

We put massive investment into projects. There have been some of the biggest infrastructure budgets that the Territory has ever seen. We invested in businesses throughout COVID to make sure that they could stay afloat. We are now investing in businesses to ensure they can continue training as many Territorians as possible. Our first preference is to get Territory men, women, boys and girls into longstanding jobs in the Territory. We complement our workforce by attracting people from interstate and overseas when we need to.

We put \$12.8m into our workforce boost package, including our global worker attraction program. That has been successful, with overseas workers starting their roles in the Northern Territory. Our WorkerConnect online portal is live, so overseas workers can connect with employers in the Territory for more information about what roles there are and how they can get into those roles. People have been taking up those options. Our Flexible Workforce Solutions Fund helps businesses source skilled workers, looping into the global worker attraction program.

We can source workers from overseas, but importantly we are working closely with Brendan O'Connor. Malarndirri has left, but I say a massive thank you to the federal government. We could not get anywhere with the previous federal skills minister Stuart Robert, who probably got himself into a bit of hot water. His focus was not on training Territorians and getting money to the Territory; that is the focus of Brendan O'Connor. We look forward to signing a national skills agreement.

We look forward to doing more of what we will do on Saturday night at our Northern Territory Training Awards—celebrating the best and the brightest young Territorians, businesses that train young Territorians and all the people involved in the awards. Thanks to the employers, the apprentices and the trainers who are involved. We look forward to sending our best to the national awards in a few months' time and celebrating all the hard work that the Territory Labor government does in supporting Territorians.

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

COMMUNITY BASED SENTENCES (INTERSTATE TRANSFER) BILL (Serial 99)

Continued from 26 July 2023.

Mr EDGINGTON (Barkly): Mr Speaker, the timing of the Community Based Sentences (Interstate Transfer) Bill 2023 is particularly concerning, given the crime crisis, historic level of prisoner numbers and monumental pressure on the Corrections system, including Community Corrections.

A few weeks ago it was confirmed that the Territory has record numbers of people in prison. Our prisons are bursting at the seams, and there is no plan to fix it. At the time of Estimates we confirmed there was a record 2,086 people in prison, 40 at the Darwin watch house and 14 at police headquarters in Berrimah.

Where will we put them next? Perhaps it will be in the Chief Minister's office? It will not be at the Nightcliff Police Station because after spending \$13m of taxpayers' money to build it there are no holding cells, there is no watch house and it is open only between 8 am and 4.21 pm. There will not be any prisoners going to Nightcliff.

The unprecedented pressure on the current system is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. From Estimates questioning we learned that as at 19 June 2023 there were 68 prisoners sleeping on mattresses on the ground.

We are seeing the results of the stress of the system more often. In June two prisoners escaped from the low-security compound at the Darwin prison. They were on the run for two days before being recaptured. In March a group of men broke through a wall in the prison and were luckily recaptured before going over the wire. In December three men escaped from police, ordering a do-not-approach advisory to the public. It was three days before they were recaptured. These incidents occur on a regular basis, and with the state of our prisons they are likely to increase.

How long is it before something worse happens? It was under similar circumstances that the over \$20m prison riot happened at the Darwin Correctional Centre in 2020. The Labor government tried for years to conceal the report into that riot, releasing only a redacted version of the executive summary of the Paget report shortly ahead of Estimates this year. Even the redacted version shows that overcrowding, lockdowns, lack of rehabilitation programs and staff shortages were significant contributing factors to the riot. Dr Paget stated: