not automatically carry the same compliance burden as a large organisation.

Second, the Bill provides practical ways to resolve problems early. Imagine a local sporting club's committee disagrees about spending, meetings are delayed and members start losing confidence. Before long, the

DRAFT

argument becomes bigger than the club itself. Children and families can miss out because adults cannot resolve a dispute.

This Bill gives the director tools to help address governance failures. The director can direct an association to hold a general meeting or engage in a dispute resolution process when governance issues are affecting its proper operation. Why is this important? Sometimes the best solution is simply to bring people together, put the issues on the table and give members a fair opportunity to be heard. We should help organisations fix problems before those problems destroy years of hard work.

Third, the Bill helps ensure that associations are established under the right legal framework. This legislation is designed to support a few neighbours who want to organise community activities in a simple affordable way to become incorporated. However, for another organisation that proposes activity on a much larger or more complex scale, a different legal framework, such as the Commonwealth *Corporations Act*, may be more appropriate.

This will allow the director to refuse incorporations where the likely size, scale or activities suggest another framework would be a better fit. That is not about stopping junior community groups; it is about matching the rules to the responsibilities of the organisation. Small groups should have a straightforward pathway and more complex organisations should have appropriate oversight.

Fourth, the Bill clarifies what happens to certain government land leases when an association is dissolved. Imagine an association that has been granted a lease to use land for community activities and years later the association closes. Who should be responsible for that lease? That is a fair question.

This Bill clarifies that relevant leases should rest with the chief executive of the public body that granted them, rather than an unrelated department. The responsible departments will work together on implementation before the new arrangements take effect. That may sound technical, but clear responsibility matters. It avoids confusion and supports sensible management of public assets.

The common theme in this reform is balance. We want accountability because members deserve confidence that their organisation is properly run. We want early action when things go wrong, but we also respect the time and energy of our volunteers.

I know from attending community and multicultural events across Casuarina and the northern suburbs that volunteers are the people who arrive first and leave last. They set up chairs, organise performances, register players and clean up after everyone has gone home. Their time is valuable. Every unnecessary form is time taken away from serving the community and every avoidable expense can mean less money for equipment, events or families. Good government should make it easier for people to do good things, not bury them in paperwork. This Bill helps community associations in Casuarina and the northern suburbs.

I appreciate Minister Cahill and her team.

I commend this Bill to the Assembly.

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations)(in reply): Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026.

This Bill represents a step forward in modernising the legislative framework that supports incorporated associations across the Northern Territory.

Incorporated associations are at the heart of our communities. From sporting clubs and cultural organisations to community service providers and volunteer groups, these organisations make an enormous contribution to the social and economic wellbeing of Territorians. They bring people together, deliver essential services, create employment opportunities and provide support to communities across the Territory. It is important that we have legislation that recognises their contributions, supports their operations and ensures they can continue to serve our communities effectively.

The *Associations Act 2003* was established more than 20 years ago to provide a simple, accessible and affordable incorporation framework for smaller community-based organisations. Since that time the sector has evolved considerably. Many associations now manage substantial assets, employ staff, deliver government-funded services and operate in increasingly complex environments. Our legislation must keep pace with these changes.

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The amendments before the Assembly strike an appropriate balance between strengthening governance and accountability while ensuring that smaller community organisations are not burdened by unnecessary regulation. Importantly, these reforms are about supporting associations to succeed, not making it harder for them to operate.

One of the most significant benefits of this Bill is the reduction of red tape for smaller incorporated associations. By removing the mandatory audit requirements for Tier 1 associations, we are reducing unnecessary administrative and financial burdens on organisations that are often run by volunteers. These are people who generously give their time to support their communities. Their time and resources are better directed towards delivering services, organising community activities and supporting their members rather than meeting regulatory requirements that provide limited additional benefit.

Importantly, existing financial reporting and transparency requirements will remain in place and members will retain the ability to vote to require an audit when they consider it appropriate. This is a sensible practical reform that reflects the government's commitment to reducing red tape while maintaining appropriate accountability.

The Bill also strengthens the ability of the regulator to respond to governance and compliance issues before they become serious problems. The introduction of early intervention powers will allow the director to take practical steps to assist associations experiencing governance difficulties or internal disputes. This includes directing associations to convene general meetings or engage in dispute resolution processes when necessary. These measures are designed to help organisations resolve issues early, protect their members and maintain the continuity of important community services.

The Bill also provides more proportionate compliance tools, including an infringement notice framework for minor breaches.

I emphasise that the purpose of these reforms is not to punish associations. The objective is to encourage compliance, resolve problems efficiently and avoid unnecessary escalation into costly and time-consuming legal proceedings. The reforms also strengthen transparency through provisions allowing relevant information about incorporated associations to be made publicly available. They provide greater clarity about the management of certain Crown and special purpose leases when an association is dissolved, ensuring responsibility sits with the appropriate government agency. Together, these changes will deliver a more modern, effective and practical regulatory framework.

I also acknowledge the extensive consultation that informed the development of this Bill. Engagement was undertaken with incorporated associations across the Territory, on the ground in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs. Stakeholders were also given the opportunity to provide feedback through the Have Your Say consultation process.

The feedback received played an important role in shaping these amendments, and I am pleased that the reforms have received broad support. I thank the associations, community representatives, stakeholders and government agencies that contributed their time and expertise to the process. Their input has helped ensure these changes respond to the practical needs of the sector.

This government recognises that strong communities and a strong economy go hand in hand. Incorporated associations make a substantial contribution to both. By improving governance, reducing unnecessary regulation and strengthening the long-term sustainability of these organisations, we are helping to build a more resilient community sector.

We are also ensuring that the regulatory framework remains appropriate for the diverse range of associations operating across the Territory. Small volunteer-run organisations should be able to focus on their communities, while larger and more complex entities should operate under a legislative framework suited to their scale and activities. That is the balance this Bill seeks to achieve.

These are practical, measured and necessary amendments. They will make it easier for smaller associations to operate, provide better tools to address governance challenges, improve transparency and strengthen confidence in the sector. Most importantly, they will help incorporated associations continue doing what they do best—supporting Territorians and making a positive difference in our communities.

I thank the members of this Assembly for their contributions to the debate and for their consideration of this legislation. The Associations Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 is an important reform that will deliver lasting benefits for incorporated associations, their members, volunteers and the broader Territory community.

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I commend the Bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 11, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 12:

Ms UIBO: How does the proposed requirement for committee members to disclose a material personal interest differ from the existing requirement most committee members already have?

Ms CAHILL: Under the current legislation, the sections outline a process of disclosure when there is an interest, but it is narrow; it covers only a financial interest in the contract, and the members can stay for the discussion. The new requirements cover off that any material personal interest in any matter before the committee should be disclosed and that the person who has those interests should not vote on the matter.

Ms UIBO: Does the requirement to disclose an interest at the committee meeting and the next general meeting impose any additional obligations on committee members compared with the existing provision?

Ms CAHILL: As I stated, the requirement has elevated to include any material interest. It brings us into line with governance proceedings across the country for not-for-profits.

Ms UIBO: Would that standard be upheld regardless of the type of meeting a committee member is entering?

Ms CAHILL: It is noted that it is a committee meeting and a general meeting.

Ms UIBO: How do the proposed restrictions on committee members participating in discussions and voting differ from the existing requirements?

If a breach occurs, who investigates this? Who can an association member complain to?

Ms CAHILL: As previously noted, the conditions that have changed is from a financial interest to now covering any material interest.

If a member of an organisation is concerned about a breach, it would be notified to the director.

Ms UIBO: Is the director the person who would pursue that complaint and investigate if it is a real complaint or dismiss the complaint?

Ms CAHILL: That is correct.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 18, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 19:

Ms UIBO: What powers does the director have to require an incorporated association to undertake an audit? How does this provision expand those powers?

Ms CAHILL: Currently, the director does not have the ability to direct a community organisation incorporated under our *Associations Act* to undertake an audit when there is a matter of concern. This will enable that to occur.

Ms UIBO: Under what circumstances would the minister expect the director to exercise their new power? What criteria would trigger a special audit?

Ms CAHILL: The reason for this amendment is that when there is a real concern about an association and what may be occurring in it, currently there is no capacity for an audit to be directed. This would enable an

DRAFT

audit to be directed, but it would need to be of material status; it would not be something that could be done on a whim.

Ms UIBO: The second part of that question was: what would trigger a special audit?

Ms CAHILL: It is a bit hypothetical. For example, if somebody notified that they were concerned that a significant amount of money had been misappropriated, that would likely trigger a direction for an audit.

Ms UIBO: Is there currently any documentation that provides what the criteria are that could then provide for that audit mechanism to be enacted?

Ms CAHILL: There is no capacity for that currently. A protracted process needs to be undertaken currently when any concern is mattered. It largely rests within the association to self-adjust, which has been problematic.

Ms UIBO: Is it your intention that there would be a criterion through policy that would outline different substantive reasons that a special audit could be triggered?

Ms CAHILL: One of the actions being taken under the review of the legislation is to ensure that those associations incorporated under our Act are supported with governance tools, education and training. That work has already started. There are clear guidelines and assistance that are publicly available to associations, so they would know what their obligations are and would be well aware if they veered from that.

Ms UIBO: Who would select the auditor? Would the director appoint the auditor or would the association nominate its own auditor?

Ms CAHILL: As the association would have to pay for the audit, it would have the capacity to choose its own auditor. It would need to be somebody duly authorised as an auditor.

Ms UIBO: Would they need to inform the director of the person, persons or company doing the audit, or would that be an internal process for the association?

Ms CAHILL: If a direction was given under this Act, it would be a serious undertaking, so there would be a close connection between the director and the association impacted. The association would need to provide details of the fact that it has complied with the direction, which means it would need to give the details of the qualified auditor to the director to see that the undertaking is being progressed.

Ms UIBO: Would it need to provide the audit report as part of that direction?

Ms CAHILL: Yes.

Ms UIBO: Who would bear the cost of a special audit directed under this provision? Would any financial assistance be available to smaller associations which may be unable to cover the cost on their own?

Ms CAHILL: I already noted that the association would be required to cover the costs of that.

Ms UIBO: When an association has already completed an audit for a particular financial period, what circumstances would justify requiring a second audit in the same period?

Ms CAHILL: As I already answered that hypothetically, it would be a notification of a serious concern. For example, it might get a qualified audit. That might be something that would flag.

Ms UIBO: That could occur in the same reporting period?

Ms CAHILL: Yes, because a qualified audit relates to a period. If a qualified audit was received, that flag to concern—for example, about money that had been spent and not properly accounted for—that would relate to the same period.

Ms UIBO: When a second audit is required, would the director be obliged to provide the association with a written reason or reasons identifying any concerns or deficiencies from its original audit?

Ms CAHILL: Any request for a special audit would require written direction and information from the director.

DRAFT

Ms UIBO: If concerns are raised about the independence, confidence or conduct of the original auditor, what actions would the director expect to take?

Ms CAHILL: If a second audit that was directed found there were concerns about the manner in which the original audit was undertaken, it would be reported to the appropriate professional body.

Ms UIBO: If an association raised concerns about the independence or suitability of an auditor selected by the director, what process would exist to review that appointment?

Ms CAHILL: The director directs that an audit to be undertaken. The association appoints the auditor.

Ms UIBO: What safeguards would prevent the director's special audit powers from imposing unreasonable or disproportionate costs on incorporated associations?

Ms CAHILL: The purpose of a special audit is to protect the assets and money of the members of the association. It would never occur in a situation that would be considered frivolous. If an organisation felt that, it would have the ability to elevate its concerns.

Ms UIBO: Would that be at the discretion of the director?

Ms CAHILL: As with any situation, if somebody had a particular concern about a process, there are mechanisms in place whereby they can raise that with people above the person who has made the direction.

Clause 19 agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 45, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

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

Bill agreed to.

VISITORS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Jason the legend in the gallery. He is a special person from Woodroffe helping people with special needs. Welcome, Jason.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms CAHILL (Trade, Business and Asian Relations): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; Bill read a third time.

The Assembly suspended.

NOTICES

Mr EDGINGTON (Health): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next meeting day I shall present a Bill titled Private Hospitals Amendment Bill 2026, Serial 82.

QUESTION TIME

CEO of Department of Mining and Energy – Sacking

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for MINES and ENERGY

Last month you created uncertainty by sacking the CEO, Mr Alister Trier, from the Department of Mining and Energy. Enough of the secrecy. Why did you sack the CEO of your department and what has it cost taxpayers to day?

ANSWER

DRAFT

Madam Speaker, I will not talk about any individual job roles in the Northern Territory Government. That is not a role for us, that is an operational role. I will not speak about it.

Severe Weather Events – Preparedness

Mr O'GALLAGHER to CHIEF MINISTER

Last week's severe storms in Alice Springs, together with the widespread flooding and damage experienced during the last Wet Season, are stark reminders of how quickly severe weather can impact Territory communities, families and critical infrastructure. With the higher-risk weather season approaching, it is essential that the Territory is prepared to respond effectively to emergencies, restore essential services and support affected communities.

Can you update the Assembly on how the Finocchiaro CLP government is strengthening the Territory's disaster preparedness, investing in emergency services and infrastructure and ensuring our communities can recover faster when severe weather strikes.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, being a Top End member of parliament, the Member for Karama knows all too well, particularly at this time of the year, that the preparedness is important for the high-risk weather season.

I thank the Deputy Chief Minister who launched our Higher Risk Weather Season earlier this week. It is a timely reminder for people to be prepared. We have just seen Alice Springs go through one mighty storm that has caused so much destruction and damage to that community. We know how powerful the weather can be so we have to be prepared.

Our government is investing an additional $3.2m to upgrade our Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre. This is critical infrastructure, not just on a day-to-day basis when people need to call 000 to access emergency support with ambulance, fire or police, but particularly during high-risk weather season and events.

We have moved our amazing team from the JESCC at the Peter McAulay Centre to the Nightcliff Police Station, which will not be the Nightcliff Police Station for much longer—the white elephant that Labor built. There was an office block with a police sign on it. We have moved the team out there so they can deliver the services while we do this critical expansion, which will be done by about May next year. That work is important and critical to being prepared.

As part of the announcement about Higher Risk Weather Season, we made two significant announcements about repair because people want to recovery quicker. That is a key takeaway coming out of last season's weather events.

We have two panel contracts that we have stood up, which means we can get repairs and maintenance out the door fast if we need to. These are two five-year contractor panels. There are about 20 appointments involving 18 companies across those panels—a strong depth and breadth across the Territory.

The first panel has 13 companies ready to go and the second has 16 companies ready to go. This is about bridges, drainage, repairs, maintenance, immediate reconstruction work and it allows us to mobilise them quickly. There is plenty of work being done across government to make sure we are more prepared than ever before.

It is timely, given we have moved into our Higher Risk Weather Season. In a few more weeks' time, we will be moving into cyclone season. Of course, last year we had cyclone season in November, very early in the season. What followed was five extraordinary weather events leading to an unprecedented weather season.

I thank the Member for Karama for the question. It is important that we are investing in our emergency systems and this funding to the JESCC will go a long way into the future. We look forward to that opening in May. The Nightcliff Police Station will be the new NTES headquarters.

Beetaloo Energy – Land for Data Centre

Mr SMELT to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

DRAFT

Without a public tender or community consultation, your government offered Beetaloo Energy land worth more than $20m for its proposed data centre development. Who made the decision to offer this valuable public land? Was the decision formally considered and endorsed by Cabinet and did anyone in cabinet declare a conflict of interest?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, on this side of the Chamber, we know what we stand for. We support the gas industry and housing and development in the Northern Territory. Unlike flipflop Ed over there, who cannot decide …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing order 31; I asked the member to withdraw the comment and refer to the member by their name and title.

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down and stop the banter across the Chamber, please. The member is correct. Please refer to the Member for Nightcliff by his proper title.

Mr BURGOYNE: We know those opposite flipflop and cannot decide whether they support the gas industry or housing or whether they are going to their federal Labor mates and complaining about it because that is what they are doing.

On this side of the Chamber, we are pro-development. We want to see development in the Northern Territory, which is why we granted Beetaloo Digital an exclusive commitment over 185 hectares of land at Weddell, about 30 kilometres from Darwin. We are getting on with giving people certainty. Everything we are doing as a government is to ensure that we are driving development, unlike those opposite who cannot decide whether they support or are against industry.

We continue to work with proponents as part of that 'do not deal'; it simply gives Beetaloo Digital a degree of land security while it progresses plans and undertakes detailed investigations into the project's feasibility. That is what we have done and will continue to do. We will work with proponents to give them certainty so that they can get on, get finances and get people to back their businesses, so that we can deliver more jobs in the Northern Territory.

I will tell the Chamber what this does not constitute; it does not constitute a grant of tenure. This is important because I have heard a lot of people say that we are giving people land for nothing. That is not the case. It does not circumvent any legislative requirements concerning environmental planning, rezoning and development approvals. Those opposite are confused. When they were in government they approved Next DC, a data centre to be constructed on the outskirts of Darwin CBD. Now they are against it.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Let us stop talking and listen to what the point of order is from the Member for Nightcliff.

Mr SMELT: Standing order 110; the question was specific. It was about who made the decision, was it endorsed by Cabinet and were any conflicts of interest declared?

Mr BURGOYNE: We make decisions every day of the week to support business in the Northern Territory. When those opposite were in government they signed 'do not deal' agreements over parcels of land at Middle Arm and now, once again, they have flipflopped and they are against those things.

We will continue to work with proponents in the Northern Territory to make sure we are delivering projects. That is what Territorians expect us to do, and that is what we will continue to do. We will not flipflop like those opposite because they do not know who they are; they are divided and dysfunctional. On this side of the Chamber, we will continue to deliver for the Northern Territory.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing order 110; the last part of the question was were there any conflicts of interest declared by Cabinet?

Madam SPEAKER: You have answered the question, minister.

Investment in the Territory – Mining Projects

Dr RAHMAN to MINISTER for MINING and ENERGY

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Every gas field and mine in the Territory begins with someone willing to back the Territory and invest. In the June quarter, petroleum explorers spent more than $120m in the Territory, which is more than Labor attracted in its entire last year in government. Since March, three major mining projects reached final investment decision and middle production has hit a record $6.08bn, beating the best year Labor ever managed by more than $1bn.

Could you update the House on what these latest figures show about investment in the Territory and what risk indecision poses to jobs and business that depend on certainty?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the member understands how important it is to have investment in the Northern Territory. We know that investment brings population and grows our economy, unlike those opposite who shrunk our economy, tried to tax their way out of it and gave us a massive debt over $1bn per year. When investment flows, families and businesses feel it across the Northern Territory.

Over the past year, I have stood here and talked about how good our mining and resource sector is. I have the opportunity to talk about it again today, and we have the hard statistics to prove it. We back the resource industry and we do not make any apologies for that because the resource sector makes up almost one-in-four dollars of our resources.

We have streamlined those approval processes; approved the first sale of gas; abolished the third-party merits review; delivered the biggest mineral titles overhaul in 15 years; lifted the payroll threshold; and introduced a Territory Coordinator to make sure that investment comes to the Northern Territory. I was told at a seminar that investment comes where it is welcome and stays where it is appreciated. We want to send a clear message to anyone in resources or petroleum, to come to the Northern Territory and spend your money; you are welcome here and you will be appreciated.

Explorers have spent $120m in the June quarter alone. That is more than Labor did in their last year of government. It goes to show that the change of government has brought investment to the Northern Territory. Those mines pay the royalties, which pays for police, education and our health system. In the last seven months, three major mining companies have reached the FID: Core Lithium, Nolan and KGL Jervois copper mine, in the land of opportunity. That is more than $2.5bn back into the Territory.

We have had more final investments in the last seven months than Labor did in their last year. Labor could not reach a final decision on anything. They flipflop and support gas, and then they do not support it; they support housing and then do not. The one thing they support is chaos and it is clear that Labor cannot be trusted as the statistics speak for themselves

We want jobs and investment in the Northern Territory and we support the industry.

Independent Review into the Conduct of Department of Children and Families

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Did you, your office, the government or your department edit or retract anything out of the report into the Independent Review into the Conduct of Department of Children and Families before it was tabled?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the report which was tabled was the report that I received.

Road Infrastructure – Safe and Reliable Road Network

Mr MACKAY to MINISTER for LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A safe and reliable road network is essential to keeping Territorians connected, particularly those living in our regional and remote communities. Road infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting local businesses and ensuring freight and essential services can move efficiently across our vast Territory. After years of neglect under Labor, the Finocchiaro CLP government is focused on delivering infrastructure improvements that support economic growth and restore our unique Territory lifestyle.

DRAFT

Could you update the House on how the Finocchiaro CLP government is delivering road upgrades across the Territory, supporting local businesses and jobs and rebuilding our economy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the rural area relies on that road network to get to and from whatever they need to do, be it from town or the bush and the urban areas. I remind those opposite that our budget this year has committed close to $2bn for transport infrastructure, which is almost half the Territory's entire infrastructure program, because we understand how important roads are.

Under our government, roads are rolling out across the Territory. I welcome every opportunity to announce road improvements.

A recent announcement was a $37.4m tender awarded to seal more than 22 kilometres of Santa Teresa Road, a piece of road that is historically prone to flooding and damage. Santa Teresa is one of the largest communities in Central Australia. Unfortunately, there were numerous delays delivering this project, but I am glad to see it out the door. The contractors are onsite now, setting up their camp. They will start work next week on the detours to start rebuilding that road.

The Member for Barkly is equally excited about the tender to upgrade and seal another 12 kilometres to Sandover Highway, which is great news.

The damage from last Wet Season was enormous. Significant pressure was placed on our road network, communities and local businesses. Our government has acted. In just two years, the CLP government has sealed almost 250 kilometres of road across the Tanami, Carpentaria Highway, the Outback Way and other regional programs. I am happy to update the Assembly that to date this includes 78 kilometres on the Tanami Road; 124 kilometres on the Carpentaria Highway; 27 kilometres on the Outback Way; plus the Tiwi Islands road upgrade to Paru Road, 9.4 kilometres of which has been completed; the Jungawa Road, 2.6 kilometres; Marrakai Road, 2.5 kilometres; and Fleming Road, 5.6 kilometres. That is great news.

We have the new panel contracts to fast-track emergency road repairs, as the deputy leader spoke about. That prepares us for our inclement weather season so that we have contractors ready to hit the ground running to make sure that we keep our road networks open and keep Territorians moving across our network. We understand the importance of that, and it was never more evident than after the flooding and cyclone season this year.

I take my hat off to the department and our contractors because they moved heaven and earth to get our road networks open, get people moving across the Territory and keep our logistics lines open. Our logistics chains are a bit longer than everybody else's. That work is imperative to keeping the Territory moving.

Domestic Violence Service Hub – Darwin

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CHILDREN and FAMILIES

Can you confirm that you will be opening a DV service hub based in Darwin staffed by two public servants on 6 November? Given that your latest crime statistics show two in three assaults involve domestic violence and that domestic violence has gone up by 12% in Palmerston and by 20% in Katherine, how do you expect a Darwin-based hub staffed by two overworked public servants will make any meaningful difference?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will not be doing that on 6 November. There is a lot of work being done in the domestic violence space because the people who work in this space deserve to be supported and shown that everything we do in this government is about helping victims of domestic and family violence, who deserve to be treated with respect and do not deserve to be politicised. Everything that we do is about keeping women, children and victims of domestic, family and sexual violence safe.

That is why we invested $36m ongoing, no questions asked, to support the delivery of services in the Territory. That is something those on the other side never did. Those on the other side saw an escalation of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory of 80% over a decade. That is a record they should be ashamed of. This government, on the other hand, has been working hard to decrease domestic violence assaults in our community, and we have succeeded in that. There has been an historic 11% to 12%

DRAFT

decrease in domestic, family and sexual violence assaults in the Northern Territory over the last two years. That is extraordinary. It is something that should be celebrated.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. DV is the worst it has been in Palmerston and Katherine. Minister, can you confirm, yes or no, is a DV hub opening in Darwin?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have plenty of time to answer the question.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! To the point of order, the Member for Gwoja constantly uses points of order to add information or restate the question. Are points of order to speak to the point of order or are they to have another crack?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Goyder, I get to decide what a point of order is or is not. I accept that usually in a question there will be some sort of point of order that may or may not be relevant or acceptable, but I get to decide that.

Ms CAHILL: This government has made a commitment to our community to work alongside our not-for-profits and people who are on the front line to make sure that we change the trajectory of domestic, family and sexual violence in the Territory. That is something those on the other side could not do. Over a decade their response in this area was appalling. There was an 80% increase in assaults against women and children in the community. We have reversed that trend because we are doing what they would not do; we are addressing the root causes of crime, working with children to show them what respectful relationships look like; holding perpetrators to account and making sure that women and children who are the primary victims in this space are kept safe.

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Do not repeat the question again.

Mr PAECH: Standing Order 110; relevance. Minister, are you opening a DV hub in Darwin?

Madam SPEAKER: You have made your point; no more points of order.

Mr Edgington: She has already answered that.

Mr Paech: She has not answered it.

Madam SPEAKER: Please continue, minister.

Ms CAHILL: I answered that part of the question. I will continue to say that I am proud of the work that is being done by the Department of Children and Families. The work the staff are doing in this space is extraordinary and they should be being celebrated, not pilloried.

Tourism Industry Growth

Mr PATEL to MINISTER for TOURISM and HOSPITALITY

The latest tourism figures show that the Northern Territory is bucking the national trend, recording the strongest growth in interstate visitors anywhere in Australia, while most other states went backwards. Last week Darwin welcomed 300 international travel agents for G'day Australia for the first time. Can you update Territorians on how the Finocchiaro CLP government is attracting more visitors and growing our tourism industry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Casuarina for that change of pace, which is welcome because there are some good things to celebrate in the Northern Territory.

Ms Uibo: Do not talk about DV. Do not care about DV. Just a change of pace—ignoring it.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please cease.

DRAFT

Ms BOOTHBY: One of those things is that we are bucking the trend on tourism, against all other states in Australia. Finally we are in the headlines for all the right reasons.

Our figures have been released for June 2026. We had an interstate visitor increase of 7.1%, which is the strongest growth in Australia. That is amazing work by our tourism industry. That is a 639,000 interstate visitor increase, which is amazing. International visitors were also up by 9%, which is reaching 248,000 extra people in the Northern Territory.

The Member for Casuarina is right. Last week the Territory hosted, for the first time ever, G'day Australia, which brought together 300 agents from across the world, most of whom had never been to Australia, let alone the Northern Territory. The opening was held at the Darwin Trailer Boat Club, with all those agents basically experiencing what Darwin has to offer. There is no better place to do that than there with the sunset in Fannie Bay. It was fantastic.

We were able to turn all that interest into global attention. We are talking about *Lonely Planet*, the *New York Times* and different big magazines. *Harper's Bazaar* recently did a huge article with Elle Macpherson at East Arnhem with some amazing fashion artists. All that interest is turning into investment.

Under the Labor government, tourists did not come to the Territory. Tourists on a cruise ship were told not to go into the city because they should be afraid of crime. That was disgraceful. Do you know what? Territorians and tourists said, 'Enough is enough' and elected a CLP government. We have made those changes over the last two years, making sure tourists and Territorians do not continue to be victims of crime. All the work we have done is working. We have tourists coming back to our cities and regions.

I just talked about being in Alice Springs a couple of weeks ago, and the town is buzzing with people and busloads of tourists at the Alice Springs School of the Air. It was amazing to see busloads in front of there. I had to wait in a queue because there were so many people coming through for its tours. That is something Alice Springs had not seen for years.

I am proud of the work everyone in the Northern Territory, including those in our resilient tourism industry, has been doing to turn around those numbers. Despite all the big challenges they still have, they do a fantastic job for the Northern Territory.

Middle Arm Precinct – Environmental Impact Statement

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for LOGISTICS and INFRASTRUCTURE

On 21 September the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority granted your department a further two-year extension to submit an environmental impact statement for the Middle Arm precinct, pushing the deadline out to October 2028, four years later than originally scheduled. When does your government expect physical construction works at Middle Arm to commence? Can you provide Territorians with a firm date when this long-promised project will move beyond planning and environmental assessments?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is great to get a Logistics and Infrastructure question, particularly about Middle Arm. While we are talking about Middle Arm, let us talk about the previous Labor government and 'do not deals' because those opposite seem to be quite interested in them. The previous Labor government offered five 'do not deals' on Middle Arm when it was in government. I think Labor invented them.

