

CONTENTS

MOTION.....	187
Sessional Order Concerning the Conduct of Question Time.....	187
YOUTH JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL	200
(Serial 5)	200
ADDRESS IN REPLY	203
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	209
Presentation of Address in Reply to Administrator	209
PAPER TABLED	209
Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2015-16.....	209
MINISTERIAL STATEMENT	210
Establishment of an Independent Commission Against Corruption	210
ADJOURNMENT	238

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION
Sessional Order Concerning the Conduct of Question Time

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly adopts a sessional order in the following terms:

Notwithstanding anything in the standing orders, during the conduct of Question Time on each Wednesday when the Assembly meets, no government member will ask a minister or a committee chair a question without notice, but no single minister may be asked consecutive questions without an intervening question being asked of a different member who is a minister, committee chair, Speaker or other member who is able to be asked a question without notice pursuant to standing orders.

This motion proposes to change Question Time each Wednesday so government members will not ask questions of ministers. This will allow additional time for opposition and Independent members to scrutinise our government. We clearly took to the last election that we would be open and accountable to Territorians, and we believe this motion today is part of delivering that.

There will also be changes so that under this new format of Wednesday Question Time ministers will not be asked two consecutive questions.

One of our key election promises was that we would restore integrity to government. We went to the election with a clear plan to reform our democracy, and we tabled that information last week in our integrity plan to reform our democracy. This proposal to reform Question Time was included in the discussion paper and has been supported in conversations with Territorians.

We are implementing this change in the first sitting period of the new Assembly because we want to get on with the job of reforming our parliament. We all spoke last week about the chaos and dysfunction we saw during the last four years of government in the Northern Territory, and we have all said we cannot repeat that behaviour in this Assembly. We need Territorians to have faith in us as their elected representatives.

Parliament should be a contest of ideas. There will always be differences of opinion between members of this House, but debates can be well mannered even if they are robust. We need to encourage a culture of respect.

Question Time is a valuable opportunity for non-government members to ask questions of ministers and receive information immediately. With these new changes it is also important that ministers have the capacity to seek any information they may not immediately have available to them. This will ensure ministers can respond comprehensively and appropriately to information sought by the non-government member during Question Time.

Tuesday and Thursday Question Times will retain their current format, including questions from assistant ministers. These questions from government members allow us, as ministers, to communicate to Territorians how we are getting on with our job of delivering for Territorians.

This government will be open and accountable because it is the right and smart thing to do, and what Territorians demand. Territorians told us loud and clear in August that they will not tolerate poor behaviour from their elected representatives; they want us to simply get on with the job. We know we have to do better to avoid a repeat of the arrogance and chaos we saw over the last four years.

This change to Question Time is unprecedented in the Northern Territory parliament. We have never seen a Question Time reserved solely for the non-government members of this parliament. We recognise that this is an increased level of scrutiny, to commit the full hour of question time on each Wednesday solely for non-government members to ask questions of ministers.

But we need to give Territorians confidence that decisions we make in government are strong. Territorians want to see a return to integrity in government, to know that government decisions can stand up to the scrutiny that Question Time provides, and we, as a government, welcome that scrutiny.

We have accepted the advice of the Remuneration Tribunal to provide new research resources to the Independent members of this Assembly. We have accepted the advice of the Remuneration Tribunal to

continue the same level of funding for the opposition because we welcome scrutiny of our ideas and decisions.

Territorians expect that everyone in this House will be treated fairly and have their voice heard, because at the end of the day we are here as representatives of our community. Each one of us comes from a very unique area in the Territory. We need to bring that into this House, and we need to ask questions and take that information back to our communities.

This change to Question Time is just one more way that this government is stepping up to the plate and demonstrating our action, and encouraging open and transparent government.

I would also like to move an amendment to this motion to clarify the status of supplementary questions on Wednesday under this new Question Time format.

In drafting this motion we inadvertently did not allow for a supplementary question from the opposition and Independent members, so if the opposition and Independent members would welcome the amendment we simply need to—pursuant to Standing Order 90 I move an amendment to the motion as follows: we need to delete the final full stop after the words 'standing orders' and insert a comma; however, one supplementary question is permitted in line with Standing Order 106(4)(b).

I have a signed copy of the proposed amendment and will ask the Clerk to circulate it to all members.

In drafting this motion we did not realise we had blocked the supplementary question. That was not the intention of our motion, so I apologise to members opposite. The proposal will be that on Wednesdays questions are from Independent and opposition members and one supplementary question is allowed as per every other Question Time.

I have detailed in the amendment to the motion that supplementary questions will still be allowed in line with Stand Order 106(4)(b). It is important to note that this amendment to the motion clarifies that one supplementary question is still allowed each Question Time, including Wednesdays. Supplementary questions are important to clarify questions asked of ministers; I think we all know that. It was never the intention of the government to remove the supplementary questions on Wednesday, and by the amendment to the motion I am proposing we are clarifying that.

Our government welcomes scrutiny of our decisions. Last week this Assembly established a new select committee to ensure a high level of scrutiny of government decisions, and we look forward to that body of work being developed over the next few months with input from Territorians and every member of this House.

These changes to Question Time provide an additional avenue for scrutiny. We are proposing this significant change to Question Time today because we think it is important to get this change under way. I look forward to the debate that will ensue. I am happy to take questions from members opposite. We are hopeful that the motion will pass today, which will put this in place for Question Time tomorrow. I look forward to questions put forward by members today and the select committee body of work. We are not ruling anything out of that body of work, which will be undertaken separately.

We are simply hopeful the motion will be passed today so we can have the new format for Question Time, beginning from tomorrow. I look forward to listening to the debate from members opposite.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I thank the government and the Attorney-General for bringing this motion before the House. It is a very important motion and something we have taken a lot of time to consider. The opposition supports the government's proposal to have non-government Question Time on Wednesdays. That is a step in the right direction and it is welcomed by the opposition. It is very important that the opposition has the opportunity to scrutinise the government in an effective and efficient way without the interruption of Dorothy Dixers, as they are colloquially known. It will allow the opposition to prosecute a much stronger line of argument and put more significant scrutiny on the government. Wednesdays are certainly a welcome opportunity for us.

However, we as an opposition cannot in good conscience accept the second part of the motion, which restricts the parliament from asking a minister two questions in a row. We have a number of reasons why we cannot support that element of the motion. As a result of that I move the following amendment: that all the words:

... but no single minister may be asked consecutive questions without an intervening question being asked of a different member who is a minister, committee chair, Speaker or other member who is able to be asked a question without notice pursuant to standing orders.

Be omitted.

Speaking to the amendment ...

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Clarification—the government has introduced an amendment which might affect the motion, and the opposition Whip has now introduced a new amendment. Is that a new amendment to the proposed amendment to the original motion?

Madam SPEAKER: The government has moved an amendment to its motion. Everyone can speak to the motion and amendment together, but the opposition Whip has moved an amendment to the whole motion.

Mr GUNNER: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker, the Member for Spillett is speaking to the motion and the amendment, and she has moved another amendment. Any future speaker will speak to the motion and both the amendments. The Leader of Government Business has a right to speak to the new amendment separately to her right of reply to the whole motion.

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct. Those speaking now will speak to the motion plus both amendments. That means there are three questions before the Chair.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, will the wording of the motion from the government affect this motion? In other words, the government is asking that supplementary questions be allowed, and they will not be affected by your changes, but the amendment does not include your changes. If the amendment was agreed to, with your changes it would not make any sense.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, there will be two questions before the Chair. How it is impacted will depend on the debate.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Our amendment would not affect supplementary questions being allowed.

Mr Gunner: Have you circulated the amendment?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is coming.

Basically, it is to delete the second part of the motion. The opposition supports non-government Question Time on a Wednesday, and we thank the government for bringing that to the House. That is very important and it is welcomed. But, as I said, we cannot accept the second part of the motion, which restricts the parliament from asking two questions of a minister in a row. There is a number of compelling reasons for that, not the least of which is that this government came to power on a platform of trust, accountability and transparency. To now protect their ministers from being asked two questions in a row starkly contradicts that transparency and accountability platform.

We cannot understand the reason for that provision in the motion. The only reasoning we can think of is that it is to protect a minister from being asked too many questions in a row. This is unprecedented in this Chamber.

I will give an example of something that happens very often. An opposition member asks a question of the Chief Minister, who is, arguably, the most popular person to ask a question of during Question Time, and rightly so. By way of example, the Member for Daly asks a question of the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister answers and sits down. A government backbencher pops up, and their Dixie happens to be to the Chief Minister, as it often is. The Chief Minister answers the question, then an Independent member gets the next jump and wants to ask a question of the Chief Minister. That is three consecutive questions. They could all be on the same topic, by sheer coincidence, or they could all be on different topics; that is not really the point. The point is that even on a Tuesday or Thursday the same minister, more often than not, would be likely to be answer two questions in a row, from different members.

Our particular objection, as an opposition, particularly in this new parliament—this government needs to be very careful about the message it is sending to Territorians about its accountability and transparency platform. We are in a new parliament. The government has the majority. Territorians have spoken and endorsed them as a government, and we fully accept and appreciate that. But in a situation where you

have a two-member opposition—we have five Independents—there needs to be an opportunity for everyone to ask ministers questions.

A very real negative result of this motion—it could just be an unintended consequence, but it seems to be some way for this government to protect its ministers. A very real scenario that could happen on a Wednesday is that the opposition gets the first jump, as it often does in Question Time, it asks a question of a minister, then an Independent member takes the jump and, through no fault of their own, wants to ask the same minister a question—it could be on the same topic or a different topic—and they will be stopped.

This motion particularly impacts the Independents prosecuting their lines of inquiry, whose opportunity is even more limited in this Chamber than the opposition's opportunity to question the government. We take serious objection to that. I am sure the Independents will speak for themselves, but that is another point we highlight.

I do not know whether this government is worried about the performance of its ministers. Perhaps this is a lack of confidence. Are you worried about their performance here? Maybe you need to think about the makeup of your front bench. It is not the problem or fault of Territorians that you lack confidence in your ministry. Do you lack confidence in the Chief Minister? I have never heard of a Chief Minister not being able to take two questions in a row. It is extraordinary. I am not sure what the vulnerability is that the government is feeling. It should be buoyed with confidence. Look at all these smiling new faces in the Chamber. They are strong. There is a big team here.

I am sure, Chief Minister, if you were asked two questions your backbench would be cheering for you, yelling out 'Shame!' to us across the Chamber and backing you all the way. I am not sure what the lack of confidence is, Chief Minister. I am sure you are more than capable of answering two questions in a row.

