

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 78)**

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I present a bill entitled Motor Accidents (Compensation) Amendment Bill 2019 and table the explanatory statement and human rights compatibility statement.

Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a first time.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that anybody who is working and injured in a motor vehicle accident, regardless of their age, is eligible to receive a loss of earning capacity benefit, subject to a two-year time limit for those who have reached and exceeded pension age. It is intended to create a fairer scheme for those of pension age, striking a sensible balance between fair and reasonable compensation for all injured people, with affordable premiums for Territory motorists.

The bill responds to the very real concerns raised by Territorians last year that under the Motor Accident Compensation Scheme—or MAC Scheme as we know it—claimants who have reached or exceeded the Commonwealth pension age are excluded from a loss of earnings capacity benefits. Like most members, I have heard from many senior Territorians about their personal experience of this exclusion. Many more Territorians are concerned that they, too, may one day be impacted by ineligibility for loss of earnings after retirement age.

Members will recall responding to a motion moved by the Member for Nelson on this issue during the last sittings of parliament. We expressed a shared concern that seniors are currently not compensated for a loss of earnings after retirement age. We acknowledge that this has been the case since inception of the MAC Scheme in 1979 and that the Territory is not alone. Our scheme is much like other no-fault schemes across the country, including Victoria and Tasmania, where benefits for loss of earnings capacity cease at retirement age of 67. Yet, many seniors are working well beyond retirement age, especially in the Territory. This should be encouraged. Seniors pay for annual motor vehicle registration, which includes a compulsory contribution to the MAC Scheme. We agreed the scheme is outdated and we want to fix it. We need a fairer scheme for Territorians of pension age.

The MAC Scheme is a no-fault scheme that provides a range of benefits for those injured in motor accidents, including attendant care benefits, hospital costs, rehabilitation benefits, medical benefits, vocational rehabilitation benefits, death and dependency benefits and weekly compensation benefits which are known as loss of earning capacity benefits.

Loss of earning capacity benefits are paid by the MAC Scheme for approved claimants when their capacity to earn an income has been reduced as a result of a motor vehicle accident. The maximum amount paid is prescribed under the *Motor Accidents Compensation Act* as 85% of average weekly earnings. As at 1 January 2019 this equates to \$965.98 per week.

Currently, the *Motor Accidents Compensation Act* determines that loss of earnings capacity benefits cease on attainment of Commonwealth pension age. This exclusion for those who have reached or exceed the pension age has been in place since the commencement of the scheme following self-government and was based on the premise that individuals who exceed the pension age were unlikely to be employed and were likely to be receiving an aged pension and therefore, had diminished requirement for loss of earning compensation. Times have changed and this bill helps bring the MAC Scheme in step with current employment trends.

The 2016 Census data indicates that of those people aged 65 years or over who reside in the Northern Territory 12.4% are employed on a full-time basis and 7.2% on a part-time basis.

This is relatively higher than the rest of Australia where 5% and 6.2% of those people aged 65 were employed on a full-time and part-time basis respectively indicating that more people in the Territory are working for longer and the exclusion to loss of earning capacity benefits is out of step with the more contemporary employment patterns.

In recognition of the senior Territorians who remain working past the pension age and contributing to the Territory's economy, a review of this exclusion has been undertaken.

The proposed bill seeks to ensure that anybody who is working and injured in a motor vehicle accident, regardless of their age, is eligible to receive loss of earning compensation under the MAC Scheme, subject

to a two-year time limit for those who have reached or exceed the pension age which is consistent with the *Return to Work Act*. This will ensure a fairer outcome for claimants who have reached retirement age.

It will give working senior Territorians financial support and peace of mind to aid in their recovery, without the stress of worrying about not having any money to cover their expenses.

The Territory is modern, the Territory is vibrant and the Territory is a great place to live, full of incredible success stories and welcoming communities. We value our seniors in the Territory and in our workplaces. We want to make the Territory an even greater place for seniors to live and work.

We are actively encouraging more seniors to make the Territory their home, including through our very generous senior's concession scheme, the most generous in the nation.

Excluding working Territorians aged 65 and over from loss of earning capacity benefits, from a scheme that they contribute financially to, is out of step with more contemporary employment patterns and has no place in the Territory's future. This bill ensures a fairer outcome for claimants who have reached retirement age.

I am pleased to commend this bill to Honourable Members.

Motion agree to; bill read a first time.

Ms MANISON: I move that the bill be referred to the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee to report back by 7 May 2019.

Motion agreed to.

WATER AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (Serial 80)

Ms LAWLER: (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I present a bill entitled the Water Amendment Bill 2019 and table the Explanatory Statement and Statement on whether the bill is compatible with human rights.

I move that the bill be read for the first time.

In lifting the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, this government has committed to fully implementing the 135 recommendations of the Final Report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory. The Inquiry Report was based on 18 months of scientific research and consultation with Territorians and other jurisdictions, by a panel of national experts. The Inquiry found that the relevant risks associated with the industry could be avoided where possible and mitigated to an acceptable level provided all of the recommendations are implemented in full. As such, we take our commitment to faithfully implement all of these recommendations seriously, particularly in relation to our precious water resources.

Key amongst these were recommendations for the prohibition of the take of surface water for hydraulic fracturing; imposing a one kilometre buffer around landholders' water bores, and the prohibition of wastewater release to surface water and aquifers.

At the moment, the Controller of Water Resources under the *Water Act*, and myself as the Minister who will be responsible for deciding whether to approve environment management plans for onshore gas activities under the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations, have the power to make decisions consistent with the relevant recommendations of the Inquiry Report regarding the protection of water resources.

For example, in the unlikely event an onshore gas company sought a licence to take surface water for hydraulic fracturing activities, the Controller would refuse the application in accordance with powers under existing decision-making considerations of section 90 of the *Water Act*, which specifically include a power for the Controller to take into account 'any other factors' they consider should be taken into account. These factors are very clearly the government's position and commitment to the Inquiry Report recommendations and which have been spelt out in my Department of Environment and Natural Resources onshore gas water licencing policy. Likewise, should a proponent seek authorisation to inject hydraulic fracturing wastewater into aquifers, it would not be allowed.

Firstly an application for an environment management plan to authorise this regulated activity would be refused, making it unlawful.

Secondly any waste discharge licence required under the *Water Act* for this activity, where the wastewater would leave the petroleum site, would be refused by the Controller of Water Resources in accordance with my department's policy.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Water Act* to ensure that there is no way for decisions to be made which do not align with these recommendations and to prevent future challenges of either a decision of the controller or those made under the petroleum environment regulations.

This will mean that not only are we future proofing the integrity of the enquiry report in ensuring that these recommendations cannot be watered down, we are also removing any opportunity for legal challenges to decisions it required to implement these recommendations.

Specifically, the amendment bill introduces additional offence provisions in new section 17A which prohibits allowing hydraulic fracturing waste, whether treated or untreated, to come in contact with waters. This includes both ground water and surface water and effectively achieves both recommendation 7.9 relating to hydraulic fracturing wastewater reinjection into aquifers and recommendation 7.17 relating to discharge hydraulic wastewater to surface waters, such as water holes, rivers and streams.

These prohibitions work in a similar fashion to those of the existing pollution offences to Section 16 of the *Water Act*. However, unlike Section 16, there is no ability for the new offences to be avoided through the assurance of water discharge licences under the *Water Act*. Meaning that the control of water resources is now unable to authorise reinjection and discharge activities. Likewise, these prohibitions also cannot be over-ridden by other legislation.

Further, section 67 of the *Water Act* has also been amended to make it clear than an aquifer recharge licence cannot be issued for reinjection of hydraulic fracturing waste.

I would like to point out that section 17B provides that prohibition does not apply to flow-back fluid or produced water being reused in future hydraulic fracturing activities. This has been done very deliberately to ensure that recycling of fluids can be undertaken to minimise the requirement for the industry to take water from our aquifers.

Just like all the other aspects of hydraulic fracturing, any environmental risk posed by the recycling of fracturing fluids would need to be carefully examined as part of an environment management plan to authorise that activity.

You may be aware that recommendation 7.9 stated that the prohibition should be effective until such time as full scientific studies have determined that all risks associated with waste water reinjection, particularly including over pressurisation risks, can be mitigated. I acknowledge that at this time prohibition is the most certain and straightforward outcome from a regulatory standpoint. But in the future, reinjection particularly of treated water may be a more sustainable wastewater management solution at a production scale shale gas industry.

As such, I have asked my department to review the appropriateness of section 17A in relation to updated understanding of the benefits and risks associated with reinjection. At the same time as the remainder of the waste provisions of the *Water Act* are reviewed as part of stage 2 environmental reforms for the proposed new *Environmental Protection Act*.

I also note that the findings of the strategic regional environmental and baseline assessments, SREBA, will be useful in informing any decisions to allow reinjection of wastewater in the future.

New section 45A gives effect to recommendation 7.6 of the enquiry report. It provides that the controller must not grant an extraction licence for surface water for any petroleum activities. This means that this take is prohibited because without an authorisation it would be an offence under section 44 of the *Water Act*. The offences in section 44 were also recently updated to contemporary standards of up to 1 000 penalty units or two years imprisonment through the passage of the Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2018.

A key concern repeatedly raised is the impact of water take for hydraulic fracturing on existing water bores. The inquiry report addressed this concern through recommendation 7.8 by requiring a one kilometre separation between landholders' bores and proposed extraction of water for hydraulic fracturing, unless a landholder agreement or a hydrogeological investigation indicates the activities will not have an adverse impact on the bore's supply.

New section 60A gives effect to this element of the recommendation by requiring that the Controller can only grant a groundwater extraction licence for hydraulic fracturing water take within one kilometre of a landholder's bore where the landholder has agreed, or the hydrogeological investigation has been undertaken and determined a different distance suitable.

The inquiry report identified that the one kilometre buffer should apply to existing or proposed bores that are used for domestic or stock use. We have achieved this through a definition of a 'designated bore' for the purposes of this buffer, and also expanded the application to bores in relation to which a water extraction licence has been granted or will be required. This is in recognition of the importance of maintenance of reliable supply to licensed users such as municipal water supplies. Designated bores also include bores which have not yet been constructed but for which a bore work permit has been applied for and granted or is still being decided.

The prohibition on this extraction is given force through the existing offences of section 59 of the *Water Act* of up to 1000 penalty units or two years imprisonment. Section 60A applies in addition to the existing considerations as to whether to grant a groundwater extraction licence, and as such, even if this section has been complied with, a licence may not be issued if it does not meet the other considerations of the *Water Act*, including consideration of any relevant water allocation plans.

Recommendation 7.8 of the inquiry report also has a number of other elements including monitoring requirements, requirements for water allocations plans and make good requirements. These requirements are not currently considered to need legislative amendments to the *Water Act* and as such they are not addressed in this bill. However, my department's approach to incorporating these will be published in a formalised decision-making policy.

Finally, I can also advise that in the spirit of my government's commitment to full transparency, all decisions relating to hydraulic fracturing made for Environment Management Plans under the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations and by the Controller for water extraction licences and waste discharge licences under the *Water Act* will be publicly consulted prior to being made. The final decisions and statements of reasons will also be published.

Madam Speaker, these amendments deliver my government's promise of delivering jobs and economic growth but not at the sake of the environment or our precious water resources.

Motion agreed to; bill read a first time.

Ms LAWLER: Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be referred to Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee for report on 7 May 2019.

Motion agreed to.

TOBACCO CONTROL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 56)

Continued from 23 August 2018.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move the bill be now read a second time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, the opposition supports this bill brought into the House by the government. In 2018 the Northern Territory government was awarded the Australian Medical Association Dirty Ashtray Award for putting in the least effort to reduce smoking in the last 12 months. For the last three years running, the Northern Territory government has won that renowned award.

Regarding last year's Dirty Ashtray Award, the AMA President, Dr Tony Bartoni noted:

The NT scored an E this year and continues to fail miserably when it comes to protecting Territorians from the harms of smoking.

I am sure those opposite will be very quick to point out that previous governments have had dirt in their ashtray as well.

The purpose of the bill is to make amendments to the *Tobacco Control Act*. One important amendment is to treat e-cigarettes and vaping devices in the same way as conventional tobacco products. All states and territories, except for the Northern Territory, have introduced individual legislation on how businesses can sell e-cigarettes and where people can use them.

In this bill retailers of e-cigarettes in the NT will have to obtain a tobacco licence to sell e-cigarettes and vaping accessories. The bill also makes some other regulatory changes to the act, such as the prohibition of teen employees selling cigarettes, a buffer zone for smoking at community events and limiting cigarette vending machines to adult-only areas of premises.

As a preliminary point, it is a bit of a misnomer to identify e-cigarettes and vaping devices as tobacco products as they do not have any tobacco in them. However, if we consider these devices as things that people smoke, and as this act seeks to remove the distinctions between smokers of tobacco and smokers of e-cigarettes, it makes sense to classify e-cigarettes as tobacco products. This is how the definitions in the bill are draft. For example, vaping is defined as inhaling by the user in a manner that replicates or produces and experience similar to smoking.

As well as vaping devices, the bill captures the relatively new heat-not-burn products, which include tobacco.

As the Chamber is aware, the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee has considered this bill in detail. The Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee received 15 submissions. These submissions canvass a wide range of views from the bill not going far enough, for example, a common theme was that smoking should be banned in schools, to many submitters saying that the bill went entirely too far.

I will summarise some of the issues raised in the submissions for the benefit of those listening and for public record; however, before I do I will state that the prevalence of smoking in the NT is an enormous public health issue for us as a community. We have the highest rates of smoking for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the country.

The Menzies School of Health Research was supportive of the legislation; however, noted the paucity of research into the health effects of vaping. The lack of research and evidence on e-cigarettes, one way or another, was a consistent theme in the submissions.

It is worth noting that the federal government has commissioned an independent inquiry into the health effects of e-cigarettes and as an opposition we look forward to reading the outcomes of that inquiry.

The Association of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies NT supports the bill citing some studies from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; however, as they noted, they cannot:

Make an educated well-researched argument against regulating the sale, supply and consumption of e-cigarettes due to the lack of evidence-based thorough research.

Their position is to support the position taken in the bill and treat e-cigarettes as cigarettes until conclusive research proves that they are, as some parties suggest, much healthier than tobacco products.

If this is proven to be the case for consumers and bystanders their consumption and use should be deregulated as a harm minimisation measure, vaping being the lesser of the two evils.

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress supports this bill; however, notes that enforcement of smoke-free areas is core, especially in remote Aboriginal communities and sporting clubs. Smoking in communities is a significant public health issue for Aboriginal people. As the Congress submission points out, rates of smoking by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory ranges from 35% to 68%, which we can all agree is far too high.

The Australian Council on Smoking and Health reminded the committee that despite numerous interventions in Australia over the years, which have halved smoking prevalence, smoking still remains the leading cause of preventable death in the country. It also points out that there is only one compliance office in the Northern Territory for enforcement of smoke-free regulations. Regarding vending machines for tobacco products, Australian Council on Smoking and Health's position is that it should be banned entirely, stating:

Given the harm caused by tobacco it is inappropriate for tobacco product to be more available than bread or milk.

A point of difference in the vaping debate is whether vaping is a gateway to stronger tobacco products or means of cessation for long-term smokers. These arguments are often age related. On the one hand, vaping might be seen as being cool for young people and from there they may progress to cigarettes. On the other hand long-term adult smokers may elect to vape for their nicotine fix and avoid inhaling harmful carcinogenic chemicals found in tobacco products. The ABC News published an article on this on Monday 11 February.

It was worth noting a literature review from CSIRO this year has cast doubt on the e-cigarette cessation argument, although further studies are underway in Australia and across the world. In its submission last year noted that the Parliament of Western Australia amended their *Tobacco Products Control Act* to prohibit the sale of tobacco by children in retail outlets. This point is relevant as the Attorney-General in her first reading speech, and I quote:

The Northern Territory will be the first jurisdiction in Australia to prohibit employees under 18 years of age from selling tobacco products.

This statement is plainly wrong. The Parliament of Western Australia passed the Tobacco Products Control Amendment Bill in 2017. I table a release from the Cancer Council titled 'WA becomes the first state to ban kids from selling tobacco'. If I had a cigarette butt for every incorrect statement the Attorney-General made, I would have a very dirty ashtray indeed.

Submissions against the bill made some interesting points on civil liberties and harm minimisation. The Australian Taxpayers' Alliance had a comprehensive submission that began with a proposition that vaping is indeed much healthier than smoking cigarettes or other tobacco products. From this proposition the ATA raised a number of arguments that vaping assists smoking cessation and harm reduction. They pointed to a 2016 study from the Royal College of Physicians in the United Kingdom, which found that absence of combustion of tobacco in an e-cigarette eliminates a smoker's exposure to carcinogens.

Another point made regarded fire risk. Lit cigarettes can set things alight, but this cannot happen when smoking a vape with no ignition required. However, cheap e-cigarettes have been known to pose a risk due to the batteries included in their construction.

Moving to the ATA's recommendations for vaping, the first thing they would like is a separate vaping act to establish a statutory regime regulating quality control of vaping devices and different rules to tobacco for display of products. They strongly agree with the application of smoke-free rules to people who vape, and I quote:

Applying the bans on smoking in outdoor areas to vapes is perverse and unscientific ...

The crux of the ATA's submission is that assuming vapes are healthier than tobacco products for public health reasons, the state ought to set up a statutory regime which encourages citizens to transition from smoking to vaping. The thoughts of the opposition members will be held off until the federal inquiry is completed and the Therapeutic Goods Administration removes nicotine juice from being a schedule 7 poison under the National Poisons Standard.

Vaping may cover smoking, but we can all agree that inhaling fresh air is better than both.

In their submission, the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association did not think the Assembly should pass this bill. Much like the ATA, the ATHRA was of the opinion that e-cigarettes are much less harmful than smoking. The ATHRA commented in its submission:

We appreciate the proposed legislation is well intentioned and aims to reduce the harm from smoking tobacco. However, the proposed approach will have the opposite effect. It will reduce access by smokers to far safer products, protect the cigarette industry and will lead to more smoking-related disease and death.

It pointed to a recent report in the House of Commons that found:

Existing smokers should always be encouraged to give up all types of smoking, but if that is not possible they should switch to e-cigarettes as a considerably less harmful alternative.

It is important to note that the treatment of e-cigarettes under the bill is only one aspect of the legislation. All parties are in favour of prohibiting the sale of tobacco products by children and most are in favour of restricting tobacco vending machines to adult only areas. Smoke free zones are also welcomed.

The ATHRA concluded their submission by quoting John Stuart Mill on the exercise of public power to prevent harm. The opposition agrees with the Menzies School of Health research that the jury is still out on the health effects of vaping. Only if and when the presupposition that vaping is not harmful is supported by scientific evidence should this bill be revisited.

As it stands, the opposition considers it appropriate to define vaping devices as tobacco products for the purposes of the regulation. Put simply, the opposition believes that the use of e-cigarettes in places where cigarettes are banned sends the wrong message about smoking. We have heard several anecdotal reports of the discomfort experienced by those in proximity to vapers, and about jealousy of smokers that the vapers are seemingly not subject to the same restrictions with their devices.

Placing vapers amongst the smokers, I suggest, is no great inconvenience to the people who vape. It adds to the comfort of the venue and perhaps may lead to beneficial discussions between smokers and vapers about harm reduction. We do not want to normalise all smoking or different types of it.

The Heart Foundation supports the efforts in the bill, however, makes an important point—which I will return to—about the enforcement of smoke-free zones. The foundation argues, as has Congress and ACOSH that:

It is understood that the Northern Territory government has very few compliance officers to monitor and enforce tobacco legislation. Without these resources, such measures are purely tokenistic.

Given the government's track record with consultation, this is a genuine concern and the opposition will be watching carefully to see if the provisions of this bill will be enforced if this bill becomes law.

The Director-General of Licensing made some interesting comments to the committee on the practical application of the law, particularly the limiting of cigarette vending machines to adults-only areas:

This, in effect, means the gambling areas of licensed venues. Putting the vending machines in the pokies area may encourage smokers to gamble, and gamblers to smoke. The adults-only zones could become a perfect storm of trouble for those who struggle with addiction.

That was an interesting observation.

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance also supported the bill and discussed the need for compliance and smoke-free areas.

The Cancer Council NT welcomes the proposed amendment, saying that cigarette vending machines should be banned altogether, as the Australian Capital Territory has done. The Cancer Council also suggested that all kinds of smoking be banned in licensed venues to sever the nexus of smoking and drinking.

Associate Professor Colin Mendelsohn from the University of New South Wales also provided a submission to the committee. Prof Mendelsohn is the Chairman of the Australian Tobacco Harm Reduction Association. I have already canvassed their views. The views in his submission are the same as that of the association.

Finally, a Territory business owner wrote to the committee—Steve Whalan from Vapourholics. Mr Whalan stated:

There was no stakeholder or community engagement with businesses and individuals this amendment is likely to affect.

Labor has once again shown it is just not committed to public consultation. The remainder of the Vapourholics' submission relies on evidence—and I have mentioned from the UK—that vaping is a safer alternative to smoking and that e-cigarettes ought not be lumped in with cigarettes. Vaping for Vapourholics is not smoking.

That concludes my summary of the submissions to the scrutiny committee. It is clear that the classification of vaping and tobacco products is an issue which has attracted a lot of attention. Although the other amendments to the tobacco control legislation are generally supported, and everyone supports the intent of the bill to address smoking-related harm, it is the treatment of e-cigarettes which has caused the largest concern amongst stakeholders.

As I said, Madam Speaker, the opposition supports the bill and will do so until such time as there is clear evidence on e-cigarettes and vaping. I will finish my remarks at that point and thank the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee for all of the work it did in reviewing the legislation.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I also support the amendments to the *Tobacco Control Act*. It is a pity we did not have bans on people who ride horses being allowed to smoke, otherwise my daughter may not be the smoker she is today ...

Ms Fyles: I will take that point on board.

Mr WOOD: She went off to be a ringer many years ago. I may have said before that the three things you learn when you are a ringer is swearing, drinking and smoking. Whilst the other two might have gone smoking unfortunately is still there and a very hard habit to get rid of.

I only wish that one day that she will be able to break that habit because I am one of those old fashion people I would rather die before my daughter dies, because I have seen so many people come in to my office with sad stories about relatives who have passed away and when you ask them why, it is because of tobacco, it is because of smoking.

It is a dreadful disease. It can affect people in many ways. I used to wonder why I only had one grandparent, it is because the other two grandfathers all had emphysema. I did not have a clue what emphysema was, it was just some sort of unknown disease that my mother said, but obviously they all smoked. Probably in those days it was just regarded as the norm. The more we can reduce the number of people smoking I certainly think the better.

The aim of this bill is to reduce the impact of smoking on the Territory community by discouraging the uptake of smoking, particularly by children, supporting those who wish to quit smoking, reducing exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and introducing controls on new and merging smoking technology.

The bill proposes to achieve these aims by regulating the sale supply, promotion and use of e-cigarettes and e-cigarette accessories, heat-not-burn and heat-not-burn accessories and similar devices and treating them as conventional tobacco products; implementing a 10 metre smoke free buffer from the boundary and entry area of community events and community facilities; prohibiting employers under the age of 18 from selling tobacco products in retail outlets not to be implemented until 1 January 2019, and prohibiting cigarette vending machines currently that are restricted for use in licenced premises from outlets that allow under 18-year-old on premises.

Going back, I was a little concerned on the last one about prohibiting cigarette vending machines how it would apply in some pubs, but reading the explanatory notes it seems that that will still—I do not think stop young people going in to the hotels—but it just means that cigarette vending machines will have to be in a far more discreet area away from where children can access.

Prohibiting employees from the age of 18 from selling products in a family owned grocery store can always be a bit difficult, especially when you have young people serving—so how that will work in practice, especially if the young person is serving other products and all of a sudden they say ‘oh, and I need some cigarettes too.’ The practical side of that will have to be worked out by the owners how that will be achieved.

I have been to shops where that has not been an issue but it might be an issue now. I do not mind the idea of it, whether it would actually make any difference to the person selling the product in relation to whether that would encourage them smoking or whether it is actually setting up an example that there is a young person supplying tobacco and other people seeing that would say ‘is that promoting the sale of product by minors?’ It is a small thing but anything we can do to reduce people taking up smoking is a good thing.

Implementing a 10 metre smoke free ban is interesting because it raises that same old question about banning smoking at schools, and that has always been an interesting topic. I noticed the Minister for Health advised in her response to the committee:

The strong intention of this bill is to protect children from exposure to smoking behaviours and also protect members of the community from smoke drift. The extension of smoke free buffer zones is designed to achieve this.

Currently 37% of NT Government schools have voted to maintain designated smoking areas continuing to reinforce the importance of children not being exposed to smoking and managing change

in these environments over time is the proposed strategy. To this end government has tasked the Department of Education with investigating tobacco policy for schools regarding how the schools will prevent children from seeing teachers smoking.

I would certainly be interested in that review, minister. Most children are not silly, they know whether teachers smoke and I understand, from my daughter's experience, it is very hard to give up smoking tobacco. It is not easy and sometimes we get up here as 'holier than thou'.

I remember listening to a BBC report, 10–15 years ago, which said giving up smoking is nearly as bad as giving up heroin. For some people it is extremely difficult. While we can encourage people, we should also realise it is not easy. There are social pressures and the pressure you get because of the addiction.

People try and we should encourage them but I do not think we should regard them as outcasts from our society, sometimes people make comments. It is a legal substance, yes it does cause ill health but it is not something that people should outright condemn because they do not agree. It is a difficult substance to give up and we should look at it in that light. Do not think it is easy product to stop using.

In relation to vaping, I note the article in yesterday's paper which related to Brian Marlow the campaign manager for legalised vaping Australia. He quoted a few things, the legislation could put smoking lives at risk by making proven safer alternatives safer to access. He quoted from the United Kingdom health agencies and expressed his disappointment that the NT Government has ignored international best practice.

From reading the scrutiny report, there has been some controversy over this particular issue. I quote from the scrutiny report which talks about the recommendation set out by the Royal Australian College of Physicians, RACP. They say the RACP is concerned there remains a lack of clear and robust evidence to inform policy makers, clinicians and the public about e-cigarettes.

While there is some evidence that e-cigarettes may reduce the number of tobacco cigarettes smokers consume, and they are likely to be less harmful than tobacco cigarettes due to a lower level of potentially toxic substances compared to tobacco cigarettes, the evidence on their efficacy as aids in smoking cessation and long-term health effects is either mixed or limited.

There is also evidence indicating that their use affects the likelihood of youth initiating the use of tobacco cigarettes. Based on the current evidence, in time the net public health effect of e-cigarettes cannot be clarified with any degree of confidence.

I note that there is an article on e-cigarettes by the American National Center for Health Research, 'Is Vaping Safer than Smoking Cigarettes':

"The key difference between traditional cigarettes and e-cigarettes and related products is that the latter don't contain tobacco".

On the ABC News Radio there was a notice that there was some recent studies about some products claiming not to have tobacco, but some had tobacco traces. Regardless of that, the article says:

But, it isn't just the tobacco in cigarettes that causes cancer. Traditional cigarettes contain a laundry list of chemicals that are proven harmful, and e-cigarettes have some of these same chemicals.

The body's reaction to many of the chemicals in traditional cigarette smoke causes long-lasting inflammation, which in turn leads to chronic diseases like bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease.¹ Since e-cigarettes also contain many of the same toxic chemicals, there is no reason to believe that they will significantly reduce the risks for these diseases.

It goes on to say:

Because they are smokeless, many incorrectly assume that e-cigarettes are safer for non-smokers and the environment than traditional cigarettes. However, a study published in the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health found that the use of e-cigarettes results in increased concentrations of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and airborne particles, both of which are potentially harmful when inhaled. Although e-cigarette vapor may not result in the obvious smell and visible smoke of traditional cigarettes, it still has a negative impact on air quality, especially when vaping indoors.

It goes on:

There are no long-term studies to back up claims that the vapor from e-cigarettes is less harmful than conventional smoke. Cancer takes years to develop, and e-cigarettes were only very recently introduced to the United States. It is almost impossible to determine if a product increases a person's risk of cancer or not until the product has been around for at least 15-20 years. Despite positive reviews from e-cigarette users who enjoy being able to smoke them where regular cigarettes are prohibited, very little is known about their safety and long-term health effects.

It goes on to ask the question:

Can Vaping Help to Cut Down or Quit Smoking Regular Cigarettes?

If a company makes a claim that its product can be used to treat a disease or addiction, like nicotine addiction, it must provide studies to the FDA showing that its product is safe and effective for that use. On the basis of those studies, the FDA approves or doesn't approve the product. So far, there are no large, high-quality studies looking at whether e-cigarettes can be used to cut down or quit smoking long-term. Most of the studies have been either very short term (6 months or less) or the participants were not randomly assigned to different methods to quit smoking, including e-cigarettes. Many of the studies are based on self-reported use of e-cigarettes. For example, a study done in four countries found that e-cigarette users were no more likely to quit than regular smokers even though 85% of them said they were using them to quit. Other year-long studies, conducted in the U.S., had similar findings. A study published in a prestigious medical journal in 2014 found that although smokers may believe they are vaping e-cigarettes to help them quit, 6-12 months after being first interviewed, nearly all of them are still smoking regular cigarettes.

Obviously there are different points of view on the benefits of e-cigarettes or vaping. At the moment we should err on the side of caution. As the American studies show that there are chemicals in those products that we know are in tobacco, but we do not know what their long term effect will be if they are inhaled when vaping.

The best thing is to work on the side of caution. This will not stop people from using those product, but it does bring it under control as to how and where it can be sold and who can sell it. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition stated, if there are studies that show it will improve the number of people getting off cigarettes and that if e-cigarettes do not have major health effects, then we should look at making separate legislation.

For the time being, this is so far the right way to go. I am interested in seeing any report the government might have on the effects of vaping. Then this parliament should see if this legislation should be changed if there is a need to change it.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I do not believe we should err on the side of caution and shut down the debate on the possible benefits of vaping. Instead, we should look at the debate on this issue again.

As I listen to the comments, the arguments are not clear-cut and seem to skirt over the nature of tobacco addiction—that being the core problem. No one, for a moment, would argue that vaping is good for you, but we should really be talking about comparing it to tobacco addiction and a possible means to create an alternative to those who are caught up in such an addiction. I will speak from some experience.

As a consequence, I propose not to support this bill. Instead, I believe we need to rethink this. At the outset, I speak of, on one hand my father, who has passed away, who struggled terribly with tobacco addiction. He did not want to smoke but he could not stop, and in the end his heart did. When I met my wife, who I have been married to for 38 years, she was a smoker. It was something she started, with some encouragement from her peer group, and then could not shake it. It was a problem for her and she was a very heavy smoker who tried everything. She and others I know of found that, of all the methods that had been employed, vaping with some controlled access to nicotine, was the pathway that finally, after 38 years, allowed her to shake addiction to tobacco. For that, I am truly grateful. My wife is happy that she finally found a way out of the addiction.

That should be the point of the issue—a serious understanding of the nature of addiction. It is almost classed in the terms of 'We think Coca-Cola is an unhealthy drink so we should not allow them to have Diet Coke'. There is a space for a different approach to this so that those who are trying to free themselves from this addiction can move from it. That is where I start from.

Even yesterday my wife said, 'I have been reading these articles about vaping. I discover it is not good for you'. I said, 'Do you remember, though, when you moved from taking nicotine by way of a cigarette, compared to taking it now through vaping, how much better it was?' She said, 'Yes, the health benefits were significant because of all the other stuff that came in from smoking cigarettes'.

So, there is an argument for us to seriously consider if we are genuine in our desire to have people reduce smoking. I will go further. If the rest of the world is any indicator, I believe the NT government, and all governments in Australia, should be considering the legalisation of electronic nicotine delivery systems and products for sale to adults—not moving the debate around the issue in the opposite direction and condemning an entire population to just smoking.

The narrative on nicotine vaping and the evolution of tobacco consumption has gone off on a tangent in Australia. That is now dramatically out of step with almost everywhere in the OECD. In reality, a billion people on the planet smoke, almost three million Australians smoke, one in five Territorians smoke, and almost one in two Aboriginal Territorians smoke. These numbers are not decreasing despite the rate of smoking coming down considerably in the last 30 years in Australia. They have remained steady now for about the last six years, with plain packaging and other measures. It is a very stubborn figure to shift because we need to have another look at the nature of addiction, and not just condemn people to only smoking or not smoking as the option but have a pathway from addiction.

Vaping, of course, is not completely harmless. It would be negligent for anyone to even say that—and I and not saying that. It has been shown, however, by numerous independent evidence-based studies, to be significantly less harmful than smoking. I can say

That is what I saw in my dear wife and that is what she said. There are others in our family who experienced the same thing. Even if she continued to vape and take in nicotine by that means instead of smoking, she said that she would be living a better life anyway. Her intent was to finally find the pathway away from that addiction.

Critical to smoking harm reduction is the smoke itself, which is often overlooked. A traditional cigarette combusts at around 800 degrees which creates smoke. The smoke is the delivery mechanism for the nicotine that is contained in cigarettes. However, the Australian Government Department of Health recognises that it is the smoke, not the nicotine, that is the carcinogenic element.

The combustion in a traditional cigarette creates an intense chain reaction of harmful constituents that causes heart disease, cancer, and other known diseases that are undeniably associated with cigarette smoking. However, vaping does not create smoke. Instead of burning tobacco, it heats it at the much lower temperature of around 350 degrees. This is just enough to allow a process to heat a substance in a liquid-based format to create an aerosol vapour which acts as the delivery mechanism for nicotine instead of smoke. Yes, like caffeine, nicotine is highly addictive. But nowhere near as harmful as inhaling the smoke.

If we are serious about helping those trapped in addiction, this is where we should be considering our genuine concern for those addicted. It sounds simple enough once explained, however the narrative on it gets skewed by people who have a binary approach to this issue. They have a quit or die attitude to smoking. Those in addiction want to find a way out of this, and they try again and again.

The Australian Government has resisted following in the footsteps of almost all OECD countries, including New Zealand, Canada, the United Kingdom and the whole of Europe, in making reduced risk, electronic nicotine delivery non-combustible tobacco systems available to adult smokers.

I was surprised when I went to a vape shop in Darwin to see the efforts it went to present its product in a way that allows free-thinking adults to access the product, not allowing those under the age of 18 years. The business was run professionally and none of the products contain any nicotine. These businesses have taken these steps themselves. Adults go there out of free choice to buy the products.

This well run facility, and others like it, are going to have regulations imposed on them where they will have to put curtains up in front of everything. Free-thinking adults who have made a decision to try vaping as an alternative to tobacco will walk into a premises where they cannot see anything until they say the code to signify they are interested in looking at the products. You will have to know what the products are. The curtain might then be whipped open to allow you to see what the products might be.

We are going down a path where it is naïve and arrogant to consider that governments and well intentioned folk, sitting outside the equation, can impose this and expect people to give up the whole thing and stop

smoking or if I do not I will die. Why not find a way where those few who may want to take that path can take it? At the very least, allow adults the freedom to make a choice in this regard.

I am uncomfortable of reducing freedoms. When governments take away freedom from people in some kind of virtue signalling that does not assist people where they are located in their journey of life. It does not respect them and the decisions they make. It transfers responsibility to governments to do the thinking and deciding for them. No wonder they are becoming increasingly hostile and difficult to manage. They do not listen to governments anymore because governments are not listening to them or caring about the situations they find themselves in.

In February 2018, an expert, independent, evidence-based review published by Public Health England concluded that vaping poses only a small fraction of the risks of smoking, and switching completely from smoking to vaping carries substantial health benefits over continued smoking. I have seen that. My wife could tell you that.

This review specifically concluded that vaping is at least 95% less harmful than smoking and remains an effective way to communicate the large difference in relative risk so that more smokers are encouraged to make the switch from smoking to vaping.

As part of its 2019 campaign, Quitline New Zealand, through the CEO, Andrew Slater, said:

We think it's a great alternative for people who have smoked for a long time, or who have tried several times in the past to quit.