Middle Arm is essential to unlocking the Territory's untapped economy-driving resources, and it will form a key pillar moving forward for the work that is taking place in the Beetaloo and what those resources will bring to the Northern Territory.

The environmental assessment on Middle Arm is complex; it is a large piece of work. My understanding is that it is probably the largest environmental assessment being done at one time, which is what has made it complex. It was the decision of the former government to do it in that way rather than in stages for different pieces of the development as it went forward. The decision was made by the previous government to do the environmental assessment on Middle Arm as one bloc, and that is a huge bloc. That makes it extremely difficult.

I know that the Environment Protection Authority has been working through that assessment. The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure has been working through that with the authority to make sure

DRAFT

that it is done right, because it has to be done right. We want to make sure that the environment is protected as we develop the Middle Arm precinct for the resource sector to ensure that we can drive our economy forward.

Yes, there has to be a delay because of the size and complexity of that assessment. The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure team is working alongside the EPA and the Commonwealth to make sure that assessment gets done.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; conciseness of answer. I appreciate the minister's response, but there was a specific question towards the end: can you provide a firm date on that environmental impact assessment process?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister's answer is entirely relevant. Please continue.

Mr YAN: That assessment will take some time. Can I give you an exact date? How long is a piece of string? We just do not know. It will take time, and it will be done in a timely manner along with the Commonwealth. That is the key to make sure that it is done right. We cannot put an arbitrary timeframe on some of these things; I could say that it will be done in three, six or 12 months, but it is possible it will not.

Mrs Finocchiaro: They had 20 years!

Mr YAN: Yes, well, how long did Labor have to get that done? It was responsible for Middle Arm for at least eight years and did not do anything with it. To all of a sudden lay the issues on us …

Members interjecting.

Mr YAN: I saw all the 'do not deals' that you announced. That is …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Land and Housing Development

Mr KERLE to MINISTER for LANDS, PLANNING and ENVIRONMENT

It has been two years since the CLP government started working hard to make the Territory a better place to live, work and do business. The CLP government is focused on increasing housing supply, unlocking land and getting development moving because Territorians need homes, not more paperwork like the former government delivered.

Can you outline how this government is turning plans into real housing opportunities for Territorians while some others are still trying to work out whether they support development or oppose it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain is someone who is passionate about getting more homes for Territorians in the NT.

We on this side of the Chamber acknowledge that we need more homes so we can increase the supply so more people can come here and enjoy the wonderful lifestyle we have in the Northern Territory.

As a government we are focused on unlocking development and increasing land supply across the Territory. That is why we pass red tape reduction Bills; to reduce approval time frames and outdated administrative requirements. It is why yesterday we changed the ministerial decision time frame for Planning Scheme amendments from 90 days to 30 days. On this side of the Chamber we are not afraid of a bit of hard work.

The Chief Minister this week said residential construction had recorded its strongest month in years with 103 Fidelity Fund certificates issues in September. We are proud of the work we are doing to ensure we are getting those Fidelity Fund certificates out the door and making sure builders have less regulatory processes in their way. It represents some $43m in new home projects and an increase of more than 300% on August.

That is what we are doing on this side. Meanwhile on the opposite side, there is the Member for Nightcliff trying to stop Lee Point development. Why would he do that if he wants to see more homes for people in the NT?

DRAFT

We will continue to make sure that we are advocating for more homes in the Northern Territory …

Ms Uibo interjecting.

Mr BURGOYNE: I hear the Opposition Leader talking about Alice Springs. I want to talk about Alice Springs and Kilgariff. When I was an electrician, Kilgariff quite literally stopped. It came to a halt because those opposite failed to release more land in Alice Springs …

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence please.

Mr BURGOYNE: Builders I was working for …

Madam SPEAKER: Please pause, minister. We will have some silence.

Mrs ZIO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! There are constant interruptions. I want to hear what the minister has to say and I cannot.

Madam SPEAKER: It would be good to hear clearly what the minister has to say.

Ms Uibo: You have not built any houses.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

Mr BURGOYNE: Builders in Alice Springs quite literally left town because there was no land available at Kilgariff to build on. That is what those opposite delivered for Alice Springs.

We now have land available and people are building on it. Territorians cannot build a home on a media release. That is what those opposite delivered. We are delivering real land and housing supply. In just two years we have issued over 15,000 building permits, assessed over 900 building applications. There are a further 334 lots selling off the plan. This goes along with the 575 titled residential lots.

On this side of the Chamber we are focused on getting homes on the ground, while those opposite—the last things Territorians need is another Labor discussion paper. You cannot build a house on a discussion paper, you need real action and plans. That is what we are delivering on this side of the Chamber—residential housing and additional land for Territorians.

Child Protection Workforce

J DAVIS to MINISTER for CHILD PROTECTION

Yesterday you told the Chamber that the vacancy rate in child protection was 20%, but in your answer to Written Question number 262 you said that at the end of July 228 out of 536 positions across the Territory were unfilled. That is 3% of the workforce in the Top End 57%, in Arnhem Land, 54%. I note that vacancy rate was almost two years into your government's term.

What is the actual vacancy rate across the Child Protection workforce?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, across the board in the Northern Territory, as you would be aware, the challenges about recruitment to various roles ebb and flow. Over time we have seen numbers drop and rise. Across the board we had a 40% vacancy rate in the department, which has been actively worked upon and reduced to 20% There are vacancies in the child protection space which have been challenging to address, which is why we have worked on developing a new workforce plan for child protection. We recognise that it is difficult to get up every day and deal with the worst of the worst.

We recognise that those people who are dealing with that challenging area in the pointy ends of child protection need pathways to receive respite from the work they are doing. We are reframing what the child protection space looks like when it comes to training, employment opportunities and employment pathways. As we have noted in the review that was handed down yesterday into the tragic loss of Kumanjayi Little Baby

DRAFT

and the work that had to be done within the department, it was recognised that workers in that area need the opportunity to come in, do the tough job and then move out and do work in other areas.

The way in which we are framing the child protection workplace is significantly moving; there will be reclassifications and opportunities for entry points at a much earlier point in that pathway. We will see frontline workers who have a true employment trajectory, and that also gives them the ability to rotate in and out of those difficult spaces. I am looking forward to working with the department to see that come to fruition. The groundwork is already being laid. On the back of the report that was handed down yesterday, I know that we will become a place that workers in this area want to come because they will, for the first time in this country, be coming to work for a government that refuses to do things the same way.

J DAVIS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. I may have misheard. The rate in the department is 20%. I specifically want the rate of child protection workers. Is that the same number?

Ms CAHILL: At any given point in time, the numbers fluctuate, which is why we want to make sure that the message is out there clearly to the people who work in this area who want to make a genuine difference in the lives of children that if they come to work in the Northern Territory, they will be supported to do that, because we put safety above every other consideration.

Education Milestones

Mrs ZIO to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING

Minister, 2026 has been a significant year for education in the Northern Territory, with schools across our regions marking important milestones in their proud histories. Territory schools are at the heart of our community, shaping young minds, supporting families and providing opportunities for students to learn, grow and succeed. Significant milestones provide an opportunity to reflect on how far education has come in the Territory, while recognising the dedicated teachers, staff, students and families who have contributed along the way.

I understand you recently joined Katherine South Primary School for a special occasion, and just at lunchtime we attended Darwin High School for another special occasion. Can you update the Assembly on this celebration and other significant milestones being recognised across the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is nice to speak with more positivity as is the theme on this side of the House today. On the weekend I celebrated. I went to Katherine South Primary School to celebrate its 50th birthday. My husband was one of those first students at Katherine South Primary School, and my three children went there. It started off as demountables at the showgrounds; then they had demountables on the site that they have now while the big school was being built.

It has been great to see the progression of that school and the leadership over the 36 years that I have been in Katherine. Teachers, support staff and everyone there came to celebrate on the weekend.

Across the Territory, I have been to many other celebrations this year. The Member for Braitling went to the School of the Air in Alice Springs celebrating 75 years. I celebrated at the 60th celebration at the Katherine School of the Air earlier in the year. School of the Air is a unique way of delivering education across the airwaves. School of the Air completely transformed remote education by providing several life-changing benefits to families living in the isolated areas of our outback.

Before radio lessons, children on remote cattle stations, police posts, mining camps had virtually no contact with the outside world, so School of the Air provided them with immediate social connection to a teacher and their peers. From sending lessons out through Australia Post, where lessons took weeks to arrive by mail via truck or horseback; the two-way radio allowed students to ask questions and receive answers in real time; to today, when they are delivered over the internet. It was great to see the start of the School of the Air and to what it is today.

I recently attended the Nightcliff Primary School 65th anniversary. The Chief Minister and I went to Nemarluk School, where we had a fantastic presentation by the kids singing the national anthem with sign. It was beautiful.

DRAFT

The Member for Barkly has recently been to Ali Curung to celebrate 70 years, and the Member for Wanguri celebrated 50 years at Wanguri Primary School. Recently I went with the Chief Minister to Stuart Park\.

Suffice to say there are many schools celebrating milestones. It is a credit to the leadership, the teachers, support staff and everyone across those schools and I look forward to attending more in the future.

Remote Housing Program

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

Earlier this year your colleague, the Member for Braitling, told a property council event in Alice Springs that your government had halted the Remote Housing Program to get builders back to Alice Springs. Can you confirm that this is the reason your $4bn Remote Housing Program has stalled on your watch?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is a good opportunity to talk about the $4bn Remote Housing Program and flip flop over there putting words into the Member for Braitling's mouth is totally unfounded.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, please pause.

Mr SMELT: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31A: Reflections on Members.

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is a fair call. Please refer to people by their proper titles.

Mr EDGINGTON: The Member for Nightcliff, who has a long history of flipflopping around—so let us talk about the $4bn housing agreement and talk about housing in general because we know that Labor supported the Lee Point development for about eight years. Then all of a sudden the Member for Nightcliff comes in and they are opposed to further housing development in the Northern Territory.

I noticed on Facebook he was in Alice Springs, and he looked like he was lost. He was floating around on vacant land calling for more land which is vacant and ready to build housing on. I do not think he knew what he was talking about because all that land was opened up by the CLP government to build housing on in Alice Springs. I do not know what he was doing there, but he looked like he was lost at Kilgariff.

Coming in here today and putting words on the table and suggesting that the Member for Braitling has said what he did not say—I can say this: the Member for Braitling is thinking exactly like me. The CLP is focused on developing more land and opening it up for further development. We are opening up land across the Northern Territory. We are building more homes and homes in remote areas. We have built the equivalent of 501 homes in remote areas over the last two years. We are getting on with the job.

If we listen to the Member for Nightcliff we would have nothing when it comes to development. There would be no jobs and no business development because he is opposed to not only housing, he does not want to see gas or development. He is opposed to everything.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the question to the minister was clearly: were the comments from the Member for Braitling the cause for the stalling of the remote housing program?

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The minister has addressed that in his response already, from what I heard.

Mr EDGINGTON: I pick up where I left off. That mob over there is completely opposed to any development in the Northern Territory. They are opposed to gas, Aboriginal business and Aboriginal jobs. Every time they oppose a project, the people that they affect are Aboriginal Territorians, stopping them from having opportunities to get into business and create jobs in remote areas. That is what they are opposed to. It is not good enough. They need to change their attitude and support Territorians.

Ms Uibo: Maybe you had better go find out what your friend over there said.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader!

October Business Month

DRAFT

Mr HOWE to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and ASIAN RELATIONS

October Business Month is now almost halfway through, with more than 140 events running across every region of the Territory, from Darwin to the Barkly and Alice Springs. Now in its 32nd year, it remains the Territory's premier business event. This year's theme of embracing change speaks directly to what local businesses are dealing with as technology, markets and workplaces shift around them. Can you update the Assembly on how businesses have engaged with the program so far; what is still to come this month; and how October Business Month supports the Finocchiaro CLP government's plan to rebuild the economy and keep the Territory open for business?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, everybody in this Chamber—except perhaps those on the other side—understands that in order for us to progress, we must support business, particularly our small businesses. The Member for Drysdale has many small businesses in his electorate and understands how important it is that we continue to support them. October Business Month does that.

This October Business Month—the 32nd that we have run—is an absolute cracker. There are more than 140 events running throughout the month. We are approaching the end of the month, but I can tell you that the first three weeks have been extraordinary. We had on-the-ground events in all our regional areas. We have four keynote events, three of which have already been done. Every one of them has been a sellout, although if you begged, borrowed and did a little pushing, you might be able to get into the last event, which is scheduled for the end of this month.

We kicked it off in Alice Springs. Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether you had a chance to go, but we had a fabulous event with businesses and interested people in the Alice Springs area. They listened to Renee Wootton Tomlin, who is an extraordinary young woman. She gave us her story about how important it is if you are in business to embrace change. Her story is extraordinary. She is an aeronautical engineer. That is an impressive thing for a young woman to have achieved. She is working hard to create a new industry for the country in sustainable aviation fuel.

Then we moved to a wonderful event in Katherine. The Member for Katherine joined me at a really uplifting experience with a comedian from down south named Brett Blake. He nailed it when engaging with the Big Rivers region's businesspeople and made them feel that everything they have done, all the work they have put in after a particularly difficult start to the year, was worth it.

We also had a fantastic sold-out Women in Business lunch in Darwin with Rochelle Courtenay—it is an unusual surname—who set up Share the Dignity. It is the most extraordinary story.

Everything about this October Business Month is about teaching our businesspeople how to embrace change and new technology, build their businesses and take advantage of the extraordinary work that the Department of Trade, Business and Asian Relations teams do.

There is a week or so left. If you have not already signed up, make sure you do and do not miss out on this great opportunity.

Market Basket Data

Mr McGRATH to MINISTER for HEALTH

Every two years, the Department of Health conducts a market basket survey reporting the cost, availability and quality of basic food items in the Northern Territory's remote stores. This report provides crucial data to understand the cost of living and access to healthy food for families living remote. Why has your department not released the latest market basket data for 2026? When will you publish the data, or does the cost-of-living crisis not matter to your government nor do the Territorians who are facing some of the highest costs in the country in remote areas?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we know that the cost of living out bush has gone up over since the global fuel crisis. The cost of freight and fuel has contributed to the cost of living out bush.

DRAFT

Regarding the price of fuel, we have seen—even in my electorate alone—occasions when fuel has gone up over $3. It is difficult for those who are living in remote areas to travel, and the cost of freight and fuel is impacting on the overall cost of living across the Northern Territory.

When we talk about the cost of living out there, these are significant issues. We have seen recently further increases in cost for fuel. I have no doubt that some of that was being passed on, unfortunately, to the consumers out there. The federal government recently took away the fuel excise reduction of about 16c per litre. With all of that, the cost of living has gone up.

If I was you, Member for Mulka, I would be on the phone to the Labor government in Canberra because it is the one that has the ability to take control …

Mr McGRATH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Supplementary; when will you release the latest …

Madam SPEAKER: No, sorry; you cannot. The minister has not completed his answer yet. You can call for a supplementary when he has finished, perhaps.

Mr EDGINGTON: Yes, it looks to me like the last basket survey was conducted in 2023, under Labor.

We are keen to see what the survey looks like. I can assure you, Member for Mulka, is that the most significant costs in your electorate and across the Northern Territory are a result of your Labor colleagues who will not take any action reduce the cost of fuel across the Northern Territory. Do not come in here trying to point the finger. The pointed finger should be taken back to your Labor colleagues in Canberra …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; relevance. It was a direct question about when the Department of Health would release the market data. It is with the Department of Health, which is the minister.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has kind of answered it.

Mr EDGINGTON: Thank you for raising those issues about the cost of living because, as I was getting to, the biggest opportunity to reduce the cost of living out bush sits with the federal Labor government.

I do not know what conversations you have with your federal colleagues. There are three in the Northern Territory—the Member for Lingiari, a Senator and this guy out at Solomon …

Mr PAECH: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: No, there is no point of order.

Mr EDGINGTON: I suggest you get on the front foot, Member for Mulka, and have a conversation with your federal colleagues and look at reducing the fuel excise, which will have a great impact on remote areas.

Market Basket Data – Supplementary Question

Mr McGRATH to MINISTER for HEALTH

When will you release the latest market basket data for 2026?

Madam SPEAKER: That is similar to the original question you asked and the minister has decided not to answer it.

Seniors – Private Health Insurance Rebates

Mrs CARLSON to MINISTER for HEALTH

Despite being rejected by the Senate, the federal Labor government said that it planned to reintroduce legislation to abolish higher-aged based private health insurance rebates for those 65-years and older. New released FOI documents reveal that federal Labor completely miscalculated the policy impact of these changes. While 44,000 Australians are expected to drop their cover in 2028–29, we now understand the impacts will be even greater the following year.

DRAFT

How many older Territorians will be worse off as a result of these federal Labor cuts, what pressure will they place on Territory hospitals, aged-care services and the broader Territory health system?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have just finished speaking about the federal Labor government, and who does the federal Labor government have in in its target this time? We have already spoken about remote areas, the increase in fuel costs, the failure to deal with the excise, and now it appears that it is focused on our most vulnerable people in the Northern Territory.

Federal Labor backflipped on $5,000 on the annual cap for veterans' allied health services, federal Labor cuts to the NDIS, to fund thriving kids and federal Labor's failure to manage the budget responsibly must not result impacting vulnerable Territorians.

Our veterans have been left worse off or denied the support they deserve. They have worked hard and served our country and the federal government tried to put a limit on the allied health services for our veterans in the Northern Territory. Absolute change by the federal government but they have not stopped there. They have gone another step further and they are already focused on our aged Territorians.

The Territory already has the lowest private health insurance coverage nationally and the lowest—I have spoken about this many time—Commonwealth contribution rate, with funding health in the Northern Territory. The lowest right across all jurisdictions in Australia and we already received the lowest funding across the board.

Now they are focused on increasing health care insurance. The average increase in policy premiums of $255 for approximately 3.2 million Australians over 65 years. What does this mean for the Territory? Private health insurance will become unaffordable for up to 750 Territorians. They will likely cancel their private health insurance, which will put an additional $3.2m additional unfunded costs on our NT hospital system.

It will drive greater demand for public hospitals, emergency departments and will impact on inpatient beds and elective surgery waiting lists. We already have 60 to 80 aged-care people in our hospitals because of the failure of the federal Labor government and Territorians deserve better. The CLP government continues to advocate for all Territorians, older Territorians and veterans, ensuring that their interests are always placed first.

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

ANSWER TO QUESTION
Child and Family Centres –Operational Date

Ms CAHILL (Child Protection): A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 115; I have a response to a question which was asked yesterday. The question was in relation to the Child and Family Centres and Remote Women's Safe Houses.

The child and family schedule commits to establishing, expanding or augmenting up to 12 Child and Family Centres across the Territory for 2031. There are currently 11 centres under agreement: Malak in Darwin's Northern Suburbs; Wadeye; Katherine; Kalkarindji; Tennant Creek; Alice Springs town camps; Warumungu; Gapuwiyak; Alpara; Borroloola; and Papunya.

Ten of those are operating, Papunya had asked to end its agreement; it has since agreed to pause it instead while the Department of Children and Families works through the challenges the centre has been facing. We want to make sure we get it right rather than lose that altogether.

For the 12th centre, the department is working with the Department of Education and Training when appropriate on community consultation and site scoping. The aim is to put it where integrated early childhood family support and prevention services will make the most difference for children and families. No decision has been made yet, but the communities being considered are Ntaria, Mutitjulu, Barunga and Ali Curung.

MOTION
Remote Housing Program

DRAFT

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls on the CLP government to accelerate the 2,700-home remote housing program, improve repairs and maintenance and invest in homelands and government employee housing in remote communities.

Every Territorian deserves a safe decent place to call home. Housing is a fundamental right, not a privilege, yet across our remote communities families continue to live in severely overcrowded conditions with immediate and significant impacts on their health, wellbeing, safety and economic and employment opportunities. Building homes is about more than putting a roof over someone's head; it is about giving people the strong foundations they need to thrive, not simply survive.

Under the $4bn remote housing agreement the CLP government has one job: deliver houses. Building homes is its core responsibility, its primary measure of success and by any reasonable measure the test being failed by the CLP. Instead of getting on with the job, the CLP has stalled this important housing program. It wants to renegotiate funding agreements with the Commonwealth Government, including seeking to redirect money earmarked for remote housing towards the administrative costs and land servicing that are the Territory government's responsibility under the agreement.

This money is intended to build homes, reduce chronic overcrowding by half and improve living conditions for people in remote communities across the Northern Territory. The CLP government should be delivering those outcomes, not diverting from them. The CLP wants to spend this money on anything but what it was intended for—that is, building more homes out bush. This failure sits within the broader housing crisis that the CLP government is making worse and not acknowledging.

It is extraordinary for the CLP to claim that is it serious about housing when the action it is taking tells a different story. The CLP shut down the YiSSA short-stay accommodation, removing 400 beds from Darwin's emergency accommodation options; reduced public housing stock and failed to effectively manage tenancies; refused to access billions of dollars of Commonwealth funding through the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF); scrapped affordable housing projects; and refused to introduce rental reforms that could help put downward pressure on skyrocketing rents affecting half of the Northern Territory's population.

At a time when Territorians are struggling to find somewhere affordable to live, the CLP is reducing housing options rather than expanding them. CLP members should hang their heads in shame. When it comes to remote housing, the government needs to stop blaming everyone else and get on with building the homes that the Member for Barkly loves taking a selfie with.

The former Labor government secured the 10-year $4bn remote housing agreement with the Commonwealth Government to build 2,700 new homes in the Northern Territory across all our remote communities. A comprehensive repairs and maintenance program was also outlined in the agreement. The objective was clear: build more homes and halve overcrowding.

Under the CLP, this important program has stalled whilst the government argues with the Commonwealth Government over funding arrangements that are already clearly set out in the remote housing agreement. Instead of halving overcrowding, the CLP government is putting at risk the program that intends to address it. The CLP continues to walk back the number of houses it intends to build. It has gone from 2,700 homes to 2,200 houses to 1,800 houses and I think we are now down to 1,100 houses—not even half the original number intended in the 10-year agreement.

On behalf of remote Territorians everywhere our Labor team calls on the government to get back to the table and resolve these issues and get houses built across our remote communities. Building new homes is only part of the solution. We also need to see a better system for delivering, managing and maintaining housing over the long term. That is why we are calling on the CLP to work with the joint steering committee on remote housing to address persistent problems and repairs and maintenance, improve planning at the community level and ensure that housing investment delivers lasting benefits for remote Territorians.

We must also see a continuation of investment in our very important homelands and the housing that is old and inadequate to ensure that families can remain on country, that elderly and senior Territorians have dignity when living on country and that we see an uplift of homes that are accessible for Territorians who have disability who want to live on country.

Government employee and service provider housing in remote communities is also an important part of the balance that the government has to strike when it comes to attracting and retaining essential workers and service providers across our remote communities. These are not separate challenges; they are all part of building healthier, safer and stronger remote communities for the Territory.

DRAFT

Last month the Labor opposition released a housing discussion paper setting out options to reform remote housing delivery. I am sure the Housing minister, the Member for Barkly, has read it. We are very keen to see him take up some of our ideas which we will support. I am sure he has done his homework. Those options reflected consultations with remote communities, housing providers, construction sector, land councils and other key stakeholders when it comes to housing in the bush. The message was clear. We do need more than just building and maintaining homes. We need a housing system reform that creates local employment, supports Aboriginal-owned businesses and strengthens community-controlled sector as well as self determination in the Northern Territory.

Our Labor team has put forward a range of options for industry, businesses, housing providers, community and Territorians to make sure we can understand from each of them what they think will make the biggest difference when it comes to delivering better housing outcomes in the bush. These options are informed by the many conversations that we have had across the Territory when it comes to remote housing. We look forward to continuing those conversations and refining our policy plans over the next two years.

In the meantime, here is what we think will shift the dial. Option one: urgently review arrangements under the Remote Housing Program. It is unacceptable that the Remote Housing Program has stalled under the CLP government with ministers offering contradictory explanations for this failure. The Housing minister, Member for Barkly, says the government cannot afford land servicing yet wants to use program funding to cover departmental administrative costs. Meanwhile the Lands and Planning minister, the Member for Braitling, has told business and industry representatives that the government deliberately stops building houses out bush to bring builders back into Alice Springs.

Think about that. Rather than creating a strong pipeline of construction work across remote and urban communities in the Territory, the CLP is deliberately restricting work in remote areas in an attempt to shift activity else. One thing the CLP ministers seemed to agree on is that remote housing construction has ground to a halt. Meanwhile families continue to live in overcrowded conditions while the government sits on its hand. We need to see an urgent review of the current arrangements to identify how the housing program in the Northern Territory can be streamlined and to ensure homes are delivered as quickly and cost effective as possible, while maximising…

Mr KERLE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31A: Reflections on Members. The Opposition Leader continues to verbal the Member for Braitling by alleging that he said something. If she wants to move a substantive motion, I invite her to, but she cannot keep verballing the Member for Braitling like this.

Ms Uibo: He said it.

Madam SPEAKER: Silence, please!

It actually is the other way round. The Opposition Leader, within the rules of the standing orders, can say what she likes. If the Member for Braitling feels that he is being misrepresented, he can correct the record or put a substantive motion to the parliament.

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, I respect and accept your ruling because this was reported directly to the Labor opposition by housing construction workers in Alice Springs.

I recommend that the Member for Blain do his homework and ask the Member for Braitling what he said publicly in an open forum. It was not a closed forum or behind closed doors or at home having a beer in the backyard; it was in a public forum. It has been reported to us by several sources that the Member for Braitling, who is the minister for Lands and Planning, openly said this.

I suggest, to correct the record, that the Member for Blain do his homework, go to Alice Springs and talk to the people we have spoken to and hear for himself what his CLP Cabinet minister said publicly about halting the remote housing program in Central Australia and bringing those builders in the construction industry back into Alice Springs because the CLP is failing to see new homes built in Alice Springs. It is holding a sword above the heads of people in the construction industry, forcing them to choose between remote and urban. That is something the CLP does rather than trying to balance the need to address the housing crisis in all our regions and environments—remote, urban and regional. Therefore, I suggest that the Member for Blain go to Alice Springs and ask the people in the housing construction sector what his minister said, if he cannot be bothered to do so in parliament while we are all together.

DRAFT

I will continue speaking on the motion because it is important. We need an urgent review of current arrangements to identify how the program can be streamlined to ensure that homes are delivered as quickly and cost-effectively as possible whilst maximising the opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians in the workforce, ensuring that local communities can maximise the opportunity to build, manage and maintain new and existing homes in their communities.

Stakeholders have raised concerns about inadequate departmental reporting and a reluctance to share data on housing construction progress and the overall state of remote housing. I can attest to this. Earlier this year I wrote several letters to the minister for Housing, asking about every community in the Arnhem electorate because the data on the public-facing Northern Territory Government Housing department website was current as of August 2025.

It has been updated, but I never received—I often receive good responses from the minister for Housing, and I appreciate that—a letter back for all 16 communities I wrote to the Housing minister about. I would have saved writing all those letters if I had seen the updated data on the public-facing website. As much as the CLP likes to rubbish Labor, when in government we made sure that public-facing data and our internal data was updated once a month.

The data has been updated on the website. It seems like the department will update it annually because the data we can find is from August 2026. One year of waiting—what? That is 14 months now. We are in October 2026 …

Mr Edgington: You said August 2026?

Ms UIBO: August 2026.

I recommend, Madam Speaker, through you, that he makes sure that his department is reporting monthly, which was the promise at the time, to ensure that community members and stakeholders understand the forecast of that important information—when new houses and Room to Breathe is being built. One year in the waiting, we were able to access that important supposedly monthly data.