Let us not forget that this significantly obstructs the democratic process. Sometimes Question Time can be all over the place, with a number of questions fielded on a number of portfolios on a number of issues. Other times there are very significant and real issues in the community that need to be properly prosecuted through a line of inquiry in this parliament. That is the job of non-government members. It is even the job of your backbenchers and non-Cabinet members, except for assistant ministers, but we are not 100% sure where that is; that is an argument for another day.

You are obstructing, stopping, gagging and hampering a line of inquiry that might need to be made on any given day. That is significant. What is the difference between Tuesday and Thursday, where a minister could get three or five questions in a row, and Wednesday? I do not see the difference and do not know why you feel the need to protect your ministers as much as you are in this motion for Wednesdays.

Question Time is a wonderful time for the government to display, pump up its chest and show Territorians its leadership ability, political and argumentative skills and ability to truly answer questions and tell Territorians what is happening, in a transparent way. Limiting ministers on how often they speak seems to disadvantage the parliamentary process, the opposition and, more significantly, the Independents, who, through no fault of their own, may be second to get the jump and therefore be obstructed by this government from asking a question.

We ask that the government supports our amendment. Surely it makes perfect sense that a minister can be asked two questions in a row. It is not about ganging up on someone or targeting someone; that is just how the business of this parliament works. Sometimes there will be a scattergun effect where different ministers are asked different questions on different portfolios, and other times a very succinct line of inquiry must be prosecuted in this parliament against one minister on various portfolios.

It is no different to coming up to Budget time—questions to the Treasurer. Significant events happening with legislative changes—questions to the Attorney-General. Significant issues in housing—questions to the Housing minister. It is not uncommon, unusual or out of the box to need to ask two, three, four or five questions of the same minister.

I hope the government, in the spirit of trust, accountability and transparency, sees that our amended motion is a transparent, accountable and trustworthy motion, and supports this motion in the House today.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I support the amendment. I am not sure how the government came to bringing this particular motion to this House. I do not think it makes any sense.

I support the changes where there will not be any Dorothy Dixers and only the opposition and Independents will be able to ask questions on Wednesdays. I have said in this House before that we perhaps should do that every day. Ministers can make three or four minute reports before Question Time, and Question Time can be used to question the ministers on the reports. You do not have a Dorothy Dixer section. You may have a part of Question Time as an opportunity for backbenchers of the government to ask local questions. That is important.

This is at least a move in the right direction, so I applaud the government for bringing on the concept of getting rid of Dorothy Dixers, at least on Wednesdays.

I am not sure who said it, but, 'You cannot be serious!' Who said that? You cannot be serious about these changes. It does not make any practical or common sense. It does not work.

Madam SPEAKER: John McEnroe.

Mr WOOD: John McEnroe. Thank you, I should have done it a bit slower. 'You cannot be serious!'

I will give some examples. As the Member for Spillett said, in ordinary Question Time sometimes ministers cop question after question from their side and our side. Are you saying the minister will wear out and we should bring in a bucket of cold water and some Gatorade at quarter time? It is not a long period of time, and we are in an air conditioned building. There should be advisers upstairs on the computer if people want answers to questions.

If I have a complicated question for a minister I give them some idea that I will ask that question so they are prepared. I hate hearing ministers say, 'I will let you know later'. There is no point.

Ms Fyles: You give us questions with notice?

Mr WOOD: I am not sure I am technically allowed to, but I do not see any point in asking a minister, 'Could you give me the exact number of camels, within 10%, that live in the NT?' That is not the sort of thing the minister would know, so you tell them you will ask that question. I have been to a couple of trivia nights lately and camels came up as a topic; that is why I remember that.

Let us look at a couple of examples. The CLP asks the first question to the Attorney-General, and it is about casinos. Do not forget that we have my favourite document, the Administrative Arrangements Order. Attorney-General, as you would know, you take up a few pages in this document. You have casinos, gaming, wagering and lotteries. I did not know what the CLP was going to ask, and I had prepared a question to you, Attorney-General, about work health and safety, another of your portfolios. I wanted to know the answer. You will say to me, 'If you do not have any other questions, too bad'. I might have questions on that because it might have been in the paper or people might have asked me about it. It does not make sense. Surely there is not a problem with the government answering questions one after the other.

Mr Gunner: Do some work, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: It does not make any sense. I would have to sit down. If that question is rejected ...

Mr Gunner: There is the next question.

Mr WOOD: We are dealing with the nuts and bolts of this. You are putting something forward that will have practical implications. I ask the Chief Minister two questions in a row; what is the big deal? The only explanation the Attorney-General gave as to why this has come forward is that answers are not always available to the minister. I understand that. That is why I sometimes send an email to the minister.

Ministers should know that when something appears on the news there is a fair chance they will get a question about it. They have advisers who should keep them well informed on these issues. During Question Time in some other parliaments they have a big file. They know that if a question is asked they can pull a file out and give an answer. I understand—new ministry, and people take a while to get used to what they are doing. If I can assist by giving an understanding of what my question will be, that helps the minister. I cannot see why I cannot ask two questions in a row.

If I ask a question and the Speaker rules that question out of order, is that counted as a question? If the Leader of the Opposition then asks another question of a minister who was also asked the first question, is that regarded as two in a row because my question was disallowed?

If all Independent and opposition members want to ask questions of the Chief Minister because there was a major issue—we might have had an emergency such as a cyclone and we want to know what the minister is doing about emergency operations—under this rule we cannot ask the Chief Minister consecutive questions on an important issue. I have to think of another question. I say, ‘Minister for Primary Industry, how are the GM bananas going?’ I have to ask another question so I can ask a question; that seems a bit pointless.

This is not a practical way to do things. The reason you have given is not sufficient for you to say, ‘We are going to tell this side of parliament where it should send its questions’. You are limiting our ability to ask questions.

Mr Gunner: We have given you greater time to ask questions.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I know you can play one against the other ...

Mr Gunner interjecting.

Mr WOOD: I knew that would come up. You can say, ‘We are giving you some changes and we think they are important’, and I am not knocking those changes, but it is no good for me to agree with another change that I do not think makes any sense. I am welcoming the change, but do not try to play me off and say, ‘With this hand we are giving and with that hand we are taking away’.

Mr Gunner: We will bring the Dixers back.

Mr WOOD: I understand, but that is not a reason for making a change that does not make good sense.

Mr Gunner: Do you want to go back?

Mr WOOD: No, do you see? I will take the interjection from the Chief Minister. He is saying, ‘Look what we are doing for you. We are getting rid of the Dorothy Dixers. We are going to take it off you if you do not agree with the second part of the motion.’

Mr Gunner: I am asking if that is what you are asking for.

Mr WOOD: No, I am not asking that. The Chief Minister is going to give me a new car. ‘Thank you, Chief Minister, but it has no wheels!’ ‘Accept it. Surely you accept that. Don’t be like that. Be grateful for small mercies’, as my mother would say. ‘You have a car; go and buy yourself some wheels somewhere else.’

It is about common sense. You want to be an open and transparent government. You want us, as opposition and Independents, to scrutinise government policy. Yet, you are limiting it. You are improving it on one hand and taking away with the other.

I am not saying your intent in trying to give us more questions is not good. But the change you are making does not make sense. In fact, it seems to work against the very philosophy of the original part of this motion, that you want to make your government more available to scrutiny. Then, on the other hand, you are saying you want to limit that scrutiny, so we cannot ask two, three or four questions. I might want to ask the minister for Primary Industry four or five questions on banana freckle. He answers and I realise he has not given enough information. I will ask for more information because I need to follow up on the line of questioning. It happens more so with the opposition, which tends to sometimes have a focus on an issue. Independents do not necessarily have that. From an opposition point of view, you limit it asking a line of questions, which may be its tactic in Question Time.

I put that forward, Attorney-General, because I do not see that it was thought through properly. Did someone say, ‘If this happens what will happen?’ If six people asked questions about bananas they would not be allowed. So what do we do? Do we wait until 3 pm and twiddle our thumbs, or think of other questions?

I am not against what you are trying to do; it is just that the practical implications of the second part of it do not make sense. I am not sure why that has been done, except for the answer the Attorney-General gave

that ministers might not have all the answers. We had the discussion about Kormilda the other day, and the Minister for Education copped a fair swag of questions in a row. She did not say ...

Ms Fyles: She got every question.

Mr WOOD: I know, but she did not stay, 'Stop. That is one question. I need a break. Bring out the Gatorade. Where is the ice bucket? It is quarter time at the footy and we will come back afterwards.'

Mr Gunner: She did not get every question in a row.

Mr WOOD: No, but she took a lot of questions under pressure. Chief Minister, you are saying the reason is that the minister could not answer the questions. Regardless of whether you agree with her or not, the Minister for Education answered the questions very well. She knew what she was saying. You are saying your ministers are not capable of answering the questions.

Mr Gunner: No, she did answer, but not consecutively.

Mr WOOD: What difference does it make?

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Nelson, through the Chair. Chief Minister, please cease interjecting.

Mr WOOD: What difference does it make whether you get two questions in a row or two questions out of three or three questions out of four?

Why should the government be prescribing it? You do not ruin the intent of what you are trying to do. The intent of what you are trying to do is supported. The prescription you are putting into this motion limits what questions we can ask, because even if a minister has different portfolios—we can ask the Attorney-General about casinos and lotteries, but if the Member for Blain wants to ask a question about work health he has to wait for another question in between to another minister.

I am not trying to be pedantic. I am just saying this is silly and it should have been worked out. I heard about this coming last week and I said to the Attorney-General that I do not think it makes much sense. I thought a few people would have sat down and said, 'This is not really sensible; let's drop it.'

Unfortunately we have come to this stage where we have to debate it. I hope it does not go through because you will spoil the intent of what you are trying to do. I praise what you are trying to do, Chief Minister, but please do not give me the car without the wheels.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Nelson, I agree with the notion behind this motion but I do not support that consecutive questions cannot be asked.

There are a couple of things that need to be pointed out, and I point out to the current Chief Minister that in the final sittings of the last term of government, in July, the Chief Minister answered five consecutive questions, including three questions and a supplementary from the then Leader of the Opposition, Michael Gunner. The previous Chief Minister was able to do it; I am sure the current Chief Minister can do it as well.

It raises a multitude of questions. Who is the minister we would deem as being asked the question if I ask the Chief Minister and he passes it to another minister after half answering the question?

There were some comments made earlier about ministers needing time to get the information. When I was a minister I had a folder, as the Member for Nelson said, which had all the information I needed refer to. There is still the ability to take a question on notice, which quite often happened in previous terms of parliament, not just our government but yours as well. You would take questions on notice, and often the answers would be given at the end of Question Time.

