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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Nightcliff

Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I seek leave of absence for the Member for Nightcliff for today.

Leave granted.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Niue 42nd Anniversary of Self-Government

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, attendants have placed pins of the flag of Niue on your desks, a small country in the South Pacific, under Samoa. Through the Australian and Pacific region Commonwealth Parliamentary Association twinning arrangements, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly is twinned with a specific nation, as are all the other states and territories in Australia. This year we succeeded in securing funding from the CPA headquarters for a Niue Hansard system, which was delivered in July by Northern Territory Legislative Assembly staff.

Niue celebrates its 42nd anniversary of self-government on 19 October, which, with the time difference, is actually today. I encourage you to wear your pin to mark this occasion and help us celebrate with our fellow Niueans.

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 1)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

In recent years greater numbers of Territorians have chosen to leave the Territory and live elsewhere. This is having a negative impact on many local businesses and our economy. The government wants to see that trend reversed. We want to see more Territorians owning their home and staying here longer. To achieve this it is critical that the housing market is unlocked so individuals and families can enjoy living, working and continuing to call the Territory home.

The Bill puts in place measures to increase the stamp duty discount for first home buyers of established homes. The increased assistance was announced prior to the election as part of the government's commitment to assist first home buyers. I am pleased to announce that, from 1 September 2016, first home buyers who purchased established homes with a dutiable value of up to \$650 000 are no longer required to pay stamp duty on the first \$500 000 of that purchase. This is an increase up to \$14 000 on the stamp duty relief previously available to first home buyers of established homes.

This increased assistance means that first home buyers of established homes are eligible for a total stamp duty saving of up to about \$24 000, and the first \$500 000 in home value is stamp-duty free. Combined with the \$10 000 available under the first home owner renovation package, including up to \$2000 for household goods, government is providing buyers of established homes with a total incentive of up to around \$34 000 to purchase their first home.

With the introduction of increased stamp duty relief, most first home buyers of established homes will pay no stamp duty for the purchase of their home. Funds can instead be put towards a home deposit or other costs that may arise. This increased stamp duty assistance makes the Territory a more attractive place to settle for first home buyers and their families. This is particularly so where the average stamp duty payable by first home buyers in other states is close to \$20 000 for an established home.

First home buyers of new homes remain entitled to \$26 000 under the First Home Owner Grant for the purchase or construction of a new home, and will also be entitled for the \$2000 for household goods. Emphasising the government's commitment to supporting local businesses, the money under the first owner renovation and household goods package must be spent locally with Territory suppliers and tradespeople.

With the introduction of the Bill and the first home owner renovations package, we are helping to restore confidence in the Territory's housing market and assist more people into their first home.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House and table the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Continued from 19 October 2016.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand as a Minister for Housing and Community Development, Minister for Essential Services and Minister for Public Employment. I am also very proud to stand here as the Member for Barkly, a wonderful place where I have lived, worked and raised a family for most of my life. I, and Michael Gunner's government, have been given the trust of Territorians, and we do not take that lightly. We have promised to listen, consult and give Territorians the power to contribute in a meaningful way to decisions that are made by government. We will be open and accountable; Territorians deserve a government which will listen to them. We will learn from our experiences, and together we will restore trust in politics in the Northern Territory.

Throughout my time in the Legislative Assembly I have travelled the Barkly and the Territory, talking and listening to people, and doing what I can to help them see their aspirations and the aspirations of their families and their communities. My aspirations for the people of the Northern Territory have driven me in my time in this place.

We come to government with innovative health and education policies, and this government is capable of delivering them. We will take action to support families, early childhood, health and education, training for jobs and economic development, and we will work to address disadvantage across the Northern Territory. Our goal is a strong society with healthy kids, functional homes and economic prosperity. Our policy, documents released before the election, detail Labor's plans to achieve these goals.

Successive Australian and Northern Territory Governments have had improving remote and regional housing in the Northern Territory as a policy priority and, with varying levels of success, have delivered programs of construction and maintenance of remote community housing.

When I joined the Commonwealth Teaching Service, left home, family and friends in New South Wales, and came to Tennant Creek, I did so with the aim of working myself out of a job. As the Minister for Housing and Community Development I continue that objective of trying to work myself out of a job.

I am pleased to have the responsibility to deliver this government's remote housing investment package. We will invest in housing to provide remote Indigenous Territorians with a better base to build a life on, find employment and develop their community. We are investing now to address social disadvantage, to change the future in remote and regional areas and tackle the problems associated with disadvantage in future years. We will work in partnership with Indigenous Territorians and the groups that represent them to allow more private investment in housing development for everyone's benefit. We will do this by consulting with Indigenous people, working with bodies such as land councils, regional councils, local authorities, the Indigenous business association, the Indigenous Land Corporation, Territory businesses and other organisations to provide real and practical solutions.

We will be involved in this work as a partner. We will consult and engage with Territorians. We will make sure qualified interpreters are engaged throughout the entire process, from consultation and planning to delivering training and employment programs, housing maintenance, tenancy management and construction.

I want to see Territorians who live in remote communities being able to buy their own homes. There is a long road ahead of us to get to this point, but we have a plan and the will, and this is something we will achieve. The plan for this includes four key programs. The first of these is HomeBuild, which will see a total of \$50m per year for 10 years. That program will focus on the delivery of new housing for remote communities. An additional \$200m will also be allocated for repairs and maintenance, with \$20m per year for 10 years. This will support the amenity and condition of housing to be maintained and improved.

A further \$100m over five years will be allocated to the Room to Breathe program, fast-tracking the building of granny flats and areas designed to provide more living and sleeping space, and shelter for remote Territorians. This includes outdoor living and cooking areas.

Over the last few months on the road in Barkly I have heard that my constituents are excited about the Room to Breathe program, and this resonated through the electoral campaign. This is an innovative program and will provide more living space to accommodate family groups which are currently living in overcrowded conditions while keeping their families together.

The fourth component of the remote housing package will build on the government employee housing program. Through the allocation of an additional \$20m per year over 10 years, Indigenous employees working in their own remote communities will be able to access government employee housing. Labor's remote housing policy extends beyond electoral cycles, with five-year funding agreements, and it targets a decade of improvements in remote housing, community development, health and wellbeing, and, most importantly, jobs.

Residents who have qualifications and work for the government in their own communities will be given access to government employee housing. This program is about equity and fairness, and we encourage more locals to take up jobs in their home towns. Labor will also increase support for homelands housing to \$6000 for eligible families, and will make changes to eligibility criteria. We will allow for funds to be held and accumulated, and for residents to make co-contributions for works that exceed \$6000. Installation of air conditioners will now be allowed under this scheme.

I am proud to stand here today as a minister in the Northern Territory Government, making such a significant commitment to remote housing. Implementation of this housing program will be guided by communities, administered by local housing reference groups and supported by a Labor government. Housing repairs and maintenance will be provided locally, and we will empower housing reference groups for important local decision-making.

The department will also work with Indigenous Territorians and their representative bodies to promote private investment in housing development, and deliver more housing options and better outcomes. This will also require engagement with organisations such as Indigenous Business Australia, the Indigenous Land Corporation, potential private investors and other organisations to provide solutions for more housing.

We will also develop a grants program to assist building new homes on outstations and homelands where grant recipients are prepared to co-fund the build. Most importantly, the government will work with remote communities to return decision-making and management to local groups, and support this approach with capacity-building programs as needed. Decisions made by the local community will ensure that local needs are at the forefront of housing and that the delivery of services reflects local priorities and time frames.

To ensure that local priorities are met the government will undertake extensive consultation and will work with Indigenous Territorians to ensure they have control over their lives. This will require consultation with traditional owners, families and organisations which represent Indigenous Territorians.

Local decision-making will decide how tenancy management, construction and repairs and maintenance of housing is to be managed by local groups. This will include making decisions on housing design, with consideration of suitability and value for money, where and how to build and who will build the houses.

The government has commenced detailed planning to inform the implementation of Labor's \$1.1bn remote housing investment package. This will require us to work closely with the Australian Government to determine how best to implement our commitments alongside existing commitments under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the Remote Australia Strategies Implementation Plan, and to negotiate a new partnership beyond the expiration of the current agreements.

Our housing program demonstrates the Northern Territory Government's commitment to remote housing beyond June 2018. Our program will deliver jobs and economic growth during construction, with ongoing local employment through repairs and maintenance programs. We will ensure that repairs and maintenance funding is no longer spent on travel costs that are not equitable. It will target local communities and focus on locals available to do the work. These are outcomes that will make a significant difference to people's lives in regional and remote communities.

The challenges in delivering and maintaining remote housing in the Northern Territory are quite clear; however, with the implementation of Labor's 10-year remote housing program, commencing in 2017—18, and by working with local communities and families, and, importantly, the Australian Government, we feel confident that we will tackle the housing deficit in remote communities.

The benefits of this plan will be life changing. Side by side with this government's remote housing program, we will continue delivery under the national partnerships on remote housing. The final two years of the partnership agreements will deliver more replacement houses, more new additional houses and upgrades to a large number of existing houses, as well as property and tenancy management services. There is no doubt that the delivery of these programs and the engagement of Indigenous Territorians and Northern Territory businesses will continue to benefit the Northern Territory and the residents of regional and remote communities.

This government believes in giving people the best chance to actively participate in their community and shape the Territory's future. We believe that housing provides a firm foundation for life, supports early childhood development and learning outcomes, and is a fundamental aspect of people's social and emotional wellbeing. When people are living in appropriate housing, their chances of being able to do some of things we take for granted are improved.

Research shows that the poor physical condition of houses and overcrowding impact on the early childhood development of Indigenous children, resulting in poorer learning and emotional and physical health outcomes. For example, young Indigenous children in the Northern Territory are 122 times more likely to have rheumatic heart disease, a condition which is more prevalent in Indigenous communities living with poor conditions.

Housing has a direct impact on people's quality of life because it provides a stable base from which people can then access health, education and employment, and build vital community connections. Housing is therefore critical to the development of sustainable communities and addressing some of the entrenched disadvantage that exists in many of our remote communities. An effective whole-of-government approach to housing is vital. This is reflected in the policies Labor has announced.

There has been no plan for the way forward following the end of the current agreements in June 2018 and, until now, there has been a reliance on federal funding to deliver housing programs. Labor's \$1.1bn investment over 10 years is planned to leverage further Australian government investment through national partnership agreements. These funds will provide more housing, living space and rooms for Territorians living in remote communities. We will drive this program to change people's lives and give them the opportunity to achieve their dreams and aspirations together.

The Michael Gunner Labor government is also taking a new approach to urban housing that will give greater control to non-government organisations. Low-cost housing provided by non-government organisations allows tenants to access rental assistance from the Commonwealth Government, which is not available to tenants in public housing. In this way, non-government organisations are able to collect more rent than government could, and have a bigger budget for tenancy management and repairs and maintenance. The result of successful models of this type is a better service for tenants with a lower cost to government. There is a range of models that have been successful in other jurisdictions and we are analysing these models to identify what will work best for the Northern Territory.

Government has a pivotal role in assisting Territorians in need. Access to stable and secure housing allows individuals to improve their lives and meet their aspirations for a better future.

We are strongly focused on providing the right services and products to assist people to move from homelessness through to public housing and into the private market, and optimally, to achieve home ownership. This is currently achieved through administering funding for specialist homelessness services, the provision of public housing tenancy support programs, the department's association with Venture Housing, social head leasing models and the delivery of affordable home ownership initiatives.

The Labor government will build on these initiatives so that more households can access affordable housing, which will ease their cost-of-living pressures. Crucially, we will work in partnership with the non-government sector to improve the lives of vulnerable Territorians, those that are homeless and desperately require access to fundamental human needs.

Local government will play an important role in this government's work towards local decision-making. Improving the way this government interacts with councils, local authorities and other representative bodies will lead the way when it comes to improving people's lives across the Territory. With the cooperation of these groups we will deliver the change that is needed to achieve this.

Remote and regional Territorians are ready for a change. They are ready to have their voice heard, and local government will be at the heart of this. We will offer professional development opportunities for

elected and appointed members of councils and authorities, and we will listen and respond to build capacity where it is needed. We will learn from successes and failures alike and share this knowledge across the Territory.

Job creation in remote communities and the engagement of a local workforce is central to this government's plan. Local governments are already leading the way with local workforce utilisation. We will work with the local and Australian governments to continue to deliver real jobs across the regions. We have a willing and capable workforce, and we will deliver our programs in such a way that keeps them in meaningful work over the years to come.

A strategic local government infrastructure fund will be developed. This will be a \$5m grant program to fund one-off projects aimed at improving health, community development and the environment in remote communities across the Territory. The local authority project funding pool of \$5m per year supports projects chosen by local authorities and their communities. This could include community infrastructure or the development of local government capacity and service delivery. The local government special purpose grant program, of approximately \$3m per year, is committed to improve infrastructure and local government service delivery.

A key policy for this government is our commitment to local decision-making. We believe that decisions made locally are more likely to be right for the affected community. Local governments will be at the core of this commitment. We will deliver a 10-year roadmap on what decisions will be made locally, what the local models are for delivering them and determining goals and how we will monitor and evaluate progress on them. Local decision-making will impact on a broad range of service delivery areas, including housing and tenancy, education and health. This is not a simple process, and while we will get started straight away, we will not rush it. Models will be vary from community to community, but we will make sure each community has a model that suits its needs.

In my role as minister I am committed to developing our communities to deliver the best level of services. This will be done in partnership with regional councils, lands councils and other relevant organisations.

As the Minister for Essential Services I am also responsible for the Power and Water Corporation, Territory Generation and Jacana Energy. We all know that the work of our essential services is imperative to our life and our lifestyles.

The staff at these operations work in some of the most difficult conditions in the country. Across the Territory they deal with the most extreme conditions, from freezing nights in the Red Centre to cyclones and storms in the Top End. They deal with wildlife and vegetation issues, wild weather and vast distances that have to be covered across the Northern Territory. We will hold onto our utilities; they are not for sale. Under Labor these public assets will remain 100% in the hands of Territorians. We value the work they do; indeed, they are our essential services.

Michael Gunner's Labor government believes that Territorians deserve reliable power and water services. We will deliver these at a reasonable cost and not lump customers with huge increases on their bills. We are capping price rises at no more than CPI, giving certainty to Territorians that this government will not be the cause of another unexpected hit to their back pockets.

This government knows that Territorians want to see more of their energy needs delivered by renewable technologies. This is the future. By 2030 we will be delivering at least 50% of our energy from renewable sources. To deliver this, Labor will commission a new road map to renewables report to be delivered in 2017, which will set out the options to achieve the target. Solar PV technology already delivers clean energy across the Territory. On the Darwin/Katherine network it contributes up to 12% of minimum daytime demand, and in Alice Springs, during off-peak times, that can be up to 50% minimum daytime demand.

Under the SETuP program, government is delivering 10 megawatts of solar systems across 30 remote communities in the Northern Territory. These systems will deliver solar/diesel hybrid generation instead of the current reliance on diesel-only generation. This will provide a more reliable service and is expected to save up to 94 million litres of diesel.

It is an exciting time to be in the space of renewable energy technology. This technology is moving at a rapid pace and the Territory has the opportunity to lead the way in developing, testing and implementing renewable technologies. To meet our targets and help other jurisdictions meet their targets, the Territory can be a leader in this field.

As the Minister for Public Employment I will ensure Northern Territory Public Sector agencies are supported to enable the delivery of government core services and this government's priorities and election commitments.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment provides advice, guidance and training related to other agencies, relating to change management, selection processes, counselling and support services, and access to grievance procedures. Our public servants work hard to deliver services across vast distances in the Northern Territory, and I look forward to assisting them to do that in my role as minister.

Michael Gunner's Labor government will deliver, recruit and train additional teachers, police and nurses. This will be achieved side by side with our work to overall Indigenous employment targets within the Northern Territory public service, including in senior and executive levels. This will ensure a public service that is more representative of the Territory's population. We have a public service to be proud of in the Northern Territory, and I will do my best to serve them as minister.

It is with some pride that I stand here as the Member for Barkly and a minister in the Labor government. We have come to government at a time when we face many difficulties, from our budget and economic conditions to crime and social problems, but we will get on with the job regardless. We will listen to Territorians. They will not be taken for granted, and the decisions we make will be driven by their needs. We will be open and accountable. We will repay them for their trust and deliver on a strong society with healthier kids, functional homes, economic prosperity and a future to look forward to.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak, and thank you to all Territorians for allowing us to represent and serve you. I also thank the speech writers because that was a very good speech. I hope I did them justice in its delivery.

For all the new members, you are learning every step of the way in this House, not only the processes of the place but how to represent the constituents of the Northern Territory. For Michael Gunner's Labor government, you have the support and backing of some very innovative and creative policies to take us forward over the next four years and the next four years and the term after that. You have embarked on a government plan to break electoral cycles and to go into the most far and distant regions and engage the people. This is a real, innovative plan, and it sits in stark contrast to the last four years—probably one of the catalysts that has driven our policy development. We listened, learnt and have now responded.

The work starts now. None of this will be easy, and we do not profess that it will be. But if you look at the linkages of this government's holistic policy, then our children and generational change is the essence. It is underpinned by new innovative and creative health and education policies. It is about the infrastructure that is desperately needed to support this generational change. Of course, there will be the other areas: protecting our environment; delivering on economic prosperity; supporting Territorians in terms of their jobs and future; and the fun things that some of the ministerial team will be involved in: sport and recreation, that wellbeing factor. That goes for people who live in cities and towns, and the most remote places across the Northern Territory.

The Administrator has given a very strong synopsis of the plan and the Chief Minister is now leading its delivery. The exciting part is that we are all part of this. We have the opportunities to really make a difference.

I conclude by thanking the people of Barkly who have seen fit to elect me for a third term. I often say at home, 'I have not served the public in Barkly over the last eight years; I have served the public over the last 35 years.' I think that resonates in why they have continued their trust in me and they wanted me as a representative at the government table; there was no doubt about that. They wanted the Member for Barkly at a government table because they looked at us and assessed our policies—their disappointment in the last four years certainly resonated, and their real concerns, and they said, 'Right, back in the saddle. It is your turn. You deliver!' As I said, none of this is easy, but we have a plan; we have policies and we will deliver. It is an exciting time ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity today. I look forward to sharing with the House and Caucus colleagues each step along this journey. It is important that we stay in touch and share in each development for every electorate. This is not just about Labor electorates; this is about the Northern Territory. This is where we will all grow together and we will realise that important prosperity and, most importantly, the wellbeing that makes us who we are and gives us our opportunities into the future.

Ms LAWLER (Education): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand here today as the Member for Drysdale and the Minister for Education. Following my long-term involvement and commitment to early childhood and school education in the Territory, I am especially proud to be given the responsibility of Minister for Education.

I was born in Darwin, and as a young person was fortunate enough to have a family that supported me to get an outstanding education. When I finished school I attended the old Darwin Community College, where I completed a Bachelor of Education before beginning my career as a preschool teacher at Berry Springs Primary School in the 1980s.

I have worked in a number of schools in the Darwin and rural region as a teacher, an assistant principal and a principal. I have also worked in curriculum development and executive positions in the Department of Education. Throughout my career I continued my education and gained a Masters in Education, a Masters in International Management, a Diploma in Project Management and an Associate Diploma in Public Service Management.

I have worked in executive roles in education in Central Australia and as the Deputy Chief Executive, Schools for the whole of the Territory. This experience took me to probably every school in the Territory, and as Minister for Education I intend, in the next four years, to visit every school in the Territory to listen to their success stories and better understand their challenges. I have been Minister for Education for about five weeks, and during that time I think I have visited more than 13 schools. This, as I said, will be a priority of mine.

I have visited the great schools in my electorate many times, like Gray, Moulden, Driver and Palmerston Senior College. I was fortunate to visit Palmerston Senior College recently and take part in its peer panel hearing, which the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency supports its students and teachers with, which was a wonderful experience.

The first week after I had been sworn in I made sure I got to Bakewell school because that is the largest, and growing, primary school in the Northern Territory, with over 760 students. I have been to Nakara Primary School, where I got to watch the children in action in their Move More Learn More program. Nakara is one of the Territory's best-performing schools, and it is wonderful to have opportunities to talk to the principal, assistant principals and teachers in their classroom about their programs, which are working. I also had the opportunity to go to Wadeye to attend the education council's meeting, and I thank Tobias Nganbe for the invitation. I have been to Milkwood Steiner School as well; it is equally important that I go to our non-government schools as well as our government schools.

In Central Australia I went to Ntaria School and met with Cath Greene and the staff. Cath is one of our longest-serving remote principals, and it is useful for me, in my early stages as Minister for Education, to talk to some of our longest-serving principals, because they have seen the ups and downs. They have a thorough understanding of the issues on the ground, and I need to be informed by talking to them.

I attended Ross Park Primary School—again, a long-serving principal who is doing a wonderful job. Ross Park continues to be one of the top schools in the Territory. I also attended Amoonguna School. Some of you may not know that Amoonguna is one of our smallest schools, with about 19 students. Cherie Gibbens has been principal there for seven years. As I said, I need to talk to those long-term principals. Cherie is working there, in a one-teacher school, and she has the experience of how to manage a one-teacher school successfully.

I was fortunate enough to visit Braitling Primary School in Alice Springs and see the new preschool, which will be opening next year. In Alice Springs most of the preschools are not on the same campus as the primary school, but the preschool at Braitling will be on the school grounds. What an amazing building that is. I wanted to be a preschool teacher again when I walked into that building; it is exceptional.

I also visited Acacia Hills special school in Alice Springs. Wendy Haynes is one of the longest-serving special school principals. It is important that I hear from her regarding budgets and the financial issues that special schools face.

One of the pleasures of my job was being able to officially open the new Henbury School building on Monday, which cost \$31m. I had only been in the job five weeks so it was important to also acknowledge the previous Minister for Education, Peter Chandler, and all the work he did to ensure Henbury School eventuated.

The Northern Territory is diverse, and this diversity is reflected in our schools. The Territory is not like places such as the Australian Capital Territory, where one of my best friends is deputy chief executive of the Education department. She can visit any of her schools within 20 minutes. I jokingly say she can look out the window and see every one of her schools. In the Northern Territory there are places such as Alpururulam—which the Member for Barkly recently visited—which is near the Queensland border and takes about seven hours to drive to from Alice Springs. I was in Wadeye recently, and it takes an hour on a light plane just to get there.

As Minister for Education I will be focused on ensuring all children and young people have access to high-quality education in the Territory, just like my family and I had. I am committed to having strong schools with outstanding teachers and leaders who work in close partnership with families and the community. In this work I will be ably supported by the assistant minister for Education. I am thrilled to say that is Selena Uibo. Those who listened to her maiden speech will know that the Member for Arnhem is an award-winning teacher. She brings her knowledge, teaching experience and passion for improving the education of remote Indigenous children to this position. I look forward to continuing our work to make sure Territory education is the best it has ever been.

During the Member for Arnhem's time as a teacher at Numbulwar she saw mums, grandmothers and fathers participate in the Families as First Teachers program, which operates in the Gulman Child and Family Centre. She saw the role that schools can play in supporting children and their families, the pride the community felt in the school and how the schoolchildren engage with the children at the FaFT program. The schoolchildren would attend the FaFT program at recess and help, playing with the children, but also cleaning and packing up.

Travelling through Arnhem Land and visiting communities and schools reinforced for the Member for Arnhem that each school was different, but the communities were always proud of their schools. It is this pride in schools and education that we want to promote and encourage in every one of our communities.

Trust and integrity—in his address His Honour the Administrator mentioned that this government was elected on a platform of trust, accountability and integrity. As a member of this parliament and as Minister for Education I will be working hard to build trust with the community, schools, families and our key partners in education.

I have been Minister for Education for just over five weeks and have held meetings with some of our key stakeholders who have children as a priority. I have met with Jarvis Ryan and Anita Jonsberg from the Australian Education Union, which represents the teachers and many of the support staff in our public schools. I have met with the Northern Territory Council of Government Schools Organisations' Tabby Fudge and Michelle Parker, who represent the interests of parents. I have also met with Gail Barker from the Association of Independent Schools, the Catholic Education Office, Charles Darwin University and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Building trust with these stakeholders will take time, and I know our relationship will not always be smooth, but I hope we continue to communicate. I am a firm believer in talk, talk, talk to resolve issues. I will do this by listening and being open and transparent, and accountable for my decisions as a minister.

I was also very proud, in recent weeks, to welcome over 1800 delegates to the national early childhood conference titled This is Childhood, held at the Darwin Convention Centre. I met some amazing early childhood educators from around the world.

As I mentioned earlier, I intend visiting every school in the Territory. I will be a minister who gets out and listens to the people. I will not be sitting in my office at Parliament House or in my electorate office. I want to know what is happening on the ground. I want to hear from early childhood service providers, principals, teachers, students and families about the great work happening in their schools and services, as well as understanding the challenges they are facing, so when I am in my office, in meetings, I can make informed and thoughtful decisions.

As Minister for Education, improving outcomes for young people will be at the forefront of all my decisions. My decisions will be based on evidence so government spends its money wisely on the things that will make a difference to the lives of Territorians. Decades of research point to improving teacher and school leadership expertise as the key to making improvements in student outcomes, and this will be my focus.

All Territory students deserve at least a year's progress for a year in our schooling system, no matter where they start; however, for those students who are starting behind, there needs to be more than a year's

progress if the gap is to be closed. In the Northern Territory most of our teachers have been undertaking visible learning professional development with John Hattie, which is one of his cornerstones.