For my electorate of Arnhem, the communities on the website as of 31 August 2026 were:

- Baranga—a total of 15 new homes, with one home tendered, 10 under procurement, zero underway and three completed
- Wugularr (Beswick)—no homes approved, no homes tendered, no homes procured, no homes underway and no homes completed
- Bulman—15 homes approved, zero tendered, zero under procurement, zero underway and six completed
- Gapuwiyak—78 homes approved, 14 tendered, zero under procurement, 14 underway and 24 completed
- Jilkminggan—28 homes approved, zero tendered, zero under procurement, zero homes underway and zero completed
- Minyerri—99 homes approved, three tendered, zero under procurement, zero underway and seven completed
- Numbulwar—52 homes approved, zero tendered, zero under procurement, zero underway and zero completed
- Angurugu on Groote Eylandt—43 homes approved, 24 tendered, zero under procurement, 18 underway and six completed
- Milyakburra on Bickerton Island—no homes approved, zero tendered, zero procured, zero underway and zero completed.

That is a big worry, which I raised with the minister personally last week because I know from my last two visits that there are seven service lots where homes have been demolished on Milyakburra, which is a very remote part of the Northern Territory on Bickerton Island. That is seven service lots ready to go at Milyakburra. There are homes that were demolished because they were not safe for people to live in, but zero homes approved for Milyakburra and no homes tendered for Milyakburra. That is seven homes down without any

DRAFT

replacement on the horizon, according to the Northern Territory Government's own future Housing website, as at 30 August 2026.

Finally, Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt has 32 homes approved, 19 tendered, zero procured, six underway and zero completed. There are a few waiting in Umbakumba. I hope that the data will change, perhaps in August 2027. That seems to be the pattern of this government, hiding information from the public and then pushing it out when it is too late to be useful.

Transparent, timely data is essential, especially when we are talking about people's lives and the ability to support thriving rather than just surviving. It would give the joint steering committee the evidence it needs to identify blockages, assess the performance of the government and determine the most effective way to get this critical remote housing program moving, as it should.

The priority should be simple: resolve obstacles; improve accountability; identify priorities; and build homes in remote communities which are urgently required.

Keeping in the theme of being constructive with our ideas, there is option two: transition to a community-controlled housing model. We repeatedly hear from remote residents about delayed repairs, poor maintenance and housing systems that are managed a long way from communities that they are supposed to serve. A community-controlled model offers an opportunity to change that factor by giving Aboriginal Territorians and Aboriginal businesses a greater role in construction, management, maintenance and long-term planning of housing in their own communities.

This is not a one-size-fits-all solution; communities have different needs, governance structures, workforce capacity and aspirations. We urge the CLP to, therefore, support communities to trial and develop models that will work for each community individually, including community-controlled repairs and maintenance; local housing management and tenancy services; Aboriginal-owned construction and maintenance businesses; local employment, training and apprenticeships; greater community involvement in housing design and allocation; local procurement and supply chains; and a staged transition toward greater community responsibility for housing services.

This approach requires sustainable investment, workforce development, training and strong governance support. We acknowledge that it will not happen overnight, but the work needs to start now.

Aboriginal Territorians should increasingly be the builders, managers and decision-makers in the organisations delivering housing for their own communities. This is about more than improving service delivery; it is about self-determination, making sure there are local jobs and pipelines of works, giving communities greater control over their futures and employment opportunities and economic development.

Option three: establish a cyclical maintenance program. New houses are essential, but they are only part of the answer. We must also look after homes that already exist. The current remote housing maintenance system is not meeting community needs, and we know that. We hear it often. I often joke, sadly, that my life as a politician is half a housing officer because I often have my constituents report some of the basic, most depressing housing repairs that are ongoing, sometimes for many months. My first response is always, 'Have you reported this issue?' When people say yes and give us permission to take photos to follow up with the minister—I am sure we spam his email inbox that many times because we are reporting often general and basic repairs and maintenance, which are startling and would not be acceptable in the urban footprint. I do not believe it should be acceptable in the remote footprint either.

Just on Monday when travelling to Numbulwar in my electorate and visiting family members I saw that taps were not working and that the calcium build-up in some of these taps in toilets, bathrooms and showers—basic places where we should be promoting hygiene and general maintenance to ensure that people do not get sick when they use the facilities and the amenities in their own home. There is not a plumber in a community like Numbulwar. The closest plumbers come from Katherine 450 kilometres away or Ngukurr community 150 kilometres on the dirt road or the two-and-a-half hours or so drive from Ngukurr to Numbulwar if there is a plumber there.

These are opportunities that we can see of what could be improved for the benefit and the outcome of health and wellbeing, jobs and opportunities and service delivery improvement, particularly when it comes to maintenance.

Residents should not be waiting months for basic repairs. Sometimes, until a contractor has enough small jobs to justify travelling—they get paid for the travel when they go to a particular community. Sometimes,

DRAFT

when community members see a plumber, they go and talk to them and say, 'Hey, can you fix the tap? It has been leaking' or, 'The toilet has been leaking for a couple of weeks'. Because it is not on the reporting list, that plumber cannot go to the house and fix the problem on the spot. They have to wait for the report for that leak to go to the Housing department to then be provided to that plumber to go do another trip to the community instead of on the spot.

They are basic opportunities that could be changed if we are talking about ensuring that repairs and maintenance issues are addressed in real time and that people's dignity can be maintained when it comes to the deteriorating conditions that they are experiencing with broken facilities because of the remoteness of where they live and sometimes the lack of skill in the community or the lack of opportunity to improve skills in a community to have the repairs and maintenance team based locally.

These delays undermine people's living standards and often turn relatively minor appears into much more expensive problems. A planned cyclical maintenance program would provide a better alternative in this instance. It would allow routine maintenance to be scheduled before problems become emergencies, reduce long-term costs, improve housing conditions and provide a more constant pipeline of work for contractors and local tradespeople. Land councils and communities have been calling for this approach for many years. Although the joint steering committee on remote housing (JSC) has representatives from the four Aboriginal Land Councils, the Northern Territory Government, the federal government and Aboriginal Housing NT—the peak body for Aboriginal housing in the Northern Territory—some of those ideas that clearly need to be implemented by the government still remain at large.

Although there is significant funding for repairs and maintenance under the remote housing agreement, we need to ensure that this funding is translated into practical outcomes through locally trained teams undertaking routine maintenance and urgent repairs in communities. Local people maintaining local homes means a faster response, more jobs in community, a stronger local economy and community ownership of much-needed housing repairs and maintenance to improve and maintain housing infrastructure. The CLP government needs to get back to the table and ensure that it makes this a priority.

Option 4 is to invest in climate-adapted and culturally appropriate housing. Remote housing must be designed for the conditions in which people actually live. As the Territory experiences increasingly extreme temperatures and weather events, remote communities face significant challenges. The people of Nauiyu are still rebuilding their lives and community following extensive flooding—twice—earlier this year.

We cannot keep building homes that are poorly suited to local climates or vulnerable to foreseeable weather events. Investing in resilient housing and choosing appropriate locations may require greater up-front expenditure, but it could reduce the long-term costs overall in order to help protect communities from future disasters.

In desert communities that means exploring designs that keep homes cooler in extreme summer temperatures and warmer in cold winter temperatures. Across the Territory it means houses that respond to local environmental conditions, family needs and cultural practices. That balance might sound difficult, but if and when it is achieved, it will bring greater outcomes for all and benefits for those residents.

Innovative designs are demonstrating how homes in the Territory can be more climate resilient, liveable and culturally appropriate. The government should work with Territory communities and our housing experts to identify and adopt designs that work for the Territorians who will live in them.

Option 5 is to invest in homelands housing. The CLP's failure on remote housing is matched by its failure to support homelands properly. The CLP's last budget cut funding for the homelands upgrades program, despite the significant need for safe and adequate housing. Families and clans who choose to live on their homelands, remain our country and maintain their cultural connections deserve the same access to safe decent housing as any other Territorian. Cutting funding is not the answer here.

The CLP government must work with the Aboriginal housing sector and the Commonwealth Government to establish a reliable program of new builds and upgrades that meet the needs of our homelands communities. Investment in homelands housing supports more than better living conditions. It supports culture, family connections, self-determination and the right of people to remain on country.

Adequate housing for government employees and service providers is also critical to the conversation about planning for the future sustainability of our remote communities and our homelands. Teachers, nurses, doctors, police officers and council staff cannot deliver the services that communities need if there is nowhere suitable for them to live.

DRAFT

A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time to continue my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: The Member for Barkly will enjoy the rest of my contribution because I am sure he is ready to talk as the Housing minister.

Appropriate employee housing helps attract and retain essential workers, supports better health and education outcomes, improves community safety and strengthens local economies. That housing should also be available to employees who are local to the communities they serve.

The former Labor government undertook work to develop a more centralised government employee housing model and streamlined allocations across the portfolio. This was because departments were holding on to unused assets in case an asset was let go and they would be unable to use a home for a government employee to deliver a particular service; they worried about losing housing stock. The model looked at would ensure that safeguarding of unused government assets did not occur, with the guarantee that employee housing would be accessible for each agency that needed it. That work—I hope, but I do not know because I have not heard the government speak about it—should continue under the CLP.

It is difficult to see what the CLP government is doing to increase and improve housing stock for GH and service providers overall. It can be done. There can be memorandums of understanding between the Northern Territory Government and non-government service providers in order to maintain existing service provision and new services can be brought online when needed. Relationships between existing assets and stock and new assets and stock could be developed, brought online and built et cetera to then be filled by people providing important services in our remote communities.

Housing is often the blocker when it comes to service providers being able to provide essential services and new services to a community. When our remote communities grow in population, they might require extra services from existing service providers—for example, Health, Police and Education—and opportunities for economic development, such as through art centres.

There is room for improvement. Through our housing discussion paper—which I know the Member for Barkly has looked over in detail—we offer some of those ideas and solutions.

A member: You should have done that four years ago.

Ms UIBO: Pardon?

Madam SPEAKER: Stop the exchange across the Chamber.

Ms UIBO: It is all right, Madam Speaker; I was just listening. Obviously they do not want to share their ideas, but they are welcome to take ours; that is fine. We are open about that. We just want to see remote housing improve in the Northern Territory. As I said, we are offering solutions, being constructive and will support those ideas if they are taken up by the CLP government. It can brand them anyway it wants, slap on its little CLP logo—whatever. CLP members can cut a ribbon and take a selfie as long as there are improvements.

We want things to improve in the bush, specifically in regard to remote housing. We will continue to talk about it because we represent many remote Territorians, service providers and government employees who want improved housing and services in the bush.

There needs to be a clear plan from the CLP government for construction and renewal; integrated property and tenancy management; and transparent reporting against program objectives. Remote communities deserve reliable access to the essential services that every Territorian can expect, regardless of where they live. Employee housing is fundamental to delivering that.

We also must recognise the importance of housing in our town camps across the Northern Territory. Town camps provide cultural security and maintain connections to family, kinship groups and traditional country within urban areas. Yet housing infrastructure in many of our Territory town camps remain below acceptable standards. Overcrowding in town camps continue to affect residents with their health, safety and wellbeing.

DRAFT

The former Labor government initiated a review of town camps and implemented a five- year plan supported by investment in housing and infrastructure. There is still much more to do, but town camps in the Northern Territory is not a topic that any of the CLP members talk about in a positive or constructive way.

If there is a contribution in the House this afternoon by any of the CLP members, I would love to hear them speak about the importance of town camps and understand what the CLP's position is when it comes to supporting town camps and the improvement of living conditions, support and self-determination in Territory town camps.

Our Territory Labor team believes that ongoing investment in housing and essential infrastructure, alongside reforms to improve and repair maintenance, is critical to ensuring that there is a reduction in overcrowding and we create safer and healthier communities. Town camp residents deserve safe housing, well-maintained housing and fit-for-purpose housing while preserving the cultural and family connections that make our town camp community important to the fabric of the Northern Territory.

The stalled remote housing program is a damning failure of the CLP government. It demonstrates a lack of urgency, a lack of care and a failure to prioritise the needs of remote Territorians, communities and the homes we need to see improved. At a time when Territory families across the Northern Territory are living in overcrowded conditions, the CLP government should be accelerating construction, improving remote housing maintenance and investing in that important infrastructure that our communities need to thrive.

Instead, the CLP has allowed arguments over funding and the responsibility to stall a program design to deliver 2,700 homes to halve chronic overcrowding in the Northern Territory. It is not good enough. We need to see the CLP government get on with building those important homes, ensuring that the maintenance of those homes is done properly. Let us see the investment and talk about the importance of homelands to ensure essential workers can live in our remote communities and on our homelands, and see a housing system that creates local jobs, backs Aboriginal-owned businesses and gives communities a genuine say in the services that shape their lives to thrive.

We need to see the CLP government work with the federal Labor government, our four Aboriginal land councils, housing providers, the housing construction industry and our remote communities to ensure that there are important results delivered rather than what its default is in looking for someone else to blame.

Remote Territorians are bearing the immediate cost of the CLP government's failure to invest in the bush. The consequences reach well beyond our remote communities. When housing fails, health, education, employment and community safety all suffer. Ultimately, the whole of the Northern Territory pays the price.

Every Territorian deserves a safe and decent place to call home. The CLP government must stop making excuses. It needs to ensure it restarts and accelerates the remote housing program to get on with building those important homes in the bush.

We all know that housing is the foundation of a strong future when it comes to economic opportunity and improving health, education and those important outcomes that are all the indicators for our children, adults and senior Territorians. In this day and age, 2026, I think it is pertinent to ensure that this topic remains a priority for the CLP government. Clearly, it is not right now. The CLP should hold their head in shame and talk to remote Territorians about why they are not building better homes in the Bush.

Mr EDGINGTON (Housing, Local Government and Community Development): Madam Speaker, before I start, it is interesting to hear some of the commentary from the Opposition Leader because there are a couple of areas where there is no doubt she is trying to rewrite history. The sad part about housing are the failures of the Labor government. We continue to see them today and to come in here and say that you are out consulting with people about remote housing, why not do the consulting before you signed the agreement back on 8 July 2024? These are the issues.

Now we have the opposition coming in here after spending 19 years out of the last 25 years in government to talk about homelands. The Opposition Leader was so rushed to sign this agreement on 8 July on the eve of the 2024 election, comes in here to talk about the need to build on homelands. Well, guess what? She forgot to include it in the housing agreement; that is how ineffective the Labor government was for the 23 years. They served in government for 19 years, and they talk about remote housing. We are delivering, but the Opposition Leader did not include homelands in the remote housing agreement. She was the minister. She signed an agreement and was too busy trying to attract headlines before the 2024 election and forgot to include homelands that she has been talking about. It is disgraceful to try to rewrite history when she failed Aboriginal Territorians in remote areas.

DRAFT

I move an amendment to the motion by omitting all words after 'that this Assembly' and inserting:

(a) recognises the CLP government's delivery of houses under the remote housing program of up to 2,700 homes, with more homes under construction

(b) calls on the federal Labor government to work with the Northern Territory Government to deliver the remote housing program, recognising that land servicing costs and the provision of electricity and water are fundamentally required for housing supply

(c) acknowledges the CLP government's commitment to investing in the homeland program beyond June 2027

(d) urges the federal government to confirm its funding for the homeland program beyond 30 June 2027 to provide certainty to residents and service providers.'

The Labor government claims to stand up for remote Territorians, but when they had the opportunity to deliver in the essential services upgrades around roads and core community infrastructure in the remote communities, they did not deliver. They failed over the 19 years that they were in government. Instead, as I have previously said, they rushed some glossy headlines to suit their agenda—a last-minute save of reputation, I suppose—but like most actions taken by Labor, they missed or perhaps overlooked key details, leaving our government to clean up yet another failure of the former Labor government.

Labor did the deals but it did not do the details. They were too busy trying to put out media releases on the eve of an election and trying to create headlines. The Member for Arafura stood alongside the Opposition Leader as she signed it. Did he ask whether homelands was in there? Of course he did not. If he did, why did he not make sure homelands was in the agreement? He cannot even represent his constituents. He did not demand that homelands be in there. Where was he? He was standing around, getting his photo and wanted to be in the headlines, but he did not ask for homelands to be in the 10-year agreement. What a disgrace.

I am not surprised that the Leader of the Opposition has left out the key details in her speech today, considering that she was the Minister for Remote Housing and Homelands. As I said, she was the one who signed the deal on 8 July 2024.

I table two photographs containing the signing of the agreement.

You can see the Member for Arafura leaning over the shoulder of the Opposition Leader, signing an agreement for 10 years to deliver up to 2,700 homes that failed to include homelands. I do not know who else was sitting around the table, putting their names against this agreement, but the Member for Arafura was there. No doubt the Members for Gwoja and Daly were there. All of them were more worried about headlines than homelands.

The joint media release of March 2024 from the Leader of the Opposition and Hon Anthony Albanese, the Prime Minister, said that they would deliver up to 270 homes each year. The Leader of the Opposition's Facebook post from June 2024 said that the agreement would see the construction of up to 2,700 new homes across the Territory.

However, it is my understanding that all officials involved in the original negotiations of the agreement knew that to halve overcrowding in remote communities we would have to deliver 2,210 homes. All the commentary pushed out there by Labor said that it would deliver up to 2,700 homes, yet everybody sitting around the table agreed that 2,210 three-bedroom homes would halve overcrowding.

There was nothing about homelands in that agreement. Labor presented a picture that it wants to do all this work in homelands and remote housing, but failed to tell this Assembly that it did not even include that in the remote housing agreement.

What a disgrace and shame when it comes to your representation of remote communities in your area. You have done the wrong thing by your constituents. You did not ask for homelands in the agreement. You failed to put homelands in the agreement. In the Assembly today you are trying to present that you want to do something for homelands, but why did you not do that two years ago?

DRAFT

If 2,210 three-bedroom homes was the specific target required to achieve a reduction in overcrowding, why did the federal and former Labor government change it? It was for the glossy headlines; that is what it was all about. There was the Member for Arafura standing alongside, getting his photo taken, without looking at the detail.

I think we can agree that anywhere up to 2,000 homes was certainly an aspirational target, but not a realistic delivery plan. We have only reached our third year of this agreement; there have been two full years. We have no intention of rushing anything.

We want to work within the parameters of this agreement and in consultation with the Joint Steering Committee. This is not an NT plan, although that was the way it was presented; the Joint Steering Committee is overseeing the delivery of this 10-year housing program. The four land councils, the Commonwealth Government, the NT Government and Aboriginal Housing NT are at the table. That is the Joint Steering Committee.

Unlike the former Labor government, we want to do this right. That is not to say we have not been faced with some complexities along the way. Earlier this year, we saw unprecedented weather conditions and some of the worst floods in a generation, which made communities inaccessible for construction purposes for more than six months.

Did the Opposition Leader talk about that? She said that there has not been construction in some of these communities. She failed to mention the severe weather events that the Northern Territory has seen this year. I do not know if she forgot or deliberately tried to leave that out of her speech.

The emergency recovery was a priority for most of this year and the tail end of last year. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development assisted with the response to the floods and saw a rapid response in repairs to impacted tenancies so that residents could return home sooner.

Like I said, they were unprecedented times. I thought the Leader of the Opposition would factor these issues in but, of course, she overlooked some of the obvious conditions that Territorians have been facing this year.

However, this is not all that we are faced with. On 12 May 2026, the Commonwealth federal Labor Minister for the Environment and Water, Murray Watt, advised our Minister for Water Resources that the remaining unallocated national water grid funding had been cut from the 2026–27 budget. As a result, no additional national water grid funding was provided to states or territories for water infrastructure projects. This decision impacts on the NT's remote water infrastructure project proposals submitted to the national water grid in December 2025. This is $125m worth of projects scrapped by the federal Labor government under the national water grid program—disgraceful.

This will affect Numbulwar where $42.1m was set for equipping new bores, constructing new transition pipelines, storage and treatment; Minyerri's long-term water supply strategy for $28.3m was to replace water storage infrastructure, investigate bore drilling, bore equipping and pipelines; Kalkarindji and Daguragu in the Member for Gwoja's electorate—I have not heard him complain once that this money is being cut; silence about the national water grid funding—had $24.2m to decommission ageing infrastructure and construction of a new centralised water storage for both communities.

There were water upgrades for Kata Tjuta, which is in Gwoja; Santa Teresa; and Ampilatwatja, in my electorate, with $30.7m set aside for replacement of critical water storage and infrastructure water tanks. To add all that up, it $125m worth of projects under the national water grid that were scrapped by the federal Labor government—all projects that would benefit remote communities and Territorians and Aboriginal people living in those communities.

This potentially risks the progress of the remote housing project's reliance on the increased water/sewage network capacity that these infrastructure upgrades support. This is just another spanner thrown in the works by the federal Labor government.

AS much as the Leader of the Opposition wants us to accelerate this program, she is deliberately forgetting the complexities of building in remote areas of the Northern Territory. I remind the Leader of the Opposition and the rest of this House about her time as the minister.

In 2023 the when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Housing and Homelands, she changed the targets in the National Remote Housing Partnership Agreement from rooms to houses in a desperate attempt to mask the fact that Labor had fallen far short of its targets. The Labor government's

DRAFT

mismanagement in housing shows that for the financial years ending 2022 and 2023, housing produced a net deficit of $347m. It overspent and still failed to deliver remote housing targets. That is not all. We are currently facing one of the largest class actions for remote housing.

It was interesting hearing the Leader of Opposition talking about repairs and maintenance in remote areas. On 19 December 2022, a remote housing class action was filed in the Federal Court against the CEO of Housing for a claim on behalf of remote public housing tenants across 73 communities alleging failures in the condition, repairs and management of remote housing. I will tell you the period—2007 to 2024.

When I look back on that, that is approximately 17 or 18 years of failures when it comes to the condition, repairs and management. At least 14 years of those were under the former Labor government. To come in here today and talk about repairs and maintenance as if the Labor government had done everything right is absolutely unbelievable when the Northern Territory Government is facing one of the largest class actions ever seen in the Territory because of Labor's failure to deliver repairs and management of remote housing between 2007 and 2024.

Territorians across 73 communities were impacted by the lack of repair and maintenance and left with unreasonable conditions to live in. Who was in government for 14 out of those 18 years? It was the former Labor government. No ifs, no maybes. It was 14 years of Labor government and now the Territory is facing the biggest class action we have ever seen. That is disgraceful.

Labor has proven again and again that it cannot deliver when it comes to remote housing. Now with this agreement, they failed again overlooking specific elements such as head works and land servicing. They were so rushed to sign this agreement, that all they were chasing was headlines rather than focusing on head works. That is what they should have been doing but there was the Member for Arafura standing there nicely, helping the Leader of the Opposition now sign this agreement.

To come in here and talk about homelands, without telling the Assembly that she forgot to include homelands in the Remote Housing Agreement is a disgrace. It cannot be described any other way. They fail to put the most important information in the Remote Housing Agreement and then come in here today and say, ‘Well, you are not delivering in the homelands’ but they did not even put it in the agreement.

Going back to 23 February, the former Labor government introduced a remote rental framework. Does anyone remember that? The Member for Nightcliff probably cannot remember because I doubt he was here. Under this model, public housing tenants were charged a set amount per week per bedroom. The Member for Gwoja would know this—$70 per bedroom.

On 3 December 2025 the High Court of Australia determined that remote tenants should have been given a fair opportunity to be heard before decisions were made. That is interesting because, as we heard from the Member for Arnhem, she is now talking about going out and consulting people about a remote housing strategy that she signed two years ago. She is out there talking about an agreement that was signed two years ago, to ask them about the agreement that should have been spoken to before signing the agreement. She did not speak to anyone before putting the remote rental framework in place either.

The High Court struck down the remote rental framework. When the former government designed and implemented the framework, it did not consult with 5,000 remote tenants on an individual basis, therefore making the remote rental framework invalid.

This was another rushed framework or programme where key details and public consultation were completely overlooked, leaving some of our most vulnerable Territorians to be financially liable for unreasonable rent charges.

You cannot build a house without power, water and land servicing. We have not shied away from speaking out about the constraints our government has had to face. This agreement was supposed to be fifty-fifty; however, it is demonstrated that the Territory will be forking out more than half of the costs in this deal.

The remote housing federal funding agreement commenced on 1 July 2024 and represents a joint investment of $4bn by the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments over 10 years. That is $2bn from the Northern Territory Government and $2bn from the Commonwealth Government. The federal funding agreement is supported by the partnership agreement for remote housing and homelands which establishes shared governance and decision-making arrangements through the Joint Steering Committee. The Joint Steering Committee consists of four land councils, the Australian and NT Governments and Aboriginal Housing NT. It was developed following the expiry of the previous remote housing arrangements and is

DRAFT

intended to provide long-term funding certainty to address overcrowding and improve housing conditions across remote Aboriginal communities.

The CLP government is committed to investing in remote housing and homelands. We continue to work collaboratively with community members, providing healthier homes and building stronger sustainable communities. The CLP government acknowledges that reducing overcrowding is fundamental to support economic participation, have better health and education outcomes, reduce crime, have more jobs and have more opportunities for local people. It aligns with Closing the Gap target 9a, which seeks to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized housing.

As of June 2026, the NT Government has delivered 421 houses, which equals 1,587 bedrooms. The important thing is that this is the equivalent of 529 three-bedroom homes delivered in the first two years of this agreement, so I am not sure where the Leader of Opposition is coming from, but to suggest that the government is not delivering remote housing is rubbish.

The program is now in its third year. Strong progress has been achieved across housing construction; property and tenancy management; and system reform, including establishment of a substantial construction pipeline to support sustained housing delivery, local employment and economic activity, increasing delivery momentum as projects move from planning into construction. There is continued delivery of repairs and maintenance and tenancy management services. There was early implementation of reforms to strengthen planned cyclical maintenance, improve asset condition and support long-term housing sustainability.

We have continued to work closely with people in remote communities through the Joint Steering Committee and listen to what they have to say. Unfortunately, the former Labor government did not listen to any of its constituents before signing a 10-year agreement on remote housing. Labor members were more interested in headlines on the eve of the 2024 election, but it seems that Territorians saw through that. That is why they are no longer in government.

Listening to communities, we have heard that people want bigger homes and more rooms to accommodate their families, so that is what we are delivering.

Our position is clear: we want to work in partnership with the Commonwealth. I see that the way to deliver this is to work together to maximise delivery and improve housing conditions for Territorians. It is no secret that there continues to be ongoing negotiations with the Commonwealth Government on the scope of the agreement. The current issue affecting the agreement is not a lack of delivery but a genuine policy disagreement about whether essential land servicing and program management costs should be recognised as eligible contributions under the agreement.

Our position has been made clear: serviced land; subdivision development; roads; power, water and sewerage connections; planning; procurement; and program management are integral components of remote housing delivery and are necessary preconditions for new housing construction.

The way that Labor members portray this agreement is that they think you can plonk a house in the middle of nowhere without the roads, power, sewage or water, and your job is done. It is not done. We need proper subdivisions in these communities and that is what this program is attempting to deliver. There remains a significant funding gap from the Commonwealth as the Territory incurs costs upfront which must be reimbursed by Canberra. Despite spending more than $600m so far to deliver houses, the Commonwealth is dragging its heels when it comes to paying the bills.

By my count, Canberra owes the Northern Territory more than a quarter-of-a-billion dollars. I am sure the Treasurer will have more to say on this. I have previously met with the Honourable Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, and the joint steering committee. We are happy to discuss the parameters and shortfalls and will continue to do so to ensure we reach the outcome that remote Territorians deserve. The Senator and I are having ongoing engagement regarding the agreement and hope that the issue can be resolved to ensure effective delivery of remote housing.

Concurrently, the joint steering committee has now progressed a two-year review of the partnership agreement to assess progress against the agreed objectives and inform future delivery priorities. We will continue to work through the current scope issues and can continue the constructive and collaborative approach that has characterised remote housing partnerships over many years and deliver for our remote housing residents.

DRAFT

Alongside new housing delivery, the agreement includes investment in a strengthened remote property and tenancy management program. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development is transitioning from a predominantly reactive maintenance model to a planned cyclical and preventative maintenance approach. This will improve asset condition and reduce long-term maintenance costs.

The $4b remote housing agreement is funding a significant increase in housing repairs and maintenance in remote communities. Spending on remote repair and maintenance has increased by 75% in two years, from $46.2m in 2023–2024 under the former Labor government to $81.03m in 2025–2026.