The other thing that needs to be borne out here is that the Westminster system has a process by which one minister fronts for questions on a day. The Health minister will be asked multiple questions. This system seems to be in complete contradiction to that approach.

This is a method of getting rid of Dorothy Dixers. As the Member for Nelson highlighted, ministerial reports may be a way of getting around those. This is not from an opposition point of view, but I think that is a good

way to do it. But the question needs to be asked, what about the other government backbenchers? Surely they need an opportunity to ask questions of their ministers about things in their electorate, which are not Dorothy Dixers so ministers can pat themselves on the back. That is an instance of where they can give the minister notice.

Knowing some of the amendments we want to make for Wednesdays, another question I raise is when looking at the committees—I agree that the committees need reviewing. If we set up larger committees and open the parliament up on Wednesday mornings, so the ministers will have Wednesday mornings free. Then in Question Time we will lighten the load for them because they cannot be asked two questions in a row, and in the afternoon we will go into General Business, which does not involve ministers much. I suppose this becomes an RDO for the ministers.

This is getting really hard. I wonder if they will give them leave loading. Will we increase their penalty rates, a bit like we are going to do for Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Let's be real. They need to be accountable, which means being asked questions. Will you do this to the journalists outside? Will you say to the journalists, 'Sorry, I cannot take two questions in a row. I can't handle it. I will need time to get some information.'

Madam Speaker, I have said enough about how ridiculous that part of the motion is. I fully support the amendment to deleting that. I thank the government and praise it for the initiative to get rid of Dorothy Dixers. They are the greatest waste of time that has ever been introduced into a parliament.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, speaking to the amendment from an Opposition Leader who walked out of a media conference, it sounds as if the Opposition Leader does not want Dorothy Dixers scrapped.

In regard to the practicalities of this, we are offering the opposition and Independent members a full hour of questioning, but we are saying within that process—as everyone has pointed out, we have personal notes in the Chamber. If there is a continued line of questioning, a Dixer allows the minister an opportunity to refer to those notes and then provide concise information to the Independent and opposition members.

It is unbelievable that the Leader of the Opposition and the Independent members are arguing with us, saying they do not want a full hour of questions. Is it the number of questions you are worried about? You will have the opportunity to ask double the number of questions, but you do not want to have to think of more than one theme? You want to have a theme for the day and stick to it.

We are giving you a full hour of questions, and the responses we have had are unbelievable, except for the one believable response. We all accept the Chief Minister's popularity, and we welcome that comment from the Deputy Opposition Leader.

We have personal notes in the Chamber which we are allowed to refer to when there is a break in questioning. We saw that from the opposition when it was in government. Scrapping Dixers is a trust issue in this parliament. The comments we are hearing from those opposite are unbelievable. It is hard to believe the comment that scrapping Dorothy Dixers is undemocratic. We are trying to put in place a more democratic process.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I believe the minister is misleading the parliament. No one has said we are against removing Dorothy Dixers.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nelson.

Ms FYLES: We are trying to put in place a process that allows the Independent and opposition members more time to ask questions of ministers. We are also putting in place a practical measure so we can provide fulsome answers and have the opportunity to refer to notes. We are simply saying you cannot ask the same minister two questions in a row. You can come back to it on the third question; you can ask me a question as AG, then another minister can be asked a question and then it can come back to me. We are simply making sure this is a practical process. I find it unbelievable that those opposite have been given a full hour—we have said we will only allow questions from government backbenchers on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Mr Wood: We are Independents; we do not know what they will ask.

Ms FYLES: If a question is asked of a minister and that was your question to the same minister—surely you have more than one question you can ask, or is it that you have only one theme of questioning. One must question why the opposition does not want to do the work and have more than one theme of questions.

We think the proposal to scrap Dorothy Dixers on Wednesday is practical. It provides an opportunity for our backbenchers, the assistant ministers, to ask questions on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We recognise the opposition and Independents and we are giving them a full hour on Wednesdays to ask questions.

Then they brought up that there will be committee work in the morning and then GBD. GBD is all about ministers providing responses, so we found those comments unbelievable.

We are saying that on Wednesdays members opposite will have the opportunity to ask questions. If it so happens that out of the eight ministers their next question was to the same minister, because they do not talk so they did not know, they would just go to their next question and then come back to it. We are scrapping Dorothy Dixers, and we find it unbelievable that we have an opposition and Independents outraged that we are doing that.

We will not be supporting the amendment to the motion. The intent of the motion is to provide for scrutiny of the government with practical measures, and I look forward to the debate continuing.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I speak in favour of the amendment to the motion brought forward by the Member for Spillett.

It would be okay—I can assure you as a former minister—to answer more than two questions in a row. Even if one minister was asked every question during Question Time, it would be okay. You would cope with it. In the weeks to come you will feel more and more confident about your portfolios, and you will embrace the opportunity to stand up, possibly for a whole hour, and answer questions regarding your portfolios. It will be okay; you do not have to be fearful. I am sensing that the new government is feeling a bit vulnerable.

It has put forward a tremendous offer of not having Dorothy Dixers on a Wednesday, which is very kind. It is very generous and lateral in approaching Question Time on Wednesdays, but to say we cannot ask one minister two questions in a row is almost embarrassing, and I think it is pathetic.

The Chief Minister is earning around \$350 000 a year. All the ministers are earning at least \$250 000 a year, with the deputy and the Leader of Government Business on probably \$280 000 a year. You are all earning really good money to answer a couple of extra questions on Wednesdays. I think you can handle it. You do not need to doubt yourselves or think you cannot do it; you can do it. Boaden your minds to allow this amendment to go through would be a genuine sign that you are opening up Question Time on Wednesdays for the Independents and the two members of the opposition to have an opportunity to grill you all about your portfolios.

There is nothing to be afraid of or hide from. You can do it. It would be great preparation for you. In a couple of months you will all sit before the Estimates Committee, where you will have hours of being grilled with question after question. You know what? You will get through that too. You can answer all the questions during estimates, and if you do not know the answer—I think my colleagues on this side of the Chamber have already said this—you can take the question on notice. You can simply say, 'I do not know; I will get back to you.' That is okay too; you can do that.

You will have other commitments as a minister. You will be asked to give presentations to the public, who will ask more than one question at a time too. They might ask you 50 questions and you will have to stump up and answer them. Do no doubt yourselves. Have confidence in the fact you can do it. Open this up to truly being transparent and open for all members of this parliament to ask you more than one question at a time. I have confidence in you and I think Territorians would really appreciate you extending yourselves that little bit further in Question Time on Wednesdays.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, that is the line I was intending to take. I have confidence in your capacity to answer questions one after the other. In fact, you will probably be a little bit frustrated when you get into the flow of discussion and inquiry and it is interrupted.

I find it really cute that the argument used to justify this is that you are only thinking of us because you want to give us really good information, and if you do not have time to get your notes organised and we ask you

a question and you are still in a bit of a spin, you will not be able to provide us with high-quality information. That is a fairly lame argument.

I have a dream, though, that the real Westminster system would operate, which is that just the Cabinet is held to account and every other member is free to ask a question. You call them Dorothy Dixers because they have all been tamed. The edge has been taken off and they are managed and controlled in the interests of the party. When the Attorney-General says, 'We will not be supporting this', what, all the sheep say baa? We will not be, even though we have not had a chat about it.

There will come a time when people will be compelled to ask a question that has not been approved by the party, and that is, in fact, how the Westminster system started. It was the Cabinet that was held to account by every other member of the parliament, unencumbered by the interests of the protection of the party. That would be good. To control the flow of inquiry in the interest of what? Protecting the interests of the government, the party? I think Territorians, if they are listening to this—and I am sure there are some listening to this—would sense that there is the giving of something and the taking of something.

Without a doubt, I applaud what you intend to do. All members have the same regard for what your intention is, but this one small thing displays a slight weakness that will not be good for you in the long run. We started with a good intention to advance the interests of Territorians in regard to what has happened in the past and to make real progress. This is an interruption to that process and it slows it down, makes it awkward and has us asking a question we should not be asking.

It is well over 50 days since the last election. We have not heard much from the government. It is saying loudly that this is a new era, but we have not received a lot of information. We have had most of the discussion about the resources that will possibly go to the Independents, for which we are supposed to be grateful. But there has not been much discussion. There has been greater discussion about how we are all managing our affairs than the scrutiny the government. The media has been exceptionally kind to you in the last 50 or more days.

If it is difficult for you and you seek to save face, wait until everyone is settled in. You will only need a couple of Question Times and then we could loosen it up. If you need time to settle in, okay, but to live out in truth what you are trying to do, let it flow; it will be fine. We are not after you. We want to know what is happening. If you go to a barbecue and are having a good discussion around the table, you do not like to control the conversation. It does not work.

It will work; we have confidence in you. Trust us. We will not hurt you. We just want to ask you questions.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this motion to the House, which is essentially a motion agreed to by government members to provide further transparency and accountability in this process of the Westminster system.

Then the government proposed an amendment because we admit we made a fundamental syntax mistake and we now need to clean that up to ensure there is the opportunity to ask a supplementary question. There is another agreement by government members. Then we had amendment from the opposition.

It is interesting, at this stage, to talk about the opposition. What has emerged out of the ashes of the CLP as an opposition has only the last four years to base transparency, accountability and credibility on. That is a pretty low base, let's face it. I find it disingenuous that we have an opposition accusing the new government of a lack of transparency. We are adhering to a process and have allowed an hour of questions from opposition and Independents, adhering to the Westminster system and the protocols of this parliament. We have offered you a bonus but, unfortunately, you are coming off a very low base of transparency, accountability and integrity.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Is the minister speaking to the amendment?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister is speaking to everything.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Speaker, I would like to start with Dorothy Dixers. I have picked up from the Member for Nelson, after many years in this place, about the government being able to tell its story. This is the House that translates information to the public, the people we represent. The Dorothy Dixer, or the question asked of a government minister by a government member, is an important part of this process because it tells a story; it also gives opposition members information they can bounce off to ask questions.

I believe in that process; I support that process. It is also, as we have heard from the Attorney-General, part of the structure of this parliament to make it work.

If you go back and look at some of the dodgy deals of the CLP—I can remember, when I was in opposition, CLP members regularly pasting me with, ‘Well if it was such a good idea then why did you not bring it into government?’ I ask the CLP opposition, why did you not make changes to Question Time? Why did you not bring in new open, transparent and accountable measures for Question Time? As a matter of fact, for the last four years I was an eye and ear witness to the stifling of open and transparent debate in this House by the previous CLP government. Outrageously, for four years I incurred the wrath, abuse and insults, and watched the manipulation of processes in this House to cut and gag debate. You guys must have had some sort of an epiphany.