I do, however, think it is not reasonable to essentially condemn a population to only smoking cigarettes when better alternatives to smoking are available. Frankly, it is no different to Coca Cola not being allowed to sell Diet Coke, or Toyota not being allowed to sell the Prius. Regular Coke, through excessive sugar, is one of the biggest contributors to the global obesity epidemic. We will not even begin to talk about the harm to the planet for combustion engines.

This is a problem and there may be a better solution closer to home as a pathway for those trapped in addiction.

The Territory has, by far, the worst smoking rates in the country. By restricting the NT to not being able to access what is now regarded globally as a revolution in tobacco harm reduction, it is different to see that we will have a positive impact on the statistics—which are stubbornly resisting change for those who are continuing to smoke. There have been some significant changes, but in the last six years they have been minimal.

I do not understand the regulations here, but it seems unclear when we draw people into an environment—these are just my thoughts. For the record, my wife moved from tobacco addiction to being free when we were living in Indonesia. In Indonesia, society has a particular view about alcohol. A standard bottle of wine could set you back \$60—that is, a bottle you could buy here for \$6. Whereas, in Indonesia a packet of cigarettes that Ros would pay up to \$50 for here—with all the excises, which were supposed to be the impediments to her deciding whether she should smoke or not. They did not stop her. A packet in Indonesia is \$2.50.

It was access to vaping in Indonesia that gave her the way out of that. It was not the cost of the tobacco; it was a way to get away from the control of the addiction that made the difference.

I visit local premises here and discover that there is no nicotine in any of the products. If people want to move away from nicotine addiction but still access the nicotine, how do they get it? There are ways. They could order it from New Zealand. It comes into the system that way. It puts citizens in a spot where they are operating in a grey area. We are mindful that there is an addiction and they might want to use nicotine in the vaping process. They cannot buy it here but they can get it from somewhere else. I will show you where you can get that.

In a situation like that you are losing control over process. It has been outsourced and I am concerned with that product now entering the system in a way which is not quite above board and clear. We seem to have exempted ourselves from responsibility and think we have done something good because we have said, 'No, you cannot. Smoking is bad and we will make it even harder for you because we can then cruise on'.

I am not a smoker—never have been—but I respect people’s freedoms. I prefer to empower people to make better choices themselves than to impose a solution upon them directly, but instead to understand the situation they are in and find a pathway from the situation in the case of nicotine addiction—as many other jurisdictions have. Something strange is happening in Australia and I, for one, will be using this opportunity to say there is a better way and I will not be supporting the bill.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I speak on the bill to add a few points. I will support the bill, but I encourage the government to keep an open mind to reviewing the situation—in particular, hopefully following the report of the Select Committee on Harm Reduction Strategies later this year. I anticipate there will possibly be a section in that report dealing with this issue.

Like the Member for Blain, I have had family members who have suffered from smoking-related diseases. In fact, both my father and step-father died young of smoking-related diseases. That had significant effect on my life. Perhaps if vaping had been around for both of them, they may not have had to suffer the way they did.

Last year—not the Christmas just gone, the one before—I went to Sydney and had the opportunity to meet with Dr Alex Wodak. Dr Wodak is the Director of Alcohol and Drugs section at St Vincent’s Hospital. Many of you would know Dr Wodak. He is a very vocal supporter of harm reduction strategies in drugs and alcohol. I had a lengthy conversation with him which was really enlightening. One of the issues he is very passionate about is making vaping available as a harm reduction strategy to help those people who are addicted to tobacco products get off those products. He pointed out to me that there is this relationship between price and use.

In saying that, I have to say he is a very vocal supporter of the floor price of alcohol. He sees that as a fantastic tool for assisting in that process of helping people off their addiction to alcohol.

Successive federal governments have raised the excise on tobacco as a means of encouraging people to stop feeding their habit. That has an effect. It shows on graphs that the higher the price goes, the more people give up. But it has come to the point now with tobacco that it is no longer an effective tool. You can raise the price now of tobacco and you are not going to have any noticeable effect on the people who use that particular drug.

Therefore all you are doing if you increase the excise or increase the price of tobacco products you are not actually encouraging anybody to give up smoking now you are actually just hurting the poorest people in our community who will do whatever they possibly can to smoke or to pay for their habit.

Vaping allows the opportunity for those people to take up something that can assist them to give up that is less damaging to their health. As the Member for Blain said, nobody is suggesting that this is without risk to the individual’s health but it is much better—and those studies from the UK show that it is a much less damaging product.

If you were going to make that product the same as tobacco, treat that product the same as tobacco, if you were going to charge the same as tobacco products then what you are doing is taking away the positive effect of reducing harm to users of tobacco products.

Most of you know I am the chair of that committee and I am very passionate about harm reduction strategies, and this for me is one of them, and I encourage the government to bear that in mind so that when the final report or even before the move towards reviewing the situation with regard to vaping products, the evidence that I have seen the discussions that I have had with experts suggest that it is a positive way forward, so we should never forget that.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, the amendments in this bill includes e-cigarettes and emerging nicotine and cigarette alternatives in to the legislation for tobacco control, including heat-not-burn cigarettes. These amendments include e-cigarettes so that they cannot be sold to people under 18, so that e-cigarettes cannot be smoked in public places so that the same laws apply to e-cigarettes as to regular cigarettes.

A Cochrane Systemic Review which uses all the best available evidence generated through research was conducted on the effects of electronic cigarettes in 2014 and it was updated in 2016. This review found that electronic cigarettes may help smokers stop their smoking and they do not seem to have any serious side effects in the short to medium-term.

However, there have been few randomised controlled trials and this is a very active and contested area of research. Smoking is a significant global problem and many smokers, including me, experience great difficulty in quitting. I have attempted to quit smoking three times in the last 25 years. One of the most effective interventions has been to overcome cravings for nicotine by using patches and gum.

The popularity of electronic cigarettes has increased significantly over the last few years. They mimic the experience of smoking and delivery of a nicotine hit without exposing others to the smoke from conventional cigarettes. But the crucial question is, are they safe?

They are not without risk and most experts would agree that inhaling chemicals in to your lungs is not recommended—that is such a dah statement.

Policy makers and medical experts would also agree that we do not want a population of non-smokers taking up electronic cigarettes either. Conventional cigarettes are deadly. They will kill almost half the population of regular smokers, but we do not have the long-term safety data.

In addition, a recently published review of 25 peer reviewed papers found that certain sub groups in adolescent populations found increasing prevalence of use of e-cigarettes. In the absence of longitude or rigorous research on the safety of these devices and to discourage the uptake of new technologies and e-cigarettes by non-smokers we should amend legislation to treat them as we do regular cigarettes.

It does need to be regulated. People may still chose to smoke electronic cigarettes but it is our responsibility as NT legislators to have sensible legislation in place to discourage non-smokers with the long-term goal of eradicating smoking habits.

I support these amendments, I commend the bill to the house and I look forward to the ongoing research and review.

Mr SIEVERS (Member for Brennan): Madam Speaker I support the Tobacco Control Legislation Amendment Bill 2018.

We know the damage that smoking does to people, families and Territorians. It is an area that I worked in and spent 14 years of my life and study at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Over a lot of those years we had CLP government and we won the dirty ashtray under the CLP. We had significant cuts in tobacco over the last four years.

We all know that tobacco smoking is a very dangerous and addictive habit as the addictive ingredient is nicotine. This is the hook, the substance that keeps people stuck on smoking and when a person tries to stop they start feeling very sick. So sick that they crave for the nicotine to enter the body again. Hence why they continue the habit. Until it becomes part of the person's everyday lifestyle.

I feel for the people who have become addicted to tobacco as it becomes a habit that is insatiable. They must have it or they can become agitated, sweats and angry at small issues. They do many things to get that hit of nicotine. They are addicted.

There are reportedly over 4 000–7 000 additional substances that are in cigarettes, substances that are very harmful. They include a number of poisons:

- formaldehyde used in the preservation of lavatory specimens
- ammonia used in toilet cleaner
- hydrogen cyanide used in rat poison
- acetone used in nail polish remover
- carbon monoxide

And many more.

Tobacco companies are multi-millionaire or billionaire companies. They rely on the sale of tobacco to survive. These companies employ psychologists and a range of expert people to attract new consumers to their produce. They do this very well through their marketing campaigns and by relying on attracting new consumers, even younger consumers, through their new products.

I remember seeing the reports of up to 19 000 Australians dying per year from tobacco smoking, through cancers, lung disease and more health issues. Health experts across the world were reporting their numbers, real people and real research, showing that tobacco was dangerous. These reports went on for many years, however the big tobacco companies continued their propaganda and advertisements to say it was safe.

There are many related health issues from tobacco and over the years we have seen these companies and products expand into many types of nicotine replacement therapies, NRT. These products come in inhaler, chewing gum, lozenges and patches. These companies are now moving into e-cigarettes.

E-cigarettes are relatively new in the Territory and are currently unregulated. There is so much that is unknown about these devices and the substances used with them. However, we do know that their use is increasing and they are being marketed by the big tobacco companies. In some countries there are reports of people becoming hooked on nicotine via e-cigarettes including teenagers—some cigarettes are often candy flavoured.

Some issues with evaluating e-cigarettes is that they vary greatly in their design and nicotine concentration. They can range from zero to high levels of nicotine, plus other flavours and compounds that are omitted. In particular there are reports of some flavourings which can be made from a number of substances than can become toxic and considered as a carcinogen, once heated.

I understand that e-cigarettes may help some people move from tobacco to another alternative. However, my concern is that the jury is still out as to whether it is a safe alternative. As we currently have many NRT alternatives that have the Therapeutic Goods Administration's approval to use, as a health professional this is what I would consider a safer alternative until more is known about e-cigarettes

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians represents physicians across a diverse range of disciplines, including addiction medicine and public health. It has published the most recent report on e-cigarettes. The report discusses the increased use of electronic cigarettes and their potential role in smoking cessation. However, importantly, the known health implications about e-cigarettes are still yet unknown. Not only the individual, but also the public as a whole may not know the impacts of e-cigarettes until 10 years down the track. We know the harms associated with second-hand smoking of tobacco.

This bill does not stop people utilising e-cigarettes, it simply brings them into line with other smoking behaviours through regulation.

As the Chair of the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee, this inquiry generated significant interest from the community, with the majority of submissions supporting the bill. Many submissions identified opportunities for further strengthening tobacco control legislation and some submissions did not support the bill. These submissions expressed concerns that the bill would infringe on the individual's right to choose what they perceive to be a less harmful alternative to tobacco.

However, the committee inquiry found that as e-cigarettes are a relatively new product and research to date is conflicting, consequently, no firm conclusions can yet be drawn regarding their benefits and risks. We accept some evidence to suggest they may be less harmful than tobacco products and can be useful as an aid to smoking cessation. However, there is also evidence of their potential to renormalise smoking and contribute to smoking initiation, particularly in young people.

It is the committee's view that in the absence of conclusive evidence it is better to take a precautionary approach to their regulation. Regulating e-cigarettes in the same way as conventional tobacco products ensures that the potential for these products to have a negative impact on public health will be minimised. Again, it is important to note that the bill does not ban e-cigarettes, it simply regulates their use.

I again thank everyone on the committee and everyone who contributed to the bill. I also thank our Legislative Assembly and the minister.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their participation in this particularly important debate today. We can all agree—as we have heard from the numerous personal stories that have been shared—that tobacco and addiction is a very difficult battle.

We have talked about the Dirty Ashtray Award and the Territory's rates of smoking. We have been presented with that award 12 times. That is not a proud moment for any Health minister or Territorian.

We saw significant reform federally in this space by the then Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon. Australia took on the world. That was a very long battle but one that is worth fighting.

I thank the members for their statements. The Member for Blain said vaping is not good for you but a better alternative to smoking. I was surprised at him not supporting the bill or basing his argument on evidence as presented.

The bill does not change current access to vaping in the NT. We have just heard the Member for Brennan reiterate that. It is important to acknowledge that nicotine is controlled by the Therapeutic Goods Administration as a poison. This is an agency of the Australian government. Its recent assessment in 2017 did not support legalising nicotine, which is the highly-addictive substance—much higher levels than in other nicotine replacement therapies. The Member for Brennan, with his experience as a health worker, explained that.

The Member for Nelson shared his personal story of his family in good humour. It was a very serious story indeed about the addiction of smoking.

My father smoked for a long time—since he was a young person. However, he was able to successfully give it up, although it was not easy. Two little grandchildren pushed that decision along. It is a real battle for people. We are not criticising those Territorians who are smokers with this legislation. We are making sure we have modern legislation that aims to protect Territorians, particularly those who are vulnerable.

The Member for Spillett made a strange statement in which she was not factually correct. Our legislation will commence on 1 July this year, unlike the Western Australian legislation which is delayed for two years.

There were comments on vending machines. Any licensee can declare any part of their venue to be child free. In facilities I have visited there are options for licensees to comply with that. They can declare any area to be child free to meet the requirements of the bill.

There was talk about schools. In the Territory we have a high rate of smoking and we want to reduce the number of Territorians who are smoking and who start smoking. When we talk about young people we talk about schools. We need to contextualise each school, which was something we talked about as a team when we were preparing the legislation for the House.

The advice I have is that a lot of remote schools comply and are smoke free schools. It is about working with each school to come up with a solution. We need to acknowledge it is extremely addictive and the nature of schools, where people get short breaks away from students. We need to try to keep that out of sight. This is not from the perspective of 'out of sight, out of mind', but to make sure young people they do not see their role models, teachers and support staff, smoking.

I have touched on a few of the contributions to this debate. We are taking a precautionary approach to vaping. We are allowing people to continue to use e-cigarettes. This legislation controls how they are sold.

The Member for Spillett mentioned the support from the Menzies School of Health Research and the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress. It is important to acknowledge those organisations, as well as all the not-for-profit and non-government organisations working across the Territory to reduce the high rates of smoking.

Compliance is not limited to the Department of Health's tobacco compliance officer. There are a number of sources that are responsible for compliance with the *Tobacco Control Act*, including police and licensing officers in licenced venues.

The evidence on the safety of vaping is lacking. We are following the Australian Government in this space. The Tobacco Control Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 is important for the health of all Territorians, but especially for our children. We believe that every Territorian deserves to live in a healthy community, and we will take actions to improve the health of all Territorians.

There are two main purposes to the bill to amend the *Tobacco Control Act* and the Tobacco Control Regulations. The first is to regulate the sale, supply, promotion and use of e-cigarettes and e-cigarette accessories, heat-not-burn devices and accessors, and similar devices and treat them as conventional tobacco products. The second is reduce the exposure of children to tobacco and environmental tobacco smoke by implementing a ten metre smoke-free buffer on the boundary or entry of community facilities and events; prohibiting employees from selling tobacco products in retail outlets; prohibiting cigarette vending

machines, which are currently restricted for use to licenced premises only, from outlet that allow under-18s on premises. As I have pointed out, an area can be declared child free.

The bill aims to reduce the impact of smoking in the Territory by discouraging the uptake of smoking, particularly among children, and to support those who wish to quit smoking, reduce exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and introduce controls over new and emerging smoking technologies.

A range of measures have been introduced to support these strategies and changes. This will once again make the Territory a leader in effective tobacco control and harm minimisation strategies. The measures contained in the bill have been subjected to an independent regulatory impact analysis, which found that the benefits to community from associated restrictions outweigh the cost.

The bill was referred to the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Committee recommended the passage of the bill without amendment.

I would like to thank the committee Chair, the Member for Brennan, and all parliamentary staff and members of that committee.

I will speak of an amendment that was circulated that is a technical drafting amendment at some stage in my speech.

The Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee noted the range of views of submissions, the mix of evidence and the safety of e-cigarettes. We have heard that again in the contributions to debate this morning.

Health stakeholders recommend the amendment bill be strengthened to the point of banning e-cigarettes and their products. The vaping stakeholders oppose the regulations of e-cigarettes and provide reports from individuals using the products as a tobacco smoking cessation strategy.

The intent of this legislation is to regulate not prohibit electronic cigarettes. We are introducing a sensible and achievable level of regulation that will protect children and provide a precautionary approach in this space whilst there is a lack of evidence. Regulating e-cigarettes like tobacco products will not change the access that vapers have to their preferred products however, it will prevent under 18s from purchasing e-cigarettes.

Around Australia e-cigarettes and their products are regulated. South Australia's legislation is progressing through their parliament and is similar to this bill in the Northern Territory. Western Australia has totally banned the sale of e-cigarettes. The use of e-cigarettes in smoke free areas is banned in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

The sale of e-cigarettes to minors is banned in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT. Advertising and display of e-cigarettes is banned in New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT. Victoria has an exemption to allow the display of some products at special stores.

E-cigarettes are banned from temporary pop-up stores in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT. Pop-ups will be banned in the NT by administration protocols.

The sale of these products will require tobacco retail licence. There is currently 455 tobacco retail licensees in the Territory. For these retailers, there will be no change required to their licence. There are a small number of sellers of e-cigarettes, including specialty e-cigarettes sellers. These sellers are currently not required to be licenced to sell the product.

The proposed changes to the legislation will mean these sellers will now be required to obtain a Tobacco Retail Licence and be compliant with the *Tobacco Control Act* and Regulations to continue selling the product.

There is a licence fee that is required with that.

There are currently a small number of pop-up e-cigarette retailers that sell these products at weekend market stalls. Tobacco retail licences are provided for retailers who sell from a fixed retail store. Pop-up licences are no longer issued where a person can sell the products at community events for example and will provide sufficient time for retailers to make the necessary changes to their store displays and to obtain their license before the legislation commences.

In terms of the amendment—is that in treating vaping products and e-cigarettes as tobacco type products we are allowing an amendment for plain packaging is picked up in the drafting and we do not want to have

Northern Territory businesses have to comply with plain packaging tobacco, that would be a significant cost, so that amendment I will speak of later.

The position that we are taking in the Territory is in line with the recent policy position of the Royal Australian College of Physicians, which in May 2018, as noted by the Scrutiny Committee:

While there is some evidence that e-cigarettes may reduce the number of tobacco cigarettes smokers consume and that they are likely to be less harmful than tobacco cigarettes (due to lower level of potentially toxic substances in e-cigarettes compared with tobacco cigarettes), the evidence on their efficacy as aids in smoking cessation and their long-term health effects is either mixed or limited.

There is also evidence indicating that their use affects the likelihood of youth initiating use of tobacco cigarettes.

Based on the current evidence, at this point in time the net public health effect of e-cigarettes cannot be clarified with any degree of confidence ...

That answers some of the questions and some of the statements that we saw from some of the members in their contributions.

The availability of e-cigarettes and other such devices has the potential to undermine the gains in smoking reduction over the past twenty years by their potential to re-normalise or re-socialise smoking in the community especially with young people.

We do not want young people to see smoking or vaping as 'being cool' and socially acceptable.

The College of Physicians state:

RACP acknowledges e-cigarettes may have a potential role in tobacco harm reduction and smoking cessation for smokers unable or unwilling to quit.

However, due to lack of long-term data and large population studies, e-cigarettes should be treated with caution.

The warning on any nicotine-containing liquid is that it is highly addictive and a poison. That has been included in my conversations with colleagues at the federal Health COAG.

Appropriate regulatory approval is required for any products claiming to have a therapeutic benefit such as smoking cessation. The Australian Government advises that all smoking cessation products lawfully available for sale in Australia have been evaluated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration—or the TGA, as they are commonly referred to—for safety and efficiency and have been registered with the TGA.

There are no restrictions on who might apply to the TGA, but no e-cigarettes have been approved by the TGA. That is quite explicit. Anyone can apply for the TGA title, but no e-cigarettes have been approved.

People talk about using e-cigarettes to help them quit smoking; however, the safety of those products cannot be assured. Further international evidence is provided in the 2014 World Health Organization electronic nicotine delivery system, which notes limited testing has revealed wide variation in the toxicity and contents of emissions—that available evidence is sufficient to caution children and pregnant women against e-cigarette use.

The United States Surgeon General advised in December 2016 that e-cigarette products are now the most commonly used form of tobacco amongst youths in the US, surpassing conventional tobacco products including cigarettes, cigars and chewing tobacco, with the average of a 15% take-up amongst high school students in 2015. Research is demonstrating that adolescents who use e-cigarettes are more likely to start smoking conventional cigarettes than those young people who have not smoked conventional cigarettes prior to e-cigarette use.

In March 2018 the report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into the Use and Marketing of Electronic Cigarettes and Personal Vaporisers in Australia noted that there is an emerging and conflicted area of policy. We have talked about that in this House before, and in my conversations with stakeholders it is a clear message of conflicted policy.

There are a number of growing advocates for the use of e-cigarettes to help people quit smoking whilst a large number of public health advocates continue to raise concerns about the uptake of young people through renormalising smoking behaviours. The NT policy position is informed by all the advice I have mentioned, including the Therapeutic Goods Administration and the National Health and Medical Research Council.

These evidence-based review mechanisms have continued to express concerns about the health impacts of e-cigarettes. The inquiry also recommended that we have nationally consistent approaches to regulation. With the current absence of legislation in the Northern Territory there is no control over who sells e-cigarettes and other products designed to simulate active smoking, and their accessories. Nor is there any control over who can purchase these products, meaning they can be purchased and used by children anywhere and anytime.

The bill will resolve these concerns, making it clear that we are working to protect the health of our community, particularly our children.

I clarify the issues regarding perceived safety of liquids, or e-juice, used in e-cigarettes. Manufacture of e-juice is not regulated under the Tobacco Control Act, but the sale of the e-juice is regulated. E-juice is the mixture used in the vapour products and consists of a number of products along with water and flavouring.

While the ingredients vary, the liquid typically contains 95% propylene glycol and glycerine. Propylene glycol is listed in the Poison Standards as unscheduled. It is listed as low toxicity in any use.

Glycerin is not listed. It is a food additive used in skin and food products.

Environmental Health advised that the combination or mix of the food additive products are not regulated as such. In January 2019, Australian researchers published the findings of an investigation into the potential health impacts of e-cigarettes in the Medical Journal of Australia. The aim of the investigation was to assess the chemical composition of a range of e-liquids available in Australia. The researchers purchased and tested ten 'nicotine free' e-liquids of a variety of brands and flavours, both online and over the counter from Australian suppliers.

None disclosed ingredient information beyond vague reporting of the excipient mix and the absence of nicotine.

Six of the 10 products were found to contain nicotine, with levels comparable to commonly available low dose nicotine e-liquids, and a variety of other chemicals, some known to be toxic. Flavouring substances commonly found in e-liquids were identified while they are generally regarded as safe for ingestion and dermal exposure, their effects on health when heated and inhaled are unknown.

It is not currently legal for vapers to use nicotine juice in e-cigarettes. This bill does not change that status as nicotine juice is controlled by the Commonwealth TGA. Nicotine juice is a Schedule 7 poison as listed in the Poisons Standard. The supply and use of Schedule 7 poison is under the national Poisons Standard and maintained by the national TGA.

The Poisons Standard is a record of decisions regarding the classification of medicines and chemicals into the schedules for inclusion in relevant legislation in the states and territories. Each jurisdiction is responsible for regulating poisons.

There is a clearly defined process for the amendments to the Poisons Standard to be considered and it is important to note that this process is independent from government. The TGA consider an application to allow nicotine, for use in e-cigarettes to be sold commercially in Australia for harm-reduction purposes in March 2017. The TGA at this time did not support legalising the commercial sale of nicotine for use in e-cigarettes for a number of reasons.

The risk of nicotine dependence is much higher for e-cigarettes compared to nicotine replacement therapy products currently marketed in Australia, which we have spoken about this morning. The effect of this decision is that a commercial supplier of nicotine for use in e-cigarettes remains prohibited under States and Territories poison legislation. Schedule 7 poisons are legislated in the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act* of the Northern Territory. Under this act, it is restricted to licensed retailers and registered users authorised by the Chief Health Officer.

Currently the Chief Health Officer of the NT has no registered users of Schedule 7 substance and therefore nicotine use should not be in possession of individual in the Territory. The Chief Health Officer has the

responsibility for licensing wholesalers and retailers and does not issue licences for the sale of nicotine juice by retail in the Northern Territory.

Customs are responsible for allowing and disallowing goods into Australia. Some people are under the mistaken view that nicotine juice falls under the personal importation scheme of 'unapproved therapeutic goods'. That is not the fact as the NT legislation sections 42 and 44 applies which states that the use of Schedule 7 substance is unlawful unless the person is a registered user. Customs are known to seize packaging of nicotine juice at the border, when they detect it.

The intention of this bill is to protect our community, particularly children, from the exposure to smoking behaviours and to protect members of the community from smoke drift. This extension to smoke-free buffers is designed to achieve this. Submissions to the Scrutiny Committee supported these amendments. The issue of educational facilities was raised and I have provided comments.

The *Tobacco Control Act* regulations allow schools to provide an area for staff smoking and will continue to work with schools ensuring we send the right messages to reinforce the dangers of smoke and to make sure that the area is not accessible and in line of sight of children. Schools review that decision and provide their plan to the Department of Education.

The bill provides further regulation of vending machines. Research has shown that despite best intentions of licensed premises, people under 18 years of age are able to access tobacco products from vending machines and I do not need to explain the practicalities of that.

A smoking survey amongst children in England revealed that 17% of 11–15 years old who smoked regularly, said that vending machines were their usual source of cigarettes. The survey was part of a body of evidence that resulted in the banning of vending machines in pubs and clubs in the United Kingdom in 2011.

Existing vending machines will have to be relocated to child-free areas on licensed premises before the amendment comes into force. We are aiming for a 1 July introduction. No new machines will be allowed into operation in licensed premises that allow under 18-year-olds on premises from the date of commencement of the bill. It will be an offence if there is a vending machine for tobacco products in an area of the licensed premise that is not a child-free area. Any licensee can declare any part of their venue child-free.

Enforcement of smoke-free areas is achieved through a number of sources. Currently councils, including regional councils, are empowered to declare smoke-free areas and enforce them. Signage and promotional materials are provided to councils by the Department of Health. Police are authorised officers, as I mentioned, under the legislation to issue infringement notices. In licensed premises, the responsibility of enforcing compliance for the *Tobacco Control Act* sits with Licensing NT. In general, an educative approach is taken to enforcement—it is more effective for long-term behavioural change for a community. Accepting an action approach is promoted.

The Department of Health will continue to work with all stakeholders. It is working with LGANT to provide additional education to regional councils for their plans and having consolidated action.

The NT Tobacco Control Action Committee has also prioritised working with regional organisations to promote role modelling—no smoking in uniform, no smoking in workplaces and community education about 10 m buffer zones. LGANT is a member of the NT Tobacco Control Action Committee.

It has been an interesting and personal debate with people sharing stories and the impact of smoking on their lives, their communities and their loved ones. The best way to reduce mortality and morbidity of tobacco-related diseases is by stopping smoking completely. We acknowledge the difficulty in that.

Proven strategies to support Quit Smoking such as counselling and nicotine replacement therapies that are endorsed by the TGA are encouraged.

E-cigarettes need more research and evidence before it is possible for them to be promoted in Australia as a safe smoking cessation therapy.

This bill provides sensible regulation to protect our children from smoking, while still allowing adults to access e-cigarettes.

In closing Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Department of Health and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel for the excellent work they have dedicated to the development, consultation and progress of this legislation. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail.

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 6:

Ms FYLES: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the new clause 6A be included in the bill which inserts subclause 12(5) which provides that, for the purposes of section 12, health warnings on packaging of tobacco products do not include e-cigarettes, e-cigarette accessories or any other device or accessory prescribed by the regulation for section 4A.

This amendment is required to exclude electronic cigarettes and electronic cigarette accessories from the plain packing requirements of the *Tobacco Control Act* and the Tobacco Control Regulations. It is required to provide clarification that the intent is not to require electronic cigarettes and electronic cigarette accessories to be sold in plain packaging.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I spoke with the opposition and the Member for Nelson about this amendment. Putting it simply, it exempts e-cigarettes and their accessories from the plain packaging requirements that apply to all tobacco products.

The need for this amendment became apparent following the introduction of the bill, as this requirement would be too onerous for e-cigarette retailers. Plain packaging is not specified for e-cigarette products in other jurisdictions as it is for tobacco products. In all other circumstances, e-cigarettes must comply with the same requirements as tobacco products.

This amendment was supported by e-cigarette retailers during their consultation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

The Assembly suspended.

CLARIFICATION OF PROCEDURE

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, before we start questions, I would like to get a point of clarity. In light of the Member for Stuart's statement yesterday, it is now unclear whether he is an Independent or a government member for the purposes of Sessional Order 2. I seek your ruling on this matter as to whether the honourable member is, indeed, able to ask questions of the government on a Wednesday.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, yes, Sessional Order No 2 states that this time of General Business Day, questions are for the opposition and the cross-benches. So, if a member is not an opposition member or an Independent, then the Member for Stuart will be considered to be a member of the government. However, if the Member for Stuart is in a position where he gets a call, I will leave it to the will of the Assembly—because he will need to seek leave—if it wants to grant him leave to ask a question, not being covered by that Sessional Order No 2.

Mr HIGGINS: So, that means that on a Wednesday he cannot ask questions as an Independent or member of opposition unless he seeks leave from government?

Madam SPEAKER: Seeks leave from the parliament.

Mr HIGGINS: From the parliament?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr Gunner: The parliament has to give permission for the sessional order to not apply.

Madam SPEAKER: To seek leave, to seek leave. One objection and leave is not granted.

QUESTION TIME

NTIDF – Payments to NT Beverages

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

Please explain how the NTIDF invested over \$10m of taxpayers' money in NT Beverages given the following:

- In 2016, several original directors resigned
- The company was listed for sale in November 2016
- Only one expression of interest was received, but that party later pulled out
- In 2017, NT Beverages recorded a \$6.5m loss and \$13.9m short of working capital to keep going.

Why did NTIDF invest \$9.2m in February 2018, then invest more money in August 2018, then again in September 2018 just to pay wages. Clearly, the company was insolvent long before this point. How is it that over \$10m of taxpayers' money was invested in an insolvent company? Why did we pay ICG over \$1.5m to make this terrible investment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As he would remember, the NTIDF was a division of the former Treasurer, the former Member for Fong Lim, David Tollner and introduced by the last CLP government. We had said in opposition that when we came to government we would follow through with the previous government's vision for the NTIDF. One of the standard features of the NTIDF was that it was independent of government, making independent decisions.

When it came to the NT Beverages investment decision that was independent and made by an independent board of the NTIDF. Clearly, there have been some very big and real issues with NT Beverages. It raises some very big questions with regards to some of the decisions that were made.

The NTIDF is no longer in existence, as you know. We had concerns about the functionality of the NTIDF, how it was going and best value for money for that investment. We have replaced the NTIDF. The NTIDF is now gone and we are focussed on a job package for Territory businesses to make sure we are growing more local jobs and growing and diversifying the economy. That is where our focus has gone because we are not seeing the results that the NTIDF were set out to achieve.

Originally the vision was to basically translate \$200m in to a billion dollars. There were huge hopes for what the fund could achieve and that is certainly what the former Treasurer had spruiked with regards to the purpose of the NTIDF and that fund and clearly that was not achieved.

We got to a point of the two year revision that we had set out to say we have had a good look at this and we no longer believe it is working. We had a discussion with the NTIDF chair of that board and we have come to an agreement that it was time to complete the NTIDF. We felt we could get more value for money for Territorians to support local jobs and to support business growth and economic diversification by setting up this new local jobs fund through the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation.

We have had very good response to that fund. They are working at pace to look at getting some of those funding agreements out the door to help those businesses grow, and we wanted to focus on businesses with the accelerated growth potential. That means more jobs, more money flowing through the economy sooner, faster. But there is no doubt that the right decision was made in closing up the NTIDF. It did not work—that simply was not the case. An independent board made that decision and with that one deal done with NT Beverages it did not work.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
NTIDF – Payments to NT Beverages**

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

When did your representative on the NTIDF, the head of the Chief Minister's department, make you aware of all of these payments? Or were you aware of them as it progressed through?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, again I remind the Leader of the Opposition that independent decisions were made by that board. There were some very prominent people that sat on the board and that was designed—what the vision was of the previous Treasurer and the previous government was that you had an infrastructure fund set up that was effectively to make decisions independent of government. They wanted to make \$200m, attract \$800m of investment and it simply did not work, so it was an independent board making independent decisions.

Law and Order Reforms

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

Your government has probably spent over \$100m in the past two years on various initiatives around youth crime, alcohol reform and other law and order type reforms. However, it is impossible to work out what benefit Territorians have actually received from that enormous investment of tax payer dollar.

Crime is at historic levels and small businesses are the criminals' favourite target. A few night ago we all watched two local business owners on the brink of tears as they recounted the destruction of their businesses at the hands of offenders looking for cash and alcohol. One having been broken in to eight times in as many months and the other suffered three break-ins in the space of a week.

What you are doing is clearly not working. While we all deserve to be safe, as you often say, we are not. What are you going to change to make businesses and Territorians safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, all Territorians deserve to be safe whether it is at home or at work, in public or anywhere. That is absolutely our value and what we believe in. That is why we have a plan to make sure Territorians are as safe as possible.

Territory crime was a problem only made worse under CLPs watch by a failure to invest in remote housing, education, health, and police and youth crime. The thing that stands out most starkly was when they cut the \$4.8m in to youth services. When you fail to invest in those prevention services it gets worse.

You do not want to kick the can down the road. We want to make sure we invest now in to what does make a difference. That is at the acute end, the pointy end into additional police and it is also making sure we invest in to those things that we know will have a long-term impact—families and those partnerships or Families as First Teachers as well as investing in additional police—we have over 100 extra police in the Northern Territory. We are backing that up with significant policy decisions that make a huge impact on crime in the Northern Territory.

For the first time, as a parliament, we are dealing as seriously as possible with one of the major contributors to crime: alcohol and the abuse of alcohol. Too often it is the underlying cause of violence in our streets, break-ins, family violence. Alcohol, unfortunately too often has to big an impact on too many Territorians. In our remote areas we have the lowest rate of assaults in five years. Let us all acknowledge that there is too much crime happening in the Northern Territory. One crime is too many crimes, but we are making that impact.

We have seen the impact from our Police Liquor Inspectors, our alcohol policy is working. In Alice Springs we have seen a decrease in assaults, offences against a person, domestic violence and alcohol-related assaults. On 18 December 2018 we saw an alcohol-related emergency department admissions in Alice Springs also decrease. We are having those impacts.

Let us be clear no one in Government thinks we have suddenly solved the problem. There is a lot more work to be done and one crime is one crime too many. We have to do everything we can to make sure Territorians are safe.

We are doing our best at the front end, additional police, police alcohol liquor inspectors who free up more police, the extra use of engagement officers, extra Larrakia day and night patrols, more CCTV cameras and more Child Protection workers.

We are putting in significant investments that go helping Territorians and making sure they feel safe. We have huge impacts in the Barkly over the last 12 months. Across the Northern Territory we are making that difference in Territorian lives. That is what is important to us and that is what drives us. That is why we are making those investments and had those plans to tackle and reduce crime in the Northern Territory.

Youth Justice Centre Facility in Pinelands

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

You were the decision-maker on planning matters, under the *Planning Act*. This morning an email went out to those who made submissions to the Development Consent Authority that the public hearing on your government's foolish scheme to build a Youth Justice Centre facility in Pinelands has, and I quote from the email: 'been postponed at the request of the applicant'. The applicant is an external consultant on behalf of your department.

Why has the hearing been postponed? Is it because you have come to your senses and have at least acknowledged the overwhelming community opposition to the Pinelands site or is it so you can declare yourself the consent authority under the *Planning Act*, do away with the public hearing and push through the application and the government's plans for the new detention centre and alcohol rehab facility?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Spillett for her question. The Territory Labor government is fixing the broken youth justice system. One of the key components of that is making sure we have a modern, contemporary, quality youth justice centre.