Children at the heart—one of the reasons I wanted to be part of this Labor government is because children are the heart of its agenda. I am a mother and a grandmother, and I want the best possible future for my children, grandchildren and, of course, for all children in this wonderfully diverse place that we call the Northern Territory. To do this we understand that government needs to invest in the early development of children.

Getting the right start in life is essential for children's later success. It shapes a child's ability to thrive at school, stay healthy and socially connected, and contribute to society, both socially and economically. The dollars vary, but studies estimate that for every dollar spent on quality, universally-available early childhood education and care programs, \$7 or \$8 are returned to individuals and society through increased tax revenues and reduced school, health and criminal justice system spends.

Not only is investing in the early years the right things to do for our children's future, it will reduce the need for government spends in later life. I look forward to working with the Minister for Children to develop a holistic early childhood development strategic plan that will inform high-quality programs that are locally responsive and culturally appropriate, with a stable and long-term future.

Part of this plan will be for government to expand the Families as First Teachers program. This program was started by the previous Labor government, and I am pleased to see it has continued to expand and support more children and their families. This is such an important program, as research tells us that a child's family is the most powerful influence on their development and the single-biggest predictor of their social, emotional and educational success in life.

The Families as First Teachers program is about driving generational change and assisting in building resilient families in the Northern Territory. In government we want to support families as our children's first and most important educators. The Families as First Teachers program has a focus on school readiness, with particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy foundations, transition to school programs and parent engagement initiatives. The program also supports families to increase their capacity to participate in their child's learning.

When the program first began in 2010 it was delivered in 14 sites. Since that time it has been expanded to 28 communities. By December 2017 there will be 38 sites, including five urban centres in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs. The Families as First Teachers program also directly supports local Indigenous workforce development by directly employing Indigenous people and providing assistance to employees and parents with education and work pathways. These programs are often located within schools or closely connected to schools.

With programs like Families as First Teachers it is clear that school is no longer just about providing education to school-aged children, but also engaging with families and supporting learning from birth to give children the very best start in life.

I was fortunate enough to attend the first birthday party of the Palmerston Child and Family Early Learning Centre. This centre is one of six child and family centres across the Territory. The other five centres are at Maningrida, Ngukurr, Yuendumu, Gunbalanya and Larapinta.

Investing in education—in his address, His Honour the Administrator stated that education is a fundamental right for all Territorians and is the key to ensuring our children have the knowledge and skills for the jobs of the future. That is why this government will provide \$124m over four years to schools to boost teacher numbers, provide early intervention programs, tackle challenging behaviours in the classroom, provide extra disability support in schools and create a new program of school sport, arts, music and health education across the Territory.

This investment in education will include \$20m per year in direct funding to schools. This will start to reverse the devastating cuts made by the Country Liberal Party government, which ripped millions of dollars and cut teachers from government schools.

I know from my experience in schools and from listening to principals, teachers and families on my recent school visits that there is a growing number of Territory children who need access to additional support services in school if they are to achieve their full potential. That is why schools will be able to direct this additional funding to where it is needed most—more teachers in classrooms, coaches to support and

enhance teacher practice and school counsellors and other professionals to support the day-to-day wellbeing of children and enable teachers and principals to focus on their primary role as educators.

We will also invest \$1m per year to support business managers in schools, who play a critical role in the administration management of schools. This will allow principals to focus on educational leadership, supporting staff and students, and working with their community to improve the outcomes of young people. With the implementation of global budgets, school business managers have increased responsibility, and these additional funds will make a difference.

This government has also heard the concerns of parents and educators about the challenging behaviours at school and the time it takes to have a child assessed for learning difficulties. That is why this government will invest \$8m per year for early intervention to tackle challenging behaviours and for extra disability support. This funding will enable specialist services to support the most vulnerable children in our schools so they too can reach their full potential.

Last week I visited the schools in the Alice Springs region, each of them very different, but the need for better services to support students with challenging behaviours and children with disabilities was a consistent message. This government will improve support services by improving access to allied health professionals such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists, reducing the time for children to be assessed so that tailored learning programs and support can be put in place sooner.

We will establish targeted intervention programs for students with autism spectrum disorder and provide training and resources to enhance integration and support students' learning, and social and emotional wellbeing. We will also work with schools and communities to improve facilities and support for students affected by hearing loss, which is a significant problem in the Northern Territory.

This government will support all children to be their best and to achieve a fulfilling life. This includes supporting our high-achieving students so they can continue to be challenged to learn and develop skills in areas of importance for the future of the Territory.

When I was at school there were no computers in our classrooms and mobile phones did not exist. That tells you how old I am. But the technological world has changed since then and schools need to evolve to equip students with the skills they will need to participate in the workforce of the future. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics are key features of this future. This is why this government will train students, from primary school onwards, in coding.

It is also important for children to have access to a rich and varied curriculum. This government will invest \$2m per year for school sport, arts, music and health programs to engage students and deliver stronger outcomes.

Working with communities to lead schools—in his address His Honour the Administrator spoke about a fundamental principle of this government: to work in partnership with Territorians to ensure community organisations and individuals are empowered and have a voice. As Minister for Education an initiative I will deliver to support this fundamental principle is the community-led schools model, to provide remote communities with a greater say in the education of young people in their schools.

This initiative is about facilitating local, community-led decision-making in relation to all aspects of the delivery of education and training in remote schools. It is about supporting schools and community members to have the skills, knowledge and support to confidently make those local decisions. I will be talking openly with parents and school communities about the best way to implement community-led schools—the best way for government to support remote communities to be empowered to make decisions on the educational pathways for their children, investing in infrastructure.

We know that many of our schools need infrastructure upgrades and refurbishment. This was apparent to me when I visited Amoonguna School last week. The small elevated building needs new decking outside, and they want to create a dedicated kitchen area where children can sit and eat their lunch, and an outdoor multipurpose room.

This government will provide every Territory school with \$300 000 for upgrades and refurbishments over four years. This will not only help schools, it will also help the local community with jobs. I know for a principal to have money they can use and to work with the community to come up with some infrastructure—\$300 000 is not a great deal of money but it provides the initiative for teachers and principals to sit down with their community and come up with some ideas to improve their school facilities.

This government will also provide \$5m for much-needed upgrades to our homeland schools, which provide services for some of our most remote and vulnerable children in the most remote context. It will fund the installation of rooftop solar to a wide range of school buildings across the Territory and provide complementary education programs, teaching children about solar technologies.

As the new Minister for Education I take this opportunity to thank the dedicated and hardworking staff in the Department of Education, under the leadership of the Acting Chief Executive, Vicki Baylis. In my first week as minister I found out about the dire financial situation of Kormilda College, and in the second week I hosted the educational council meeting in Adelaide. Their professionalism and willingness to support me as the new minister, to provide the facts and their commitment to finding solutions is unwavering, and I thank them very much for that.

I acknowledge that many staff, including staff in my office, have been working long hours to ensure this government is doing all it can through a difficult time, putting the interests of students, their families and the staff at Kormilda College at the forefront, while they continue their day-to-day work to meet the needs of all other schools in the Territory as well.

I also thank the educators and carers in the Northern Territory's early childhood education and care services in our schools, who work tirelessly to provide every child with quality learning programs that are engaging and support their emotional and social development.

In conclusion, this government is placing children at the heart of its agenda, and I am very proud to be part of this team, led by Chief Minister Michael Gunner. As Minister for Education I commit to working hard to ensure all our election commitments are fulfilled, and my decisions will be open and accountable.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, it is my great pleasure to be here today as the re-elected Member for Araluen. I am honoured to return again, after my third election, to this position. It is different being elected as an Independent member rather than a member of a political party. I moved from the CLP to become an Independent in June 2015.

Going to an election as an Independent and being re-endorsed as the Member for Araluen was a significant accomplishment for me. I thank the people of Araluen, who have continued to show their confidence in me. I can assure you I will not let them down.

Yesterday in parliament I took the liberty of tabling my key priorities for Alice Springs and the electorate of Araluen. These priorities were developed through the election campaign and over the last six years that I have been the Member for Araluen. Given that three of the other four members representing electorates in Central Australia are new, it is an opportunity for me to share with the new government and the broader parliament what people voted me in to do. I have promised to work very hard to drive these initiatives.

Today I will talk about these priorities. Alice Springs people have voiced their wish for a change of government, and I truly respect that. They had obviously had enough of the last four years of the Country Liberal government and they very convincingly voted in a new Labor government.

My job is to work with this new government to drive change and development, and advance the town of Alice Springs. My number one priority going into the election was to make sure Alice Springs remains a top priority for the Northern Territory government. When the CLP came to government in 2012 people had had 11 years of a Labor government, and across the board the people felt that Labor government had neglected Alice Springs; that they were disappointed in how they had been served and provided for under that Labor government.

With a new Labor government, people are already expressing their concern that could happen again—that the old Berrimah line could be highlighted again and anything south of Palmerston forgotten. I know that the other members of parliament representing Central Australia will be listening to me today and saying, 'We will ensure that will not happen this time around', but it can very easily happen when you have such a dominance of members representing electorates north of the Berrimah line.

You will be in for a struggle to make sure, within your Caucus, that Alice Springs and Central Australia remains a top priority for your government. Sitting outside your government, people like me need to chip away. One of my major challenges over the next four years will be to ensure that Alice Springs is mentioned in every day of every sittings of this parliament. 'Alice Springs, Alice Springs, Alice Springs.' You will consistently hear me speak about Alice Springs.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms LAMBLEY: ‘Hear, hear’ I hear from my local member, the Member for Namatjira. I will be keeping an eye on you. One of the initiatives I brought to the last parliament was to start planning for a new Alice Springs hospital for 2030, which I put it up as a motion. I think I first put it up in around October of last year, fairly recently. The Labor opposition at the time was very supportive of the idea. It was voted down by the government and the Chamber, but I remember the opposition spokesperson for Health, Lynne Walker, the former Member for Nhulunbuy, talking very favourably about the idea. I will pursue this over the next four years. It is time for us to stop throwing money at an old hospital and start planning for a brand-new hospital to provide for health and hospital services in Central Australia over the next 50 years.

I would like to know, at some point, from the new government, what the estimated repairs and maintenance bill for the current hospital is over the next 10 years. When I was Health minister a few years ago, the estimated repairs and maintenance bill for the Royal Darwin Hospital for the future 10-year period was \$1bn. I would not be surprised if the Alice Springs Hospital's repairs and maintenance is estimated to be not much less than \$1bn over the next 10 years. How we could better spend that money needs to be considered.

In the Chamber a few months ago, when I brought the motion forward to plan for a new Alice Springs hospital, there was much talk about a new site for a possible new hospital. There are several locations that could be considered. The obvious one to me is the land adjacent to Colonel Rose Drive, between the airport and the new Kilgariff subdivision. There is plenty of land there that could be used to build a hospital that would have plenty of room for expansion through to the next century. I look forward to talking about that over the next four years. I would like to get as many people as possible on board for that initiative. It makes sense.

The biggest problems identified by most constituents of Alice Springs are crime, antisocial behaviour and the impact of alcohol abuse on our community. I met with the Chief Minister last week in Alice Springs when he was on his ‘10 consecutive days of Alice Springs’ trip, which he was very excited about. We talked about the fact that none of us can afford to take our eye off the ball when it comes to addressing the impact of alcohol on our community.

I am a great supporter of the temporary beat locations, or POSIs—the police standing outside of takeaway liquor outlets. It has been the single most effective mechanism we have ever seen in Alice Springs in reducing the impact of alcohol on our community. I would hate to see any significant changes to how that is delivered; that would be a retrograde step. I am aware there are members of the government who have a different opinion, and I understand their position. I understand how that strategy the police use in Alice Springs and other parts of the Northern Territory is perceived, by some groups in the community, as being racist, but the overall benefit to the entire community outweighs any concerns. All we can do is work on making sure it is delivered in a way that is not racist. We should ensure that everyone, regardless of colour or race, is asked for their identification and proof of residency.

That is a challenge, particularly in Alice Springs. In Katherine it has been received very well; I have heard the Mayor of Katherine talk about TBLs as being game changing, as they were when they started in Alice Springs in 2012, if I remember correctly. Interestingly, it is a policy that was brought in during the former Labor government. When I was campaigning in 2012 for the seat of Araluen, I was often standing outside Piggly’s on Flynn Drive with the coppers undertaking that role. It was continued by the CLP government, strengthened and rolled out more extensively. It will be interesting to see what this government does. I know it is bringing back the Banned Drinker Register, and I am not against that at all. It is worth another go—modify it, make it more relevant. Looking at all the other strategies currently in place, there is a good possibility that it will be complementary.

I would like to see the continuation of Alcohol Mandatory Treatment in the Northern Territory. I was the Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation; I love that illustrious title. It was a very caring way of picking up people in the community who are destroying their lives through alcohol, and giving them a chance to turn things around. I would like to see that continue in some shape or form. It probably needs to be reviewed, but I think it has changed people’s lives, and saved people’s lives, and for that I think it is a good thing.

The government is supportive of the establishment of a purpose-built, specialised palliative care hostel in Alice Springs. A few years ago, when I was Health minister, much to the disgust of the former Member for Nhulunbuy, I took \$5m out of the \$15m for the emergency department of the Gove hospital and allocated it, through the Health and Hospital Fund, to set up a purpose-built palliative care hostel in Alice Springs.

When I was taken out of the role of Health minister, the new Health minister, John Elferink, decided to turn it into a multipurpose facility based at the Alice Springs Hospital, which demeaned the whole purpose of that exercise. Setting up what is essentially a nursing home in the grounds of the Alice Springs Hospital was not the intention of that dramatic move of taking money away from Gove and putting it into the Alice Springs Hospital.

I am very encouraged to hear that this new Labor government will return that facility to its original purpose—a palliative care hostel. I have spoken to the new Health minister, the Member for Nightcliff, and she is very supportive of that. I thank her for embracing that.

One of the challenges in Alice Springs—it has been going on for decades and has become an issue again—is the lack of nighttime youth services. Under the CLP government they were cut back to a minimum. One of the key priorities I have is that we have nighttime youth services operating in Alice Springs seven nights a week. There are some very good programs running at the moment. On Saturday nights the Alice Springs youth centre delivers a program for kids which is really well attended. They have had up to 200 children there on some Saturday nights, which reflects the need for activities for kids during the evenings.

It is a way of getting kids off the streets at night, which is a perennial problem in Alice Springs. It is a way of giving them something really constructive and positive to do. It is also a way of reducing antisocial behaviour on our streets. I would like to work with the government and the new ministers involved in this area, and roll out more services for children at night.

One of the things I stumbled across during my general electorate work over the last four years is that some schools in my electorate have very strong school councils and some do not. The ones that do not, seem to struggle along. I would like to see, through our new Education minister, a general strengthening of school councils to ensure our public schools get the best deal from government for our kids.

I would really like to see those schools that generally tend to be more disadvantaged than others have people from outside of the school, outside of parents and friends, join their councils to strengthen their ability to function and advocate on behalf of their schools. There are some schools in my electorate of Araluen that have missed out due to not having schools councils that are as functional and informed as they could be, so I would really like to see that happen.

I know that some members of parliament are, or have been, members of school councils. The former Member for Karama was an active member of her children's school council. The former Member for Sanderson, Peter Styles, was actively involved in his school councils. I heard the current Member for Sanderson speak earlier in the week about being on her children's school council. I have put my hand up to be involved in one of my school's councils. I think that is the way to go—draw in expertise and people from across the community to make sure our schools and kids do well.

I support the government's initiative to continue Alice Springs as a leading centre for solar energy generation and innovation; that makes perfect sense. I had the honour of being on the Alice Springs council about eight years ago when Alice Springs became a solar city. That was a status we held for six years. It did not continue; it was only ever going to last for six years. There was a lot of concern and consternation when that six years came to an end, which was only a few years ago. We have done well to continue as a solar city, regardless of the lack of federal government funding to support it, but I am interested to see how this new government will continue those sorts of initiatives in Alice Springs. They make perfect sense.

There are many infrastructure projects for Alice Springs that I want to see happen, and my question to the Chief Minister yesterday about his vision for Alice Springs in regard to advancing our economic prosperity—the government needs to focus on how it can invest in, and attract more investment to, Alice Springs.

The Chief Minister spoke a bit about population growth and how he wants to see us have the extra seat we recently lost—Greatorex. He wants to see that third urban seat return. I went home last night and thought, 'Gee whiz; that is aspirational.' It is ambitious; we would almost need a population growth double that of anywhere else in the NT to achieve that. It is not impossible; I like to hear aspirational goals and great ideas, but the only way we could do that in reality is if a big mine opens up close to Alice Springs. That is the only way we could have an increase in population of that magnitude. It is possible, as many mines are in the process of establishing themselves in and around Alice Springs, so it is not out of the question. These things take time.

I want to see a new rail overpass on the Larapinta Drive/Stuart Highway intersection. This has been discussed for years. I was lobbied by a sizeable group of people in my electorate about it leading up to the election. When the trains roll through Alice Springs, the traffic banks up and people do not like it. If there is substantial money available for that sort of project, then it would be worth considering.

There has been much work done recently on flood mitigation in Alice Springs. A new high-level bridge over the Todd River, replacing the Taffy Pick crossing, is required. It is time we had a third bridge in Alice Springs to allow people who live in the golf course estate to get across the river during flooding. The river does not flood very often and many people dismiss this as not being required, but when it floods people will complain and be reminded of the fact that not having an additional bridge across the river is a right pain.

I notice that the new government has an assistant minister for the rejuvenation of the Darwin CBD. I cannot think who it is ...

Ms Fyles: The Member for Port Darwin.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The new Member for Port Darwin. I would like to see an assistant minister for the rejuvenation of the Alice Springs Todd Mall. Chief Minister, if you are listening, that is on my list.

I remember very clearly, when I was on council between 2004 and 2008, the Labor government saying, 'We will rejuvenate Todd Mall. We will ensure it remains a great centre for the town of Alice Springs.' All we got out of that process was lots of consultation. The money was never stumped up and not much has ever happened. Ten-years plus later, we are still talking about a real upgrade of the Todd Mall.

Some friends who were participating in the Masters Games visited me last week. One chap has been to the last 10 Masters Games. He said, 'Gee, your Todd Mall is looking really sad, Robyn. It is tired and there are so many empty shops. It just needs spruicing up.' And it does. Look at what other towns the size of Alice Springs are doing and you will realise it is well overdue. We need a full upgrade of the Todd Mall. An assistant minister for the rejuvenation of the Todd Mall—thank you very much.

We also need to upgrade the Flynn Drive Community Health Centre, which is right in the middle of my electorate. It is a tired old community health centre that really needs some money spent on it.

I am very pleased that the new government has agreed to provide a brand-new Alice Springs Women's Shelter, which was on my list of priorities. Congratulations for making that announcement during the election.

I also am very encouraged to hear that the Chief Minister moved very quickly on ensuring local businesses are advantaged in the government procurement and tender process. This affects Alice Springs; as a small town there is only X amount of dollars generated. There is very little money coming in from outside, so competition for any local tenders is intense. That being strengthened under this government is a very positive step. I am yet to understand exactly what the changes are, but I am very encouraged to hear that.

One of the key priorities I went to the election with was to establish a national centre for the research, treatment and prevention of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD, in Alice Springs, together with a preventative service for women at risk. I see this as a priority. Many of the social problems and difficulties children face throughout Central Australia come back to what we suspect is foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. It has been talked about ever since I have been in Alice Springs, which is about 23 years. I first worked at the hospital and people knew it existed. It was rarely diagnosed, and I believe it still is rarely properly diagnosed. We need to move on this and set up a centre of excellence in Alice Springs.

Alice Springs is the obvious place, the centre of Australia. Jump on this. A lot of research is being done throughout the country. To centralise it in the Northern Territory would put us on the map; it would create interest and an industry within itself. So many parts of Australia are identifying FASD as a problem in their communities.

Most of all, we need to prevent it from happening. Prevention is always better than cure, and I strongly believe we need to do something about it today, tomorrow. Kids are being born to a life of disadvantage and difficulty due to something that is, as we all know, 100% preventable. I would really like to see that happen and I would love to work as a part of any parliamentary team or bipartisan team to further that. I have no doubt that people sitting in this Chamber today would be supportive of that.

I was very encouraged to hear the Member for Barkly talk about the plan of this new government to roll out more remote housing. I am committed to that. We need more public housing, and we need an improved maintenance of the housing we have. We would all be able to identify dozens of public houses in our electorates that are run down and in terrible states of disrepair, needing money to be spent on them.

I do not know how we have got to this state in the Northern Territory where our public housing is in such an abysmal state. I am disgusted with the former Minister for Housing for not doing anything to address these very serious problems. Without repeating the words of the Member for Barkly, who spoke earlier today, housing is critical to all the social problems we have in the Northern Territory, and without addressing housing we will get nowhere. I commend the government for embarking on this ambitious program of rolling out more remote housing throughout the Northern Territory.

I have a concern about the Budget; I heard the new Treasurer talk about the state of the financial affairs of the Northern Territory. Four years ago I was the Treasurer and I was saying pretty much the same thing as she said earlier this week. It is not uncommon for new governments to find themselves with no money in the coffers, but I suppose that is the challenge of taking on that job. It is an incredibly difficult position to execute.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I request an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to

Ms LAMBLEY: Thank you. The Treasurer told us earlier in the week that the economic growth of the Territory was around 10% a few years ago and is projected to be as low as 1% in the next financial year. That is disastrous. We knew it was coming with the conclusion of the INPEX development, but it is a disaster. With revenue levels at a low due to the moratorium on mining, I really do not know how this government will pay for any new initiatives without cutting some of the existing programs.

The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday was a good question to the Treasurer. You have lots of initiatives you intend to fund, so what will you cut? The difficulty you will face over the next four years will be trying to meet your election commitments with reduced revenue. You are in for a really tough time; I do not envy you at all. You might find yourself making some very difficult decisions; I would be surprised if you do not. Four years ago the Member for Blain and I had to make some extremely difficult decisions, some of which I regret in hindsight. However, difficult times require difficult decisions. You will be making some in the next few months, and I suspect they will not be pleasant.

There are a few more initiatives I would like to share this morning. I am very pleased that the new government has come on board with a generous First Home Owner Grant for people to purchase existing homes, which is something I have campaigned quite strongly for over the last few years. The Chief Minister was right yesterday when he said the removal of the First Home Owner Grant for existing homes had a profound impact on the Alice Springs economy. Returning that in a slightly different form will hopefully inject some enthusiasm into the property market and the local economy.

One issue that has been sitting in the new part of my electorate for many years is the Alice Springs Golf Club, which has a major problem with water salinity. When we were in opposition, I think around 2010, we met with the Alice Springs Golf Club and they talked to us about how they needed a new water supply. Six years later, they still need a new water supply, perhaps more urgently now than six years ago.

Alice Springs has a beautiful golf course; it is an international attraction. A few years ago it was deemed to be one of the most beautiful, perfect—I do not know how you rate golf courses—golf courses in the world, or at least in Australia. This funding has to be made available to the Alice Springs Golf Club to address this serious long-term salinity problem.

The last thing I want to mention is an idea that was put to me just before the election: the establishment of a peak body for domestic violence services in the Northern Territory, with the head office being based in Alice Springs. This is, surprisingly, non-existent in the Northern Territory at the moment. We have peak bodies for lots of problems, but not domestic violence. Arguably, domestic violence is one of our greatest challenges and problems. I encourage the government, perhaps the new Member for Braitling, to further that priority.

I have heard many people talk over the last few days about working together, behaving better in parliament and furthering the interests of our people rather than ourselves. That is my agenda for the next four years; I

want to work with you all—the government, the CLP opposition and my four Independent colleagues. It is possible to put our politics aside and get some great results for our people. I look forward to the next four years.

Madam Speaker, I thank the people of Araluen for putting their confidence in me once again.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be standing here this morning, not only as the Member for Braitling, but as the Minister for Territory Families. I am extremely humbled that the Chief Minister and my Labor colleagues have asked me to serve in this way. It is a great responsibility that I take with a deep sense of privilege, particularly as my ministry encompasses the whole life journey of Territorians across all cultures and communities—children, men, women, seniors and our vibrant multicultural communities.

As the Chief Minister said yesterday, much of the work of Territory Families moves well beyond the short-term electoral mindset that is easy for a government to adopt. This work must be bigger than that. The work we do now will span generations.

In my first speech in this place I said that our role as parliamentarians was to ensure that Territorians had a positive and fulfilling journey throughout their lives that is not an accident of birth, but rather a birthright. We all know that a positive and fulfilling journey through life is not a given. This is a great responsibility of government. Families will be at the core of the Northern Territory government, and children at its heart.

I will talk about Territory Families shortly. For now, I take this opportunity to share some of my thoughts in reply to His Honour the Administrator John Hardy's speech. His Honour called it quite correctly. Territorians have made a compelling vote for change by electing a Territory Labor government. What an opportunity for change it is!

It has been wonderful, over the last few days, to listen to the new members' first speeches. I feel very honoured to stand in this place with this group of extraordinary people who have so much to offer our great Territory. It has struck me that each member has been able to articulate defining moments in their life, things that happened in their family that have been a strong reason for why they are here today.

The Member for Katherine—thank you so much for your moving speech—reminded us of the enormous contribution of refugees to this country. The Chief Minister has often spoken about his family needing to access public housing at a particular time in his life. The Member for Sanderson experienced making choices that many women in our community have to make. Thank you for sharing that. Women will appreciate your honesty. The Member for Karama, with the loss of her sister—thank you for sharing that. It has reminded me that any family can be vulnerable.