Mr Higgins interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: We are getting a bit of a reaction. I pick up on the interjection of the Leader of the Opposition. We have hit a nerve there. Bounce out of the box, Leader of the Opposition.

This is a good motion; the amendment is a good motion, structurally, and I do not agree with your amendment whatsoever.

Member for Nelson, you seem to want to flip this, and the flip side is that you are suggesting the minister will not be able to answer your questions. The Member for Nelson has flipped this, and he does not have any confidence in this new government. Let us say we are going to trial this, and it will start tomorrow if this motion passes in the House. We will put the opposition and Independents on notice about making them work. This is what this debate is really about, making you work.

The Attorney-General was very clear in her advice to this parliament that the government has accepted the advice of the Remuneration Tribunal, providing new research resources ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 38: relevance. The minister said this is a trial so could he please tell us the expiration of this terrible trial.

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. Minister, you have the call.

Mr McCARTHY: I qualified that and I said if this motion passes we will see this tomorrow. This will be for the Territory to judge tomorrow, Member for Spillett.

The Attorney-General said:

We have accepted the advice of the Remuneration Tribunal to continue the same level of funding for the opposition because we welcome scrutiny of our ideas and decisions.

That is important, because you have resources and you have an important job, and you will be able to exercise your role even better if this goes through this House.

I will put out a bit of a challenge, because it is about perception in the public and parliament—it is about credibility. How long will the Leader of the Opposition continue to read those disingenuous preambles to questions? When will the Leader of the Opposition rise to the occasion and get with the new accountability in this parliament? I give you an example of a preamble, where the Leader of the Opposition said that the government has done nothing, it is wandering and the public service is in disarray and is completely lost. It was a totally disingenuous statement that started off your campaign as an opposition member in this parliament with no credibility, because considerable structural changes have been made to the machinery of government and how we operate, including transparency and accountability, and the public sector is embracing that.

Leader of the Opposition, I am getting some very positive feedback from the public sector, which has said, ‘Finally! After four years of complete chaos, dysfunction and lack of credibility, we want to get on with the job of implementing government policy.’

I will also address an Independent’s role in this House. The Member for Araluen has made statements in this House that the previous Labor government, from 2008 to 2012, did not provide \$5m to Alice Springs for the development of the CBD. The Chief Minister corrected that in an answer. I found that totally disingenuous. If you really want to explore that—the Labor government from 2008 to 2012 did extensive

work in Alice Springs. I will not go through all the work we did, but one of those bodies of work included \$5m to the Alice Springs Town Council to enhance the Alice Springs CBD.

If you look at it today and see the considerable traffic management initiatives that were put in place and the CCTV cameras for safety and security in the CBD, you will be able to explore the appropriation of the \$5m, made by decision-makers in the Alice Springs Town Council and its elected members in an open and transparent process, with their constituents.

If opposition members and Independents want to embrace this change, they might have a bit of a challenge in regard to kicking off with completely disingenuous, mischievous approaches to questions, playing into the space of lack of accountability and transparency. We are accountable to ourselves ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 38: relevance. The minister is going on a tangent that no one quite understands. The debate is very clear; we are debating a motion where this government wants to stop its ministers from being asked two questions in a row, which in any other forum would be nonsensical.

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. The minister has plenty of time to answer.

Mr McCARTHY: I will go back to the Attorney-General's contribution to this House with a very powerful clause:

We need to encourage a culture of respect.

That is what this is about. This is about open and transparent processes. It is about conforming to parliamentary procedure and developing and valuing a culture of respect. As I have said in my contribution to this debate that, I have already seen completely disingenuous contributions from members opposite. That needs to be taken on in regard to personal and professional responsibility.

I support the Attorney-General in her motion. I support the amendment regarding structural change to ensure they get to ask supplementary questions on the opposition benches, but I will not support—I will be loud—the Member for Spillett's proposed amendment to this motion.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, it is unbelievable that we heard from the opposition and Independent members that they do not want an hour's Question Time, that they cannot come up with more than one theme.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The Member for Nelson took exception to the minister using those words before. At no stage has anyone on this side of the House said we do not want an hour of non-government Question Time.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Sit down, please.

Ms FYLES: One might question whether they can think of more than one theme for an hour of Question Time. We think this is a good measure. We were elected to be open and transparent.

Mrs Finocchiaro: What an arrogant government you are already.

Ms FYLES: In doubling the questions for the Independent and opposition members, we get comments like that from the opposite side.

We will progress with this change. We believe it is a good thing for the parliament. We believe that providing for a full hour of questions from the other side on Wednesdays is a good opportunity for Territorians to see how robust and innovative their opposition members are. What questions will they ask? Can they do the work? One must question what we have heard over the last hour or so of debate. They do not want to come up with more than one theme for Question Time.

Madam Speaker, we will not be supporting the amendment from the opposition. We believe the motion we put forward is a good one. I apologise again for supplementary questions having to be put forward as an amendment, but we want to ensure the supplementary question provided on a regular sitting day is also provided on Wednesdays.

Madam SPEAKER: The Assembly has before it the proposal with two amendments. One amendment proposes to add words to the motion to permit supplementary questions. One amendment, moved by the Deputy Opposition Leader, is to delete words. Therefore, I put the question for the deletion amendment first.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 6

Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Guyula
Mr Higgins
Mrs Lambley
Mr Mills
Mr Wood

Noes 18

Ms Ah Kit
Mr Collins
Mr Costa
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mr Kirby
Ms Lawler
Mr McCarthy
Mr McConnell
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Ms Nelson
Mr Paech
Mr Sievers
Ms Uibo
Mr Vowles
Ms Wakefield
Mrs Worden

Amendment not agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, the question now is that the amendment proposed by the Leader of Government Business be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 18

Ms Ah Kit
Mr Collins
Mr Costa
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mr Kirby
Ms Lawler
Mr McCarthy
Mr McConnell
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Ms Nelson
Mr Paech
Mr Sievers
Ms Uibo
Mr Vowles
Ms Wakefield
Mrs Worden

Noes 6

Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Guyula
Mr Higgins
Mrs Lambley
Mr Mills
Mr Wood

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**YOUTH JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 5)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 amends the *Youth Justice Act* and Youth Justice Regulations. The Bill gives effect to government's intent to prohibit the use of a restraint chair on youth detainees in the Northern Territory pursuant to the *Youth Justice Act*.

On 25 July 2016, ABC *Four Corners* aired an investigation into the Northern Territory's youth detention centres. The report showed CCTV footage of a youth detainee seated upright in a purpose-built chair, with material belts secured around the wrists, ankles, and lap, across each shoulder and under the armpit of the detainee. The detainee's head was fitted with a mask, colloquially termed a 'spit hood', used to prevent the transfer of diseases from spitting and biting.

There is no doubt that these images had a significant impact on the community, as evident from the number of community members who approached me expressing their distress at what had occurred. It is an absolute priority for me as the Minister for Territory Families to ensure that young people are treated with respect and dignity while also ensuring the safety of staff. These priorities are not mutually exclusive and I am committed to consulting and working with staff, and with the community, to create a safe environment for those young people and the dedicated staff who work with them.

I acknowledge and welcome the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory and the opportunity to give careful consideration to the findings of the Royal Commission relative to:

- failings in the child protection and youth detention systems of the government of the Northern Territory
- the effectiveness of any oversight mechanisms and safeguards to ensure the treatment of detainees was appropriate
- cultural and management issues that may exist within the Northern Territory youth detention system
- whether the treatment of detainees breached laws or the detainees' human rights
- whether more should have been done by the government of the Northern Territory to take appropriate measures to prevent the reoccurrence of inappropriate treatment.

We know that the child protection and youth justice system requires reform and this government will fully cooperate with the Royal Commission.

While we wait on the findings of the Royal Commission, this government cannot remain passive with regards to the use of restraint chairs on youth detainees; this matter requires immediate attention.

I have met with the Children's Commissioner, Ms Colleen Gwynne, and discussed with her the concerns she identified in her own initiative investigation into 'Services provided by the NT Department of Correctional Services to Don Dale Youth Detention Centre and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre'. The Children's Commissioner's report will be tabled during these sittings and gives further credence to the urgency of this Bill.

I have also given consideration to the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians report into *Human rights standards in youth detention facilities in Australia: the use of restraint, disciplinary regimes and other specified practices*. This report provides guidance regarding the circumstances under which force or restraint should be used. It provides a guide for this amendment and will help to guide the review of all policies and procedures that Territory Families is undertaking in youth justice to protect the wellbeing of young people and staff.

Due to the urgency needed to ensure restraint chairs are not able to be used on youth detainees pursuant to the *Youth Justice Act*, the Bill currently before the House is limited in its scope, but remedies an urgent issue of significant public importance. This is a beginning, the first pragmatic step that needs to take place

in order to ensure the safety of young people and staff and to begin to restore public confidence in the Youth Justice system; however, it does not stop here.

Today, with the support of my ministerial colleagues, I commit to a full review of the current *Youth Justice Act* and to the introduction of a new contemporary *Youth Justice Act*. This new Act will reflect international standards and the standards set by the Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators and will only be drafted after extensive community consultation and will be guided by the findings of the current Royal Commission.

I seek to make it abundantly clear to the House that under this Bill, youth detainees in the Northern Territory cannot be secured in a restraint chair pursuant to the *Youth Justice Act*.

It is important to note that the effective prohibition of restraint chairs, through not approving the restraint chair for use as an approved restraint in amended section 151AB of the *Youth Justice Act*, applies to all young people in the care and custody of Youth Justice, Territory Families, irrespective of where the young person is accommodated. Operational staff, whether youth justice or correctional services, must act in accordance with the *Youth Justice Act* when engaging with youth detainees.

Amended section 151AB of the Bill lists only those devices which may be used to restrain a youth detainee. The advice of the Youth Detention Restraint Practice Advisory Group, comprised of Northern Territory Government agencies that have expert skills, knowledge and experience relevant to restrain in youth detention, has been used to inform government in proposing the devices that are permissible for use on youth detainees.

The Bill clearly sets out that only devices considered to be approved restraints in amended section 151AB are handcuffs, ankle cuffs, and waist restraining belts. Any device not listed is therefore prohibited from being used to restrain a youth detainee pursuant to the *Youth Justice Act*.

The devices listed in the bill as approved restraints include restraints within the category of the restraint; for example, handcuffs may include a flex cuff or velcro locking handcuff. This recognises an approved restraint must be suitable for each and every circumstance it is used, taking into account the physical, psychological and emotional welfare of the individual youth detainee, and the behaviour the detainee is displaying, or security risk the detainee presents.