The delay from the Development Consent Authority is about making sure there is considerable feedback. I went to that first public meeting—you were there as well, Member for Spillett—and since then the Member for Brennan and I have met with a number of people. We have attended the Palmerston markets, doorknocked and talked to people and made phone contact. We have been listening to the people of Palmerston and beyond on the issue of the best placement of the Centre.

I have been on the public record to say it is about following the due and correct process. With any big infrastructure build, and this is a \$50m build which will provide great input for jobs for Territorians, there is a process to be followed. The announcement was made. On that day the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics doorknocked and spoke to business people. I had a number of meetings immediately following and there have been a number of opportunities to provide feedback. There was also an opportunity at a public meeting at the end of January.

The Planning Commission needs time to write the report. I need the opportunity to read it. The Development Consent Authority then needs to be involved.

The independent authorities that are involved in this work need to have the opportunity to do it thoroughly and completely and not to rush it.

It is about ensuring we have a youth justice facility that can turn the lives of young Territorians around. This is the focus that the Minister for Territory Families and I have for the youth justice centre. We need to ensure we have a facility that will give our young people a second chance.

You cannot complain about crime in Palmerston if you want to sweep how we are going to turn the lives of young people around under the carpet. The Minister for Territory Families and I are focused on having a youth justice centre that will deliver that into the future for young Territorians.

Public Employment Superannuation Provider

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

Treasurer, the Labour government is trying to hand \$580m of taxpayers' money to Statewide Superannuation. Did this decision go to cabinet? If not, why not? This is over half a billion dollars. Where was the political oversight and accountability?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, last night we had a debate on the Superannuation Legislation Amendment Bill. This was supported by the opposition. In my summary, I went through the processes that were followed in the selection of Statewide Super, which was an extensive body of work.

Statewide Super has been selected as the default superfund for employees who do not nominate a fund for the employer's superannuation contributions. We have transferred the NTGPASS over to that fund. These were two separate processes that ran at the same time. This was so we could get the best value for money and the best returns for Territorians on their superannuation. These processes ran so we could get as much interest from the superannuation industry as possibly.

It was either your response, or that of the Member for Nelson, that pointed out that Canstar have rated Statewide Super as one of the five star superannuation funds in the country. We had an extensive process regarding this.

The appointment of a default fund is required by the *Superannuation Guarantee (Safety Net) Act* and it has occurred every three to five years through an open and public process since 1999. The default fund has been the Australian Government Employee Superannuation Trust and then AustralianSuper after their merger. The next term of the default provider commenced on 10 February 2019, and follows a process of inviting and assessing proposals that began in mid-2018.

An assessment panel comprising of the Commissioner of Superannuation and senior staff from the OCPE, the Department of Treasury and Finance, and the Department of Corporate and Information Services was supported by an independent probity auditor ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. My question was whether this decision went to Cabinet, and if not, why not? Where was the political oversight and accountable? You keep saying, 'We did this and we did that'. What was your involvement?

Ms MANISON: Madam Speaker, I am still trying to answer the question.

These decisions were not ones that went to the Cabinet. But they were signed off with the appropriate probity and process in place. That was the way to go about it.

The assessment panel unanimously recommended to Superannuation Trustee Board that Statewide be selected to be the fund that received the transfer of NTGPASS. This was something we debated and passed last night. I remind you that you supported that.

There was a competitive process which ultimately selected Statewide Super as it sought to get the best value for money on the superannuation investments made by members.

Onshore Oil and Gas in the NT

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

In your Year Ahead speech you made it clear that onshore gas and the industry it can spark in the Territory is essential to our future. We agree. However, just days before that speech you made the inconceivable decision to appoint your mate, a former ETU Secretary, as the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources.

Along with his MUA comrades, the ETU under Kirby ran a scare campaign against onshore gas so rife with misinformation it would make a used car salesman blush. How can you justify the decision to make a committed anti-fracker your minister for onshore gas? How does this give confidence to private industry to invest in this essential industry to the economy of the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we want to create more jobs in the Northern Territory. We want to make sure that in creating jobs in onshore oil and gas, cattle, fishing, farming and tourism, we do it by protecting jobs.

As we learned through the moratorium and the independent inquiry, the CLP made a series of decisions that put jobs in cattle, fishing, farming and tourism at risk. That independent report was a damning indictment on the regime the CLP had in place.

The way in which CLP was going to run onshore oil and gas in the Northern Territory put jobs in cattle, fishing, farming and tourism at risk. It was a disgrace. A considerable, weighty report that showed how we can improve decision-making in the Northern Territory and improve rules and regulations—particularly in how we govern water in the Territory. It was all put at risk by the CLP—one of the most damning reports ever into how we do things in the NT.

Let us go through what we promised Territorians and how we went about it. We made a clear promise to Territorians that we would have a moratorium, during which we would have an independent inquiry. It was led by an expert in independence, Justice Rachel Pepper. At the end of that, as a Caucus we considered that report and made a decision about whether to allow onshore oil and gas in the Northern Territory in tightly prescribed circumstances and highly-regulated areas.

We made a decision, as a Caucus, to allow onshore oil and gas in the Northern Territory based on the scientific evidence in that report. That is our position as a team, and we are all working toward that—to implement the recommendations of that report.

The new minister has already been to a meeting with the minister for the Environment and me, and we went through the implementation of those recommendations to make sure we are on track with that implementation, which will see exploration commence this Dry Season.

I have complete confidence in the public sector, the new minister, the Environment minister and our team's ability to deliver the recommendations of that report for onshore oil and gas. It is in complete contrast to what happened under the CLP, which destroyed trust in government's ability to protect the environment and jobs. That put at risk economic development of the Northern Territory.

We all remember the port that was not a port. We all remember Stylo, and we remember who the Environment minister under the CLP was.

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20.

Madam SPEAKER: I know, members need to be quieter. Can members keep it down, please.

Mr GUNNER: Let us be clear; the CLP destroyed Territorians' trust in government and the way government works, and that put major development in the Northern Territory at risk.

Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund – Funds Allocation

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to TREASURER

You wound up the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund with little detail or explanation. You had a seat at the NTIDF boardroom table. You were involved in the decision to give a private company, NT Beverages, \$10m of taxpayers' money. This is a water-bottling company that did not have a water licence. This company has since gone bust.

Where did the \$10m of taxpayers' money go, and will Territorians ever see this money repaid? Or has this \$10m just been wasted, and why?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have just gone over this territory with the Opposition Leader and now the Deputy Opposition Leader. The NTIDF made an independent decision by an independent board about that investment.

\$800m Savings – Request for Details

Mr COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Chief Minister, you were quoted in the *NT News* yesterday as saying something that I was quoted on was a categorical lie; that is, you called me a categorical liar. It seems the list of unrecognisable things lining up to slap you in the face is growing longer by the day with fairness, due process and Labor values now being joined by the truth.

This is another chance for you to finally tell the truth. You have been running around with the line of spin for more than 12 months now about having identified \$800m worth of savings. Please provide the Assembly with full details of the \$800m in savings so we here, and the people of the Territory, can follow your progress.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is called the budget. It was delivered by the Treasurer twice. That is where the savings are, that is how they have been identified and it has all been publicly tabled for the record in parliament.

I ask the Member for Fong Lim to do some research.

Hydraulic Fracturing – Drilling in 2019

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the new Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, in spite of the knife in the back I received. Minister, congratulations on your promotion.

Can you inform the Assembly—this comes from concerns on constituents—why the gas industry is going ahead with drilling in 2019 without first obtaining adequate baseline data in accordance with the clear recommendations of the Pepper review.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for his question. It is lovely to be able to get up to speak for the first time as the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources.

As the member knows, we value the work we have done with the onshore industry. We have been through an explicit and detailed report through the Pepper inquiry and our government believes that restoring trust and listening to the community was a big part.

As the Chief Minister just mentioned, the necessity to hold a fracking moratorium and to move forward once we had the scientific data was what we promised to do and what we have done.

Now that those regulations are being drafted and are being in place we have kept our promise. The final report for that inquiry into hydraulic fracturing was released on 27 March and we have adopted all 135 recommendations.

We support the recommendations. We released our detailed plan on how we are going to move forward and implement them. As the recommendations come into place the activities related to hydraulic fracturing will be enabled. A good example of this is that companies will be able to install water-monitoring bores. There will be activity in the basins as we move forward.

Having six months of water-monitoring data before drilling or fracking occurs is one of the recommendations of the inquiry. The baseline data that has been mentioned is the exact that that we will move forward with to make sure we do this in a safe and efficient manner.

Over the last couple of weeks I have enjoyed meetings with the Chief Minister and department heads on how things are progressing to make sure there will not be impediments, that the regulations will be in place and the recommendations are enacted.

I have had the pleasure of meeting with Matt Canavan. He aired some queries later in the newspaper that he did not bring to the table while we met. I extend the olive branch to Matt that any time he is here, I am more than happy to meet with on anything he wants to clarify.

I have had conversations with APPEA and a host of different proponents. They have been very open and honest, and I am sure we will be able to move forward in a mature way and continue to create jobs through the Northern Territory in a safe and well-regulated manner.

Dialysis Treatment in Remote Communities

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HEALTH

Madam Speaker, could the minister detail the current available of future plans for registered nurse-assisted dialysis in each of the towns in my electorate?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. He is someone I know is committed to his community and the people of his electorate.

Every Territorian has the right to access high-quality health services. Sadly, 700 Territorians require renal dialysis care to sustain life and it is estimated that by 2023 that more than 1000 Territorians will require renal dialysis. That number is growing sharply.

That is why it is so important for us as a government to put in place generational change. We know that the early investment pays off in giving children the best start and opportunities in life. It also pays off in long-term healthcare. That is why investment in primary healthcare is so important.

I am very proud to have launched the NT Renal Services strategy 2017 to 2022. I launched that from the Tiwi Islands with the Member for Arafura. I mentioned yesterday in the House that I was pleased to see a photo of the Pirlangimpi Renal Unit. As a government, we are not only spending \$10.5m upgrading the Nightcliff Renal Unit, providing services in Darwin. Sadly, many people need to receive their treatment in Darwin, rather than community.

We are also investing in treatment for communities. That is complex, Member for Nhulunbuy. Some people do not want to lead their own care through self-care dialysis, they want nurse-led care. I congratulate Alan Cass from Menzies who worked very hard. The federal government—I think it was last year, the years are blurring—announced a new Medicare rebate item for very remote renal dialysis. That opens up opportunities, recognising not only the cost of delivering those services in remote communities, but the importance of people being able to stay in community to receive their care. When you are receiving renal treatment three times a week, which is the average, you cannot be away from access to that treatment. If it is not available in your community, then you cannot access that lifesaving treatment. That Medicare item is hugely important.

We know in Central Australia the great work Purple House has done in ensuring that there is infrastructure and nurse-led care accessing that Medicare item.

Member for Nhulunbuy, we will continue to work with communities and non-government organisations, Aboriginal medical services, as well as NT Health through the two health services on ensuring that if communities wish to have that self-care they can access that, as well as the infrastructure needed to access that Medicare item.

This is a complex area of health but is something that is hugely important and only growing in the Territory. Something that should be pointed out, Madam Speaker, is this is an actual item the previous government ignored. They failed to plan for this ...

Ms Uiibo: Shame.

Ms FYLES: Picking up on the interjection from the Member for Arnhem, it is shameful.

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, minister.

Youth Crime Wave in Alice Springs

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

In Alice Springs, youth crime has become more planned and sophisticated, callous and brazen. Alice Springs people have had enough of this youth crime wave in our town. In the past few weeks, we have seen one couple having their separate home and business premises robbed numerous times. A woman sitting at the traffic lights had three young women get into her car and rob her. Our elderly people are being robbed systematically and regularly. It seems no one is safe. What are you doing about the youth crime wave in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there is a lot happening in Alice Springs making sure the people of Alice Springs are as safe as possible. I thank all the public servants and other organisations who do a significant amount of work, particularly over the school holidays, especially around those hours before midnight and after midnight. It went a long way towards ensuring we were doing the best we can with youth in Alice Springs. There was a significant amount of work done coordinating and delivering those services.

Since we came to government, we have made sure that school holiday programs, as much as possible, targeted the youth we need to target and was at the times when we needed to have them available—that is, do not do it from 8.00 to 4.21 for a bunch of kids who are not necessarily causing trouble but make sure we work in with the kids who are more likely to be out on the streets at night and bored—how we work for them and what services work for them—and putting them on at the right time at night. There was a significant amount of work done by a lot of people in Alice Springs to target that, such as Operations Haven, Cradle, and Strike Force Winx. There is a lot happening down there.

We have also made a number of significant resourcing decisions that have had a positive impact on the amount of resources that are available in Alice Springs. We had a police recruit squad trained in Alice Springs for the first time, so people knew where they would be based and what they would be doing. We have had liquor inspectors hit the streets of Alice Springs.

Let us pause to remember that the CLP forced fully sworn police officers to stand outside bottle shops. We made a decision based on advice of the Riley review to train Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors to take on that work and free up fully sworn, highly trained police officers in Alice Springs and wider Central Australia.

There has been a significant change in approach to make sure there are more resources available in Alice Springs to target crime there. The Police Commissioner used his powers to institute a 48-hour ban. These are important powers that made a big difference in Alice Springs, sending a strong message to people across the Northern Territory about the responsibilities they hold and the expectations that we have on how alcohol is sold.

The four-person alcohol policing unit has started in Alice Springs. There is also extra CCTV in Alice Springs. There are also things that we did not do. We have not cut our investment in youth services in Alice Springs, which the previous government did. This is not how you tackle crime. You need to invest in young people and kids, because if you fail to do that all it does is kick the can down the road and make the problem worse.

The decision by the CLP to cut the funding of youth services has seen an exponential result. That was a mistake and a failure for the people of Alice Springs. We will not make the same mistake as those CLP and ex-CLP members did. We will continue to back and invest in Alice Springs.

Territory Contractors – Repayment

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Minister, your government made an announcement on a \$7m upgrade to Litchfield Park. But, the day before that there was a story on the ABC about local contractors, and I quote:

The company charged with scrutinising building companies in the Territory is broken and should be scrapped, according to contractors stung by the collapse of a pre-approved civil construction firm.

The story referred to work in Litchfield Park; the Indigenous Construction Resource Group North, ICRG, which had entered into voluntary administration in February 2017; how that company had been approved by the industry regulator CAL; and how local tradesmen were left \$2m out of pocket.

If the government was responsible for this sorry saga, before you spend money in Litchfield Park, will the government pay the money paid to these NT contractors who are now struggling financially and will possibly only receive nine cents in the dollar when ICRG North is wound up?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, no one wants to see subcontractors not getting paid, businesses going bust, or liquidators and administrators having to step in. It is a sad state of affairs when, for whatever reason, a business does not make it. There will be some careful work to look at the contractors working on the Litchfield road tenders.

Contractor Accreditation Limited, CAL, is a non-profit company established by the NT Chamber of Commerce, Master Builders and the NT Small Business Association to manage the scheme of self-regulation in the building and construction industry. Our procurement policy mandates that contractors have CAL accreditation if they tender for government contracts.

Since 1995 there have been 20 failures of accredited businesses from a pool of over 3500 contractors. We can individual stories, but overall CAL has accredited over 3500. That is an average of less than one business per year that has failed. That is not too bad. But we understand that when times are tough, things need to be looked at carefully.

I am happy for the department to have a discussion with you on the issues you have mentioned regarding a specific business. I do not think it is appropriate to discuss specific businesses in parliament. It is an issue for government, businesses and all the way down the line when a business does not pay its bills.

We want to see contractors and subcontractors getting paid. We want the work delivered because my understanding is the business that you are talking about there is three schools that had some of that work and they are the people that are then impacted as well.

A member interjecting. Florence Falls upgrade.

Ms LAWLER: Florence Fall upgrades as well. As I said, it is in the hands of a liquidator that liquidator will work with the businesses and subcontractors and suppliers that have been impacted around that but it is something that we do not want to see. We want things done right and we want businesses to seek help early. Hopefully CAL can pick up some of those things, but individual businesses as well.

When money is tight people do not chase bills early but people need to chase bills and get payments early. Member for Nelson I am more than happy to get a department person to sit down and talk you explicitly around some of the work that has been down round this company and what is happening.

Palmerston Youth Skill Centre

Mr WOOD to CHIEF MINISTER

Out of the blue last year you announced the Palmerston Youth Skill Centre to be built at the Buslink VIVO bus depot in Howard Springs. You took the Mayor of Palmerston and the Member for Brennan and visited the site.

Could you please say why you did not first consult with the local community before making this announcement? Could you please explain why you did not have the courtesy to let the local member and the Mayor of Litchfield know what you were doing? Could you say why you used the name Palmerston when the bus depot is in Howard Springs in the Litchfield municipality and the inner electorate of Nelson?

Could you please explain what is going on?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a debate that we have had previously. In terms of the general topic I have actually had a formal meeting with the Mayor of Litchfield to discuss this and a range of things. For example, as we know, Gerry, we have had this conversation in the House. The Palmerston Regional Hospital is actually based in Litchfield.

I recognise there is a border there between Palmerston and Litchfield but things on the other side of that border do still service the people of Palmerston so obviously this go to a point of contention or sensitivity. I

have recognised that with the Mayor of Litchfield. I am happy to formally recognise it today with you, Gerry, that there are things that occur in the Litchfield region which do service the people of Palmerston. I believe the people of Palmerston are very grateful to the people of Litchfield region.

The other thing obviously is also, on a more sombre note, the cemetery that also service people in Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield. There is a need, I believe, to recognise more of what Litchfield provides to the people of Palmerston and also often the people of Darwin too. I am prepared to acknowledge that, Member for Nelson. I have formally spoken to the mayor about it as well about recognising there are things that occur in the Litchfield area that service Palmerston.

Member for Nelson, I am more than happy to get you a briefing around the youth plan but we will also work for the people ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! 110: relevance. The Member for Nelson asked the Chief Minister a question around consultation. The Chief Minister did not speak with people in Zuccoli and Johnston before making the announcement either. Why does he not answer the question?

Mr GUNNER: Madam Speaker, I am very confident that the people of Palmerston want us to invest in youth and a plan for youth crime. They have made that very clear. Repeatedly they made that very clear under the CLP last term as well and I believe as a government we are genuinely responding to what the people of Palmerston want us to invest in and that is tackling youth crime in Palmerston and the border region.

That is absolutely what we are doing and that is what we are investing in and this is something that makes sense and it does respond to an issue that people believe is important to them, and that is what we are doing.

I recognise often the CLP and the ex CLP would rather talk about themselves. We would rather talk about what we are doing for people in the Northern Territory. In Palmerston specifically we have done the police station, we are about to do the fire station, we have finished the hospital the CLP could not finish, we have the Zuccoli Primary School stage one and stage two and we have the youth plan.

We stood with the Mayor of Palmerston and said we would support their ideas for the Palmerston pool. The CLP came out and said Palmerston gets too much.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance. This depot is in Howard Springs, in the electorate of Nelson. Why did you not have the courtesy, instead of just taking the Member for Brennan to the electorate of Nelson, to ask the member who actually lives there?

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, get to the point, please.

Mr GUNNER: I thank the Member for Brennan, the Mayor and the Member for Drysdale for their support. I am more than happy to stand with any member who supports investing in the people of Palmerston and in plans to cut crime, especially youth crime, in Palmerston.

The CLP and ex-CLP members are more than welcome anytime to stand up and speak for the people of the Northern Territory.

Superannuation – Fund Transfers

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

The Labor government is handing over \$580m of taxpayers' money to Statewide Super—a decision that was made before the legislation was approved yesterday. This is part of a move from AustralianSuper to Statewide Super for NTGPASS. The opposition has been made aware of close personal ties between the Member for Namatjira and a member of the Statewide Super board.

Why was this personal relationship not disclosed? What is the relationship and why was this conflict of interest not disclosed to Territorians? Do you think it should have been? Remember his maiden speech in this parliament!

Mr Paech: Talk about desperation!

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Members, can we have a bit of quiet, please. Treasurer, you have the call. We would like to hear what you have to say—in silence.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for supporting the legislation last night. He did not seem to have a problem with it then. I will do what I did last night again so he has absolute clarity on what happened and why good process was followed.

I table these two attachments, which include media question on the selection process and so forth, as well as some points on media reporting. I tabled these last night in the debate on superannuation.

The decision to appoint Statewide Super to receive a transfer of the Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities' Superannuation fund—NTGPASS—which was valued at \$526m as at 31 December 2018, was not made by and did not involve the Labor government. The decision was made by the Superannuation Trustee Board, the trustee of the fund. By law, section 8W of the *Superannuation Act* ensures that members of the Superannuation Trustee Board are not subject to the direction of anyone, including the Treasurer.

I stated in my answer to the last question on Statewide Super that we had two separate issues. There was the default fund as well. We went through a competitive process to make sure we had high-calibre superannuation funds contesting this work. We all know our public servants work very hard throughout their career. They do an amazing job serving the Northern Territory. In their golden years in retirement, we want them to enjoy the fruits of their labour with accumulated superannuation funds.

We have a responsibility to make sure they get the best deal and that when they invest their super they get the best return. That is why we ran a thorough process around both of these. We also ran processes that complied with our obligations to ensure they were above board.

Thorough due process was followed. We have fought for the very best deal for our employees and previous employees to make sure they can look forward to a happy retirement where they get good return on their superannuation and access to good services. That is why we ran thorough processes. We wanted good-quality superannuation funds—rated five stars by Canstar, as pointed out by the Member for Nelson.

That was an above-board process. We are fighting for the best deal for Territorians on their return.

Budget Repair Report – A Plan For

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

I am very grateful that this report, A plan for budget repair, has been made available.

As you would be well aware, the NT structural deficit is a compounding problem that has grown over time where expenditure exceeds income year-on-year and compounds. It is a problem you would know through your reading that has come into play since 2001. You have acknowledged publicly the need for tough decisions. I note the Member for Fong Lim was asked a similar question about some detail about those tough decisions. I would ask you specifically in your reference to meeting CEOs to discuss the proposed savings methods.

Can you report in detail on these meetings? Why did you wait two and half years to have these types of meetings? How many have been held so far? When will they be concluded? When will they be reported on? Do we have to wait until the Budget to learn of your savings measures in the face of this crisis?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker as I have said previously in this House and I will repeat for context. Since 2002–03 the Territory Budget spend has grown by 6% year-on-year. That is the average growth. Many of those years were good, now we are entering a difficult period, particularly with the \$500m a year in GST cuts and the post-INPEX construction phase.

What we saw late last year was the fixing of the GST relativity and the locking in of the \$500m a year job cuts. That is why we are now going through a new and fresh process around fiscal repair, on top of what we have already done to date. This is not coming out of the blue or the first time we have done this. We are now recognising a change of situation that requires a fresh approach going into this budget.

What we have outlined is two things. An independent fiscal review being led by the former Western Australian Under Treasurer John Langoulant and the tabling of the interim or first report which will outline two scenarios. Parallel to that, I am leading the root and branch review of CEOs and agencies that follows on from work that we have done in previous budgets, this is building on previous decisions. We are now going to the four principles as I have outlined in the House.

We have been upfront with Territorians about the problem and how we intend to approach and tackle it. This is in stark contrast to what the CLP did at the start of last term when they delegated this away to the million dollar men and a sequel report that no-one saw.

We have been upfront about what we are doing. We publicly released the first independent fiscal report and we are going through a process which we declared up front to Territorians. Yes, it will be decisions made in the next budget. This is the considered way it should be done, act calmly, make sensible decisions through a thorough process that best looks after Territorians and their interests. To make sure we keep investing in jobs and the creation of jobs, investing in cutting crime and generational change.

We recognise that the budget must have a purpose. We are going through a clear fiscal process up front to make sure we deliver on that purpose, Territorians, creating jobs, cutting crime. A very upfront clear and considered process. We are doing that, we are making those decisions through the budget Cabinet process. You will the completion of it in the next budget.

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; the crux of this question was about reducing expenditure and we have not heard any reference to reduction of expenditure only spending.

Madam SPEAKER: The Chief Minister has the call. The Chief Minister has concluded.

Charles Darwin University Alice Springs – Job Cuts

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for EDUCATION

It has come to my attention, through internal sources, that 80 jobs have been cut from the Alice Springs campus of the Charles Darwin University over the last 18 months. This is a devastating blow for our community of Alice Springs, an absolute crisis that has been under the radar for too long. It contradicts the absolute nonsense your government has been spinning about your commitment to education over the last two and a half years.

80 people, cut from the CDU campus of Alice Springs. This affects the quality and quantity of education provided in the town of Alice Springs and obviously you do not want to hear about it. Please explain why your Government has cut 80 jobs from the campus.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I welcome the question from the Member for Araluen. I believe it is her first question in two-and-a-half years on education, so I am glad to see there is an interest in education.

I will clarify that the Member for Araluen has written questions to my office, and the answer is due by 5 March. I want to clarify in the case of answering those if they have been written and documented already.

Mrs Lambley: So, you will not answer it. That is pathetic!

Madam SPEAKER: It is entirely up to you, minister, how you want to answer the question.

Mrs Lambley: Answer it. Talk to the people of Alice Springs. Do not be a disgrace! Eighty jobs ...

Madam SPEAKER: Give the minister the time to answer the question, Member for Araluen.

Ms FYLES: The Member for Araluen is making commentary that could be ruled offensive.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, do you find the comments offensive?

Ms UIBO: I do when they are being yelled out across the Chamber in that way.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, can you withdraw them please?

Mrs Lambley: I withdraw the volume. Is that what you are asking me to withdraw? I withdraw yelling at you.

Madam SPEAKER: All right. Next question.

Mrs Lambley: You are an incompetent government.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, please withdraw your phrases.

Mrs Lambley: I withdraw.

National Indigenous Art Gallery Alice Springs

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for TOURISM

Following the announcement of the South Australian government's consultation on its proposed national Aboriginal art gallery, a direct contrast can now be drawn between the South Australian government getting on with the job and honouring its election commitment and your government's dragging its heels, failing its electors and abandoning its commitment. Given that traditional owners have now pulled their support for the Anzac Oval site, is the national Indigenous art gallery in Alice Springs over? What will the minister's plan be to revive this project?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for this question. The answer is it does not need reviving because we are continuing on with the work that is necessary to build a nationally significant institution in Alice Springs.

This is a really complex project. That is clear and has been well reported. There are a number of issues we need to work through that I do not think are present in the South Australian project.

I have said on the record a number of times that I welcome when other jurisdictions are investing in their arts and culture infrastructure. We have seen successive governments across this country reduce funding to arts and cultural institutions over many years.

This is a government that really values our arts and cultural sector. We see how important it is to our economy. We think this is a really important economic, social and cultural project in Alice Springs ...

Mrs Lambley: Of course it is. Get on with it!

Ms MOSS: I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Araluen who said, 'Of course it is', despite the fact that she deliberately stepped in the way of this project for two-and-a-half years and shown no interest in it outside this Chamber, other than to stand in its way.

It is complex. We have done a huge amount of community consultation. We are taking a breath while we work through some of the issues with traditional owners. I thank those members of the team in Alice Springs who have been on the ground talking to the community and building support. We will work through the complex issues and ensure we build a globally significant arts and cultural institution in Alice Springs. I thank those members of this team who have supported that project and are out there having the difficult conversations because we know what the legacy is in Alice Springs.

Mrs Lambley: You do not know what you are talking about. You are hopeless.

Ms MOSS: For the Member for Araluen, the cuts to youth services and not really a whole lot else.

We are out there delivering on getting this job done. We are doing the project work, the planning work and have done the consultation. We are delivering sporting infrastructure in Alice Springs and the works in Hermannsburg. We are delivering the DV court, the women's shelter, the Acacia School and the north Stuart Highway work. We are rolling out more in Alice Springs than I think we ever saw out of the Member for Araluen.

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

MOTION
Northern Territory Fiscal Crisis

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader) (by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the Legislative Assembly recognise that the Northern Territory is in fiscal crisis based on the government's plan for budget repair dated 14 December 2018, that this party transcends the party divide, and takes responsibility as a whole to address the dire state of Northern Territory Finances.

The opposition is deeply concerned about the disarray and disorder that has enveloped the Territory Labor government. This is an exceedingly dark time for Territory politics. This is not a time for squabbling. Dysfunction of this magnitude is bad for Territorians and the Territory, and does nothing to address our financial and crime crises.

Politicians talking about themselves is not what Territorians want to hear. Territorians want to hear what this government is doing to fix the economic crisis that Labor has caused, and what the government is doing to address crime and restore community safety.

Punishing the only Labor minister who had the courage to speak the truth is not only unfair, it is immature and shows a lack of leadership. To add further insult to Territorians, the Chief Minister has replaced the former Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, the Member for Johnston, with a left-wing unionist who is on the public record opposing fracking.

The former Minister, the Member for Johnston, has confirmed that government spending and waste is out of control. He has exposed that it has no plan, and Labor cannibalised him. At least the Member for Johnston had the guts to stand up for his convictions and acknowledge that Labor has lead the Territory into dangerous and uncharted waters.

On last Friday evening the poor Member for Fong Lim resigned and indicated that the Labor government is in denial about the economic crisis. The Chief Minister's priorities are questionable. He remained on leave after dropping an economic bombshell on 14 December last year, yet cut short his overseas trip to shore up his numbers in the caucus. The Chief Minister has a lot to explain.

Financial mismanagement—in 2018 Labor delivered the worst ever set of finances in the Northern Territory. Their own figures show an unwieldy debt burden, an analysis that says that the Territory will not be able to meet interest payments let alone pay back the debt. The Treasurer is begging for a bailout from the Commonwealth. Even though they have been managing the coffers for two and a half years, they blame everyone and everything except themselves.

When the CLP government left office in 2016 the non-financial public sector debt, or net debt, was \$1.8bn. That was a \$1.7bn improvement on the \$3.5bn net debt inherited when the CLP came to power in 2012. Then, like now, the recklessness of entrenching recurrent expenditure emblematic of Labor's incompetence has put the Territory on a path to insolvency.

Territory Labor's tenure at the helm thus far has been unending consultation and outsourcing of responsibility and blame, constantly levelled at the federal government or the previous CLP government. The Chief Minister has shown no leadership in this time of crisis. This is highlighted by the release by his government of a paper titled A plan for budget repair that detailed how the Territory would pay \$2bn in interest on borrowings by 2029–30 and hit a debt to revenue ratio of 320%.

These numbers and levels are self-evidently far beyond sustainable, yet Labor has no plan to ever deliver a surplus or get the Territory back on track. Moreover, the assumptions underpinning these dreadful numbers are kind, if not overly optimistic.

We in opposition are concerned about the compounding effects of a credit downgrade. Again, we call on the Territory Labor government to set a clear economic narrative and focus on wealth creation, not just social reform. The primary driver of economic growth must be the private sector. Impediments to investment must be removed. The Labor Party has made fraudulent claims about this budget and has deceived Territorians.

Territorians deserve the facts about GST. The Commonwealth Grants Commission determines GST allocations every year based on a formula agreed by each state and territory. For the Territory, the change

between 2017 and 2018 was an additional \$136m. The Member for Nelson went through this as well. Our relative share of the GST pie is declining because our population growth is not keeping up with the rest of the nation. In other words, we need more people in the Territory.

The federal Coalition topped up the Territory's GST allocation last year by \$259m. The federal Coalition is fixing the GST formula, ensuring that the Territory will not be worse off. That is the legislation.

Labor has misled Territorians over the \$2bn and \$3.4bn GST cut lie. Government is blame-shifting and basing its cut numbers on what it would like to get, as stated in the Pre-election Fiscal Outlook for 2016. The formula for calculating the GST return to each state and territory has been agreed upon for nearly two decades. That formula has not altered. The Territory's economic fortunes, that is, people are leaving—0.03% to 0.7% population decline forecast in Budget 2017–18 and 2018–19 respectively. Why? Lack of jobs.

GST distribution is not political. Payments are distributed by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Declines in GST receipts started under the CLP, but the CLP still managed to pay down debt and close the deficit gap—structural deficit or fiscal imbalance.

The CLP had a plan—we published it—to diversify the economy and create jobs. Labor is still thinking about it. This government needs to lead and stop lying to Territorians. A total of 71%, or \$4.2bn, of the NT income for 2017–18 has come from the Commonwealth.

Let us look at government waste—there are a few sitting on the other side. The Labor government has spent more than \$63 000 on promotional fence wraps and boarding around the underground car park project. Talk about waste! This spending is on self-promotion and it has to stop. This is another example of how Labor has continued to fritter away taxpayers' money, but they will never acknowledge it. They will continue to blame everyone else for the Territory's economic crisis. There are those words again.

It may seem like small figures compared to the millions in debt that Labor has landed us in, but this is how the waste adds up. Anyone with a credit card debt can tell you, small incremental spending is just as bad as big-dollar purchases.

We appreciate the safety aspect of the solid hoarding, but why the graphically designed promotional painting and very strange inclusion of artificial grass? Why not put it up in the first place instead of the initial fence wrap?

The figures also show that 14 projects across the NT have had fence wrap installed at a total cost of \$68 770.79, excluding GST. The 14 projects, however, do not include the Nightcliff renal upgrades, which also feature government fence wrap.

Other government waste includes \$500 000 on the MyFuel NT website, \$150 000 on the driverless bus trial, \$1.2m on the economic summit series talkfest, and the \$800 000 plan for the now defunct Myilly Point museum. Then there is the \$1m to date for the Alice Springs art gallery, which the Chief Minister now says the government will have to reconsider. That is a bit different to what the Tourism minister recently said. That is \$1m and we do not even have a location, let alone an art gallery. At the same time, South Australia is forging ahead with its Indigenous art gallery.

What about that \$40m rugby league stadium—\$40m seems a bit over their estimates, but this is to benefit one club and not supported by the 80% of the other clubs.

What about the lack of business confidence? The NT Chamber of Commerce in its 2019 Business Outlook Survey received over 615 responses. A resounding response that confirms the concerns of Northern Territory businesses on a wide scale. The Chamber conservatively estimates that these 615 businesses employ 20 000 local Territorians.

In terms of their assessment of NT business in general 63% have a negative outlook, 23% are neutral and only 14% are positive. I wonder what happens if the votes turn out that way? The Chamber on behalf of their members has put forward a five point plan. That includes:

- acknowledge that it is the local private sector that needs to lead economic growth and act accordingly, cut red and green tape and speed up government approval processes
- continue to invest in strategic infrastructure and spend the allocated money in the year allocated

- tackle crime, vandalism and itinerant issues that are killing local businesses
- the Northern Territory Government to live within its means and to streamline the public service
- grow our population by creating real jobs generated by the private sector and industry development.

It is a very loud and clear message to the Gunner Labor government. An evidence that the business community are displeased with the government's performance and they want to be heard. In my statement to the House yesterday I outlined the growing and unfortunate number of businesses that have closed and I do not intend to go through that list again, suffice to say it has happened and it is further proof the Northern Territory is in an economic crisis.

Wealth creation—Labor has introduced the world's worst hybrid royalty regime. A property levy on investors who are doing it tough, a halt to gas exploration, a moratorium on water licences, uncertainty for major retailers like Dan Murphy's, uncertainty for the mining industry through legislative changes and drop components of the pastoral land legislation which would have allowed for subleasing to be recorded on the title thus unlocking millions in much need investment.

In short, Labor has hindered wealth creation in the Territory. It has not helped. The Opposition believe that at this time of economic crisis with the government spending \$4m every day than it has then it should be government's priority to make it easier not harder to invest in the Territory.

The environmental legislation proposed by Labor empowers the Environment minister in such a way as to give her an absolute veto on any project. At the very least this could be a Cabinet decision not the decision of a single minister.

The changes proposed by the government increase business uncertainty, are unprecedented, unwise and unnecessary, represent a scale of reform that is sweeping at a time when business investment confidence in the Territory is flagging.

It should be made clear that the opposition see hope and abundant opportunity in the Territory. Today there are 17 major mineral resource projects at final investment decision phase. Unhelpfully the Territory Labor government has sought to increase red and green tape, not reduce it as is required at this time of crisis. Labor's hybrid mining tax will put at risk at least \$6bn of investment and 4000 jobs and that is according to the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, AMEC.