It has also reminded me that families give great legacies and many influences. My grandmother, Edna Johnson, has been a powerful influence on my life. She was an extremely smart woman who was forced to stay at home from the age of eight to care for her mother and two younger siblings. Consequently she was largely illiterate until my grandfather, Ron, taught her to read using knitting patterns and women's magazines.

My father, John Wakefield, and his sister had a similar experience as children, when their mother, Gwen Wakefield, developed a mental illness. They were forced to take turns in attending school on alternate days so they could care for their baby brother and their mother. This had a profound effect on their schooling, and both of them missed important opportunities.

When my father was permanently incapacitated in a serious car accident when I was 17, my brother and I could well have been at risk of repeating some of this experience; however, because of the work of the unions and the Labor government, there was a social safety net in place. Medicare had been established under Bob Hawke's government, and my father's rehabilitation was covered by Workcover. This meant that, unlike those previous generations of my family, neither my brother nor I had to consider leaving school or forgoing tertiary studies to care for my father, help pay for his treatment and care or assist my mother to keep a roof over our heads.

Despite the profound upheaval and ongoing impacts on our family of my father's injuries, my brother and I were given the support we needed to finish our schooling. My brother, today, is a doctor of genetics, an internationally published researcher, currently working on cures for ovarian cancer. We are very proud of him. This is an important contribution. I believe without that safety net, fought for for so long and so hard by

the unions and the Labor Party, my brother and I would not be making the contribution to our communities that we are today.

However, we have to very clear that this safety net has not worked well for everyone. One of the challenges faced by all of us in this place, which was clearly articulated by the Members for Arafura and Stuart, is that this wonderful safety net is primarily designed to work well for families like mine, and has not worked well for the Indigenous peoples of this land. This is a fundamental challenge facing all of us.

Whilst I acknowledge any family can be vulnerable, we must acknowledge this structural disadvantage experienced by so many. Poverty, racism and chronic ill-health all make bouncing back from adversity much harder, and sometimes almost impossible. We must work to increase the possibilities of bouncing back.

Listening, consultation, dialogue—we have made this very clear as the intent of this government. Whilst I am sure the opposition will continue that well-worn and predictable path of calling it a talk fest, the many stakeholders I have already met with have been very clear in saying the last four years have been extremely frustrating, disillusioning and disempowering. People want to be heard; they want to participate; they want to be part of decision-making in our great Territory. We will consult and partner with Territorians, and we will not unilaterally impose grand designs. As I say that, I think of the \$18m courthouse in Alice Springs.

In my last role, as CEO of Alice Springs Women's Shelter, I spent a significant amount of time in the Alice Springs courthouse and had staff who worked there every day. I know we desperately need court facilities. The current facility is overcrowded, and overworked staff work in poor conditions. Victims of crime are sitting in the same waiting room as defendants. I do not argue that we do not need the facility; however, we, the people of Alice Springs, had no say in the design. We had no say in where it would be located or the height of the building. Alice Springs locals call it the Temple of Doom. They are against it. The people spoke and the government did not listen.

We will make this building work for our community. Buildings do not change people's lives; services, the community and the people inside the building, along with their skill and hard work, will change people's lives. That is what the Labor Party has and always will deliver: community. I choose to feel lucky when I look at this building every time I walk through town, because it will remind me of the politician I do not want to be, and will never be.

I believe we have made it clear that we will not be a government without ears; we will be open and accountable. As the Minister for Territory Families, I want to be very clear that many of those stories that we have to hear will be very difficult to listen to. As someone who has spent the last 27 years having the privilege of listening to people who have experienced some of the worst that life can throw at you, either through accident, illness or the actions of others, this will be no easy task. It will take the collective bravery of all of us to hear these stories, to acknowledge past failings, which all of us, as a community, are responsible for. It will also take much bravery to implement the solutions. Territorians have been very clear that they want change, and I feel fortunate to be here at this time, because we must do better.

I would like to talk more to you about my role as Minister for Territory Families. One of the great opportunities of the task given to me by the Chief Minister and my Cabinet colleagues is that Territory Families will bring together core portfolios: children and families; women's policy; men's policy; youth justice; multicultural affairs; seniors; and the Domestic Violence Directorate.

Territory Families is the perfect combination of related areas of government activity and expertise. It will take care of the Territory's most precious assets: its people. This gathering of people-centric portfolios provides a unique opportunity to have a positive impact across the breadth and depth of social issues that impact on families across generations.

To be clear, when a Labor government talks about families it means all families, and that means same-sex families, blended families, families of choice and families of birth. To this Labor government a Territory family is a unit of love, support and respectful relationships.

I take this moment to acknowledge the Member for Namatjira's fine speech this week—a true blue Territorian. I pledge to you, Member for Namatjira, my friend, not only to support your call for marriage equality but also to ensure that Territory Families recognises families where parents happen to be of the same gender as equal to every other family. Everybody is included. The Territory has always been an inclusive society and this must never be allowed to change.

Territory Families includes responsibility for multicultural affairs. I was honoured last night to go to the memorial for the Thai king, led by the Thai community. I take this opportunity to give my condolences. The Territory, as we all know, and anyone can see at any of the many markets across the breadth of our great land, is a wonderfully multicultural, vibrant and diverse society. I too, like His Honour the Administrator, am confident the diversity we now find in this Chamber will bring a welcome change to the way the Legislative Assembly does its business.

As I doorknocked the electorate of Braitling in Alice Springs during the election campaign, it became clear to me that diversity is our greatest strength, as I noted in my first speech. In Alice Springs specifically, this cultural and ethnical diversity reflects the immense diversity of the traditional owners of this land.

Alice Springs, I am told, has always been a meeting place. We have people from many Aboriginal nations. In fact, Alice Springs is probably the most diverse and multicultural place in inland Australia. This is why our commitment to working with and listening to our community is essential, because this diversity calls for flexibility in our responses as a government. If we are to be effective we must be listening. This is particularly true of the work of Territory Families, and the government reforms to place-based decision-making and community control will significantly shape the work of Territory Families.

As someone who has worked in Alice Spring for the last 12 years, I have sat through my fair share of government consultations. I am sure none of them were yours, Member for Sanderson. I also want to be very clear that many of my Aboriginal friends have been doing this for a lifetime. There is nothing more frustrating than going to another meeting with no outcome. As leaders we must ensure that all voices have the opportunity to participate in the creation of a shared and inclusive future, and then we must deliver.

With Territory Families, the Northern Territory Government will, under the leadership of Michael Gunner, invest earlier in children by providing support to families, with a focus on vulnerable families, as I mentioned; address the issues in our youth justice system so children are diverted from further detention; increase services for teenagers so they have activities and opportunities to engage positively in our community; improve and expand our response to domestic and family violence; ensure senior Territorians are respected and supported; and strengthen the decision-making boards across government by ensuring they reflect the community, particularly with equal female representation. We will also ensure that children in care receive effective support and services to address their history of trauma.

The creation of Territory Families will have a positive collective impact on our community. As you can see, Territory Families covers a whole-of-life journey from zero to 99 and beyond.

We must acknowledge the extent of the issue of domestic and family violence within our community. His Honour the Administrator rightly called it a scourge. We must be honest about the cold and sobering truth in our community. We cannot turn our eyes away. In fact, as leaders we cannot avert our gaze for a second. This will be one of the most challenging and difficult conversations we must have. As a non-Indigenous woman, I will need the support, leadership and wisdom of Aboriginal women, and, vitally, Aboriginal men. I respectfully ask for that help today and pledge to walk with you—as I mentioned in my first speech—and not to walk away when the conversation gets hard, which it will.

We need to commit to action in this area. The Territory government will take early action to protect women and their children, and combat domestic and family violence and sexual assault, through an integrated and holistic response that better supports all.

We are doing some early practical things. As part of the National Strategy on Domestic and Family Violence we will introduce laws to allow the automatic recognition of interstate domestic violence orders in the Northern Territory. Furthermore, we will introduce police body cameras to make the collection of evidence more effective, meaning people do not have to tell their story twice, which is very difficult.

As His Honour the Administrator highlighted, we will fund new women's shelters in Alice Springs and Galiwinku. We will also be looking at the infrastructure needs of all the other women's shelters.

We, the Territory government, will be acting on every level—hyperlocal, Territory-wide and national—to address domestic and family violence. We need to be smarter in our approach. To that end we will do several other things, such as develop specialised justice responses, increase access to programs that support people who use violence to change their lives, and increase grassroots programs that will help change community attitudes.

We have only just begun the fight against sexual assault and sexual violence, which is an area we will focus on under my leadership, and we have a great team in place. It is a dedicated, focused team, and I think we are up to the challenge.

I am very pleased that this government will establish a ministerial advisory council for Indigenous women to complement the existing Indigenous men's council. I will also work very closely with the Ministerial Advisory Councils for Multicultural Affairs, Senior Territorians and the Youth Justice Advisory Committee. These committees give me the ability to understand the real issues and to work collaboratively to deliver solutions.

I also have responsibility for seniors, and I just discovered that in three years I will be one, which is a bit distressing since I have a five-year-old. Let us not forget seniors because I will be one soon. Senior Territorians play a massively important role in families and communities. They are the bridge between generations, the guiding hands and the people who keep traditions alive and make the Territory a better place.

As we said before the election, this government will take action to keep seniors in the Territory. Seniors will continue to contribute to our economic growth. As the Treasurer pointed out yesterday, growing our population is an important part of our economic future. Seniors have much to contribute to our community. They have skills and talents we need to keep. I have already met with seniors' organisations, including the Alice Springs branch of National Seniors NT, and I look forward to working with such dynamic, amazing and interesting Territorians.

We will work on a review to totally revamp concessions so we end up with a scheme that reflects the needs of our senior Territorians. We also want seniors to stay in the workforce longer if they choose to. They are valuable workers who share their wisdom and skills with a whole generation of younger workers. We need to tap into that skillset; we cannot afford to lose it in the Territory.

We will undertake a project with the Commissioner for Public Employment to look at keeping ageing workers in the public sector and how we can keep our seniors contributing by flexible work options. This will also be an important part of women's and men's policy, as we know flexible work practices benefit all, particularly those with families, and we particularly want men to have increased opportunities to parent.

Finally I need to offer my thoughts on youth detention, but before I do I must acknowledge the work under way with the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. It is important that the commission go about its work without running commentary from politicians. We will work closely with the commission to respond to any information and data requests, and provide full responses and submissions. Territory Families has set up a group of very experienced workers who will be doing that.

For now, what I will say about youth justice is that what happened at Don Dale and what we saw on *Four Corners* will not be happening under a Labor government. I was campaigning in Yeperenye Shopping Centre in the three days after that *Four Corners* report was aired. People were coming up to me crying in the middle of the shopping centre. I do not think we can underestimate the impact of that show and the distress within the community. We will not downplay that or back away from it.

To be clear, the Northern Territory knows we need to be smart on crime. Changing the way we do business does not mean we will allow people to not take responsibly for their actions and choices. In fact, it is the complete opposite, but the evidence has been clear that a punitive regime with no thought of early intervention and therapeutic rehabilitation has not worked. It does not support people to change their minds, their lives and the way they deal with problems. There is no place in Australia for the scenes we saw. It will never be allowed to happen again.

As His Honour the Administrator has already said, this Territory Labor government will work in partnership with frontline services and peak bodies to deliver co-design and early intervention to Territory children. It is our solemn duty, as elected representatives of the people, to ensure our children have the best possible start in life. This means we have to invest heavily in families and communities. We must ensure family units and communities are healthy and strong, and that our children can grow up in these nurturing environments. We want to keep our children out of the criminal justice system. Too often in the past it has been about policies that focus on the end outcome: a young person in detention. We need to intervene earlier because that has not worked.

We will work closely with the non-government sector to look at solutions outside of the youth system. I was very proud yesterday, in this place, to announce \$340 000 in funding for the NT Council of Social Services, which has 40 years on the coalface of doing this work. It is those types of partnerships that will make the

difference to what we do. The government does not have all the answers, and we need to put greater value on co-design and working with the non-government sector.

In conclusion, we will treat young people in our youth system humanely. Young people need a place in our community. We need to give them a vision of being part of a community where they are valued and they have a future. We will never give up on our kids, particularly where there are issues—as the Member for Araluen mentioned—with foetal alcohol syndrome. We have many challenges in this area and much work to do.

As many of you know, youth justice has been transferred out of corrections and will now come under Territory Families. We are working on the machinery mechanisms of government for that. We will be speaking more about youth detention in the next day or so.

Madam Speaker, I am very proud to stand here today. Yesterday our friend, the Member for Nelson, said I had a bit of a job coming straight from the streets of Alice Springs. I am wondering what you need to be qualified in to be in this place. I spent 23 years as a social worker; I worked in outback and remote Australia for several years at NPY Women's Council. I spent a couple of years at the coalface in emergency at the Alice Springs Hospital and eight years running a very great place, the Alice Springs Women's Shelter. I have also represented the Northern Territory on national boards and I have been on the hospital board, so I do wonder what you need to do to be qualified.

I feel very qualified to take on this job. I am privileged in it. I may be the only person in Australia who would be excited to get this job. I am and I pledge to work extremely hard to better the outcomes for Territory children.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to be speaking today, my first official contribution to debate in the Assembly. I begin, as many others have, by acknowledging the Larrakia people on whose land we meet today and paying my respects to their elders, past, present and future.

It is my honour and privilege to sit as a member of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory and to serve the community of the Northern Territory as the Member for Casuarina, the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, the Minister for Tourism and Culture, and the Minister for Corporate and Information Services.

I will be speak today about our plans under my portfolio responsibilities, in reply to His Honour, but it would be remiss of me to not take the opportunity to first thank all the community members of Casuarina for allowing me the great honour and privilege of being their representative for a second term in this House. It is not a privilege I take lightly, and there still is not a day where I do not wake up and pinch myself at the opportunity I have been afforded and the opportunity I have to hear the stories and be involved in the lives of people in Casuarina.

It is life changing, and I know that even all the new members in this Chamber, after a long period of campaigning, will be feeling that life-changing effect of being invited into people's lives in the way we are. It is an enormous honour to advocate for those in our communities, and it is really special for me. Tomorrow is the two-year anniversary of when I was sworn into parliament the first time, which is pretty special.

I would like to thank a range of people, but I will take the opportunity to do that in adjournment. I want to share a special moment from this week, before I go into my portfolio areas, that I enjoyed with my brother, who was here on Tuesday. He came to watch us all be sworn in. He did not come the first time. We were standing in the foyer and had just seen all the beautiful entries of many of our new members. I think we all had some tears in our eyes that morning. My brother looked at me square in the face and said, 'Bad day to get a pimple'. I would just like to thank my family to continuing to keep it real in the wake of the enormity of the position I am now in.

I am also honoured and privileged to be part of a government which has such an ambitious agenda for the Northern Territory, one that puts children at the heart of everything we do, that restores business and community confidence by growing jobs and the economy, and that will return integrity and transparency to the way that it conducts its business. In the months leading up the Territory election we released a broad range of election policy proposals, and engaged with the community on the directions and priorities of a future, and now current, Labor government.

We listened to Territory families, businesses and community organisations about their aspirations and priorities to inform our agenda at a time when their elected government simply would not. Our policy agenda was consolidated under three main themes: jobs; growth; and putting children at the heart of everything we do. For the benefit of honourable members, I would like to flesh out the commitments and the strategy outlined by His Honour relevant to my ministerial responsibilities. I would also like to say that as a member of the former opposition and having the opportunity to work with many of the current members of this house on the commitments that we took to the election—I really look forward to working with ministers in a range of areas outside my portfolio areas that my community and I are very passionate about, including suicide prevention, which was mentioned by a number of members in their maiden speeches, and making sure young people are afforded the best of opportunities.

The Northern Territory is a unique and beautiful part of the world, and our natural assets are some of the most important things we have. That is constantly brought home to me; I represent an electorate that has great ecological, cultural and recreational value. We have the most visited reserve in the Top End, the Casuarina Coastal Reserve. I grew up around the cliffs there, around the ocean, and I have a great deal to do with the Landcare group there.

Our environment has maintained and sustained the world's oldest living culture for thousands of years, and today provides a foundation for a sustainable economy, supporting tourism, primary industry, art and creative industries and our resources sector. It is also crucial to the health and wellbeing of every Territorian, allowing all of us to not only enjoy an active outdoor lifestyle, but, as I discussed yesterday, to connect on a deeper level, as many Territorians do, with what makes this place unique and special.

It is crucial that we continue to manage and protect our environment and abundant natural resources so future generations can also benefit from them economically, socially and culturally. Our land and waterways are the backbone and lifeblood of our Territory lifestyle. It is crucial that we respect and care for these unique and important assets by maintaining healthy ecosystems and protecting biodiversity. This is fundamental to a happy, healthy and thriving community.

This government will deliver a suite of environmental regulatory reforms aimed at improving transparency, certainty and confidence in the environmental assessment and approval system, consistent with the government's commitments to open, accountable and transparent government, as well as a healthy environment and a strong economy. We have already begun delivering on our commitment by reinstating operational funding to the Environment Centre NT, the Arid Lands Environment Centre and the Environmental Defenders Office. This will allow these important bodies to employ policy officers to proactively engage with government and represent communities' interests as government implements its vast environmental reform agenda. It is big, and the funding commitment is for five years.

We expect these organisations to hold us to account as we seek to implement our environmental reform agenda, including regulatory reform of environmental assessments and approval processes. This is an area where we will be held strongly to account by the public, as we should be. In line with the Healthy Environment, Strong Economy policy we took to the election, the Gunner government will strengthen the Territory's environmental assessment, approval, oversight and enforcement regime, including establishing the necessary powers to effectively enforce regulation and punish non-compliance.

Our reforms will provide for much greater transparency for mine management plans and environmental management plans. These plans outline the environmental management practices and procedures that must be followed once an application is approved. The CLP government sought to water down the disclosure of mining management plans. Plans were not consistently made available to the public, and in some cases only a summary of those plans was made available. We will ensure Territorians have full access to environmental and mining management plans. Since coming to government, the full environmental management plan for Origin Energy's exploration activity at the Amungee well site has already been made publicly available online. I commend my colleague, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, the Member for Johnston, for undertaking this very important work.

Our priority now is to make changes to relevant legislation to ensure the transparency of mining and environmental management plans into the future, and the effective enforcement of their provisions. This includes a full disclosure of compliance reports from approved licence holders. We will also ensure all significant developments are subject to scrutiny and assessment.

We will honour the former commitment to amend the *Water Act* to remove the exemption that applies to mining and petroleum activities to licence and permit requirements under the Act. It is imperative that all sectors and industries are assessed and scrutinised under the Act. The amendments will ensure the mining and petroleum activities are treated the same as all other sectors, in an open and transparent way.

Under the CLP government we saw the construction of a port on Melville Island without any environmental assessment or approval—the port that was not a port. This highlighted serious deficiencies in the Territory's environmental assessment regime, and these deficiencies continued to grind down the trust of Territorians. We cannot afford to disregard the impact of major development on our environment in this way. This government will restore integrity and transparency in the environmental assessment and approval system by ensuring that all developments with the potential to significantly impact the environment, including ports, receive an appropriate level of environmental assessment prior to approval. This will include the consideration of carbon pollution.

Reforms will be introduced to increase the transparency of projects that are referred for environmental assessment, as well as assessment and approval decisions. We will ensure that penalties for noncompliance and environmental bonds are appropriate.

Indigenous rangers play a central role in conservation and natural resource management in the Northern Territory; many other members have close ties with local ranger groups. They do a range of things, including fire, weed and feral animal management, wildlife surveying and monitoring, and more targeted management of significant species or sites. Indigenous ranger groups also bring additional social and cultural benefits to remote communities, including employment, increased access to country and incentives for education and training.

Around half of the Territory's land area is Aboriginal owned and/or managed, while some 85% of the coastline is Aboriginal land. There are 15 formally recognised Indigenous protection areas within the NT, with a total terrestrial area of 245 504 km², accounting for over 70% of the Territory's conservation estate. There are currently over 40 Indigenous ranger groups helping to manage these areas, with around 1000 rangers operating on a full-time, part-time or casual basis.

Most Indigenous ranger groups simply do not have the resources to tackle the scale of the management tasks they are faced with. Recognising the crucial role they play in communities across the Territory, the Gunner Labor government has committed substantial future funding to support Indigenous rangers. We will provide \$4.1m for capital grants for ranger groups, to help with the purchase of essential items such as vehicles, boats and radio and communication equipment. We will also provide a further \$8m for a land management and conservation fund to improve conservation practices on Aboriginal land and sea country, and support Indigenous ranger groups. These funds will be delivered via a grants program which will be developed in close consultation with key stakeholders and informed by an Indigenous land management advisory group.

In addition to demonstrable conservation outcomes, priority will be given to projects that increase employment outcomes; demonstrate innovation in the way they partner with business, industry, the government and non-government sectors; and enhance our climate adaptation and knowledge.

We will also amend the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* to specifically recognise the role of Indigenous ranger groups in managing natural and cultural assets across the Northern Territory, and provide enforcement powers to increase the ability of groups to effectively manage land.

As part of our commitment to support Indigenous rangers and Indigenous communities with conservation management on their land, and to reap the benefits of this, we will also establish an Indigenous carbon unit. The unit will work with communities to facilitate and deliver carbon abatement and economic development opportunities on Indigenous land. The Indigenous carbon unit will facilitate the creation of sustainable enterprise through carbon abatement and (inaudible), as well as promoting this emerging industry to new potential partners both nationally and internationally.

The Gunner Labor government will also ensure the Territory's precious and unique marine environment is better protected. As development proceeds in the Territory there are increasing pressures on our coastal

and marine environments, and the risks of environmental degradation are growing. To address this issue we will implement our marine protection policy. I have been really pleased to meet with groups about that policy. It was really well received, and I am sure I was not the only one, throughout the campaign, to receive many emails about our coastal environment and the importance of having a strategy to protect it. We will be developing a coastal and marine management strategy that is science based and provides for a consultative approach to management and conservation that includes all stakeholders.

The reinstatement of the Darwin Harbour advisory committee will see a return to a community-driven approach to managing Darwin Harbour. We understand that giving everyone in the community a say, including the Indigenous community, recreational anglers, business, industry and our researchers, on managing Darwin Harbour is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do.

The first task of this committee will be to develop advice on a community-led integrated plan of management for Darwin Harbour and, specifically, a plan to protect vital habitats, such as mangroves, which are at threat from climate change.

The Gunner Labor government will also move to better protect mangroves, providing funding to Charles Darwin University, as we committed, for urgent mangrove research so we can better understand threats posed by climate change and possible adaptation strategies to alleviate this impact. That is something many Territorians will be very happy to hear.

We will invest in a comprehensive plan of management for Limmen Bight Marine Park, one of two declared marine parks in the Northern Territory. Consultation with key stakeholders, including traditional owners, will begin this financial year. This will see us complete the work started by the previous Labor government to protect the Limmen Bight from damaging seabed mining, work that was left to stall under the former CLP government.

By the end of 2019 we will complete the plan of management for Limmen Bight Marine Park and make sure we are delivering a sensible science-based management arrangement, in close consultation with stakeholders. The end result will be a framework for sustainable fisheries management, a ban on seabed mining, a best-practice monitoring and evaluation framework, and a model for the development of tourism and local job opportunities.

This week is National Water Week. As such it is timely to highlight that as the Territory grows we need to ensure we are using our available and precious water resources sustainably to ensure the ongoing health of our rivers and waterways, and that Territory households, communities, businesses and industries can continue to access the water they need when they need it.

To do this we will ensure we are making sensible decisions about water allocation based on science and in close consultation with the community, through the implementation of our sustainable water use policy. We will ensure that communities and stakeholders are actively involved in advising on water management and allocations in a region or catchment through water advisory committees and open and transparent water planning processes.

Water allocation planning is an important mechanism used to assist government and the community to determine water management and allocation decisions across the Northern Territory. Community consultation and engagement plays an important role in assuring a balanced and well-informed planning process. Water advisory committees are the primary vehicle for community engagement and involvement in defining water allocation rules and decisions within a plan area.

Since forming government we have approved the reestablishment of the Tindall, Mataranka, Daly Waters and Katherine water advisory committees, and more will follow. This will result in increased transparency and accountability for sustainable water planning processes across the Territory.

Sustainable water allocation is underpinned by sound knowledge and understanding of this resource, its dynamic behaviour and the natural processes which interact with it. The comprehensive assessment of the minimum environmental flow requirements for ecosystems and the ecological response to the impacts imposed by water extraction are the subject of an area of environmental research that is largely unfulfilled.

We will be guided by science when approving water allocations, and we will invest more in water research and modelling to ensure we are operating from a strong evidence base in our decision-making. Sustainable water use policies will be applied to all users. As announced, the removal of the exemption will require all

mining and petroleum activities to be subject to the arrangements and processes in place for water extraction and discharge licences, bore construction permits and permits for alteration to a waterway.

Mining and petroleum operators will no longer be exempt from water allocation plans. This will ensure we can better track and monitor water use across the Northern Territory and will help inform future planning and ensure the ongoing security of our water supplies.

We need to work collaboratively to ensure we understand our water resources so we can plan accordingly for our future. In addition, Strategic Indigenous Reserves will be reinstated in the Northern Territory to provide for greater equity of access to water resources and to ensure Indigenous Territorians are involved in the water allocation decisions that impact on their interests.