The authority to approve devices to restrain youth detainees will no longer rest with the Commissioner for Correctional Services, and instead will be subject to scrutiny through the law-making process as per amended section 151AB of the *Youth Justice Act*. This is because the only way an additional device can be considered an approved restraint for use on a youth detainee is by further amending the legislation.

The Bill also provides increased accountability as to the use of approved restraints, that being, handcuffs, ankle cuffs and waist restraining belts, on youth detainees through requiring the commissioner to make a determination governing the use of approved restraints. The *Youth Justice Act* currently prescribes in section 217(3) that the regulations may authorise the commissioner or a superintendent of a detention centre to make a determination with respect to:

- (a) the management and operation of a detention centre
- (b) the maintaining of order within a detention centre
- (c) a grievance or complaint of a detainee, or
- (d) the health, welfare, safe custody and protection of a detainee.

Regulation 30(1) then provides that the commissioner or superintendent may make a determination in relation to any aspect of 'the management and operation of the detention centre'. This is further qualified by Regulation 30(2), which provides that a determination may relate to the conduct of persons, whether detainees or other persons, within the detention centre.

The Bill amends Regulation 30(1), to cover the entirety of section 217(3) of the *Youth Justice Act*, therefore widening the matters for which the commissioner or superintendent can make a determination. The ability to make a determination will therefore have application to the use of restraint on a youth detainee.

To achieve this, the draft Bill amends the definition of appropriate in section 151AA, by inserting a new paragraph (c) which provides, in relation to the use of an approved restraint, appropriate means using the restraint in accordance with the determination made by the commissioner under Regulation 30(1).

Section 151AA currently provides that appropriate means using the restraint in the least restrictive or invasive way reasonable in the circumstances, and for the minimum amount of time reasonable in the circumstances. The newly inserted paragraph (c) in section 151AA complements the existing safeguards in requiring that for the use of approved restraint to be appropriate, it must be in accordance with a determination made by the commissioner.

The effect of the proposed amendment is to place a requirement on the commissioner alone to ensure that a determination regarding the use of approved restraints must be developed prior to any use of an approved restraint on youth detainees. The determination will prescribe that approved restraints are used as a last resort, where methods of engaging a youth detainee to de-escalate behaviour have been exhausted.

The amendment requires that the use of an approved restraint on a detainee in a youth detention centre must be carried out in accordance with the determination binding operational practice, and therefore, must be followed by all staff.

The Bill amends section 158A(1) of the *Youth Justice Act* to expand upon the particulars that must be contained in the register of use of approved restraints. Currently, the superintendent of a detention centre is required to keep a register of the particulars relating to the identity of the youth detainee, the type of restraint that was used, the circumstances leading to the use of the restraint, the date the restraint was used, the time the restraint was applied and the time the restraint was removed, the identity of the person who authorised the use of the restraint and any medical attention that was required.

The Bill omits paragraphs (d) and (e) from section 158(1) and inserts a new paragraph (d) to specify that the superintendent of a detention centre must record the period for which the approved restraint was used, including the date and time at which the restraint was applied and the date and time at which the restraint was removed.

The considerations under existing paragraph (d), regarding the requirement to record the date on which the approved restraint was used and existing paragraph (e), regarding the requirement to record the time period of restraint use, are now provided for in the newly inserted paragraph (d). This avoids inconsistency in terminology or repetition in the particulars that must be contained in the register, relative to recording details of any assessment made during the period the restraint was used, through the insertion of new paragraph (e).

The Bill inserts new paragraph (e) to specify that the superintendent of a detention centre must include in the register, details of any assessment made during the period the restraint was used on a youth detainee. This includes the time the assessment was made, the outcome of the assessment and the reasons for that outcome. The Bill further amends section 158A to insert subsection (3) which provides that for the purposes of section 158A, assessment means an assessment as to whether:

- (a) the restraint can be removed, or
- (b) the restraint is still necessary.

The requirement to assess the ongoing use of restraint, at minimal intervals, from the time that the restraint is applied, reflects existing reporting requirements when a restraint is used on a youth detainee.

Operational practice dictates that staff must assess the use of the restraint throughout the period of restraint use to ensure that the application of the restraint is still necessary. Newly inserted subsection (3) confirms that when making an assessment, staff must record in the register the reasons as to why the restraint was removed from the youth detainee, or alternatively, the reasons as to why the restraint was still necessary. This provides greater transparency during the period for which the restraint was used, and complements the requirement now contained in newly inserted paragraph (d) for staff to record the date and time of restraint use relative to a youth detainee.

It is anticipated that Northern Territory Government agencies will provide advice in the making of a determination regarding use of restraint on youth detainees, to ensure that the operational guidance contained within the determination is representative of the position of Northern Territory Government

agencies that have clear intersect with restraint use relative to youth detainees. Consultation with non-government agencies regarding the content of the determination has already commenced.

This government is committed to ensuring increased transparency and accountability regarding the use of restraint on youth detainees. Determinations pertaining to restraint use must be given to youth detainees upon their admission to a detention centre, or as soon as practical after their admission, to ensure detainees are informed and made aware of how restraints can be used on them.

Determinations will be made publicly available.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to honourable members and table the explanatory statement to accompany the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Continued from 20 October 2016.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions responding to the Administrator's Address to the Assembly. In his speech the Administrator referred to the importance of his trust and the trust our electors placed in the Members of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly, all the members of this parliament—trust that we will all serve Territorians faithfully, diligently and with integrity. Territorians deserve nothing less. This will be an essential and core value of my government. There is no doubt that Territory voters expressed a clear and resounding message about this in our recent election. It is important for us to acknowledge that this is understood.

It is a theme that has underpinned many of the speeches we have heard over the past few days, including those of the Independent members of the Assembly and the opposition. We have, as a legacy of the last four years, a deep trust deficit, which all in this place now have a responsibility to fix to restore trust in government and parliament.

I have committed to leading a government of policy, not personality, focused on inclusion and governing in the best interests of all Territorians, no matter where they live. I have also committed to leading an approach that hinges on collaboration and looking outside of government for the wisdom we will need to govern equitably for all in the face of our many challenges. It is appropriate to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Spillett acknowledge the failings of our most recent government and accept the message delivered by voters, understanding that Territorians demand a government of integrity, not a government distracted and side-tracked by self-interest and personality—a government of honesty and integrity.

In his reply speech, the Leader of the Opposition committed to strong scrutiny of government decision-making, but also offered collaboration in working to address key issues, like alcohol management, across the NT. I look forward to the many policy debates we will have in this Chamber. The Leader of the Opposition has a key role in ensuring good government, and I look forward to holding him to that, working with him and his team in the best interests of all Territorians.

The Members for Nelson and Goyder reminded us of core issues that go to the ongoing wellbeing of the Territory, including the need for government consultation and community inclusion. They reminded us of the priority that has to be given to restoring confidence in land-use planning and the integrity of government decision-making. The rural area has strong representation. They have not always agreed amongst themselves on the floor of this parliament; they have strong opinions and strong values. I do not know if a Chief Minister has ever met the rural area's high expectations and standards, but I promise to do my best and to listen to the members from the rural area. I look forward to their knowledge and support in our work in these important area, including our commitment to the appointment of an integrity commissioner and an independent commission against corruption. After all, the rural area is expert in being independent.

The Member for Araluen spoke of her constituents in Alice Springs and concerns expressed to her that their issues of importance continue to be central to government decision-making. I say that is an unnecessary fear. I know Robyn will be an articulate advocate for Alice Springs, but so will we, from the Member for Stuart to the Members for Namatjira, Braitling and Barkly. I love Alice, and we will be a good government for Alice Springs. We have very strong, passionate members from Central Australia.

Working to support our communities right across the Territory, both regional and remote, is core to our government, my leadership and how we want to be. We have heard those values, reinforced by the heartfelt contributions from all our government members representing constituents in Central Australia. They are well grounded in the issues of concern to Centralians and full of energy to champion those matters in government, whether they go to economy, infrastructure, family wellbeing or community safety.

The Member for Nhulunbuy, like other speakers, spoke of the importance of understanding and responding to the different perspectives and values held by Territorians, particularly Indigenous knowledge and governance values. This too will be central to my government, reflecting my core belief in localising decision-making, understanding the issues that need to be addressed and working with local people in the design and implementation of solutions and community development. We have to do it better and with locals.

The Member for Nhulunbuy also spoke of his interest in issues relating to reconciliation, using the mechanism of a treaty or other forms of negotiated agreement that acknowledge and respect Indigenous values and priorities. I have said that I am open to that conversation. We talked about that before the last Territory election.

My government and I are focused on inclusion and working together with all Territorians. I want that conversation to emanate from outside government. I look forward to working with my colleagues and all members of this Assembly to map out an opportunity for that conversation and negotiation.

One of the key features of the speeches we have heard was the great range of life experience, skills and knowledge that all members of this Assembly bring to this place. We have heard stories of difficult circumstances, resilience, self-development and adaptation to change. We have heard and felt the energy, compassion and commitment that the members of the Thirteenth Assembly bring to their work.

I will steal a quote from the Member for Nightcliff that we had ...

Ms Fyles: You can borrow it.

Mr GUNNER: I can borrow the quote and you can take it back. I do not want to sound jaded and cynical, having been here for eight years; I do not think I am, but there is something about listening to the debut speeches of the new members in this Chamber that reminds us of the enthusiasm we have about the task before us. I thought that, as always, was refreshing at the start of this term.

We have heard from all members about the importance of family and community—community support, family support and family love. These life stories reflect the great character of the Territory, and not only are they the core values of Territorians, but those of my government. We heard the Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Children speak passionately about her key role in delivering my government's priority work in the area of early childhood and family wellbeing. Nicole is a young mother with a son in the specific age we are targeting. The first thousand days are crucial, and I know she will lead a fantastic effort across our team, with buy-in from the whole team.

We know the importance of investing in our children. We know the long-term impact this will have if we get it right, and this is the legacy we need to start. I believe we will have buy-in from the entire parliament towards that.

We have heard strong messages from members about the need for attention to family violence and youth development. We have also heard many stories of the importance of education, including adult education and retraining, and of enterprise and having a go. Education is a key priority for every wise government, and I look forward to our important work in this area being led by the Minister for Education, reinvesting in our public schools, boosting teacher numbers, expanding Families as First Teachers and developing more local community leadership of schools as places central to the lives and wellbeing in every community.

There have been life stories from members amongst us who have come from other places to start a new life in the Territory. We have also heard Indigenous members of government, particularly the new Members for Arafura, Arnhem, Namatjira and Karama, speak proudly of their great culture and history, and how they now want to help lead more inclusion and understanding of Indigenous values and wellbeing.