The Northern Territory Government has committed ongoing funding of $40m per annum for homelands, housing, municipal and essential services program. This will provide certainty that essential housing services can continue and supports ongoing investment in communities. As I said, homelands were not included in the remote housing partnership. That is a failure by the current Leader of the Opposition, who was the relevant minister at the time.

This program regarding homelands, housing, municipal and essential services supports housing maintenance, municipal services, essential services and capital works across 374 homelands, 43 town camps and eight remote areas throughout the Northern Territory. The funding includes $34.743m for municipal and essential services, $6.482m for capital works, $2.735m for administration and $900,000 for emergency funding.

Discussions on future Commonwealth and NT Government funding for homelands beyond 30 June 2027 are underway through the joint steering committee on remote housing. We are waiting for the Commonwealth Government to decide whether it will continue its funding for NT homelands beyond 30 June 2027. We have heard nothing from the federal government about what it will do beyond 30 June 2027 to support homelands in the Northern Territory.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr EDGINGTON: This investment in homelands, housing and essential services will underpin long-term improvements while future policy settings are developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities. In 2026–27 this presents a healthier and more sustainable funding profile confirming that funding levels are stable and commitments to homelands are being met by the CLP government.

The CLP government is here to deliver for the Northern Territory, specifically those in remote communities. We are investing in remote housing, working with our communities and listening to the local people on what they see, what they want and what they need. To hear the Leader of the Opposition come in here today and talk about repairs and maintenance, and to indicate that repairs and maintenance was failing—as I have clearly explained so far, the Northern Territory is facing the biggest class action that the Northern Territory has ever seen because of the failures of the former Labor government in the Northern Territory.

They are the facts of the matter. The agreement itself, to reiterate one more time—the 10-year $4bn agreement for remote housing, despite the Opposition Leader's want that further upgrades be conducted in the Homelands, we have committed our $40m per year, ongoing. The Commonwealth has failed to commit beyond June 2027, but the reality is that under the current Remote Housing Agreement, signed by the Leader of the Opposition on 8 July 2024, when she was the minister for Remote Housing and Homelands, with the Member for Arafura looking over her shoulder, did not have any information in there about any capital works for homelands. That was an opportunity missed.

The Northern Territory Government is getting on with the job. We have been in government for two years and delivered, in accordance with the agreement—in the first two years of the agreement—despite severe weather conditions right around the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition tried to suggest that the program had come to a halt. She came up with some story that contractors had been called in to do other work. The Leader of the Opposition failed to include some of the most severe weather conditions this year in her commentary around remote housing.

She also tried to direct some criticism about the delivery of the program. I do not know how many times I have to say this, but that is why there is a joint steering committee—four land councils, Aboriginal Housing NT, the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory.

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For the Leader of the Oppositon to come in here today to try and direct her criticism at the Northern Territory Government is totally unfounded and unwarranted. She needs to step up, and if she has any criticisms direct them to the joint steering committee rather than try and target the CLP government. Maybe she is afraid of the joint steering committee. I do not know. Maybe she lacks courage when it comes to challenging the joint steering committee, but the reality is we are working together with those partners through the joint steering committee so that we can get better outcomes for Territorians living in remote areas. We want to see improvements in education and health and we want to see more people in jobs. The best way to get there is through a housing program. Having a roof over your head is one of the best outcomes for anybody living in remote areas. It gives them the ability to get kids to school, go to work and have better health outcomes—all those things that people want in remote areas.

Today all we saw was the Opposition Leader with some vague selective commentary about how the remote housing program is going. I have tabled the photos. The agreement was signed on 8 July. For the Opposition Leader to be criticising a program that she signed on behalf of the Northern Territory on 8 July 2024, on the eve of an election, is disgraceful. She needs to have a good think about it. Members on the other side need to have a look at the agreement.

Whilst I criticise the Member for Arafura, I am sure he was there just to get a photograph. He may not have asked the questions that needed to be asked when there was the opportunity to discuss the remote housing agreement. The facts of the matter are that it does not include homelands. He can shake his head and do all those things. He can talk about homelands and the need to put housing in homelands. The Member for Arafura can talk about all those things.

The former Labor government missed an opportunity because it was too busy planning for an election rather than planning for the people of the Northern Territory. Its members put themselves ahead of Aboriginal Territorians without thinking through what was needed in that agreement. It was a critical time in the Territory's history, with $4bn going towards housing, and they missed the opportunity to do something about homelands. To direct criticism at the CLP is a disgrace. Those opposite need to go away and think about what they are saying because they had the opportunity and did not take it. They were too busy focusing on headlines rather than headworks and homelands. Today all we hear is whingeing, complaining and an attempt to rewrite history about the failure regarding housing across the Northern Territory.

We have the biggest class action against the Northern Territory because of Labor's failure to manage the remote housing program, deliver repairs and maintenance, provide proper tenancy management and consult with tenants on implementing the remote rental framework. All it caused is chaos and dysfunction in remote areas.

When you hear the whole history of what it has done to remote Territorians, you realise that Labor disempowered all the communities in 2008. It scrapped law and justice groups in 2005. Labor made promise after promise and all it has done is cause chaos for Aboriginal Territorians living in remote areas. It is high time that its members focused on what they should be doing—looking after their constituents rather than looking after themselves. That is what they have been doing. Shame on you.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak about remote housing and set the record straight.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, before calling the next member in debate, I note that the Assembly is now considering both the Member of Arnhem's motion and the minister's amendment. When no more members rise to speak, I will put the question on the amendment. I will then call on any other members who have not spoken to the motion and then the Member for Arnhem in reply.

Mr BROWN (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not accept the government's amendment to our GBD motion.

Yes, minister, I was there on 20 June in my home town of Milikapiti with Minister Burney; Selena, the minister for Housing at the time; and Malarndirri. It was a proud day for Territorians, with $4bn of funding for 2,700 houses in remote areas. That is something that the federal Liberals and the CLP cannot match. You can jump up and down, minister, but all you have is hot air and no alternatives.

I found it a bit rich that the minister talked about photos. He is the selfie king of remote housing. He took photos of our investments. They were all signed by Selena and Linda Burney.

Saturday there was a piece. There were quotes in the newspaper from the minister for Maningrida Housing. I am all for remote housing; it is everyone's business. I am all for everyone jumping on the bandwagon when

DRAFT

housing is being built. Someone sent me a message, ‘There is a comment from Steve Edgington, minister for Housing’. I said that he is allowed to comment and asked what he did. They said that he was just taking selfies. He takes selfies whenever houses are built and takes credit for them.

However, we all need to get on this because it is a ripple effect for housing in remote communities. About five years ago, 95% and upwards—nearly every house was overcrowded in Territory remote housing. Every house across the Top End was overcrowded. It has gone down to 80% to 89%.

I invite ministers out there. Minister Charls came to Maningrida to open the sporting complex. Go and look at the houses. Look at the overcrowding. There are literally tents inside living rooms so that families can squeeze in and have their own space. It is everyone’s business.

I will go through some numbers within my Arafura electorate. Housing building to date in Gunbalanya is 63 total approved; homes tendered, 36; under procurement, 10; and homes completed, 18. The mob doing that are Dice Contracting. It is developing the new sub. In its works and KPIs it has Aboriginal employment up to 10%, which is amazing. It is a hit two birds with one stone sort of situation by giving locals employment as well as building for their community. There is some pride in that work. Locals are helping.

I referred to Maningrida earlier regarding the minister’s commentary. There are 256 total approved; homelands tendered, 32; underway, 23; and homes completed, 34. There is still a lot of work to come for Maningrida.

Minjilang has 16 total approved homes; homes tendered, zero; under procurement, zero; homes underway, five; and homes completed, six. That is one of my smaller communities, so they are pretty good numbers.

Pirlangimpi has zero for every line item. Wurrumiyanga, another big community of mine, has 26 total approved homes; homes tendered, 37; homes underway, seven; and homes completed, zero.

We talk about housing, and there has been a lot of commentary on recent events, about privilege and the human rights aspect.

In regard to the human rights aspect, consider the dignity of a family or individual. Everyone deserves a safe place to sleep, live and maintain their privacy, health and wellbeing. Secure housing protects physical and mental health safety. Without a stable home, people face greater risk of homelessness, exploitation and violence.

In regard to equality, access to housing should not depend solely on how wealthy a person is.

In regard to opportunity, housing provides the foundation for education, employment, family life and community participation.

It is a ripple effect. When we get people in houses, things start looking better for the family in regard to health and participating in society actively. A home is more than an investment; it is the foundation of a person’s dignity, security and participation in society. The real debate is not whether everyone should own a house, but whether anyone should be left without a safe place to live simply because they are poor—just a touch there on the privilege and human rights aspect.

I drove down Tiger Brennan Drive/ I do not know if anyone else saw it, but there are tents being put up in the islands along the highway. That is a bit concerning. It is the first time I have seen that there. Hopefully they get relocated to a new home. Obviously, it is starting to spread into the community, this three strike rule.

Every Territorian deserves a safe place. Housing is a fundamental human right, yet across our remote communities families continue to live in severely overcrowded conditions with immediate and significant impacts to their health, wellbeing, safety and economic opportunities. Building homes is not just about putting a roof over someone's head. It is about giving people the foundation they need to thrive, not just survive.

I refer to the $4bn remote housing agreement. I take the minister's point about the bush—about the homelands. But he is the minister now; we need him to step up for our people. He is good at giving us history lessons—2008, 1988. He does not want to advocate on our people's behalf.

When we talk about cutting red tape and pushing things out, if it is out in remote community, why can we not do that for everything?—Only certain projects.

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This money was intended to build homes, reduce overcrowding by half and improve living conditions in remote communities. There is a fair way to go. As I gave you the stats before, I can see the difference already showing in some of our communities, especially in my hometown of Milikapiti, where that $4bn agreement was signed.

The former Labor government secured a 10-year $4bn remote housing agreement with the Commonwealth to build 2,700 new homes, supported by comprehensive repairs and maintenance programs. The objective was clear, build more homes and halve overcrowding.

Under this government, the program has stalled. There are a lot of excuses coming from the other side, but we still need to get back to the main course. The main thing is halving overcrowding, pushing that through. This government is putting risk to that program instead of instead of addressing it. They are walking back on the number of houses being built over time, from 2,700, now it is 1,800 but 2,200 earlier. We are down about 1,100.

On behalf of remote Territorians, we call on this government to go back to the table. Resolve these issues and get houses built—culturally appropriate houses for different communities. One of the reasons is the cultural obligation that Aboriginal Territorians face. You would not have a poison-cousin living in the living in the same house as someone else—who they call poison-cousin. They will put a tent in the front of their yard just to get separation, but they have no other house to go to. Eighty to ninety per cent of houses are overcrowded.

This is why we are calling on the government to work with the Joint Steering Committee on Remote Housing to address persistent problems with repairs and maintenance, improved planning at community level and ensure housing investment delivers lasting benefits.

We must also continue investing in homelands. There was an outstanding homelands project at Maningrida. They have mud-brick-making facilities in the community. Historically, they used to get the community to build those houses in remote communities. There are about 30 homelands near Maningrida in my electorate. They predominantly have houses built from mud bricks from the community factory. It is a good news story and something that maybe the government should push in regard to getting more works on the ground in remote communities.

I will go on to the benefits of having houses built in communities and the ripple effects it will have on health. Regarding disease prevention, when I lived at Milikapiti in an overcrowded house as a boy, if somebody got the flu—or anything—we would all catch it. We were crammed in and the whole school was at the clinic that week all getting needles or medication. That was in the early 1990s.

That has changed now because there are more houses, more space and the clinics are more equipped. There is still a long way to go. As a kid, that was a reality.

Mental health is affected. Families having overcrowded houses means there is shortage of food, overuse of power and just space to think. That contributes to being unhealthy and unhappy. Families are wondering what to do next. In some of these remote communities there are a lot of mental health issues on the ground. They could be solved if they had their own space or their own house. That would go a long way.

There needs to be safety for children and women from domestic violence. Mothers want to want to keep their kids safe. I refer back to the tent situation in the living room. There could be four tents in the living room because they wanted their kids in a safe place. That is their world. There are more than 20 people in the house, with cultural obligations. Everything plays a part.

I invite ministers to come and see how urgent some of these situations are in remote communities.

The social and cultural outcomes I have touched on before—we want people to be living in culturally appropriate housing. To do that, people need to have their own space and their own yard. It also reduces the community government burden.

When there is no housing in remote communities, they look elsewhere. Some of them have come looking for housing in Darwin, unfortunately, in some of the suburbs. We have heard about the wait list in this Chamber. It has always been like that; it is over eight years. In the interim, while they wait, they squeeze in and bring the mentality from the community into the suburbs. That is why overcrowding is happening in the suburbs. If there is a spot on the floor, a section of the house where you can pitch a tent, they will do that just to run away from domestic violence or come into town for health services. It puts the burden on the community, and

DRAFT

some of these communities are getting hammered by people wandering the streets looking for where they will stay for the night or where their next meal is coming from.

That is why I bang on about YiSSA; because everyone who came and stayed at YiSSA has not gone to Bachelor. They have moved into the streets now; they have pitched tents in yards. We need to rethink and revisit to see how we can take another approach in all of this. I do want a safe community. You do not want to overburden health system.

One elder that comes in brings her whole family, and where do they go? While the elder is staying at an Aboriginal hostel getting treatment, the whole family is spread amongst the suburbs. That is what is happening. That is why we bang on about health and housing; it is all interlinked. You cannot have one without the other.

I acknowledge some of the businesses doing the hard yards in regard to building houses in remote communities. I mentioned DICE, which has a 10% KPI for Aboriginal involvement and employment at Gunbalanya. We have Stedmans at Maningrida—an Indigenous man taking the lead and employing Aboriginal men, taking pride and building houses for families and doing maintenance work in communities.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr BROWN: Milikapiti, the community where the contract was signed, with all the ministers coming for the $4bn—it was a proud day for me in front of my people. Like I and the minister said, the four land councils were there, a couple of ministers and Selena Uibo. We are getting houses built all over the Territory. I have given you my numbers.

Pirlangimpi, even though there are none in the last year, has been rejuvenated. It has houses from when the former member, Lawrence Costa, was standing here. I had not been there for three or four years before a couple of years ago, and everyone was comfortable, everyone had houses, the people were happy and kids went to school. It goes to that whole point of getting everyone active in the community to work and participate.

I finish up by saying that this is important, and it has a ripple effect. If our people in the communities are not in housing, they will look elsewhere. They come in family groups. They do not come individually; they come in fives and 10s, and they look for other places, especially when there is domestic violence and overcrowding in the community that they cannot bear anymore and when coming to town for health services. They follow their elder, because every time an elder flies to town they come back in a coffin. That is the reality because we do not have palliative care in community. Only a couple of communities have dialysis machines. Maningrida has a self-administered type, but not everyone can do that and not everyone wants to do that.

I urge the government to push on with the remote housing because it affects everybody, not just remote communities, because guess where they go? They all come to town. They overburden the system; they are in the parks and hospitals, putting a strain on the system.

Mr YAN (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I support the Member for Barkly's amendment.

Let us put our delivery record on the table up-front. The CLP has delivered 428 regional homes containing 1,614 bedrooms and the builders have another 127 homes underway. That is the equivalent bedroom capacity of 538 three-bedroom homes. Since taking office, we have got on with the job.

Where are those homes? We have heard lots about that so far in the contributions from Labor. There are 41 houses at Galiwinku; 36 at Lajamanu; 34 at Maningrida; 24 each at Gapuwiyak and Ramingining; 21 at Yuendumu; 18 at Gunbalanya; 16 at Ngukurr; and seven at Minyerri.

The land servicing program has delivered 176 subdivision lots with another 177 on the way. This is where Labor fell over. It had the housing program running before the new one was signed, but it failed to start the planning for additional homes in the bush. Labor was happy to knock down existing homes and replace them with new homes on the same lots, but it did not do the hard work of providing new subdivision lots for that all-important new housing in communities.

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We have spent just over $637m on this program. How much have we received from the Commonwealth? Remember that this is supposed to be a 50–50 deal. We have received $61.3m from the Commonwealth in an advance payment. The Commonwealth's outstanding bill to the Territory for its portion is $257m.

I will not accept lectures from the former minister while she ducks questions about the deal her government signed. The Member for Arnhem wants us to build faster, so she should go to Canberra and get the Commonwealth Government to pay its fair share of the program. The Territory has got on with the work, paid the bills and carries the funding pressure. Now the Commonwealth wants us to carry another enormous cost outside the agreement, and that is the problem. The former minister cannot wash her hands of it.

Labor entered into this agreement on 8 July 2024 before the last election. It would have been only a week or so before the caretaker period. The Member for Arnhem held the Remote Housing and Homelands portfolio at that time. She helped sell the promise of $4bn and up to 2,700 homes, with half the money from Canberra and half the money from the Territory. Her government did not settle how to fund all the groundwork those homes would need. The devil is always in the detail on these agreements.

We know all too well that Labor was not all that great on the detail. We have a PAC report on the ship lift that gives us a bit of an idea on how good Labor was with detail—not particularly good. It looks like the same applies here. Yes, there is existing land servicing program funding work in remote communities, but that did not settle the land and infrastructure requirements for the full 10-year promise. Labor had announced homes, the agreement had started, yet the planning had not even begun. Why am I not surprised?

Now the Leader of the Opposition is demanding answers for deals she struck. She was the minister, so she should bring some answers of her own to this Chamber. She should explain to us how she did the deal and what the parameters were. She talks about doing the consultation now. Maybe she should have done it in the first place back in the day. Again, that is typical of Labor. She was the minister responsible. What did her government expect the land servicing to cost? How did it plan to pay for it? What funding did it secure for the full job? Those questions go straight to the agreement that she helped establish.

The Commonwealth now says that the agreement excludes land servicing. We know the agreement mentions land servicing three times. Minister McCarthy only last week put that position in her letter to Minister Edgington. We dispute that position. We do not accept that Canberra can simply put those costs outside the deal and leave the Northern Territory to carry them. Land servicing makes housing possible. To build houses you need roads and you have to have water, power and sewerage before families can live in those homes. It is pretty easy to bang up a house, but if you do not have those things, what is the point of living in it? You have to be able to get to it. These are basic requirements, not optional extras.

The current estimate for the land servicing needed to support the alleged 2,700 homes announced publicly by Territory Labor—not the 2,200 homes needed to address the overcrowding, but the 2,700 it announced—exceed $1.7bn. If Canberra expects the Territory to pay that additional amount alone, our contribution for this agreement rises from $2bn to $3.7bn, and the Commonwealth's contribution stays at $2bn. That means the Territory pays roughly 65% of the total cost and Canberra pays 35%. For every dollar that Canberra contributes, we would have to contribute $1.85.

Where, in anyone's idea, is that accepted as a fair funding split? That is not fifty-fifty, as announced by Territory Labor before the election in 2024. That is far from it. Labor promoted it as a fifty-fifty agreement. When Territorians heard that promise they did not expect the government to pick up close to two-thirds of the full bill.

The Commonwealth cannot exclude essential work from its calculation and pretend that the total cost stays the same. The pipes still cost money. The roads do not come for free; they cost money. The power connection still costs money. Somebody has to pay. We will not quietly accept the Commonwealth pushing that additional bill onto the Territory.

We have already shown our commitment. Our reconciliation records $637.9m in expenditure that we identify as eligible under the agreement over the first two years. The Commonwealth has paid $61.3m as an advance. On our fifty-fifty calculation, its share comes to $319m. After deducting the advance, the outstanding claim comes to $257.7m. The Commonwealth must assess those claims and we must provide the supporting evidence. We understand the process, but while the claims remain unresolved, the Territory is left carrying that cost.

DRAFT

We carry $257m on our books. That is money we had to borrow and we have to pay interest on those borrowings. The Territory has to pay interest of $12.8m per annum on that borrowing. Where is that fair in anyone's books?

As I said, we are getting on with the job of building and delivering these houses. We are holding up our end of the bargain and covering the Commonwealth as far as funding goes. Where is the Commonwealth? We are now carrying an interest burden to deliver these houses when we should not have to.

Of course, we do not tell the builder to wait for two years for the governments to finish arguing; we have to pay for the work and we do. Contractors have to pay wages, suppliers have invoices to meet, local businesses need cash coming through. We have kept the program moving.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about delivery. There is only one group slowing delivery, and that is the federal Labor government. The Territory has carried the funding can; Canberra needs to come to the party. As Treasurer, I have to look at the whole budget. Every dollar we carry while we await Commonwealth payments adds pressure to our budget position. Every additional cost the Commonwealth tries to leave with us adds to that pressure. We still have hospitals, schools, police and roads to fund, and now we have to carry the Commonwealth debt.

The Member for Arnhem knows that; she sat in government. If the agreement she helped establish leaves the Territory funding billions beyond its stated contribution, she needs to explain how she expected our budget to absorb that. We know what Labor is like when it comes to budgets and spending—just keep banging it on the credit card; she will be right, someone will pay for it someday.

An unfunded bill does not disappear because Labor loses an election; it lands in the Territory's budget. It puts pressure on our deficit, our borrowings and the other services that Territorians need. That is why we will always fight for a fair deal. Let me also make our position on delivery clear. We will keep going within our funding envelope and keep building homes and progressing the works that support them—again within our funding envelope.

We will pursue the funding that the Commonwealth disputes while we deliver. We will not use it as an excuse to walk away from our remote communities and the people in the bush. We can do both; we can deliver homes and stand up for the Territory taxpayers. That is exactly what we intend to do.

The Land Servicing Program budget at July 2024 was $231.54m. Since then the Territory has spent $141.2m of that amount. Existing projects and contractual commitments account for the remaining funding.

Contractors have another 177 lots under way—62 at Milingimbi, 47 at Maningrida, 21 at Minyerri, 12 at Galiwinku and 35 at Ramingining. We need to keep that work moving and prepare the projects that follow.

The forecast shows housing construction using up that available serviced land by the end of 2028. That gives us a clear task now. Plan ahead, secure the funding and prepare more land. You cannot wait until builders finish the last house before starting on the next subdivision. That is foolishness.

We need the Commonwealth government to stop playing political games with their mates in NT Labor and come to the party on funding for land servicing costs. The Opposition Leader has a choice. She can keep attacking the government that now has to deliver on her promise, or help secure the funding that delivery requires. She should tell her federal colleagues that the Territory expects a fair partnership and support proper assessment and payment of our legitimate claims. She should oppose an arrangement that leaves Territory taxpayers carrying roughly 65% of the full cost when she promised Territory taxpayers that it was fifty-fifty. If she wants fast delivery she should help get the funding right.

The housing and land servicing programs also report 29.5% Aboriginal employment over the reporting period. That means this work supports regional jobs and training as well as homes. A steady program gives local workers and businesses a chance to plan ahead. We intend to keep those opportunities moving.

The problem that we face is delayed funding from the Commonwealth, which is putting those Aboriginal businesses in jeopardy. We need the funding from the Commonwealth to keep this program moving, otherwise it will be Senator Malarndirri McCarthy who will put Aboriginal people out of work, closing Aboriginal businesses in the bush that are delivering these very programs. We have carried substantial costs while we pursue the Commonwealth's contribution. We now face the Commonwealth position that could leave the Territory paying at least $3.7bn against Canberra's $2bn. We dispute that position. We will not accept 65–35 as a fair substitute for the fifty-fifty deal that Labor promoted.

DRAFT

The Member for Arnhem needs to decide whether she will stand up for the Territory on that question. She helped sell the agreement. She now needs to step up and help make it work. Otherwise, she leaves the government and Territory taxpayers carrying the financial gap in her promise. Canberra needs to come to the party and pay us $257m outstanding, except that of course land servicing costs are part of producing homes. The Member for Arnhem needs to help get them there to understand it.

We support Aboriginal businesses in the bush helping build these houses. They are there now, building, employing local people. Labor's federal counterparts, through their action, face sending some of those Aboriginal businesses to the wall because their reneging on funding the deal they struck with Territory Labor.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the question be put regarding the amended motion.

Motion agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr McGrath
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Mr Smelt
Mr Edgington	Ms Uibo
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question the Assembly is now considering is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

Any members who have not spoken may speak. Then I will call the member to reply.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the chance to speak on this in this Chamber today.

Mr EDGINGTON: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move that the question be put.

J DAVIS: Come on!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 6
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	J Davis
Ms Cahill	Mr McGrath
Mrs Carlson	Mr Paech
Mr Charls	Mr Smelt
Mr Edgington	Ms Uibo
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	

DRAFT

Mr Howe
Mr Mackay
Mr Maley
Mr O'Gallagher
Mr Patel
Dr Rahman
Mr Yan

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15	Noes 5
Ms Boothby	Mr Brown
Mr Burgoyne	Mr McGrath
Ms Cahill	Mr Paech
Mrs Carlson	Mr Smelt
Mr Charls	Ms Uibo
Mr Edgington	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Mrs Hersey	
Mr Howe	
Mr Mackay	
Mr Maley	
Mr O'Gallagher	
Mr Patel	
Dr Rahman	
Mr Yan	

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION
Additional Child Protection Funding

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls on the CLP government to provide additional child protection funding in the midyear budget, consult frontline experts and adequately resource the implementation of the Webb–Shanahan review recommendations without overburdening caseworkers.

Every Territory child deserves to grow up safe, supported and surrounded by people who love and care for them. That should be the most basic responsibility of any government. However, what we continue to see in the Northern Territory are systems that are failing vulnerable children and families, governments that are failing to invest in prevention and ministers who are far too quick to claim successes but reluctant to take responsibility when things go wrong. That is simply not good enough.

I make it clear from the outset that the safety of children must always come first. There is no compromise on that. However, keeping children safe requires more than legislation, political announcements and another inquiry. It requires leadership, investment, accountability and a genuine commitment to working with the people and organisations who understand communities.

Where is the commitment to Safe and Supported? Safe and Supported is an Australian national framework for protecting children. It recognises that protecting children requires governments to work together, invest in prevention and support families before they reach crisis point. I ask the CLP government: where is your commitment to implementing the second action plan? Where is the commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander action plan? Where are the resources, investment and accountability to make these plans a reality? A plan sitting on a shelf does not protect one child.

Leadership means more than sending department officials to meetings. How many national Safe and Supported ministerial meetings has the responsible minister attended? How many times has the minister sent bureaucrats in her place? If we are serious about protecting children, surely the responsible minister should be at the table participating in the national discussions and fighting for better outcomes for Territory

DRAFT

children. You cannot say that child protection is your highest priority and then fail to demonstrate that priority through your own leadership.

Investment is needed in early intervention. The CLP government came into this parliament with its Every Child Matters legislation. It told Territorians that the legislation would make children safer and strengthen the child protection system. I have simple questions: where is the money and investment? Where is the investment in the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations already doing the hard work of keeping children safe? Where is the additional funding for early intervention as promised with the introduction of the Every Child Matters legislation? Where is the support for families struggling with overcrowded housing, domestic violence, poverty and intergenerational trauma? Where are the programs that help families before things reach breaking point?

You simply cannot legislate your way out of these problems. You cannot pass a Bill, hold a press conference and pretend that the job is done.

Mr Mackay: You did.

Mr PAECH: If you are serious about—I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Goyder saying, 'Hear, hear!' He thinks the job is done.

If you are serious about keeping children safe, you must be equally serious about investing in the services that support them. There are Aboriginal organisations across the Territory with cultural knowledge, community relationships and the expertise to make a genuine difference. They know their communities, families and what works, but they need the resources to do the job. The government needs to stop treating early intervention as an optional extra. It is one of the most important investments we can make in protecting children. Where are the Aboriginal voices in this inquiry?

I will raise a serious concern I have heard from frontline organisations, stakeholders and family members about the role of Aboriginal people in this inquiry process. When we are examining systemic failures that disproportionately affect Aboriginal children and families, Aboriginal people must be central to that process, not simply consulted, invited to make a submission, listed as someone in a review and a report, but genuinely involved in leading the work, identifying the failures and developing solutions.

Where were the Aboriginal voices leading this inquiry? Where was the Aboriginal leadership in examining what went wrong? We cannot keep having governments, institutions and non-Indigenous people making decisions about Aboriginal children without Aboriginal people having a genuine authority and influence over those decisions.