The Territory has an incredibly vibrant arts and culture sector. I was in Alice Springs last week—Central Australia, what a place to truly see what an impact the arts sector has on who we are. Along with our natural resources, it is one of our most valuable and treasured assets, delivering significant financial and social benefits to the Territory. The Gunner Labor government will work with the sector to support jobs and growth across our arts and cultural industries, and further build the Territory's creative economy. I thank those who, in this short period so far, have shown me what they are doing and talked about the importance of their work.

I see the arts as economically important, and coming from a background of working with young people I have also seen the arts used in health and wellbeing, so I understand the importance of it on many levels. Investing in our culture ensures we are leaving an important legacy for the children of the Territory so they can have a strong sense of their own culture and place in the world.

Some of the major commitments we have made in arts and culture—the Gunner government will invest \$100m in an Indigenous arts trail, leveraging private investment and increasing visitation to the NT as an arts and culture destination. This is a significant initiative and it has been well received. It will provide opportunities for jobs and growth in the creative industries and Indigenous arts sector.

Investment in the Indigenous arts trail will allow for the development of an iconic national Indigenous art gallery; cultural centres; gallery upgrades in regional and remote areas of the NT; grants for museum and gallery upgrades that will contribute to the growth and professionalism of the creative industry sector; and jobs for local NT artists and art workers in the museum, art gallery and art centre sectors.

This commitment will also strengthen the leadership capacity of the museum and art gallery sector. This significant investment in an Indigenous arts trail will include \$50m towards a national iconic Indigenous art centre in Alice Springs, and \$20m for a national Indigenous culture centre, also in Alice Springs. We believe the heart of Central Australia is the right place for both of these significant investments, not only for the Territory, but for the nation.

Both of these projects will bring significant employment opportunities in the construction phase and in their ongoing operation and management. There is much work and consultation to be done, and I thank my colleagues already for being part of this process and providing me with their thoughts and ideas. It is definitely an exciting project for us to be taking on, one that will be very significant for the Territory.

One of the priority areas for our government is to develop a 10-year museums master plan that will identify and prioritise our investment in the infrastructure of art and cultural facilities. The Territory has unique and culturally rich collections, including the Territory's unique Indigenous art, that are housed in ageing buildings and facilities with a lack of suitable storage and exhibition space to fully promote and celebrate the Territory's rich culture. We will work with cultural organisations and the community to develop a master plan to map out future investment in the infrastructure of museums, galleries and keeping places.

The Darwin Festival is a premium mid-year festival which supports jobs and growth for the arts and creative industries. Again, it is about increasing visitation to the NT as an arts and culture destination. My last two election campaigns have fallen in festival time, so I think we all spend a bit of time trying to pick up some dinner in Festival Park in August. The Gunner Labor government will maintain funding for the festival of \$1m per year. The Darwin Festival has delivered an economic impact of over \$8m in the Northern Territory in recent years and has one of the highest per capita attendances of the major arts festivals in the country.

Darwin Festival is an important event for the development, commissioning and employment of NT artists and art workers, providing sector development, employment opportunities and growing audiences for the

NT in arts and culture. I think we can all agree this is an important time for its future. It is a festival this government supports, and we are committed to ensuring its ongoing viability.

Some 815 000 people holiday in the Northern Territory each year. That is a lot of people to be sharing this special place with, which is fantastic. We want to grow that number by opening up new tourism markets, particularly from Asia. We will invest \$5m dollars to attract more tourists from China and India, providing a significant boost for the economy and local jobs.

Work is already under way to establish a direct aviation service from China to prepare the tourism industry for Chinese tourists, including ensuring that there are relevant tourism experiences and services on offer. I acknowledge the incredibly hard work that has been by the tourism industry, not only in this space but right across the board. They are some of the most hard-working people I have met.

The funding towards the Indian and Chinese market will be used to identify opportunities, including the distribution and purchase of Territory tourism products in India. The Territory already has good air connectivity to India, via SilkAir and Jetstar International. Some of us were at Tourism Central Australia's 10th anniversary of their awards. There are some spectacular offerings for anyone who wants to come and experience the Territory. It is a beautiful place. I am looking forward to meeting more people and experiencing some of those things. Get out there and share our beautiful patch of the world.

I am also lucky enough to be responsible for Sport and Recreation. Territorians love their sport. Many members of this Chamber have already talked about their connection to Territory sports. The Chief Minister was playing hockey in Alice Springs during the Masters Games. The Member for Nelson also participated. It is fantastic to see members of the Chamber being involved.

Madam SPEAKER: Ping pong.

Ms MOSS: Ping pong? Well it is a sport in the games, and the Member for Nelson should be commended for participating. What a buzz that was. The Masters Games is a fantastic time to be in Alice Springs.

We will continue to invest in our community and professional sporting facilities to ensure Territorians can enjoy their favourite sports as participants or spectators.

Local sporting facilities are an important part of the social fabric of communities across the Territory, as well as encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles for Territorians, young and old. Providing Territorians with greater access to improved sporting facilities will lead to increased participation and will provide a development pathway for young Territory athletes, and bring more national and international games and competitions to the Northern Territory, boosting the economy and jobs.

We are investing \$25m in the establishment of Warren Park as the home of rugby league by 2020-21. This will provide a fit-for-purpose facility for local competition and national and international events.

Women's AFL has grown substantially in the Territory and across Australia. To support this growth the Gunner Labor government is investing \$3m to upgrade, repair and maintain facilities at Marrara sporting complex to provide strong support for further growing women's participation in sport. As a woman and the minister responsible for sports and recreation, and a member of this incredibly representative Chamber, I also hope to bring a broader focus to increasing the participation of women in sports and celebrating their achievements.

Motorsport facilities are also in need of repair.

Mr KIRBY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I request an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Ms MOSS: To address this need \$13m over two years is being invested in upgrading motorsport facilities across the Territory. It includes facilities in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. A further commitment of \$2m annually over four years will be provided to Motorsport NT to further develop the sport.

We will also invest in sports in remote communities, providing funding for much needed facility upgrades. Our commitment includes investment of \$5m in 2017-18 and 2018-19 to upgrade lights at remote Territory ovals.

Additional ongoing funding of \$2m per year will also be provided for lighting upgrades across urban and regional areas.

In a further boost to women's sport in the Territory we will commit to the construction of a four-court indoor netball stadium at Marrara. This will include constructing one court to national standard to attract more high-profile national and international games and competitions for the Territory. It is a very high participation sport in the Territory, and I was very pleased to be in Alice Springs to see the new facility there and see Pat Gallagher take the first shot. It was a great opportunity.

Children and young people should be given every opportunity to achieve their potential. It is a key driving force behind the Gunner Labor government's investment in sport, recreation, health and the arts. We will bring together the sports and arts communities with various agencies to develop a comprehensive program to be run in schools, engaging the sporting and artistic talents of young remote and regional Territorians. This program will be focused on promoting interschool competition and participation in Territory-wide sports, and will also seek to hone the artistic talents of students, providing them with opportunities for the future.

The Gunner Labor government will introduce a chief information officer as part of a wider plan to harness digital technology, create a data analytic centre, implement a digital-by-default policy and promote open government by adopting the Commonwealth's public data policy, an area I am very excited about. Technological advancement provides opportunities for business to expand in the NT, the local business sector to achieve productivity improvements and the government to reduce red tape and costs to business.

Online and digital services create opportunity for NT businesses to compete more effectively at national and global levels. A digital economy strategy will set out the framework to align ICT-related government initiatives, such as making government data public and the digital-by-default policy. We will focus on ensuring our strategy is pragmatic, relevant and attainable, leveraging the experiences of other jurisdictions but producing a forward plan that is appropriate for the NT.

Public data will allow business and research sectors to access government data to create commercial opportunities such as innovative applications and new digital services. This will strengthen and foster a competitive local ICT industry.

Digital services will also provide for more simple and efficient government services for Territorians, making them available 24/7 from a range of devices. This will give members of our community better visibility of their interactions with government and reduce the time and cost of dealing with government.

Our commitment to making more government data available and accessible to the community will increase transparency and make government more accountable. It, of course, needs to be balanced with the utmost priority of keeping individuals' data protected and private, but there is a lot of non-sensitive data that provides many opportunities to engage in evidence-based conversations with Territorians about policy and create really great business opportunities.

Our reform agenda for the Northern Territory will ensure children are at the heart of everything we do, that jobs and growth remain key priorities and that integrity and transparency in relation to government activity is restored. In consultation with my chief executive officers and their staff, we have developed plans and strategies to implement the new government's policies and priorities. This will require clear and ongoing focus, and lots of hard work.

The skills and commitment of our public servants will be critical to delivering our agenda, and I am confident that working together we will implement the agenda that was endorsed by Territorians in the August general election.

We listened to the community during the development phase of our policies and election commitments, and Territorians have placed their trust in us. We will continue to listen to Territorians during the implementation of the new government's programs over the next four years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before I take my seat, I take this opportunity to congratulate every new member and returning member of the Thirteenth Assembly. It will be a big four years. We have all had a shared experience of campaigning. Whether you love it or not, it is one heck of an experience and something we have all gone through together. To everybody who ran in the general election and all those in here, thank you for putting your hand up to stand up and advocate for your community. I am looking forward to working with you over the next four years.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take pleasure this evening in responding to His Honour the Administrator's address, where he outlined and articulated what the government plans to do over the next four years.

The first thing I comment on is the expression 'restoring trust'. There is no doubt that trust has been lost over the last four years, and it is critical that any government, but particularly this new government, restores the trust of the community. As I labelled it mid-last year when I left the CLP, there was a serious trust deficit. Members of the community did not have any faith or trust in government to act on their behalf with goodwill, honesty, integrity and openness. It is critical that the government continues to demonstrate that it can and will restore the trust of everyone in the community.

The speech then turned to the establishment of an ICAC, which I and many members in my community have no issue with. When they called for submissions I wrote a brief submission on the establishment of an ICAC. The main areas I focused on were planning, planning approvals, development applications and development approvals, because I believe that, under the current arrangements, the Planning minister is vulnerable when it comes to perceptions/reality. My perception is my reality, if I think something is untoward.

I articulated in that letter where I thought things could be improved. As it is now, when an application or report goes from the Development Consent Authority to the minister, for approval or otherwise, that report is never made public. We never know what information the minister gathers to make his or her decision, so how do we know it has been done appropriately, with integrity and honesty? I am not saying anything bad has happened in the past, but the comfort is not there and the potential is—hence, the minister and government could be vulnerable.

The establishment of an integrity commissioner was mentioned—which I do not have an issue with, and I think that has been talked about before—to help provide advice to not only ministers of the Crown, but all members of this Assembly and the public service on integrity and conflict of interest matters. In this job, more so for government and ministers, the issue of conflicts of interest is paramount. I was disappointed in some of the past members of government, who did not fully appreciate what 'conflict of interest' means, how it arises, how to avoid it and what to do if you have a conflict of interest. If a person is appointed who can assist all of us to better understand that, it can only be good and it will give comfort to the community.

Political donations were referenced, and government wants to establish a judicial inquiry. I am not really fussed about that. If you want to find out who gives money to whom, so be it. Again, I think that will comfort the community. If big hotels, developers and wealthy individuals are giving money—I tried to ascertain a case in either NSW or Victoria, but I could not quite pin it down, where they have legislation that prohibits property developers and large hotel chains from giving money to political parties. It is against the law. Perhaps when that judicial inquiry is under way they will draw upon some of those pieces of legislation from interstate. It is to avoid any conflict of interest and untoward activity. We have seen too clearly what has happened in those two states with donations to people, companies, property developers and Liberal Party people, and it cost a premier his job.

I will move onto planning reforms. There was not a lot of information on what exactly is proposed, other than, 'We feel the need for major planning reforms'. That can only be good, because the planning system at the moment is not good. Most people have confidence in the DCA; they do not always agree with the decisions, but the way it operates is appropriate. Proponents get copies of public hearing submissions, but the move to put the DCA into the Planning Commission was not well received. I do not know if it can be reversed—whether it was a legislative change or something in policy. I, for one, would not like that to happen. We struggled in the rural area with the subregional plan from the Planning Commission and the greater Darwin plan. It is one thing to come and see me, as the Member for Goyder, or the Members for Daly Nelson and tick the box—'Yes, we have consulted with them.' They never record any of the concerns or issues we have placed.

I have made submissions on Planning Commission documents, as have my other rural colleagues, as have lots of different people for that matter. But when the final documents come out they have not taken up any of the concerns or serious issues—big problems. I have had some discussions with the minister for Planning. I propose to bring a motion before the House for debate in the November sittings in regard to setting up a select committee to review planning decisions, particularly in the last two years under the CLP government, because there have been some very poor decisions.

We are starting to see the legacy of those decisions, particularly in the rural area; other examples are the Gardens Hill proposal and other areas that involve a substantial change to the community, the amenity and

the infrastructure. I look forward to hearing from the Planning minister in the near future about exactly what planning reforms they propose, whether they be legislative changes or changes to the department and it goes about its business. I would also like to know what the government's view is on the Planning Commission, whether they think it should stay, go or morph into something else; I would be interested to hear about that.

The speech then goes on to more about economic growth, and of course we have to grow our economy. There is no doubt about it; we have to get more jobs, businesses and perhaps new industries established in the Territory. The Territory's economy is based particularly on resources, whether it is minerals, agriculture, horticulture, cattle or seafood. The engine of any economy like ours is built on small business. The more we can do to foster the growth of small business, the better off we will be, because it is those small businesses that employ six or seven people, four trainees or whatever—there is a couple down my road who have an electrical business. They have five apprentices. They are probably a medium-size business, but they are dead keen to have more apprentices to help to expose them to all kinds of electrical work. They are the kind of businesses we have to try to encourage, whether it be through improving the regulation system or helping with their business and expanding with their contacts, things of that nature.

One area that needs to be looked at again is procurement and the tendering of major contracts. It was reported in the paper yesterday that another major contract has gone to a company interstate. The hospital is being built by an interstate company. There are companies in the Territory that can build that hospital. I will not mention them but they are long-established Territory companies. They could have been the major contractor for that hospital, and then they could have outsourced the major contracts: electrical; plumbing; sewage; telecommunications; whatever. If the government is serious about growing jobs and the economy, we have to take a very hard, careful look at who is getting the government jobs.

Taminmin College had a contract of just under \$1m to build the new canteen. It went to a company interstate. The interstate company employed about 10 subbies, mostly rural painters, contractors, electrical—the electrical bloke was a one-man show. The business left town and did not pay him. That is outrageous. They eventually, through mediation, got their payments, but that business should never have got that job. It was under \$1m. Companies here, Brustolin Builders for example, are quite capable of doing that kind of job. It should never have gone over the border.

I see that team NT will be resurrected. I was around when team NT first started. I think Clare Martin was the Chief Minister, and industry groups, land councils and other people were involved. It had the right objectives. I cannot recall why it fizzled out, but it did. If it can be revisited that can only be a bonus.

I will turn to education. Repairs and upgrades for every school in the Northern Territory—I heard the minister say during Question Time that \$300 000 will go to every school. Does that include Catholic, independent and Christian schools?

Ms Lawler: Yes, every school.

Ms PURICK: That is excellent, because in the rural area there are a couple of schools, as you would know, minister, that are old. Humpty Doo is over 35 years old; I think Howard Springs is a similar age. Taminmin is a big school, bursting at the seams. Girraween is not so old but still bursting at the seams. It has to get more demountables to fit all the children in. Girraween Primary School is getting a lot of students from the Herbert area, where there are many young families. They have lots of classes under Year 3, and not so many at Year 6. When they start to move up, they will need a middle school. I know the department has been looking at a new middle school to support the rural area plus upper or lower Palmerston, whatever it is called. I am interested to know where that is in regard to planning for a new middle school that will support the rural area.

That section also talks about supporting infrastructure repairs and upgrades across the Northern Territory. I would like a bit more information about that, because not only all across the Territory with big sport and recreational people—Freds Pass Reserve is pretty much at capacity. There needs to be more planning to start for the new Freds Pass. It could be at the Livingstone reserve, which has a lot of land, I think, Member for Daly. The rural area has anything from, depending who you believe, 25 000 to 30 000 people. Freds Pass does not accommodate any basketball facilities and has no netball, hockey or badminton facilities, and the rural area has no swimming facilities. If people want to participate in those sports they either have to go to the city or Marrara in the northern suburbs. There is some capacity at Freds Pass, but not much.

The Members for Nelson and Daly and I have lobbied past governments, and will continue to lobby this government, on how the sporting infrastructure, not only at Freds Pass but elsewhere in the rural area,

should be improved, which includes a pool. I am not a supporter of a water park, and I am meeting with a person from Litchfield Council this week. Children cannot learn to swim in a water park; they have fun in a water park. You need a pool to learn to swim. I am not fussed whether it is a 25 m or 100 m pool, but we need a proper pool. Royal Lifesaving and Swimming Australia support it. I have written to and had discussions with them. Somewhere along the line the NT Government and Litchfield Council need to commit to a pool complex. How big it is, I do not know. It depends on funding.

Many children in middle school in the rural area have grown up without learning how to swim properly. We know you cannot swim in the creeks anymore, and not everyone can afford a pool. They will not always travel to Palmerston because public transport in the rural area is pretty crappy on weekends. It would be better if the pool could be worked on somewhere in the rural area. I know Litchfield Council is working on it, but we probably need to fast-track it.

Personally, I believe bringing back the Arafura Games is a great idea. I have heard many comments from people. I have a couple of friends who are mad keen cyclists and cycle for hours on weekend and all those silly things. They are so keen that the Arafura Games come back, because it was used by some people and sports as a training field for the next major international competition. People are overlooking that. All the cultural stuff is fine and lovely, but in the new model perhaps we should not invite the Russians because the Russians came, so I am told, and brought lots of vodka but no sporting gear. Someone had to take them to Target to buy their sporting gear so they could compete.

A member interjecting.

Ms PURICK: That is the story I was told, assistant minister. I welcome the Russians, but make sure they bring their own sporting gear next time.

There is a comment about setting up business round tables, which I agree with. They are a great idea. I am interested to know exactly how they will do it, whether it will be by industry, as was done before, with a round tables for mining and petroleum extractors, tourism and a retail. In these business round tables and in dealing with the business community, I encourage the government not to lose sight of the important role industry groups play in providing advice and policy direction for government. Do not get them all together and say, 'We have consulted with industry', because behind every CEO of an industry are all the businesses. Having been an industry CEO for 16 years, I know the challenges; I know the good and the bad. Sometimes governments think, 'If we get them all in a room together then we have consulted with all the businesses', but it does not work that way.

Most of you would know of the different industry groups, so I encourage you to have good relationships with them and involve them in any business summits or things of that nature. Those who are not aware, there is an NT Business Council, which is a collective of all the major industry groups across the Territory, and it is a good organisation to get to know.

There was something in the newspaper recently about Contractor Accreditation Limited. The CLP government tried to get rid of it. For what reason I do not know. There was a disgruntled builder who could not get his accreditation so he went knocking on the minister's door. CAL serves a very important role in regard to business which are seeking to get contracts for NT Government. I encourage the business minister and other ministers who have a role in business to get to know Contractor Accreditation Limited. Perhaps its role could be expanded into approvals for housing and things of that nature.

Page 12 talks about investing in children, and I agree. Everyone agrees; it is a given. Children are our most valuable asset. They are our future; they grow up to become future Territorians. It reminds me of a saying—I am not saying I agree with it—accredited to Francis Xavier, who was the co-founder of the Jesuits. He said, 'Give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man'. He was talking about indoctrination. I am not interested in that at all, but at that young age it is critical that a child has a good home life, good health, good hygiene, a good education and good social activities. We hear all too often that many children in the Territory are not getting that, and as a consequence they and their families are suffering. I listened to what the minister for families said. It does not matter where the children are—community, urban, remote, bush—it is critical they get the best chance in life to achieve whatever they want to achieve.

FASD was referenced, and as someone who was on the FASD committee I was very disappointed, as were other members of that select committee, that the CLP government and former Attorney-General pushed so much for the select committee to be set up—they also had a bit of a notion that women who continue to drink while pregnant should go to gaol. The Member for Nelson asked questions of many people on our

travels, and everyone accepted that you want pregnant women to stop drinking, but punitive measures are not the answer. That report was not debated properly in parliament; it passed.

Many individuals and groups, including health groups, are keen to see government look at the recommendations of that report, because they were very good recommendations. One of them was to introduce a floor price. The Hotels Association said it had no problem with that. If the major industry group says it does not have a problem with introducing a floor price, why are we not looking at it in association with all the other recommendations?

Following on from FASD, domestic violence is a major problem in our community, in Australia and around the world. We are not special. I was reading some reports about various things to do with domestic violence, and it is a huge problem, even all through Europe. The European countries tend to be tougher on domestic violence perpetrators.

Perhaps I can suggest to the government—I am no expert so do not think that I am. The Netherlands, Austria, Germany and France have a range of measures we have not even looked at. For example, the perpetrator is expelled from the home by law. He or she cannot live in the home for whatever period. There are many other things they do. In one country, I cannot remember which one, the mayor has the power to get the perpetrator to leave the home. That presents lots of issues in itself; where does that person then live? Are you just moving the problem on? I do not know.

There needs to be tougher measures. I am one of those fortunate people in life who did not experience any domestic violence in my family upbringing, and neither did any of my siblings, but I am an anomaly in our community. I think we need tougher measures at law, along with educational awareness et cetera, getting children, when they are young, to learn respect for their siblings, teachers and family members.

The planning of more aged-care facilities was also mentioned. Good! There are no aged-care facilities of any kind in the rural area. I get it; it is a Commonwealth funding issue and you have to find a Southern Cross/Masonic-type company to run them, but we have an ageing population and there are many elderly people living in the rural area. They do not want to live anywhere else; they want to live out there, but in an aged-care facility. Perhaps it could have a healthcare component to it if they are a bit frail. We seriously have to plan it.

I can even recommend a site—the Anstey site on Bees Creek Road. It is a large site, where the previous government wanted to put a low-risk gaol. The government also owns the land next door. It is a very big parcel of land. It would be perfect for an aged-care facility. Even better is the workers' camp on Howard Springs Road. It is already equipped—swimming pool, health, bar, food outlets, laundry, pictures, entertainment, gardens; everything is there. I do not know what the arrangements are for when that project is finished, but you have a perfect opportunity to think about how that can be utilised to the benefit of our elderly people.

Going on to the environment, I see mention of a robust, clear, simple and transparent set of rules. I thought we had that, but if there needs to be improvement so be it. The improvement has to be for government as well as industry. People tend to think environmental regulations are just about industry; government should be regulated as well. It should be doing environmental impact assessment statements. It should do exactly the same as a company that wants to build a major mine or property. People think it is for industry but it should be for everyone in the community. Every major infrastructure project that government puts up should be subject to the same regulation.

I am not sure what will happen. I will seek a briefing from the minister's office but a new Environmental Protection Act is mentioned. The new Department of Environment and Natural Resources—will the Environment Protection Authority, the EPA, the mining monitoring component of the mines department and natural resources become one department? If so, what will it involve? How will it operate? Where will it operate from? I am interested to know whether there will be a completely new protection Act. Will the other bits of legislation be repealed and the new Act put in place? In which case, so be it, but establishing a new Act does not happen overnight. That will involve extensive consultation with the community, industry, non-government organisations and government departments. I am interested to know how that process will be undertaken.

Ten years ago Western Australia did exactly what is proposed in this document. It did not work. It brought development to a halt, and it was reversed. There might be slightly different contributing factors for why that happened, but I say to government to be very careful that whatever is implemented will not become cumbersome to industry and other groups like that.

Water is one of our most precious resources. That is a given because we all need it. The speech talked about government water advisory committees. Good! Get them up and running and get the community involved with them as well. I look forward to details on that.

I will not talk too much on the current proposal to have rural residents obtain extraction licences, put a meter on their bore, do a reading et cetera. We have had public meetings, and I have had meetings with the minister, for which I was thankful. I am thankful to the department for coming out. However, it is still not right and I will not encourage people to go down that path. It is too rushed and there are still too many unanswered questions. I do not know what the department is doing regarding the rest of the Northern Territory. I understand it has impacts on the rural area of Alice Springs. It seems to me that at this point in time it is focusing on the rural area outside Darwin. What about the rural area outside Alice Springs? What about Katherine? I know the Member for Daly has a motion for next week, which I will talk to at greater length.

The change happened in June, and then by July they were saying, 'You all have to do this'. There are about 4900 bores in the rural area. They will not all be affected, but they are saying if you make 0.5 hectares of your block green you will need an extraction licence. On one hand they say if you have stock—cows, goats, poultry or whatever—that is fine, but if you irrigate more than 0.5 hectares you need a water extraction licence. What do you think the cows and goats will live on in the Dry Season? Sticks and stone? Of course you have to irrigate to have some grass grow, as do all the horse people. There are upwards of 3000 horse owners in the rural area. Yes, the horses eat a lot of hay in the Dry Season, but the act is not contemporary. It was brought in in 1992 and has had few amendments and no substantial review. By good practice, major legislation should be reviewed about every five years to ensure it is contemporary, in tune with community expectations and recognises what is on the ground at that point in time. The *Water Act* 1992 does not do that. Hence, the 0.5 hectares is not legitimate and we will not accept it.

Having said that, I, as a local member, will continue to work with the government on behalf of my constituents, and I am sure my two rural colleagues will do the same. There is much more work that needs to be done.