We are very fortunate to have the very experienced Member for Arafura. I love the respect that Lawrence paid to past members with strong Tiwi names—Tungatalum, Tipiloura, Rioli, Scrymgour, Kurrupuwu, and now Costa, following a strong line of people who have spoken very clearly for the constituents of Arafura.

Lawrence is a strong advocate for remote health, and he spoke passionately and powerfully about disengagement from family and kinship. We can make a difference, Member for Arafura.

The Member for Arnhem has been on a 16-year journey to be here, having been a youth parliamentarian. I am glad you went back to teaching, returned to Numbulwar, and survived your first class, where you were related to everyone, which is incredible and has to be rare. Your energy clearly brims over the boundaries that are set for you—breaking barriers, fundraising, winning awards for excellence and now representing your community in parliament. We welcome you.

Chanston James Paech knows how to steal a show. What a quote, 'I am young, I am gay, I am black, a true blue Territorian'. The Member for Namatjira said much more beyond those words, and he is aware of the deep challenges we will face. I look forward to working with him on those challenges. He represents an area of Central Australia that has deep challenges. We will work together on those.

I have to apologise to the Member for Karama. Often when I talk to her I see her through my strong friendship with her father, John Ah Kit. She is very clearly a woman of great achievement, a community leader well before she stood for parliament and delivered her maiden speech. I thank her for bringing to this Chamber the passion she has already shown in the community interests and charities she has pursued.

We will be tireless in the areas of understanding Indigenous values and wellbeing, working across government to create, build and maintain an environment where all Territorians can have the best start in life, support where it is needed and, most importantly, opportunity.

The Members for Fong Lim, Port Darwin and Sanderson spoke eloquently about equality of opportunity and a fair go as core values that drive their interest in politics. Their stories personified the things I am thinking of.

Jeff may be our 'go to' expert on everything—sparky, fiery, lawyer, CrossFit. I join the Member for Fong Lim in the desire to move to a system of rehabilitation and diversion as a way forward to the long-term benefit of the Northern Territory. We welcome his passion in our ranks.

I congratulate Paul Kirby, the member for Port Darwin, and Bek. I missed the announcement as I was speaking at the fourth annual Defence summit. Congratulations—a new child on the way. You cannot add too much to your work pile, Member for Port Darwin. The work you did for your members—you told many stories of the people you represented before coming into this Chamber. Powerful, important, moving—and I know you will now bring that energy towards your constituents.

I thank the Member for Sanderson for choosing politics over being a helicopter pilot. That was a very astute and wise decision, Member for Sanderson. You shared a very difficult story, and you will be part of the bigger solution in this Chamber. Thank you for sharing that. I have had the privilege of knowing and working with the Kate for years—determined, passionate, caring. You will be an amazing member of parliament, and we will bring back the Arafura Games, Member for Sanderson.

We have, in this Chamber, an opportunity to learn new skills and seize opportunities to develop, accompanied with an overarching desire to give back to the community. That was a very strong message that came through.

We also heard the voice of youth, with the Members for Arnhem, Karama, Casuarina and Namatjira all bursting with optimism and energy to be part of change and good government. I welcome these young, challenging voices to the Assembly and look forward to their fresh and energetic advice.

The Member for Stuart is fortunate to be with us, and he had a salutary lesson for us imbedded in his speech when he spoke of a near drowning and his important life lesson of depending on others in times of need. It is a great truth, and one not lost on my government. In many ways it is the reason many of us are here.

The story of finding your sister though, Scott, is just as moving, and very illustrative of how you operate. When you want to get something done, you do it. Many people may not have made that phone call and found that connection. It is very clear that you are better for having done that. You are someone who knows how to achieve, whether that is personally or in the work scene. That was a very brave step, and I think it will be illustrative of how you spend your time as the Member for Stuart.

We will be there in times of need—access to continually improving health services and support programs—and we will be there, responding quickly and appropriately to emergencies in our communities. I was pleased to hear many of the members of the Assembly touch on these issues in their speeches—how we will be there for others in their times of need.

The Minister for Territory Families spoke eloquently of her priorities of working to strengthen our support for all Territory families in all their diversity. We heard strong supporting contributions from the Attorney-General and Minister for Health, particularly in terms of our strong government in addressing key issues such as the scourge of alcohol abuse and family violence in our community, as well as work to foster better outcomes relating to social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and disability support.

A firm but fair justice system is also a key to community wellbeing, and I look forward to the work outlined by the Attorney-General, responding to the need to improve our approach to youth justice in the NT, maintaining and developing a contemporary justice system that all Territorians have confidence in.

Natasha is another young mother in our team, and we are clearly better as a team for having the work environment that allows women of talent to remain active and leading. Tash is a key person in our plans for children.

Our Minister for Children and the Minister for Education, lifelong Territorians, spoke of their strong focus on ensuring that children and opportunity are at the fore of government decision-making, contributing to the central focus of our government, supporting strong, healthy Territory families.

I am mindful of community expectations right across the Territory in terms of family and community safety. Many members touched on this in their speeches, including, notably, the Minister for Territory Families and the Members for Araluen, Katherine and Sanderson. The Leader of the Opposition has offered support in this important work, and I look forward to him, and all members of the Assembly, staying true to that, working collaboratively on delivering on these community priorities. We all have to work together to build a safe and happy Territory, and rebuild our national reputation as progressive, responsible and a caring part of Australia.

Speaking of wellbeing we also have to work wisely and with urgency on building economic wellbeing. The previous government came to power on the back of a growing economy. We enter government with some major economic challenges ahead, as outlined by the Treasurer. We are, however, confident and up to the job of building economic growth and jobs for Territorians. We have heard of the focus that will be given to that work by the Treasurer and the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources. This will also be a key focus of my work as Minister for Trade, Business and Innovation. In particular, I look forward to working with all my colleagues in the business community to build economic wellbeing, build on engagement with our Asian trading partners and foster a culture of enterprise and innovation.

The Minister for Primary Industry and Resources highlighted the importance of markets to our north in both the agribusinesses and resources sectors. We have great products to market and agribusiness second to none. Our challenge is to connect products to markets—new markets like those in Vietnam—and ensure we have the infrastructure and resource support to develop new markets and maximise our business penetration in supplying quality goods and services to Asia.

We will focus on building on the work of the previous governments, ALP and CLP, to continue to grow strong and neighbourly political, social and trading relationships with Indonesia, Malaysia and other near neighbours, including Timor-Leste.

The Territory's links to Indonesia predate European arrival on these shores. Trade was at the core of those early links between coastal Aboriginal communities and Makassan visitors. Trade remains a significant element of the relationship with Indonesia today. It is our third-largest export partner and the principal customer for NT exports of live cattle. The NT has an overseas representative in Jakarta, Mr Mark Bruny, who is working under an arrangement with Austrade to broaden and realise our opportunities in a trade relationship.

We remain responsive to the Indonesian government's desire to grow its cattle herd. These (inaudible) breeder projects, supported by the Department of Primary Industry and Resources, demonstrate what can be achieved by working together. I am pleased that NT experts from DPIR in the Katherine research station were able to visit last month to continue that excellent cooperation.

My Department of Trade, Business and Innovation also led a trade mission in August 2016, the (inaudible) Mining Oil and Gas Expo, consisting of 12 people representing six businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and Charles Darwin University. All have reported positive outcomes from their attendance.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that the Chief Minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr GUNNER: Tony Copley of Carcom Installations has stated that he sees this expo as his most important business event of the year, as it gets him in front of decision-makers. There are also strong links across our health and education sectors, and in arts and culture, and I look forward to these continuing.

Territorians can be proud of the strong relationship we have with Timor-Leste. The people-to-people links between our communities are remarkable. Timorese people make a significant contribution to the vibrant multicultural community we enjoy in the Territory, and Territorians are increasingly taking up the opportunity to discover what Timor-Leste has to offer.

We are continuing our support of the health sector. NT Government members of the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre were recently in Dili to support the running of the Dili Marathon. The links between our schools are growing. The connection between Wagaman Primary School and Maubara School in Timor-Leste is a great model that opens up the world to young Territorians and their Timorese schoolmates from an early age. I am sure members in this Chamber will wish their counterparts in Timor-Leste well as they prepare for presidential and parliamentary elections in May next year. I look forward to meeting our counterparts at an early opportunity at the next bilateral.

It is great to have the Member for Katherine, with her strong family relationships with Timor-Leste, as part of our team. Sandra escaped conflict and found a new home in Australia. My great-grandfather was a refugee from Russia and others in this place will have family stories. We are better for those who come to live, share and build with us. We thank Sandra for running, for creating history and being part of a new narrative for Katherine. *Husi povu; ho povu; ba povu*—from people, for people, with people. I apologise to the Member for Katherine if I got the pronunciation wrong. We will do it together.

These near neighbours will also be an important pivot to our other new and international relationships and trading opportunities. The resources sector in the Territory has always had to deal with ever-changing markets and cyclical commodity prices. The current market environment continues to be a challenge, but we have excellent opportunities available, especially in specialist mineral commodities. The minister for Resources outlined the work being done and developed to encourage much-needed capital for well-focused exploration activity and the development of new mineral resource projects.

Likewise, the Minister for Tourism and Culture spoke on the importance of markets to our north in the development of diverse tourism economy. We continue to foster innovation and development of great tourism products for domestic and overseas visitors, including our investment in Indigenous art trails to help underpin regional tourism growth.

Both the Treasurer and the Member for Araluen touched on the key economic issue of population growth. We will work to support local business to secure government projects, whether they be large or small. Every local job counts, and our infrastructure investment plans will be tailored to maximise benefits to Territory businesses, including those in our remote and regional centres—projects such as our school infrastructure grants and more localising of our \$1.1bn remote housing investments.

Growing our population also includes arresting the drain of young Territorians by providing access to quality education and job opportunities in the Territory. It includes work to support entry into the housing market. I am pleased that the Treasurer highlighted in her early work in this area our new stamp duty concession scheme and our home renovation grants. We will continue to focus on lifestyle and services, encouraging more movement to a Territory of opportunity, as well as working to keep our seniors staying in the Territory.

We will rebuild our relationships with the Commonwealth Government, working to ensure a fair share of Commonwealth revenue and investments, including work in respect of northern development and Defence. The tourism economy, new Defence projects, agribusiness and developing the art sector will all be important parts of that work. In conversations with Territorians and in listening to the optimism of the members of the Assembly, I am excited by the challenge and the opportunity, including the work we will do

in supporting economic activity that supports development in our regional and remote areas of the Territory. In line with my firm belief in the value of working with those who know the challenges and opportunities best, I look forward to our planned economic summits this year. The quality of our environment and issues like water security have also featured in members' contributions and will be discussed through those summits. They are essential to our quality of life.