I acknowledge that the people who led this inquiry are professional, distinguished, have spent a lifetime working in public servants, but not a single person on that panel was an Aboriginal person who understands the environment of Central Australia and is able to provide the context of the landscape of Central Australia and who understands the unique kinship structures and systems.

That brings me to another important point: the Aboriginal child placement principle did not fail this child. I reject any suggestion that the Aboriginal child placement principle itself is or was responsible for these failures. The principle did not fail this child; the failure was in its implementation and application.

The Child Placement Principle is not simply about placing Aboriginal children with Aboriginal families; it is about prevention, partnership and participation. It is about ensuring children remain connected to their families and communities wherever safely possible. It is about Aboriginal children having meaningful say in decisions affecting them. We should not allow failures in the application of the principle to become an excuse to weaken it.

We should be asking why was it not properly implemented and applied? What safeguards were missing and what needs to change? The answer to poor implementation is not to abandon the principle, it is to implement it properly.

This was not just a child protection failure. There are other issues that cannot be ignored. We cannot examine this tragedy through the lens of child protection alone. The circumstances raise serious questions about the failures of multiple government systems. The housing, education, health and Corrections systems, and the coordination between all of them. When we talk about child protection we must acknowledge that if a child is being evicted from a house because of the applications of an adult, that puts the child at risk.

DRAFT

This is a government that have moved this week to implement measures to look at evicting people. What happens to those children? Do they then become the product of a child protection notification? Do they then work through the system and become removed from their families?

When we look at health, families who go to a clinic for their child to receive medical support, do they suddenly have to question whether or not they are going to be raising notifications against that, around them and their families?

These are all important questions that we continue to work with families across the Territory to understand. Domestic, family and sexual violence is insidious across our communities. There is not a single family in the Northern Territory that at some point or another has not been affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

We cannot come down on families without acknowledging that more needs to be done in the domestic, family and sexual violence space. We need to make sure that our families are encouraged to come forward and report domestic, family and sexual violence when and as it happens. We need to make sure that we are not creating an environment where women do not disclose DV for fear of that leading to a child protection notification, which then ultimately could lead to the removal of their children.

We need to make sure that when assessments are undertaken and supervision is required, it is done in an appropriate and timely manner.

We need to make sure that across the Territory there is appropriate and applicable accommodation options for Territory families, people who seek supported accommodation; people fleeing domestic, family and sexual violence; and people leaving the Corrections system. They need to have appropriate housing and not be told that to become homeless is okay.

We need to make sure that we are providing adequate men's behaviour change programs across the Northern Territory so that people have every opportunity to reform their life and be the best they can be. Rehabilitation programs and other supports must be available for people to undertake and become better. That information is shared between Corrections, police and child protection.

Importantly, what is done to protect Territory families and children? These are serious questions that we need to understand. We cannot have systems that let down our Territory. Whether it is in the health system, education system, housing system or the justice system, we need to make sure that people do not fall through the cracks. When consequences are devastating, we owe it to the children, family and community to examine every failure. We cannot keep looking at this through a narrow lens. We need to make sure that child protection is broad and takes into account all the other areas. There needs to be a whole-of-government approach.

Ultimately, this comes down to leadership and accountability. I say this directly to the minister: you cannot keep shirking your responsibility. You cannot claim every positive announcement as a personal achievement then distance yourself when things go wrong. You cannot take credit for the successes and blame everyone else for the failures. That is not leadership or accountability, and it is not what vulnerable children and families deserve. Minister, you are responsible for overseeing this system and ensuring that the department has the resources it needs. You have had two budget cycles to put up the bids to reform the system that you say is broken. You are responsible for driving reform, demanding accountability and making sure the lessons from tragedies like this result in real change. The buck stops with you.

That does not mean blaming the hardworking frontline staff who turn up every day under enormous pressure and who are feeling so depleted at the moment. It means accepting responsibility for the systems they are being asked to work within, listening to Aboriginal organisations telling you what is needed, properly funding early intervention, making sure that justice and child protection systems work together and having courage to acknowledge when government has failed.

We need action, not more announcements. I am sure none of us wants to stand in parliament in another six or 12 months having the same conversation. I do not want to see another report identifying the same failures as this one, another inquiry making the same recommendations or another family left asking why more was not done.

We need change. We need to change the way we respond. We need to invest in early prevention rather than simply responding to crisis. We need to empower Aboriginal community-controlled organisations rather than continually sideline them. We need to strengthen—across justice, Corrections, housing and child protection—

DRAFT

better responses. We need proper and full implementation of the child placement principle. We need a government that is prepared to take responsibility for the systems it oversees, because child protection is not the responsibility of one department. Keeping children safe is the responsibility of a whole government.

At the centre of all this is a child who whose life has been lost and a family whose lives have been changed forever. We must never lose sight of that. We owe it to the child and the family to do more than political point-scoring. We owe them answers, accountability and, importantly, action. We need to acknowledge that the work that needs to be done is important.

There are hundreds of people across the Territory who are still deeply impacted by the death of Kumanjayi Little Baby. There are hundreds of people who have worked in the child protection system who still deal with the trauma every day of the complex environment in which they have worked or continue to work in. I acknowledge the hard work of our child protection clinicians and practitioners across the Northern Territory, whether that is in the public service or acknowledging the work done every day in local organisations. These people show up every day. You do not work in child protection if you do not care. Every person who works in that system cares. They are there because they want to make a difference.

There were 45 recommendations. We have been told by a number of child protection workers and practitioners over the last 24 hours that a number of those recommendations are already in the department, but they lack resources. They lack the ability for those to be driven inside the organisation itself. The best way that many of them have referred to being able to do this is a midyear budget that delivers and goes to the main cause, which is more resources are needed to help reform this system.

When we talk about child protection workers in DCF, we need to acknowledge that the environment they work in is complex. I think we need to also understand and have a better understanding of what constitutes and what is the process for the removal of a child. What is the process for a reunification or the removal of a child? They are complex systems. They deal with the complex situations of people's homes, the environments, and we need to make sure that we are looking at it not just with a narrow lens of one department. What is the role of the housing system in this space. If we are to provide more housing in urban, remote and regional settings, does that enable us to reunify a child who has been removed with an appropriate kinship carer in that community? If we work with and get clinics open in remote communities, does that enable the reunification of a child in that community because there are those services available there?

That is why you cannot look at child protection in isolation. It has to be a whole-of-government approach. We need to grow the footprint of the department in regional and remote areas so that they have the appropriate resources there to support families and assist them in understanding what their needs are and how we address those needs. How do we grow more Aboriginal child protection workers in the system so that we can see Aboriginal people doing that work? I know we have spoken about it many times. How do we get more Aboriginal people taking on the role of kinship care? It is important that we do this because we need more kinship carers. We should not be removing children from their communities. We should be working on how we can best support those children to thrive and survive in their own community.

I take great offence to the assertion of others regarding the role of parents. I know for a fact that Kumanjayi Little Baby's family, her mother, her father, and her immediate community loved her with every fibre of their being. Although the department has structural issues and needs reform, the department did not kill Kumanjayi Little Baby. Kumanjayi Little Baby's mother and father did not kill her. Someone else did, and we need to understand the circumstances that led to that. Those circumstances are not just through a child protection lens.

I said outside parliament this week that the opposition will work with Minister Cahill on those 45 recommendations. We said in principle we support them, but they must be matched with a financial contribution to do that. Any assertion that they can be done from the existing budget arrangements will not cut it, because every child protection practitioner you speak to will tell you that they are doing the best they can with the resources they have and that is not enough. They need more. You cannot reform a system using an existing budget that is not already enough. We need to see the commitment from this government in its budget cycles to back those recommendations and plans to implement and drive positive and progressive reform.

The recommendations will drive positive change, but there are other areas in the government that need positive change—Corrections, Health, Education and Housing—all of which line up next to child protection. All of them need to work because if they are not working, children are put at risk.

DRAFT

We also need to acknowledge that we have oodles of evidence and testimony of lived experience from hundreds of people in the Territory, whether that is people who have been through the child protection or people working in organisations in the child protection space every day to help drive down the number of children who are removed from their families. We need to use that evidence, data and lived experience to help reform, grow and drive the system.

Madam Speaker you are no stranger to this. I am no stranger. There are members of the government who are no stranger to this. Over many years there has been systemic reform in place because of royal commissions and as a result of national reports and inquiries. We know that there are probably enough reports to fill an entire shopping trolley with what needs to be done. We need to do that together, unified, not in isolation.

In child protection, you need to have the domestic, family and sexual violence stakeholders and organisations at the table helping because they deal with it every day when women come to them with their children or extended families seeking crisis accommodation and support. You need to do it with national organisations like SNAICC, whose job it is to stand up and represent the voices of children to make sure that we build a system that works for the child and that the child is put first. We need to make sure that health clinicians, nurses and doctors, also had the opportunity to have a say because they are in our remote communities, along with our hardworking teachers and educators. They know that what we need to do is work together to get this work happening.

This is obviously incredibly important. I know there are matters being dealt with at the moment through the legal system, but we do need to do work. We also need to look at other jurisdictions that have external agencies that deal with child protection. That are external from government, are representative of the community, that take into account the appropriate considerations and measures, that review cases to make sure that child safety is paramount. That is what we need to do. That is incredibly important and these are things that we can do.

We cannot do those if there is not the resourcing, support and goodwill of the government and the parliament to do this. We have heard a whole bunch of stakeholders saying that they have been calling for the last two years on the government to make changes based on evidence, on lived experience, on what the data tells us. It is not being made up. It is real time, real data and real evidence. It has been done by experts, and we should not be afraid to listen to that data, to those organisations, to Aboriginal people themselves who have been telling us for the last two years that there are problems. They are the same voices that were talking and raising concerns when this government pushed through Every Child Matters legislation.

There is a huge gulf between what the report says and what the minister said. The minister spoke about culture and the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. Neither of those are mentioned in the report that the minister tabled at all. Not once are they mentioned.

We have a government that comes in with its vision continually to demonise the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and culture. They were not mentioned once in the report. The only time the word ‘culture’ is mentioned in the report is when it talks about the workplace culture of the Department of Children and Families. The only time the word ‘Aboriginal’ is mentioned in the report is when it refers to organisations and the definition. No other mention of Aboriginal in the report.

Child protection, when we talk about that in the Northern Territory, we are talking about how Aboriginal children predominantly make up the numbers in the child protection system. This report does not even acknowledge the Aboriginal experience and that Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected when it comes to health, housing, education, justice and correction.

It is alarming that when a report is commissioned about a particular instance, where a beautiful little baby has had her life taken, that the relevance and subjectivity of the report fails to address the behaviours, externally, that led to the death of Kumanjayi Little Baby.

We know there were problems…

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

Motion agreed to.

DRAFT

Mr PAECH: There is a huge gulf between what the minister said and what the report identifies. The report highlighted that the sector had been saying this for years. The legal mechanisms already exist. Our child protection system is under-resourced and understaffed and desperately needs better training, specialist expertise and support.

I know that the Member for Johnston asked a question about the vacancy rates. I pick up that the minister did not answer the question: what is the current vacancy rate of child protection workers and practitioners across the Northern Territory, broken down by jurisdiction? At home I hear that the child protection vacancy rate in Central Australia could be as high as 40%.

If we are serious about caring for kids—I acknowledge that the minister has said the government is doing strategies to look at recruitment and the workforce, but we cannot legislate our way out of a workforce shortage—we need to address those systemic failings as well.

The CLP government said that it is doing work to fix those problems, but what is the timeline? We hear—I do not know whether it is true, so I will let the minister respond—the department has sent staff, who should be caring for kids, out to run the Batchelor facility because Mission Australia is not ready to run it yet. If that is true, that is alarming and needs to be immediately addressed.

I continue to be worried about the language used. Let us be clear: I will stand with anyone out the front of this parliament and call out people for domestic, family and sexual violence. This needs to be about addressing the actions of perpetrators, not the failures of victims. We cannot have a child protection system that punishes women experiencing violence by threatening to remove their children. What message does that send to a mother desperately trying to escape violence and protect her family? Would she feel safe coming forward and asking for help?

We need to stop ignoring the experience and expertise of domestic, family and sexual violence services, Aboriginal organisations and frontline workers who deal with these challenges every day. We need to examine the failures across the entire system, not just child protection. What happened in Corrections? What happened to rehabilitation? What happened in health, education and housing? If we are genuinely committed to protecting women and children, we must hold perpetrators accountable. We must support and invest in men's behaviour change programs and ensure that government agencies have the resources, training and systems to intervene early. Protecting children means supporting families experiencing violence, holding perpetrators accountable and fixing the systems that are supposed to keep families safe. This is where the government's focus needs to be.

I come from Central Australia and I hold a bush electorate. I make the point that everywhere I go, I see loving families. Aboriginal people love their kids, communities and families. Let us be clear that has never been and never will be a barrier. Yes, people need help with housing, education, health—all those things. People need help navigating the child protection system when they feel that something is wrong. It is the law—mandatory—to report when something you see does not look or feel right or you are concerned. That is still the case.

The child protection placement principle was never enshrined in law to put the principle above safety. We need to make sure we invest early, support families early and let Aboriginal people be at the table and take them off the menu. They have to be there driving decisions and be empowered to lead change and help grow our families and communities.

We need to invest in growing the number of kinship carers. I give a shout-out to all the kinship carers across the Territory who do an amazing job. I also acknowledge our foster carers who do an amazing job when we do not have the kinship carer capacity to take on an additional child. I acknowledge the organisations across the Territory providing residential care for people to help do that.

There are ways in which we should be working to establish an external agency that can deal with child protection and placements to help grow that. That is important. We need to be innovative and forward-thinking in child protection.

I know that child protection is not an easy thing to talk about or something that seems to be working well in any one jurisdiction. A Territory problem requires a Territory solution and the best people to lead that solution are Territorians who work, live and breathe it every day.

Members of my family have ended up in the child protection space. I have seen firsthand that it worked well for some and had devastating impacts on someone who was removed from their community and family and

DRAFT

taken interstate, with no means of coming back regularly to connect with their community, see their extended family and have that connection to their place.

We need to move forward, making sure that the department is well resourced through additional budgets. To make the assertion that calling for money is somehow a woke left agenda is disgusting and disgraceful. You government's own report says that you need to address the resources and shortcomings of finances and support in that system to help reform it.

Child protection workers I have been speaking to over the last 24 hours—whether they are still in the department or have left the department—said, 'Yes, we need more, but we need to also create a more culturally safe working environment for us that provides all the staff with appropriate cross-cultural awareness training to understand the complexities and the environments that we work in.' We need to grow the regional and remote footprint of Children and Families so that we know what is going on in every corner of the Territory. That is important.

I thank members for indulging me on this important matter tonight, particularly with little to no interjections other than one from the Member for Goyder. This is an important topic. I say, hand on heart again today, that I am willing to work with the government on the implementation of the 45 recommendations, but let us not stop there. Let us do the work to look at an independent external child protection agency. Let us look at reforming health, justice, housing and education to more appropriately respond to the needs of the child.

Let us look at making sure that we provide the adequate training and resourcing for our child protection clinicians and practitioners to do the work. I know it is a complex environment. They need support after they have dealt with heavy cases as well. It is timely to do this work.

I thank honourable members and those who will contribute tonight.

Ms CAHILL (Child Protection): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Gwoja for bringing this motion before the Assembly.

I reconfirm what I said earlier: our child protection practitioner vacancy rate is 22% to be exact. The Member for Johnston has all the figures. She needs to look at the breakdown. If she is asking about child protection workers, it is 22%.

Member for Gwoja, I appreciate that you said in the media, and again just now in the Chamber, that this review was led by two non-Indigenous people who do not understand the kinship and cultural structure of Central Australia. I suggest that before making claims about someone's knowledge, understanding and experience, perhaps picking up the phone might have been a good idea to get the facts. Clearly you did not.

I reinforce that what is critical about the review is that it heard directly from frontline workers. It talked to the caseworkers who are in Alice Springs. It listened carefully to what they had to say and it gave them gave them the attention they deserved.

I did, indeed, yesterday table the Report of the Independent Review into the Conduct of the Department of Children and Families into the circumstances surrounding the death of Kumanjayi Little Baby. The systemic failures identified by the review absolutely demand the full attention of this parliament.

Her family deserves our compassion, our honesty and, most importantly, meaningful action.

It is never easy for a minister to acknowledge serious failures within their own department, but accountability requires us to confront those failures openly, understand how they occurred and make the changes necessary to protect children. Again, none of what was found in the report blamed the workers who work incredibly hard and whom I am always grateful for.

This motion raises three matters: additional child protection funding; consultation with frontline experts; and properly resourced implementation of the Webb–Shanahan review recommendations without, critically, adding to the burden on caseworkers. I will address each of those in turn. Before doing so, we must keep the central question before us: what changes will make children safer?

The review records that Kumanjayi Little Baby was known to child protection before she was born. Across her short life there were 16 notifications with domestic and family violence present in each. A safety plan relied on adults whose suitability had not been checked. A matter involving a blow to her head remained open for 229 days. The review describes how her mother was left effectively responsible for protecting her

DRAFT

children while experiencing violence herself. Those findings were profoundly troubling. They demonstrate why reform must be practical, rigorous and focused on the safety of the child.

First, the question of funding. The member calls for additional child protection funding in the midyear budget. In the Territory the midyear report updates the fiscal and economic outlook. Funding decisions are considered through the government's budget process. That distinction matters because decisions about resources must be informed by evidence and clearly identified needs.

The review does not present additional funding by itself as the solution to the failures it identified. Its 45 recommendations point to the need for stronger practice, clearer accountability, better systems and more effective alignment of departmental resources with frontline child protection. In particular, the review identifies an opportunity to reduce duplication and inefficiency, better align corporate and operational resources and direct greater organisational capacity towards frontline child protection. It recommends a targeted review of the department's structure.

That work will be undertaken. This is not an argument against investment; it is an argument for making sure investment reaches the areas where it will make the greatest difference. If the organisational review and implementation plan identify a need for additional resources, those proposals will be considered through the appropriate budget processes.

Our responsibility is to use every public dollar effectively and to ensure that the people delivering services in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin, Nhulunbuy and remote communities have the support they need.

Labor cannot seek to lecture this government on child protection funding without answering for its own eight years in office. Eight years meant eight budgets—eight opportunities to strengthen frontline services and eight years in which the systemic weaknesses identified by this review were allowed to persist. The opposition must be prepared to defend that record.

Consider the funding decisions made under Labor departmental advice indicating that $1m was taken from child protection budget allocations across the 2023–24 and 2024–25 budgets—$500,000 in each year—to support women's football games. I support women's sport, but Labor must explain to this Assembly why those funds were drawn from child protection allocations when frontline pressures were already well known. That is a legitimate question of priorities and it deserves a direct answer.

That is not the only question Labor must answer. The department's review of grant arrangements has identified organisations not delivering contracted services, missed performance measures, agreements without meaningful key performance indicators and inadequate acquittal arrangements. Those arrangements did not arise in a vacuum. Labor must account for the standards it set and the oversight it exercised when agreements were entered into when it was in government. Public funding must be tied to demonstrable results, not merely good intentions.

At Batten Road too there is a serious discrepancy requiring explanation. The original advice referred to almost 400 people relying on the facility and a waitlist of about 300. When the department sought details to assess those on the waitlist, it received 19 names. The department's review also raised eligibility concerns.

It is probably a good time to put on the record that there are four Department of Children and Families staff assisting Mission Australia at the new Batchelor facility. Those four staff are from the homelessness services team, not the child protection team. I am not sure where the Member for Gwoja is getting his information, but perhaps he needs to do a little more fact-checking before he brings it to the parliament.

These are not minor administrative matters; they go to whether government can rely on the information used to allocate resources. Labor should explain how those figures were tested and monitored.

When Labor calls for more funding, my response is clear: more funding for which services, against which measurable outcomes and with what assurance that children will be safer? We will invest where the evidence shows it is needed. We will also demand the accountability that was too often missing from the arrangements we inherited.

The second part of the motion concerns consultation with frontline experts. On this point, I agree with the Member for Gwoja about the importance of listening to those who work in the system every day. Their experience is indispensable to designing reforms that will work in practice.

DRAFT

Karen Webb and Greg Shanahan engaged with frontline staff in Alice Springs. Among the concerns raised was the limited visibility of senior leadership in regional and remote workplaces, so they also spoke to staff in other areas. The review recommends more regular engagement by the chief executive and senior leaders, together with improvements to supervision, induction and training. That is a clear direction for the department. Consultation cannot be a one-off exercise undertaken to produce a report; it must be reflected in leadership presence, ongoing engagement and decisions informed by the people responsible for delivering services.

We will continue to engage frontline staff as the recommendations are implemented and we will ensure their practical experience informs the sequencing and delivery of reform.

The third part of the motion asks that implementation not overburden caseworkers. That objective is central to the government's response. Many of the recommendations are designed to remove obstacles that prevent frontline workers from focusing on children and families. Yes, the department has faced serious recruitment and retention challenges. The vacancy rate was over 40% when this government came to office, but as I have said, the vacancy rate of child protection practitioners is down to 22%. That improvement matters, but recruitment alone is not enough. We must retain experienced staff and ensure that they have appropriate supervision systems and wellbeing support.

Child protection workers are exposed to distressing and complex circumstances. We are developing an approach that identifies burnout earlier, supports mental health and wellbeing and provides opportunities for staff to move temporarily into other roles when appropriate. Supporting our workforce is an essential part of protecting children.

The review also points to the need to reduce unnecessary administrative burden. We will examine processes that take time away from frontline practice while maintaining the checks, records and safeguards essential to child safety. Reducing red tape must never mean reducing accountability.

The CARE case management system is another example of why Labor's record must be examined. More than $70m is reported to have been spent on CARE, yet frontline workers continue to raise concerns about obtaining basic information and reports. The previous Labor government promised a system that would make their work easier. It must answer for the gap between the promise, the expenditure and the experience of staff, and we will examine what is needed to make the system fit for purpose.

The pressures on caseworkers are not new. In 2018, during Labor's time in office, reports described workers carrying between 70 and 100 cases each and being pressed to close six cases a week. Those reports should have prompted sustained action. Labour cannot now treat workforce pressure as though it began when it left office. Our test is whether the reforms reduce that pressure in practice.

The government has accepted all 45 recommendations of the independent review in full. As I noted, we received the report on Friday and I tabled it yesterday, but implementation has already begun. I have directed an immediate audit of every current safety plan across the Territory. I have also directed that going forward, at a minimum, an adult assigned a protective role in a safety plan must hold a working with children clearance, which includes a national criminal history check. These are immediate steps, but they are not the whole reform program.

The recommendations will require sustained implementation, clear responsibilities and ongoing oversight, and I will report to this Assembly on progress.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 184; I draw to your attention quorum.

Madam SPEAKER: She is right; there is no quorum.

There has to be 10. We need one more for a quorum. We now have a quorum. I ask government members to be mindful of that.

Ms CAHILL: The chronology matters. The safety plan that relied on adults whose suitability had not been checked was put in place in 2021 under Labor. The matter that remained open for Kumanjayi Little Baby that ran for 229 days from August 2022 to March 2023 happened under Labor. Those are dates recorded in the history of this case. They are not matters the opposition can simply set aside when demanding action from this government.

The review exposed systemic weaknesses that developed over years. Labor held responsibility for the department during much of that period. It is therefore entirely appropriate to ask in response why its ministers

DRAFT

knew what they did and why those failures were not corrected. This government expects responsibility for fixing the system now. That does not erase the former government's responsibility for its record.

Much has been said about the signs of safety in the report and, as noted yesterday, that was introduced in 2019. Yet the draft review raises concerns about the absence of an evaluation. The tool upon which child protection workers relied to assess the safety of a child has never been evaluated. The issue is not simply how much is spent; it is whether anyone established those systems were making children safer and helping case workers to do their job. Labor must answer that question.

This government has worked to strengthen the legislative framework through Every Child Matters, placing the safety of children at the centre of decision-making. That legislation is important and its value will be measured by how consistently it is reflected in everyday practise.

I spoke yesterday about the ordinary childhood milestones Kumanjayi Little Baby should have had ahead of her, including school holidays and time with family. Those opportunities have been taken from her and her family. We cannot undo that loss. We can, however, honour her memory through the seriousness with which we respond to the findings of the review.

Her family deserves a system that acts when children are at risk. Our frontline workers deserve leadership, training and systems that enable them to do their jobs. Territorians deserve assurance that public resources are directed toward effective services and measurable improvements in child safety. That is why the government has accepted every recommendation. That is why implementation is already underway. That is why I will continue to account this Assembly for the progress we make.

I will not support a motion that ask this Assembly to announce additional funding before assessing where it is needed while overlooking the former government's own funding decisions, management failures and longstanding system pressures. Those on the other side are entitled to scrutinise us, but they are not entitled to rewrite their own record.

This government has accepted all 45 recommendations, begun immediate action and committed to reporting on delivery. That is the accountability we will demonstrate.

I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that this Assembly' and inserting:

(a) notes the independent review into the conduct of the Department of Children and Families was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday 20 October 2026

(b) acknowledges the government has accepted all 45 recommendations of the independent review

(c) notes implementation is already underway, including an immediate audit of every current safety plan across the Territory

(d) recognises the review's findings on the need to better align departmental resources and functions with frontline child protection services, reduced duplication and administrative burden, and supports the recommended targeted review of the department's organisational structure to achieve these objectives

(e) notes the Minister for Children and Families will report to the Assembly on progress in implementing the reviews recommendations.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, I speak to the motion as amended. I have just seen it, so I will talk to what is in that in a minute. There is nothing in that motion that I disagree with, but I think things are missing, so I will speak to that.

The death of Kumanjayi Little Baby, as we all know, was a horrific tragedy. A precious child died in unimaginable circumstances. Everyone in this parliament knows part of our job is to understand what happened, face the failures that led to it and do everything we can to stop it happening again.

The government has had two years to do that job. The Webb–Shanahan report shows what it did instead, because what the report found was a capacity problem and the CLP legislated about something entirely different. The reviewers were clear that the central issue was not a lack of legislative powers or protective mechanisms; it was the department's capacity to respond to risk in a timely and effective way.

DRAFT

We have heard from everyone who has talked to this, and we know if we read the report, that the review found delayed responses to domestic and family violence, inconsistent risk assessments, workforce shortages, excessive workloads, growing backlogs and weak governance. I welcome the fact that the minister has said that she will be implementing every recommendation, but I cannot not talk about the fact that the response of the government up until this point and the energy of the government has been to develop a new Act which does nothing to address any of those problems.

The government knew those problems before it legislated. Everyone in this Chamber knew that the system was in crisis, including the CLP. We know the CLP had been working on developing that Bill for more than a year before it tabled it. We know that the focus was changing the Aboriginal child placement principle; it was not the depleted exhausted workforce. When that Bill passed, experts and frontline workers warned that it would cause harm. More than 120 submissions opposed the Bill. The message was the same every time, the same as the message from the report: the system needs urgent reform, but changing the law is no substitute for funding the services and supporting the services that children and families need.

We have heard that there is no additional funding to implement the Every Child Matters Act. We heard that during the inquiry, and the minister says that there is no funding because we need to go through the processes. I heard her say that just now, but we heard across the board during the inquiry that the issues the child protection system is facing cannot be addressed within existing resources. We heard that from the kinship carers, frontline organisations, Aboriginal organisations, the Police Association and all the people working on the front line. It is not a new question about the need for more resources in this system. We know that there is no new funding for family preservation, reunification, support and early intervention.

We have talked a bit in the Chamber today about the vacancies in the child protection system. The minister said that I had the figures in front of me. The figures I have in front of me, supplied by her department, quote the numbers that I asked about in Question Time, which is a 43% vacancy rate. The minister said today that there is a 22% vacancy rate. I take her word for it. I would be interested to see the breakdown of those numbers and see where they are across different regions in the Northern Territory. If it has dropped from 43%—or 57% in the Top End—to 22%, that is an astounding change in three months. That is something to be welcomed. Hopefully the child protection system is being properly staffed, but, once again, I would like to see those figures.