I am not sure where this next bit fits. It might come under the Chief Minister or the minister for Territory parks and wildlife conservation. In May this year it was part of a budget commitment to establish an office of the chief scientist. I would like to know where that is at. Is Labor committing to having a chief scientist for the Northern Territory? We are the only jurisdiction that does not have a chief scientist. It is critical that we establish this person and position, which will be completely independent. I am not sure how they work in the other states. There is an Australian chief scientist as well. I have met one of them.

If we are moving into an age of greater embracement of technology, innovation is critical to how we grow. A chief scientist's office is imperative to help with jobs and growth in the economy. If we are talking about being a clever country and Territory, we need to embrace this kind of person, who brings all those high-level scientific research and direction—one of the papers I was looking at on the website today—they have written a paper saying tertiary students in the science field are not getting a good gig because they are not getting industry placements as practice.

There are lots of things intertwined in the chief scientist's office. I am interested to hear from whichever minister is responsible, probably the Chief Minister, as to what is happening with Labor's commitment to implementing an office of the chief scientist for the Northern Territory.

The other part I was interested in—it is under parks and wildlife. I declare a conflict of interest because my sister works in the herbarium. The herbarium is not that well publicised. Every state has a herbarium. They have got thousands of species of algae, plants, mould and all sorts of things out there at Palmerston.

All the states' herbariums get together for an annual conference. The last time we had one in the Northern Territory was in 2007. If we want to put the Territory on the map with our fellow jurisdictions and the Commonwealth, we need to promote the Territory more. We need to be having these conferences here so they can understand the issues we have with endangered and threatened species, and things of that nature. They need to understand how well we are going at increasing our database of all the species of flora we have in the Territory.

Having a really good herbarium helps government and industry, because that is where they go when there is a Development Consent Authority application. We want to build a new hospital. Are there any threatened or endangered species in that area? There is one, but there is not enough data on it: typhonium. It is a small native plant, but there is not enough data on it to know how to preserve it.

Minister, if you have time in the near future I encourage you to visit the herbarium. It does a fabulous job and we should promote it more. People can visit; it is a bit like a museum. You can ring up, make an appointment and go there free of charge. I encourage anyone interested in that area to go, and to encourage their friends and visitors.

We have an enviable lifestyle; there is no doubt about that. Fishing is a way of life. I have inherited a lot of fishing areas in my new electorate boundaries, and the more government can do to assist the amateur and recreational fishing world the better. It, too, brings a lot of jobs and growth in the economy. A lot of it is not seen; it is a bit of a hidden industry sometimes, but the more government can do to upgrade roads and boat ramps to support people who want to grow that industry ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms PURICK: In due course, sports minister, I will write to or meet with you to get an understanding of where government will deliver its infrastructure commitment in the Point Stuart area.

I am no fishing expert; my fish comes from the supermarket. I want a better understanding of the maintenance and upgrades to the road to Point Stuart, because a lot of people go down that road. Shady Camp, I understand, has a lot of problems with silt build up. I am told reliably by amateur fishers who know these things that in about five years you will not be able to use Shady Camp. If you cannot use Shady Camp then where do you go? Many people go there. I am told that on the popular weekends the queue to put your boat in the water is more than 2 km long. I would be pretty cranky if I had to wait that long.

I have talked about sport and upgrading facilities in the rural area. The Arafura Games—great. The only thing I did not hear mentioned, which would come under recreation, is the agricultural shows of the Northern Territory. The previous government established some consultancy work to look at the four major shows, the Borroloola Show and the Adelaide River Show. There needs to be a serious commitment by government to the NT Show Council. It is twixt and between. It sits in the Chief Minister's department at the moment, which I do not think is the right department. It should be in the sport and recreation department. That would be a better fit.

They are also looking at their infrastructure. The Darwin Showgrounds is pre-World War II. Only of the mouldy old sheds is heritage listed so they probably cannot do a lot with that, but they are huge community events. If you are talking about contribution to the economy, jobs and growing the economy, those six shows are critical. They are also critical community events that bring whole communities together: the pastoral and fishing industries, the people who supply all the produce. Everyone knows the history of agricultural shows. They have changed a bit over the decades, but I—my apologies. I forgot Freds Pass Show; how could I do that? I am the patron. Can you rub that out, Hansard?

I would like to see some commitment to supporting the agricultural shows because they are a huge boost to our community and they contribute to the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the government and I thank the Administrator for his address from the throne. I look forward to some answers to my questions.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to be back in this Chamber, this time as the very first Member for Spillett. My four years as the Member for Drysdale were rewarding, humbling and productive. I cherish the relationships built and the outcomes delivered thanks to the wisdom and support of the community.

When I reflect on the past four years I must acknowledge where the Country Liberals started and where we are today. The Country Liberals have gone from 16 members when coming to government in 2012 to just two in 2016. These figures send a very clear message to our political organisation and are a warning to all politicians going forward.

Territorians have once again shown that they are strong, engaged and in control, and this is exactly how it should be. Members of parliament are but the voice of our community. The Member for Daly and I are determined to steer the Country Liberals in a new direction that brings the community with us and listens and learns from the experiences of the past. The Country Liberals have suffered a near death experience,

and the Member for Daly and I have been charged with breathing new life into the party that dominated politics for almost three decades after self-government.

All of us in this Chamber live in the Northern Territory because we love this place. Some have moved here from interstate to work or be closer to family. Some, like the Chief Minister and I, were fortunate enough to be born here, and have chosen to stay. There are enormous opportunities for Territorians, but there are also enormous challenges that we, as a community, need to overcome. Some of those challenges are currently the subject of a Royal Commission that is under way, and it is my hope that we are able to work together in this Chamber to improve the lives of all the people we represent.

I love being on the ground in my electorate, and I believe that it is at the doorstep that local members are able to make their biggest impact. Often there is genuine surprise and appreciation by constituents that a member of parliament has taken the trouble to visit their home. It humanises the person they have seen on the television, heard on radio or seen on an election poster tied to a fence. It is at the door where the good politician gets the real story about how the economy is travelling, the state of law and order in the community, the lack of childcare facilities, the condition of roads and footpaths and neighbourhood cohesion. The official statistics come months after the information you receive at the doorstep, and often the statistics come too late. The mood of the community is best gauged at the door. Ignoring the information received at the door is fatal.

Throughout the last term my mission was to make a full-time commitment to the people of Drysdale to be available to them 24/7 with an open door policy. I am proud to say that when I was not in the office working for the people of Drysdale I was in the community, visiting schools, supporting sporting clubs and community groups, manning my mobile office while serving up a chargrilled sausage, and I was always available on my phone. I am proud that I have achieved this mission and can say there was never a day when I was not the Member for Drysdale. I made good on that commitment.

As well as doorknocking and attending numerous community events, I am proud to have delivered a great deal for Drysdale and, more broadly, Palmerston. Some of my more memorable achievements include securing significant funding for the roll-out of additional CCTV in Palmerston CBD; supporting numerous community organisations to receive over \$700 000 in community benefit grants, including the Palmerston Cricket Club and Palmerston Football Club, which are two sporting clubs that I am the patron of; ensuring the levelling of raised sewer lids in the footpaths in Johnston and Zuccoli to support safe access in our streets; the construction of a new cycle path on Lambrick Avenue right through to the Stuart Highway, giving MacKillop college students and residents the opportunity to walk and ride their bikes safely; being part of Durack Primary School's journey to become an independent public school, and being a member of its board; constructing two shade sheds at Elizabeth River Jetty to support residents to get out and cast a line; and the construction of the Farrar family centre, providing an additional 50 childcare places for Palmerston families.

Over the past few years I have also worked closely with the Departments of Housing and Transport, the Power and Water Corporation, Palmerston police and the City of Palmerston to rid our streets of graffiti and vandalism. Those agencies were very helpful and contributed towards the revitalisation of our streets in the city and the suburbs. When I reported damage to property or unsightly spray paint on walls and other property, more often than not it was cleaned up and returned to its original state very quickly. I thank all the departments involved for achieving that.

During the last term one of my goals was to continue to provide opportunities in Palmerston for young people. One of the instrumental factors in making Palmerston a city for young people to settle and live their lives in is affordable housing. I was proud that the previous government fast-tracked land release for headworks to develop Palmerston east. Last year I was extremely privileged to cut the ribbon on 20 new dwellings in Driver, easing the pressure on Palmerston families by helping to reduce the cost of rent.

The Country Liberals undertook extensive clinical consultation on the development of a new hospital in Palmerston. We identified and secured a large site with critical connections to the Stuart Highway, servicing Darwin, Palmerston and, importantly, the rural area. We awarded the tender for construction, and the facility is well on its way to be delivered. The last time I was on-site the hospital was two storeys above ground and will no doubt be very impressive once completed. I look forward to attending the opening in 2018, and I urge this government to continue to drive this project to completion.

Gender equity and the advancement of women is an area I was passionate about in my last term, and during this term I will continue to focus on making a difference. I have always voiced the opinion that the government, as a large employer of women, should be the leader of best-practice policies that give support

and flexibility to women who choose to have children and return to the workforce. As a new mother I have personal experiences of the challenges of returning to the workforce, and I am even more convinced now of the importance of government being a leader of best practice. I do what I can to lead by example and am always touched by the support I receive from men and women in my community who can see I am doing my best to provide open and flexible work arrangements, such as job sharing and working from home. I strive to have a family-friendly office in which my staff can care for their children and continue to work full-time. In return I have received unquestionably high-quality work, dedication and loyalty from my staff.

Surprisingly to some, I was the first Country Liberals member of parliament to have a child during their term in parliament. I want to show other young women aspiring to enter politics that you can be a good mother while struggling with the demands of being a member of parliament. The parliament is one of those places that must also show best practice in this space so as to strongly encourage diversity. I am very proud to have contributed to this best practice by securing flexibility for breastfeeding members of parliament, something I did not personally benefit from, but I know many parliamentarians to come, including some in this Chamber now, will benefit from it. Knowing that makes it all worthwhile.

As a young woman with a background in law and a love of politics and the Territory, I hope I will be able to play a significant role rebuilding our political party in the coming months and years. I want to try to take the whole community on a journey with us to increase our membership and interest at a grassroots level and encourage the recruitment of quality candidates at election time. The Country Liberals have a proud history of producing strong, capable women in both the administrative and political wing. In that sense I feel I am very well placed to develop my skills and the skills of others to best serve the community.

Suzanne Cavanagh is a case in point. Suzanne was a founding member of the Country Liberals and was elected to the party's presidency in 1994. She also served the roles of general secretary and branch chairwoman amongst many other senior and strategic responsibilities.

Another former president, this time in a recent era, is Tory Mencshelyi, who led the party during an extraordinarily tough time. Jodeen Carney was the first female leader of the party wing and also guided us through difficult days after the 2005 election. Natasha Griggs is another Country Liberals woman, who made a mark in the world of Canberra conservative politics.

I take the opportunity to say hello to the good people of Spillett. I was fortunate enough to earn the trust and support of the people of Spillett in August and have a strong base on which to represent them. While I will continue to represent the people of Durack, Spillett also includes the suburbs of Johnston, Marlow Lagoon, Mitchell, Zuccoli and Palmerston, right through to the Narrows, including Berrimah, Pinelands, Hidden Valley, Eaton, east Darwin and Wishart. It is an electorate that is large in land mass and home to a diverse and engaged group of Territorians.

The electorate was named after noted Northern Territory historian, Peter Spillett, regarded as the founding father of community history in the Northern Territory, who died, aged 78, in December 2004. Peter is best known for his highly-acclaimed 1972 book *Forsaken Settlement: an illustrated history of the settlement of Victoria, Port Essington, North Australia 1838-1849*, and for a bicentennial project he organised and participated in, sailing a Makassan sail boat from eastern Indonesia to the Northern Territory in 1988 along the route taken by the trepangers. Those who knew him speak very well of his generosity of spirit and his enormous love for the Territory's history, both before European settlement and after. The *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography* is a direct result of his initiative.

On a more personal note, my family has a long-term connection to the Spillett family. My great uncle and aunty, the late Giovanna and Pietro Finocchiaro, lived next door to Peter Spillett and his family. My cousins Rozario and Salvatori grew up with Simon and Richard Spillett, and shared, and continue to share, very fond memories of old Darwin.

I feel proud to have the support of Peter Spillett's son, Simon, who has been a great support to me since being preselected. He often attends the public galleries to watch the parliament and was there for me during the campaign. I am proud to represent an electorate that carries his name and am pleased that Simon recently sent me the following message to read to parliament:

My family and I are very proud to have Lia Finocchiaro representing the seat of Spillett, and I would like to personally thank the CLP for approving the recognition for my father's work.

I will refer back to a few comments I made during my first speech to this Chamber, just on four years ago. At the time I made a commitment to Territorians that I would fight to protect our unique Territory lifestyle. I

said that as a born-and-bred Territorian I grew up enjoying our unique landscape and recreational opportunities that children in other states and territories can only dream of.

I recalled the first time I went hunting for magpie geese with my father. I was four years old, wearing pink jeans and carrying salty plums and a Barbie doll when my dad and I headed out to Howard Swamp in our clapped-out old Daihatsu ute. This is a rare privilege of life here; it is why we love the Territory. Our outdoor lifestyle ought to be protected and harnessed for future generations to enjoy. Our relative freedom should be celebrated and guarded by our parliament as we are, in many ways, the gatekeepers of our Territory culture and identity.

Four years ago I said:

In the coming years, we will all be challenged to safeguard our Territory. I can promise Territorians I will be ever watchful that development and growth does not come at an irreversible cost to our lifestyle. I see this balance as being one of the greatest challenges successive Territory governments will face.

To that extent, I am proud to have worked closely over the last four years with organisations such as the Amateur Fishermen's Association and NT Field and Game to devise ways in which we can engage young Territorians in continuing with cultural pastimes. The Neighbourhood Fishing Program, which saw 9000 barramundi fingerlings released into Durack Lakes and bylaws changed so that children and their families can get hooked on the outdoors in their own back yard, is one example of those partnerships.

My commitment, in this term, to retaining the essential Territory character remains undiminished. It is not just about our wonderful environment; it is about the spirit of the people who live here. This does not only apply to people who were born here. To move to the Territory from interstate or overseas is important, and everyone who wants a taste of the Territory needs to know they are very welcome here. For those who stay here and make a home to raise a family there is a very special connection and contribution they make to the Territory. Those people have shown a commitment to the place by moving so far away from family and friends, relocating from what is familiar into the unknown and living in one of the most colourful climates in the country.

Lastly, I thank everyone who has made the last four years possible. I am blessed to have a strong network of family and friends who have encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. My husband, Sam, is a pillar of strength and has taken a hugely active role in raising our daughter, Isla, particularly over the hustle and bustle of the election campaign. It is not easy, but it is not impossible to juggle family life and your responsibilities as a member of parliament. Sam gives me the peace of mind to continue to work and fight hard for my electorate, knowing he is there with Isla.

I also must thank my mum, Danni, who cares for Isla during the day, and often at night. Without her involvement in Isla's life things would be much more difficult for Sam and I. It is wonderful to see the strong relationship Isla has built with you as a result of the extensive time you spend together. I know she will cherish that for years to come.

Of course, it takes a whole village to raise a child, and Isla is certainly no exception. She is so fortunate to have the love and support of her nonna, nonno, nanny and poppy, and I am very fortunate to have the support of loving parents and parents-in-law.

To my sister, Jessica, and her brand-new husband, Shane, thank you so much for surprising me on election morning. It was amazing to rock up at mum and dad's, thinking I was quickly dropping Isla off and running off to a booth, and see you and Shane sitting at the breakfast table. It completely blew my mind. I was thrilled to see you. It started my day so strongly, and it ended it strongly when we were able to celebrate together on election night. Thank you so much for coming all the way from Brisbane.

To my husband's best friend, Tristan, who travelled from Melbourne to help out in the last week of the campaign, it was fabulous having you here, and we really could not have done it without you.

My Electorate Officer, Angie, has been by my side since becoming the Member for Drysdale in 2012. I am so proud to have her by my side, and she has been a strong advocate for the people of Drysdale over the last four years. As she transitions with me as the first ever Electorate Officer for Spillett, I could not be more relieved and excited to be embarking on second term with her by my side.

I was also blessed with supporters during the election campaign. Whilst I cannot name you all, I really must thank my tightknit campaign team, and you know who you are. We worked very hard and achieved everything we set out to achieve. Your commitment, time and energy is highly valued, and I will never forget it.

To the Palmerston campaign team, which supported Team Palmerston, made up of my colleagues Peter Chandler, Marie-Clare Boothby and Ben Hosking. We were a close and united group focused on achieving the best outcomes for the people of Palmerston. The Palmerston campaign team dedicated a great deal of time and energy into the election. They gave me strength, courage and confidence, and I learnt a great deal from you all. I only wish Team Palmerston was here in this Chamber today, but it was not meant to be. Team Palmerston does, however, live to fight another day.

To members of the Calder Branch and those who letterbox dropped, stood at the Palmerston Markets, sat by the roadside, ran barbecues, put up and pulled down election posters and helped one election day, I say a huge thank you. Words cannot express the gratitude and thanks I have for you.

I also want to thank my Labor Party opponent, Phil Tilbrook, for the hard work he did and for running a fair campaign. Running for political office requires tremendous dedication, and he certainly showed that dedication to our community. I wish him all the best for the future.

There are a number of key projects in my electorate that I want to see delivered and I will be working very hard to ensure that they are delivered under this new government. The Zuccoli public primary school is a project that must go ahead. This school will make a huge difference for the families in Johnston and Zuccoli, who currently have to send their children to Bakewell, which is at bursting point, or Rosebery. There is no primary school in the suburbs of Farrar, Johnston or Zuccoli, and this primary school is anticipated by families in these areas. This government cannot ignore the need to go ahead with this project so students can be in the classrooms by 2020. The minister's answer in Question Time was non-committal and, frankly, not good enough.

In the meantime, the government must commence a school bus service for primary school students who live in Johnston and Zuccoli and travel to Bakewell and Rosebery. Currently students who need to catch the bus to school—and we are talking about primary school students—are required to catch the public bus from their suburb to the Palmerston depot and then transition onto another bus back down to the school. It is not a realistic expectation of primary school students, particularly lower primary. This government must support families by providing this bus service.

The people of Durack are waiting to see if this government will commit that it will not cut the \$1.3m I secured to upgrade the Kirkland Road and Woodlake Boulevard intersection and the \$1.3m for the Durack primary drop-off zone. Both projects affect all residents in Durack and are critical to ensuring public safety.

Palmerston needs and deserves a continued roll-out of CCTV. This government cannot shy away from how serious our community takes law and order. Whilst CCTV does not necessarily stop crimes, it does have a deterrent effect and is an effective tool for police in order to respond quickly and obtain the facts required to conduct their investigations. This government cannot take its foot off the peddle on law and order in Palmerston; the community simply will not accept it and I will not let you get away with it.

Equally, the community is waiting for a real commitment from this government to deliver the new Palmerston police station. All we have is a commitment to a two-stage police station commencing in the 2020–21 financial year. Today in Question Time the Chief Minister committed to the doors opening this term. Chief Minister, if the project is scheduled to commence in July 2020 then how will you have a police station, which the community deserves, completed before the August election, just six weeks later? Chief Minister, it is just not possible. Stop treating our community with contempt and start implementing what you promised you would deliver. I will make sure you do.

The beautification of Farrar Boulevard must be properly budgeted for by this government. The suburb of Johnston was developed under the previous Labor government, and already I have had to fight to get the raised sewer lids in the footpaths levelled so pedestrians can safely use the footpaths. The next stage is to provide ongoing maintenance and upgrades to bring the streetscapes up to the standard that residents were promised by Labor and deserve to have delivered. I have been fighting for beautification and will hold this Labor government to account.

The people of The Narrows want this government to take seriously their concerns around antisocial behaviour stemming from the Territory Housing units on Shiers Street and Dwyer Park. What policies will

this government put in place to meet the expectation of the community? I will be fighting for the people of The Narrows on local issues like this one, and will ensure they are not forgotten by the Gunner government.

These are just some of the issues I will be working hard on with my community, my electorate and fellow Territorians to make our community a better place.

In my new-found and broader responsibilities as a Deputy Opposition Leader, it is my desire this term to not only serve the people of my electorate to the best of my ability, and not just the supporters of the Country Liberals, but all Territorians who have chosen to make this wonderful place their home.

Debate adjourned.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE **Future of Kormilda College**

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received correspondence from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition as follows:

I propose for discussion this day the following matter of public importance: the future of Kormilda College and the impact that ongoing uncertainty is having on students, parents, teachers and staff, and the failure of the Northern Territory Government to:

- *demonstrate leadership*
- *engage with the school community in a manner that is open and transparent*
- *effectively lobby the Australian Government for assistance*
- *take seriously the effect of the possible closure of the school on the 650 students enrolled, including the 170 remote Indigenous boarders, and the 150 staff*
- *be clear about the Northern Territory's Government's plan or intention for the school.*

The letter is signed by the Member for Spillett.

Is the discussion supported? It is supported.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased we could bring this matter of public importance to the parliament this afternoon to debate for the benefit of the Kormilda community and the Territory as a whole.

It is my view, and the view of the Country Liberal opposition, that Kormilda College is worth saving. Despite a negligible contribution from the Northern Territory Government, it has been saved. Thanks to the Commonwealth, Kormilda will continue to offer its comprehensive curriculum to students in 2017. This is tremendous news, and I was delighted to confirm the Commonwealth's announcement this morning. I acknowledge the deft footwork of the Commonwealth Government and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, in this matter.

With a minimum fuss and fanfare the Commonwealth has stepped up to do what the Northern Territory Government would not, and that is to provide certainty for the community. This is in stark contrast to the leaden-footed effort of the Territory government, which showed, over the past weeks, it was prepared to allow Kormilda's doors to permanently close. I will return to that point in just a few moments, but I want to begin this MPI by repeating my delight at this morning's announcement.

The Commonwealth has set aside sufficient funding, through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, to ensure the school remains open next year. This funding will be contingent on an independent audit being conducted into the school's financial position and the development of a plan to put the college on a sustainable footing into the future. This is excellent news for the 650 students at the school, including 180 boarders from remote communities across the Northern Territory. It is a welcome relief to the 75 teachers and 75 staff who work tirelessly to deliver a quality education to a diverse cohort of students.

Even though the Territory government has been let off the hook by the Commonwealth, the underlying issue remains, which is that your government did nothing to secure Kormilda's future beyond the end of this year. How do we know this, Minister for Education?

Ms Lawler: \$5m worth of nothing?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I note the interjection. By the governments words, its lack of leadership or decisive action over the past five weeks—that is how we know. I have set out a very nice time line just in case someone missed it. Here is the time line of inaction as I see it.

On 12 September, by the minister's own admission, the government was informed about the situation confronting Kormilda. For over a month the minister did not speak about Kormilda with Senator Birmingham or Nigel Scullion, a detail the minister admitted on radio this week.

The minister failed to attend two parent meetings. The minister failed to brief the school about the nature of the funding. All members of the government failed to front the student rally on the steps of Parliament House, and the government missed two deadlines. It said it would tell the school the details of the \$3.1m. This makes it tragically laughable that the minister, in parliament during Question Time, claimed credit for securing the federal funding. I remind you that your government told Territorians it would be trustworthy, accountable and transparent, and you failed on day one.

While the minister was doing nothing, the opposition wrote to Senator Birmingham, contacted Senator Nigel Scullion and took action with the students, teachers, staff and parents on the ground. As recently as yesterday I provided the government with an opportunity to clear the air about the future of Kormilda College beyond this year.

I asked the minister whether it was the government's plan to lend \$3.1m to Kormilda College and recover the money by taking over the school in 2017. I asked the government to tell the day students, boarders, staff and parents what its real intentions were. The answer gave nothing to those key stakeholders and showed a breathtaking lack of leadership by this government.

The minister spoke of things like 'due diligence' and 'clear business models'. The minister said that schools need to stay within their budgets. This is from a government that, when in opposition, campaigned so vigorously on increasing education funding. The minister said that the answer is still being worked through and she hoped that the Australian Government would come forward with some dollars to help support the college into the future. Well, it has, but that is no thanks to Territory Labor.

The Australian Government has delivered the worst possible outcome for this government. It has provided ongoing funding to a school the Labor government does not see as having a future in the delivery of education outcomes across the Northern Territory. Shame on you!

The Education minister has acknowledged that the school contacted her with concerns about its financial viability on 12 September, yet it took the government another fortnight to publicly comment on the school's situation. From that moment on, your government was preparing contingencies for the school to close at the end of this year.

The first public comments on this matter were telling. In your 28 September media release you stated:

This one-off emergency funding support from the Northern Territory Government will provide much needed stability for students and their families for the rest of 2016, which is particularly important for those students in their final year of schooling ...

You went on to say, minister:

These funds will allow the college to continue to operate, including its boarding facilities, and that staff continue to be employed and paid until the end of Term 4, 2016.

This week you followed up with another media release that held out even less hope for the Kormilda community. You said:

We will continue to work closely with Kormilda College to put in place arrangements to best accommodate the needs of students, staff and the wider college community beyond the 2016 school year.

A final decision on the future of Kormilda College will be communicated to all affected as early as possible so that students, their parents and staff have clarity for 2017.

While options for the future of Kormilda College are being formed, I'm pleased to confirm that Year 11 students enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program will not need to repeat Year 11 if they are unable to access the program in 2017.