Crime remains out of control in the Northern Territory. The most recent crime statistics released for the 12 months ending 30 November show a 15% increase in commercial break-ins and Territory wide with a near 10% increase in Alice Springs, a 42% increase in Palmerston and an incredible 167% increase in Katherine. This is a kick in the guts of business when they are already down for the count.

The resourcing of police force have been questionable indeed and we are told that they will need to reduce their spending by at least \$30m. Police are a demand driven agency. If this government continues its social reform agenda where there is no consequences for crime being committed in our communities inevitably you will continue to see and exponential increase in crime and an increase demand for police resources. The government likes to wring its hands over law and order and it has done nothing to truly address the issue.

Let us have a look at portfolio management. There have been significant failures by ministers over a number of portfolios and an alarming level of bureaucratic capture. There are two words that describe the Treasurer, boundless debt. The Minister for Territory Families has lurched from disaster to disaster for children in care, their families and youth detainees. The Minister for Tourism and Culture keeps her job even though she has shown scant interest in her duties apart from media release announcements and she has failed time and time again. The current Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics tends to leave all the heavy lifting to the previous minister and the re-announcing government projects to look like she is doing something.

While the opposition welcomes the announcement of infrastructure projects last week it is disastrous for Labor to imply that some sort of boon to the economy. These are necessary infrastructure projects which have been on the books for some time. In the case of the Mandorah Jetty this is an overdue project, Labor promised it ages ago. They are just catching up, they are that far behind.

We are not saying do not do them but we are cynical about the government's announcement. It amounts to no new money and once the projects are done the jobs will disappear. They are bringing forward projects that they failed to get out in the first place. Only the Litchfield spend will yield a financial return. I remind

members of this House that Labor has priors in not getting work out the door and we will believe it when we see it.

The Housing minister conducts his business through media releases with no proof that what he says is being delivered is actually being delivered. Time and time again we have heard the minister boast about the provision of housing in remote communities. After an offer of \$550m from the federal government in April 2018, this government has failed to even sign up for that money. Rattle a tin but never sign an agreement. How many times do we hear members opposite bleating about the federal government and its inability to adequately provide for Territorians? I say to the minister, get on with your job, stop playing politics with the lives of vulnerable Aboriginal people and get the agreement finalised and signed. Shame on you minister, shame!

The Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Health has overseen the bungling of alcohol reform from floor price debacle through to select measures for corner shops. The Territory government continues to strong-arm locally owned businesses which employ Territorians and contribute to the fabric of our community. Labor has failed to consult in a meaningful way and completely ignored businesses which are already struggling in a tough economic climate and have been plagued by crime. Crime that they cannot address. These are the same businesses that employ Territorians, sponsor and support local community groups, including sporting teams and drive foot traffic to local retail precincts.

Finally, we come to the Chief Minister. As I said earlier, the Chief Minister chose to go hiking when his Government released the damming plan for budget repair. He only decided to cut his holiday short when he was direct by his chief of staff to sack three colleagues for having the temerity to speak the truth. They spoke the truth and got cannibalised, crucified and everything else that happened to them.

The Chief Minister continues to preside over a 50m \$2.7m shade structure that does not even provide any shade. In the wake of an eight-hour riot at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, the Territory Labor government reinforced its inept and tone-deaf approach in deciding to circulate a media release about Territory population.

The Chief Minister needs to get real. Youth justice detainees rioted at Don Dale putting the safety of frontline responder youth justice workers and fellow detainees at risk. Rather than addressing that issue, Labor has forged ahead with its population plan that intends people to bribe people to move to the Northern Territory. Growing the Northern Territory's population is vital, but without the jobs to keep people here and a safe community, any Labor bribe will not work.

The incompetence and arrogance of this government is really boundless. Let us not forget that the repair bill for the Don Dale riot was almost \$1m. The Chief Minister has shown no leadership in this time of economic crisis. He has gone so far as to say there is no crisis. This is despite their own report detailing how the Territory would pay \$2bn in interest on borrowings by 2029-30 and hit a debt to revenue ratio of 320%.

Remember, they were given 27%. They put a zero on the end and added a bit, which seems Labor's new way of blaming the CLP. They are nothing if not consistent with their blame game. The fact is the deficit handed to Labor was \$78m, as recorded in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement. The CLP also had a plan to bring the budget back into surplus, which can be seen in the forward estimates of Budget 2016-17. Labor loved it! They stuck with it. They did not introduce a mini-budget—they loved it.

Labor also knew that INPEX was winding down and our GST receipts would be down. Where was their plan to deliver economic diversification and tackle the downturn? Remember there was not even a mini-budget. Maybe it was because they could not add up.

Our plan included onshore gas, diversification of the pastoral estate, growing and supporting our tourism industry, developing further links to tap into the growing international student market and major projects. We published a full policy and plan at the time of the 2016 election. All Labor has done is say it is just thinking about it—'We are taking a breath'. They must be comatose. Between breaths you have years go past. They have to be comatose.

All Labor has said is, 'We are thinking about it'—about tomorrow. But bet your bottom dollar tomorrow there will be a sunrise. That is the only thing we know will happen tomorrow. Yet we all know tomorrow never comes. An old saying Labor has adopted is Labor debt today is less than yesterday but it will be more tomorrow.

The Chief Minister needs to wake up and talk about real solutions, not sprout more rhetoric. Taking out expensive political ads in newspapers and TV and putting out a Facebook page and a have your say websites is not leadership. This Labor government is trying to outsource responsibility and crowd source solutions. Labor lurches from crisis to crisis and desperately needs to apply itself if it is to steer the Northern Territory through the fiscal and social crisis we find ourselves in. Their hubris prevents them from admitting any wrongs and they are overly fond of blaming everyone else except themselves.

All ministers need to start performing in their portfolios. They should be holding agencies to account and should start insisting on approving any new executive position, as well as reviewing those currently in place. They need to listen more closely, improve their work with others, and use their time more effectively. Labor's extremely poor performance and incompetence is a cause for serious concern.

Territorians cannot afford for them to continue to fail. They need to vastly improve their attitude, performance and work ethic, swallow their pride, stop the internal bickering and pick up their act overall. If they do not, the NT will be bankrupt, the economy weakened by the uncertainty in the Northern Territory and will be taken over by the Commonwealth.

The NT opposition recognises that the Territory, like Australia, must be competitive regionally and globally. We further recognise that any government that lacks the big vision has a big problem. We have a vision for the Northern Territory as a safe, secure community with a strong, prosperous economy led by private sector investment.

NT Budgets 2017-18 and 2018-19 showed population set to decline 0.3% and 0.7% respectively, which is the first period of negative population growth in 14 years. Additionally, it is critically important that we recognise that the Territory is currently in recession. Given the anomalies of the Territory economy and the outsized effects of major exports, the best measure of how the economy is travelling is state final demand. Under this metric, the Territory has been in deep recession for some time. The NT opposition believes that the current fiscal and economic challenges the Territory faces can be addressed through the following steps as a minimum.

Rein in the spending. Reduce general government operating expenditure from 6% to 3%—welcome but insufficient.

We need smaller government and to reduce the price of delivering core government services. Stop the waste—underground car parks, shade structures, consultancies, reviews do nothing to generate wealth in the Territory.

Support a diversified economy. This means proactively backing the mining, tourism, hospitality, international student education, agribusiness, Defence supply and service sectors. Free up business. Scrap the investment killing vacant and derelict land tax. Scrap the world first, world worst hybrid mining tax. Introduce new debt and bond products for national and international investors and provide strategic infrastructure investments that create sustainable employment.

The opposition wants to know where the Chief Minister is up to in regard to one-on-ones he is conducting with departmental heads, and how the so-called root and branch examination is going. I look forward to him responding to that.

I ask the Chief Minister what savings have been identified for this financial year and the outer years. What disciplines have been put in place in departments and agencies? How is the government reining in its spending? We need the detailed numbers. We have not seen one dollar in savings identified.

Territorians deserve some real answers and not more rhetoric. We must do more than crowd sourcing comments on a website. We cannot allow children to inherit our debt of \$35bn. We cannot stand by and continue to listen to empty slogans that 'times are tough but the sun will shine again'.

We cannot continue to see businesses closing across the Territory day after day. We cannot ignore the calls of businesses that say, 'Cut the bureaucracy red tape'. We cannot ignore the calls of the resource industry, which is calling for business certainty.

We must scale back the social reform that is sweeping across the Territory and causing so much fiscal and other harm to our communities the length and breadth of the Territory. I, as the Opposition Leader, am not saying we have all the answers. We do not have all the information at our disposal and neither do the members of this Assembly.

This crisis is one that all Territorians are facing and it transcends the party divide. Today I call on every member of this Assembly to take an active interest in the very serious and grave financial situation on behalf of their constituents. Further, and importantly, I call on this parliament to support this motion.

I also ask that members take an active role in the PAC's examination of accounts and receipts of expenditure of the Northern Territory, which commenced yesterday. Sessional Order 16.2 allows each and every member of this House to participate in the PAC's proceedings. A PAC inquiry will allow individuals and organisations to make submissions for public hearings to be held and for the committee to have public service agencies provide the information on scrutiny of government receipts and spending. This is desperately needed at this time.

We need the PAC and all members of this parliament to examine the calamitous state of the Territory's finances. The solvency of the Territory is in doubt. These are issues and require serious people to take responsibility on behalf of their constituents.

Should members opposite not support this motion they will clearly demonstrate to their constituents that they, too, are in denial that we have a physical crisis and they are not serious about budget repair. There has been no time in the history of the Territory when it has been more necessary to scrutinise public accounts and, importantly, for each of us to band together to do so.

I urge honourable members to support this motion. Let us work together with the community to haul the Territory back from the brink and into the brighter future.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in response to the motion put by the Leader of the Opposition. It is important that we talk about the budget challenges we have in the Northern Territory. We are doing this in an open, clear and transparent way. We are not having this discussion behind closed doors. We are facing the challenges head on, because that is what you need to do.

There are real economic and fiscal challenges which have been largely driven by the changes to the GST. We are tackling them head on because this is what responsible and good governments do. We have been elected to manage the Territory's finances and govern responsibly. We are having an open, clear and transparent discussion with Territorians on the challenges we have.

I have said it before and I say it again, it would not matter which party was in government and who was in the Treasurer's seat as they would be faced with the same challenges we are facing now because the GST has changed forever. My job and that of government is to deal with it and make strong, sensible decisions in the best interest of the Territory's future in the short, medium and long terms.

We will get the balance the right to manage the challenges in the economy now. Territorians need us to do this. They need us to support jobs, business, economic growth and diversification. We need to back those industries that have been creating and supporting jobs in the Northern Territory for a long time. Responsible decisions have to be made on where you allocate resources and give the best support.

We will work constructively with the federal government, making sure that we have strong relationship with Canberra. You would be burying your head in the sand if you did not recognise that 70% of our funding comes from Canberra. That is a reality of being the smallest jurisdiction in the nation—that will not change overnight. We will diversify our economic base so that we are less reliant on Canberra, but we will have a constructive relationship with the government. We will fight for the best deal for the Northern Territory because that is the right thing to do.

The revenue coming into the Northern Territory has changed forever and that is a real challenge. We must deal with that challenge as it is now legislated. This is what we are doing through the fiscal paper.

The Leader of the Opposition has put his case on the table. I move to amend the motion so that it is far more constructive and something we can work together as a parliament on. Each member of this parliament has a duty to do this.

I move the following amendment to the motion: remove all the words after 'that this Assembly' and replace them with:

1. recognise that the Northern Territory has budget challenges due to a number of factors, including an annual Commonwealth GST reduction of \$500 million and a \$867 million deficit identified in the 2016 PEFO – and is addressing this through its "Plan for Budget Repair" dated 14 December 2018
2. acknowledges that this assembly must work together to create jobs and deliver generational change because this is crucial to budget repair
3. continues to take responsibility to address budget challenges through the Plan for Budget Repair final report and the root and branch review of programs that will be incorporated in Budget 2019.

When we came to government in 2016 we were faced with a raft of challenges. I have spoken about the reputational damage after four years of the chaotic Mills and Giles Government. There was a huge amount of work rebuilding people's confidence after the instability they saw in four years of 18 cabinet reshuffles, 2.5 Chief Ministers and the chaos that ensued as reported in national news stories of scandal after scandal. When we got to government we went about getting on with the job.

We knew we would inherit an economy with challenges. We had seen record growth from the INPEX project, which in Darwin equated to about 10 000 jobs from that booming construction project alone. We knew that would go from a construction project to a 40-year operational phase, exporting gas out of Darwin. The size, scope and scale of that project is unlike anything we have ever seen in the Northern Territory. It is huge. I have never seen so much scaffolding before in my life than when I looked at the INPEX project. It was and is a remarkable project. The potential to expand that to think another four trains in to the future is just fantastic.

That is a very exciting project that I had the Infrastructure minister's up here last year. It was fantastic to host Australia's Infrastructure ministers and federal minister here and the thing they could not get over was how quickly and how well done such a major infrastructure project was delivered in Darwin. For the size of that—\$US37bn—at the time it was the biggest construction project in the southern hemisphere when it kicked off and they were so impressed that this is what we are capable of delivering in the Northern Territory. It is something we should be very proud of.

Make no mistake, it had a huge impact on our economy. It saw extreme record economic growth because that is what happens when you have an economy of this size with an extra 10 000 jobs and when you have \$US37bn worth of investment. But we have come off that phase. We are now in to the operating phase.

I saw the gas boat come in to Darwin harbour today and you can always tell which one is the INPEX boat because it comes very close to this Parliament House as it floats by. We are now exporting gas to Japan. That project is operational but it had a remarkable impact on this economy and we are now feeling that full transitional effect.

When we came to government a fact was that there was a deficit in place under the pre-election fiscal outlook of \$867m and that was after selling off assets. That was after raising power prices, water prices and sewerage prices—there was still that deficit in place. Government was out there at that time under the CLP borrowing in order to go ahead and provide those services in government. That was there. That was in place and that is what we inherited.

When we came to government we were told firmly by the business community and by industry do not put hand brakes on. We want to see you supporting jobs, working to support major projects, diversifying the economy. We want to see you get on with it. We want to see stability. We want to see a government that goes about serving Territorians and supporting the economy and growing jobs.

When we came to government that is exactly what we did. We hit the ground running. We focussed on things such as investing in infrastructure because we knew that we were seeing record private investment cooling off. So it was important to invest in infrastructure because that is a great way to deliver economic stimulus to support local jobs but also to deliver important infrastructure that does become economic enablers, that does open up new opportunities, that does ensure that people can get access to better services. That is what we have done.

We have invested in some fantastic infrastructure across the Northern Territory, including roads. We have looked at wonderful infrastructure such as the RDH car park. That was something that was long overdue and needed.

If you were to have a look at some of the projects that have been invested in in our community such as the immediate works grants to invest in those wonderful community groups right across the Northern Territory.

I keep coming back to the \$1.1bn remote housing package. It is not just about the urban centres it is about doing the work out bush on community for better lives—but also that creates jobs and economic development opportunities out bush—especially since we have changed the program so people out bush get more of a say about housing design, about how they go about it and where their priorities are.

The top down response getting driven out of Canberra, which has happened in the past of telling people what to do out in some of the remote parts of the Northern Territory does not work. It is not the answer. We need to work with people on country in their communities because they have the answers. They know what those solutions are and what works best for them on their country. That is an important point.

We made sure that we are supporting important industries, some of our traditional sectors, such as tourism with the Turbocharging Tourism package. That is a very important package that is bringing external money in to the Northern Territory. For the investment that we are making it is about bringing people in across the borders from the other jurisdictions but also from overseas to leave their hard earned dollar here in the Northern Territory. We want them spending up big here and bringing that external money in to the Northern Territory, and we have been seeing some great results from Turbocharging Tourism.

We have gone out to support the housing sector. I have spoken about the bush investment but it is also about that urban investment too. We have done that in a few different ways. The first one was, when we came to government we said we would change first home owner concessions again because we saw under the previous government that the changes had a very detrimental effect on the housing market.

We were finding that less people in the Territory could get their way into the housing market because of those changes. We changed the housing entitlements for those first home owners, for those established properties. It had to be done.

We also made sure that we kept the stimulus up for building new properties as well because it is important that people have choice. We know that once we lock those first home owners in, that they are more likely to stay and build their life in the Northern Territory. That is so important.

We brought that back. We have had fantastic results and we have seen great changes right across the Northern Territory. The last figures I looked at were over 1500 people that have bought their own part of the Northern Territory. It is a great result.

We also had the \$10 000 stimulus there for established homes to encourage people to also take that leap into home ownership. We have now boosted those housing packages again. We have worked with the MBA, the HIA, and the Real Estate Institute; we have listened to what their industries are telling us and how construction needs to be supported in that important sector.

We believe this is going to deliver some fantastic stimulus out there to support jobs but also the long-term return of more people staying put here in the Territory, building their lives here, making a contribution, and calling this place home forever. That is what we want to see; more Territorians building their future here in the Northern Territory.

Since coming to government, we have looked at sensible and smart savings and ways we can reduce the expenditure of government. We have identified \$800m of savings. They have not been easy decisions. We acknowledge that given the changes that are now here forever through the GST and through the revenue coming into the Northern Territory, that more work needs to be done.

That is why we have embarked on that open process of putting the paper out. I do not know if other governments would be bold enough to do that because we put the case on the table to say here is a real issue that we are confronted with in the Northern Territory that we must deal with.

Rather than doing that behind closed doors, we have gone out and said here is the case for change. We need to change what we are doing in the Northern Territory. We have to deliver sustainable budgets for the future.

Some people have run off with the extreme example of if you do not change then you are heading down a path of what the 2030 example could lead to and that is exactly what we are doing. We are making sure that we avoid that path and we make sure that we are putting the Territory's budget on a sustainable footing. That is what we are doing. It is not an easy discussion but we are having it because we believe the best decisions

are made when you make sure they are well-informed and you work with Territorians. That is why we are doing it.

People need to understand why we are making those changes. They need to understand why, this time, we need to see further savings throughout government but also in the longer term, more structural reform to the sectors of how we do government, full stop.

How can we be more efficient in how agencies work together? How can we break down the silos of government to make sure that we get the very best value for dollar that goes out the door? How can we ensure that agencies are working together rather than working in silos, often creating duplication or waste? I think we have all heard stories that drive a lot of frustration where you know that if agencies shared resources, you could get a far better outcome.

Technology has changed. The world is a changing place. The way we do things is rapidly changing. Digitalisation brings us all closer together, even people out bush. I can never get over, when you go into a community that has good telecommunications, just how tech savvy people are. Everybody is engaged, everybody is on Facebook, and everybody has a phone.

The world is a smaller place due to technology bringing us all together. It stresses how important telecommunications are, not just for the social connection and inclusion that people get but for the opportunities it creates to develop businesses, economies and better service delivery in a more efficient way. They are some of the things that we have to look at. We have to look at smart sensible reforms.

We have brought in John Langoulant and Helen Silver to work with the Under Treasurer and the head of the Department of the Chief Minister, who is a former Under Treasurer and has done multiple budgets—I think she has done about a decade worth of budgets. They have the right experience in this to work with us to look at the reforms that are required.

This is some of the work we are doing in addition to normal savings processes through each budget. There is also a more extensive root and branch process to go through items line by line to scrutinise expenditure further. People now genuinely understand that the GST and revenue issues have changed and there needs to be further action taken. This is the case we have put on the table as it is the right and responsible thing for government to do.

This needs to be done in sound and measured way to ensure that, while the government is a big part of the Territory economy, the decisions made do not hinder economic growth and or put further pressure on the economic challenges that the Territory faces. We have seen in the past that when governments make spending decisions and reductions that they can have unintended flow-on consequences.

We need to make sure those decisions are the right ones to deliver better services more efficiently and cost-effectively without putting the handbrake on job development, economic development and supporting local business. It is a fine and challenging balance. Nonetheless, we are in government and it is our job to face challenges head on.

We have looked at the huge impact of service delivery on government budgets. There are huge spending pressures in the areas of Health, Corrections, child protection, and community safety. These are the pressures we face if we do not get changes right in stemming the problems that lead people into the Health system, the criminal justice system and child protection. Otherwise, long term savings will never be achieved.

We are targeting the right problems when it comes to generational change as we want our kids to have a better future in the Northern Territory. We do not want to have so many people living in poverty and disadvantage. Ultimately, this will save the budget bottom line too.

As I said earlier, we have been to Canberra, lobbied and built constructive relationships with our federal counterparts. During our term in government there has been a Coalition government, nevertheless each minister has built a constructive working relationship with their counterpart. There have been good results from that.

I worked hard and closely with the former Treasurer, now Prime Minister, on some GST challenges. We secured top-ups for the next three years. These will not quite meet the huge gap that we are expecting, but we lobbied because it was right thing to do and what Territorians need us to do. We make no apology for building constructive and strong relationships with our counterparts.

We also secured an amazing deal for Kakadu to build a future for Jabiru and that region. The previous CLP government had walked away from the table. Throughout the closure of the mine that the town of Jabiru was dependent on, they were not going to sit at the table. When we came to government, we said, 'The NT Government has to be at this table as we believe in Jabiru and support the future of Kakadu. We believe in sensible transition at the end of the life of a mine, which can be achieved if you are proactive and make the right decisions, working with the community and traditional owners.'

The deal we have secured for Kakadu will see it reinvigorated, with life brought back into what was a jewel in the tourism crown of this country. Let us face it, it was looking a bit sad and tired and needs some work. The natural environment is there, but the infrastructure and assets around it need to be brought back to life to make it more accessible to all. We are very proud of that deal.

We have secured a City Deal for Darwin. It was a huge amount of work to secure that. We worked with the federal government and the City of Darwin, and we are thrilled with the outcomes of that. We have done some great negotiations in Palmerston to support the council in its pursuit of the fantastic Palmerston six. They have done a great job to secure funding for some of those projects, particularly if they are successful in winning government under Bill Shorten's leadership in Canberra.

I commend the Mayor of Palmerston, Athina Pascoe-Bell, and her councillors. They have done a magnificent job.

Tennant Creek has been faced with challenges, but the Member for Barkly has been strongly advocating for that region. We have some great investment going into the region. I feel particularly sentimental about the place, being the place I was born. It has gone through some challenges and it is time to reinvigorate and put more investment into the place. We have secured significant funds from the federal government to invest more in services and infrastructure in Tennant Creek because kids born in the Barkly deserve a great future. There is a fair bit of work for us to do there.

These are some of the things that can be achieved when you have constructive, strong relationships with your counterparts in Canberra. I thank the Opposition Leader for his lobbying there. I take my hat off to him. I appreciate it when he backs up the messages from government and when we work constructively in a bipartisan sense. It helps when you can use each other's relationships to benefit the Northern Territory. It is good that we try to work together in the best interests of the place.

We have done a huge amount of work in that regard because it needed to be done and we do not shy away from that, but there is more to do. We need to continue to work on investing in jobs and major projects, and making sure we have the right target investments in place.

We have spoken about onshore gas. We made the difficult decision about onshore gas, but we will see exploration kicking off this year. We will see how much the industry stacks up. The numbers look good in regard to the estimates of what is under the ground, but until that exploration gets going we will not fully understand the potential. We are progressing with that.

We have worked with Canberra colleagues to lobby them about Defence expenditure in the Territory. We have just fast-tracked five fantastic infrastructure projects that were needed in the Northern Territory in the long term, but they will also deliver stimulus here.

We are still working through more major project facilitation and investment. We are very committed to that. There are some amazing resources projects on the horizon: Arafura Resources; the potential for Darwin LNG and backfill expansion; INPEX in the future and what it can achieve; and Project Sea Dragon. That is progressing. If Project Sea Dragon meets its full potential we will be exporting prawns at the level we export live cattle. That is huge.

We are looking at the potential of Tellus in Central Australia, as well as Mount Peake and Ammaroo phosphate. We are looking at the Tanami gold mine expansion. They have now installed gas. That brings potential for future growth, which is a real vote of confidence in that mine and the future of the Northern Territory.

Government is doing a lot of work to support major project facilitation. We have the new jobs fund package with half of the NTIDF proceeds. That is about supporting projects and businesses that have accelerated growth potential. They have the potential to create new jobs, industry and businesses more quickly. They are the priority. We have received great response to that. It is about getting money out the door quickly. We are

looking forward to seeing some great projects get the help they need to get out the door this year, or to help them reach a final investment decision. That is very important.

We have done more work on trying to build our population. Everybody can see that we are throwing a lot at it. As I said, we held a population forum the other week in Canberra. The feedback we had from our federal counterpart was we were well ahead of the game in the work we have been doing.

We have prioritised home ownership. We have offered some fantastic incentives and have had huge response from the construction industry. It was lovely to hear that we have also had huge inquiries in places like Alice Springs. That has been wonderful to hear that it is not about the Top End, it is about getting out into those centres so more people get to own their own slice of the Territory, which is wonderful.

However, there is more work to be done. This is exactly what the motion I am speaking to is about. We need to make the right decisions. We are having what is a very difficult discussion, but it is a real issue you have to confront and tackle. We are having that now to ensure we put the beset decisions in place. We are determined that we will leave the Territory in a sustainable budget position. We are ensuring we make the sound decisions that need to be made because it is the right and responsible thing for government to do.

We are doing it in a way that will not hurt Territorians. We do not want to hurt Territorians with massive price hikes. We do not want to see the Territory sold off through public asset sales when it is in the best long-term interest to keep some of these assets in the hands of Territorians. We are ensuring that we do this so we can continue supporting the right services that Territorians need.

This is not about sacking teachers, cutting youth services and not getting the important police numbers we need. It is about ensuring we make the right decisions.

We have more work happening on the budget repair. We have been doing a lot of work in the community to understand where the priorities are, where savings can be made and what people think need to be the priorities of government.

We are continuing with our root and branch reviews of government agencies. We are continuing preparing the budget as well and ensuring we have the right savings identified. There is no doubt that there will be some very tough and hard decisions made, but that is the reality we live in. You must ensure that you have a sustainable budget.

The GST issue will not change for us—it is what it is. So, our job as a responsible government is to deal with it and ensure we have the budget in the best possible footing into the future. That is exactly what we are determined to do.

As a parliament, we can very much work on this together. It is something where we need to continue working in a constructive way. I welcome the feedback we get in this Chamber from the opposition and the Independents. It is important to listen and understand that everyone else brings their experiences in from their previous life to this parliament. They also listen to their constituents and can bring some very good ideas to the table. I welcome that.

There is no doubt that there have been some challenging debates, but we are determined to ensure that we put the budget on the best sustainable footing for the future, because it is the right thing to do. Again, it is not without hard decisions, but that is the right thing to do. We are determined to put them in place but ensuring we do it so it is in the best interests of the Northern Territory when it comes to creating jobs, creating a sustainable future, ensuring people can get access to the services they need to make a more liveable place and for our children now and into the future.

Madam Speaker, I have moved the amended motion. I believe it is the motion this Chamber can work on together. It should be supported. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this important debate to the House.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing on this motion in General Business, debating the fact we're in a financial crisis in the Northern Territory. Something needs to be done.

The wheels have fallen off this Gunner government and despite what we just heard from the Treasurer, again a repeat of her speech from yesterday, I do not think anyone is listening or believes you.

I will take up some of the points the Treasurer just spoke of. The tough and hard decisions: what are they? People are waiting to hear what those tough and hard decisions are. I have heard numerous people from this side of the Chamber—opposition and Independent members—ask this question. It is a question people are asking on the street: what are the tough decisions this government is making? We do not know what they are. It would be great if a member of the government stands this afternoon to explain what some of them are.

We need detail. We need to understand what your plan is to get us out of this diabolical fiscal situation you have placed us in.

I have written numerous Written Questions to you. I have sent them through to the Treasurer asking how we are going to get out of this pickle and how she intends to return the budget to surplus. To those questions I have never been given a clear and coherent answer. We hear this gobbledegook, this endless talk about the tough and hard decisions, yet there is never any detail. You say you do not want to hurt Territorians and that you want to create jobs.

This afternoon, you might remember, I asked the Minister for Education about hers and the previous Education Minister's decision—the Cabinet's decision, no doubt—to cut 80 jobs from the Alice Springs campus of the Charles Darwin University.

Members interjecting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: They are all yelling at me saying, 'Oh no, that is ...

Ms Lawler: The federal government funds universities. The NT government ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is absolute true and I have heard this confirmed from many people who work, either directly or indirectly, through the Charles Darwin University. I remember when I was first told you have cut 80 jobs from the Charles Darwin University Campus in Alice Springs I said, 'You can't be serious—80 jobs'. They said, 'It is absolute true, 80 jobs have disappeared from the Alice Springs campus of the Charles Darwin University.

It does not matter how much you yell from the other side of the room, the Minister for Education confirmed it this afternoon with her complete paralysis, her complete inability to answer the question I put to her about these 80 jobs being cut by your government.

All she could do was stand up and ask the Speaker—and we will be able to read it on *Hansard* any minute now—if she had to answer the question, because she has received similar questions in a Written Question form. She then promptly sat down after the Speaker directed her to 'answer if she wants'.

Complete and utter incompetence. That is all I can say about all of you. The wheels have fallen off your government, we have a minister who stood in the Chamber in Question Time incapable of answering a question; incapable of responding in any way, shape or form. She did not refute it; she did not deny it. Because of that it has been inadvertently confirmed that this is in fact, true.

Until I hear otherwise, Territorians can assume that too.

Members interjecting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The yelling from the other side of the Chamber confirms it all. Why could she not answer the question in parliament about your government cutting 80 jobs from Alice Springs. You should be ashamed of yourself. For the last two-and-a-half years we have heard this rhetoric, this diatribe, from this government accusing the former CLP government of cutting funds to education, their lack of care about education and look at what you have done to Alice Springs.

Alice Springs people will be hearing this story in the next hour in the media about what you have done to our community. Eighty jobs. When the Treasurer talks about tough and hard decisions, she forgot to mention yes, I have an example, I cut 80 jobs from the CDU campus in Alice Springs. She did not mention that.

Maybe other things have happened that have managed to get under the radar. Maybe other decisions have been made that are not yet in the Territory's consciousness because you have tried to do it in a very sly and tricky manner. Let us keep our eyes open and let us really examine what is really is going on here.

If you can cut 80 jobs from the Alice Springs campus of CDU and effectively get away with it for the last 18 months, what else have you cut that we do not know about? Let us be transparent. Let us be open about exactly what your tough and hard decisions are. At the moment we do not know what they are. We have to scratch around and find out.

You are not being open. You are not being transparent, despite all your great intentions when you came to government about doing things differently. As far as I can see there is absolutely no difference at all apart from the fact that you are completely and utterly incompetent.

Does the \$800m of savings include the 80 positions cut from the Alice Springs campus of CDU? Is that what you are talking about? We have no detail at all about what that \$800m of savings includes. We can only presume that it includes the scrapping of these 80 jobs.

Have you any idea of the impact of cutting 80 jobs from Alice Springs? Eighty jobs. That is 80 individuals, possibly 80 families, thousands of people will be impacted in the Alice Springs community because you have scrapped these positions. Let us go to the impact on tertiary education services provided in Alice Springs. The hundreds, if not thousands, of people who will no longer be accessing those services that were provided by those 80 people who were working at Charles Darwin University.

Tertiary education in Alice Springs is very important. It is important to provide tertiary education in regional and remote areas. We had quite an impressive Charles Darwin University campus. I am told that the school of nursing is about to be scrapped at the Alice Springs campus of Charles Darwin University.

CDU has provided nursing training of a very high quality for many years. I am told that they are just about to be shut down and instead, anyone who wants to do nursing through Charles Darwin University Alice Springs campus will have to do it completely online. Is that what your government is all about? Cutting jobs and doing it in a very deceitful, underhanded way.

I am absolutely stunned by this news that has come about over the last ten days. I was informed of these cuts about two weeks ago. I have sat on them and thought about how to go about presenting this to the community and today is the day. The Minister for Education could not even answer the very simple question I asked her.

Then we get the Minister for Tourism, Sports and Culture telling us all about her lack of progress of the National Indigenous Art Gallery in Alice Springs. Her complete and utter incompetence in managing that whole project. She tells us we are taking a breath. That is exactly what Alice Springs people do not want to hear: we are taking a breath. She has done absolutely nothing in terms of progressing this project in the last two and a half years and yet we are told today she is taking a breath.

I am almost speechless when I think about how hideous and ridiculous it is that we hear from a minister today in this parliament who has botched the roll out of the National Indigenous Art Gallery in Alice Springs. For more than two years she has made a complete and utter mess of it together with the Minister for Territory Families. They have both demonstrated to the whole community how incompetent they are and yet today we here that they are taking a breath. Well—I take a breath when I think about your future as members of parliament in this government because people are losing patience. People have lost all confidence they truly have. I do not know of anyone who is impressed by what they are seeing of your performance at the moment.

Smart, sensible reforms we heard from the Treasurer. What are they? Some examples perhaps? We hear the terminology that is favoured by this government—Turbocharging. Tourism has never been so bad. The stakeholders in Alice Springs are encouraged by such small increases in some areas because it has come off such a low base.

Root and branch, Boundless Possible, Turbocharging—it is all gobbledegook. It is meaningless. What people want to see is a plan. A way forward. A way out of this financial crisis that you have presided over whether you like it or not for the last two and a half years. The deficit has doubled in the last two years and the projections are absolutely horrendous. We are spending millions of dollars every day that we are having to borrow to pay for.

In conclusion, I want to talk about the infrastructure development fund. I spoke about it yesterday in the censure motion on the financial crisis this government has placed us in and I would like to return to that this afternoon because it is a matter of very great public importance that this matter be resolved by this government.

When you talk about a financial crisis, the poor fiscal management that we have seen demonstrated by this government over the last few years nothing exemplifies the mismanagement of our finances more than how this fund has been managed 100% under your watch. It was the Treasurer that enacted the infrastructure development fund. It actually did not function at all under the former CLP government. It was their idea they conceived the idea but it was Treasurer Manison who signed off on it and kick started it and has been presiding over this for the last two and a half years. She tried today to dodge that but she cannot dodge it. It is an absolute fact. She has been ultimately responsible for the infrastructure development fund all the way through. Whatever has transpired is ultimately her responsibility and the responsibility of the board of the infrastructure development fund. I will not forget to include that.

We have heard today that the Treasurer really takes no responsibility for the fact that the only investment made by the infrastructure development fund was to NT Beverages to the tune of \$10m. We all know that very soon after that money was delivered to NT Beverages they went in to administration. They went broke.

I would like to put on the public record today that I have written to the Treasurer and the Chief Minister today, and I have asked them to undertake a full investigation in to the infrastructure development fund and do everything within their power to recover the \$10m that was allocated to this business NT Beverages.

To not undertake an investigation or attempt to recover this \$10m is in my opinion a dereliction of duty. The Treasurer is ultimately responsible for stepping in to this space. It was a tax payers' funded fund. It came from the Northern Territory coffers. It was our fund. A fund set up with Territorians money—tax payers' money. And she is the Northern Territory Treasurer, needs to step up and initiate this investigation.

I will table this letter. I note that in previous ABC reports the Chief Minister was quoted as saying that he will not be doing an investigation into this appalling situation which came about with the Infrastructure Development Fund. That is not acceptable. It does not pass the pub test. If you are talking about fiscal prudence and accountability, it is the role of this government, which has presided over the Infrastructure Development Fund for its entire life, to initiate this investigation and try to recoup the money.

In my letter I said:

I am writing this letter to ask that the Northern Territory Government undertake a full investigation into the Infrastructure Development Fund's investment of more than \$10m in to NT Beverages. I also ask that all attempts be made by the NT Government to recover this money. Given the current state of the Northern Territory's finances, it is essential that the government shows some leadership and accountability in explaining this appalling waste of Territory taxpayers' money. If the government refuses the undertake a full investigation and makes every effort to recover the more than \$10m that was granted to NT Beverages through the Infrastructure Development Fund, I will be compelled to refer this matter to the Northern Territory Independent Commission against Corruption.