What the CLP has done up until this point in changing the law is make a system that is already not working worse. It has shortened reunification timeframes without fixing what makes reunification impossible, like homelessness. In fact, in other work that the CLP is doing, it is increasing homelessness. It has increased the number of children entering a system already at crisis point without properly addressing why children in that system are unsafe.

I also note that in 2025–26, there were 26 children in care who were the subject of substantiated investigations of abuse in care across 28 investigations. When the state removes a child, the state takes on the duty to keep that child safe, and these figures show that it is not meeting that duty. These new laws will put more children into the care of the state.

We have also heard a lot about the fact throughout this whole debate over an extended period and again today that culture is what puts Aboriginal children at risk. Ninety per cent of children in out-of-home care in the Territory are Aboriginal, and this government weakened the Aboriginal child placement principle, saying that …

Mrs Zio: Shame!

J DAVIS: Yes, shame.

Mrs Zio: Shame on you.

J DAVIS: I note the interjection.

The minister continues to say, as do other people in this Chamber, the law put culture ahead of safety. There is no evidence of that in the law. As SNAICC Chair told the committee, the principal categorically does not prioritise culture over safety. To suggest it does is ridiculous, misguided and misinformed.

The Webb-Shanahan report, as heard from the Member for Gwoja—I had a look at it to see what it had to say about culture putting children at risk and how that played out in the child protection system. It mentions culture once, as we heard, in relation to the culture of the department. The report does not say in any spot at

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all that Aboriginal culture is a danger to children. The fact the government continues to say the law prioritised culture over safety is deeply and problematically misleading.

The department has also confirmed it has not modelled the cost of expanding kinship care. We know what kinship care costs. As at 30 June, 505 children were in purchased home-based care at $44.7m. The government's own figures put purchased care for a five-year-old without complex needs at almost $2,000 a week. There is no extra money, we have heard, for kinship care.

Aboriginal organisations tell us, and told the inquiry, when the department has told them a child has no family who can care for them, they have gone on to identify dozens of relatives. What this government has done is make it easier for the department to separate children from their family.

I was heartened to hear the minister say, and I see it is also in this motion, that they will evaluate what this does. I have lost count over the last two years how often a minister has said to me, when I have asked where the evidence is, and when are you evaluating it—they answered me with, 'We do not track or measure that'. It is welcomed to hear this is going to be measured. We need to measure things to know whether things are working. We need to be making sure we are using our resources in the right way to achieve what we all want, which is to make sure that every single child in the Territory is safe.

Too often a woman escaping violence has her children removed because the shelter was full. We know the recent decisions on YiSSA have meant there are less beds now available for women who are escaping domestic violence and need short term emergency accommodation. It is hard to imagine a crueller position to put someone in than tell them their children will be separated from them because there is nowhere safe for them to go.

If the minister is accepting the recommendations on children's exposure to domestic violence, which she absolutely should, she must also fund crisis, short term and long-term accommodation. Safe housing comes first. That is absolutely at the centre of making sure children stay safe.

The recommendations mirror warnings given directly to this minister and the findings of four coronial inquests over the past two years, which this government has continued to ignore. Poverty, overcrowding and homelessness drive children into harm's way. This government is directly increasing homelessness, not reducing it. It has shut crisis accommodation, treats child safety as a welfare and policing problem, not a housing and health one.

There is something else the review did not address, which I will touch on. Kumanjayi Little Baby was allegedly abducted and killed by a stranger. He was not her parent or carer. He did not live in her home. He was not known to her family, he had been released from prison with no rehabilitation, bail support, housing and no plan. The person identified as using violence in her child protection notifications with someone else. He was not unidentified.

A member interjecting.

J DAVIS: Can you give me that evidence? I have looked at that. I have read the report.

I am not saying the child protection system does not need reform; it does urgently, but this government has built its response around a story where we need to know the whole facts. If we do not face that, we miss all the reforms we need to make sure our community and every child is safe. We need to make sure that when we lock up people, they get real rehabilitation. When the government locks up people, there needs to be real bail support and services waiting for people when they leave prison to make sure that when they leave prison, terrible things do not happen. This government is two years in. It runs the Correction system and needs to be taking action on this.

I welcome the government saying that every recommendation will be implemented, but words cost nothing. Without enough staff, proper housing for people who need it and with the domestic violence crisis, the commitment stands empty unless those things are properly addressed. We know this government has a record of not only not listening, but telling people who they do not agree with, 'We just do not want to hear from you; you can leave.' This includes not listening to the statutory bodies whose job it is to protect children.

We also know the recommendations are not new. They mirror recommendations given directly to this minister, recommendations before coronial inquests and what the sector said to the scrutiny committee in more than 120 submissions. The government was told before and after it was legislated, and now it has been told by this review.

DRAFT

I am hoping that what this review does is make the changes happen that need to. That means filling the vacancies and sharing the real information. It means publishing a costed workforce plan with dates for the vacant positions and properly resourcing the reforms, whatever that looks like it. It does not mean—which is what we have heard up to this point and what we heard from the department—the department needs to absorb any extra workload that comes from these reforms.

It means properly funding prevention, family preservation, reunification and early intervention delivered with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. It means building the housing and domestic violence accommodation that families and women need to stay safe. It means measuring, which I have heard the government is intending to do, and collecting the data not only on child protection but on housing barriers, service gaps and establishing independent monitoring of any child removals. It means fixing Corrections and funding real rehabilitation, bail support and a plan for every person leaving prison. It means ensuring that Aboriginal organisations are at the table, noting that more than 90% of the children who are in care are Aboriginal.

We cannot change what happened to Kumanjayi Little Baby, but we can choose what we do next. We heard from the minister that her family deserves our compassion, our honesty and our action, and I agree. What we can change is whether the next child in the next notification meets a system with staff to answer the call, a house for family, a plan for the person who might otherwise slip through and people who are properly equipped to actually make sure that every child in the Northern Territory is safe.

Mrs ZIO (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I will speak about something that should be above politics, ideology and every other consideration in this Chamber: the safety of our children.

I am growing tired of the rhetoric in the Chamber around the fact that this CLP government is making things worse for Territorians. We are doing the opposite. We are trying our hardest. There is rhetoric around statutory bodies providing advice to us. Those statutory bodies have been in place for a long time, and the statistic were going backwards. Things were getting worse. The statutory bodies that we are supposed to listen to, to get advice, did nothing to improve the lives of our Territory children. Forgive me when I say that we will not not always take the advice of the statutory bodies that apparently have best practice or evidence-based themes behind their directives.

There is no greater responsibility of government than protecting those who cannot protect themselves, and that is our children. Yet the Webb–Shanahan Review has exposed serious systemic failures in the Northern Territory's child protection system that should shock every member of this House. This did not just start two years ago when we came into government; they started a long time ago when people started listening to people who decided they did not want to look after the safety of children anymore. They wanted to put other things in front of that.

This review exists because a little five-year-old girl, Kumanjayi Little Baby, lost her life in Alice Springs in April. My thoughts, just on the record, are with her family and the Central Australian community. Her life mattered.

The failures identified by this review demand more than expressions of sympathy; they demand action. In her five short years, there were 16 notifications involving domestic and family violence—16 warnings. A subsequent examination of her life identified 24 opportunities where intervention could have occurred.

In five years there were 24 opportunities when intervention could have occurred, but the child protection workers were so confused under the legislation that they had in front of them that they could not identify the safety of that child was the main thing that they needed to look at. They were confused, so we make no apology for removing any confusion and making sure that they know that when they are looking at a child and there are 24 opportunities for them to help that child there is no confusion; the safety of that child is the paramount thing that they need to be concerned about. They told us they were confused. They did not know what the policy direction was. We are removing that confusion. Everybody who works in that space knows that the safety of a child is the priority, and we are not afraid to make sure that is embedded in everything that they do.

We cannot know whether earlier intervention would have changed the course of Kumanjayi Little Baby's life, but we know that a child protection system cannot afford to repeatedly identify danger without ensuring that effective protective actions follow.

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The review found that departmental policies and practices had drifted away from the requirements of the law. It found that the background and police histories of adults nominated in safety plans—and the man accused of taking Kumanjayi Little Baby's life was identified as somebody in the safety plan—were not routinely checked. It found that a mother experiencing domestic and family violence was effectively left responsible for protecting her own children while she was experiencing the violence herself. This is not a system putting children first; that is a system in desperate need of reform.

The review makes clear that there were systemic failures, not simply the mistakes of individual frontline workers. These workers perform, as we have heard many times, some of the hardest jobs in the Territory often under extraordinary pressure, with inadequate support. They deserve better leadership, training and resources. Most importantly, the children they protect deserve a system that works.

We need to ask how the Northern Territory reached this point. We cannot have that conversation without examining the record of former Labor governments. It is a fact that Labor governed the Northern Territory for 19 of the past 25 years. That is 19 years of responsibility and 19 years of opportunities to strengthen the child protection system. Statistics went backwards under Labor's leadership.

What do we have to show for the last 19 out of 25 years under a Labor government? We have review after review, inquiry after inquiry and warning after warning. Since 1997 major inquiries, including bringing them home, little children are sacred and the 2010 Board of Inquiry into the Child Protection System have collectively made almost 300 recommendations, yet we are confronting another report documenting fundamental systemic failures. How many reports does it take before a government recognises that children are being failed? How many recommendations must be written before meaningful reform becomes a priority? How many vulnerable children must endure unsafe circumstances before we accept that the system itself needs to change?

Labor cannot simply dismiss its responsibility for the state of the system it governed for so long. There is one issue that must be confronted directly: we know that culture matters. A child's identity matters. Connection to family, community and country matter. However, none of those things can ever be placed ahead of a child's immediate safety—not culture, not ideology, not departmental policy and not a political philosophy. Nothing comes before the safety of a child. I cannot understand how that is so hard to understand.

Members interjecting.

Mrs ZIO: We have written it in plain English in the law that the child's safety comes first.

Members interjecting.

Mrs ZIO: I take on the interjections from those opposite. That may have been the case, but the workers who worked in that system were so confused that we have made it explicit. There is nothing wrong with that.

I am saying that we do not want to remove connection to country, culture or the placement of a child with their family if that can be done. However, if the child is unsafe, they will be removed.

I will say this plainly: a child does not become less deserving of protection because of their background, their circumstances or where they live. The first obligation of child protection is to keep child safe, and that is what this law requires and what every government must deliver. For too long, the Territory has been caught in debates about how children should be protected while too many children have continued to experience harm. A policy is not compassionate simply because it sounds compassionate; it must actually protect the child, and when it does not, governments have a responsibility to change it.

The Finocchiaro CLP government is taking that responsibility seriously. We have accepted all 45 recommendations of the Webb–Shanahan review—not selected recommendations or the politically convenient recommendations, all 45—and implementation is underway.

The minister directed an immediate audit of every current safety plan in the Territory. Mandatory background checks will apply to all adults given the responsibility of keeping a child safe. The child protection practice model introduced in 2019, which has never been independently evaluated, will undergo independent evaluation. and the department structure will be reviewed to ensure that frontline staff receive the leadership, supervision and support that they need to do their jobs well. Importantly, the minister will report to this parliament on the implementation progress.

DRAFT

This report will not be accepted, filed away and forgotten; it will be acted upon. We also need to recognise the long-term consequences when child protection fails. Children who grow up experiencing violence, neglect and instability can carry that trauma throughout their lives, and too many young Territorians who have been failed by the protective systems later come into contact with our youth justice system. If we are serious about addressing root causes of crime, then we must be equally serious about protecting children before their lives are shaped by repeated trauma. Early intervention is not simply good child protection policy; it is an investment in the future safety and wellbeing of the entire community.

The former Labor government had years to address the problems within the system, and this CLP government now has the responsibility to deliver meaningful change, and we will be judged not by the number of reports we accept or the number of inquiries we hold. Will be judged by the improvements that we deliver because at the centre of every notification of every single safety plan and every departmental decision is a child who deserves to feel safe, who deserves protection and whose future must matter more than political ideology or bureaucratic convenience.

No cultural consideration should ever be used to excuse a failure to protect a child from danger. No government should ever become comfortable with repeated warnings and missed opportunities, and no child should ever be left wondering whether someone will step in to keep them safe. Children do not get a second childhood. We cannot undo the harm that they have already suffered, but we can change the system responsible for protecting them; that is our job, and that is what our government is committed to doing. Every child matters; every child's safety matters equally; and every child's safety must come first.

I reiterate the fact that child protections were confused under the previous legislation, the previous policies that were in place, the previous leadership styles of people who worked in the child protection system giving delivery of guidance of how they should be approaching each and every case. We have clarified that. We are working to fix it. We will provide support. We cannot magically create staff to fill all the gaps that we have got; they have to come from somewhere. We need to take the time to repair the systems behind the child protection system as well, but I can say that we will not sit on our hands. We will not sit and wait while another child is traumatised, abused or neglected. We will act.

Ms UIBO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am speaking to the amendment to the motion by the Member for Port Darwin, the Minister for Children and Families. and I start with praising the work of an overburdened and stretched child protection system and the workers who have been doing their best. As the Member for Fannie Bay calls them, they are confused—so confused they do not understand what their job is. I think that is highly offensive for workers dealing day-in, day-out with heartbreaking conditions and environments that children and family are suffering in the Northern Territory. I think this whole tit for tat and political scrapping is extremely distressing for those workers to hear.

The horrific incident that occurred for the family of Kumanjayi Little Baby, the Central Australian region the Northern Territory and indeed the country—the whole of Australia was devastated with what happened in the Northern Territory. It was a moment for people to come together and reset. A family has lost their little girl forever, and that is the deepest tragedy.

To use politically motivated assumptions that child protection workers in the Northern Territory somehow do not know their responsibilities or roles and, to quote the Member for Fannie Bay, are so confused is highly offensive. I acknowledge the work of the child protection workers in the Northern Territory in the overburdened system.

It should not be an overburdened system. We all agree to that, but, unfortunately, that is the system we find ourselves in the Northern Territory. Not one member of the CLP government ever spoke about child protection until this horrific incident with Kumanjayi Little Baby. Shame on them for not ever bringing it up, in two years, other than this horrific incident with Kumanjayi Little Baby. They talk about reforming and supporting the child protection system. Shame on them. Do not come in here and say, 'Labor did this two, four or eight years ago'—whatever the hell the crap is they are trying to shove down people's throats. Do not come in here and say that when you did not say it for the first two years.

To use the horrific incident of Kumanjayi Little Baby as the catalyst for this big deep dive, when it was not even on the radar—we hear from the minister that apparently, yes, it was, but she just never mentioned it; she never said anything. We always knew and heard whispers, though, that the CLP would change the child placement principle. It used this horrific event for Kumanjayi Little Baby as the catalyst for that. I think that is a deep shame.

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Thankfully there has been a review. It has been tabled. I had to chase it, mind you. The minister stood in parliament yesterday at 10 am and gave a ministerial report in regard to the independent review into the conduct of the Department of Children and Families, but did not table it for all of the parliament to even view. Here we were taking the word of the CLP minister, the Member for Port Darwin, and it took 40 minutes for a document to be shared in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. I had to chase it up to access it. I do not know who the CLP was hiding the document from. It was not in the public ether. It was not even in the parliamentary Chamber. The one thing we should have in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly is access to important processes in our democracy, but here I was having to chase up a report that was supposedly tabled by the Member for Port Darwin yesterday. She was speaking, sat down and then nothing. I unfortunately had to chase it. Thank you to the Table Office for chasing it.

I do not know whether the minister did it intentionally. All I can think is that it was either intentional or accidental, but after two years you would think the minister would know the process of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. There I was chasing this important report after the minister had already sat down. Debate was gagged. We had much to contribute, wanting to ask questions. There was the CLP government just yesterday shutting down the opportunity to speak on a ministerial report. It was outrageous.

If we are talking about not politicising things, there you go, Member for Fannie Bay; your own team is doing it. You did not call it out yesterday, did you? You did not run around trying to get the tabled document, did you? You did not call it out. No, we had to run around, chasing like we are scrappy dogs, trying to find this important review that has been done. It has been spruiked, and now we are hearing about the recommendations.

Now the minister has amended the motion, and I understand why, and that is fine, but to then say, 'We are not politicising it, and it is above us' and all this other stuff when it was never the intention for the CLP government to talk about the reforms for the better when it comes to the child protection system in the Northern Territory.

I thank those child protection workers and hardworking men and women in the public service who are working day-in and day-out with some of the heaviest content that anyone can imagine. I have read in the past, when I was in government, some of those horrific reports that child protection officers and staff have to deal with day in and out in the Northern Territory. It is consuming and disturbing some of the things that happen in the Northern Territory; no-one is hiding that.

No-one should hide that when we are talking about the safety of our kids—it does not matter what colour they are either, black, white, brindle—every kid in the Northern Territory deserves to be safe. I know that is one thing that everyone in this Chamber can agree on. What is the point of contention right now? How is the CLP government going to show—put their money where their mouth is—the Northern Territory, and indeed Australia, that what they are doing is action.

Commission an independent report. Say they are looking at the recommendations and that they are all agreed to, but no, we will just hesitate for a little bit and think about whether we resource all of those recommendations or not. Hang on, we are just a little bit not sure. How ridiculous!

Come out with a process that tells Territorians and children in the Territory that their government backs them and that families and carers are backed when it comes to keeping them safe. We also know that unfortunately, other frontline services are extremely stretched and carry that deep burden when it comes to keeping our kids safe. The work of police—I acknowledge police—and our housing officers as well, and the experiences and knowledge that they have in their roles working with child protection, police and to identify some of those unfortunate early signs when a child or children may not be safe and the processes across government.

Breaking down silos which everyone gets frustrated with in how the process of safety for children in the Northern Territory should be constant work, not a once in time or a point in time type of affirmative and sudden realisation, but constant work needs to be done. I acknowledge all those workers. I think it has been extremely heavy for them. They do not get a right of reply as public servants, so on behalf of the Territory Labor team, we acknowledge all those frontline workers and the heaviness of constant debate and politicisation in parliament. We hope that everyone could be better but just does not seem like that is a possibility.

Budget cycles—I heard that is part of the debate, 'Oh, we cannot do anything because it is not the budget cycle'. The government can always do things out of the budget cycle. We saw it this year in the extreme weather events, the $100m flood recovery; that was not a part of a budget cycle. We also saw the $7m of

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the $100m pulled out and given to Batchelor and the relocation facility there that was not part of a budget cycle. When the government uses a budget cycle as an excuse that shows me, and I hope Territorians, that that issue—whatever that issue is, particularly now, the important issue of child protection—is not a priority of the CLP government because that is an excuse.

I heard the minister, the Member for Port Darwin, talk about how action is needed and that they want to show action. I heard the Member for Port Darwin talk about action being needed and that they want to show action. Well, put your money where your mouth is, show the action and resource the sector and the public service to make sure that is not an issue, a barrier or it becomes the excuse of the government. Do not use budget cycles as an excuse to try to step away from a priority that all Territorians have, which is keeping our children safe.

We also heard about the constant flurry—it is like the CLP is stuck in time and obsessed with Labor. We heard the Member for Port Darwin, the Minister for Children and Families, speak about Labor in her contribution to the debate today of her own motion which is now amended to the CLP government's motion. The minister spoke more about Labor than she did about kids in her contribution to amending the motion before the House.

Imagine that! The minister responsible for Children and Families speaking about Labor two years ago, four years ago, eight years ago—whatever it is. This historical step back in time is more about than it is about kids in her contribution. It is like a obsession now with the CLP; to bog down and act like it is not in government; it is back in opposition with just more members this time. This constant rhetoric of Labor, Labor, Labor, 'We are not in government. We do not find ourselves two years in, or two years out from an election'.

There are constant excuses. Ask a minister a question, 'Oh, Labor did this two years ago'. Ask a minister a question. 'Oh, Labor did this four years ago'. Ask a minister a question about what they are doing right now to better child protection system in the Northern Territory, 'Oh, Labor did this four years ago, eight years ago, six years ago'. This is constant cycle. They are stuck in opposition mode and they are the government of the Northern Territory. It is shameful and pathetic.

This blame game is a desperate attempt to try to dismiss every decision. This is a clear and pathetic attempt to try to wash their hands of any responsibility. This is a clear attempt by the CLP government to not be accountable for the decisions and the actions it is making now, which Territorians are disagreeing with, questioning and becoming increasingly concerned about.

In the amended motion today before the House I agree that there is some sensibility which the minister has put forward. I am concerned about some of the gaps which the Member for Johnston articulated earlier in her contribution to debate, in not seeing some of the glaring calls from the child protection sector.

We heard earlier today some of the comments that were made by the CEO of NAAJA, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, Mr Ben Grimes, on ABC radio. Some of the comments were clearly articulated by Mr Grimes openly on radio in the interview this morning. He was about the report that was tabled by the Member for Darwin yesterday. Mr Grimes responded:

'The report paints a really clear picture and raises real questions around a minister who has done nothing for two years. There is a lot of explaining that needs to happen around why the minister has not acted, given how grave these failings are.

'I think one of the key things to highlight, unfortunately, is that nothing in the report is new. These are things that frontline organisations have been saying ever since this government has come to power. There have been four coronial investigations and reports handed since the minister has had the portfolio. They all say the same thing, so the minister has known this information for two years and has done nothing about reforming the issues that are leaving vulnerable Territory children without protections that are needed.'

There is more of that interview. It is alarming and, unfortunately, telling.

There is an amendment to the Labor opposition's original motion put forward by my colleague the Member for Gwoja. There is constant action about default excuses and the blame game—'Everyone else's fault except mine' and 'Everyone else's fault except the government'. The CLP has been in power for two years. The Country Liberal Party's lack of accountability and response when it comes to taking on accountability for what is happening in the Territory is, unfortunately, a heavy topic when it comes to child protection.

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I note as well that the process will continue. Our Labor opposition will keep asking the hard questions of the government. I expect that we will keep getting the excuses and the diversions. With the heaviness and importance of child protection in the Territory, I find it baffling that when we are raising such important processes and motions that the government has moved an amendment.

We all agree that more needs to be done. However, not to speak about reform in child protection until the horrific incident with Kumanjayi Little Baby is disingenuous. There was some weird waft of a rumour that sometime last year the …

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: An important motion originally brought to the Assembly by the Member for Gwoja, will be amended now by the Member for Port Darwin.

I turn to the processes regarding each region's support and resourcing. We have six identified regions in the Northern Territory and understanding what is resourced across every region would be important. That could have been a front foot for the government.

The clear lack of respect from the CLP for public servants who are working in child protection is quite hurtful. Hearing some of the language, particularly the Member for Fannie Bay calling child protection workers confused—every child protection worker in the Northern Territory is somehow so confused that they do not understand their job. That is ridiculous. She has every opportunity to clear that up. She can talk to those child protection workers. I know some of those child protection workers and that is not what they have said to me. I will not repeat what they have said to me, because it would be unparliamentary to repeat some of the frustrations that they have heard, but also the hurt that they are experiencing with being trivialised and tonight being dismissed, not recognised or acknowledged for the heaviness of the work that they do day-in and day-out—things that people would not even imagine, which are horrific.

What the Member for Port Darwin, the Minister for Children and Families, has put in is a holding pattern. I understand that, but not having a CLP government that prioritises child protection in the Northern Territory, talking about how broken the system is, but have not actually articulated, verbalised or spoken about the concerns earlier than now, is rather disingenuous. I guess we can say that it is horrifically sad in the sense that it is been caused by such an horrific incident that we are now seeing some action or some interest, maybe—I will give them a little bit of that—in entering and talking about child protection, but again we hear the dismissive tone of the CLP talking about the needs of reform, not any type of genuine interest in working with the experts in the field because we continually hear that the CLP government knows best.

The 17 members of the CLP government know better than every expert in child protection and domestic violence and sexual violence prevention expert. They know better because you cannot tell them what to do, and they will tell everyone else what to do, but they do not want to be questioned. They do not want to hear concerns; they do not like giving answers is the clear message that we are hearing in most of the debate.

The blame game, the diversions, the lack of accountability and responsibility when it comes to understanding what Territorians actually want to see, and that is the resources—like Member for Gwoja said, it is not all about money, but the resources—the respect that is needed in such sensitivity when it comes to child protection in the Northern Territory and the collaboration is clearly the one thing that the CLP government cannot swallow their pride. Collaborating and working in partnership all sounds too hard. It almost sounds like you would want to be a good government if you did any consultation, collaboration or partnership. No, that is not in the CLP's toolbox because of the processes that the government thinks that they know better.

Mr MACKAY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move that the question be put in the interests of time. I think there is only a minute left of General Business, and I am keen to have a vote on this motion.

Motion agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

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PAPER TABLED
Quarterly Members' Fuel Transaction Report – Quarter 3 July to September 2026

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Quarterly Members' Fuel Transaction Report, Quarter 3 from July to September 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

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

VISITORS
Dr Albert Foreman's Family and Friends

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We welcome the family and friends of the late Dr Albert Foreman to the Legislative Assembly as we pay tribute to his life and contribution to the Northern Territory. I give a special welcome to his wife, Eugenia.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms CAHILL (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, I reflect upon the extraordinary life of Dr Albert Foreman OAM, a life well and fully lived. He was a humble legend who made a significant and enduring difference.

Passing away at age 95 at a time when many were well into retirement, Dr Foreman remained a registered and practising medical practitioner in Darwin until a few months before his passing in August 2026. His contribution to medicine was rightly recognised with an OAM in 2017. Working a six-day week, his mantra remained one of 'I just keep going because I do not want to give it up. Medicine is good for you; it gets me out of bed each day.'

Dr Albert Foreman will be remembered as not only a dedicated clinician but also a man with a rather eclectic and varied career. Training initially as a civil engineer, his career choices were diverse and varied, all of which fashioned him to become the outstanding and much-loved humanitarian that he was.

Born in Melbourne in 1931, Albert grew up in Footscray and first came to the Territory in 1957 as a civil engineer with the Commonwealth Works Department, working briefly in Darwin on projects, including the Ludmilla subdivision—a long time ago—and the Parap water tower. He also supervised a team dredging the harbour for unexploded World War II bombs and spent four years in and around Alice and the Barkly region doing town water supply, sanitation and sewerage works, as well as working on the highway and bush roads.

Not satisfied with his civil engineering career and feeling out of place, he left that calling to study theology and became eligible to be ordained as an Anglican priest. Instead, he decided against this to take a position as senior engineer for roads and aerodromes in Papua New Guinea, where he believed he could make a difference as the nation emerged. Again under-challenged, he decided to embark upon yet another career, teaching mathematics at the university in Port Moresby.

It was in 1971 that he finally decided to leave engineering for good and to apply to study medicine in Port Moresby, a challenge in itself at age 40. In PNG, at age 40, the opportunity to study medicine arose—an opportunity he often reflected he would have liked to have had at the beginning of his working life. The Dean of Medicine in Port Moresby at the time, Professor Ian Maddocks, later an eminent palliative care specialist who was awarded 2013 Senior Australian of the Year and a close friend of my husband and I, initially rejected his application, saying that at age 40 he was too old to enter the medical profession. According to Dr Foreman, he was overruled by others on the committee and admitted to a calling that he would see give him more than half a century of clinical commitment.

Medicine had always been an interest and, so too, an interest in ear health, growing up with a deaf father who suffered from Meniere's disease. Thus, Dr Albert Foreman OAM completed his MBBS at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1976. He went on to complete a Master of Public Health at the University of Sydney in Australia in 1990, then a Fellowship from the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine in 2000 and a Diploma in Laryngology and Otology at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, United Kingdom, in 1991.

DRAFT

Such was the respect as a clinician that he earned in Papua New Guinea, in 2007 he was awarded Life Membership of the Papua New Guinea Medical Association, an event attended by Royal Darwin Hospital's Dr Mahiban Thomas, who recalls that even now Albert is remembered in Papua New Guinea with the utmost fondness and respect.

In 1994 my husband, Dr Len Notaras, who was Medical Superintendent of Royal Darwin Hospital, noted that Dr Foreman provided the only resident ENT service at the hospital and, indeed, in the Top End. Given the importance of ear health, particularly to our First Nations and remote communities, it was a critical service and one that preserved the hearing of many who would otherwise have suffered a loss was able to preserve.