These students can have their studies recognised under the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training.

Thank you very much, minister. I am sure those Year 11 IB students are thrilled. How insulting and dismissive that comment is to Year 11 IB students, you might never know. This is the worst possible outcome for students undertaking the International Baccalaureate, which can open pathways to some of the highest-ranking universities in the world.

It is important that I declare to this House the enormous regard I have for Kormilda, its intuitions and its legacy. As a former student, I am fortunate enough to have benefited from the curriculum and the focus on learning it offered. It offered me and my student colleagues enormous opportunities, and on the back of those I was able to obtain a position at the University of Adelaide in 2003 to study a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of International Studies.

Ms Lawler interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind everyone that the Member for Spillett has the floor.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Your government has never demonstrated any enthusiasm towards Kormilda remaining open in 2017. You have confused dithering and inertia with action and indecisiveness; they are two very different things. All of your efforts so far have been geared towards dealing with the fallout of it eventually closing.

Education minister, you and your government came to office on a platform of accountability and consultation with Territorians. Territorians have made their views and opinions very clear; they want Kormilda College to remain open. In a space of just four days 825 signatures have been gathered from within the school community and the broader Territory, demanding the school remain open. The reasons provided for this support are numerous and compelling. One signatory notes, 'Kormilda is not another elitist private school exhausting taxpayers' capital. It provides invaluable educational and personal development opportunities to a large number of Indigenous Territory children, who will go on to support their people and communities from their education. It is an exceptional school that shouldn't be allowed to fail.'

Another commentator said, 'It is the NT and Australia as a whole which ultimately reap the benefits of children attending school and/or suffers the consequences of non-attendance. I strongly support the work and mission of Kormilda College, and it just has to stay open forever.'

These are just a few of the numerous comments attached to the petition supporting retention of the school. Territorians have been vocal, active and communicative about what they want and expect from this government, so it would be natural to expect a government committed to listening and consulting to work with the school community and the broader Northern Territory community to keep the school open. But instead of leading the charge on the issue of Kormilda College, the government has shown it will align its ideological biases rather than listen to the overwhelming voice of the community. Your government has shown, over the past few weeks, an unsettling lack of leadership on the issue of Kormilda College, and this raises so many questions.

What has stopped you from lobbying the federal government directly on this matter instead of delegating it to your staff? Why did you delegate responsibility for this important issue to the bureaucrats, which you openly admitted to on radio this week? You devolved any responsibility and left it to staff. How did you, a former adviser to an Education minister, so badly misread the importance of Kormilda College to the Northern Territory's overall educational fabric? Why did you not lobby hard for this with the federal government instead of finally directly making contact with Senator Birmingham on Tuesday by email? Why on earth did it take you over a month to speak with Education minister Simon Birmingham on this matter, which is crucial to so many Territorians?

Minister, you chaired a COAG meeting of Education ministers in Adelaide on 21 September, which you said in your media release included the federal minister, Simon Birmingham. Did you raise the issue of Kormilda with him? If not, why not? If so, what was the outcome? Why is there an information black hole in this space, making Territorians feel as if they have been shortchanged on the facts?

It has been acknowledged by the Kormilda community over the past few days that some of its problems stemmed from a lack of sound management, and others were simply beyond its control. Many of its problems began under the Rudd Labor government in 2009, when Minister Peter Garrett introduced changes to the way school funding was allocated by the federal government.

In her maiden speech to federal parliament, newly-elected member for Solomon, Natasha Griggs, championed the cause of Kormilda, highlighting the fact that the recently-introduced Labor changes had cut \$600 000 from the school's bottom line.

After that, the Uniting Church stepped in to close the financial gap left by the federal Labor government's changed funding model. This, clearly, was untenable. Unfortunately, the Uniting Church has since become unable to cover the school's financial shortfalls, which have pushed Kormilda to the financial brink. The Chair of the Kormilda College Board acknowledged this week that it should have been more up front about the school's financial crisis.

The school never approached the previous government with details of its severe financial haemorrhaging. If it had, our side of politics would have responded immediately and decisively in acknowledgement of the time-sensitive nature of the issue and the numerous people who have instead been disadvantaged by this government's muddling and hand wringing.

Whoever is to blame for the school's financial situation, it is not the fault of parents, teachers, staff and, especially, the students. Immediate action was warranted to alleviate their concerns. As one member of the school community so eloquently put it, whilst it is clear that this school has been a business that was poorly managed and needs to be held accountable for that, this is not something the innocent should have to wear. We are not talking paperclip production here; this is a school. It is our children's education and a place they attend and become attached to, especially with remote Indigenous kids, where relationships are everything. Why would we rip the mat from under the feet of these kids now?

I want to take the government back to the Education minister's media release of 21 September. In that release the minister made some motherhood statements about school funding and her excitement at meeting the federal minister. The minister said:

'I'm very excited to be meeting with my Ministerial colleagues from around Australia, including the Federal Minister for Education the Honourable Simon Birmingham ...

'From the Northern Territory Government perspective, putting funds back into education is a major focus.

'Education funding is a matter of crucial importance and it is absolutely vital that we represent the diverse student population of the Northern Territory.

'This government is focused on providing all schools across the Territory with fair and equitable funding. The priority is for all schools to have quality teachers delivering quality teaching and learning to its students.'

Over the last few weeks the government's actions have not backed up these commitments. It is an enormous irony that a government elected to office on a platform of strengthening education across the Northern Territory is prepared to do nothing while one of its leading schools faces closure. It has also made it very clear that its focus is not on education choices and the best education models for the Northern Territory.

Its focus is ideological and is driven by the education union and the organisations that bankroll the Labor Party. This old-style class warfare attitude of the Labor Party was very clearly illustrated during Question Time, when the Member for Arnhem made a sneering reference to the entire Kormilda community when she said:

My question is not about a single private school in one part of the Northern Territory.

Shame on you, Member for Arnhem. I challenge you to repeat that comment in front of 680 students, 150 staff and the parents of Kormilda. This is not a joke, Member for Arnhem. I know you are new to the parliament, but have some respect.

Minister, is it true that every action you have taken was based on the school closing at the end of this year? You said yesterday that through the department you offered counsellors and support for the staff and students of the school, communications staff to assist with their communication to parent groups, a transition support unit to ensure every child in the boarding school had a place to go and places at Casuarina Senior College for the Year 11 IB students, to make sure they would be able to complete their studies as NTCET students.

Not even one of these actions was based on actually supporting the school to continue operating beyond the end of this school year. It was the intention of the minister that the school would close at the end of this year. You even planned for that eventuality. This is a clear demonstration of your ideological bias against independent schools in the Northern Territory, which is simply not sufficient.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not know all the reasons Kormilda has gotten into financial difficulties. In general I would say if an independent school gets into financial difficulty it is not necessarily the role of government to bail it out, but that would depend on the circumstances. I do not know all the circumstances of this matter, but at least for the moment there is time to see what the problems are and, from there, work on the future of the college.

Kormilda College has a reputation of educational excellence, especially through the International Baccalaureate program. The college now at least has some breathing space to see why it is in a financial mess, with the announcement from Senator Scullion today that the federal government will fund it through 2017, as well as the funding from the Northern Territory Government.

As an outsider looking in—and it does not only apply to this college—it seems to me it is the cost of supplying Indigenous boarding facilities in the NT that is part of the problem. The Minister for Education said schools are businesses. Whilst they should run within a budget, they are not a profit-and-loss type business. They are still education facilities. The problem is that where you have to provide boarding facilities for Indigenous students funded by governments, if that funding is insufficient then staying within a budget may simply be impossible.

Independent schools are the providers for Indigenous boarding in Darwin. If they are closed because they are making a loss due to insufficient funding, there will be no boarding facilities for Indigenous secondary students in Darwin, and the Territory and federal governments would look very silly with their promotion of secondary education for Indigenous students, and they would have to pick up the tab.

The schools in the Darwin region which provide boarding facilities are Marrara Christian College, St John's, Kormilda and Woolanin Homeland Christian School, which also has a problem at present. They provide spaces for a total of around 600 students.

Let us look at the boarding side, which is something I have been able to look at and talk to people about. The total amount given to Kormilda and other independent schools by governments is approximately \$15 000 per student—it can be either side of that—and there is no top up from parents, and I will get into that. The bottom line is that this is simply not sufficient funding for Kormilda or other boarding schools to adequately fund their schools.

Although there may be arguments that Kormilda should have been putting up its hand earlier, there is a question for government—and this includes the previous government—as to why the government has not released the KPMG report that was commissioned at the beginning of the year. I rang KPMG and they said the government has that report. This report looked at boarding schools in the NT. If the government has that report, which it should have, it should table it now, and, if so, would have it helped the present situation if the unknown recommendations in the report had been acted on?

But there have been other reports done, and it is amazing that when you start to dig into this you find that this has a long history in relation to the proper funding of Indigenous boarding schools.

In 2013 Project Vale was written by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, which said:

... identified shortfalls in incremental funding for Indigenous boarding students in eight of the nine schools reviewed.

The Gonski report said, in recommendation 18:

Australian governments should fully publically fund the recurrent costs of schooling for non-government schools as measured by the resource standard per student amounts and loadings where the school:

- *does not charge compulsory fees and has no real capacity to do so, or*
- *provides education to students with very high needs, such that without full public funding of the school's resource standard those needs would not be met.*

There was also the Wilson report and, as I said, now there is the KPMG report. I must admit, in my research today I was very happy to see that the House of Representatives inquiry has started again.

Earlier this year there was a House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs. It brought out an interim report called *First steps for improving educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students*. That report finished on May 2016. It said:

... the committee recommends that the Minister for Indigenous Affairs refer to the Indigenous Affairs Committee in the 45th Parliament the inquiry into educational opportunities for Indigenous students and task the committee with a focus on boarding arrangements.

Lo and behold, today—I was in touch with the committee—there was an announcement by the minister that there will be a new inquiry into educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. That committee will be continuing the work that was done prior to the election. That is good because there is a real problem with the way we are funding these schools.

I will give a brief understanding of the problems these schools face. I will read from two submissions to this committee before it was dissolved because of the election. These highlight some of the problems boarding schools face while present funding is inadequate. First I will mention why there is little or no income from parental sources. I quote from page seven of the submission from the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory:

Means testing ABSTUDY

ABSTUDY families are means tested. On the surface that seems like a good policy. Families who have made the transition from welfare recipients to productive members of the economy are generally those who are most committed to their children receiving an education. We have growing numbers of these students in our schools. Their presence means that the ABSTUDY funding that schools receive is extensively curtailed.

While we understand the expectation is for parents to pay the difference the reality is that this is impossible. These families are usually in lower paid employment and living in a remote location where living expenses are extreme and are also subject to cultural expectations to support their wider family. In reality they do not have the disposable income available to bolster their children's education costs.

This results in either the school bearing the difference between reduced ABSTUDY funding and the cost of education or expelling the student. If we followed the later strategy, and some school may soon be forced into that position, then students who are generally succeeding in their education are rejected and demoralised. The very families who are "closing the gap" are being disadvantaged by the system. It seems inappropriate that a family may be forced to choose to give up their jobs so that their children have an opportunity to have a secondary education. Yet that is what some families do.

To this point schools have chosen to bear the burden of reducing government funding for remote Indigenous education but that time is reaching the end of economic possibility. Our schools are willing to make sacrifices to ensure a remote Indigenous education program is maintained, whether they be local, community based programs or boarding programs, because we see it as our responsibility, as part of the Australian community, but there are limits to our ability to do so.

I will read from another submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs. It is from the Independent Schools Council of Australia, which includes many schools of all faiths and some schools that are not faith based. What I will read is what I have also been able to get from people who are in the educational side of Indigenous boarding. This is from page 23 of the submission, and it

highlights some of the difficulties these schools have in staying afloat. I have no doubt this is one of the problems Kormilda has. It comes under the heading 'Additional needs of Indigenous students':

Many Independent schools educating significant numbers of Indigenous students have little or no capacity to raise private income and are therefore highly reliant on government funding. Despite numerous reviews and changes to funding arrangements, many of these schools are not adequately resourced to meet the particular additional needs of Indigenous students.

Many Indigenous students require additional resources to address need in the areas of English language proficiency, prior learning deficiency, health and social and emotional wellbeing issues, cultural awareness and understanding and teacher professional learning. These costs are significantly higher for students from remote communities who need significant levels of pastoral care and support for virtually every aspect of their life.

Schools often need to attend to students' food, clothing, health and hygiene, dental, immunisation, and severe psychological distress or mental health issues, prior to learning commencing. While considerable funding is provided for these services to Indigenous communities, frequently these services are provided in communities rather than in schools where the students actually are. Alternatively, many remote communities do not have access to these services and this deficit must be addressed by schools.

For schools catering to Indigenous boarders there are significant additional costs associated not only with the services listed above but also with pastoral care to address issues of homesickness, cultural change and inter-student relationships. Schools are dealing with the typical behaviours of teenagers often compounded by the many complex issues that these students bring with them to school.

In addition, many remote Indigenous students are from language backgrounds other than English, and have not had any exposure to the school environment or mainstream cultural expectations. Some students have experienced high levels of trauma and upheaval in their lives and schools need to address these issues before learning can commence. Many students have disabilities associated with hearing loss or other impairments that will affect their learning.

It should also be noted that these issues are not 'one-off's' but need to be constantly addressed. For example, for boarding students returning to school at the beginning of term, many students need significant health and social and emotional support in order to be school ready.

That gives you an idea that we are not talking about standard boarding schools here. We are talking about a special group of boarding schools that, in the majority, are for Indigenous students.

I got talking to someone from one of the schools, and he mentioned that money is spent which they cannot recover. For instance, a student might come to the school, get a uniform and some books and be all set up to go, and walk out of the school in three weeks. The school cannot recover that money because the student has not stayed long enough, so it is a straight loss to the school. That is one example.

I raise these questions because whilst I understand Kormilda has a problem, it has highlighted that there is a big problem. The Catholic schools have an advantage. I am not saying it is an advantage that makes it any easier for them, but they can spread some of the cost over a range of schools because they have many of them. Kormilda is a standalone school. It has nothing to offset some of these costs, such as from another school. These things should be taken into account.

I will read again from this report. If people want a good understanding of the issues, these submissions from the Independent Schools Council of Australia and the Association of Independent Schools in the Northern Territory are worth reading. You get a feel of the problems and frustrations after so many reports have been done, but we still have these issues. I will read the conclusion from the Independent Schools Council of Australia; it says:

The Australian Government ...

And, I think, to some extent the Northern Territory Government:

... should take a leading role in facilitating the development of a long-term policy framework with the support of the state and territory governments to ensure that Independent schools educating

Indigenous students, particularly large numbers of Indigenous students, receive adequate resourcing.

A number of Reviews and Inquiries have demonstrated that these schools are currently not receiving adequate levels of resourcing.

The Australian Government SRS funding arrangements are currently being transitioned in for all Australian schools and it is currently unclear whether the transition to full implementation will continue beyond 2017. Even with the full implementation of the SRS funding arrangements, it is clear that for schools educating large numbers of Indigenous students, particularly from remote areas, funding will continue to be inadequate to fully meet the needs of these students.

A notable concern is the critical funding situation of Independent boarding schools which provide boarding facilities for large numbers of Indigenous boarding students.

This was written on 30 October 2015. One of the big schools is Kormilda. This conclusion is sending out that message:

This model of education delivery is currently under threat unless an injection of long-term funding is identified. A longer term funding solution needs to be found so that schools have the flexibility and confidence to continue investing in Indigenous education.

The interesting question is how much the government pays for each student. I think there is a Katherine boarding facility, and there will be a Nhulunbuy boarding facility. By the way, the Nhulunbuy boarding facility, according to the figures I have, cost \$20.3m and it will only provide room for 20 students. Dollar for dollar; that is interesting. The government will make sure these facilities run as businesses.

The same amount of money per student should be the basis for the non-government facilities. A figure I have been quoted by one principal is that they need around \$30 000. I know that the principal of Kormilda has said up to \$40 000; regardless, there is a big gap between what is needed to make these schools operate properly.

I am glad both governments have acted quickly because there had to be some certainty around the future of the college, at least for 2017, otherwise good teachers would start leaving, and students. This would be a great shame as we know that Kormilda has always been renowned for its high standard of education, and that is now at risk.

While the government must work with the board to look at whether there have been other problems with the direction and management of the college, the issue of boarding fees appears to be a major issue that needs both the federal and Territory governments to act quickly.

A parent came to see me about the issues of the school. Obviously the cost of the boarding facilities is one of the problems, but you have to look at the school. The numbers have dropped. The school has gone from a secondary school to a total primary/secondary school. It has gone from being in an area that had some support from Coonawarra Naval Base to being a school sitting in an industrial area.

One of the hopes for it—and you cannot say it would be an overnight hope—is that the residential development of Berrimah will provide the opportunity for that school to pick up. But looking at the growth of our population at the moment, I am reluctant to say how many years it would be before that was developed enough to make Kormilda a feeder school for the area.

That being said, my children went from Howard Springs to St Mary's on buses. They did not have a problem. We have a wonderful school bus service. There is competition in the independent school area as well. MacKillop was built at Palmerston, but it caused a problem with its fellow Catholic school, St John's. Its population dropped. There is always that competition. Good Shepherd Lutheran has a huge population at Howard Springs. They are the realities of independent schools. There is competition between those schools and, unfortunately, Kormilda is in a spot which does not have the residential base some of the others schools have.

That does not mean we should drop it. We should promote it as a school of high-quality education, including the International Baccalaureate. If you go to school awards here at Parliament House you always see a number of students receiving that award and being very proud to.

The school plays an important part in the overall education of the Northern Territory. It provides an alternative, which is important in our education. We should be doing everything we can to find out what the problems are and help with the issue of boarding schools funds for all boarding schools that bring Indigenous children in from remote areas. That has to be looked at for all schools that are struggling with it. In the long term we have to find out what the issues are and get the school back up and running as a financial school, not necessarily as a business, but as a well-run education facility.

Mrs LAWLER (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory Government has demonstrated strong leadership by acting swiftly and decisively in relation to Kormilda College because we care about students, staff and the families of Kormilda.

I wrote to the federal government and spoke with Senators Birmingham and Scullion on a number of occasions to seek a commitment to provide financial assistance to the college to enable it to continue services in 2017. I asked both the senators for a commitment for Kormilda's future as the major government funder for non-government schools. Kormilda has a direct funding agreement with the Australian Government. It was initially up to Kormilda to talk to the Australian Government to seek additional funding.

I welcome the announcement today from the federal government that it has agreed to provide financial support through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy; this is exactly what I have been asking for. This afternoon I met with Trevor Dalton, who is representing the newly-formed steering committee of Kormilda parents and community members, to talk about how we can work together to ensure a sustainable, long-term future for Kormilda. Mr Dalton expressed how grateful he and all the other members of his steering committee are, and he passed on to me how grateful the parents and school community were to the Northern Territory Government for bailing them out and acting quickly. They are his words. He thanked me profusely for acting quickly to bail Kormilda out so it could continue providing an education to students for Term 4.

The Member for Spillett talked about the comments attached to the petition of 800 signatures, and I would like to tell her that I have received a large number of text messages and have had people stopping me in the streets and coming up to me at the markets in Palmerston, highly concerned that the Northern Territory Government was spending \$5.1m on a private school. Something we all learn when we come into government is that there are people on both sides of the fence and they have divergent views. One of the key things as a minister is to listen very carefully to those views and make thoughtful decisions, not quick, rash and foolish decisions, but sensible decisions based on evidence and what is best for the long-term future. That is what I have done with Kormilda. There are people who will say yes but there are also people who are highly concerned that the Northern Territory Government has bailed out a private school.

A school is a school is a school; it is an education facility. I remind the Member for Spillett that it was a CLP government which brought in global budgets for schools. Global budgets were pushed onto schools along with more financial responsibility. In the past, all the staffing of schools was managed by the department. The payments, budgets and all the things around staffing were not up to the schools to manage; it was up to the department. It was up to the HR and finance departments to work with the principals to manage it. It was a CLP government that brought in global budgets, which pushed more responsibility onto principals, and savings measures, where principals have to make spending cuts.

It is concerning that the college board did not bring its serious financial issues to the attention of the previous government. There are two issues. I suspect that the CLP had lost touch with schools, which is why Minister Chandler called for the review by KPMG. Ministers call for reviews when they want to get the full picture, do they not? We hope that was the case.

The college board's poor management has been exacerbated by declining student enrolments and reduced funding from the previous CLP government. As the Member for Nelson said, in 2009 there were over 1000 students enrolled in the school, and there are just over 600 students at the college now. This has been a steady year-on-year decline. But this government respects parents' choice and the right to choose the most suitable education option for their children.

Kormilda College is a non-government school with approximately 75% of government funding provided by the Australian Government and 25% provided by the Northern Territory Government. Additional funding is provided through fees. As an independent school, Kormilda College has control over determining and setting the fee structure for all its services.

Kormilda College received \$8.09m in federal funding in 2015-16, a point that was made to me by Senators Birmingham and Scullion. In the same period, the Northern Territory Government provided \$1.81m for schooling under the per capita funding for non-government schools. The college was also provided funding under the capital subsidy scheme and some funding for the boarding students.

Under the CLP government's cuts to education, the per capita funding rate to non-government schools was reduced from 24% to the per student ratio for government school students of 23.25%. It has only just returned to 24%.

It was very rich for the Member for Spillett to cast aspersions on funding. To be very clear, in 2012-13—the Member for Blain will know this well—the CLP introduced the renewable management board. Within weeks, CEOs and chief financial officers of departments were asked to make funding cuts.

In 2012-13 \$16.7m was pulled out of the Education budget. In 2013-14, there was a \$27.6m reduction in the Education budget. In 2014-15 that grew to \$84.1m. In 2015-16 it was \$114m less than when the Labor government left. We wonder why teachers, parents and the community had been saying to Labor, loudly and clearly, just how terrible the effect of those funding cuts was on schools.

In the four years of the CLP—there are now 373 fewer school-based, full-time equivalent staff. That is 373 fewer teachers, school support staff and assistant principals in our system. That is 9.4% less in June 2016 compared to June 2012. Programs and staffing have been cut, and the Member for Spillett has the gall to say this government did not do enough. In the budget of a department that lost \$114m over four years, \$5.1m is a lot of money.

While costs continued to rise the CLP exacerbated this funding reduction by ripping funding from the government education system. This resulted in students across the every sector receiving less funding. Cuts to education funding by the CLP presents the greatest challenge to ensuring Kormilda, and all NT schools, can continue to provide a quality education for Territory students.

I heard a terrible story the other day about a large secondary school that did not even have the finances to put on a special education teacher; this government's \$20m injection into our schools will change that.

Cuts were made to school budgets, teachers and staff who provided important support to schools for student wellbeing, students with disabilities and curriculum advice. Those cuts were made to the corporate areas, and people say, 'Oh, it is all those people just sitting in the office in the Mitchell Centre', but those cuts to the corporate areas are about people such as guidance officers; they are the people who work with students with disabilities. They were the people who supported students with hearing loss in the classroom. There were cuts to those key services. There were cuts to the number of curriculum advisers. They are the people who support teachers and develop programs to assist teachers to be their best. Those were the early cuts made by the CLP.

The early cuts were to the staff in the corporate areas and then the cuts went to schools. The senior secondary ratios—it used to be one teacher to 14 students; it is now one teacher to 18 students in senior secondary. One of the effects of that is that there are physics classes at Darwin High School with 27 students in them. That is unheard of, unprecedented.

In the middle years it went from one to 17 to one to 20. One of the issues with Kormilda is that in the primary school there is a cap of 20 students in classes. Every teacher in the government school system would love that, but the teachers in the government system, under the EBA, have classes of 27. I ask every member here to go into the schools, talk to the teachers—it is World Teachers' Day on 28 October—and ask them how many kids they have in their classes. That is why we have made such a commitment to education; we are about reversing the damage done by the CLP, for which the members opposite and many other members in this House are responsible.

I hoped the members opposite would get on the phone to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and plead with him to fund Kormilda. As I said earlier, Kormilda called on the Minister for Education to bail it out, but that fell on deaf ears. There were also bureaucrats who worked on that. It was only when we made some calls to Senators Birmingham and Scullion that things started to happen.

This government has stepped in. We made available up to \$5.1m to ensure the college could remain open, staff could be paid and students could complete their studies this year. This is particularly important for Year 12 students, who are commencing their final examinations, and for the boarding students from remote communities, who reside in the college.

Like the Commonwealth Government, the arrangements for the emergency funding includes the appointment of an independent financial adviser. We will be a fiscally responsible government. We will not just give \$5.1m to Kormilda and say, 'Here you go'. We will ask for some tight measures around that funding to make sure any money not spent in that time is returned. The Commonwealth Government has been fiscally responsible as well; it has asked the same thing.

In my meeting today, Trevor Dalton advised that federal bureaucrats will come to Darwin on Tuesday to work with the Department of Education to look at Kormilda's finances and come up with a plan. Both the NT and Australian Governments are being fiscally responsible. The CLP members across the floor would have us give \$5.1m or more to Kormilda and not have any agreement or measures around it.

Due diligence is needed in making decisions about the future of Kormilda College. It is important that we all have the full facts of that. Government is accountable to all Territorians for its decisions and how it spends its Budget. This government won the election with a clear majority. People told me they were going to vote Labor was because we were putting money back into education—\$20m back into education after the CLP cut \$114m over four years from the Education budget.