I can assure you I will do so. But, in the first place, it is important to give the government the chance to initiate its own investigation of this taxpayer-funded fund.

Stand up and show some leadership and true accountability over this enormous amount of money that went missing under your watch. It is not acceptable to just fob it off, push it under the carpet and pretend it did not happen. It is \$10m—in fact it is more than that; it is closer to \$10.5m. That is an unimaginable amount of money for everyone, even the wealthiest people in the Territory would think that is an outrageous amount of money to say, 'It is gone and we are not doing anything about it'.

I could talk all day about ...

Ms Uibo: Please do not.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I pick up on that interjection. The Member for Arnhem has just told me she would like me to stop. This is the woman who could not answer her question in parliament. She is so incompetent she could not answer a simple question about her portfolio ...

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20 ...

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Cease interjecting!

Ms FYLES: The member opposite is waffling on, rambling, trying to rewrite history, forgetting about when she was the Treasurer and making up all sorts of accusations. If she could do that with respect, please ...

Madam SPEAKER: Members, I ask you to keep your interjections at a minimal and pay members of the House the respect they deserve when providing their contribution.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I welcome the interjection from the Member for Nightcliff. It indicates to me how vulnerable they are when you have to step in and try to shut me down, when I have comments from the Minister for Education, who failed to answer a simple, straightforward question.

You are all incompetent. You should be completely embarrassed by your incompetence. You have failed Territorians. I can understand why no one has any confidence in you. I do not know how we will get through the next 18 months of you governing the Northern Territory. The thought of it is horrific for people who take an interest in the affairs of government.

I commend the opposition for bringing this forward this afternoon. It is an important topic that needs to be debated. I note that the government is trying to amend it to suit its own narrative of how fabulous they all are. No one believes you.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, while I am on my feet I want to clear something up. Member for Araluen, you have no shame in coming in here and accusing the government of cutting 80 positions at Charles Darwin University in Alice Springs. That is misleading information she has supplied to this House.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker! The member knows he has to move that by substantive motion.

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I invite the Member for Namatjira to continue. Member for Spillett, I take your Point of Order on notice as I am seeking the advice of the Clerk on the Member for Namatjira's comments regarding the question asked by the Member for Araluen asked earlier today.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, the Member for Namatjira could withdraw his remarks?

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Namatjira, will you withdraw your remarks?

Mr PAECH: Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like to continue to put the truth on record.

The Department of Education contributes \$9.2m worth of operating funding annually, increasing to \$9.4m in 2018–19 in line with CPI. This supports Charles Darwin University's delivery of higher education and training services and is to expand accessibility to higher education and training in remote and very remote centres across the Northern Territory.

Charles Darwin University receives funding of around \$44.4m annually to provide vocational education and training, known as VET, as a public provider on behalf of the Northern Territory Government. This funding includes an Australian Government contribution under the national agreement for skills and workforce development.

The statement made by the Member for Araluen that 80 jobs are being cut from Alice Springs is just not true. This government has been the only government in a long time who supported the educational sector in the Northern Territory. We do not cut when time gets tough, we work with the sector to make sure Territorians have the best opportunity.

Mr Mills: You do not cut anything.

Mr PAECH: Member for Blain, I pick up on your interjection. You love cutting educational services, do you not? It is the first thing you did. You reached into the drawer, pulled out the scissors and cut the funding. You had a good old time.

Mr Mills: You had no idea.

Mr PAECH: You cut education funding and you should be ashamed of yourself.

Alice Springs is home to many outstanding people in the Northern Territory because they have had a quality education. To come into this House and make the accusation that we are cutting education services in Alice Springs is playing politics with the situation. It is disgusting.

We are committed to the Northern Territory and developing the best educational outcomes we can.

Mr Mills: What does that mean?

Mr PAECH: Member for Blain, we are not going to cut like you did.

We care about Alice Springs and investing in our future.

Mr Mills: Well how about outcomes and results in literacy and numeracy?

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the interjections, if you or the Member for Araluen knew about it ten days ago and sat on your hands, what does that say about your commitment to the Northern Territory?

Mr Mills: What are you talking about?

Mr PAECH: It says, 'I am going to sit back and use this for parliament' rather than to develop and stand up for the people of the Northern Territory. That is a shame.

We are in the midst of challenging times that are unlikely to be familiar to many people. That is why, during these challenging times, we have to approach these things with caution, tact and a great deal of patience. This has been unfamiliar territory for a lot of people. We need to work through that, understand it and need to ensure we bring the community along with us so they understand and are able to do it. We all know Territorians are hard-working, committed people.

We on this side of the House know that in order to move forward, we need to determine the best way forward through a range of options which do not put the economy into a bad position. We will foster those relationships and build that spirit so that people are comfortable to invest in the Territory.

Our government stands for that very opportunity to get ahead and get back on your feet when times are tough. That is what we are doing ...

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Namatjira, I will interject there. Members, I have sought advice from the Clerk and I will read out some wording that relates to the matter before the House:

Australian Speakers have followed a similar approach. An accusation that a member has lied or deliberately misled is clearly an imputation of an improper motive. Such words are ruled out of order and members making them ordered to withdraw their remarks.

The deliberate misleading of the House is a serious matter, which could be dealt with as a contempt and a charge that a member has done so should only be made by way of a substantive motion.

On the advice I have received, Member for Namatjira, I offer you the opportunity to withdraw or reframe your remarks.

Mr Mills: Deputy Speaker, I would have thought you would have known that.

Mr PAECH: Just hold on for a moment there, Member for Blain. Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I take on board the advice and thank you and the Clerks for confirming that ...

Mrs Lambley: Oh, get on with it!

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the interjection. I clearly think that what I was doing was clearing the record and ensuring that people who are listening to this understand that those comments were not factual—they were incorrect.

Mr Mills: There is another way of doing it.

Mrs Lambley: Perhaps a substantive motion.

Mr Mills: There is another way of doing it. It is just the language ...

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let me seek further advice.

Mrs Lambley: You are wasting time, Member for Namatjira. Withdraw or move a substantive motion.

Mr Mills: There is a way of doing it. I can help you there.

Mr PAECH: I do not need your help, Member for Blain. I will withdraw those comments, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, so I can get on with what is best for Territorians.

As I was saying, we want the Northern Territory to continue to be a place where people can invest, their investments can flourish and people can line up and park their money in the Territory. That is what we are doing. We are getting on with business. We want Territorians to achieve, to do their best. We want to work with them to ensure that they can achieve that. We on this side have never ruled out having those hard conversations and working through those challenging times.

We believe through our plan we can create opportunities. We can also help people when they need help. That is what we are doing. We have a range of stimulus packages we have injected into the economy to keep the economy going, keep it stable and keep investments coming on. We believe in providing a fair go for everyone. If they fall behind, yes, we will be there to help them where we can.

Of course, the challenge is that we need to ensure that the policies for the future are good, sound and are developed for the future. There is, therefore, a test that every policy and decision of our government is to create more opportunities for Territorians.

We need to allow Territorians to grow, diversify and play a role in shaping the future. The future of the Territory is bright. It is exciting and full of opportunity. We must not lose sight of that opportunity. Sure, there is no denying that the Territory is in a transition phase, a wind down from major projects across the Territory. We need to ensure that the Territory's economy is not one that is left alone. We need to ensure that it is diversified and a strong economy that can withstand the highs and lows of industry.

Our economic plan has and continues to be a plan that works through and across all layers of government. Our economy has been fuelled by a number of factors. We need to understand those and the market trends.

People from right across the Territory are able to call the Territory home because of our investments. We need to make sure our policies are designed to funnel money into the Territory and not to dismantle our local economies. We understand that we need stimulate our local businesses. We are doing that, working with people across the Territory from remote communities to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Arnhem Land, Daly, Darwin and the islands. We understand.

Our commitment to strengthening our relationships with our Australasian neighbours is important to us, so we can discuss the possibility of trade deals for expanding opportunities for Territorians to sell products and services into the fastest growing world markets. We have had trade delegations going there to talk about and look at important potential industries where the Territory can be a leader and major exporter.

Our science and innovation agenda ensures that we can continue to develop and roll out sound investments in renewable energies. I am sure Ministers Wakefield and Lawler will continue to do great things for renewables and climate change. Investing in these areas is critical for the future of the Northern Territory.

I have said many times this week that you cannot have an economy on a dead planet. The Leader of the Opposition is in love with killing the planet. It is all he wants to do as it is all he talks about. If there not sound environmental practices and regulations you will have no planet.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Shame on you, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Higgins: Dreadful, dreadful.

Mr PAECH: I pick up on the interjections. They clearly do not care about the environment because they are talking about not protecting the environment and natural resources.

Mr Higgins: You had better come back to earth.

Mr PAECH: I am standing right here, though I do not know if you can see or hear me. But, it is worth listening to so check out the Hansard.

We are restoring trust and transparency through sound implementation of robust, clear and transparent sets of rules and guidelines. The other members are just throwing comments around. If they went back and spoke with industry, industries want certainty. We are providing that certainty by having sound regulations and industry guidelines.

Mr Higgins: It is a certainty that we are all going to go broke.

Mr PAECH: Leader of the Opposition, strong environmental protection makes good economic sense. For some who talks about the economy, you do not know its simple components.

We need to make sure that environmental legislation is sound legislation with good regulatory practices. But those on the other side do not want to hear it.

We need to continue with stakeholders to ensure the future for remote communities is a prosperous one. We need to engage with remote communities and stakeholders to ensure that their future is sustainable, where people can remain on country and connected to both worlds.

In all aspects of our policy development we strive to make sure Territorians are included and encouraged in all opportunities. When we talk about creating more sustainable and higher paying jobs, it is also about being a strong advocate and lobbying for those thousands of Territorians who have been shut down and out by the federal government with the CDP. They cannot participate in the economy because they have been shut out if it.

If those on the other side want to talk about economic opportunities, their federal counterparts are starving the Territory of economic opportunities by cutting our most vulnerable people off from funding to access those services. If they want to talk about shame jobs, that is the biggest one here.

We have lived through a remarkable era of prosperity. There has been a huge amount of resources through a once in a generation boom from mining and INPEX. We are talking about the new challenges and we say that as an opportunity. We need to look at this time to be innovative, be bold, and think outside what the traditional industries and economic drivers have been. We need to think beyond anything we have thought of before. That is part of the planning and part of the discussions.

It is time to look at markets and industries that we have not before. We are doing that. It will take some time. You cannot just do it overnight.

I pick up on the comments being made by the Leader of the Opposition on the minerals, resources and pastoral. I come from an electorate rich in culture, resources and pastoral history. They are huge economic drivers for the Northern Territory economy.

We are looking to continue our work with them into the future on their economic drivers and the opportunities that may present to the resources industry, to the pastoralists, and to our remote communities and how we can create regional economic development opportunities for those people.

To come in here and make those claims that those on our side of the Chamber do not care is simply untrue. We continue to invest in those industries. We continue to meet with those industries. I am very confident in my parliamentary colleague, Minister Kirby, out there on the ground, talking with industry and understanding the challenges they face in the current economic climate.

Our Chief Minister and our Treasurer are working with small businesses. We have introduced a range of incentives for local businesses like Biz Secure; helping businesses secure their premises. If a business in my electorate or community has been a product of antisocial behaviour or a break-in, I make it a necessary step to visit them, talk to them about the Biz Secure packages so that we can make the best attempt possible so that those activities do not happen again.

For the Leader of the Opposition to come in here and make the accusation that we are not doing anything in the child protection space—we are doing a significant amount of work but the work and the reform that they want costs money. We are going to invest in our generational change. We need to do that.

This is something that we have to do. We have to invest in our young kids. So, Leader of the Opposition, I ask you this: you want us to invest more in child protection services but your candidate for Lingiari wants us to do nothing in that space and give it over to the feds. What is your position on child protection?

Those on this side of the House, care about our young kids, want to invest in our young kids and we are doing that. You are critiquing us for the amount of money it is costing to do that. What do you want to do?

Before I finish...

Mr Higgins: I want you to get your head out of the sand.

Mr PAECH: It is not in the sand. I am asking you a simple question. You complain about the amount of money in the child protection space and then in your second breath say do more. Which one do you want?

Following up again, employees in Alice Springs from CDU. In July 2017, it was 146. Now it is 165 full-time and part-time. We are investing in Alice Springs and we will continue to invest. There are not 80 cuts. It is quite a shame that is the position.

I reiterate, strong environmental protection makes good economic sense, Leader of the Opposition. We need to invest in these principles. We need to invest so that we have a strong Territory for the future. That is what we will do on this side of the House and we will continue to do it.

You had a plan and your plan worked so well for you there is only two of you sitting here right now. I would rethink your plan.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I speak today on this issue because this is an important one for all Territorians. This is an issue that we are concerned about all over the Northern Territory. This is an issue we are concerned about in the bush because we know when the government makes tough decisions it is often the bush seats that suffer.

I have long been saying to the government that out in the bush we want to contribute to the Northern Territory economy. We want to be part of creating business that is sustainable. I am frustrated by the lack of interest by the government in working in partnership with Aboriginal landowners, elders and communities. There have been many elders come here to meet with government ministers to discuss ideas of sustainable business development that takes young people back on to country into training, businesses and schools for the young ones. This is a discussion about generational change. This is how we see generational change. Our community elders are trying to create a pathway for the next generation that gives them opportunities and hope for the future. But too often, they are being ignored and not being consulted.

Right now, community leaders across the NT are saying, 'We do not want sit-down money, we want to utilise our land for sustainable business development and job creation for our communities. But we want to be in control of that business development and have lawful employment. This is about buy local and invest local.

This stimulus of jobs in Darwin is great, but we also want to see a stimulus of jobs for local people in the bush and we want to be part of developing those jobs and training for our vision of our land and generation.

I have heard about people in social media saying we should give our land over to save the NT economy. Too often, we are given the label of being lazy, but we want to contribute to the NT economy, not through handing over our country but by creating viable, sustainable business that will give the next generation a future and maintain our culture and heritage.

We have great responsibility to look after our country that we cannot abandon. We are calling on government and business to work in partnership with us to invest in the future for all Territorians. We are not lazy, but too often we have seen outside businesses given the list for work on our country. We would rather see that with support we could develop these business ourselves and be part of building the NT economy.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I support this motion that the government needs to work with all ministers of the Chamber and across the community, including the bush, to improve the financial state of the Northern Territory.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. I support the motion before the Assembly this afternoon. To reiterate what the motion is asking for—it is asking the Assembly to recognise that the Territory is in a fiscal crisis. Based on the plan for budget repair ...

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, you are speaking to the amended motion.

Mr COLLINS: Sorry, I missed the amended motion. Trying to ignore the fact it is a crisis is probably typical of the situation.

Crisis—the C word. We cannot say the C word, can we? We are not talking about the bumper sticker C word. The Member for Namatjira spoke about the politics of the situation before. If that is not an indication of the politics, I do not know what is.

That is the reality. There is a crisis in the Territory. Attempting to simply deny or talk around it will not change the situation. Verbal gymnastics does not change the situation. We all know the dire straits we are in, and something needs to be done about it.

Asking for an acknowledgement that we work together and take responsibility as a whole for budget repair is simply reasonable. The future of the Territory is not bright if we are bankrupt. If the situation arises where we are \$35bn in debt, we are simply bankrupt. We are unable to meet our debts as and when they fall due. That is the simple definition of bankruptcy.

It is arguable that at the moment we are. If we are borrowing money to pay interest and wages, we are unable to meet our debts as and when they fall due. The future is not bright unless something drastic is done. That will take all of us working together, not a couple of people on the government's side and everybody else following suit on what they are told—all of us in this Chamber. We need to lead the Territory. That is what the Territory is calling out for.

I am gobsmacked to hear that you are not getting this message from your constituents. I do not believe you are not—I believe that you are. Everybody else is. They hear that message loud and clear. To continue to ignore it just because of what that small control group says will not assist the situation.

The future can only be bright if there is a plan; a vision that carries Territorians with it; a plan that invigorates them, inspires them, and builds business and investor confidence. That is the crucial element that we need in the Territory. The government can spend all it likes to keep certain sectors happy and keep a handful of people employed—which is good—but we really need business and investor confidence to lead us into the future so we get investment in the Territory.

You all know that it will be private investment that pulls the Territory out of the financial mess it is in, not government spending. If you do not get that, why are you here?

Restoring trust is not achieved simply by saying it, or repeating it ad infinitum. It is a bit like tourism; it is not turbocharged by saying it again and again as the numbers drop. It is a sign of the disconnect of the group that lead you. I had a conversation with the Chief Minister when he returned from a COAG meeting, or something. It was when the first discussion of the space industry was raised.

He was waxing lyrical about the opportunities of the space industry. I have to admit I am a bit of a cynic but I am happy to be convinced. The beaming Chief Minister proceeded to tell me about the real opportunities for mining asteroids.

I was gobsmacked, to be honest, with the concept of mining asteroids. I am not a rocket scientist but we cannot even get the mines here in the Territory approved so that we can benefit from them. That is an indication of the disconnect between the thinking of your leadership group and the reality of what is happening.

The reality is, we need to work with business. We need to find a vision for the future of the Territory that business and investors get behind, and is long term. INPEX is fine, but we need a natural industry in the Territory that is a world leader. I have raised this with many of you. We have the opportunity to go forward in developing our solar resources and in conjunction, develop a hydrogen industry that is going to make us a true world leader.

Member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: I take up on the interjection and I know the Member for Barky is a supporter of the issue, and so is the Member for Nelson.

Members interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: And the Member for Stuart and the Member for Katherine. I would like all hands up please.

Read the reports of the Chief Scientist of Australia. He encourages all Australian jurisdictions to start this process. I could not even get the conversation going with your leadership group.

Ms Uibo: Actually, no, it is brought by the Member for Barkly, if you were even listening.

Mr COLLINS: I am sorry, Member for Arnhem, perhaps you were not there.

Ms Uibo: Perhaps you were not there! The Member for Barkly brought that to the table in the caucus. Maybe you were not there.

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members I ask that your comments be directed through the Chair.

Mr COLLINS: I raised this issue and I was told we did have a plan for our economic future, and the plan was that we were going to make Katherine the inland port and Tennant Creek the mining hub. That was our plan for the future.

I tried to have that conversation and I was shut down. You can say what you like, but that is the reality. This industry takes government initiative, and you do not have it. Again, it is a fundamental problem with the government not being open to listening to ideas.

Say what you like, believe what you like. It is clear that you believe what you are told, that is obvious. I support this motion and support the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing the motion. It is an important motion that you all need to consider. I know you will not, but you should. Thank you.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I take the opportunity demonstrated earlier by the Member for Namatjira to correct a comment on the record from earlier in the day.

I took issue with part of the statement by the Chief Minister in response to a question. I am not denying the statement of fact by our Chief Minister. The statement of fact was that in our remote areas, we have the lowest rate of assaults in five years. I can tell you why. It is because remote police stations are undermanned or closed. They are bricks and mortar remote police stations that have been there for a long time that I witnessed being built. When I was a young person in the 1970s I witnessed the new police station being built at Papunya. I witnessed a new police station being built at Lajamanu.

These police stations have less staff in them now than I can remember. These assault reports are going down because it is almost impossible to contact a police officer in a remote area. Further to those bricks and mortar police stations, which have been around for a long time, I will also address the issue of the former Operation Themis police stations.

I have been trying to get an answer out of the government as a member of the Labor party. I still am a member. I have been trying to get a response as to what will happen to former Operation Themis police stations for months. I first went public regarding this many months ago. I still do not have an answer or know what will happen to former Operation Themis police stations in the electorate of Stuart, or indeed in other electorates. Yes, Chief Minister, you are right that assault reports have gone down because it is almost impossible to contact police officers. I have spoken about the fact that these police offices are under-resourced regarding staff. That is clearly established and I am sure people will back me up on that.

We also have another problem, which I have been trying to address for some time, and have spoken numerous times about. We have a problem with the way the call system works. We have a serious problem with the way you contact police in remote areas. There is an adaptation to a 1300 methodology that you need to use so police can log calls and so on. In a cultural construct in a remote community, it does not work. It is well established that it does not work. I have tried to voice those concerns on innumerable occasions. I have not been able to voice those concerns.

I reach out to my constituents of Stuart, I am doing everything I can to try and deal with these issues regarding remote police stations. I have tried to speak to ministers, when I was in Caucus. I have spoken through media and done all sorts of things. I have tried to get this to go forward. Every Territorian deserves a safe community and environment. For that you need to have a police force that is responsive to the needs of that particular

community. We need to do that. That is what I want to do and came to the Chamber to do. That is what we all came to the Chamber to do, to be engaged in debates and talk about these things, not to be shut down when we suggest them.

I wanted to bring that point up. I assure you there is a major problem with under-resourcing of remote police stations throughout the Territory. I further assure you that there is a major problem with the way the 1300 call system works. It needs to be addressed and talked about. I am happy to talk to anyone in the government, ministers or anyone else at any time about this. I have been trying to talk about it for a long time. I just wanted to clear that up.

Speaking directly to this motion, the changes we make now will affect the future of every Territorian and should be in the interest of every Territorian. We have to make changes. It has been acknowledged by the Treasurer and Chief Minister that we have to make structural changes to change the budgetary fiscal projection of the Territory.

If you are worried about the cost of dealing with itinerants or crime in Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine, you must also be worried about the conditions in remote communities. If you are worried about the cost of another Don Dale or more juvenile detention facilities, then you must be worried about education and employment in remote communities. If you are concerned about the cost of police auxiliaries manning bottle shops, you must be concerned about the lack of progress on remote community alcohol management plans and preventative education programs.

I could go on, but really we are all in this together. We cannot separate by calling it 'the remote Territory' or 'the bush'. We cannot refer to the remote Territory and ignore it while we are sandbagging the northern suburbs in Darwin. I do not mean that politically, I mean that in the idea of the really great initiative of this government of making it easy to own your own home. That is a great thing to do but we also need to remember that we have to always be reaching out wider than that.

Something I said in this place and to my colleagues numerous times before, is that the future of the Northern Territory depends on Indigenous land and labour participating in the economy with equity. How do we do this? Remote infrastructure must be improved and the Northern Territory Government needs to make the case to the Commonwealth for additional investment in remote infrastructure.

It is not enough just to talk about Aboriginal disadvantage as a commodity; that Aboriginal disadvantage requires more money in the Territory—we are getting \$4.66 on the horizontal fiscal equalisation but that we still need more because of the Aboriginal disadvantage.

Respectfully, I know the pressures ministers, this government and previous governments are under. I know that pressure. We need to not commodify this Indigenous disadvantage. We need to talk about how we are going to give people the resources to be able to participate in a modern economy. To participate in a modern economy, you clearly need infrastructure.

Governments are responsible for establishing an environment for business and industry to thrive. In the Territory, we still need dual lane bitumen roads for transport, mining, pastoralism, horticulture, community services and tourism. Bad roads are bad for business.

Ms Lawler: I am working on the Tanami.

Mr McCONNELL: Yes and that is great news. I am very pleased to hear about that. I will briefly take that on. It is interesting that the proponents of the Granites gold mine which is in the middle of the Tanami Desert have recently constructed a gas pipeline connecting with the existing north-south gas pipeline.

One of the reasons that the proponents of this mine constructed that gas pipeline—this mine is in the middle of the electorate of Stuart by the way—because there is an economic advantage in having their energy supplied by natural gas but they also did it because we have not been able to keep the road open.

The Tanami Road is in terrible condition and it is always in terrible condition. It has been a problem for a long time. Hundreds of millions of dollars of royalties have come from the Granites gold mine directly to the Northern Territory Government, yet we have made very little progress on the road.

These are legitimate things for the Member for Stuart to talk about. These are things that should be talked about in this place. I am not being critical of the government at all. I am talking about things that are factual. We need to be thinking about these infrastructure deficits. Bad roads are bad for business.

We know that we need to grow private investment in the Northern Territory. If we do not underpin the attractiveness of the Northern Territory—it is a great place to live, work and play, it is all of those things—to do business by having adequate infrastructure, we are not going to attract people. Attracting people to your jurisdiction is a competitive environment. You have to do things well. You have to be innovative. You have to have a marketable point of difference. You have to do those things.

Remote areas also need real investment in mobile communications and data, not just tiny dots across a vast landscape but the ability to connect, manage and intersect with mobile data networks across the Northern Territory. Anything less would mean we are being left behind.

In the electorate of Stuart, the minister responsible can probably tell me a bit more about this, there has been some updates recently on the Telstra mobile networks. That has meant there has been slightly better coverage. I can tell you that for the electorate of Stuart, there is almost no mobile coverage anywhere. My electorate, I am very old fashioned here, is 1000 miles high. That is 1600 kilometres high. It is many hundreds of kilometres wide. There are very few places of mobile reception.

This has made it difficult to recruit and retain staff, and for people to communicate more widely as people use more platforms to access the internet, news data and those type of things. We need to work on this as a priority.

I am not saying that this government is not doing it. We need to do more of it and communicate it better to the people in Palmerston, Darwin and other urban places in the Territory. We need to make it clear to people that the need to have good quality services and infrastructure across the Territory is always a priority.

Sustainable power and is increasingly important for remote communities. We will not be able to attract new business or buildings if there is no available water or the power shuts down regularly. There are communities in the electorate of Stuart have substantial water problems or do not have an adequate water supply. I am not making this stuff up, it is widely known. We need to talk more about these things.

We need to make sure that people in Darwin, Palmerston and other urban places know that we are measured by the way we deliver services to remote communities so they can participate in a modern economy. You cannot participate in a modern economy in most places in the Northern Territory because there is not adequate telecommunications or roads infrastructure.

We need to make positive investments to reduce the negative costs of ignoring the real challenges in remote areas. The challenges are a cost to Northern Territory society that we cannot bear. We cannot afford to continue the costs of crime, alcohol and drug dependency, unemployment, low literacy, homelessness, family violence, severe health conditions and disease and suicide. We have to deal with these matters, be inclusive, take on the difficult things people tell us, and to accommodate the things people in our own teams tell us. We cannot continue to have them happen.

I am not going to quote directly from the Chief Minister's state of the territory speech at the Chamber of Commerce recently. I saw when I watched it on a Facebook feed that the Chief Minister talked about real concerns we have in the Territory from a budgetary point of view. He talked about how the Police, Corrections Health budgets are massively overspent. Those are the three he referred to, but we know there are other overspent budgets as well.

Why are they overspent? Because we have so many Indigenous people overrepresented in incarceration, arrest, hospital admission—or innumerate other things in the health care system—statistics. We have to change that. We are not going to change that by removing people's culture or their connection to their country. If you are a progressive politician or a member of the Labor Party, you are interested in having people live on their land and practice their law, language and culture.

To be able to live on your land and practice your law, language and culture in modernity you need to be able to participate in the economy. You cannot maintain your cultural integrity and your other commitments, the songs you need to sing and the sorrys you need to go to, on a Centrelink payment, which has probably been suspended by the federal government more often than you have received it. People have to be involved in a participatory economy. As well as infrastructure you need to work on making sure people are employable and able to participate in a modern economy.

When you ask how we got to this crisis point, need to look closely at the Northern Territory's economy and how it works. The electorate of Stuart does better than Darwin in many ways. We are not propped up by a

massive public service and there are well recognised hospitality and tourism businesses; national parks in the North and South, including one likely to be nominated for World Heritage; thriving Aboriginal-run art businesses; long-term pastoral properties; and recent horticultural developments. There are also existing mines and emerging mines, as has been spoken about in this place before.

The shires or regional councils in the electorate of Stuart do a lot of work with few resources. They need to be commended. We are proud of all of our local government service providers across the Northern Territory. We need to reach out to them and talk about the great work they do.

We need to invest in youth programs, as they produce good results for keeping people out of the youth justice system. I often site Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation as a good example of an organisation that ultimately saves the Territory money. If we took a closer look at justice reinvestment in remote communities, we could do a lot more in this area.

Some of these things are being done. I will reach out to the Minister for Territory Families, the Hon Dale Wakefield, and say that I know that she has provided funding to WYDAC. There are opportunities to do even more, such as talking about these things more. This is important. If we want to deal with issues on developing capacity of people, organisations like WYDAC are important.

Improving literacy is another area we need to invest in. We need to set high targets to improve literacy, not just for kids coming out of schools but also for adults. Where are our adult literacy and numeracy programs? Despite earlier discussions, my understanding is that there used to be three adult literacy and numeracy teachers at CDU in Alice Springs and now there is one, though I may need advice from the Minister if this is true. I have not had the opportunity to check that. I do not know if that is a budgetary constraint or whether a funding pool dried up, I just heard about it.

I am committed to the idea that we need to be working on adult literacy and numeracy. One of the main barriers to people being employed is not a lack of jobs in remote areas. People might be surprised to hear that. It is a lack of functional literacy and numeracy. If we address these things people are able to become more resilient and able to deal with matters in their own lives as they are able to work and have an increased income. This means they are less likely to be represented in incarceration figures ...

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time be granted to the member to continue his remarks.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Kirsty Sayers-Hunt, Alderman of Litchfield Council, and her partner, Amber, and their daughter Saige. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr McCONNELL: It was a good thing I was shouting out good things about local councils. That was advantageous.

Ms Fyles: Member for Stuart, you made a good impression.

Mr McCONNELL: Thank you.

What I am trying to demonstrate is that I am not going to be involved in argy bargy about the words, but there is substantive work that needs to be done on the economic sustainability of the Territory. I am passionate about the fact that what we really need to talk about is Indigenous land and labour participating in the economy with equity.

People might find this a little strange for me to say, but the government that is best placed to do that is a Labor government. The Labor government has a history of working collaboratively and cooperatively with Indigenous land interests, particularly land councils.

Labor has a history in the Northern Territory of being the strongest advocate for land rights. Labor understands what we need to do to make sure Aboriginal people are involved in every aspect of making decisions about development on their country, and that they benefit from that development.

That is why I am concerned when I see some of the priorities I do not like the look of. I am not going to articulate them now, but there are some things I do not like. I have said this on numerous occasions to my previous colleagues in caucus. Let us work collaboratively and cooperatively across the Territory. Let us understand that it is inherently an Indigenous place, and anything going forward will have a central component of Indigenous impact to it.

The thing I am most critical about with the much-maligned boundless possible program is that if I look at the way it is promoted, I see some demonstration of Indigenous productivity, but I do not see it presenting that this is an inherently Indigenous place.

I also went to New Zealand over the Christmas break, and I had a conversation about this with the Member for Sanderson a couple of days ago. As well as the beautiful facilities and landscapes in New Zealand, what I was most impressed with is the fact it is so inclusive of Maori culture.

It is not over the top, it is right throughout everything that happens. The way roads are named, the way people welcome you in a restaurant, the way pamphlets are written, the way tourism businesses are operated. It is ingrained and something the New Zealanders can be very proud of.

I know it is not perfect, and I know there are people who say there is a lot wrong in New Zealand, but it is a lot better, generally, than the Northern Territory. This is our marketable point of difference. Why do we not try to do what New Zealand has done? We could do that well here when the majority of the land mass is held by Indigenous interests; when more than 30 percent of the population is Indigenous; and when in every corner of the Northern Territory there is still an Indigenous first language spoken.

Why are we not promoting those things? Why are we not talking about those things? Boundless possible in numerous shades of purple is good, there are aspects of that I agree need to be done, but what needs to be at the forefront in the promotion of the Territory is that this is an inherently Indigenous place. We still have people living on their land practicing their law, language and culture.

I believe we are in the International Year for Languages. Member for Namatjira, is that correct?

Member: Indigenous languages.

Mr McCONNELL: Thank you, Member for Katherine as well. Is it not extraordinary that we live in a place where there is still an Indigenous first language spoken in every corner of our map? Is that not extraordinary?

That is what we need to do. I referred earlier in my monologue to what we can be excited about. We can be really excited that if we do develop further extractive mining industries, they are going to be done in a way that is sustainable, that includes the community, and that benefits Territorians in every corner of the Territory. If we have an emerging industry like hydrogen, that will be inclusive as well. If we develop new tourism infrastructure that needs to be inclusive as well.

We are doing some of these things, but we can do more. We can do some of these things a lot more. I would say that some of these things are happening. I am not saying that everybody is doing everything wrong. I am saying that we need to do a lot more about this. We need to generate the excitement and interest. This is a great place to live. We have some difficult times at the moment, but do you know what happens in difficult times? You become more communicative with the wider circle rather than narrowing it. You become more exposed to wider opportunities, not narrow them. That does not work.

I was going to avoid direct political statements, but you do not exclude people in your team, you try to include people from your team. The people who are furthest out on your team are some of your most important team players. I know that from the environment I am in. The things I have learned over my career is that you have to accommodate those views and learn from them.

I could not learn from the views to lean the things I have learned from station managers, who I had very little time for some of their other views about Indigenous people. But I learned from those station managers and the people I was in the stock camp with, because I did not exclude them and say, 'They are not good enough for me, I am not going to talk to them'. I learned from them. That is what helped me to become what I am now. I spent time with Aboriginal people and a lot of that time I could not speak the language.

I learned from people while I was there and that is what you need to do. When you are up against it, like we are here where we have significant structural reform we need to do on the economic sustainability of the Territory—take on the fact we also need to deal with some of the cultural issues we have in the Territory. So many Indigenous people are represented at the bottom end of so many things.

We need to work on those things. How do we work on getting more Indigenous people into the economy; working in the economy—their Indigenous land in the economy? People should be able to aspire to private home ownership regardless of where you live in the Territory. It might have to have some innovative methodologies that underpin it because of the underpinning land title, but let us do that work and truly be innovative by doing those things.

I remain optimistic about doing those things. I think we can deliver those things. We cannot deliver them by exclusion. We have to deliver those things by having a wider view.

The practice of mindfulness. That is a sort of hipster thing to do at the moment, to take on mindfulness. The practice of mindfulness is to let all your barriers down and let the information come in. Then you make the value judgements within your values of how to go forward with them. But if you preclude yourself from accepting the information to come in, you will continue to make the same mistakes we have before.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to this GBD motion. Normally I do not do this sort of thing because I have a limited amount of time and would much prefer to put on record what I would like to say, but this needs to be addressed. This is about the Member for Araluen's comments about the cuts to the staffing at Charles Darwin University.

In July 2017, Charles Darwin University Campus in Alice Springs had 146 staff members. Today they have 165 staff members. There have been not cuts, in fact the staff numbers have increased by 19. I have articles—as she was talking and bringing that up I thought to myself, 'Where in the world has the Member for Araluen been that it is only just come to her that there have been funding cuts to universities and how could she have gotten it so wrong to blame the Territory government?'

I quickly researched and went through the files I have on record. I have been following cuts by the federal government for a few years now. The first article I had saved was from *The Guardian* on 18 September 2017:

The federal government will cut \$2.2bn from universities, predominantly through a two-year freeze in commonwealth grants funding for teaching and learning.

The ABC news said on 18 January 2018:

Federal Government university budget cut leaves 10,000 places unfunded ...

The Guardian said on 28 February 2018:

\$2.2bn funding cut to universities 'a cap on opportunity for all.

...

Universal access to public services and improved educational opportunity hinge on the reversal of a \$2.2bn cut to universities ...

ABC news, on 14 June 2018, said:

University funding freeze hits regional campuses worst, with up to 15 per cent of expected money on ice.

Held by the federal government. In that article there is a table which says, 'Find out how your university will be affected'. Charles Darwin University Northern Territory—decline, 8.1%, which is \$30m. That is the federal government doing that—the \$2.2bn cut to universities—not the Northern Territory Government.

I wanted to put that on record before I continue me further, because nothing irritates me more than to have those types of general statements thrown about. It is scaremongering and it drives me bonkers.

I find it incredibly disingenuous that the Opposition Leader and some other members across the floor will stand up and passionately criticise, point fingers, insult—all those things. Yes, we have seen it from this side as well. Nothing irritates me more than seeing that type of politics being played out on this floor. It is disingenuous to go on with that rhetoric and not accept that you also had a part to play in the way the economy is today.