The Member for Casuarina has outlined how she will be addressing that work through the portfolio of Environment and Natural Resources. This is about understanding our obligations as a good government in responsible environmental decision-making, and about ensuring the government has the best available information at hand to make the best decisions on environmental management on behalf of Territorians. There will be important decisions to make; the future of unconventional hydraulic fracturing is just one. We are determined to get the balance right and restore confidence in our environmental protection arrangements. The minister for environment and heritage has already moved, working with her colleague, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, to improve accountability and transparency in these matters with a commitment to more public reporting of mine-related environmental protection and mine management plans. We have strong plans for improvements to our environmental regulatory framework. We will work constructively to bring those new arrangements into effect.

The Members for Sanderson and Brennan spoke about the things that bind us together as communities, particularly through sport and other community events. I have to do a shout out to the Member for Brennan and his opening line on, 'footy shorts, the Aussie ute and Hiccup', who I think may become a mascot for the Territory Labor team. Hiccup is very popular.

I had no idea your great uncle wore the baggy green, which may be my favourite colour. I will have to hit you up for an autograph or something—raid the family collection. We thank you for sharing your story—nothing given, everything earned. That is very true of how you approached the campaign; you earned it, Member for Brennan, and we are very happy to have you on our team, being a very passionate advocate for the people of Palmerston.

We understand the importance of community events, and I look forward to the return of the Arafura Games and our continuing support for community festivals and events that bring us national attention and tourism opportunities.

The Member for Spillett also spoke of the importance of lifestyle for Territory families and the continuing development of the Palmerston region. Make no mistake, the Members for Drysdale and Brennan are equally passionate about the development of Palmerston, and we have strong plans to support infrastructure growth and family lifestyle in this important and growing part of the Territory.

The Member for Spillett also spoke of the importance of fostering the involvement of women in politics, and I am proud that I stand in this Thirteenth Assembly with an unprecedented number of women members. This leap forward is also reflected in our Cabinet. That is something we can be proud of, fostering a work environment that allows all to succeed and excel.

Lastly, I note that many members of the new Assembly come from a background of representing their community in local government. Local government has a key role to play in terms of lifestyle, access to services and representation of grassroots community concerns across the Territory. The minister for local government has outlined our continuing commitment to strong local government in the Northern Territory, and I look forward to supporting him in that work, particularly working with our Lord Mayors and council presidents on all the important work they do.

In conclusion, I look to all the members of this new Assembly, who have made great heartfelt contributions to the Address in Reply. I see many great Territorians making their stake here, making a stand during this term for a better Territory. We will be coming together in a contest of ideas in this Chamber, and I think Territorians will be better for that contest. People with great life experiences, knowledge, commitment and passion—I see Territorians who have connected with their constituents and come here now to do good.

The opposition and Independents of the Assembly have offered strong scrutiny of government decision- and law-making, but also genuine support in providing good government for all Territorians. This is our collective challenge, to restore trust and faith in government.

I thank all members for approaching their contributions and commitments to that end. We have much to do, and I look forward to providing good, strong, stable and focused government for the Territory over the next four years.

Motion agreed to.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Presentation of Address in Reply to Administrator

Madam SPEAKER: I inform honourable members that the Address in Reply will be presented to His Honour the Administrator on Tuesday 22 November at 11 am, and I invite all honourable members to accompany me to Government House for the presentation.

PAPER TABLED
Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2015-16

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, in accordance with section 9 of the *Financial Management Act* I table the 2015–16 Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement. The statement forms part of the 2015-16 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and presents the former government's fiscal results for the 2015-16 year. The report also satisfies requirements of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act 2001*.

This report shows better than anything else just how the CLP missed the opportunity of a lifetime. It shows how, through bad management, a lack of leadership and total disregard for financial responsibility, the CLP failed to capitalise on the \$34bn INPEX investment, which the previous Labor government identified, chased and secured. The final outcome of 2015–16 is a fiscal balance deficit of \$78m. This is an indication of the projected significant deficits inherited over the next two to three years.

The key factors contributing to the fiscal deficit position in 2015–16 are new policy decisions made by the former government, additional Commonwealth-tied revenue and the changed timing of associated expenditure, and lower than anticipated capital spending. Other key fiscal aggregates of the 2015–16 outcomes are a general government net operating surplus of \$293m, net debt at the non-financial public sector of \$1.85bn, and a net debt-to-revenue ratio of 27%.

While net debt for 2015–16, at \$1.85bn, is \$389m lower than the 2014–15 outcome, it is a direct result of the up-front proceeds of the \$506m received from the long-term lease of the Darwin port. Put simply, this means the CLP sold our assets to try to make up for its lack of long-term planning. The lease proceeds are also the reason that, when measured as a ratio to revenue, net debt at 30 June 2016 has reduced to 27% from 32% in 2014–15.

It should also be noted that the Auditor-General has issued a qualified audit opinion of the 2015–16 Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement in relation to the public non-financial corporation and non-financial and total public sectors. This relates to issues associated with the Power and Water Corporation and Indigenous Essential Services asset valuations undertaken for 2014–15 that remain unresolved at 30 June 2016.

As in the previous year, it is, however, important to note that the Auditor-General has issued an unqualified audit opinion for the general government and public financial corporation sectors. In summary, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report provides an insight into how the CLP failed Territorians, the fact being highlighted by the latest CommSec report released last Monday. I quote from that report:

The Northern Territory is losing momentum and as the key resource projects are completed, activity levels will slow further unless a lift in investment takes place. Slow population growth, weak demand for housing loans and a sharp fall in business investment will constrain economic momentum.

In other words, the CLP's failure to plan was a plan to fail.

This government has been elected to move the Territory forward and grow our economy in these challenging times. We have committed to balancing the books in 2019-20, but it will not be easy. In fact, it will be extremely difficult, and we will have to make some tough decisions along the way, but we have a plan.

That plan includes continuing the \$1.7bn infrastructure program, which we are rolling out as quickly as possible. It is a plan that supports buying local across the Northern Territory economy and that draws on the expertise and experience of Territorians through the upcoming economic summits that will further shape our first Budget to ensure we build a strong, diversified and resilient economy.

In conclusion, despite some improvements in the key fiscal aggregates since the original Budget, the 2015–16 outcome is significantly worse than the surplus recorded in 2014–15. The recent downgrade in the Territory's credit rating, combined with the projected deficit and rising debt levels forecast over the next two to three years, left behind by the former government, means we face significant fiscal challenges to return the Budget to surplus by 2019–20.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at another time.

Leave granted.

The Assembly suspended.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Establishment of an Independent Commission Against Corruption**

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I stand today to update the Assembly on the government's plans to progress and establish an independent commission against corruption for the Northern Territory, to be known as an ICAC.

There are two primary reasons why the Territory needs an ICAC, and this government will deliver to make the necessary reforms.

Firstly, we must acknowledge that large parts of our community have lost trust in our government. An important point to make at the outset is that creating an ICAC is about ensuring better government. It is about repairing the trust that has been broken with Territorians.

ICAC is one part—a big part yes, but one part—of an overall reform program of our government. Our policy is to promote transparency and openness in our government processes so public confidence in government decision-making can be restored.

A significant reason for the loss of trust was the seemingly endless array of dubious decision-making by the CLP government, regularly splashed on the front pages of our local, or even national, newspapers.

Our government began the repair job required immediately. We implemented greater transparency for overseas travel, ensuring the cost of such travel is immediately known to the community, and that was shown in the House today, talking about the trip the minister assisting the Arafura Games took on behalf of the government, as well the Chief Minister outlining that all overseas travel will be shared publicly before it is undertaken.

Last week, in our first sitting days, I was pleased to initiate the first steps towards increasing transparency around members' interests, increasing the scrutiny of government by changing Question Time and establishing a new select committee to deliver parliamentary reform. Our government will also reform the Territory's environmental decision-making. We will not allow a lack of transparency and accountability in environmental decision-making, something the community is crying out for us to do.

As Attorney-General I will ensure our government implements a fair and impartial process for future judicial appointments. Our government will also initiate a judicial inquiry into political donations and reforms of our electoral system. But Territorians expect more than this; not only do they want to see some transparency brought to bear on the decisions and actions of the former CLP government, they expect integrity in decision-making from our government and from any future Territory government. That is why Territory Labor took the policy to develop an ICAC to the last election.

I believe our ICAC policy has widespread support from the community. Our government does not support creating a Star Chamber. We are not creating an ICAC to generate lewd headlines; four years of the CLP gave Territorians enough of that for a lifetime. Instead we hope an ICAC can change the culture of the Territory and help protect the community from the misuse of power and authority, which too often has gone unchecked.

As Attorney-General it is my wish to drive this cultural change throughout the course of our government, which leads me to the second key reason why the Territory needs an independent commission against corruption: the identified inadequacies in our existing integrity regime. I acknowledge that the Territory has existing agencies with extremely hard-working staff that have investigative functions. The current integrity

regime includes the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General, Northern Territory Police and, most notably, the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures.

The Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures is the main current anti-corruption watchdog; however, whilst the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures has some of the jurisdiction and powers similar to other interstate anti-corruption agencies, it is clear that a new office with broader powers is needed.

In particular, the current Office of Public Interest Disclosures does not have a broad-ranging power to initiate investigations on its own motion; does not have the surveillance, search and seizure powers required; has limitations in who it can investigate; and has significant limitations on what and how it reports. These limitations, as I expressed in my response to the Administrator's speech last week, demonstrate that we have been left behind other states on this issue. It has fallen to our government to rectify that position, and we will do that.

As such, the ICAC will be a new office with the powers and independence to investigate the most serious corruption at the highest levels of government. Chief executive officers, politicians in this Assembly, police and judges will be able to be investigated by the ICAC.

In establishing the ICAC the government has the benefit of the report by the former Chief Justice Commissioner, Brian Martin AO QC, who conducted an inquiry into how an anti-corruption body could be established in the Northern Territory, as a result of the resolution by the Legislative Assembly. That report—the Martin report—was tabled in May last year, and it made 52 recommendations.

The government supports the approach in the Martin report. The ICAC our government will establish will be dependent and accountable, and will have strong, wide-ranging and retrospective powers.

Our government provides in-principle support to 50 of the 52 recommendations made in the Martin report. Commissioner Martin's report recommended a similar model to the current South Australian integrity regime. This was a sensible and timely approach by commissioner Martin, made after careful consideration of existing anti-corruption regimes around Australia.