If the NT Government had not stepped in immediately, the school would have had to close. Closure would have meant that over 600 students would be unable to complete their 2016 studies at the school, including around 180 boarding students from remote Indigenous communities right across the Territory. While working to secure additional funding from the Commonwealth, the government responsible for a majority of government funding to Kormilda, I also sought advice from the Department of Education.

Of course, Member for Spillett, I would be talking to the government about all contingencies. There is no point in burying my head in the sand and thinking we will be bailed out. I must consider all options. We need to make thoughtful decisions. As part of the work we have been doing over the past month—there are 600 students to consider—I asked whether all students could be accommodated in other schools, and they could. The remote students are from a range of communities and the town students are from a range of suburbs. We were advised that all students could be accommodated in other schools, either in their local communities or other boarding facilities, if they were unable to access a program at Kormilda or in an urban setting. I asked about the current Year 11 IBs because we needed a contingency plan.

I provided counselling because I knew teachers would have first found out they could be losing their jobs on the day the announcement was made.

The Northern Territory Government does the heavy lifting around Indigenous education. We are aware of how much it costs. I have been a firm and decisive Education minister.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the opposition for bringing forward this matter of public importance, and it is indeed a matter of public importance. Sometimes these matters are viewed as matters of political importance, but this is a matter of public importance. The lines of debate almost immediately revert to the political frame of what happened when, under whose watch and who is responsible, and that is it. It solves the problem at a political level when it is a very serious public matter. We operate in the realm of politics.

In response to the Minister for Education, who just made a passionate contribution, I am sure you will recall that, when we were on 104.9, immediately after you made the announcement to make the contribution to Kormilda College I congratulated you publicly. We work in a political space and there are those—even people close to me. Conservatives were troubled by the decision, but we have to look through it and see it is not an easy matter to solve. I acknowledge the swiftness of the decision, and you will note that the questions asked—although it be in an adversarial political context, and we can respond like that—are to recognise the core of this problem and what is really at risk.

I will not go back over much of the ground presented here. All of it is good because it is bringing us closer to the recognition that what is a threat to Kormilda College is an opportunity for us all to reset the frame and identify what is important. Some history—and I am not being selective in my telling of this story, trying to pick items of history that accentuate who is responsible politically. I will tell you what happened. I was the Opposition Leader and was always available and looking for opportunities to respond to issues of concern. In 2009, or thereabouts, I heard there was a growing concern at Kormilda College over decisions related to the flow of funding from the Commonwealth.

A Commonwealth decision was emerging that would have a significant impact on the funding streams of all non-government schools which are providing boarding services to Indigenous students. I was approached

by a number of schools, Kormilda being one of them. I heard from Marrara, St John's and St Philip's, but I had not spoken to them.

I made a point of going to Kormilda and saying, 'I have heard this. Help me to understand what this means.' I spoke to the principal at the time, not the current principal but a former principal, by the name of Mr Shinkfield. I wanted to get some details of the implications of this reduced funding, because what I heard made me very concerned. Maybe it is the political environment that schools operate in—I was a school principal and sometimes we get very nervous when it comes to having to take on a political battle when we are focused on our core business of delivering quality education.

At that time the clear message was, 'Thank you for your interest'—remembering I was the Leader of the Opposition then. They wanted to talk to the Territory government, which was a Labor government, and they were in negotiations, apparently, with the Labor federal government—Mr Garrett at that time. I was thanked for my interest and they said, 'It's okay; we will manage it.'

Some people get suspicious and think your only interest is political and you will cause problems. I was concerned. A number of those who were interested in this space, at that school and a couple of other schools, said they were deeply concerned, but they were a bit nervous so they wanted to manage it themselves. That was the fatal error; it reduced the central core funding to provide support for the delivery of services.

Once that decision was made, and inadequate lobbying was brought to bear on that point, we end up with the problem all these years later, which is a deficiency in core funding. That school board—and I take my hat off to them—got into a muddle. They thought this was such noble business that no one would leave them abandoned. They know this is such an important mission—'We will not be left out to dry.' They made all manner of strategic decisions, including focusing more on the non-Indigenous sector, trying to strengthen that for increased revenue flow to support the reduced flow for the remote Indigenous boarding facility. That was a tactical error because, what happened? We end up with competing schools that begin to operate.

Communities pick it. They think, 'Something is going on here; the school has changed direction.' A new school started up, the Lutheran school, then MacKillop started up; Essington is going well. Parents got a sense of this and started to move. The funding had dropped and they made some tactical decisions which proved to be not at all fruitful. Then the numbers started to drop and they tried to recover. That was a mistake.

I went to the parent meeting the other night with some trepidation. I was hopeful there would be sufficient support for the school, demonstrated by attendance. I was fearful it would not be the case and people had given up. I was very impressed to see not only the attendance but the quality of people who presented their services to be on a steering committee. The message was clear that they were not happy with the tactical decisions taken by the board. They were respectful but they were not hiding the fact that there had been some serious errors made in governance of the school. To his great credit, Peter Jones, a volunteer—all the board members are volunteers—was at that meeting and accepted that criticism.

The community rallied and appointed a steering committee to steer the school and provide options to the Territory and federal governments of how to sort it out. In my view, the most important matter for us is to rally here and lobby the federal government.

It is not an ideological battle, albeit I understand there is strong support on the Labor side, particularly in the unions, for community-based schooling. That is fine; there is a place for that, but there is an equally strong place for well-functioning, properly-supported, well-managed, well-governed boarding facilities. Both of them must exist.

Here is an opportunity to put this on the stage for the Territory to run the argument very strongly that there be proper funding. It gives us an opportunity to reset the agenda and ensure we have proper governance. The school community has rallied. We need to show them that we have heard their call. In the middle of that call was something which is uniquely Territorian. Though we are, essentially, running the argument that we need to have a proper response to the issues of Indigenous education, this unique model of schooling at Kormilda—by the way, my son went to that school, but I did not raise that on the night. I would love to tell you some stories about my son's experience there. It may be a story for another time.

What they wanted, and what I actually wanted too in having my son there, was to mix with Indigenous students, to be working together. That was the central value the parents wanted preserved. There is something unique here.

I have spoken to federal counterparts as well. I have raised the alarm, that is why my question yesterday was, 'Will you join in a campaign?' It was not a tricky question, and maybe I missed something about Gonski while I was in Indonesia—no I did not actually—but that was not the point. The point was, let us work together and really identify what the core issue is. It is adequate resourcing for the challenges of delivering remote education, either in communities or in boarding facilities.

The simple maths of it is compelling. It cost somewhere in the order of \$40 000 for Kormilda to deliver education to Indigenous students. They provide additional medical and educational support behind the scenes because these students are in need of extra assistance. They are in a stable environment, as best as can be provided, for the school term.

They receive, from what I understand, something in the order of \$11 000 from the Commonwealth and \$2000 for each of those students from the Territory government, because it is a non-government school. The rest is meant to come from somewhere else. It was meant to come from a strong cohort of non-Indigenous students that would be able to support that, and supported by the mission of the Uniting Church the Anglican Church and so on. But it did not work out that way, mainly when the funding stream, in around 2009, diminished significantly. St John's, from what I understand, responded to that by reducing its commitment to delivery of services to remote Indigenous kids and went to Papua New Guinea. It has international students for their boarding ...

Mr Wood: It is a mixture.

Mr MILLS: Yes, it is a mixture, but they have changed their direction because of that funding issue.

The numbers are quite clear, and it is quite an easy issue for us to identify. Once we have had our fun in here, we could get to work and run this argument very clearly in concert with all those who have a serious interest in the delivery of education, particularly remote education, and preserving the core value of Kormilda College where both groups work well together.

I have just enough time to tell why my son wanted to go there. He said 'Dad, AFL. I want to go there because I like Aussie Rules.' He went there to find the non-Indigenous kids were playing rugby league. That was offensive to my son. He wanted to play Aussie Rules. He found that to play Aussie Rules he needed to get in with the Aboriginal kids. He used to hang around, get the ball and hand pass it back to them so he could get in the circle. He took a long time, trying to get accepted, but he endured. Then someone asked him, 'Hey, brother, where do you come from?' He said, 'I come from Mullewa.' I come from Mullewa, in mid-west Western Australia. He was not born there but he said he came from there. They said there were a lot of Mullewa people around there. He got included on the assumption he was Indigenous, one of the guys from Western Australia.

Many in my network in Palmerston come from Geraldton and Mullewa, and they said, 'A new Indigenous kid has turned up at Kormilda but we can't work out how he fits in'. I said it was my son. 'That's it. He's your boy', they said. He used that. It was an honour to him and a means to engage. Then he played at a curtain raiser at the Tiwi Islands grand final. He was the only non-Indigenous kid in the Kormilda team. It was the best game that Ros and I had ever been to, because usually we could never spot him in the crowd. This time we could see him plain as day. That was really special. Many have enjoyed that experience. That is one of the unique values of Kormilda College.

The issue is to get the attention, run the argument to Canberra then work in a coordinated way to ensure we treat the threat to the school as an opportunity. I am prepared to play my part.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Member for Spillett's MPI and discuss why I believe this government's failure to genuinely commit to Kormilda College's future was a serious error of judgement.

We have just heard from the Member for Blain that a lot of people came out last Tuesday in support of Kormilda College. That highlighted the fact it was a serious error of judgement. We have heard the minister say she has received a lot of emails in regard to the opposing views on this. I seek leave to table a copy of the petition with over 600 signatures, which was presented to the federal government.

Leave granted.

Mr HIGGINS: I also pick up on a couple of comments the Minister for Education made. As far as I understand it is not up to Kormilda College to go to the federal government to seek money to bail it out. Education is the responsibility of the NT. That is the way it has been for years, and the way it should be. I acknowledge that there is a responsibility for the federal government to provide some funding. This MPI is not about where the money comes from. It is about the lack of action taken that put us in this position where we have people protesting about the lack of government action.

We have heard that many people have had a connection with the school. The Member for Spillett attended the school, the Member for Blain's son attended the school and my son attended the school in the 1990s. He still retains strong ties with the school and the broader community. He thrived under the school's curriculum, and it was a great pathway for him in his current career in the police force, which is something they should be very proud of.

I also heard an interjection that the CLP solution would be to sell it. The truth is that we do not own it. We need to look at some of the history. Every good school and every big independent school has history. This school does. Where it stands was originally a World War II Army hospital. It then became the Qantas transit centre for international aircrew and passengers who flew through Darwin on their way to Europe.

I also understand—the Member for Nelson would be very keen on this—the first swimming pool in the Northern Territory was located there.

Mr Wood: It must have cost too much. They filled it in.

Mr HIGGINS: But we have had a big issue with pools in the rural area.

According to the school's website:

In 1967, the Commonwealth government acquired the property to create a post primary hostel and boarding school for Indigenous children from isolated locations. By early 1968 many of the buildings were renovated, repainted and converted into classrooms or bedrooms and the property became Kormilda College. Initial enrolment totalled 121 students from 27 Territory communities, pastoral stations and missions. Following self government, the management of the College was transferred to the Northern Territory government.

In February 1989 the ownership of the College transferred to the Anglican and Uniting Churches and Kormilda College Limited was formed and administered by a board of directors, appointed by the two churches.

While maintaining the provision of full secondary residential education programs for Indigenous students, we now serve the broader community and host both day and boarding students.

In 1993 Kormilda College commenced teaching the IB Diploma for Year 11 and 12 students:

... and remain the only College in the Northern Territory to offer the IB Diploma.

...

In 2010 the College commenced offering the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP) for Years 6-10.

In January 2015, just last year, Kormilda Primary School, including Early Learning, opened its doors with 51 students.

Thousands of Indigenous boarding students have passed through Kormilda since it began operations in the late 1960s. It says a lot about government's failure to consult on the college's situation that traditional supporters have rallied against it.

It was significant that former AFL footballer and Indigenous activist Michael Long was critical of the government's response. In his speech in front of this place on Tuesday he made some significant points. Kormilda is one of the largest Aboriginal boarding facilities in Australia, accommodating up to 230

Aboriginal children. Thirty-five communities from the NT and Western Australia are represented. That is up from the 27 it started with. There is a 90% attendance rate of Aboriginal children at Kormilda.

Compare that to a community like Wadeye, which has half the attendance rate. If that was the situation, 54 Aboriginal children at the school would not have finished their education. On average, between 17 and 22 Aboriginal students graduate from Kormilda each year, and last year 63 Aboriginal students graduated from independent schools across the Territory. That means one-third of those who graduated came from Kormilda.

How will some of those Indigenous children be accommodated at schools like Casuarina? Michael Long raised, in his speech, the health and literacy focus support that Indigenous children at the school are offered. This includes immediate and ongoing health services, without any government support; specialist literacy teachers, targeting small student groups; a paired reading program after school and in boarding; post-dinner homework; and tutorial support.

Labor says it is committed to improving education outcomes for Aboriginal people, but in its education election plan there is only a single reference to Aboriginal people. Labor's policy says:

Decision making on the educational path of Community Led Schools will be placed into the hands of remote communities. They will be supported by government in making the best decisions for the education of their children.

Maybe they will give them an assistant minister.

This is counter to the recommendations contained in education consultant Bruce Wilson's 2014 review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory, which recommended progressively moving to deliver most secondary schooling and the majority of the middle year schooling in urban schools with a critical mass of students, beginning with trials in Tennant Creek and other locations, based on a series of principles. These principles include working with volunteer families in communities; families deciding the year of schooling at which young children enrol in an urban school; undertaking community engagement processes with participating communities to ensure trials meet the needs of these communities; maintaining secondary provisions in participating communities; and students remaining enrolled during the trials.

Despite having all this information to hand, Labor chose to adopt policies that are nothing more than buzzwords and which are not based on sound research.

Bruce Wilson's report was not just one person's assessment of how Indigenous young people in the Territory should be educated. His work was supported by a team from the Department of Education and involved community consultation—open and transparent.

This brings us to what would have happened to the board should Kormilda have closed. In the various media releases on the subject the government made no reference to the plight of Indigenous boarders who would have been affected by the closure. Would the students have gone back to their communities? Would they have to travel interstate? There was no consideration of what would have happened in the event of the school closing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I fully support the MPI. Kormilda is a matter of public importance. How lucky are we that we do not have an assistant minister for independent schools?

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this matter of public importance. One thing that is very clear in this Chamber is that there is much love, passion and support for Kormilda College, and so there should be. This is a school with a wonderful, long, proud history in the Northern Territory of delivering education outcomes for Territorians from remote communities and kids in urban settings. It is a wonderful school.

I have many fond memories of going to school, and I always loved the fact that, particularly with sport, after school you would always get a good Kormilda contingent participating in sport—the boarders who would come through. It was a fantastic thing to have as part of our community.

I have many constituents who chose to send their children to Kormilda College. It is really important that parents have choice in education. It is really important that parents, with their child—and they know what is best for their child—can choose the best school for them, and for many parents that is Kormilda, from urban

and remote settings. It has done a fantastic job, and there is a lot of passion in this Chamber for making sure we work together to give Kormilda a bright future going forward.

When this government was confronted with the fact that Kormilda was in financial dire straits—things were grim; it was at crisis point and the doors were about to shut—we acted immediately. We knew it was going into the last term of school, a critical time in the life of a student in Year 12.

We thought, ‘Oh my goodness. Can you imagine what it would be like as a Year 12 student, all that hard work to have your school close its doors on you?’ In the last term of your final year of your education that would be a disaster. We acted swiftly. We gave the school urgent financial support of \$5.1m, which it desperately needed. We gave it certainty to get through to the end of the year. We gave the support that the students, parents, and, importantly, staff needed, which has also been raised as part of this matter of public importance. We need to keep quality educators—the best teachers—in the Northern Territory. Having certainty around your jobs plays a very big part of that.

When I hear the opposition say we did not demonstrate leadership or engage with the school—that is absolute rubbish. We acted as swiftly as we could to give the school certainty. The Education minister has worked tirelessly to give the school the outcomes it needs to go forward. She has done a wonderful job so far. She has lobbied the federal government.

One of the things I was truly appalled at with this situation was that fact that a school that has 75% of its government funding from the Commonwealth compared to a 25% component from the Territory government—we were the ones who acted swiftly and we have heard silence from the federal government until today. I welcome its contribution to Kormilda for next year, but it has not been helpful for it to sit silent until this point. I commend the new Education minister on the work she has done since coming to office. She has been dealing with this pretty much from day one. She has been responding, lobbying and fighting for that school, and she has done a wonderful job because we will get the students through until the end of the year.

The federal government has finally come to the table and given the school certainty around next year, and it is clear we have a commitment, as the Territory government, to work with the school, the parents and the federal government going forward to find the best sustainable, long-term pathway to continue great education at Kormilda College for the students, the boarders and the Northern Territory community. We want to keep supporting the school.

We have around 170 Indigenous students coming in. What would have happened had that school closed its doors in Term 4? What would have happened to those students in their education journey? We are at a point where one of the greatest challenges we face in the Northern Territory is ensuring more students complete their schooling so they have a world of opportunity ahead of them after school for jobs and to participate and make the most of the opportunities that come in adulthood. Too many Indigenous kids are not finishing school, so this is a very important area.

My constituents love the school; they send their children there for a reason. They are very happy with the education delivered there. I have heard fantastic feedback.

The school has responded to its declining enrolments by building a new primary school and looking at the long term by trying to ensure it grows the school from the ground up. I have heard fantastic feedback from friends who send their children to that primary school, and they are looking forward to their future at Kormilda.

I get frustrated when I hear the opposition say this government did not act. We acted swiftly. The Education minister has lobbied and pushed hard. We now have the outcome we needed, which is that finally the Australian Government is coming to the table, showing some commitments. It is a real shame it was silent up to this point. If the school did not continue there were plans in place with the Education department to accommodate students at other schools to the best of their ability. Ideally we wanted to keep the school open and ensure the students could continue down the pathway they were on.

With all the work that has been done, we have reached an outcome that will keep the school going and give it the certainty it needs to work with the parents, the two levels of government and the community to plan a sustainable, viable future to ensure it continues to be a school that delivers great education outcomes for kids across the Northern Territory. It is important that it is sustainable; we do not want to end up here again. The students and parents do not need that uncertainty in their lives. It is important that all parties work together.

I can see Mr Trevor Dalton in the gallery, and I am pleased to see his leadership as part of the parent group and steering committee. I applaud the fact we have seen parents come out, put their shoulders to the wheel and fight for their school and its future. It is a wonderful to see the community come together and works on finding solutions together. You will get the best outcomes by doing that. It is a community-driven response to a very serious problem. We are working together to find a good, long-term, sustainable outcome for Kormilda. I welcome his work.

I am friends with a lady named Bethany Maley, who is a very impressive woman. She is a passionate Kormilda parent, and I understand she has been doing a remarkable job there. It was great to see Michael Long there and it is great to see people coming together and bringing the passion to support Kormilda. That is terrific.

A future can be achieved because there are opportunities going forward for Kormilda when you look at possible options for building on sustainable growth in numbers. It will not be tomorrow and it will probably not be the year after, but there will be residential development in that area going forward, as the Member for Nelson mentioned.

Berrimah Farm has the potential to cater for over 2000 dwellings. That is a significant number, and there is a fantastic school right across the road which has been around for a long time and knows what delivering a good education is about. It is there already. You can see that there is a future of population growth in that area. It is about planning now and getting the rights plans in place to ensure this school does not have to go through the horrendous crisis it just has.

It is a real shame that, unfortunately, the full extent of the financial situation was not recognised until the very last minute. It is a shame that there could not be a process that allowed for more time and consideration. But, as I said, when this crisis situation appeared in front of this government, we responded, acted, delivered, kept the doors open and gave the school the support it needed. That is something we are very proud of. The amount of \$5.1m is not an insignificant amount of money. That is a huge amount of money. For one term of school it is a big contribution. For \$5.1m you could deliver about 50 teachers for a year.

Looking at our additional commitment to education, we are putting an extra \$20m into those budgets. That is a quarter of that and that is for all government schools. So \$5.1m is a lot of money, but when you think of what the disruption would have been and what it could have meant for the students and families, I believe we made the right decision to help the school keep going until the end of the year and have parents know their kids are going to school and, particularly for the parents of Year 12 students, that they will finish their education—all that hard work. They will get through to the end. It will also keep people in jobs, keep people in the Territory and ensured the incredibly slow-moving Australian Government had time to respond appropriately, which, thankfully, it did today.

We are very grateful and we looking forward to moving with it and working with it, as well as the parents, the staff and the Kormilda community. It is really important that we get it right and see this school with a long-term sustainable future to keep supporting Territory kids.

Kormilda College has done a fantastic job. We can all see that. Many of us know someone who has been to Kormilda. Many people in the Chamber have had a direct pathway through Kormilda, which has created good opportunities for them. It offers a unique educational environment. It is in an urban setting but enjoys the wonderful diversity of students from communities around the Territory. It is a terrific and dynamic environment. It is a fantastic reflection on the Territory that we can have such a special school here.

I have received passionate emails from my constituents. It is good that the petition has been tabled and is on the public record to show that people in the community support Kormilda. As members of parliament we have a responsibility to do what we can to represent our constituents, some of whose children go to that school. As the Northern Territory Government, elected members of parliament and members of the community we must keep working to ensure the Australian Government stays at the table and does its fair share to move Kormilda to a brighter future in a sustainable and manageable way. We must ensure we also support parents and students.

There is work to do. I am optimistic about the future, especially after today. The Australian Government has finally come to the plate. I am very proud that when this government was faced with this situation we responded and kept the doors open. We kept Kormilda going for the last term of school, and the Australian Government finally came on board to keep those students in school and get students through Year 12 and make sure this school has a brighter future.

Well done to the Minister for Education. Thank you for your hard work. It is good to hear there is such enthusiasm for a continued future for Kormilda. Thank you to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion forward. It is a matter of public importance and an important debate.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I honour the memory of the late Maureen Dunham. Her funeral service was held this week and it was a very touching ceremony. I have been asked by her loving family if I could please read her eulogy into the *Hansard* to be forever recorded:

Maureen Dunham

Born in Katherine 13 November 1933

Died in Darwin 10 October 2016

The story of Maureen's life is essentially a love story.

The critical elements revolve around her unshakeable love for her husband of 63 years, Peter, her family and friends, and her faith.

There are many tangible examples of the manifestation of her love for family, friends and faith, and this short eulogy will recount but a few. In the Irish tradition still strong in the family, there will be an opportunity for all of you who knew Maureen to retell these stories when we leave the church and gather around the corner for Maureen's wake. This is an occasion of joy and gratitude for the blessings which came from Maureen's long life. We are confident in the knowledge that Maureen will be rewarded in the afterlife for her selfless generosity in helping others.

Maureen Catherine Kearnan was born in Katherine to Jack and Johanna Kearnan after a prolonged and difficult breech birth. At one stage during labour the doctor asked Jack Kearnan which of the mother or child he wished to save. Jack gave the doctor clear instructions to give his best endeavours for the survival of both and Maureen was delivered safe and well albeit with a broken leg.

Jack was a railway fettler and with his wife and young family he lived in Katherine, Larrimah, Birdum, Darwin and Mataranka, from whence Johanna and her two girls, Maureen and Lynette, were evacuated after Darwin was bombed in 1942. Johanna (or Josie as she was known to all) was in Adelaide at the time with her seriously ill young son, Brian, who was receiving treatment. Brian died in Adelaide and Josie was forbidden to return to the Territory by the authorities. In a tradition which spans generations and which Maureen had in spades, she paid no heed to official government decrees which were intrinsically stupid. She ignored the ruling and hitched a ride with an NT policeman, Vic Hall, who had been recalled from leave. The entirety of the Stuart Highway was unsealed in those days and Josie returned to Mataranka and took her two daughters to Adelaide for the duration of the war. This round trip took weeks and involved trains, trucks and Army transport.

At the war's end, Maureen and Lynette were not able to return home to the ruins left by the bombing raids and went to the OLSH boarding school in Alice Springs. Boarding life was far from optimal and the whole boarding community suffered chilblains, ptomaine poisoning, a lack of compassion and corporal punishment, particularly Maureen who was deemed to have 'an attitude'. Maureen and Lynette moved to Darwin with their parents and lived in Parap in the housing occupied by railway employees. They went to the local Catholic school and Maureen met her lifelong friend Hazel Gaden, who some of you will recognise as the pretty young bridesmaid at Maureen's wedding in the photos.

The family eventually returned to Katherine where Maureen worked at the PMG, the corporate forefather of Telstra and Australia Post. The 19-year-old telephonist worked alongside a postal officer named Peter Dunham. The old people among us can let the gen Xs in the crowd know what telephonists and postal officers did in the olden days.

Love blossomed between the two and despite initial misgivings in Maureen's extensive and very matriarchal family, Maureen and Peter married at St Joseph's Church, a requisitioned Sydney Williams Hut leftover from the war. Father Frank Flynn came down from Darwin to perform the

ceremony as Katherine did not have a resident parish priest. Maureen's uncle Bat Kirby hosted the reception at the family hotel and the entire population of Katherine attended.

Following the wedding in 1953, Mark was born in 1954, Elizabeth in 1955, Stephen in 1956, Catherine in 1958 and John in 1960—five kids in six years. Maureen and Peter worked hard. They were young and energetic and they were joyous, as the photos will show. As children the river was their playground and there was always time for camping, fishing, horse riding or shooting. Maureen and Peter provided the same opportunity to their grandchildren at Galloping Jacks decades later. The grandchildren also helped in several of the business enterprises that Maureen and Peter were involved in—a dress shop, the family hotels and a caravan park to name a few. The staff from those enterprises remain family friends and many are here today.