We came to government with a GST revenue decrease year on year. For the third time in NT Government history that has happened. We have to acknowledge that we were handed down a tough economic situation. We have to acknowledge a slowing of the economy with the INPEX construction winding down. We came to a budget in deficit. It is only fair to acknowledge that.

If you are yelling at us, saying, 'Admit your faults'—everybody needs to admit it. Every person played a part in this. Not one single party or politician ...

Mr Mills: You had better tell your mob. They reckon it was the CLP ...

Ms NELSON: I pick up on the interjection. What I tell my mob is my business. I am addressing the parliament today.

A member: She is gagged as well!

Ms NELSON: I pick up on that as well. The conversations I have around my dinner table with my family, the arguments I have with my spouse and what I do with my personal bank account is none of your business. What I say in this Chamber, on the street, to my constituents or put on the public record is what I am willing to say to you today.

Again, it is disingenuous to have those conversations, yelling constantly, but not being willing to accept your own hand at the way the economy looks today.

Mr Mills: You have to be joking!

Ms NELSON: No, I am not, Member for Blain. I will not allow myself to be distracted by the interjections because I have to tell you something ...

Mr Mills: Grow up!

Ms NELSON: I have lots of great stuff to tell you about in Katherine. These things have happened because I have been working very hard in my electorate for the two-and-a-half years. I am incredibly fortunate to have a government and a Cabinet that is supportive of the Katherine electorate. I am going to start off with a couple of things.

Since we have been in government, we have seen a record investment in Katherine and I am going to elaborate on specific projects. To start with, here are some of the opportunities that have been made possible in Katherine:

- \$8m for a new fire station, an increase of \$3m to the money that was in the forward estimates
- \$4.5m for refurbishment and improvements to the sports precinct
- \$2m ...

Mr MILLS: Expenditure.

Ms NELSON: I pick up on the Member for Blain's interjections over there, yelling out 'expenditure'. I pick up on that. According to the Member for the Blain, do not spend money on a new fire station which is being built in Katherine to meet the demand and need of the growing population in Katherine. Do not do that.

Do not spend money refurbishing and improving the sports precinct. Do not spend money on the Katherine showgrounds. Do not spend money on the CBD refurbishment. Do not spend money on youth school holiday activities \$450 000, do not spend that. Do not spend money on public housing repairs and maintenance, bad idea according to the members over there.

Do not spend \$300 000 on each school in Katherine. Again, bad idea according to the members over there. \$500 000 for the Doorways Hub in homelessness.

Mr HIGGINS: Tell us where you are saving it. Come on!

Ms NELSON: I am going to get to that, Member for Daly. I am going to tell you how that this expenditure that we have spent in Katherine has actually saved quite a bit money and reliance on some of the services that people rely on heavily when they do not have this sort of support.

It is a shame that there are some people that are not capable of seeing that the more you support your community members, the more there is in long-term savings. It is amazing to me that they cannot see that. Let us not spend money in trying to keep money in jobs, improving their quality of life, fixing houses and fixing roads. Let us not do that. Why not.

I listen with bewilderment to the Leader of the Opposition describing the Territory as being in a high-risk situation and his constant criticisms. You know what? I understand the politics of it. I get it. I get that you have this amazing public platform and you need to get your political message out there. What are your solutions? What are you going to be putting in place? If you are the alternative government, what are your solutions? Austerity measures?

It is really disingenuous to be constantly yelled at but not have anyone else get up and say hey, a bit of humility, we did this as well but here is the problem.

In the financial year of 2017, the forecast GST cuts were predicted to leave the Territory \$317m out of pocket, with an estimated loss of about \$800m. Undeniably they were pretty scary numbers and we are in very difficult financial times.

In response to that, last year, I stated that for too long Territorians living in rural and remote communities, which include Katherine, have walked away from consecutive NT budgets feeling like the type of the character from the very much loved Charles Dickens novel, *Oliver Twist*. Always left wanting more and forever feeling as though they have been relegated to the back seat in favour of some of the more populated hubs in the NT, like Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs.

In that budget that we released last year, we made some inroads into that disparity. We provided some much needed hope to people, like my constituents, that there was a focus on the Katherine region, that they are not being forgotten and that we are working to dismantle that infamous Berrimah Line.

For the first twenty years of my professional life I was in logistics and procurement, working on major projects in the offshore industry, and in transportation. I apply the project management skills learned through those twenty years to my current job as the Member for Katherine. Since being in office I have kept a spreadsheet of all the program and infrastructure commitments that we have made for Katherine.

As much as the members opposite enjoy the chance to put their criticisms on public record, I relish the opportunity to put on record what I have done for Katherine with the support of my government. These things are not massive, flashy or grandiose investments. They are necessary and needed infrastructure investments that are long overdue. The investments are in areas like child protection, tourism, and infrastructure, all of which have benefitted Katherine and its economy.

As part of the royal commission, \$400 000 was allocated to Katherine for family and childcare centre that will provide afterhours outreach services to our most vulnerable children. This funding is crucial to ensure that kids who cannot go home are not roaming the streets and being put in dangerous situations or breaking into school and community facilities to find somewhere safe to sleep for the night. This investment is needed.

We talk about youth crime, disengaged youths and crime in general, and we are asked, 'What are you doing about it?' This is one of the things we are doing in Katherine and it requires money.

We are only going to make this a reality by investing in infrastructure. After the \$103m Turbocharging Tourism package that was rolled out last year, we immediately began to see positive effects in Katherine. Katherine has been featured frequently in recent tourism campaigns. Funding has been committed towards new projects that will enhance the unique beauty of the Katherine River and improve access for tourists and locals to its bank. There is a lot happening in the tourism sector in Katherine.

Over the last couple of days, I have been carrying a great plan called the Great 8 Projects, which has put together as part of the Katherine Town Council's masterplan. It is an example of how hard we have been working in Katherine and what you can achieve with a collaborative relationship between the Territory government and the local council. With our support and working together, we have managed to get a few things improved on and built. This is bringing money into the electorate and generating revenue.

The CBD revitalisation is to start this year. There is \$6m, including the Katherine Town Council contribution. There is a concept design for the Katherine East neighbourhood centre that has been progressed—\$22m. There is a tender underway for the showgrounds upgrade—\$2.4m. The Katherine logistics hub and agribusiness—\$30m. The Indigenous arts trail—\$10m. Hot springs revitalisation, the sports ground upgrade, the Katherine Boundless Possible video, which we have had a buy into as well. I been carrying these papers around.

I just had briefings with the planning commission on the Katherine East area plan. The Katherine agribusiness and logistics hub is a project I am excited about. There is a huge list of things that have been going on in Katherine and that this government has invested in. It is all to generate revenue, bringing more people into the Katherine region to support the population that is there already. You have to be able to put in money to keep it ticking over.

There are tens of millions of dollars' worth of infrastructure projects already underway or in the process of being put out to market. This includes work both in the Big Rivers region more broadly, and in Katherine. We have seen projects moving into the design and construction phases, with the majority of the projects to be completed prior to August 2020.

For example, in May 2018 we saw the \$130 000 Katherine town road reserve landscape maintenance project commence. There was \$8m committed to the new fire station, as I mentioned previously. This new fire station is co-located with the newly opened St John Ambulance centre, and has better access to the Stuart Highway to allow emergency crews to get on the road faster.

Katherine is a service town and logistics hub, and has the potential to be an even greater contributor to those industries that operate in the region. To go along with these important economic investments, we understand and acknowledge that we also need social investment. We need better resources for our hospital. We need ways to get more service providers to the town. We need more housing stock and more short term accommodation options.

There is a lot we need to address. I have sat in this chamber many times and listened to the minister for housing, community development and local government, especially during estimates last year. Having read through the budget papers and listened to him and the plans they have and the work they have already done in the last two years, I remain reassured and confident that the department of housing and local government and community development is focussed and determined to increase and improve housing stock throughout the Katherine region.

They are doing that because of the minister's hard work. I am going to continue to support my government in our efforts to address these gaps, and in lobbying the federal government. If we want to increase our population, which in turn increases our GST contribution from the federal government, we need to take advantage of every opportunity to grow our economy. And we need the services and infrastructure to do it.

We have a thriving agricultural sector in our back yard. Incredible mineral deposits at our doorstep.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I seek an extension of time for the member to complete her remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that. There are a lot of jobs. All of this is generating jobs. It is generating revenue. That is what it all leads to. Katherine is the best-positioned town in the Northern Territory to benefit from the future expansion of various industries, which include transport, tourism and mining, but again, to do all of that, we need to invest in infrastructure.

Katherine has been overlooked for a long time. You only have to spend a few days in Katherine looking at some of the things there to know it has been taken advantage of and overlooked by previous members and the previous government.

We are committed to the potential in Katherine and what it means for the future of Katherine. I acknowledge the work done by the Member for Johnston, the previous minister for primary industry. He did a lot of work with the Katherine logistics hub, and I look forward to forging ahead with the substantial commitment and infrastructure investment, by working with the Member for Port Darwin, minister for primary industry, and with the private sector, to develop a logistics and agribusiness hub. I am the assistant minister for that.

Infrastructure is going to be a turning point in the town's history. In the words of the Chief Minister, it will realign, reset and expand its purpose and economy. Such a hub is going to be a massive job creator and economic stimulator during the construction phase. It is going to thrust into the national and international spotlight as an inland port that utilises road, rail and aviation loading and unloading facilities, warehousing and cold storage infrastructure, and the capacity to provide a one-stop service centre for the NT's agricultural wealth.

The commitment of \$30m towards the planning and future development of this logistics hub. This is after years of talking about it by successive governments. We are actually going to be making that a reality. The money is there; we remain committed. It is there.

Katherine's potential as a major contributor to the long-term economy of the NT is endless. This is part of the reason that there is such a buzz and sense of anticipation around the community. I am grateful for the work that we are doing around Katherine but I acknowledge we are falling short on some things in Katherine. I certainly would not be doing my job as a local member if I did not acknowledge that.

I have to reiterate, I and my electorate are really fortunate that I have some great colleagues in my caucus and some great support from people in the Cabinet that are supportive of Katherine, that do acknowledge and appreciate that Katherine is the hub for the Big Rivers region. It is a region of 24 000 people and that covers from Kalkarindji to Borroloola.

Are there things that we could be doing a little bit differently? Could we be a little bit more adventurous in thinking outside the box? We all could. To be more specific, we are doing great things for Katherine. We are spending money there but we are spending money because we need to. We are going to get good returns on that.

We have some great projects that are currently underway. I am looking forward to the completion of the fire station; it is going to be opening really soon. This is a single level facility that accommodates the fire crew staff; is available for after-hours use by volunteers and community organisations, again, generating revenue; provides a venue for training; offers a workspace for vehicles and safety equipment; shelter for the fire fleet on standby; allows for further expansion to enable the facility to service the community into the future, again planning for the future.

The masterplan for that site also allows for future relocation of the whole Katherine emergency services, again planning for the future.

The Ngukurr police station, \$12m is Australian Government funded. The release of that construction tender is hopefully going out in March, with completion 12 months after that has been awarded. The number of jobs supported by that is 63.

Nitmiluk National Park walking trail feasibility and planning, the number of jobs supported by that is 29. We have had work that has also begun as part of stage one of the redesign and refurbishment of the interior and exterior of the 20-year old Nitmiluk Visitors Centre that has not seen one new nail or one stroke of new paint. It is a major hub for visitors starting their journey through that park. Last year, we recorded that we had more people going through there than Kakadu.

Tourism is a key economic driver in the Katherine region. Nitmiluk is a major attraction. Ongoing investment in our tourism assets is great news for Katherine businesses and local jobs. The tender for stage one for Nitmiluk has been awarded to a local company—more jobs—Remote Build NT and will see a new modern kitchen and updated bathroom facilities.

It is being jointly managed with Jawoyn people. This project is being coordinated in close coordination with the Nitmiluk board of management. The upgrades are going to incorporate design elements that resonate with the landscape, tell the story of the park and the Jawoyn people and is going to deliver a memorable visitor experience.

Nitmiluk National Park is a key visitor destination and it attracts approximately 270 000 travellers each year. Keeping it open, improving on it, refurbishing it, renovating it, upgrading it, all of that not only creates jobs for local companies but it enhances the visitors experience and what we want to have is people returning. We want return visitors, we want new visitors, and we want word of mouth to get out there so people come in and say, I did not even think about going there but I am going to go there now.

There is lots of stuff happening. The visitor centre serves are being refurbished, the Logistics and Agribusiness Hub, Katherine East Neighbourhood Centre—that is a great one—Katherine sport and recreation site. DIPL has accepted a direct sale application, which has been advertised in accordance with the release of crown land policy. An assessment of that application and discussions with the proponent are ongoing, but that is an exciting investment. The department is progressing its investigations on the Katherine East Neighbourhood Centre to develop a commercial neighbourhood centre in Katherine East. That is exciting and, again, means more jobs.

Katherine flood mitigation—the department is leading the implementation of flood mitigation measures for the Katherine region. The remaining projects include structural mitigation infrastructure to support the Katherine East Neighbourhood Centre. Again, it means more jobs and money going to local businesses, companies and employment. These works will be funded through the flood mitigation capital works program. We are hoping these construction works will commence early in the 2019–20 financial year.

Katherine Hospital—patients will soon have access to state-of-the-art medical imaging and CT scanning on site at Katherine Hospital after we awarded a tender for the project to a local company. A tender of \$4m to construct, fit out and deliver ongoing medical imaging services was awarded to Katherine Diagnostic Imaging, ensuring it stays in Katherine. Katherine Diagnostic Imaging will construct and fit out the space at Katherine Hospital through a subcontract with another local company, Atkin Building—local business.

This is the first time that the Katherine Hospital will be able to offer such services on site.

Ms Wakefield: A big achievement.

Ms NELSON: A massive achievement. It took a lot of work for that to come to fruition. Yes, it is again money being spent, but it is money staying in the local economy. It is jobs being created and services being improved on. This government has also delivered better access to quality healthcare for Territorians and has definitely been creating jobs for Territorians. Like I just mentioned, this tender was awarded to a local company using local tradies. That is a \$4m investment.

We are also seeing \$4.2m for sporting and entertainment facilities in Katherine. That is again money that will help create jobs, support local businesses, ensure vital sporting facilities continue to provide social, cultural and economic benefits to the community, keeping people in Katherine.

Retention of population—time is running out, but I wanted to put all this on record. I support the amended motion and will continue supporting my government to work through this, which will in turn support my electorate.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support the amended motion because I can, but I note that the original motion is not—I just find it irksome when such a serious matter, which is facing the Northern Territory and generations to come, that the Labor government reverts to such vanity to change the words of the motion and put up its own so that it looks a little nicer. They are constantly accusing those who want to talk about better democratic processes and are thinking properly about the challenges that we face now and into the future—anyone who is saying anything like that or other than singing along with the party line is only talking about themselves.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Labor government is obsessed with themselves. Otherwise, why would they take the vain approach of just modifying a motion so that it does not look as unkind as the other one, is not really unkind. There is nothing political in that; it is just stating the obvious. It is stating the facts that can be gained from the government's own report, which it has circulated publicly and is a plan for budget repair.

The plan for a budget repair speaks of a structural deficit problem, which is a big, deep problem that is bigger than the Labor government. You can be relieved from being in that totally defensive mode by trying to find someone else to blame. It is not all about you or your plans to be re-elected. You will probably increase your chances of being re-elected if you would relax and be honest about this, and do what people expect you to do, that is, lead us toward how we deal with the crisis.

Your own amended motion disturbingly modifies the concept in the first line of the original motion. The first line says that it is headed towards a fiscal crisis. You found that offensive and said that better words were, in true Orwellian speech, that we had some budget challenges. That is much milder and nicer, and it will not scare the horses.

Then it was said there were a range of challenges, but you specified one in particular. That is so telling. If you were going in to battle and knew you had a formidable challenge to address, a foe against you—in this case it is net debt that could steer the future of the Northern Territory to paths we cannot control. It is a serious foe, a crisis we have to confront with steel, courage, clarity and conviction. You would not follow someone who is trying to downplay, sanitise, misrepresent and reduce it to terms that are strictly political and vain. It is all about them.

'Let us put all that aside. It will go away because we are not really responsible for anything except our own secret agenda which no one knows about—how we can be re-elected in August 2020. That is what it is really about, but nobody knows that is the cunning plan here.'

The jig is up. People know what is really going on here. Houston, we have a problem. It is a real problem. You cannot sanitise this; it is troubling people. I will prove that.

You might have noticed yesterday in Question Time—the Member for Katherine is possibly interested in this. Up in the gallery I saw a group of senior citizens come in. They took up two rows. They sat and listened to Question Time. I always feel a bit sensitive during times like that because I think our behaviour is not always understood. Even if it is, it is not acceptable to citizens who expect more from the dialogue that goes on in this parliament. It is supposed to be a contest of ideas.

Sometimes our behaviour is a bit over the top. I was thinking about how they might perceive it. I received an email from one of the seniors, whom I am not sure if I know or not. This senior has given her name but asked that it not be disclosed. Bear in mind the senior citizens who observed Question Time and then the censure knew it was about the economy, debt and deficit. They come from a different place. I think the Labor members who have not had any real experience in private enterprise or running businesses do not feel for those family stories such as what it was like during the Depression, when livelihoods were wiped overnight. Families were ruined and great shame befell families and communities.

My wife's side of the family encountered poverty, which caused them to leave one country and come to another for survival. Those things are very powerful. I am sure the seniors sitting up there had, within their family stories, some connection to severe economic crisis.

They also know the value of money. They count the cost of things and budget. If they do not have enough money at the end of the week, they need to budget better the following week. They do not expect people to bail them out. They live within their means because that is a dignified and honourable thing to do.

They try to save a bit of extra money so they can help somebody in need. That is what they do. These were the people listening to the discussion yesterday, and this is what this dear lady wrote to me. She said:

Dear Sir, this morning I was privileged to attend the opening ceremony of Parliament 2019, and to spend some time in the gallery at question time. Myself and those attending with me thoroughly enjoyed the opening ceremony. Our time in the gallery was limited, but speaking for myself, I was left asking myself this question after listening to the Chief Minister: where is the money coming from to fund the projects designed to create the jobs for Territorians?

There was no mention of it, says she:

Income from any source was not mentioned. Establishment of any new industries that could possibly create an income were not mentioned. Assistance to provide NT enterprise to establish an income-generating enterprise was not mentioned. Assistance to employers to employ and train staff was not mentioned.

Surely there has to be some form of business or industrial activity to generate an income, fund a payroll, pay taxes, at least. Small business and sole traders form the basis of the local economy. Without an income or a five-year business plan, a business eventually becomes insolvent and unable to secure a loan to keep trading.

Yet it seems that the 'powers to be' deem it can continue to borrow to fund their projects, and all of this will be fine. Nothing to worry about. When all the household silver has been sold, how will the establishment pay debts? What will be the next Territory asset to be sold off to pay debts?

I am aware there is limited time to pose a question and to respond to such a question. Kind regards.

And asked that she remain anonymous.

I am impressed that someone would sit in the gallery and discern that so clearly and feel compelled to write. That is what we are endeavouring to say here. At least we can feel satisfied that we are speaking the truth in the face of a severe crisis.

History will not judge well those who talked it away and tried to remove it from view, and remove themselves from responsibility and transfer it elsewhere. Even as we have seen, tinkering with words to cover your own responsibility. Heading into a crisis you need to be able to trust your leadership. You need to be able to win the confidence and support of those that are following you. You need to have political capital on which to manoeuvre.

We do not even have the Chief Minister stand up and defend or fight, or prepared to actually take what we could all recognise as a tough decision. We do not see that. We find reasons not to follow up after a presentation, and leave the event. It has happened too many times, and some eloquent public servant gets up there and says, unfortunately the Chief Minister has to go, let me answer a few questions in as many words as I possibly can. And the Chief Minister is gone.

In times of crisis, perhaps that is why the Chief Minister says this is not a crisis. We remember Nero, who fiddled while Rome burned. The whole empire collapsed. That is what is happening here. Living in some kind of false reality.

In the words of the Auditor-General, words that you in government should pay attention to. This is a serious public document, not something written by the spin doctors on the fifth floor—the real deal. I quote its key findings:

Whilst total revenues increased by \$52.5 million from the prior year ...

That is a lot of real money. How did that come into being by the way? Where does money come from? It continues:

... \$52.5million from the prior year, total expenses were \$350.7 million higher ...

So your revenue increased by \$52m, but your expenses increased by \$350.5m than in the prior year. This is in the classic words of the Auditor-General:

... indicating opportunities may exist where spending could be restrained in the current economic environment.

But the ears of those on the other side are closed. They cannot hear that, but the people are beginning to hear that. Where is the restraint? We have heard presentations and contributions citing list after list of money that has been spent. Is that not a jolly good thing?

I wonder where money comes from. If you borrow it from somebody, do you have to pay it back? Not in the socialist mindset. Other people work hard for it, generating wealth, and it comes—that's right, we adopt a mendicant posture, going to Canberra to cry so they feel sorry for us. We say, 'It is so hard up here. There was a terrible government. They were here for four years and they wrecked the whole joint and bankrupted us. Could you please help us out?' But without mentioning 12 years of Labor before that, creating the structural deficit problem.

The sensible folk, whether left or right, Labor or Liberal, in Canberra are able to see you coming. This is why I asked the Chief Minister last year, 'How is it going with the statehood campaign?' and he said, 'They laughed because of the last mob'. That is an interesting interpretation. It is the whole posture of the Territory facing up to its responsibilities as a member of the Commonwealth with aspirations to be a contributor, not just a mendicant.

The Auditor-General has said it plainly, though perhaps you in government cannot see or hear it. She goes on to say:

The largest component of expense growth related to other operating expenses (an increase of \$113.1 million).

That is a lot of money. I wonder where money comes from? The report goes on to say:

Significant increases were also noted in employee benefits (\$89.6 million) ...

Hang on, gosh we cannot do anything for that because our strategy is to be re-elected and we cannot upset any of those people. We will change words and line up behind a false narrative, hopefully we will get there.

...depreciation (\$62.5 million) ...

Depreciation is on assets that are losing their value. That number is going to change.

... and capital grants (\$34.8 million).

That is just one snippet of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report as assessed by the Auditor-General. We really should be hearing what that says and responding to it. I get the politics of it, though maybe I am not good at that. But I am still here.

The Member for Fong Lim and I asked if the Chief Minister could give us specifics on the hard decisions that will have to be made. Those in government think we all think like they think and that we are trying to play a political game and bowl them out. It is a real question.

I am convinced and everyone outside the little bubble knows it is a crisis. You would expect there to be a change in posture. The Chief Minister is starting to dig in and starting to let us know that he is onto it and starting to identifying with honesty that there has to be some cutbacks. Your own graph—it is just shocking to see that graph. I thought \$5.5bn nett debt was a problem, I honestly did. Many people gasped when they saw that in 2012 but \$35bn is like we are into another stratosphere. It is almost inconceivable.

They have disconnected from reality and now the Member for Namatjira is talking about environmental things are the most important. Not if your basic economy and the responsibilities you have been given by the Commonwealth to manage your own affairs are first and foremost; then you cannot do any of these great things.

I do not disagree in one way with what the Member for Namatjira, for example, is saying but you must have priorities. You must have a sense of reality about the situation you are currently in so you can have a clear message that people understand and that people will be able to follow you. They will be following you in terms of going into a polling booth in August 2020 and making some decisions.

Ms Lawler: We have some integrity.

Mr MILLS: Well we will see. You can say whatever you wish in here but they will speak ultimately. There are words that I have just reported, obviously you were not listening because you having a little confab other there about your next tricky slogan or something: root and branch, or turbocharges and whatnot.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Coming up with the tough decisions.

Mr MILLS: That is right. That turbocharge business, it is starting to wear thin. People do not take it seriously and it made me think of Dad when we had a tractor and all the farmers were starting to talk about turbochargers. You could get your international tractor, it was a 706 international, it did not have a cab on it but you could go and buy, fairly cheaply, a turbocharger and you would put it on the tractor. We expected when the turbocharger went on the tractor that the tractor would be like some kind of rocket.

It cost a bit of money, we got a special bloke to come and put the turbocharger on the tractor and it just made a bit of noise. It did not do anything. But we were able to get on the school bus and say we have a turbocharger on our tractor. It really did not make any difference. It made a difference on the bus, I could tell all the kids we had a turbocharger on the tractor. They would say 'oh have you, my Dad is going to get two.'

This talk about turbocharging the economy, it is a bit uncomfortable. I have heard someone saying—the comments that were going on Facebook when the Chief Minister was giving his beautifully manicured speech and he was talking about turbocharging, that came up a few times, and someone said ‘it looks to me like they put the turbocharger in the wrong way because it is going the other direction. I thought turbochargers were meant to make something go forward really fast but it looks like it is going backwards so they might have to check that they have the turbocharger in the right way.’ I thought that was pretty cool.

This motion, I am happy to support it. I am glad you have all been listening to every single word and changed the way you are thinking and that you are probably going to go home and think ‘yes, I think that bloke was right.’ Well I know I am right and I reckon there are a lot of people that are going to—in fact, the dear lady that sat up there, I want to thank her for her comments and for speaking up and I hope you at least heard those words.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, Territorians will not be fooled. This motion today is, without doubt, a deliberate ploy by the Opposition to stir up unnecessary community hysteria and I am choosing today to talk about the bigger picture that the Opposition simply does not get.

It is sad that they continue to waste the time of this Assembly whilst our government is getting on with the important business of economic stimulation—do not want to hear it Member for Blain—and generational change. Perhaps you could look that term up when you are looking up turbocharging, perhaps you could look up generational change and just how important that is. Clearly, others did not want to do it before us but we will take on that charge.

There is such a stark division between us. The attitude of ‘slash and burn’ while giving jobs to their mates and ours of looking after every day Territorians whilst ensuring we have a brighter future. You will not hear us in hear talking about slashing and burning because that is exactly the difference between us and those on the other side.

Whilst we have a plan, all I hear from them is criticism with no alternatives, but what else do we expect. I have lived in the Territory under several CLP governments when jobs go to mates continuously and the public service had its very own ‘toe cutter’ who sent shudders of fear whenever a call to the public service office was made for you to front up, it was generally known that was going on, and you ended up with unexplained sackings and instant destabilisation of essential service delivery. We will not be doing that. There are stark differences in what we are about. The calls from the opposition and the whipping up of hysteria that we have seen as a result in the public sector is unacceptable and deliberately destructive. I am calling them out.

Again, what else will we expect from the opposition? They speak as if everything they say is a revelation to us. The tone of condescension we have been hearing over the last couple of days is often too much to bear. I think the Member for Blain has missed his vocation as a preacher. He should really have a rethink about what he is doing here. The constant tone of condescension and preaching is getting to the point of quite frankly ridiculous and deeply arrogant. They should rethink their position in the Chamber.

I put on the record my support of the public service and the tireless work they do across the Territory. If the opposition had their way can you imagine the impact that would have on places like our CBD? We are building it up and trying the best we can to make the city of Darwin better and a more improved capital city, but you strip all those public servants and they carry on about businesses having it tough. We are well aware of that; we are out speaking to them all the time. There is a revelation for them.

They constantly say we have no experience. It is ridiculous to think we are not constantly talking to business. They are ridiculous assertions to be making. We are well aware of it, and it is not the same story for every business. Some businesses close and of course it is all the governments fault. Did anybody look at whether they had a business plan? Did they close of their own volition because they had enough and wanted to do something else? But no, it is always the government’s fault. It is ridiculous. They are ‘the sky is falling’ conspiracy theorists who would have you believe we are responsible for everything. The opposition needs to listen more to businesses because many tell us they are doing well.

I pick up on something the Member for Araluen said yesterday. To say that we do not understand business, are not listening and do not have the capability just because none of us have faced losing our houses—I have faced losing my home over business. I have had to make really tough decisions over those things. If my colleagues do not understand that—if she thinks my colleagues do not ask me for advice on that—does she think my colleagues do not have any empathy for people and understand the impact it has?

What are we coming to when we can just throw things around and accuse people of things? Do your research. Understand that we did not get elected because we are all stupid. We have the capacity for empathy for people and to walk through their stories, listen to and understand them, then work on plans to fix it and help them. It is just arrogance at its height. It is quite frankly getting beyond the point of ridiculous just having to listen to that rubbish.

Drastic cuts to the public service would definitely kill many of the café business in the city. The owners of the Galleria that we all love would really start to feel the pinch. It is not just in Darwin; the Member for Barkly tells a story about the Tennant Creek Café having to stop selling sandwiches when the CLP came to government and cut public servants in the region. Those left were left worried about job security and stopped spending. That is what happens. They have form in this space.

We have 24 government agencies, including our government-owned corporations, which employ just over 21 000 Territorians. All of them live in our electorates. We are talking to them every time we talk about cuts. Of course it makes them worries.

Almost 4000 of them are living and employed in Central Australia and just over 14 000 in the Top End. Many of them are living in my electorate of Sanderson. That leaves close on 4000 public sector workers in our regions delivering essential government service to Territorians. Slashing and burning public sector numbers in those areas would have a devastating flow-on effect to those regions.

Those opposite have very little to contribute to the debate beyond 'spend nothing', which Territorians know is not the answer to the economic challenges we are facing. They will not be fooled. Our public sector is made up of nurses, doctors and other medical practitioners, teachers, public housing safety officers, police, police auxiliaries and all of the support services that Territorians rely on every day.

Having been a public servant of just over 20 years I want to reassure our hard working public servants that we are not about to take advice from those opposite. Any changes will be measured, fair and about targeting services where they are most needed and most effective, with a particular emphasis on areas that will impact generational change and unlock private investment. Our approaches could not be more different.

The opposition had their chance to improve the economy and those chose the easy path of putting up power prices, selling TIO and leasing the port, still leaving us in a deficit position. They failed and just because they come in now with their scare tactics, Territorians will not be fooled—they have not changed.

It is important today to also speak about the work we are doing across the board. I take this opportunity to talk about a few things going on in the Darwin region that are or will benefit the good folk in Sanderson.

My constituents can expect this year to see this government continue to invest in key infrastructure projects to keep our construction industry going and deliver much-needed projects for Territorians. This year alone we have committed \$253.7m in the construction sector.

I briefly touch on the Rapid Creek flood mitigation works. That will have a massive impact. Quite a number of Territorians are working on that site day-in and day-out. The flow-on of that will be a reduction in the amount of water that flows through—we will not be faced with that again.

Sanderson constituents now have access to the PET scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital saving them—should they need access to one—from interstate travel and the pressures of separation that that often puts on families. In fact, only a month before it opened here my dad had to travel to Brisbane to undertake a scan. Fortunately, my sister lives there so he had support, but had it been any other location it would have been a far more difficult and stressful event for him.

People can now use the new multistorey carpark at the Royal Darwin Hospital. It opened late last year, providing over 150 jobs for locals during construction. It is a real asset not just for now, but into the future. I am sure they all appreciate the work and the impact that has had on their families.

Another super project in the Sanderson electorate is the newly-opened Darwin indoor netball facility. The netball community is very happy and it now has the added bonus of allowing players to continue to play this fantastic sport for a longer period, as it is medically proven that wooden floors reduce impact on players' joints. More people playing for longer is a fantastic health outcome.

It is great to drive past every day and see the \$25m Warren Park emerging. I cannot wait to see it completed in May this year and I know that this has supported well over 100 jobs for locals. Those opposite do not want to speak about jobs.

Students in Sanderson attend a range of schools. I often see them at bus stops or on their bikes in the morning, many attending Darwin High School. The very overdue redevelopments there are supporting close to 300 jobs for locals. Important work.

Other projects are underway and we heard the health minister earlier today speaking about the importance of the new Nightcliff Renal Unit; 50 jobs. The expansion of the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre facility will accommodate a cyclotron.

State Square underground parking; lots of mockery but 225 jobs, and transformational for our city. The Cavenagh stage two cooling works, and many more.

In the public housing sector, we are constructing two new dwellings in Sanderson with a completion date in March this year. These dwellings provide direct construction jobs, and replace tired homes that had reached the end of their economic life. It allows for new fit-for-purpose homes to be constructed that meet the needs of the waitlisted clients, which have changed over many years. It adds 20 years to the life of those dwellings. One house has already been completed.

Still on housing, the Treasurer in 2018 announced our \$69m urban stimulus package. One hundred percent of that went directly to Territory businesses. Those opposite would not have the vision to understand the trickledown effect of that, and without it I sincerely believe the economic situation following the reduction of the GST would be much worse. And we would have seen many more businesses struggling or closing.

Through this program, 158 vacant properties in the Darwin region were renovated by local contractors and returned to public housing stock, getting more people into housing. A fundamental social determinant, as we know, to get people on the right track. As we all know, it is hard to get a job or address physical and social problems if you are homeless and living in places like your car.

This does not include the work undertaken by Territory businesses on our local schools under the building better schools project, which I know the Member for Drysdale worked extremely hard on in her previous role as education minister.

There are a multitude of solar projects and community infrastructure projects we have funded that will have a flow-on effect for many years to come. With my assistant minister hat on for multicultural affairs, I can say how appreciative those multicultural groups are to be able to get the work done on their halls. It will give them some longevity and with the solar projects, reduce overall running costs. It is a win-win.

In addition, our changes to home owner incentives have had an excellent effect in Sanderson. We have seen lots of housing previously vacant or up for sale, now sold, and new families, really important stuff, moving in and joining our vibrant community. Meaning more kids in our local schools and more customers for our local businesses in Sanderson.

Before I finish, I want to touch on the importance of funding programs, like school based Constables. The program was slashed under the former government. It was short-sighted and now they sit there talking about crime. It is ridiculous. They slashed youth programs and things like the school based Constables, while some of their own members knew just how important it was, and are now suddenly coming out saying it was fantastic and I supported it.

Your government, the previous government, slashed it and now we have restored it. We know how important it is to generational change. A strategic investment to work directly with kids and families that are vulnerable and showing early signs of heading down the wrong path. And another support structure which can have a significant effect on choices young people make into the future.

As I finish, I want to make it clear there is a vast difference between us and those opposite in the CLP. We will not cut out all the programs we know have the capacity in the short, medium and long term, to achieve budget repair and generational change. The two go hand in hand. I do not think they get it yet. We will continue to work with the business and wider community to ensure the Territory is a place of prosperity for everyone; not just the CLP and their mates. That is why I support the amended motion.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Sanderson for her comments on this issue. Whilst I hear everything the Member for Sanderson is saying, that is good and is what government should be spending money on, but we live in the real world.

If you are approaching \$5bn in debt you cannot continue down this path. You have to find the balance between the issues you raised and the reality that it has to be paid for.

What I have not heard is, 'We are doing all these things, we want to reduce crime, help youth, help people get off the grog, we are going to do all of these things and this all costs money'. When does it come to reality? Where do we say that these are good but we cannot afford all of them? If you are going to a \$5.5bn debt you then need to say, 'How are we going to bring that back to something that is manageable?'

We know that \$4m a day is not realistic, in fact, it is disastrous. What I am trying to get from the government—yes, I think some of the programs you are trying to do are worth supporting. I also know that if you do not have the money for them you might have to delay them or make them smaller, or different. You might have to make some cuts.

Today the minister said there was \$50m for the youth justice facility. My budget says \$70m split, I presume, between the Alice Springs and Pinelands centres. I am confused about how much money there is.

I raised this issue yesterday. If you left the Pinelands facility out of it and looked at the existing one, how much of it could you still use? I was there many years ago and I know that some of it is absolutely not suitable. There are facilities and infrastructure there. If you are struggling with major debt, would it not be wise to say, 'Can we still achieve the same thing, but it might not all be brand new?'

Tony Abbott was laughed at, because people do not particularly like him. He went to Borroloola and said, 'Why don't we use some of those RAAF houses at 11 Mile?' 'Oh no, you can't do that, that's not right, they have to be all brand new houses.' Why? Is there something wrong with a second-hand house? I live in a second-hand house.

Can we save money by doing things a little smarter? I have not heard anything that says how we bring that debt from \$4m a day down to something that is manageable. How do we manage the programs you are talking about and still bring the debt down? To me, that is a worrying sign.