For Albert, it was about making a contribution to society, which he did in many ways. It was not until 1998, at the age of 70, that he retired from his position as an assistant surgeon at Royal Darwin Hospital, confident now with becoming of full-time specialist such as Dr ABN Rao OAM and Dr Gus Hunter OAM that this was an appropriate time to pass on the baton or otoscope.

Typically committed, he changed and put his time together by running his clinic in his home in Nakara with his wife Jenny, a former health professional herself, and provided outstanding clinical care to many Territorians. Even after retiring from Royal Darwin Hospital, he still maintained close contact with many members of the senior staff, becoming an active member of Royal Darwin Hospital's retired doctor society, whose membership included the like of Dr Alan Walker, Casey Lee and David Lowe to name a few of the esteems.

It was during my time with the AMA I had the privilege of working with Dr Foreman. I have fond memories of many dinners held by the Royal Darwin Hospital's retired doctor society, mainly at Casuarina Club. It was always a good night out.

Albert was a trusted and compassionate doctor, well admired for his empathy and superior communication skills—precious attributes often lost in the hectic day-to-day pursuit of clinical excellence. He listened and took time to explain the condition to the patient, making them comfortable with his friendly approach.

Both my husband, Professor Len Notaras, and myself, with the pleasure we had of knowing Albert and working with him over the years, extend to Jenny, your family and his extended family community our deepest condolences on his passing. His commitment and contribution to our community will never be forgotten.

Vale, Dr Albert Forman, OAM.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is with great sadness we acknowledge the passing of Dr Albert Foreman OAM. Dr Foreman's lifelong dedication to his career, patience and community is evident. Incredibly, he is one of Australia's oldest practising doctors. He retired proudly at 95 years of age, and we are lucky enough in the Territory for him to have spent most of his esteemed career, 50 years, working as a special interest GP in Darwin.

If you had an issue with your hearing, Dr Foreman's name was always the first to be recommended. If you were fortunate enough to have been provided care by Dr Foreman, you would know that his style was eclectic, his personality quirky, and his knowledge impressive. Everyone I have spoken to recently has shared a story about the time they were seen by Dr Foreman.

The family members and friends who are here tonight are evidence of the great legacy Dr Foreman has left in the Territory. The legendary character who had a way with people. A visit to Dr Foreman was never rushed, never dismissed. He took time to get to know his patients personally and provide the true, holistic care that encompasses what it means to be a trusted and compassionate doctor.

You could say that he was old school in the best possible way. Stepping into his practice was like stepping into a time capsule with droves of artefacts, documents, equipment, photographs and a personality that made each person who sat before him at ease.

Dr Foreman was an expert. His commitment to his medical practice was recognised in 2017 when he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. He was a deserving recipient. However, his career spanned across more than general practice.

He started out, as the Member for Port Darwin said, as a civil engineer. He took the opportunity to work in the NT, across Australia and overseas. It was not until his forties when he began working and helping at

DRAFT

hospitals in Papua New Guinea, which inspired him to study medicine. He largely worked in the Northern Territory at the Royal Darwin Hospital but is also remembered for his practice in rural and remote areas. Many of his colleagues, peers and community have paid tribute to the life of Dr Foreman, which is a true indication of how well he was loved and how much he will be missed.

A staff member of Dr Foreman said he was not only a good boss but truly a good man who made a difference in their life. Others said there was simply no stopping him. Clearly Dr Foreman is a Territory treasure. He led an extraordinary life and provided an invaluable and provided an invaluable service to his community.

On behalf of the Territory Labor team, we extend our sincere condolences to Dr Foreman, to all who loved him, to his friends who enjoyed him, and to his patients who adored him. We acknowledge his lasting contribution that was made in the Northern Territory. He is and will be irreplaceable. The Territory community, as well as specifically our Territory medical community, will never be the same.

Vale, Dr Albert Foreman OAM.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the passing of Dr Albert Edward Foreman OAM and to place on the record our profound gratitude for his life of service and compassion.

I acknowledge and welcome his beloved wife, Jenny, who joins us in the Assembly this evening, and the friends and family who have come. Thank you for honouring a truly amazing Territorian. We are very sorry for your loss and on behalf of all Territorians, we send our deepest condolences and love.

Together we are mourning the passing of a good man, a much-loved Territorian and a dearly beloved husband. Dr Foreman passed away on 20 August this year, aged 95. He had only stopped working in June of this year where he had continued to practise as Australia's oldest doctor specialising in ear, nose and throat conditions.

Dr Foreman was incredibly passionate about helping others and worked tirelessly from his surgery and office spaces in Nakara. To his patients and those he met there, this space was a living museum with decades worth of photos and memorabilia bearing witness to his incredible life and journey. I have a particularly strong memory of having to see Dr Foreman, I might have been either a late teenager in my early 20s, and it is fair to say with all of his incredible equipment in there, I was fairly terrified, Jenny, of what was going to happen. I thought I might be having brain surgery or something. It was incredible.

He was so meticulous and reassuring, I honestly did not feel a thing the entire time I was there and I left amazed at the skill and expertise and the technical know-how just from observing that room and then having him—I cannot remember what had happened to me, but I remember being scared when I walked in and then full of admiration and respect when I walked back out the door for his skill and his talent. It really was incredible and I think that people saw that so deeply in him. It was not like just going to a doctor. It was an entire experience and almost a lesson in, or a glimpse into, the profession of what he did.

I went out to visit Darwin-based photographer Georgia Politis, with her Divercity Series exhibition, which is on until the weekend. I saw the beautiful photo that she had taken of Dr Foreman. She felt so privileged to interview and photograph Dr Foreman in February last year as part of her second Divercity Series. I have some of the photographs that were taken by Georgia. She provided them to me so I could table them for the record, Mr Deputy Speaker. They are beautiful photos with Jenny and their lovely dog, Mia.

Dr Foreman lived a truly extraordinary life which almost reads like an adventure story—a bit like going to his surgery. It was a life filled with so many different chapters across different careers and continents that it seemed as though Albert had lived several lifetimes in one.

Born in Melbourne on 16 June 1931, Dr Foreman grew up in Footscray. After earning a civil engineering degree at Swinburne Technical College in 1953 and a Bachelor of Civil Engineering at the University of Melbourne in 1954, Albert worked worldwide as an engineer in his early years. This included the Snowy Mountains, Melbourne, Alice Springs and Darwin, and a year working on the M6 in England in 1961.

Albert was a deeply thoughtful man with an eclectic mind. A keen historian and talented linguist, he spoke fluent Greek and Hebrew. Because of his diverse interests, it is not only natural that there were many forks in the road which could have led to many different directions in his life.

In the early 1960s he studied theology at Ridley College under the renowned biblical scholar Reverend Leon Morris and seriously grappled with whether he should enter the ministry. As Robert Frost wrote in *The Road*

DRAFT

Not Taken, way leads on to way. A chance meeting with the Katherine doctor on a Melbourne tram sparked Albert's calling into medicine.

In the late 1960s, he worked in senior engineering roles in Papua New Guinea in remote camps where he helped in hospitals. This opened his eyes to healthcare even more and, at the age of 40, he commenced formal medical studies in 1971.

He graduated in 1975 and returned to Papua New Guinea to work for several more years. He then worked as a doctor in hospitals across Ethiopia, Tanzania, Swaziland, Jerusalem and India, often in dangerous conditions where it was difficult to treat patients. He eventually returned to Melbourne to practice.

There he met his beloved wife, Jenny, who worked as a nurse at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. They were married in 1983 and soon moved to Darwin together. Albert worked at the ENT Clinic at the Royal Darwin Hospital until 1999, treating thousands of Territorians as an expert in tropical, remote and rural medicine. Albert also found time to work with the Royal Flying Doctor Services across Port Augusta, Alice Springs and Katherine.

He also completed a Master of Public Health at Sydney University where his thesis was on otitis media, which is a middle ear infection in Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. He was admitted as a Fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine in 2000.

In recognition of a lifetime of dedicated, compassionate service to others, in 2017 Dr Foreman was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to medicine, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Dr Sam Heard, NT Chair of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, noted that his greatest legacy will be the countless people he cared for and the difference he made to their lives. He was known by Territorians as miracle worker for his work to heal the ear, nose and throat ailments of countless patients.

Reading through the many tribute posts to Dr Foreman online and on social media, there are many heartwarming stories and testimonials about how Dr Foreman's empathy, expertise and encyclopaedic medical knowledge healed conditions which had long troubled patients. Over his many decades practising medicine, Dr Forman treated generations of Territorians. Many of us, just like I have, will have direct personal experiences of his compassionate care.

Dr Foreman's deep Christian faith was central to who he was. The Right Reverend Dr Greg Anderson, Anglican Bishop of the Northern Territory, reflected on Albert as a kind, gentle and good man and a devoted parishioner and layman at the Christchurch Cathedral for decades.

Bishop Anderson spoke movingly about the deep love that Albert had for his wife, Jenny, and how they supported each other to attend services each week over many decades. Bishop Anderson spent time with Albert in his final days and noted that Albert was at peace with coming to the end of his life surrounded by Jenny's love and the love of his community.

The Dean of Darwin, the Very Reverend Rob Lewin, who joins us in the gallery today—thank you, Rob—described Albert as a pillar of the Anglican community in Darwin and the Northern Territory. He noted that Albert was deeply influenced theologically through his studies at Ridley College in Melbourne. Albert spoke regularly about his time there and reflected on his guiding ethic that all we do in life is in response to God's unmerited love for us.

This sentiment echoes the first Christian sermon ever preached in Australia in 1788 by the Reverend Richard Johnson, who took Psalm 116, verse 12 as his theme: *And what shall I render unto the Lord, for all his blessings unto me?*

We can say that Doctor Albert Foreman rendered all through his extraordinary life of compassion and service to others and to the Northern Territory.

On behalf of this Assembly, I extend our deepest condolences to Dr Foreman's family, friends and the many Territorians who loved him deeply and will always remember him. May he rest in eternal peace.

J DAVIS (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also pay tribute to Dr Albert Foreman OAM, who as we know, passed away peacefully on 20 August, aged 95.

DRAFT

We have already heard stories of Dr Foreman, a much-loved Territorian and general practitioner for more than 50 years, who kept caring for his patients up until he retired in June—half a century of medical practice. I was one of the many Territorians who was lucky enough to go and see Dr Foreman pretty frequently. His surgery was, as we have just heard, a complete adventure in itself, full of amazing photos of his time in Papua New Guinea and an incredible chair with this ear suction machine that looked like something out of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. He would sometimes give me some medicine in a blank envelope with some like scratchy writing on the front—I never was quite sure what it was, but it definitely fixed me up—and a visit to him not only fixed up our ears but filled you up with stories of an amazing life well lived.

We have heard his path to medicine was not the usual one. I heard many of these stories—he generously shared them as I sat in that torture chair. It was not a torture as I sat in the chair. We know he worked first as a civil engineer here in the Territory and travelled all over the world, studied theology, began studying medicine at the age of 40, went on to practise across Australia and across the world and, thankfully for us, came here to Darwin to Nakara where he ran his practice.

I remember seeing him when he was in his seventies and him telling me that he had now decided he was going to study law, so I do not know where that ended up, but I told him medicine was much more interesting than law, having been someone who studied law, but I am not sure where the end of that story was. We have heard many stories of him. He was greatly loved. He was remembered as a doctor who was compassionate and generous with his time and had wonderful stories. As I said, I certainly heard many of them.

I also mention more broadly what his career says about general practice because Dr Foreman knew his patients over years and generations. I had three generations of family who went to see him, and that kind of continuity is exactly what a great GP does, and he certainly was a wonderful GP. I cannot count how many other people I told to go to him. Whenever anyone had any kind of ear trouble, I said I know exactly who you need, so we were just so lucky to have him.

I remember asking him when he was planning to retire and he said I want to work until my very last day, and that is almost exactly what he did.

What an amazing man he was; knowledgeable, skilled, kind, compassionate and incredibly committed. I offer my deepest condolences to Jenny, to all of his family, his friends, his colleagues and the many patients who will both miss him and remember him with gratitude.

Vale, Dr Albert Forman OAM.

Mr EDGINGTON (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, today we pay tribute to a remarkable Territorian, an extraordinary doctor and a man whose life was defined by service to others. Dr Albert Foreman OAM dedicated around 50 years to the practice of medicine, caring for generations of Territorians and making an enduring contribution to the health and wellbeing of our community. His passing on 20 August 2026, aged 95, marks the loss of a much-loved and highly respected member of our Territory community.

Dr Foreman's story is also a story of the Northern Territory itself, one of hard work, determination, service and the deep commitment to the people who call this place home.

He first arrived in the Territory in 1957, working as a civil engineer with the Commonwealth Works Department. In those early years, he helped build the foundations of the Territory we know today. Contributing to important infrastructure projects across Darwin, Central Australia and in the Barkly. His work included the Ludmilla subdivision, the Parap water tower, water supply and sewerage projects, road and transport infrastructure and the dredging of Darwin Harbour to address unexploded wartime ordnance. There was also road and transport infrastructure in Katherine and Borroloola to Timber Creek and to the Roper River region. His contribution helped support the growth and development of communities across the Territory.

Amazingly, he went on to pursue a career in medicine and began studying medicine at the age of 40. He brought the same dedication and practical commitment to improving people’s lives. Across decades of service, he worked in a range of roles within NT Health; including as a hospital medical officer, senior hospital medical officer and assistant surgeon at Royal Darwin Hospital. He also worked alongside health services and fellow practitioners through hospital and community-based practice, developing a reputation as a trusted clinician and a dedicated general practitioner with a particular interest in ear, nose and throat medicine.

For generations of Territorians, Dr Foreman was more than a doctor; he was someone they could turn to for advice, reassurance and care. He understood the importance of accessible healthcare, particularly for people

DRAFT

living in rural and remote communities where having an experienced and committed doctor can make an enormous difference.

His dedication was evident in the years he continued practising well beyond the conventional retirement age, remaining committed to his patience until shortly before his retirement in June 2026. That commitment speaks volumes about the kind of man he was. Medicine was not simply his profession; it was a lifelong calling.

Dr Sam Heard, the Northern Territory Chair of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, described Dr Foreman as an extraordinary doctor, recognising the legacy of his commitment to Territorians. Those words capture what so many people will remember: a doctor who showed up, who cared deeply and who devoted himself to serving others.

In 2017 Dr Foreman was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to medicine, particularly in rural and remote communities. This recognition has reflected a lifetime of achievement, but the greatest measure of his contribution is found in the countless lives he touched, the families he supported and the communities that benefited from his care.

I extend my sincere condolences to Dr Foreman's wife, Jenny, and family, friends, former colleagues and all those who had the privilege of knowing him.

We thank Dr Albert Foreman OAM for his extraordinary service to the Territory for six decades, first helping build its infrastructure and then caring for its people. His contribution will never be forgotten. May he rest in peace.

Mr PATEL (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I honour a truly remarkable Territorian, Dr Albert Foreman OAM, who passed away 20 August 2026, aged 95.

As the Member for Casuarina, I speak with enormous respect for a man who spent decades caring for our families in Nakara and across the Northern Territory. His story is about more than medicine; it is about courage, kindness and a lifetime spent helping others.

I remember I met him for the first time when I was doorknocking in 2024. He made an effort to come out and talk to me about myself and our party policies. He admired our leader at that time. He showed a lot of interest in me too. We talked about my where I came from and my culture. I was very interested. He was talking to me for more than 30 minutes. I could not stop; I told him that I needed to finish my doorknocking. What I could take from the conversation with him that I still remember, was he said, 'Khoda, you are a young man. Life is a journey. Keep going.' I thank him for that life lesson I learned from him. Thank you, Dr Albert.

Dr Albert was born in Melbourne on 16 June 1931. He did not begin his working life as a doctor. I think we have already heard that many times. He was a civil engineer with the Commonwealth Works Department helping deliver projects in Darwin, including the Ludmilla subdivision and Parap water tower. Before he cared for Darwin's people, he helped build Darwin itself.

Then, at 40 years of age, Dr Albert made a brave decision; he went back to study to become a doctor. Think about that age, 40. When many people are settled in their careers, Dr Albert chose to start again. He returned to the classroom, faced years of hard work, and followed a new calling. He graduated in medicine in 1975. His work would take him across Australia and overseas, including Papua New Guinea and Africa, before he made the Northern Territory his home.

He worked at Royal Darwin Hospital and later established his own practice in Nakara. Over time, that clinic became much more than a place to seek medical treatment; it became a place where family knew that they would be heard, respected and cared for. This part of his story is especially meaningful to me. I raised my children in Darwin's northern suburbs and spent many years running a business in Casuarina. I know how much our community depends on people who turn up day after day and genuinely care. In Nakara, Dr Albert Forman was one of those people.

He was a familiar face, a trusted doctor and a part of the fabric of the neighbourhood. Some of the greatest contribution to our community happened quietly. One person, one family, and one act of kindness at a time. Dr Albert was particularly respected for his expertise in ear, nose and throat conditions. In the Top End, ear health can be a serious concern, especially for children and people living in remote communities. His knowledge helped many patients find relief and better care.

DRAFT

In 2017 he received the Medal of Order of Australia for his service to medicine, particularly in rural and remote areas. It was a fitting honour, yet his greatest legacy was not an award, it was his trust for the people he helped. After his passing people remembered a doctor who listened, shared stories, smiled and treated his patients with dignity. They remembered the relief he bought in difficult moments and the reassurance of knowing he would do his best.

One former staff member recalled arriving in Australia and being offered a job at Dr Albert's clinic, despite having no previous medical experience. He gave that person a chance, guidance and encouragement to build a career. As someone who also came to Australia from overseas, that story touches me deeply. I understand what it means when somebody believes in you before you have had that opportunity to prove yourself. Dr Albert did not only help people get better, he helped people move forward.

His commitment to medicine was extraordinary. At age 91, he was reportedly still working six days a week. That tells a story, six days a week at 91. While others might have enjoyed a long retirement, Dr Albert kept caring for his patients. He even called his practice his retirement job. That tells us something about the man.

Medicine was more than his profession; it was his purpose. He finally retired in June 2026, just two months before his passing, after more than 50 years in medicine. What an extraordinary life of service that he provided for our community. As a father, I think Albert's life gives our children an important lesson. It is never too late to learn, never too late to begin again and never too late to make a difference in our communities.

He helped build this city as an engineer. He then cared for its people as a doctor, and through it all he showed that success is measured not just by what we achieve, but by the lives we touch.

To his wife, Eugenia, his family, friends, colleagues, former patients and anyone who loved him, I extend my deepest condolences. I hope you find comfort in knowing how greatly he was respected and how much he meant to our community. The Northern Territory is a better place because Dr Albert Forman chose to call it home. His kindness and service will live on in the families he cared for and the people he inspired. May he rest in peace.

Mrs CARLSON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I pay tribute to the life and extraordinary service of the late Dr Albert Edward Foreman, OAM. Born on 16 June 1931 and passed away peacefully on 20 August 2026, aged an incredible 95.

Dr Foreman was a remarkable Territorian whose life was defined by determination, compassion, generosity and an unwavering commitment to helping others. His contribution spanned civil engineering, medical research, rural and remote healthcare, and more than five decades of medical service. In 2017, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia, in the general division, with the official citation for service to medicine, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Those words recognise a lifetime of dedication to people living in some of the most isolated communities of the Northern Territory. I acknowledge the man behind the national honour, a man of faith, integrity and deep compassion.

I acknowledge Georgia Politis, whose second edition of the Diversity Series captures Dr Foreman's extraordinary life journey and the experiences that shaped him. Albert Foreman was born in Melbourne in 1931 and grew up in Footscray. As Georgia recounts, his childhood was marked by adventure and adversity. He suffered serious illnesses, including diphtheria and pneumonia, which delayed his schooling. Despite these challenges, two inspiring teachers helped him find his direction.

In 1953 he completed a civil engineering degree at Swinburne Technical College. His engineering career took him across Australia, including the Snowy Mountains, Alice Springs and Darwin. In the Northern Territory he worked on our roads, town development projects, water supplies and other essential infrastructure. He was helping build the foundations of our territory long before beginning his medical career.

In 1967 he accepted a senior engineering position in Papua New Guinea. While working in remote camps, he sometimes assisted in hospitals, inspiring him to pursue medicine. At the age of 40, he made the extraordinary decision to begin his new career. He commenced medical studies in 1971 and graduated in 1975, the year I was born, and completed his internship in Papua New Guinea.

His medical career subsequently took him to hospitals across Africa, Jerusalem, London and India. On returning to Australia, he worked in ear, nose and throat medicine before coming to Darwin to study middle ear diseases in children. This became one of the most significant contributions to the Northern Territory.

DRAFT

Dr Forman recognised the serious impact of chronic ear disease and hearing loss, particularly among Aboriginal children in remote communities. He understood that hearing difficulties could affect a child's education, communication and future opportunities. His research with Menzies School of Health Research and his work at Royal Darwin Hospital contributed to understanding and treating these conditions.

Between 1991 and 1998 he served as a senior ear, nose and throat hospital medical officer at Royal Darwin Hospital. He also worked with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, providing care across rural and remote Australia. this dedication to medicine and remote healthcare formed the foundations of his Order of Australia recognition.

While his professional achievements were extraordinary, personal stories often best demonstrate the kind of man Dr Foreman was. I acknowledge Japeng Pargeter, whose life was profoundly touched by his care. Japeng recalls being diagnosed with thyroid cancer and coming under Dr Foreman's specialist care during an incredibly difficult period. She remembers his encouragement, reassurance and determination to see her recover. He took a close interest in her progress, ensuring she met important milestones throughout her recovery. With his care and support, Japeng went on to make a full recovery. Their relationship did not end there.

Dr Foreman was impressed with Japeng and he offered her employment at his medical surgery at Ellengowan Drive in Nakara. She worked alongside him for nearly four years. What began as a doctor–patient relationship developed into a lasting friendship. Japeng came to regard Dr Foreman as a father figure and developed a close relationship with his wife, Jenny. She speaks of him with enormous affection and gratitude and misses him dearly. That is a powerful testament to the kind of doctor and human being he was.

I also had the privilege of knowing Dr Foreman through my own professional experience while working at the Commonwealth Bank. What stood out to me was his integrity and strong sense of responsibility towards his employees. He was meticulous about ensuring they were paid on time and that their superannuation contributions were made when due. He understood that behind every employee was a family, financial commitments and responsibilities. But for Dr Foreman, meeting those obligations was not simply about complying with the law, it was about doing the right thing. That experience left a lasting impression on me and demonstrated that his compassion extended well beyond the consulting room.

Dr Foreman's generosity extended far beyond the Northern Territory. He continued supporting families in Papua New Guinea and Africa, where he had developed those lasting connections through his earlier work. When families experienced financial hardship, he provided assistance to help young adults continue their education.

He understood that education could change a person's future. Rather than simply expressing concern, he offered practical support when it was needed. He did not seek recognition for these acts of generosity; he simply believed in helping others. His compassion was also shaped by his Christian faith. Dr Foreman was a regular member of the Anglican Church and attended Sunday morning services. His faith was reflected in his kindness, generosity and willingness to serve others.

One of the most cherished parts of Dr Foreman's life was his beloved wife, Jenny. As Georgia Politis recounts, they met while Jenny was working as a nurse at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. Their friendship developed into the lifelong partnership and they married in 1983. Together they worked with the Royal Flying Doctor Service before settling in Darwin. In the later years, Jenny's eye treatment meant sometimes they lived in different states, despite the distance Dr Foreman's affection and devotion remain strong. He cherished their time together, and Jenny always held a special place in his heart.

In 1999 Dr Foreman retired from hospital work and established his medical practice at his home on Ellengowan Drive in Nakara. Retirement meant something different to Albert Forman. He continued treating patients for more than two decades, and at 91 he was still seeing patients six days a week. Remarkably, he continued practising shortly before his passing.

Even after receiving a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2017, he remained committed to the work he loved. Dr Foreman's legacy extends beyond his professional achievements. It lives in the patients he treated, the children whose hearing and health were improved and the families he supported. It lives in the young people overseas whose education he helped make possible. It lives in the employees he treated with fairness and respect, and it lives in people like Japeng, whose relationship with him became one of lasting gratitude and affection.

DRAFT

I thank Georgia Politis for preserving his story through the Divercity Series, ensuring future generations can appreciate his remarkable contribution.

I extend my sincere condolences to Jenny and to Dr Foreman's family, friends, former colleagues and the many Territorians whose lives he has touched.

Dr Albert Edward Foreman OAM lived an extraordinary 95 years. He overcame childhood illness, built a successful engineering career, began studying medicine at 40 and devoted more than five decades to caring for others. He was a dedicated doctor, a generous benefactor and responsible employer, a man of faith and a devoted husband.

His Order of Australia Medal stands as an enduring recognition of his professional service, but perhaps his greatest legacy is found in the gratitude, respect and affection of those who knew him.

The Northern Territory is richer for his contribution and may his life continue to inspire others to serve with compassion, generosity, integrity and humility. Before I end, I do I have one personal recollection of going to his surgery with an ear infection and flying in and out interstate for work many times, it became quite blown up and I went to see Dr Foreman. Jenny pushed me through the backlog and got me an appointment and he told me that he had a love-hate relationship with cotton buds because everyone uses them, however they are no good for you, but it kept him employed, so that is why he loved them as well.

From that, he gave me another tool to use and I took that back to work, and the others at the office were impressed with this little tool that Jenny actually then brought a whole stack to work for us, so we gave them around at the Commonwealth Bank as well.

Rest in peace, Dr Albert Foreman OAM, and thank you for your service.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: On behalf of the Speaker and all Members of the Legislative Assembly, I once again extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Dr Albert Edward Foreman OAM.

Please stand, for those who can, for one minute's silence to honour his life and contribution to the Northern Territory.

Members stood for one minute's silence as a sign of respect.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: With the agreement of the Assembly, I propose we suspend the sittings for five minutes to give the family time to leave.

The Assembly suspended.

Mr CHARLS (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, today I acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of veterans and veteran families across the Northern Territory. In recent weeks, I had the privilege of attending a number of commemorations that remind us of both the sacrifices made in service to our nation and the enduring strength of a veteran community that continues long after uniform service ends.

The anniversary of Australian service in Afghanistan was marked on 11 October. More than 35,000 Australian Defence Force personnel served in Afghanistan and the wider Middle East between 2001 and 2021, making it Australia's longest military commitment.

On 9 September I hosted members of the veteran community, Australian Defence Force personnel and family members at Parliament House to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Australian service in Afghanistan. I acknowledge and thank Brigadier Robert Haertsch, Commander 1st Brigade Australian Army, and Wing Commander Rowan Paice, Commanding Officer 13 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, for attending.

I thank Kris Civitarese, President of the Palmerston RSL and Rural Sub-branch, for his efforts assisting with the event and for his thoughtful address on the significance of the anniversary.

I also acknowledge Annette Rudd, an Afghanistan veteran who shared her personal experiences of service. Annette's reflections provided a powerful reminder of the realities faced by those who deployed and the lasting impact of that service.

On the Sunday I attended the service organised by the Palmerston and Rural RSL Sub-branch at Reg Hillier House in Bees Creek, home of Veterans Australia Northern Territory.

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I acknowledge and thank Rob Burgess, President of Veterans Australia NT, for his unwavering commitment to the veteran community. Through his leadership and advocacy, Veterans Australia NT continues to provide a welcoming space for veterans and their families, to connect, support one another, and remain engaged in the community.

We remember the Australians who lost their lives and the hundreds who were wounded. We acknowledge the significant contribution of Darwin based personnel and members of the First Brigade who served throughout the conflict.

This week we marked National War Widows' Day. War widows have carried a unique burden in service to our nation. We recognised this at the recent National War Widows' Day reception hosted at Parliament. I acknowledge and thank Bonnie Poulter for her contribution to organising the event and bringing our war widows together for this important occasion.

I thank Emily Cook, President of Australian War Widows Inc WA, for her address. Thank you to Chaplain Darren Loechel for providing the blessing and reflection. The strength of war widows has never been measured in medals or citations. Yes, we honour their loved ones, but we also honour them, their courage, resilience, friendship to one another, contribution to our nation and to the Northern Territory.