Maureen and Peter lost two sons, Mark in 1962 and John in 1993. Although both boys were haemophiliacs, both deaths were preventable and had a profound impact on Maureen. Mark died following a tooth extraction at Darwin Hospital despite Maureen alerting nursing staff to his critical condition and being largely ignored. The impact of Mark's death created a powerful sense of advocacy and protectiveness in Maureen. Along with adopting her mother's dismissive attitude to stupidity in government actions, Maureen challenged the status quo and became an agent for change. She instilled confidence, tolerance and assertiveness in all her children. John, in particular, exemplified these traits. When John died as a 33-year-old father of four in 1993, Maureen was angered by the later revelations that inaction by those in power contributed to his death. She was to discover that John acquired AIDS from contaminated blood, which the government health authorities knew about and did not act to ensure the safety of those who were dependent on this vital treatment.

Maureen and Peter worked in several hotels, including the family hotels at Larrimah and Katherine, and later at Cooida in Kakadu. Maureen first held a liquor licence when she was a licensee at Larrimah in 1957 after her Uncle Johnny Mahony was injured and badly burnt. At this time she had three small children, one of whom she was still breastfeeding.

Hotels at that time could be violent places and Peter was assaulted on at least two occasions. Luckily for him, both happened while Maureen was nearby. The family still enjoys the story of Maureen rendering unconscious one particularly large, drunk and belligerent assailant who had Peter in a choke hold; a well-placed blow from a coke bottle to the back of the head was effective in releasing the choke hold. In those days Coke was provided to hotels in large, heavy glass bottles which were pretty much indestructible and similar in shape to a club.

The police were called to the unconscious man, who awoke with the same fury as he had when he first attacked Peter, coupled with a splitting headache and general confusion, which often follows concussion from a Coke bottle. It took several police to subdue him and he was locked safely out of harm's way for a period.

That said, there were very few people Maureen didn't like and she was blind to distinctive features such as criminal record, financial status, race or religion.

Maureen was associated with the society of St Vincent de Paul and as President saw the NT become an independent state entity. She was the first ever female state president of the society in Australia. Interestingly, while her fellow state presidents commuted from the outer suburbs of whichever capital city they lived in, Maureen attended meetings from Cooida, where she and Peter were working—drive to Jabiru, light plane to Darwin, jet to the conference—20 hours or so.

Even though Maureen's involvement with the society of Saint Vincent de Paul dates from about the time of the cyclone, she and Peter were always involved in charitable work. Numerous people were helped with 'loans' in hard times; often the girls would see their favourite dress that they had just grown out of being worn by one of the kids from a large family up the road. The parish priest always ate at the pub and church cleaning, gardening and fetes were just normal activities. Maureen and Peter sponsored football and cricket teams and were the inaugural sponsors of the Katherine Golf Club.

When the family moved to Darwin just before Cyclone Tracy, Maureen went to night school and became a welfare worker. Her life experience in 'welfare' should have been worth a couple of doctorates. She started with the first group of Home Liaison Officers in the Department of Education. Their job was to visit the homes of children who were not attending school, or appeared to be at risk or in need of additional help. Maureen's area included the rural area beyond Berrimah and home

visiting involved some risk due to the attitudes and proclivities of those rural dwellers at that time. This valuable work had an impact on the lives of many children.

Maureen and Peter were blessed with many offspring, most of whom grew up in Darwin and were frequent visitors to their grandparents. Great grandchildren arrived when Maureen was a relatively youthful 65. All of these descendants call Maureen and Peter 'Maureen and Peter' and they all have great affection and respect for them. None of their possessions were so precious that the kids couldn't play with them and all of Pete's tools, gear and material could be used for whatever project was on the boil. They all learned to drive the tip truck and the canoes, fishing gear, welder and grinders all got used.

Maureen and Peter had a great idea of taking the grandchildren camping at Galloping Jacks in Katherine, 11 of them. Three meals a day equates to 39 and over a week 273. Peter set up toilets, tents, a kitchen and took them for fishing safaris and bushwalks. This investment in their grandchildren is probably one of the things which contributed to them all turning out so good, and if you don't believe me, ask them.

As I said at the start, Maureen's life is pretty much a love story and no love story is complete without talking about the partnership.

Maureen and Peter's deep understanding of each other and their absolute loyalty and unconditional love has provided the foundation of their large extended family.

They travelled extensively together, including with their young children in the back of a panel van to Sydney. This will surprise some here but back then there were no means of playing music when you travelled—no cassettes, no CDs, no iPods, no car radio. They all sang wherever they went. The Boomerang Songbook had hundreds of songs and Peter has a wide range of jazz classics tucked away in his memory. Stephen can still bang out a decent version of Delia, and Elizabeth and Catherine have a few good Burl Ives and Dean Martin classics.

About a year ago Peter thought that the government might get a bit nervous about his driver's licence, so he and Maureen took off for their last driving holiday. They went to Mount Gambier and back. Seemed like a good idea at the time.

Peter has done an extraordinary job of nursing Maureen over the last six months. While in hospital getting out of bed was a grand production with the need to get organised a couple of hours in advance and sometimes up to four staff on hand. The hoist usually had a flat battery and the second backup one was also usually flat. Peter is a highly-organised person and this level of ineptitude was a source of aggravation. When it became apparent that Maureen's condition was worsening ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Spillett, your time is up.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I ask that the remainder of my remarks be incorporated into *Hansard*. There is only half a page left.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are members happy for the member to continue?

Leave granted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you very much.

... the longer she stayed in hospital they decided to go home. Technically this is called a voluntary discharge against medical advice. In reality it means you are out on your own and all care, equipment and consumables have to be provided by yourself. Community nurses came twice-weekly to change dressings on her feet, but everything else they paid for. In Maureen and Peter's view, picking up the entire cost of home nursing was a small price to pay for their improved quality of life.

Peter bought a badly-damaged lifter from the dump, cleaned it up, bought the parts and had it repaired. The machine cost about \$1600 compared with the \$6500 for a new one. Interestingly, Peter, an 86-year-old man, achieved all of Maureen's transfers out of bed into the shower, toilet and wheelchair by himself, and the battery never went flat.

They have lived a long life together, full of adventure, laughter, some tears and abundant love.

Rest in peace, Maureen.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, Ness Love-Monk's daughter Courtney committed suicide in 2012 after cyber trolls tormented her on social media. Ness Love-Monk had this to say:

I would love nothing more than to know that every keyboard warrior who cyber bullies another human being would be shut down by the commissioner. But in reality that's not possible.

Ms Monk was referring to the Children's eSafety Commissioner. Because of senseless deaths such as Courtney's, and so many others, in a world first this year we saw Australia pass legislation which gives the Children's eSafety Commissioner powers to remove serious cyberbullying if social media companies fail to act. Formed in July of last year, the office had received 124 complaints about serious cyberbullying by 30 March this year.

This office, introduced as part of an election promise to form a united approach to cyber safety by the federal government, has been flooded with inquiries, some of which do not meet the benchmark for serious cases of bullying. Of the serious categories, the most common complaint is nasty comments and serious name-calling. The second-highest rate of complaints is for offensive and upsetting private pictures or videos. This is followed very closely by fake and/or impersonated accounts and threats of violence.

Cyberbullying or stalking occurs when someone engages in offensive, menacing or harassing behaviour through the use of technology. It can happen to people at any age, any time, and is often done anonymously. Examples of cyberbullying include posting hurtful messages, images or videos online, repeatedly sending unwanted messages online, sending abusive texts and emails, excluding or intimidating others online, creating fake social networking profiles or websites that are hurtful, nasty online gossip and chat, and any other form of digital communication which is discriminatory, intimidating, intended to cause or make someone fear for their safety.

There are Australian laws which apply to serious online harassment and online bullying behaviour. Under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* it is an offence to use the Internet, social media or a telephone to menace, harass or cause offence. The maximum penalty for this offence is three years' imprisonment or a fine of more than \$30 000.

There are a number of Northern Territory offences that potentially apply to cyberbullying behaviour. They reflect a range of unacceptable behaviours, as they should. Threats by words alone can potentially be an assault or aggravated assault under the Criminal Code of the Northern Territory. Threats to kill are also covered under the Criminal Code, as is unlawful stalking, whether stalking through the use of a telephone or other electronic communications. Encouraging suicide is also a criminal offence in the Northern Territory. We are probably all aware of cases involving celebrities subjected to what has been described as 'trolling' on the Internet. Some of these have had some tragic outcomes, but many may not appreciate that this sort of behaviour is against the law.

The Commonwealth Criminal Code creates offences where a person uses a carriage service in circumstances that are menacing, harassing or offensive. We are unfortunately all too aware of the most recent example, this year, of a person being convicted for a disgusting racial tirade against Senator Nova Peris. A message or post can be considered offensive if it is likely to cause serious anger, outrage, humiliation or disgust.

Just to remind everyone, if the recipient of your comment or opinion is offended, then it is offensive. The onus needs to be placed on the offender not the offended. The maximum penalty for cyberbullying is three years in gaol. We have, in recent years, and rightly so, placed great emphasis on educating our children on the dangers of cyberbullying, but in doing so we have left a significant gap in regard to educating adults.

I am concerned about the high occurrences of bullying by adults towards other adults that is occurring on various social media sites that were originally created as a means for people to share with each other information about community events, local news et cetera. These are community social media sites. This concern is also shared by several members of the Katherine Domestic Violence Directorate local reference group. I have also seen some unsavoury comments about me, and have even received some disturbing messages from adults, such as, 'too mentally deficient to walk and talk, let alone be in parliament'. By far the most hurtful comment I have received in the last 18 months was, 'Go back on the boat that you came off'. These were from adults.

It is disappointing to see that some people seem to have forgotten the responsibility they have of setting the example for children. As a mother of a 15-year-old young man I practise what I preach. It is not enough for me to say to him, 'Be nice to other people'. I am nice to other people; I lead by example. It is not enough for me to say to him, 'Be polite'. You need to lead by example.

As a human being I am also very conscious of the language I use. I strive each day to ensure I use positive language and express myself in a cordial and polite way. I treat others as I like to be treated in real life and when I communicate on the Internet.

This is a really serious issue, and the cyberbullying incidences that are happening throughout some of the social media sites, as well as some of the vigilante conversations that are happening, are disturbing and of great concern.

In closing, I end with this advice and gentle reminder for everyone; it is for children and adults alike. Think before you hit that publish button and ask yourself whether you would tolerate receiving that message from someone else, whether it was face to face or behind a screen.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, they were very interesting comments from the Member for Katherine. I tell young people who get into the world of social media, 'Once you put it out there it is out there forever'. Perhaps you and I will not be able to get it back out of the sky, but there are some very clever people who do get things from the sky or clouds or wherever they sit. The emergence of instant technology has created positives and negatives. I sympathise with what you said and I agree with you.

I will finish my adjournment from last night. Apparently there was a very diligent, conscientious person in the Chair who cut me off and said my time had expired. I am watching the clock. I have 10 minutes, so, right, go!

I had not finished thanking all the people who helped me in my bid for another term, and I am very appreciative of all the people in my constituency who voted for me and have given me their support and trust.

I also express my thanks to Ray Tandy, who helped me put up signs in the rural area. He is an ex-fireman so he pretty tough and strong. He helped, along with Charlie Ryan and Chris Nathanael.

There were also some people who were visiting from interstate. July in Alice Springs is the show, of course, and then Tennant Creek, Darwin and Katherine. Many people travel from interstate who breed show dogs. My big sister is one of those people, and all these people stay at her place. They are very unusual people who have unusual dogs, but that is a separate debate for another time.

Anyway, I went to my sister because I needed some help with folding letters and things of that nature and some of these people helped. Thank you to Rowena Conroy and her border collies for helping fold things for me. To Joan and Peter Wright and their two massive wolfhounds, thank you for helping me. To Donna James and her Hungarian vizlas, thank you also. Some are from Perth, some from New South Wales, some from Victoria and some continue to wander around the country. Your help was also very much appreciated. Please come back next year. It is lovely to see you every year.

I overlooked thanking my brother, or one of my brothers. It is another 'Uh, oh'. One of my elder brothers, but not my eldest, Gervase, came to Darwin especially to help out over the election weekend. It is always good to have a bloke around you, especially a brother who is always there to protect your back and fight off those other candidates who get a bit obstreperous. There are a few in the rural area—or one candidate. Anyway, we will not go there either. Thank you to my big brother Gervase for coming to town especially to help me with that.

Finally, I want to thank my Electorate Officer, Trish O'Hehir, for her ongoing support and dedication to the job that she does. I would not be able to do much of what I do without Trish. She is a tremendous woman, very knowledgeable and very empathetic with constituents. She has a huge following. She gets more chocolates and champagne than I do, and I am really quite upset about that. Zipper Murphy, her partner, is little bit concerned as well because most of the chocolates and champagne comes from men. I have assured him that everything is good.

I have to thank Zipper too. He helped me with some running around. He was dubbed the office security, not that we needed security. There was some argy-bargy at one stage during the campaign. My sincere thanks and love go to Trish and Zipper for supporting me over the last eight years. I am hopeful that they will

continue to support me in what we do. We have a lot of fun in the rural area. We got to a lot of fun events. Tomorrow we have the rural garden club at 9.30 am, which is a fabulous community and group of individuals. You learn lots about gardening and pretty flowers, and have a wonderful morning tea.

Thank you one and all to all those I have mentioned, to my family and the constituents of Goyder and the rural area, including those within the new boundary. I look forward to another four good years.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to place on the record my best wishes to Wanguri Primary School on celebrating its 40th birthday this year. It is an important part of our community and is very loved. Many Territorians have benefitted from an amazing primary education thanks to their time at Wanguri.

It has a proud history and I would like to put some of that on the record. It was built as part of the new suburb of Wanguri, which was developed after Cyclone Tracy. It was officially opened in March 1976. The name derives from the name of a relatively small Aboriginal clan in northeast Arnhem Land, between southeast Arnhem Land and Caledon Bay. Most clan members now reside around the Gove and Yirrikala area. The totem of the Wanguri people is the (inaudible) fish. The school celebrates that with a large, beautiful mosaic of the fish, which can be seen as you drive past.

The original logo and the colours representing the school were developed in 1976. The spiderweb logo represents the unity of purpose of different groups working in harmony and demonstrates to all students to be good, better and excellent. The sun in the middle represents a very happy school.

The school values, which you hear about often there, are, 'Be safe, be kind, be your best', and I think they are lovely values, which the school promotes amongst the children and the community.

To celebrate and mark this wonderful occasion of the 40th birthday of Wanguri Primary School, it held a community celebration on 6 August. The 40th anniversary celebration was coordinated by Robyn Nowland, who is the administration manager at Wanguri school, and the school council members, led by Mr Rick Wallace, did a fantastic job and put in a lot of time in for the 40th anniversary fair.

Principal Jen Coad is a wonderful addition to the Wanguri community since coming from the Katherine School of the Air. She has done a tremendous job at the school and brings a new level of strong leadership to the school community, which is terrific to see.

It was a huge day; about 1200 adults and kids attended. We all enjoyed a range of activities. There were some great opportunities to walk down memory lane, with many photos of the school post-cyclone and the early days of construction. There were also some great photos of the Greek community being at the school in the 1970s and cooking lots of octopus. We still have a very strong Greek community in Wanguri.

There were wonderful school photos and I got to look back and see many of my dear friends. I did not get to go to Wanguri Primary School, but the Member for Sanderson's children had that opportunity. I was able to see many faces of people I know whose educational journey was through Wanguri Primary School. It was lovely to see.

It was a wonderful day. I congratulate the school council, Robyn, Jen, the staff and the parents who got involved. They did a wonderful job celebrating this very special anniversary. Thank you for your hard work and for opening the school community for the day.

In the same spirit of celebrating the anniversary I must also congratulate the school for holding *Wanguri the Musical*. It was quite an event, held on 8 September, and I had a fantastic time attending. It was pretty special.

Andrew King, the music teacher, does a tremendous job at the school. He did a monumental job, where he managed to coordinate every class in the school to do a musical performance, one after the other, celebrating Wanguri school, its history, the community and what it means. It was a wonderful, joyous night.

The school assembly area was packed. It was great to see all the children being able to participate and the care the school puts into helping children nurture their creativity and develop their skills, particularly in the arts. It is a very special thing to be gifted in the arts. It should be nurtured and students should have the opportunity to succeed. It also a great way of engaging children in their education. We hear about it often from the Member for Barkly, who is very passionate about the arts in education. In this school, with Mr King

running the show when it comes to music—he does a great job and the children had the most delightful time.

At the end it was lovely to be together—I had the privilege of being on the stage with some of the kids to cut the 40th anniversary cake.

Mr McConnell: Did you do a number?

Ms MANISON: I did not get to sing; however, I did enjoy cutting the cake with the kids. It was a lovely celebration.

Happy 40th birthday, Wanguri School. I am looking forward to many good years of this wonderful school serving our community.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not have the opportunity before to speak about the election and the opening of parliament. I more or less concentrated on the Administrator's speech, which related on the government's policy for its new term in office.

I thank my wonderful family for coming here the day before yesterday for the swearing-in ceremony. I thank my very patient wife, Imelda, who is a very strong Wadjigan woman. Wadjigan country is on both sides of the mouth of Daly River, up to the Finnis. It is a beautiful part of the world.

Two of my daughters, Angela and Joanne, took some time off work, and I thank them for doing that. Unfortunately my middle daughter, Caroline, had to fly to Gunbalanya on the same day. I probably should put a plug in that I am also very proud of my daughters. They are all A-grade goal umpires for the AFL. Caroline did her second A-grade match on the weekend.

As this was my fifth swearing in I was not sure if my wife, Imelda, would bother to come as she has seen it all before. But I think my daughters decided to drag her along. She did and that was good. She especially liked the morning tea; scones, jam and cream is good for anyone. It was very special for me to have my family in attendance. I must admit, we thought afterwards that I should have got my aunties to bring me in. That would have been different.

It was good to see the emphasis on traditional Aboriginal welcomes and blessings for different members. Nowadays I think it is normal, but for a lot of people it is unique. It is one thing I love about this parliament. Even though we have had ups and downs in parliament, the number of Aboriginal people in this parliament is a great example to other parts of the country. For all the bad things that sometimes happen, that is a really positive thing for people from all over the Territory, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I sometimes laugh when people say, 'I was born and bred in the Territory', and I can say, 'Well I have been in the Territory for longer than you have been born and bred in the Territory'. I have the dirt under my fingernails to show I have been in the Territory a long time.

I thank all the people who participated in those ceremonies; it was wonderful.

I better thank all the people who helped me during the election, otherwise I will be in a lot of trouble. I do not have a big team. I am an Independent and I tend to be independent; I have always tended to work on my own to some extent, which can mean my wife does not have a clue where I am. She knows I am at parliament but she does not have any idea what time I will be home tonight, but I always give her a ring before I leave and ask her if she wants anything. It is either a cappuccino at Macca's at Stuart Park or it is a nice salmon burger from Fisherman's Wharf to take home.

I thank Peter, Annie, Marie, Nev, Helen, Kerry and Kim, my EO, and my family, which certainly helped me through the election campaign. I know some of you have bigger electorates than me but I did 10 000 kilometres in five weeks. I might have a smaller electorate than some but I also have a fair bit of work to do to hand deliver all my election material. I do not post anything. I also hand deliver my newsletter. I find that one of the best ways to do things.

People say I am a bit old fashioned but the funny thing is that I received the highest vote, on two party preferred, of anyone. I am not trying to brag, but I am saying that I did that without Facebook. I do not have Facebook. I know it is important and many people like it, and when I get old I will probably want it to speak to my grandchildren when I live out somewhere.

I like the personal touch. I like to meet people and talk to people on the phone. I am happy with emails and text messages. I am happy sitting on the corner. Would you believe I have sat on corners—not in the morning, except on Saturdays mornings. I know you all brag about sitting out there during the election, but a number of people say to me, 'Do they have to do that at 6 am by the side of the road?' You can win elections without doing it at that time. Do it in the afternoon. That is my advice. Do it in the afternoon and people have time to stop and see you. I have done that for nearly 30 years. I was on the council for 13 years. I have sat on the side of the road Friday nights and Saturday mornings all over the place. I guarantee it is the best way. If people want you, they know you will be somewhere. They do not have time to go to your office because it closes at 5 pm, but you meet people face to face. I always enjoy that, even though sometimes it means you have to give up other things to do it.

There are a few things I would like to say about the election. I would like a few things changed. I do not agree with optional preferential voting. It was done for a particular reason and it has put us out of line with all the other states, except the upper house in New South Wales. It puts us out of line with our local government and federal government elections, and that will cause more informal votes in both. It was done for political reasons. It is easy, I understand that, but it was not done for the right reason.

I would not mind seeing the declaration of the polls a week before polling booths open. Getting your how-to-vote card delivered in three days to thousands of houses is just about impossible. That needs to be looked at. Also, deceitful advertising—something needs to be done about advertising that is meant to deceive, especially the advertising saying, 'This is important electoral information, just vote one.' That was meant to look like it was from the Electoral Commission.

One of the big issues in my area is planning, which the minister was talking about. There is no doubt that people do not want the rural area urbanised, regardless of what you saw in a letter in today's paper. I know that gentleman and he says that continuously, but he is one of a very few people who want the rural area urbanised. People want proper development. They want villages and some of the services you get in the city, but that does not mean you have to turn the place into a suburb. And they want Weddell developed.

The next big issue is water. Water is something on the lips—pardon the pun—of many rural people, especially now there are restrictions on bores. There is also a concern we will run out of water, so that is an issue.

I hope people take this in the right context. A couple of people spoke about marriage. I need to say on the record—and I have written about this before—that I support traditional marriage. I also support the right of people of the same gender—for whatever reason they are living together; it does not matter—to have their relationships inscribed in law and recognised, but not as marriage. I will perhaps give my views more fully another time, but some have raised this matter, so I thought I would put my views on the record. I looked at this, would you believe, long before it became what is more or less politically popular. About 14 years ago I spoke with a Liberal member in the South Australian Government about recognising those relationships. I thought I would say that so people know exactly where I stand. I respect other people's views, and that is what that parliament is about.

Mr Deputy Speaker, once again I thank everyone who was part of the ceremonies. I thank my family for coming. I will get to know you all better. I know I have different views but I still respect your views, even if I do not agree with them. The Chief Minister's speech about trying to work together was important.

That does not mean I will not send some wisecrack remarks across the table or get excited from time to time. Underneath it all I believe you achieve more by working together. Consensus government is good. The previous Member for Fong Lim used to say that consensus was a love-in. No, it is not. Consensus is having the right to give your views in the right way and to put your hand up to say whether you support it or not, and you accept that. That is what consensus government is about.

I must admit, so far so good. In the first three days there has been a bit of liveliness, but that does not hurt. We will get into more serious debates as time goes on. I will be willing to listen to what you say, as you might listen to what I have to say.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to reflect on the matter of public importance in regard to Kormilda College and its future.

Something the Member for Blain said resonated with me. It is a matter of public importance for our community in Darwin and further across the Territory. I also take this moment to applaud the Minister for

Education, Eva Lawler, the Member for Drysdale, for her hard work in the last few weeks to ensure there is some certainty around Kormilda College's future for the rest of the year.

The Minister for Education has taken some great leadership steps to make sure our government supports the college, the students, the staff and the community of Kormilda College. The engagement of the minister's office with the school community has been very open and transparent. I also expect that all members of the House will applaud the minister for the support that has been given to our students with disabilities and challenging behaviours, with the injection of \$20m into our schools to make sure they have the services and support structures available to give them the best education possible.

The Minister for Education has fought since day one of her swearing in. It is definitely not an easy job to do as a new member of parliament and a new minister. Her commitment and drive for Kormilda and its future, supporting the staff, students and families, was evident with the push for the \$5.1m to support Kormilda College for the rest of the year.

I will be very concerned if the depleted CLP opposition thinks \$5.1m is not an extreme move by the government to ensure it shows it supports the college, and that this commitment is not taking the situation seriously. As was pointed out by other ministers in our government, it is a lot of money and it could be used to do many things. The seriousness of the situation at Kormilda is very clear, and the government will support the school until the end of the year.

I point out that we are very fortunate; our Labor government has five previous educators as part of its Caucus, and four of them are ministers. They are the Members for Nightcliff; Wanguri; and Barkly; me, the Member for Arnhem, and the Member for Drysdale, who is the Education minister. It shows that education is at the forefront of the Labor government, and the fact that four of our Cabinet ministers are previous educators shows that it is very important for our Labor Territory government to push education to all our schools, public, independent and private.

It is very exciting to welcome the news from the federal government in support of Kormilda College for the next school year in 2017. We do not know the detail of the situation and what the Northern Territory Government can commit in the future. We do know the school is safe at least until the end of the year. That brings relief to the families, students and teachers at the school. Being an ex-teacher, I know that budgeting is very frustrating and difficult. It is good to make sure the government is working with the school to make amends for what has happened and to push forward. It is not a situation of blame but of moving forward into the future.

I express my excitement in working with Minister Lawler in my two assistant minister portfolios, which are remote education and Families as First Teachers. The minister has taken great steps. She has shown leadership in her new role. I commend her again and I wish the Minister for Education all the best, as well as my Labor colleagues and the other members of the House in making sure the situation of Kormilda is not a political stunt but a community action, and that we all work together to make sure we support the college, the staff, the students and the families.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.