I raised the issue of solar power yesterday. I heard the Member for Namatjira say that moving to solar is going to stop the earth from overheating and all sorts of things. There are a few minor issues like the economies of China, India and the USA. Whilst we might show some good example in using renewables, the Northern Territory's effect on climate change is extremely small.

That is not to say we should not be looking at those things, but we need to look at it in comparison with the issues we have. If you look at the Auditor-General's report for November, she does a performance overview of Power Generation Corporation. She says:

For the year ended 30 June 2018, the Corporation recognised a net loss of approximately \$121.3 million compared to a net loss of \$554,000 for the year ended 30 June 2017. The combination of reduced electricity demand, high input costs and recognition of impairment losses of \$143.9 million contributed to the significant net loss for the financial year.

The influx of solar generator players and the preference of end users for renewable energy to reduce users' costs have impacted the Corporation's electricity sales during the year.

The lower electricity sales, along with the slow growth in the Northern Territory economy resulted in management recognising a provision for impairment in response to concerns about the future recoverability of the Corporation's assets.

Administrative expenses ...

And times are tough:

... increased by \$6.0 million (2018: \$30.1 million, 2017: \$24.1 million).

Consultant fees decreased ...

That is good:

... by \$3.3 million (2018: \$1.8 million, 2017: \$5.1 million) as the Owen Springs and Tennant Creek projects were nearing completion and a major consultation for commercial and strategic analysis growth opportunities was undertaken in 2017 resulting in an overall decrease in professional charges.

Where is the in depth discussion on how we are going to pay for that? How are we going to pay for power generation to continue with such losses? If we are including solar power as a wonderful source of energy, and I have no doubt that it is, do not take the overall cost of having solar power farms and a power generation corporation that is losing money.

We need to know how much is this going to cost the people of the Northern Territory. This is not what they pay for electricity at the meter, but what they pay to keep the whole thing running. To keep it running, the government is going to have to subsidise it as it does not get enough income. It would be great to hear how the government is matching its proposals to increase the amount of renewable energy in the Northern Territory with keeping gas-fired power stations operating at the same time.

What was the original cost of running electricity before we brought the solar farms in and what will be the cost now when they do? How will that be managed from a financial perspective? I have said before that I am not the whiz kid when it comes to economics. We gloss over these issues as we want to look like we are green and clean and that we are going to save the whole planet. The reality is there is a cost which needs to be identified and managed. It is no good whinging. It is a reasonable question to ask.

We have to create jobs. I do not know if I have heard this debate about developing the North. There was a lot of money available for developing the north, such as the Food Futures program late last year. Where are we going? Did I hear anything about developing the north? If you do not go down this path, you are not going to end up producing your own economy. Not one based on the GST, but one based on producing your own goods.

We have a great horticultural, agricultural and pastoral industries at the moment. But they need to expand and grow. There are issues in relation to water, soils and markets which we should know about already. But we should be developing more. I do not hear much from you in government about going down this path.

If you went to the Food Futures Conference you would have heard a lot about cotton. I have heard many bad things said about cotton, a lot of which is based on what is happening in Queensland and New South Wales. I am not down there and I will not comment. But I have been down there. Have many people here been to the Cotton Research Institute in Narrabri? How many people knew about the cotton trials in Katherine? Not too many.

How many people have been to the cotton trials in Kununurra? I have not been, but I intend to go this year. They produced 325 hectares of cotton last year, but the problem was they had to send it to Queensland to get it ginned.

There are possibilities for developing the north. They may not all be in the Northern Territory, but they may be in our neighbour with the Ord River as it has plenty of water. This is all part of developing an economy in the region.

I have said few times to the Minister for Tourism that we have to do a lot more work on developing our World War II heritage. I have been up and down the track recently, as I went to see my mother, and I feel we are missing so much of an opportunity. It is nearly fifteen years since we saved the Strauss Airfield from the highway going through it.

It required a number of passionate speeches in this parliament on not building the Stuart Highway through the airfield. Regardless of your politics it was saved by the Senator Scullion lobbying the then Minister for Heritage in parliament. He got us \$2.5m to make sure duplication of the Stuart Highway didn't go through Strauss airstrip.

Then the government tried to do some things. It put some tow-dimensional, or three-dimensional-looking, planes on Strauss airstrip. It put a nice information area and roundabout there for people to stop and look around. It has made some improvements since, but has it done anything else in that time? I can probably blame both governments for that because I have been on this before. Strauss airstrip is an ideal place for a ranger station. Why do we not have heritage parks? You have Strauss, Sattler, Livingstone and Hughes all within a certain distance. They should be developed as a heritage area of outer Darwin, if you want to call it

that—which is a terrible name because I remember we pulled all the signs down; I am just referring to where it is—because there is so much else. In Katherine, Adelaide River, Hayes Creek, Fenton and along airstrips—they are fantastic. The amount of information—if anyone knows Doc Holliday, I think he may be still alive. He may be living along the Uluru Crossing.

Madam SPEAKER: He is alive.

Mr WOOD: He is alive? He has so much information. He has information about which people flew in that place and which ones never came back. I went for a tour of Long airstrip. You cannot get in to Long easily because it is part of Douglas Station. The amount of stuff that is still there because it has not had a chance for people to get in there and vandalise it, it is fantastic. You go to Larrimah—I have mentioned this before. Look at Gorrie airstrip. It was the biggest town in the Northern Territory during the war. I think it had 8 000 people. It had its own picture theatre and stores—you name it.

Just up the road from there if you go in off the bush—you can hardly see it, but I know where it is—you will find where all the stores were kept. They are these huge sheds, and the concrete bases are still there. In fact you can still see some of the lights, because the lights had to be hidden from planes going overhead. There are bottles of beer everywhere. That is one thing you can find there. Larrimah has the railway line. It has Birdum. Birdum itself has a great history. The Americans served there during the war, and got out of there because it was nearly impossible to get there when it rained.

You have Daly Waters. It has more history. It is not just about World War II; it was the link to London for our planes. Then you go further down to Ban Ban Springs. I think there was a hospital there. In Elliott, a staging post for troops more or less half way between Alice Springs and Darwin. We have so much, and there are places not only just down the track—Maningrida, there are probably other places.

Ms Uibo: Mandorah.

Mr WOOD: Mandorah. There are other places. Some places may not be easily accessible, but hundreds of people come up the track every year. You might call them grey nomads, but you also have the opportunity to have school groups going up the track, people who are interested in the heritage of the Northern Territory. We have not made an effort to preserve those sites. If they were done up properly, a lot of work would have to be done. If those sites were set up especially for the Dry Season traffic and maybe mothballed a bit during the Wet, because you cannot employ as many people, we have a unique chance to improve—I will not call it turbocharge—the number of people coming to the Northern Territory.

I went to some places when I dropped into Vancouver. When I came back from my trip through northern Canada I stayed there and went to Capilano Park, which is just outside. It is only a small park. It is not much bigger than a couple of rural blocks. You would think it was bigger. The emphasis on tourism and giving people a good experience made that place grow. There were trees that you could climb through. You had a bridge across a river, a great café, souvenirs and even some entertainment. It was only small; I am not saying they had a big orchestra, but you had places that people got to know were fantastic to go to.

Again, these things cost money. Things are tight at the moment. I am not saying you spend money right now, although I have been saying this for so many years that a small amount of money every year would have been good. You have to budget it and that is where I think we have run into this problem. We have gone and out and said boom, we should have got this money from GST, let us spend all this money on all these good things—and I am not saying they are all bad things—but someone did not say control yourselves, you are getting too excited, you cannot afford all those things. Let us look at a 10 year program, let us slow down and spread it out over 10 years.

The little bicycle path, that I will hopefully get in this next budget, when it is built I will believe it, but the Chief Minister mentioned it yesterday. It has taken five years to get to a point of the Chief Minister saying it is going to happen. I am not going to believe it, I will be a Saint Thomas here. I am not believing it until it is done because it has taken that long.

The other bicycle path that went from Tulagi Road to Howard Springs took 20 years so I am used to budgets being slow. That is why I think government needs to think that way. If you cannot afford it, do not do it, or get your priorities which might be about looking after youth or doing some of these things.

I know you have to balance things because you are trying to get the economy going and giving people work but at the same time you have to tell people to be realistic because you can spread all the good news now

but somewhere along the line, the bad news is going to come that we have to somehow pull our heads in and pay that debt.

My favourite subject, hydrogen, was mentioned. I think that we are missing an opportunity. Other states are moving ahead. Western Australia, South Australia, the ACT I think is getting 12 hydrogen cars. I have been to Las Vegas and Hanover in Germany to look at hydrogen cars. I have been to Barcelona to look at the possibility of producing hydrogen from wave power.

I have been to Newcastle to go to the CSIRO's experimental facility which shows that you can produce electricity from solar thermal, not solar, solar thermal and that can be used to produce hydrogen which mixed with nitrogen can produce ammonia which we can transport to places like Japan who are hoping to have two million households running off hydrogen and about the same number of cars running off hydrogen, in fairly quick time. They see an opportunity to use what is a clean fuel and that is hydrogen.

We have the sun, we have the water, we can use the nitrogen as well in Australia for fertiliser—many crops have to use nitrogen—so we have the science and the ability but we do not seem to have in the Northern Territory, the go. That is not to say that the minister, the Member for Barkly, does not know about it because he had a meeting late last year with a group of people who are involved in hydrogen production especially in South Australia.

I do not hear anything from the Territory government saying this is a future industry, a good industry, a practical industry. It is not a theoretical industry because it has already been proven. I drove around Las Vegas in a hydrogen car. In Hanover, they had hydrogen cars. They fill up the same as if you had fuel. They do not take a long time like an electric car that you have to wait for it to charge the battery.

The possibilities are there but I do not hear a lot coming from the government that this is an opportunity for industries, especially outside of Darwin, to develop.

In summary, I hear what you say, I know you try and develop good programs, try and encourage people to get jobs, but in the end there is no good ending up with a \$4m a day debt. Somewhere it has to be paid. It is time we stopped and say how are we going to reduce this debt, what are our priorities—we put our priorities up there and say they are the priorities, some of those other nice things might simply have to wait because as a lot of people have said, we can only spend as much as we earn.

At the moment we are not doing anywhere near that at all. Our balance is well out of sync. We have to sit down and tell people what our plan is for the next five to ten years.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to the fiscal situation we are now dealing with in the Territory. We are focused on creating more jobs and delivering generational change because we know this is the key to repairing the budget.

We all know the facts and the cards we have been dealt. The CLP had the boom time of the hard work from Labor getting the INPEX deal. The Territory boom time was over 10 000 INPEX jobs, investment for the Territory and benefits we had never seen before through shopping and local businesses opening to meet the demand.

The CLP government at the time was wallowing in the riches of a Labor initiative. Some were even taking it beyond the limit and living it up in wild bars overseas. It was a splendid time for the CLP, living off the grand fiscal investments, all off the back of a Labor INPEX deal and by slugging Territorians in the back pocket. They did not have to worry about any fiscal issues. In fact, they went further to get more riches by selling TIO then our port to the shock of every Territorian, along with the US and Australian Government.

We know what the CLP was focused on, and that was very clear having a number of leadership spills, 16-plus Cabinet reshuffles, four full years of infighting over who should have power within their ranks. There was daily turmoil, so much that I could not go through it all in this speech. I do, however, promote the *Crocs in the Cabinet* publication. What a great read it is, a reminder to everyone in the Territory what not to do in politics.

When we came to government in 2016 the CLP books showed an \$867m deficit, after the INPEX boom time and after slugging Territorians in the back pocket by putting up power and water costs up to record amounts. They then charged seniors bus fares and hospital parking. They sold some of our most valuable assets in TIO and our port.

The CLP had a great time, and now they have the audacity to cry about it and try and make it all look like someone else's fault. How typical.

On top of all this, the CLP federal mates in Canberra decided after the NT election to review our GST and reduced it by \$500m per annum. There you have the response of sour grapes over losing an election so badly. As we all know, the Territory has the most complicated issues, as well as remoteness to deal with, but the CLP federal mates in Canberra decided that the big cities need our GST more than Territorians do—shocking and shameful.

We all know the federal government has our money, as it can inject \$220m into Kakadu coming up to election time. Why did they not do that two years ago when we needed it? It is the CLP and their federal mates playing politics with us—again, shameful and shocking. You should be putting the people before politics.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Who wrote this for you, Tony?

Mr SIEVERS: Thank you for that support. I like that.

Labor people were not born with a silver spoon in their mouth. We are tough; we dig in when it gets tough and always look after those who do not get a fair go. We accept the challenge and we have great confidence in our government, Chief Minister and Treasurer to steer us through this challenging time.

The Chief Minister has announced over \$800m in savings. Further, we have the under Treasurer working with us and many government agencies to reduce costs and make further savings whilst continuing services to all Territorians. I have heard the Under-Treasurer speak about how the NT is in a better situation than what WA was when it faced this same issue not long ago. His work and the changes implemented by the WA Labor government brought them back well within their financial issues, from an 8% over-expenditure to 2%. He states that the NT is only 6% over and we need to reduce it to 3%, which is achievable.

We are not panicking or slugging Territorians like the CLP; we are working towards ensuring Territorians keep their jobs. The funding and work keeps flowing, businesses still get local contracts, workers keep buying their morning coffee and meat pie, and local families can buy houses and raise their children in quality schools with quality teachers and support staff.

We know governments across Australia and the world run in a fiscal deficit. The federal government can help us out tomorrow if it wants to. Our Chief Minister and Treasurer have met with the feds several times to ask them about our fair share of the GST, or even for them to invest in their own Defence, Housing or Closing the Gap policies in the NT, but they have not. We all know they have our funding and are playing politics with it, as are the CLP here today—chooks running around with the sky is falling approach. Panic is their approach. When people or governments panic like the CLP do, they make bad decisions.

We are calmly working through it. We will get through it and build the NT into its own sustainable economy again, like we did with INPEX. However, the difference this time is we will have 20-plus INPEX-type investments running in the Territory, from mines—phosphate, lithium, gas, gold, metals—to cattle, prawns, fish, a space base, renewable energy, horticulture and many more to come.

All of this will make the Territory very wealthy in the future. We know we are on the right track as we are seeing our Darwin central business buildings being bought by large developers and investors already, with many more wanting to buy in the NT and set up to prepare to bear the fruits of this Labor government's hard work again.

The Territory is set to prosper again, and 2019 is a tight year. We must not panic like the CLP—mad chooks running around screaming that the sky is falling. Contrary to the CLP approach, our Labor Gunner government will remain strong, focused and committed to the cause as we will continue to invest in Territorians, jobs, education and the future.

The seeds we have planted again will come to bear bigger and better fruit in the near future, like our INPEX deal did, only this time it will be bigger, and it will continue for many years with the diverse industries now being built across the Territory.

Another key factor is, we may have a change of federal government in the next few months. We all know if it is a Labor federal government, we will see Territorians get a fair go and a fair share of funding for our people and families, which would change our fiscal situation overnight.

Territorians are in for a bigger and better, prosperous and diverse Northern Territory under a Gunner Labor government. We are boundless possible.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you. Before we go on to our next item, I welcome some young students into Parliament House. We have lovely Amara and Zoe in the gallery. Good of you to come and watch. They go to Nightcliff Primary School.

Member for Spillett, you have constituents up there. Welcome to Parliament House. Welcome Amara and Zoe, have a lovely time here.

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr HIGGINS (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on behalf of the opposition to speak to the Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal Bill, 2018.

The opposition supports this bill, and it is important to note this legislative amendment was requested by industry in order to clarify some uncertainty in regard to exemptions to the storage of naturally occurring radioactive material, or NORMs, resulting from the petroleum industry.

Currently there is ambiguity as to whether some NORMs are able to be brought into the Northern Territory from offshore sites for temporary storage before being cleaned and disposed of at an approved facility outside the Northern Territory.

INPEX, whose project is directly affected by this legislation, made a submission to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee supporting this change, and suggesting further amendments. In the submission, Darwin General Manager Mr Sean Kildare, stated that without this change, current operations at the Darwin Marine Supply Base could be put in legal limbo, threatening certain aspects of the project's future in Darwin.

It is imperative for the sake of Territorians' jobs that this Assembly support the industry and their efforts to operate within the legal framework. This place should be open to legislative change where it supports industry and local jobs.

This amendment bill specifically redefines a prescribed petroleum project for the purpose of being exempt from the act. A new definition is three fold; it must produce nuclear waste incidentally as part of exploration, recovery or exploitation of petroleum or other energy producing hydrocarbons; and deliver significant economic and social benefits to the Territory; and be located within 800 kilometres of the Territory as measured from the territorial sea boundary.

In addition to these prescribed projects, as further clarification, the following will also be exempt from the act:

- nuclear waste that was stored in the Territory prior to the commencement of the act
- waste stored in accordance with the *Radiation Protection Act*
- mining activity governed by the *Mining Management Act*
- uranium activity authorised under the *Radioactive Ores and Concentrates (Packaging and Transport) Act*
- any NORMs produced incidentally from the operation and maintenance of petroleum pipelines, including those licensed under the *Energy Pipelines Act* and the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act*
- any NORMs remaining on equipment used for the operation and maintenance of petroleum pipelines, including those licensed under the *Energy Pipelines Act*, and the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act*.

In their submission, INPEX stated that the 800 kilometre metric was inadequate, as it may impact future activity beyond that boundary, which would hinder future projects and their use of Darwin as a support base. Therefore the scrutiny committee recommended an amendment to the 800 kilometre limit by adding a

reference to a prescribed geoscience basin. This will allow for any activity within such a basin to be exempt from the act. This is a common sense amendment and I hope the government adopts it—I note that it has been passed around.

I have noticed through the scrutiny committee process that there are many pieces of legislation governing the handling and storage of radioactive material in the Northern Territory. For the sake of clarity and efficiency, the government may eventually wish to look at streamlining all of this into one act.

I note with interest that the former Labor government in South Australia initiated a royal commission into the nuclear fuel cycle. The conclusion of which may make for interesting reading, particularly to a uranium-rich jurisdiction like ours.

This bill has come about as a result of a request by industry. It clarifies existing exemptions for the sake of industry. It will be supported by regulations. The act will apply to all waste originating inside and outside the Territory which is stored here.

It introduces a two-stage test for allowing nuclear waste storage in the Territory, firstly requiring companies to demonstrate that they are providing an economic and social benefit to the Territory; secondly, it limits the exemption operating within 800 kilometres of the terrestrial sea baseline. The second part of the test will be amended after concerns were raised by INPEX for further clarification, a further prescribed geoscience basin will be added—as the minister has indicated that amendment has been circulated. This will allow for further expansion of operation beyond the 800 kilometre metric. The opposition commends the bill to the Assembly.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, these amendments before us today amend a bill that was introduced into parliament in 2004. I was in parliament in 2004.

The original act was part of a political campaign by Labor to stop the Commonwealth from establishing a radioactive waste facility in the Northern Territory, commonly known by Labor and the ABC as a dump to remove any notion of science from the discussion. It also added a bit to a preselection at that time. I have been to France and seen where nuclear waste is stored. Radioactive waste is not dumped. There are scientifically built facilities that are monitored continuously.

The former Minister for Environment Heritage, my good friend Marion Scrymgour, opened the debate and said the following:

The purpose of this bill is to protect the Northern Territory from becoming the dumping ground for the nation's nuclear waste. It is about protecting the environment of the Northern Territory, the health of Northern Territorians and the industry of the Northern Territory. It is about protecting the wonderful reputation the Northern Territory has as one of the most pristine places on earth. The intention of this bill is to prevent waste from outside the Northern Territory being transported into the Northern Territory and stored in the Northern Territory.

In the event that a national nuclear waste disposal facility is proposed for the Northern Territory, the bill provides the minister with the capacity to seek an injunction to prevent such action. If works on a facility have already been taken, the minister may authorise action to remove the facility and make good any environmental harm. This bill does not relate to the transport, storage and disposal of radioactive waste produced within the Northern Territory.

In other words, it sounded nice and promoted the rights of Territorians. But, what was not highlighted was another section of the act which said:

A provision of this Act relating to the transport, storage or disposal of nuclear waste does not have any effect to the extent it is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth but the provision must not be taken to be inconsistent with that law if it can be complied with without contravention of that law.

If the Commonwealth wanted to do what they wanted to do, they still could have.

The minister said in her speech:

This bill legislates to prohibit a nuclear waste dump to the full extent of the Territory parliament's capacities. It would be wrong for me to propose that this bill, when enacted, would offer some sort of cast-iron guarantee that there will not be a nuclear waste dump in the Territory - it does not. The capacity of the Territory to regulate Commonwealth instrumentalities has limitations and the

Commonwealth can, if they wish, remove our right to legislate on this matter. Both South Australia and Western Australia have similar legislation, with similar limitations

I thought I would put some of that in context. There was a lot of debate in parliament following the introduction of the bill. It was a colourful debate, and my good friend Matty Bonson did not agree with me. He got a bit upset by some of my comments. I remind him of what he said about my view on the matter. After I put my few words in about being Australian rather than just being Territorian, he said:

I am sorry, but the contribution from the Member for Nelson was one of the most self-centred, blow-wind-up-my-bottom contributions.

After which I raised a point of order. He turned that around and said:

I withdraw my comments. It was a stand-on-my-soapbox lecture.

There were some colourful phrases at that time. It was a very interesting debate. I am not sure science was the main object of this. I think it had a lot more to do ideologies, protecting Territory rights et cetera. It is worth reading because it puts this matter into context.

I make note about nuclear power. Reasoned debates today about nuclear power in Australia can no longer be had in this country, even though if we had built nuclear power plants, as was originally planned in the 1950s, we may not have been discussing carbon emissions and climate change like we do today. The debate is stifled by powerful activists from the environmental left, many in Labor and supported by parts of the media, especially the ABC—who is no friend of anything nuclear.

There is a website called Power Technology. I looked at it, and it says that China will have 40 nuclear power plants in 2018 and another 18 are planned. They are, of course, building renewable power plants as well. To reduce pollution from coal, which is one of their biggest concerns, and still retain their energy requirements for industry, part of the mix is nuclear.

I digress. The legislation is about allowing NORMs to be transported into the Territory from offshore wells outside the NT, but the present act creates some uncertainty about the legality of that because of the objects of the act. The objects are to protect the safety, health and welfare of the people of the Territory and the environment in which they live by prohibiting the construction or operation of a nuclear waste storage facility in the Territory and the transportation of nuclear waste in the Territory for storage at a nuclear waste storage facility.

As provided to the scrutiny committee by the government, I should read out the definition of NORMs.

NORMs are naturally occurring radioactive materials, widespread in sand, clay, soil and rocks, many ores and minerals, commodities, products, by-products and recycled residues. For example, NORMs can be found in building materials such as bricks, concrete, natural stone, mineral sands, cosmic rays when flying an aircraft—you only need to put a Geiger counter in the Main Hall and you will know where the radiation is in the marble floors.

NORMs may be produced as a natural by-product of petroleum and other energy-producing hydrocarbons, and may accumulate within drilling and exploration wells, pipelines or other parts of equipment. The volumes and concentrations of NORM from a well will depend on a number of factors, including reservoir geology, production processes and water quality. Some wells may not produce NORMs, while others adjacent can produce significant quantities of NORM, requiring careful and considered management.

There are a few questions I would like the minister to answer in the wrap-up, rather than in the committee stage. I am not doing this to stir any problems; I just want to see what happens.

Why does this issue not apply to onshore gas projects that may operate on both sides of our border, such as the Bonaparte Basin, which borders the NT and Western Australia, or the South Nicholson Basin, which crosses the Queensland and Territory border? What happens to NORMs if they are produced there? I presume I am on the right track that NORMs can also be produced onshore, not just offshore. If you have a company working on both sides of the border, what happens then? This only relates to offshore, and the legislation says you cannot transport nuclear waste into the Territory.

Where will the NORMs be stored? Is that possible, when we are prohibited from the construction or operation of a nuclear waste storage facility? Is a nuclear waste storage facility not just a Muckaty-type facility that was

planned for there? Is the site under the Darwin hospital regarded as a nuclear waste storage facility? I will throw in another question, if it is called a nuclear waste storage facility under the hospital, how is iridium isotopes allowed to be transported from Lucas Heights into Darwin legally? They end up in that storage facility when they are finished. That may be a simple answer for that, but it may be a technical reason.

If the radioactive waste storage facility at the hospital is given an exemption, how is that done? Will we also have an exemption for the storage of NORMs. The act says that it is prohibited to have the construction or operation of a nuclear waste storage facility. Will these sites be registered? Will the places where the NORMs are stored be publicly available? Will a company that does not fit the first criteria be able to store its waste in a site for NORMs, and would that not be good for an economy?

In other words, are we cutting ourselves out of part of the economy? If we have some sites set up for NORMs in the Northern Territory, and there may be some people outside the 800 kilometre zone. There may be some people outside the Northern Territory drilling close by who have NORMs, and the closest place to store those NORMs would be a facility in the Northern Territory. By limiting the ability for those radioactive NORMs to be brought into the Territory through this legislation, are we missing an opportunity to store some of those wastes?

Remember, we are not talking about the radioactive rods that come out of Lucas Heights; we are talking about the NORMs I described in that situation. I put those as questions I thought were worth asking. To some extent, this is a fairly limiting piece of legislation. Maybe people with more knowledge of onshore gas might be able to expand on whether we can be applying this legislation to onshore gas as well, which could be just outside of the Northern Territory, or even NORMs outside the 800 kilometre zone if that is ever possible.

I support the legislation. It is a good piece of legislation. I thank you if you can have those answers later in the debate.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I stand to contribute to the debate on the Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Bill 2018 and thank the minister for bringing this important legislation before the House.

The Minister outlined that the purpose of this bill is to clarify the application of the act as it relates to nuclear waste, to ensure that appropriate protections are in place to prohibit the transport of nuclear waste in the Territory. At present there is ambiguity between the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act 2004*, the *Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*, and the Territory's *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act*.

This bill seeks to address this ambiguity to ensure that nuclear waste including naturally occurring radioactive material, or NORMs, which may be incidentally generated from offshore oil and gas activities and subsequently brought into the Territory, are covered in the act. As Chair of the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee, which oversaw the inquiry into this bill, I believe that submitters found the title of the bill confusing because there were a number of the 11 submissions we received that raised issues that went beyond the scope of the bill. The bill does not introduce any new exemptions nor does it broaden the existing exemptions. Instead, the bill reframes the exemptions to provide greater certainty to industry and at the same time it maintains the original intention of the legislation.

The committee held an additional public briefing with the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources; Trade, Business and Innovation; and Health; to address these concerns. Back in October 2018 I tabled the committee's report on our inquiry into this bill and highlighted that the committee recommended that the Assembly pass the bill with one proposed amendment. This amendment seeks to clarify the requirements for a 'prescribed project' as set out in section 5(4)(b)(ii) of the bill.

During our inquiry, the committee found that as currently drafted, a prescribed project must be located within 800 kilometres of the closest point on the territorial sea baseline, but that submitters were concerned the 800 kilometre metric could unintentionally exclude future projects that may choose to use the Territory as the base for their operations.

Following advice the committee received from the responsible departments, the committee recommended this subsection be amended such that a prescribed project must be located within the 800 kilometre limit, or be in a prescribed geoscience basin.

Once again I thank my fellow committee members for their efforts during our inquiry into this bill, and the officials from the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Trade, Business and Innovation and Health, for not only briefing the committee on this bill, but providing additional advice.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, the purpose of the Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Amendment Bill 2018 is to provide clarity for the application of the act to nuclear waste, including naturally occurring radioactive materials that may be generated from offshore oil and gas activities.

The amendments make it clear that nuclear waste from pipelines and exploration and recovery activities in the offshore oil and gas industry are exempt from the act, when the project is a Territory project and provides economic benefit to the Territory.

I briefly touch on a life story that happened less than an hour ago. I just hosted a group of young people visiting the Parliament and on the way through the main hall, a young lady from the Tiwi Islands asked me about the rig tenders in the harbour. I was able to explain those rig tenders service the offshore oil and gas industry in the Northern Territory. It is big business. They are highly specialised transport logistics that move plant and equipment offshore to the rigs, and bring back a lot of material.

Some of the material coming back on those rigs will be naturally occurring radioactive materials. We had a discussion about the industry and these rig tenders and I was able to say, it is funny we are talking about this because I will be on my feet in debate, supporting the minister and the government in amending important legislation to make this industry safer and more efficient, and to provide economic benefit for the Northern Territory.

I did not explore this further, but I did invite those young Territorians to come back again and ask a lot more questions, because they certainly have some.

The Marine Supply Base has been mentioned in debate. I was privileged to work in Paul Henderson's government as a minister. As a Labor government, we set up the Marine Supply Base. It was a visionary Labor project that would support the development of the East Arm logistics precinct.

In my time in this house, I have been able to watch the East Arm logistics precinct grow. I oversaw the construction, as a minister, of the Marine Supply Base, and I have now seen those synergies between the port, the Marine Supply Base, INPEX and the offshore industry, growing. Which represents another sustainable outcome for economic growth in the Northern Territory.

When we talk about Conoco Phillips and INPEX and this offshore industry, the application of new processing trains to those LNG facilities will be more jobs, bigger economy, more churn through not only the greater Darwin economy but also the Northern Territory economy, and real opportunities into the future for training, employment, for businesses to set up and for logistics to support these industries.

The pieces in the puzzle have come together. There was only one disappointing piece of the puzzle that dropped off the table, and that was the previous CLP government, who sold the port. That was devastating to Territorians. Australians in general are still shocked. I still get questions about that. I will address the political semantics, they did not sell our port, they leased it for 99 years.

As the Minister for Ports in Paul Henderson's government, we showed a turn in profit that was new, dynamic and part of our logistics build. I was excited and learned much in that industry. We had large land reclamation projects going on. The opportunities for the Northern Territory were all going. I call out the previous administration's sale of the port as bad policy. That was a deep depression in the plan but we move on.

We are dealing with some of that movement with this legislation. I will comment on the Member for Nelson's contribution to debate. While I enjoy his contributions, we have to tweak the facts in what he said. But one of the best things that happened in the rocky and chaotic brief period of the CLP when they returned to government was the establishment of the NT Energy Futures Select Committee.

It provided a group of parliamentarians with a brilliant secretariat to travel the nation and research possibilities for the Northern Territory's energy requirements, production and innovation. That is a brilliant report and I encourage everybody to look at it. I acknowledge the chair of that committee, the Member for Daly. He was a great chair and it was great travelling with him. It was unfortunate that the CLP members rarely turned up.

But, the chair kept it on the road and the committee did important research in terms of the Northern Territory's energy futures.

The Member for Nelson was on that committee and I took great delight in that. It was collegial and we debated throughout that period. I remember distinctly that the Member for Nelson took things a step further, way beyond that committee. He toured Germany to one of the biggest renewable energy expos in the world in Hanover. He also went to France—I think the facility is called (inaudible). He delivered a brilliant presentation to the select committee when he came back. He took that presentation to a wider audience, which was important.

He got to experience a lot of things that we researched but did not get to see one-on-one, get hands-on, or standing on that space. I remember the photos the Member for Nelson put up on his slideshow. One was important for me because the Member for Nelson was standing on a marble floor and there was obviously sophisticated technology.

It was in a plant, which would have cost mega billions of dollars, in France, there was security like the Pentagon there was a big brass plaque on the floor that he was standing. With great pride he told us that underneath that floor were stored spent nuclear fuel rods that were produced in Australia in the early 1950s and 1960s and came from Lucas Heights. They had been reprocessed in that facility, yet were still highly charged and would do some serious damage if not handled appropriately. They were on their way back to Australia.

That was a memorable learning experience for me. I got to visualise the facility that France has to reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods to store them. There was one twist in the story for the Member for Nelson. The contract with Australia had run out so the Australian Government was under great pressure to receive these spent nuclear fuel rods which when you are talking about those sort of pieces of nuclear technology, you are talking intermediate to high-level waste.

You are not talking about gowns out of a hospital. You are not talking about nuclear isotopes that are produced in Lucas Heights where we went. That was a memorable tour as well, with the committee. You are talking about intermediate to high-level waste and you can see why France has this multi-billion dollar facility, more security than the Pentagon, to manage this level of nuclear waste.

The Member for Nelson was standing right on top of it but it was booked on boats to come back to Australia. It was coming home but we did not have anywhere to put it. The link to the story, for the Member for Nelson, is about what he takes umbrage to and that is any Australian or Territorian that calls it a nuclear waste dump.

I want to explain to the Member for Nelson where the word 'dump' came from because it was planned on Muckaty Station on traditional Warlampa land about 100 kilometres north of Tennant Creek. The Commonwealth Government was planning to build a series of above-ground sheds. They were going to bring home the waste from France, the waste that the Member for Nelson went and visited, they were going to bring it home and they were going to create this above-ground, elaborate, concrete labyrinth of sheds.

It was going to get dropped off on our shores and it would be rattled down a railway and then possibly handled through Tennant Creek, put onto trucks and then taken up to be stored above the ground on a cattle station, basically, on traditional lands of the Warlampa people. That is what Territorians said no to. That is where the dump came from.

What I saw the Member for Nelson doing in France and what the Commonwealth agency in Sydney were going to do at Muckaty, were worlds apart. One was a nuclear waste management facility and associated nuclear power plant and the other was a dump. There was no question about it. It was a cheap, second-hand, dodgy deal. The Territory was going to cop it.

As the Member for Nelson recalls, in 2004 when he was in this parliament debating it, it was a Labor government that stood up and said we better enact legislation because this stuff is coming our way and it is not good policy. It is not a good outcome for the Territory. It is a bad federal government policy.

The Labor government at the time in 2004 enacted legislation to address a federal issue where the Prime Minister at the time, John Howard, felt the pressure that Australia needed its first nuclear waste management facility and was planning to put it in South Australia. South Australian people united and linked arms and said no because the definition around it was too loose. It was like a Muckaty story. There was no real planning or commitment like the facility in France.

Western Australia decided it was a bit too close to our borders as well so they linked arms with South Australia and they enacted legislation and the Territory followed. This sent a very clear message to the Commonwealth. For the Member for Nelson, I would really enjoy the opportunity to put this on the record, when we linked arms on a seven-year campaign to prevent the intermediate and high-level nuclear waste coming back home, arriving in the Territory and being taken to Muckaty, it was because that was not a proper way to store what is very dangerous material.

I will keep it simple. We said it is not the way to do it. It was not that we want to stop it. I worked with some very strong environmental activists, there were some brilliant people from barristers to doctors, right through. It was a rational approach.

At the end of the day, regarding some very radical issues, debates and protests, there was this moderate theme that ran through: if you are going to do it, you should do it properly. That was taken to the people. There were radicals, do not get me wrong. It all went to plan. I will cut it short; we won and they lost. I will not go into details, but Muckaty did not receive intermediate to high level spent nuclear fuel rods coming home from France. Ladies and gentlemen, they are home; they are here. They went back to the place where they were produced. They went back to Lucas Heights.

Since then I think there has been a bit more movement, because there are some other spent rods that had to go back to France to be reprocessed. This trade is ongoing. This debate, as you may be picking up from my contribution to the debate, strikes close to my heart because Australia took a stand. Let me go a bit to the right, which is a position I took in the seven-year Muckaty campaign. I said, 'If Australia was to build a safe and secure nuclear waste management facility, where would that go?'

The NT Energy Future select committee of parliament in the Northern Territory helped me answer that question. Basically the answer that came out was that it should go between the border of South Australia and Western Australia, up in that top corner of South Australia for some very important reasons. It is one of the most geologically stable part of the continent. It has a very deep water table, most contaminated by salt. It has limited infrastructure, and if you are providing supporting infrastructure for a facility like this, it should be one way in and one way out. Keep it very simple.

That is all regarding security. In the modern context it does not relate to the storage and management of nuclear waste, it relates to terrorism. That is a pretty scary link to this debate, but it is real. It has a scientific and social debate, but the science community say that if we are to do this in Australia, that is where it has to go. It has to be a deep geological disposal facility, so we take it one step further. It is not just about storage; it is about disposal and factoring in the life of this type of material.