Tomorrow one of the Northern Territory's own war widows, Marjorie Nelson, celebrates her 100th birthday. On behalf of this Assembly, I extend our warmest congratulations to Marjorie; happy birthday. We thank her for her contribution, resilience and place within our veteran community. I know all members will join me in wishing her a very happy 100th birthday.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr CHARLS: These events remind us that service takes many forms. That brings me to another outstanding event that highlights the ongoing importance of connection and community among veterans. On 18 September the 2026 Veteran Games Darwin Heats were hosted in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government, First Brigade and Veterans First Consulting.

The Veteran Games are a celebration of teamwork, resilience, comradeship and the enduring bonds formed through military surveys. On the day, 12 teams representing Army, Navy, Air Force, United States Marines and the local veterans community came together. There was plenty of competition, determination, and no shortage of good-natured rivalry.

I congratulate First Combat Engineer Regimen for claiming victory on the day and securing $20,000 in the Northern Territory Government's sponsorship to support their participation in the National Finals on the Sunshine Coast. In a surprise announcement, a second team received sponsorship to attend the National Finals.

Through the generosity of Veterans First Consulting and funds raised through the Chin Up Challenge, the team Mad Snakes on a Plane became the lucky recipients of additional support. I acknowledge the team members Matthew, Annette, Robert, Sam, Paps, Thommo, Justin, Kris and Brad. This group of former Defence personnel perfectly captured the spirit of the veteran gains. Events like this help maintain the connections and create opportunities for veterans to build networks and continue looking out for one another.

I wish both teams representing the Northern Territory this coming weekend at the Veterans Games the best of luck and look forward to hearing how they go.

The veteran community remains an important part of the Territory story. Our veterans continue to lead, mentor, volunteer and contribute. Their families continue to support, advocate and strengthen communities.

As we speak about service, sacrifice and the enduring commitment of our Defence community, it is fitting we also pause to remember a soldier whose loss has been felt deeply across the Territory and across the nation. Recently, Corporal Brendan Hannam lost his life while undertaking military training in the Northern Territory. Like every member of the Australian Defence Force, Brendan volunteered to serve something greater than himself.

He accepted the demands of military life, time away from family, uncertainty and responsibility that comes with wearing our nation's uniform. Behind every uniform is a person, son, father, partner, friend, colleague, mate. Behind every loss is a family whose lives are forever changed.

DRAFT

Today our thoughts are with Brendan's family, loved ones and fellow soldiers as they navigate a loss that words can never fully ease. We acknowledge the members of his unit and the wider Defence community who continued their duties while carrying the weight of losing one of their own. The strength of the Defence family prevails. Friends from far and wide came to honour Brendan, a testament to the character of the man they served alongside and to the lifelong bonds that military service creates.

Long after postings change, uniforms are packed away and careers come to an end, those connections endure. In the Northern Territory, Defence is not something distant from our community. It is woven into who we are. When the Defence community grieves, our community grieves alongside them.

To the family and friends of Brendan Hannam, we extend our deepest condolences and our sincere thanks for his service. May we never take that service for granted. To all veterans, current serving personnel, war widows and veteran families across the Northern Territory, we thank you for your service, your sacrifice and your continued contribution to our community.

Lest we forget.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Northern Territory Police Threat Assessment Review Briefing

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, before we go on to the next speaker, in light of the attack on the Independent federal Member for Indi on Monday afternoon, there has obviously been quite a reaction across the community, particularly amongst parliamentarians, so just to let you know, all members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly are invited to attend a briefing on the Northern Territory Police threat assessment review presented by the Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police. That will be tomorrow morning at 8.30 in the Nitmiluk Lounge. It is only for members, and I urge you all to attend.

Mr PAECH (Gwoja): Madam Speaker, I would like to talk about the bush. When I visit remote communities, I do not just visit the bush for the day. I visit the bush because I come from the bush. I stand with the bush, and I want to make sure that we continue to deliver services in the bush for remote people.

I am really annoyed tonight at the Member for Barkly, who is supposed to be the Housing minister, and the Member for Namatjira, who are supposed to represent the bush, but they come in here tonight and they closed down a debate on remote housing. I thought about it. Why do they not want to talk about remote housing? You know why; because they are failing when it comes to delivering remote housing. and that failure starts in the Member for Barkly's own back yard, because he is the Housing minister, and is he building a single house in Alpurrurulam? No. Is he building a house in Arlparra? No. Is he building a house in Borroloola? No. Is he building a house in Ti Tree? No. Is he building a house in Elliott? No. It is a giant fat failure from the CLP that they do not want you to know about. This is the Housing minister who is not even going to deliver a house in his communities in his own electorate.

Now, when you turn to Gwoja, now this is for everyone tuning in tonight, for all my communities, Papunya no houses, Nyirripi no houses, Yarralin no houses, Pigeon Hole no houses, Amanbidji no houses, Bulla no houses, Laramba no houses, Willowra no houses. Mount Liebig no houses, Haasts Bluff no houses. That is why the CLP government do not want to talk about remote housing because they are not delivering anything in the bush. They are failing. When it comes to repairs and maintenance I have constituents out bush right now who are saying to me, 'Japanangka, we reported our air conditioner to Housing three months ago and it is still broken. Our toilet we cannot use; it is still broken.'

We need to continue to shine the light on the failure that is the CLP government when it comes to remote housing. I am not going to be lectured by any member in this parliament about remote housing because they are the ones who come in here and want to silence everyone and not talk about it because they do not want to highlight their failures. They are trying to cover up their plan that they do not want to deliver anything in the bush. This is a government who has forgotten the bush. They have not delivered. When it comes to roads, when it comes to housing, when it comes to remote services, the CLP do not care because they are the careless party. Let us make that clear.

When we go around, like I said, I go bush, I do not just visit these homes; I stay in these homes. I cook in the kitchens, I use the bathrooms, I sleep with my family in the bedrooms, listening to their heartache and their stories that this government is a failed government. I hear the anger, I hear the frustration, I hear the sadness

DRAFT

from people in my electorate when they say to me, what is this government doing to help us in our homes? Well, it is pretty evident tonight. They just shut down debate when it comes to remote housing.

When it comes to families talking about when they're getting new houses, this CLP government silences them because we know that the Housing minister, who is a bush member, cannot even build houses in his own electorate. What a disgrace. What a shame job that this government talks about …

Mr Kerle: You are a disgrace—worst Attorney-General in history.

Mr PAECH: The Member for Blain keeps interjecting. If you want to speak, jump up and have your own time; do not interrupt me.

It is abundantly clear that this government has absolutely forgotten about the bush.

You go out bush and you see houses empty, boarded up and locked up. Then you hear that the waitlist for a house is over five years. The Housing minister, a remote minister, brings in a new policy this week—three strikes and they evict you. Where do you go? You become homeless. This is what you are getting under the CLP government. A lack of investment, a lack of care and a lack of planning for the bush.

I will not be lectured by the CLP when it comes to remote housing. This is a government that is making more Aboriginal people across the Territory homeless. When it comes to housing, we hear from builders and families out bush, all saying that less activity is happening in the bush now. The CLP government has pulled on the park brake and is not building houses.

I had a forum last week in town with the Member for Nightcliff, where three business owners told us that the Member for Braitling, who is supposed to be a champion for Central Australia, said, 'I told everyone to get in from the bush and start building houses in town for my constituents'. Newsflash—people in the bush are Territorians. They are everyone's constituents. They deserve service, infrastructure, new homes and respect.

While we are talking about the Member for Barkly, let us talk about his abject failures in Alpurrurulam. That community has been calling on the Chief Minister for months for help, for police resources, for law and justice groups and for support in that community. What have they got? Nothing. Silence. You can hear the crickets because this government has walked away from Alpurrurulam. It does not care.

While we are at it and while we are talking big and talking tough like the CLP does, the Member for Barkly—I am holding a flyer, in case Alpurrurulam has forgotten him because he has not been there for that long—promised Alpurrurulam a new council. Did he deliver? No, he has failed. He promised Alpurrurulam a new police station. Has he delivered that? No, he has failed, and he has blamed the Commonwealth. You are the one who promised to build it on your flyer, Member for Barkly. Did he deliver a water project? No. Did he deliver grass and lights at the football oval? No. Did he deliver a law and justice group that the community has been asking for? No. Did he deliver community-based solutions for crime? No. He is ignoring those community-based solutions to tackle crime because he is ignoring the community.

The Chief Minister cannot even be bothered to get her backside to Alpurrurulam to listen to community members, who have local solutions to overcome their challenges. I have been talking to people from Alpurrurulam on the phone. They have said we need help. We need help for law and justice, we need help for police, we need help to fix our roads that have potholes so big that your car can fall into the hole. We need new houses.

According to the Housing minister's own plan, not a single house will be built in Alpurrurulam. When it comes to the CLP's commitment for the bush, you only have to look at the CLP members' own electorates to see that they are failing their own people. The people of Alpurrurulam voted for you, Member for Barkly, and you have turned your back on them. You have not even delivered on your own commitments. You have not even responded to their calls for a coordinated approach to antisocial behaviour.

You are the one who promised a new police station, but you will get up later and blame everyone else. Newsflash—you are the person who promised a new police station for Alpurrurulam. The blame game is over. If you mean what you say, deliver on your own commitments.

While I am on my feet, I seek leave to table the Member for Barkly's election commitments at the 2024 election.

Leave not granted.

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Mr PAECH: All right, there you go. This government does not even want to have on the record its own election commitments. That is how afraid it is of delivering.

To everyone in Alpurrurulam and the Barkly, we will make sure that we put all of these on Facebook so that you can see what you were promised and what this government is too afraid to deliver and commit to.

Quite frankly, when you look at this, do you know what this is worth? Nothing. Rip it up because it is rubbish, like the CLP. It does not care about anyone in the bush because it makes all these promises and delivers nothing.

Where are all the new houses? There are no houses in Elliott, Alpurrurulam, Arlparra or Ti Tree. That is from a person who is supposed to be the Remote Housing minister who cannot even deliver on his own patch.

When you look across the bush and see nothing happening, do you know who you can blame? The CLP, or, as we have come to know, the Care Less Party. Unless you are in Darwin, the CLP does not care about you.

Dr RAHMAN (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, tonight I live my 100th substantive speech in this House. I could not be more pleased to be speaking about two of my favourite Fong Lim stakeholders, the Haileybury Rendall School and Stuart Park Primary School.

Tonight I take an opportunity to reflect in detail on some of the wonderful work at both of those schools. As all of you will know, earlier this year I reflected several times on the fact that Stuart Park Primary School turned 60 this year.

It is not just an education community, it is a community hub in and of itself. It has strong teaching and wonderful student achievement and partnerships. Stuart Park Primary School was opened in 1966 with 320 students and 11 teachers, initially accommodating students at the former Darwin Primary School in Wood Street for its first term. Today is has second and third generations of local families attending, reflecting its deep and rich history.

It services students from Stuart Park, Bayview, Tipperary Waters, Woolner and Winnellie and further afield. People at that school speak more than 33 languages. It is an incredibly rich, diverse cultural place and I love going to assemblies there, particularly around Harmony Day, because you see that represented.

There are some 586 students enrolled at that school with four preschool groups and 65 staff members, including 35 teaching staff members. The place has benefited from some fantastic principals over the years, including Bernie Bree, Danielle Hall and now Maria Albion.

Bernie Bree was there for 17 years and used to teach me in Year 5. I remember well what an excellent teacher he was at the time, and he remains to this day a part of the fabric in their community.

Recent staff achievements also include the fact that we had people like Carla Kennedy and Biancia Mayabe recognised as Early Childhood Teacher of the Year. As noted recently again, Alastair Marshall, who does wonderful work with assemblies, choirs and school kids there, has been nominated for Primary Educator of the Year this year as well.

The staff also contributed fantastic professional development. In July 2026, they hosted 60 educators from eight schools in an explicit teaching–learning master class. Dr Lorraine Hammond, Sophie Hawke and Jane Edwards led the program and Carla Kennedy contributed as the internal instructing coach. They are committed to their students in every regard, as well as to their staff.

Their NAPLAN achievements are outstanding. In 2026, the Year 3 students achieved mean scale scores above the Australian comparison in all five domains of reading, writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation. And numeracy. Year 5s are also super strong. In the match cohort, tracking the same students from Year 3 in 2024 to Year 5 and 2026, there has been demonstrated growth above the national standard, the Australian capacity of writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation and numeracy. Grammar, punctuation and numeracy were in particular strengths, with growth exceeding both the NT and the Australian comparisons.

These results support the school's continued commitment to explicit direct instruction and evidence-based literacy and numeracy practices. Priorities for 2027 I know include strengthening targeted intervention, accelerating ready growth and extending students already achieving strongly. They are extremely strong in sport, music and the performing arts, which I know well from sitting in with their school band on a fairly regular

DRAFT

basis in the trombone section, as I did on the 60th anniversary arts festival on 21 July, which was a wonderful showcase of student artwork, the band, the choir, the guitar ensemble and all the dancers who performed in *The Beat*. The celebration brought the community together in terms of students, staff, families and community representatives, with the school history displaying added connection to earlier generations.

I am proud to have supported and bankrolled the entirety of a big movie night for the community in August, where we had more than 200 families represented; that is the strength of the community at that place. I love being part of it.

There is a fantastically active school council which I am proud to be on as an invited member. Volunteers contribute to events and fundraising in governments. To Maria Albion, the Principal; the leadership team; teachers; support staff; students; the school council and families, congratulations on turning 60. I am looking forward to attending the quiz night tomorrow and your collective contribution continues to make a proud tradition of public education at Stuart Park Primary.

On the other end of the spectrum, in Berrimah, Northcrest, I represent Haileybury Rendall School, a magnificent school which, again, does not necessarily get the attention it deserves as it is a private school. It is important for us to have independent schools that are extremely strong and none are stronger than Haileybury. Do not forget it. Their mission is to deliver exceptional educational experiences and their pillars of educational excellence, social justice, enterprise and entrepreneurship and their international outlook have made them an extremely high performing school, which we are lucky to have in terms of what it offers the Northern Territory.

The school was opened in 2018, building on the foundations of the former Kormilda College, with only 426 students. Every year since then, their enrolments have gone up and by May 2026 there are 1,060 students enrolled there, including 180 Indigenous kids, 130 of whom are borders. They are a wonderful school in that regard, and many will know that St John's College shut down its boarding program last year and Haileybury took those borders on and they have all done exceptionally well.

In 2022, in fact, Haileybury Randall School won the Australian Education Award's Boarding School of the Year award, and this year they also won the Regional School of the Year award. It is not without reason. It is a wonderful school populated by excellent staff, great community and wonderful teachers.

They are also very committed to explicit instruction of the, 'I do, we do, you do' scenario and they have been from the very beginning. It is reflected in their NAPLN results, which they are the top junior school for NAPLAN results in the Northern Territory for the last five years running; in 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025. That is something worth noting. Like their predecessor Kormilda, who offered the International Baccalaureate, they have a different educational offering, the Victorian Certificate of Education. It is important that we have a diversity of options for people considering elite schooling in the Northern Territory.

I congratulate their dux from last year, Ethan Cruster, who finished with an ATAR of 99.9 in that VCE; that is no small feat. The class of 2026 will include 73 Year 12 graduates, of whom 24 are Indigenous, 23 are borders, and five are as far afield as from China. They are not just an academic institution; they do phenomenal work in performing arts—anyone who saw *We Will Rock You* this year, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* or their other school productions will know what an amazing school they are.

They are also a centre for excellence in Indigenous education. I think that is important to remember. They educate the whole person, they are a school that adopts learning technologies, but they are not just about the haves, they are also about making sure that people get equitable access to education.

On that note, I call out the Clontarf awards that I went to on Monday at Haileybury. Clontarf, for those who are not familiar, partners with schools to create programmes to encourage students to gain confidence, self-esteem, develop employment prospects and strengthen their leadership opportunities. Nationally, there are some 160 programs across six states, 12,000 students of whom 1,200 are in Year 12. In the NT, Clontarf Academies partner with 20 schools, 15 in the Top End, five in the Central area and there are 1,100 students enrolled. Education is a huge priority for them, as is health and wellbeing and they have a strong commitment to supporting graduates into employment. I think it is important we recognise the great work that Clontarf does.

On Monday night, I was delighted to be there to hear Angas Haines, an Anmatyerre man from Ti Tree and lives in Alice Springs, and Micah Maymuru, a Yolngu man from Nhulunbuy, who emceed the proceedings. They did a beautiful job. They talked about families who travelled to see the place and their highlights of footy, worksite visits and camps, and the NT Cup AFL Carnival. I shout out Brad Ryan, who encouraged the

DRAFT

award winners that night to give speeches and be heard; they were beautiful speeches that were really moving. I call out, with the remaining time that I have, the special award winners from that night.

In the Attendance Awards, middle school category, with 98% plus went to Levi Vincent-Wanami and in the senior school Attendance Award category with 98% plus as well, went to Jacob Nawia. In the Leadership Awards, the middle school award went to Tyrique Donald, and the senior school award went to Sonny Smiler. In the Employment Award category, the middle school award went to Elijah Anderson, and the senior school award to Simon Johnson Junior.

The Clontarf Spirit Awards middle school went to Joseph Ragget and senior school to Micah Maymuru. The Year 12 graduates, a dozen have graduated this year. Congratulations to Quayd Baker, Nathias Bourke-Miller, Maxie Brown, Colin Morgan, Jamison Nabegayo, Jacob Nawia, Mazlan Patrick, Ethan Piening, Tylar Raymond, Jaren Samba, Sonny Smiler and Danny Vincent-Wanambi.

I thank these two schools, Stuart Park and Haileybury for the exceptional work you do. It is a real honour to be associated with you. I am looking forward to the award ceremonies and season coming where we will get to spend a lot more time together.

I do not have many schools in my electorate, but I am proud to say Stuart Park Primary in Haileybury Rendall School are two of the finest, and it is my great privilege to represent you in this place.

Mr McGRATH (Mulka): Madam Speaker, I will talk about a success story in my electorate, the Prime Minister's Literary Awards. There is something special at Mulka communities for the NT and the nation that I would like to share this evening with fellow parliamentarians.

The Prime Minister's Literary Awards are the richest literature prizes in Australia, worth $80,000 to winners. They recognise the exceptional contributions from Australian writers, illustrators, poets and historians. Announced on September 10, the 2026 winner for the fiction was *A Piece of Red Cloth* by the NT authors Leonie Norrington, Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs, Djawa Burarrwanga, and D Maymuru. Merrkiyawuy, Djawa and D Maymuru are Yolngu cultural custodians, leaders and educators.

This was a cause for great celebration for Yolngu, for all in my electorate. Such a major win and recognition. Merrkiyawuy and D are also co-authors of Welcome to My Country and Song Spirals. Leonie Norrington is a multi multi-award-winning North Australian author who grew up in Barunga.

This book represents a pioneering collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal storytellers. *A Piece of Red Cloth* is a powerful and unique novel. It is based on the oral history and told through Yolngu eyes presenting ancestors as the Yolngu remember them. Proud, strong, resilient people in control of the world and interacting with foreigners on their own terms.

The story explores the complex interactions, both social and cultural, of Yolngu with Makassan Trepang traders who sailed on the trade winds to the coast of Arnhem Land over hundreds of years. This is more than just the trade of Trepang. There is also religion and language such as Islam; there are ceremonial traits in my culture as well.

The legacy of these interactions is still active, visible, alive in Yolngu cultural life and in language today. Well beyond the banning of the Makassan Trepang trade at Federation way back in 1901.

There is more to celebrate. *A Piece of Red Cloth* was also the winner for Fiction in the NT Literary Awards and also winner of Australian Book Industry Awards for Social Impact Book of the Year 2026. It was shortlisted in the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Fiction 2026 and several other awards.

I congratulate these high achievements of the authors and these Yolngu authors as well. We are very proud of a long list of famous and internationally renowned artists and musicians from north-east Arnhem Land. Now authors and recognised cultural knowledge holders have joined their ranks. Many thanks.

Mr BURGOYNE (Braitling): Madam Speaker, as we are all aware, last week my home town of Alice Springs was battered by a one in 40-year sudden storm cell. We knew something was wrong and brewing when we had a hailstorm on Friday 16 October with a major storm falling on Monday 19 October. It was a storm which lasted under 30 minutes but end up with around 9,000 properties left without power.

DRAFT

From homes to critical services, some homes had their roofs completely torn off and trees were uprooted in some streets. I walked through some streets to see every tree had been torn down. A fallen tree in Tmara Mara Circuit busted a water main, causing a brief water outage. There were many challenges afoot.

It was not just Alice Springs; other communities were affected, including Hermannsburg, Wallace Rockhole and Amoonguna.

I immediately flew home to support my home town and the resilience and the community spirit cannot be understated.

The emergency operations centre was stood up and the government agencies ensured the safety of the Alice Springs community.

I take this opportunity to thank the group leaders from the centre:

- The Local Emergency Committee and Emergency Operations Centre Chair, Acting Superintendent Alice Springs, Conan Robertson of the Northern Territory Police Force
- Adam White and Peter Crook of the Northern Territory Emergency Service
- Andrew Walder from the Welfare Functional Group of the Department of Children and Families
- Tim Steele, Gavin Kahl, Jaco de Wet and Corey Bell from Power and Water Corporation
- Chati Jerry Tasantab, John de Boer and Alec Moylan of the Critical Goods and Industry Team of the Department of Trade, Business and Asia Relations
- Tegan Berg, Barbara Beier and Sarah Blacker of the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure
- Lisa Sennett, Tess Nekrasov, Aileen Keenan and Nicholas Oliver from the Public Information Group of Northern Territory Police and Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet
- Jason Atherinos and Sally O'Callighan from the Alice Springs Town Council
- Ruby Cuthbertson and Billy Lynch from the Bureau of Meteorology
- Sarah Fairhead and Peter Scott Waugh of the Flood Forecasting team in my Department of Lands, Planning and Environment.
- Tyler Thurston from the recovery Team, Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet.

It takes an enormous, coordinated effort during these situations.

I give an all-round thank you to everyone for all their efforts in helping our town get back on its feet:

- The NT Police and all first responders for their tireless work
- NT Emergency Services, who responded to 125 requests for assistance—volunteers who give so much to help our community
- Power and Water for working around the clock and sending additional crews from Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek. As a former sparky, I understand the incredible amount of work that goes into making sure all those homes were reconnected
- All government agencies in the Welfare Recovery Centre for working together to support those doing it tough
- The Department of Education and Training for keeping families informed about government schools that were open or closed
- Department of Corrections staff and Community Service Work Program participants for helping clean up key areas and ensuring the Masters Games routes were cleared of debris and it could go ahead

DRAFT

- The Alice Springs Town Council crews for helping with the cleanup and putting out skip bins to help people with storm cleanup and disposal of spoiled food
- Everyone who has volunteered in any way, shape or form
- Every Alice Springs resident who rolled up their sleeves and helped their neighbours
- All the local workers for helping keep the town running
- There was also the telecommunications providers for helping get people back online when people were without phone services. I saw NBN setting up generators to around town to make sure those connections were upheld as well.

I also take the opportunity to thank Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro for all her support and understanding the importance of having someone on the ground to help the community.

I also give a shout-out to Braitling resident Max and his trusty sidekick Banjo the Beagle. We worked together to remove a ginormous tree that was blocking the road. It was a true Territory team effort and shows the strength of Territorians working together.

If anyone knows how to get things done, it is Territorians. That is something all of us in this Chamber can agree on. The humanity and empathy shown to those experiencing extremely difficult circumstances has not gone unnoticed. Alice Springs proved, once again, that it is a strong and resilient town filled with community minded people.

We saw this only not too long ago when we experienced our worst floods since 1988 and we have seen it again in the face of another extreme weather challenge . That speaks for itself and the community of Alice Springs.

I also congratulate Rona Glynn Preschool in Alice Springs on winning the Outstanding Education and Care Program Award at the 2026 Northern Territory Education and Care Awards on Friday, 16 October. I also congratulate teacher Lauren Brown, who took home the Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher Award. These are fantastic achievements and a real credit to the staff at Rona Glynn Preschool. It is wonderful to see a school in my electorate recognised for the important work it does in our community.

I also wish all nominees in the 2026 World Teachers' Day NT Excellence Awards the best of luck. I know there are several nominees from Alice Springs in the electorate of Braitling. It is great to see the talent and dedication of our local educators being recognised.

I acknowledge those nominees:

- Mrs Penny Weily, Ross Park Primary School, nominated for Principal of the Year
- Pippa Boyle, Ross Park Primary School, nominated for Leader in Education of the Year
- Sarah Crawford, Ross Park Primary School, nominated for School Based Support Person of the Year
- Marissa Hansen from Ross Park Primary School nominated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator of the Year
- Keeva Spencer-Wright from Ross Park Primary School nominated for Primary Educator of the Year.
- Habiba Nasser from Sadadeen Primary School nominated for Primary Educator of the Year.
- Lisa Sherriff from Acacia Hill School who was nominated for Leader in Education of the Year.
- Leanna Bull from Acacia Hill School who was nominated for Inclusion Educator of the Year.
- Joel Hohn from Acacia Hill School nominated for Principal of the Year.
- Melissa Insch from Acacia Hill School who was nominated for School Based Support Person of the Year.

DRAFT

- Alex Pye from Acacia Hill School nominated for School Based Support Person of the Year.
- Deb Simpson from Braitling Primary School nominated for Leader in Education of the Year.
- Sarah Robertson from Braitling Primary School nominated for School Based Support Person of the Year
- Karen Eglinton from Alice Springs School of the Air nominated for Primary Educator of the Year.
- Amanda Grace from Centralian Senior College who was nominated for Secondary Educator of the Year
- Natalie O'Connor from Centralian Senior College who was nominated for Secondary Educator of the Year.

I am proud to be the Member for Braitling, and as you can see we had some incredible educators throughout the electorate of Braitling in Alice Springs doing incredible work and I wish them all the best in their nominations for those awards at the NT Excellence Awards.

Mr SMELT (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I would like to recognise and celebrate the local businesses in my electorate of Nightcliff. It is very fitting being October Business Month, and I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the many great local businesses we have in my electorate. They contribute so much to our local community. They support our local sporting teams, they provide local employment, and they provide local services. They are indeed, an incredibly important part of our fabric of our local community.

This includes things like going for a coffee in the morning at the Foreshore Cafe, getting a haircut from Alley Cats Barbers, getting new school shoes for the whole family from Savvas Shoes, getting your family's dinner from Dobby's Butchery, going out for lunch at the Nightcliff Bakery or getting a takeaway burger from Paddy Shack. All these businesses contribute so much to our local economy and it's important that in October, business month, we recognise and celebrate them.

As part of October Business Month, I am conducting the Nightcliff Business survey, and I am getting out to every single one of our major and minor businesses right across the electorate. I want to hear directly from our local businesses about what they need, what support they need, what challenges they have in their businesses. This is also that that I can better advocate for them, that advocate for our community and advocate to the Northern Territory Government.

From speaking with cafe owners and healthcare providers, property officers, service stations in the electorate, there are already a number of themes coming through. I am hearing a lot about anti-social behaviour and concerns around crime in the electorate and occurring in and around businesses. We have concerns about lighting and suggestions around CCTV. There are also suggestions to plant more trees for beautification works and the like to help grow and create a really positive environment for businesses to operate.

Most of all, businesses just want to be able to do what they do best. They want to have a great shop front, provide an excellent service, and ensure that they have regular customers from our community, and that is not too much to ask, and it would be my role as the Member for Nightcliff to advocate to the local council, to City of Darwin, to the Northern Territory Government so that we can have the best possible trading and operating environment for our local businesses.

The survey is open all month. I will be getting round to all our local businesses. If you are a local business in Nightcliff, Coconut Grove or Rapid Creek and you have not heard from me, please drop in. I will give you a survey. It would be great to hear your results, and I am planning to host a forum early in November where I will table all the results and submissions and share some of my ideas of what we can do to help grow and support our local businesses in Nightcliff.

I love Nightcliff. It is my home and I am dedicated to making sure that it is the best possible community, and local businesses are such an integral and key part of that.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

DRAFT