Member for Nelson, I joined a lot of dots in your brief story. You are an advocate for nuclear energy and you have been a privileged parliamentarian to travel and see these infrastructure facilities overseas. All I say is what Australians demand, not deserve. Then we will talk about this on a level playing field. We will talk about this debate regarding any possible benefits to our country. That was an interesting experience and I acknowledge that committee and all those opportunities.

Member for Nelson, it is still very much alive. The Commonwealth government still has not landed what Australia needs regarding a nuclear waste management facility or, I reiterate that additional layer, a disposal facility. The story of Muckaty regarding medical waste and gowns and drums of low-grade nuclear material we saw at Lucas Heights, was what the government was promoting and telling the Traditional Owners and people of Tennant Creek about. There were tour groups. People were taken to Lucas Heights; they were shown these materials and it was explained how they would be transported into the Northern Territory.

However, the federal government of the day lost all credibility when people understood it was not just about those low grade items, and that these spent rods were coming home from France. That is where a government was not open, transparent and accountable, and they lost the trust of the people.

That is why this debate around Australia's first nuclear waste disposal facility is ongoing. It has not landed, and there is still a lot of suspicion in the community and questions to be answered, if any Australian government wants to land this.

It is an important debate. It will be ongoing. It is a debate that has to be conducted, and any future government that wants to do this could probably take a leaf out of Michael Gunner's Labor government and learn from transparent, open and accountable local decision making and community engagement. The principles we have employed as a government. The principles that are changing the nature of Indigenous remote housing now.

Simple things like local members telling me complaints around housing have dropped to number three on the list. So we are getting two issues above housing. That is an improvement and something we can use as a yardstick. The best thing is that remote Indigenous Territorians are saying, you are a government that is listening.

If you really want to listen and take the people with you, it takes time. Our community engagement processes, in local government, housing and community development, have added time to our delivery, but I am prepared to take the hits on that. I am prepared to take the criticism, and I hope to be able to deal with the Member for Araluen at the next available opportunity, to debate remote housing. She has made some critical comments today that are baseless.

It takes time. If you take that time and achieve that quality engagement and consultation, you engender trust. That whole debate around the nuclear waste management facility was a lack of trust. People fought hard to get that trust.

I give a big shout out to two entities. There were a lot of people, energy and resources put into a seven year campaign for justice for the Northern Territory. It started in 2004. And that is the MUA and TWU: the Maritime Union of Australia and the Transport Workers Union.

They were two solid organised entities that stood up to this process and said no. They were frontline movements that had the opportunity to direct transport logistics and stand up to government and say, this issue has credibility. You will deal with the community and your constituency. They stood rock solid in the Northern Territory; stood shoulder to shoulder and demanded justice.

It was those sort of entities that gave us credibility and real community action and I acknowledge that. It was many moons ago that I joined the Transport Workers Union when I had a job in a freight facility in Sydney, but that is a story for another day.

I support the minister and support a good amendment to legislation, because it will deliver economic outcomes for the Northern Territory. It will support a thriving marine logistics precinct in Darwin Harbour. It will support a growing offshore oil and gas industry and associated jobs. It is an example of a government which understands that targeted investment will generate economic returns focused on jobs and the economy. This is a good amendment to legislation and I commend it to the House.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I support the amendment bill. The amendments reinforce the original objective of the act, written in 2004, by continuing to prohibit the construction or operation of a nuclear waste storage facility and the transportation into the Territory of nuclear waste that originates of the Northern Territory.

The Member for Barkly just recounted the history of how and why the original bill was written as a direct result of the federal government's proposal to make a nuclear dumping ground at Muckaty Station in Tennant Creek. He was spot on in his description. The Member for Nelson spoke about his trip to France, and the Muckaty Station proposal. One was a waste facility and one a dumping ground.

I stand with my colleagues and constituents in opposition to any attempt to make the Northern Territory a dumping ground for nuclear waste. The Northern Territory enjoys some of the most unique and untouched environments on the globe. We are in such a privileged position as custodians. It is our responsibility to ensure these lands can be enjoyed by current and future generations.

I am pleased our government has accepted the recommendations of the Scientific Inquiry into hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory and that these recommendations provide further safeguards to our natural environment. The Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Amendment Bill does not introduce new exemptions or expand the scope of existing amendments.

There are two offences contained in the act. The first is associated with the importing of nuclear waste in the Territory and the second is associated with constructing and operating a nuclear waste disposal facility. The amendments ensure the already operating industries such as the offshore gas industry are not inadvertently placed in a position where it may be claimed that they are in breach of this legislation. If there was a new offshore gas development it would need to meet those criteria to be exempt from the act.

Those criteria being a very clear economic and social benefit to the Territory within 800 kilometres or being in a prescribed basin.

If there was a new development offshore and no clear economic and social benefit to the Territory, and was outside those 800 kilometres or prescribed basin, it would not be exempt. It is pretty clear. It would prevent the development of an offshore basin with no economic and social benefit to the Territory.

There are incidental amendments to ensure the bill reflects the original intention of ensuring that the Northern Territory does not become a dumping ground for nuclear waste.

I enjoyed going through this bill as a committee member. It gave me a great opportunity to learn a bit more and find out more about nuclear waste disposal in Australia, not just the Territory, and globally. Coming from East Timor I was keen to learn about the offshore and geo-boundaries as well.

I support these amendments and commend the bill to the House.

Mr KIRBY (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I also support the passing of the nuclear waste bill, as introduced by the minister for Environment. It shows a level of maturity, the debate we are having today. I am interested in and refreshed by people's opinions, especially people's personal recollections of debates, discussions and heated confrontations about industries across the Territory, how they need to progress and how, at times, they cannot progress. I echo the Member for Katherine's comments about the Territory not becoming a dump for radioactive materials.

The level of maturity within the industry to bring this debate forward, or assist with these reforms coming forward heartens me to know that it is not where we are at with this legislation; it is to clarify important aspects of dealing with naturally occurring radioactive materials.

I am sure we are in a position in the Northern Territory to have that debate maturely. Through our admission of our shortcomings, with the Pepper report, we have shown that we were not in the position we needed to be for parts of the industry to progress safely. We have adopted the regulations and recommendations to make sure that we can progress safely in the Territory.

I very much welcome this bill, which clarifies important aspects of our existing regulatory system.

I have advocated for safety on work sites for a number of years, for almost all of my years in the Northern Territory. I believe in the importance of safety at work; I know all of us do. It is heartening to understand and know that a big part this legislation is about ensuring people's safety. It will ensure the Territory's safety going forward in that there will be stronger regulation in place.

At the top of the list, as far as safety in work sites go and in looking after people, equipment, and for productivity to continue is about having safe systems in place to reduce or remove risk, or mitigate it when it cannot be removed altogether.

Having safe systems and processes in place to manage risk the best we can is the next step for the Northern Territory. We do it really well in some industries. In some industries we are still making headway. During my days at Power and Water, I remember we had a number of different independent reports done. One of those reports put it very simply and eloquently, calling Power and Water: data poor. It was extremely poor on having any data on equipment maintenance or longevity equipment and on the risks to the system if equipment failed.

I commend Power and Water for the work it has done over the last 10 years or so, to get up to best practice and make sure its workers are safe when working on those systems and that we have a much more reliable essential service supply to our doorsteps.

When we talk about nuclear materials it will always prick people's ears up. It is a subject that divides people and opinions. There will be a lot of barbecues had around the nation for decades to come that will always have radioactive materials weaved into their discussion. What we are talking about now is naturally-occurring materials and about ensuring that we have good, clear regulatory settings in place to deal with the materials that come out when we are performing other mining operations and to have clear regulatory settings allow businesses and workers to build processes and systems into place to make sure everybody is safe at work.

This bill improves the way we regulate because it clears up potential uncertainty in the legislation. That is one of the very important parts of this bill.

It provides real clarity to government and to important sectors, like the pipeline sector. We have run through a few of those—the offshore oil and gas sector about the regulatory regime for naturally occurring radioactive materials.

As I mentioned, the word, ‘nuclear’ is used—it catches people’s attention and probably for the reason that the Member for Barkly just went through, particularly for Territorians. It will always ignite a passionate debate.

One of the things I emphasise is the point of naturally occurring radioactive materials that need to be dealt with in a safe and systematic way. We come into contact with the natural environment regularly in the Northern Territory. It is not until you disturb the environment that you can understand there can be consequences you do not often think of.

The Member for Barkly explained his experience of travelling to see what the second and third effects of mining these materials are. This is a slightly different set of circumstances to what we are talking about here.

I commend the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for taking the time to have a detailed look at the bill. I understand the Member for Katherine explaining that it would have been an interesting bill to pare back and an interesting conversation and debate to have. Like many energy industries, the nuclear industry is broad. It covers a lot of different angles. It would have been an interesting bill to spend some time crawling through.

As the committee noted in their report, the key thing to remember is that the original purpose of the legislation was to prohibit the NT from becoming a nuclear waste storage zone or a dump. As explained before, this was the terminology that was being used through the Territory.

Importantly, this legislation does not and is not intended to regulate the transport, storage or disposal of nuclear waste that may be generated or present already within the Northern Territory. The *Radiation Protection Act* is the primary regulatory instrument for those issues. This will not make any changes to that.

There are additional regulatory mechanisms for things like uranium mining through a range of Territory and federal legislation. One of the briefs on my desk at the moment is to do with that. I have to write to the federal minister about because of our crossover and connection with some of our mines that operate under federal jurisdiction in the Northern Territory.

Noting all of that, this bill is primarily a technical bill. It fixes some aspects of legislation that will ensure there are no unintended consequences for the resources industry. I am impressed they have had the maturity to enter into discussions and make sure there is no vagueness in the drafting of this.

Like Minister Lawler I emphasise that this bill does not introduce new exemptions or broaden any of the existing exemptions. This is an important point that should appease any concerns from people about this legislation being enacted.

Our government supports the resources sector, and I look forward in the coming days and weeks to the opportunity to speak more about my steep learning curve on this industry through the Territory—on the amount of jobs it creates and its commercial value to the Northern Territory. I look forward to having the opportunity to learn more about it and promote the resources sector in the House. More importantly, I hope to get outside the electorate of Port Darwin to learn more about the resources and mining sectors across the broader Northern Territory.

This amendment bill ensures that in the relatively common context of naturally occurring radioactive material being present, the development of resources in the Territory and offshore continue to take place under a clear and safe legal regime. This is important to me and many people in the Northern Territory.

This bill is one part of numerous reforms our government is making to strengthen regulations to protect the environment throughout the Territory. I understand that, at times, the sectors will be nervous when there are regulatory changes afoot that they might fear bog their industries down. I assure them that with this legislation our government is focused on making sure all the environmental impacts are looked at. We want to make sure we clear through them as quickly and as safely as we possibly can. We want to make sure our environment and industries are protected, that they work together and respect each other.

I thank the committee, once again, for their hard work and the departments who pull all these bills together do a fantastic job for us often in short spaces of time. I welcome the debate today and welcome the industry having the maturity to assist in bringing this bill forward and understand that for their sector to be a safe and important player in the Northern Territory’s future, these reforms need to be introduced.

I congratulate the minister for bringing these reforms to the Assembly and I commend this bill to the House.

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank each of my colleagues who have spoken this evening and the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Nelson for speaking on this bill. I will go into the comments in more detail later on in my speech.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act* to provide clarity and certainty to the offshore oil and gas industry about the application of the act to nuclear waste including naturally occurring radioactive materials, norms, that may be incidentally generated from offshore oil and gas activities and subsequently brought into the Northern Territory.

This amendment is the result of this government actively engaging with and listening to an economic development framework priority industry sector, specifically the offshore oil and gas industry and aims to improve clarity and certainty about the application of the act.

I introduced this bill into the Legislative Assembly on 23 August 2018 and the Assembly subsequently referred the bill to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for inquiry.

I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

Leave granted.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about a very serious matter and acknowledge the death of an important member of the Alice Springs community, in Dr Michael Tyrrell.

Mike, as he was well known around town, was an important health professional in our community and a very important community member who participated and made the Alice Springs community a better place to be. He spent his early professional career in PNG in the 1970s, but moved to Alice Springs in the mid-80s and became the Regional Director of Health and Community Services in Alice Springs from the late-80s through to the mid-90s.

He then set up as a sole clinical psychologist in private practice. Setting up a private practice and being a psychologist in a small town is a very challenging thing. He was somebody who led with excellent practice but also continued to improve his own practice and learning by making sure that we saw in his practice was informing the work of others.

He was known to be an expert on the impacts of witnessing trauma, grief and health system management, particularly in remote locations. I know he was very proud to get his PhD. We discussed the pains of writing a PhD at length one day. It is an extensive process for anyone and he was very proud to get it.

It was an important piece of work that will be a reference for the work of government because he did it on what motivates a medical practitioner to go and work in remote locations. His thesis was about—we often talk about the 3 Ms of why people are motivated to go and work in remote communities: mercenary, missionary and misfit.

Those of us who live in remote locations know that is a deep simplification of why people work and get a lot out of working in remote locations. His PhD showed there is a great deal to learn professionally from working in remote locations. It tests you in ways—the things people got out of it were much more complex than that. I thank him for his work because it will inform policy for many years to come.

I want to sum up to say I have worked professionally as a social worker in Alice Springs. The work you do as a mental health professional, particularly in small communities, is by necessity and your professionalism, absolutely hidden. Much of what Mike contributed to our community is very hidden but he saved lives and made people much more able to go to work and face some of the difficult things they see every day. While that was hidden, it was not hidden to other professionals. We know the depth and quality of his work in our community.

He was a gentle, thoughtful and very ethical man. He made a big difference and I was very glad to have some brief but important professional contact with him through my work. I thank him for everything he did to contribute to making Alice Springs a better place.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I want to speak about a few things tonight, but I will start with some good news stories from the electorate of Casuarina. The first thing I want to talk about is related to antisocial behaviour. It is really important that we have a conversation about this in our community, but that we are also sharing the good stories and work that people are doing.

Tonight I put on record my thanks and recognition of the team at GPT in Casuarina Square. This is a large shopping centre and is run by a large national company. I have had a lot of very good conversations over a long period of time with the security team and the centre management team there. I have always been impressed by their desire to engage with young people and their level of knowledge of young people that they come across on a day-to-day basis and the different approach of that security team.

Casuarina Square has engaged a youth engagement officer who has come from the Palmerston and Rural Youth Services Network, PARYS. They have run a number of different programs. They have engaged Adam Drake from Balanced Choice, who has been working with their security team and young people at Casuarina Square.

Scott Flanagan and his security team have been running barbecues on a fortnightly basis. Those who are homeless in the local area, or they might be in town for various reasons and are unable to get home—they are running these barbecues once a fortnight on a Friday. They are providing a decent breakfast, health checks and a connection to services. That has been really well-supported by a range of partnering organisations including Danila Dilba, Centrelink, Orange Sky—which is a volunteer service that has started up in the Territory only in the last couple of years; we are very grateful they are here—the Salvation Army, Clinic 34 and of course Larakia Nation.

They have reported that they have lower incidents of antisocial behaviour around the time they run these barbecues. It is really proactive of Scott and his team, but also Mardi and the entire centre management team, that they are taking these sorts of approaches to issues around their centre.

I will move on to congratulate those in my community whose immense contribution has recently been recognised through a range of awards programs. One of those was Charlie King. Charlie King is a well-recognised Territory legend, but he was the NT Senior of the Year in the NT Australian of the Year awards. He is probably best known for his media work and his sports broadcasting over a significant amount of time. Lot of people tune in to listen to Charlie and his opinions on sport carry a lot of weight, he has been doing it such a long time. He has of course had a lot of impact regarding his advocacy for social issues in the Northern Territory. He is probably also well-known for his No More campaign regarding domestic and family violence.

One of the things I have heard about Charlie over the years that has impressed me the most is the stories of Charlie accompanying young people who might be waiting for a police interview where they do not have a parent or guardian to attend with them. We have people like Charlie in our community in Casuarina who quietly go about helping others. I appreciate the contribution he has made.

It was fantastic for me, as the Minister for the Arafura Games, to announce Charlie King as one of the ambassadors for the event. The assistant minister is also very happy. He will be fantastic at promoting the importance of volunteering.

There are a couple of other people in the electorate I want to recognise as well. Janie Mason was recognised as a Member of the Order in the recent Order of Australia honours. She is well-known for her work as a nurse in the Territory and at the nursing museum at Charles Darwin University. I have one of her books on my bookshelf, about the history and experiences of remote nurses in the Territory. She has been a fantastic contributor to the heritage and historical societies of the Northern Territory, considering the history of the Territory and the challenges that have been addressed in innovative ways over our evolution as a community.

Major Nigel Ballette was the Australian Army awardee for meritorious devotion to duty to operations officers of the first combat service battalion.

Marion Guppy, as the Minister for Education reflected on this week, was awarded a public service award medal for outstanding public service to the education sector in the Northern Territory.

In Casuarina we are all cheering for those people who have been recognised in a range of ways for the work they have done and for their contribution to our community.

I will also touch on the fact the Member for Sanderson and I had the honour to celebrate Vietnamese New Year. We tried a different language—we gave it a crack. We celebrated with the Vietnamese community in the NT. They are a beautiful community. It was nice to be in Marrara—we are always pleased to visit somewhere a few minutes away from home to celebrate some important moments with our multicultural community.

We are reminded constantly of the diversity that has built this wonderful place we call home, and the many communities that exist within our broader Territory community.

I acknowledge the committee for the work it does, not only in organising nights like that—but also the Vietnamese community is well represented in our horticultural and agricultural sectors of the Territory. They are huge economic contributors. They also run significant social programs. They are more actively involved in International Women's Day. They have run getting online programs with seniors. They have gone above and beyond. As a community they continue to grow and achieve great things.

It was fantastic to see some wonderful performances, including a young piano prodigy. It made me wish I had learned an instrument at school. There were lots of children getting involved, and lots of singing. Luke Gosling, the Member for Solomon was there, as was the Member for Blain; Kon Vatskalis, the Mayor of Darwin; Maree Bredhauer, the Mayor of Litchfield, Sally Sievers, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner—I hope I have not forgotten anybody. Many people were there, getting behind the community to celebrate this wonderful time.

One of the other things the Member for Sanderson and I had the immense honour to do last year was congratulate the Sikh community. They now have their first place of worship, their Gurdwara, in Marrara, their Sikh temple.

Satpinder and the Sikh community have done a tremendous amount of work over many years trying to get this vision to become a reality. I know they have met with successive governments to try to get this to happen. Not only that, they have done a huge amount of community fundraising within the Sikh community, and raised a significant amount of money towards that project.

While the Northern Territory Government is a proud partner in what is now a wonderful place for the community to gather, and for those events, that community has also risen to the challenge. It also serves as a cyclone shelter, which is fabulous.

When we go out there, it is so warm and you get to participate in the langar, which is the kitchen, where everybody sits together, everybody is equal, and everybody is provided with a meal. It is a really lovely community to be welcomed into.

I know the Member for Sanderson, and myself, made financial contributions to that project. We are very proud to support our community to reach their aspirations in having a wonderful community place to gather. Thank you.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Katherine.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, last night I spoke in adjournment about the Kerri-Anne Kennerley comments that were made in regard to Australia Day and the protesters and that broad, general statement she made about Aboriginal women and children being abused and victims of domestic violence. I wanted to carry that conversation on a little bit tonight as well.

More specifically, I wanted to talk about the Katherine Women's Information and Legal Services. I want to put on record the amazing work this organisation does in Katherine, and not just with the Katherine electorate, but for the Katherine region.

Katherine Women's Information and Legal Services has been around for 21 years. In November of last year they celebrated their 21st anniversary. In 2015, KWILS found out the federal government had made the decision to discontinue half of the funding they were receiving. I will declare a conflict of interest, I was the executive officer of KWILS at that time.

At the time, KWILS operated on \$480 000 per year. That is in 2015, not 2000. Half of that funding paid for wages of four people, and the remainder paid rent for a small office space, all of the administrative support needed, and the back of house operations such as electricity, water and office supplies.

\$240 000 for four people, and the rest going towards operational basic necessities. It does not seem like much when you see it on a calculator. All of the funding was used to support our clients, who are disadvantaged, disempowered, living in remote regions, and in the majority of the cases we handled back then, and that they handle now, are domestic and family violence and child protection matters.

KWILS was established 21 years ago because there was an unmet need for legal services for women in the region, and that need is just as great today as it was 21 years ago.

Earlier this week I received a letter from the current executive officer of KWILS, Jacqueline Remington, and she wrote to me saying, 'I am writing to urgently seek your support. Our service is set to lose nearly 80 percent of its total funding come 1 July 2019. As you know, the impact of KWILS closing its doors would be devastating for our community, particularly for vulnerable women who rely on our services from across the region.'

If funding is not secured, we will have no option but to close KWILS and reassess what level of service we can achieve with just one staff member and no premises to operate from.'

Instead of using your media profile to criticise people who chose to participate in a protest, would it not be wonderful if we could get these media profiles to use their national profile to talk about issues like funding cuts to community legal services, like the Katherine Women's Information and Legal Services. How fantastic would that be?

In 2015, when the first funding cuts were announced—this was because the funding model was changed. Prior to 2015 it was the federal Attorney-General's office that managed and distributed the money for community legal services. That was split, some went to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs at the time, who is still Senator Nigel Scullion.

The funding then had to come through a new program at the time, the Indigenous Advancement Strategy Funding program. There was more than \$680m in funding grants that had been awarded to 964 organisations under that scheme, which consolidated Indigenous programs and policies into five broad areas. At the time, Nigel Scullion said:

In the last Closing the Gap report delivered last month is both a lesson in how bad things have become and reinforces the need for a new approach.

This all sounded fantastic and we were thinking, 'Wow, he actually gets it'. No, he did not actually get it. What happened was that if you were not an organisation specifically for Aboriginal women only, you did not get funding.

How did that affect KWILS? KWILS is a women's information and legal service. It is a generalist legal service that provides legal services, information and advice to all women in the Katherine region. We do not fit neatly into a tiny box. KWILS cannot tick that box to make it easy for the funding agencies to decide that it does things for Aboriginal organisations so it can be put in there and be given that money.

KWILS at the time was granted \$107 000 for the Indigenous women's outreach program, which assisted women living in remote communities. This was funding for only twelve months. KWILS then had to reapply. This practice that started in 2015 continues to this day.

At the time when I was the Executive Officer, KWILS had applied for \$150 000 for a pilot traineeship program to train Indigenous women as paralegals to work in their communities. That application was knocked back.

To make things even worse, the \$207 000 funding KWILS received from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, which paid for the rent, administration and salaries for two staff, was cut without any advance notice. That funding program came under the Supplemental Legal Assistance Fund. It was defunded because it was not included in the KWILS application. It is hard to include something in an application when there is no category to put it in.

But I digress as this is just to paint the picture. These are the sort of things that organisations and community groups in remote and regional areas of the Northern Territory have been dealing with for a long time. It would

be wonderful if we could get national support from people like Kerri-Anne Kennerley on national media. As opposed to having a rant and rave about who is at a protest over Australia Day and who is not.

KWILS is an accredited not-for-profit community legal centre. It provides free legal services to women in the Katherine region, covering an area of 330 000 square kilometres. For over two decades KWILS has continued to expand its specialist services to disadvantaged and isolated women, particularly those who face additional barriers for reasons such as race, culture, disability, language, poverty, age and sexuality.

KWILS provides assistance on a range of issues including but not limited to domestic and family violence, child protection, family law, employment, government complaints, victims of crime compensation, motor vehicle accidents, tenancy, adult guardianship, credit and debt consumer advice, general civil law.

KWILS provides advice clinics, duty lawyer services, outreach services, legal education and law and policy reform. Its aim is to provide holistic and client-centred services. The demand for KWILS services has increased by 173% during 2017–18 where KWILS assisted 402 women of whom 72% of the total clients identified as Indigenous, 78% of the services were provided to Indigenous clients, 73.3% of clients were in financial disadvantage, 64.5% of total clients presented within the family violence indicator.

The impact that domestic violence has on the Katherine region is devastating particularly for isolated women and children living in remote communities. It impacts on the health, safety and social conditions for families and of course, the wider community. Access to legal support is a critical factor in supporting victims and their children.

KWILS has conducted an analysis of the daily court list during January to August 2018 to determine the number of domestic and family violence mentions listed in the Katherine Local Court. The data indicated that the court hears, on average, five mentions per sitting day. This five mentions per sitting day is consistent with the same analysis that KWILS undertook over January to May 2016.

The gap is still there. The demand is still there yet every single year, community legal services such as KWILS have to fight constantly to secure funding from the federal government. This is the same federal government that loves to make these wonderful statements about how they are so focussed on supporting domestic and family violence victims, throwing money into the situation but it is not targeted for community legal services.

How wonderful would it be for small organisations like Katherine Women's Information Legal Services to have the ear and the support and the voice of some of the national media personalities that love to offer their opinion about domestic and family violence issues in communities in the Northern Territory.

I ask again, if you are out there and you are listening, give KWILS a call, ask them what they are doing and how you can best support them. Ask what you can do to draw attention to the fact that every single year, they have to fight for funding just to be able to provide these very essential services to the disadvantaged women and children in remote and regional towns.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about a few events and travel across the Arnhem electorate which is my favourite thing to talk about and also some significant events that I have been able to attend in my capacity as the Minister for Education. In particular, I recognise our top 20 students in the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training attainment which was held here on 18 December.

That is a very exciting day. I was never a top 20 student unfortunately in my year 12 graduation so I have a lot of admiration for the dedication of our highly academic students and to see the future of the Territory is looking extremely bright when we have these top academic students achieving here in the Territory.

Some of them are staying to study in the Territory or to work and some of them going abroad because their courses are not offered here in the Territory yet and then looking forward to coming back to the Territory to live and work. That is really exciting to hear that kind of enthusiasm and those type of events are the best parts of this job.

I acknowledge the hard work of my staff over the last six to seven months in taking on their role to support me. We worked out that in six months, I visited 50 schools across the Territory. We have 152 Northern Territory Government public schools, as well as independent and Catholic schools. Between the previous Education minister and me, we only have 29 schools left to visit. Then every school in the Northern Territory has had a visit from the Minister for Education in our term of government.

It is a testament to Minister Lawler's travel across the Territory. It is something I have taken on—with my education background, I love and enjoy visiting schools, meeting teachers, principals and, of course, students. It is the best part of the job.

At the December I had spent a couple of days in Lake Evella. I thank the residents there. There was a big funeral happening in Raymingirr and I was unable to go because I did not have a car. But I got to decorate Christmas cookies at the sport and rec hall. I thank Scott from the East Arnhem Regional Council for letting me use the hall venue to encourage kids and young people to make their Christmas cookie decorations. It was a lot of mess, but a lot of fun.

I also got to do that a couple of days later in Bulman. I worked out it was the first time in two-and-a-half years that I have flown into the community. I always drive. That and Weemol looked beautiful from the air. It was a day trip on the way back from Lake Evella back to Katherine.

I thank my friend Jill, who works at the Roper Gulf Regional Council aged care. She helped me with the Christmas cookie decorations in Bulman. We had a couple of kids who made a massive batch. We got some great photos and they went off to share their Christmas cookies.

They tasted good, Member for Katherine. I think I will try to do that in more communities. They were my trial communities, thanks to Lake Evella and Bulman kids. I will do that at the end of this year. It was a lot of fun.

I was also able to visit Mataranka, Numbulwar and Alyangula schools before the end of the school term in December. I love visiting schools and communities in the electorate.

I had a great break. My partner, Corey, is listening; he spends every night watching adjournment. I say a big hello to him.

Madam SPEAKER: Hello, Corey!

Ms UIBO: We got to spend 12 consecutive days in a row together. That has not happened all year. I thank Corey for supporting me and putting up with all the travel. He knows I love what I do. We spent the whole 12 days in a row together, which was pretty exciting.

I went past the Cook Islands and got to see the parliament there. I picked up the newspaper—I got a copy for you all to look at. We had the Speaker of the Cook Islands here when she came for the executive CPA meeting. I heard from my taxi driver that she was on holiday, so I did not pop in. I got a photo out the front of their Parliament House, which is very different to ours. I would guess a tenth of the size. It looks like a long house. It has good views of the coast. I hope that if I ever go back I can go inside. I will make sure the Speaker is not on holidays.

While on holidays, I got to visit one of the campuses of the First Nations University in Saskatchewan, Regina, Canada. I have looked at the model and been very interested in it for about the past eight years. I thank the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Regina for allowing me time on campus. I thank Emily, who is one of the Directors of the Office of Indigenisation—the First Nations University office—for spending some generous time with me and my friend who was travelling alongside, to show us the campus. Absolutely lovely building they have had designed and purpose built for first nation students, attached an annex to that university. And to hear the history and journey of that university, was a pleasure.

I have met with our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Simon Maddox, who has some good contacts with that university and has invited the Vice-Chancellor from the University of Regina, to come to Darwin and the Northern Territory to see our model and share some of the story.

After eight years of hearing about this university and researching it online I actually got to visit it. In my own spare time, with my own money, just so everyone knows in Hansard. It was part of my holiday stopover and I was very privileged to be able to see how some of these models had worked.

Interestingly, the Provincial Premier of Saskatchewan, the day before we arrived for the visit to the university, had made an official apology for the 60s grab, which is the equivalent in Canada of the stolen generation. So Canada, Australia, New Zealand, native Americans in the US, have some very similar stories in terms of that dark, deep, hurtful and very emotional history that comes with first nations indigenous people of their country. It was really interesting to hear the different timelines, but the harsh similarities between our country and theirs.

I did enjoy myself on my holiday and came back feeling very refreshed at the end of January. No time for jet lag, the very next day was day two of the teacher orientation; 170 new teachers in the Northern Territory. Either new teachers to the NT or Northern Territory professionals who have changed into educators and trained to be teachers here. So that was a pretty exciting day to come back to work.

And on the same day, the official farewell for Deputy CEO of the Department of Education, Marion Guppy, who I was able to speak about last night and acknowledge her contribution to education in the Northern Territory.

Australia Day in Mataranka. It is a lot of fun. It is a small, tight knit community and I want to acknowledge and thank Mayor Judy MacFarlane from Roper Gulf Regional Council, who is always very happy to host me and let me be part of functions. I want to acknowledge the Local Authority members, who are the volunteers cooking the barbecue breakfast. Good bacon and eggs on toast, and baked beans. Fantastic. Very early in the morning they start, so thank you to the LA volunteers.

I want to acknowledge some of the award winners for Mataranka. Citizen of the Year Helen Harding, for her ongoing service to the community at Mataranka over the last 20 years. Youth Citizen award to two winners, Lily and Violet Chocholowski, who are sisters and were recognised for their work as youth citizens. And the event of the year, which is the Never Never Festival Friday night dinner, and that event award was collected by Moira O'Brien.

I entered my first ice-cream eating competition. Unfortunately I did not win, but maybe next year. It is quite competitive, but it was a lot of fun. Mataranka Australia Day, if you ever get a chance. Thank you.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, I stand in adjournment this evening to put on public record my acknowledgements for a number of things that have been happening in my electorate.

I will start with the Darwin Olympic Sporting Club sign up day. If you know of anyone who is interested in soccer and wants to play for, I am going to be controversial, but the best soccer club in Darwin, then come on down to Malak oval this Saturday 16th February between 3pm to 6pm. Come down, have a yarn with Katie, our wonderful juniors coordinator, or Charlie the Darwin Olympic Sporting Club president. They are both lovely, friendly locals.

They really do so much work to ensure not only our older community members, but also our young ones have a good grounding in being active in sport. So come on down to Malak oval this Saturday between 3pm and 6pm. See you there.

I recently attended the funeral of Miss Celcie Marquez. God Bless Celcie, who passed away recently. Celcie was a well-respected and long-term contributor to our community as a whole and especially to the Filipino Australia Association of the NT and the Filipino community. Celcie was an inaugural member, I believe, of that committee. She helped to have the Filipino Hall built on Batten Road, Marrara. My deepest condolences go out to Celcie's family, her friends and the Filipino community on the passing of a very special and much-loved woman.

To everyone in my electorate, I am having my first community barbeque for the year next Saturday 23 February, weather depending. I miss my barbecues and being able to catch up with everyone. Next Saturday 23 February at 10am I will be in Holzerland Park, Malak across from the shops. Come along, have a feed. My colleague before me was talking about wonderful bacon and egg sandwiches. That is exactly what we will have on offer and then we can all burn it off together on the basketball court. Come down if you have any questions or are bored. It would be really good to catch up with a lot of the local kids who come down and run off a lot of their pent up energy.

I send a big congratulations to Mitchell from Manunda Terrace Primary School, who won my backpack full of school supplies, which I provide each year for my back-to-school competition. This year I was pleased to see that I had 63 entries from a lot of young ones who either attend school in my electorate or live outside. I feel fortunate as local member for Karama to have six schools in my electorate. I have hundreds upon hundreds of bustling kids in my electorate as well. Thank you to everyone who entered. Unfortunately I'm not able to provide all entries with a prize, but keep entering in the future. I run plenty of competitions from my office.

Best wishes to all my school principals, school teaching staff all the students and our entire school and community knowing that school is back for this year. I was able to catch up with a lot of people over the break and it seemed that everybody was really excited to go back. Make sure you stay safe and drive safely around our schools and keep an eye out for a lot of our young ones who are first-timers this year. Give them the

space to enjoy their bike rides and walks and just understand that there are our children and future and are very precious. We need to do what we can to keep them safe.

I also want to publicly thank Karama Shopping Plaza centre management traders and our new security company, Jambo Security. We have been having a tough time in the electorate at the shopping centre. We are all very aware of it and are working in a united form to make sure we address it together and overcome it. We have a wonderful centre. We have just about every sort of service you could need from a centre. We feel very fortunate and very lucky.

There are many community members and even some people who work in Palmerston and live down the track and they stop off at Karama because it has everything they need. Thank you to all of those people who continue to come back and frequent the centre and spend with our local businesses so we continue to go from strength to strength.

I give a special shout-out to NT Police, Larrakia Nation's Day and Night Patrol services, Territory Families for all of your support of our centre and the work I have been undertaking. Thank you everyone.

Finally, I congratulate my colleague Paul Kirby, Member for Port Darwin, on his recent appointment as the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources. As we can tell in our second day of sittings back for the year, Minister Kirby has hit the ground running. He is going to continue to work hard as does every single person on our side of government and will continue to put Territorians needs front and centre every time that we wake up.

Ms LAWLER (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I talk briefly about the Sri Lankan Australian Friendship Association and the wonderful job that they do each year, all year. I attended the 71st Sri Lankan Independence Day celebrations on Saturday night and what a wonderful night it was. Besides the food—it is beautiful food every time I go there and I think this is my second or third time.

What a wonderful group of people the Sri Lankans are in our community. The President of the Sri Lankan Australian Friendship Association, Nishantha Weerasinghe, is a delightful man who brings that group together.

On the night there were young children singing, performances and plays. It was lovely to see that whole community there. It was a large group of about 150 people on the night. It is an association that has been around for about three decades. When I got there I was walking around talking to people, and they have lots of new members.

There are lots of new Sri Lankans in town who are making the most of the Sri Lankan Australian Friendship Association. I think this is a great thing when you are new to a country, city or town, it is wonderful to have those connections. The Sri Lankan diaspora is strong. If you are new to the Territory or Australia, they have been providing accommodation, free medical consultations for a few months, assisting their fellow members with employment, and just being friends. The Sri Lankan Australian Friendship Association is a tremendous association.

From my previous role as Minister for Education I know of the outstanding results their year 12 students are able to achieve as some of top year 12 students. I think it is an indication of a great community and multicultural group that rally around one another and provide social settings. They provide more than by providing support to their community.

It was an absolute pleasure to be a guest at the Sri Lankan 71st Independence Day celebrations, which are held on 4 February every year. I look forward to attending more in the future.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.