The ICAC will have the full suite of powers proposed by the Martin report. In determining how to handle a matter the ICAC will be able to investigate a matter using the strongest investigative powers. The powers of the ICAC will include powers to:

- enter, search or seize things at public premises or premises used by public persons or entities other than residential premises
- require the production of statements, documents or other things
- obtain search warrants in respect of private or residential premises, motor vehicles or ships, or other forms of conveyance
- seek warrants under surveillance and telecommunications legislation
- seek authorisation to conduct unlawful activities and assume false identities
- require attendance at a hearing and the giving of evidence under oath or affirmation
- second staff from other agencies, employ investigators and delegate powers
- require a public body to refrain from taking action relating to a matter under investigation or to conduct a joint investigation with the ICAC
- exercise the powers of a public body, including the powers of existing inquiry bodies such as the Ombudsman
- request or recommend that a person be granted indemnity from prosecution
- issue seizure and retention orders
- apply to the Supreme Court for injunctions to restrain certain conduct

- apply to the Supreme Court for an order that a person's passport be delivered to the ICAC.

Failure to comply with directions of the ICAC and obstruction of the ICAC will be offences punishable by imprisonment.

In the event of a conflict of interest the ICAC will have the ability to refer an investigation to a suitable person or body that does not have such conflicts.

Where an allegation is not of the kind that ICAC needs to handle the investigation, the ICAC will have the ability to refer the allegation in whole and in part to those existing bodies and direct a coordinated response, including, in many circumstances, exercising the power of these bodies and making directions as to the conduct of their investigations.

Indeed it is an important point that whilst an ICAC will lead the fight against corruption, other agencies will continue to be required to promote integrity where matters arise but those matters are not handled by the ICAC.

As the Martin report makes clear, the issues of corruption, misconduct and maladministration are matters which must be treated with the utmost seriousness by all arms of government.

The reality is that much of the ICAC'S work must be conducted as private investigations rather than public hearings. Private investigations may be necessary to effectively obtain relevant evidence; avoid prejudicing future prosecutions; protect whistle-blowers; and ensure that persons who are the subject of false or unsubstantiated allegations do not suffer reputational damage of those allegations being made public.

The ICAC will have the power to conduct public hearings, make public comment and deliver reports into this Legislative Assembly, but it will be a matter for the ICAC to decide when it is appropriate to do so, as such decisions are best made on a case-by-case basis.

As recommended in the Martin report the new ICAC will replace the existing Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, and the staff of that commissioner will be absorbed into the ICAC. The ICAC will therefore take over the responsibility for receiving information from whistle-blowers, and the new Bill will contain measures to place obligations on public officials to report corruption and protect those who report or assist the ICAC to investigate corruption.

Our government wants the ICAC to be established and operational as soon as is reasonably possible. My agencies have already made significant progress in developing the drafting instructions which will create the ICAC. It will be a substantial piece of legislation which will require significant consequential amendments to numerous other pieces of legislation.

In creating this important new body it is crucial that there be sufficient time to ensure the legislation the government puts in place will be solid and workable, and that Territorians will have the opportunity to have input into the development of this Bill.

While the Martin report provides a clear general model on the way forward, there is still some policy work to be done with respect to some details and some topics on which the Martin report does not express a conclusive view.

Our government also recognises that with major reforms such as this we must consult and be open to listening to the concerns of stakeholders and the Northern Territory community. Our government therefore has a clear position on the Martin report but remains open and willing to work on implementing the best reforms for the Northern Territory. As a government we want to listen widely and hear voices from across our community. It does not matter who comes up with the best ideas, we want the best outcome for the Northern Territory.

As part of that process our government has endorsed that the Chief Minister will refer three recommendations from the Martin report to the Legislative Assembly for consideration. Those recommendations relate primarily to the creation of a standing committee of this Assembly to give appropriate oversight of the ICAC and its appointments, and the recommendation relating to a commissioner for standards for this Assembly.

To all honourable members of this Assembly, as Attorney-General, and on behalf of the government, I welcome your feedback. We will listen to your concerns on these issues. More widely, the government will

be seeking the community's view on the effectiveness of existing whistle-blower protection measures in the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*, and whether these can be improved; the mechanics and limits of the new ICAC's jurisdiction with respect to private persons and businesses; and technical aspects of the legislation, including the investigation processes, confidentiality and privilege.

The community's responses on these issues will then be fed into the Bills development process. Indeed, all submissions to the inquiry which Commissioner Martin undertook and on which his report is based, supported the creation of some form of anti-corruption, integrity and misconduct commission. We recognise that Territorians expect to continue their involvement in the establishment of an ICAC.

A draft Bill to establish the ICAC will be prepared and available for public comment by the first half of 2017, with the aim to introduce a final Bill in the second half of 2017. It will then be necessary to advertise widely and find the best possible candidate to take on this significant new role, which the government intends will be a full-time position, based in the Territory. This will allow the commencement of arrangements to transfer staff to and from existing agencies in line with the Martin report's recommendations. Our government will work with the affected staff and agencies to ensure this transition happens as smoothly as possible.

These timframes reflect the government's commitment to swift and decisive action on the creation of the independent commission against corruption, as well as its commitment to consultation and obtaining the input of the broader Territory community.

Territorians can have confidence that, following the establishment of an ICAC, public administration in the Territory can be investigated by a truly independent body with independent and strong powers.

Madam Speaker, I move that the statement be noted.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to give the support of the opposition to this process. The previous government initiated the process to establish an ICAC, and it is time the Territory moved in line with most of the other states around the country and has such a process in place.

There are, however, a couple of concerns we want to raise. One of them was not raised in the speech, and that is the amount of money allocated to the ICAC. The estimates were between \$2m and \$5m, and \$2m has been budgeted. I caution the government on that. My other concern is that there is a reference in the speech which says:

Not only do they want to see some transparency brought to bear on the decisions and actions of the former CLP government, they expect integrity in decision-making from our government and from any future Territory government.

My concern with that statement is it seems to imply we will only go back four years. That is a blunder. We should go back as far as required. There are statutes of limitations, and I am not asking for them to be altered, but I wanted to make that point.

When we talk about an ICAC and transparency in decisions and actions—an ICAC is not there to question bad government; it is there to question corruption. We need to ensure a line is drawn whenever we refer to an ICAC. We need to make the very clear distinction that bad government is completely different to a corrupt government. An ICAC's role is not to investigate bad government, it is to investigate corruption.

We thank the minister for bringing this in and bringing us up to date on it. The time frame to have something ready next year—I wish her luck. I hope it is ready then because I would like to get a lot of this over and done with before the next election. We thank the minister. We support the progress being made.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to point out how splendid you look in the Chair. It is the first time I have looked up and thought that.

Onto the more serious issue of the ICAC, this is something we pushed for because of the decisions handed down over the last four years. The foundations of these expectations come from Territorians who have come to us over the last four years saying, 'This just does not smell right. This doesn't look right.' We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, are elected to represent the constituents and the people who come to us—and our respective electorates, with a team of 18 here. Territorians have voted that they want an open, transparent government that will work for them. We have not seen that over the last four years.

Having said that, there have been some good policies and initiatives. I said in opposition that I did not just want to bag the government. I was in a meeting during lunchtime with the national fishing board and we discussed the Million Dollar Fish, which was a great initiative by the government. So it all was not bad, but some of the policy decisions made just did not stack up.

It was very clear that the previous government, more so after the Member for Blain, the former Chief Minister, was embarrassingly ousted in Japan—it got really bad after that. Let us not forget that the Member for Blain, at the time the Chief Minister, put our power bills up. It was a very tough decision they took—which Territorians did not like—without any consultation.

After Terry Mills, the Member for Blain, was sacked embarrassingly—I say embarrassingly because we all felt embarrassed, in this Chamber, about how that was done. Regardless of different political parties, sitting on different sides of the Chamber and things like that, it looked bad for all of us; it really did, and we were ridiculed not only here but across the country and internationally, and, obviously, in Japan. It is great to see that Michael Gunner is going over with businesses to further strengthen the relationships that still need to be strengthened; they still need to be repaired. I remember when it was all happening and there were CLP members and supporters high-fiving each other and things like that. I thought it was really unprofessional and a sad day for the Territory.

It has been terrible, and I am not just saying that. The lack of separation of powers—the former Chief Minister clearly showed, on numerous occasions, that he only cared about himself. He did not care for Territorians. He did not care whatsoever. We saw that in his speech addressing the media on election night. I thought it so was unprofessional. It was a description of the man himself, what sort of person he was and how he governed the Northern Territory. People saw that and were disgusted with it.

In this Chamber, over the last four years, we put up with many decisions we could not comprehend. We heard the stories from families, such as my own, of people being fired because of relationships with Labor members. People were plonked in key positions in government without interviews—nothing. Decisions were made about water licences and contracts that were not discussed and did not go through the right processes. Things were chaotic, and not just in this Chamber; government was in chaos. I take my hat off to the public servants who put up with that for four years.

I promise every public servant that we will do our best. It will not always be pretty or right, but we will do our best to ensure there is a clear separation of powers and a clear process where you give frank and fearless advice to us. We, as elected members, will put the political spin on it, not people plonked in the department to look after the government's interests. We must make sure we get this right. We were elected on a clear mandate that we will be an open and transparent government, and we will be. We were elected so we would have an ICAC. We will set this up.

I will tell a quick story. I was in a cafe in Sydney very early in the morning. It was when the midnight coup happened. The two people next to me did not know they were sitting next to a Territorian who was an elected member of parliament. I was quietly having a skinny cappuccino and poached eggs. They were ridiculing us, saying, 'Look at these idiots, these cowboys in the Territory. How does this happen anywhere? Maybe in African countries somewhere, but not in Australia, not in our democratic society. How does this happen?' The guy turned to me and asked, 'What do you think?' I said, 'Oh, they're cowboys'. For the first time in my life—I was born and raised here—I was embarrassed to be a Territorian. The calls we got from our interstate Labor colleagues saying, 'What is going on up there? It is unbelievable'—people could not talk to us without laughing in amazement.

It reiterates that Territorians have lost faith in us. Not only did they lose faith in the former government, they lost faith in all politicians. It was a terrible time in politics. We had Rudd-Gillard-Rudd, Turnbull-Abbott—maybe Abbott is coming back, who knows? It was a terrible time in politics. You put all that together with what was going on with the way the former Chief Minister was running the Territory and some of the decisions made—we heard of so much internal bickering, because people were telling. We knew, with all the leaked information coming to us, that something needed to be done, that it was not a good government.

We made a plan; we stuck to it and kept our heads down. We listened, talked to people and represented them in here. Many times things were rammed through on the numbers, and that is fine; we are very conscious of that. When we speak about being the open and transparent government we were elected to be—a strong team of 18. One of the first things we decided to do was elect an Independent Speaker. Everyone in this Chamber knows we could have had our own Speaker, rammed in through on the numbers, but we wanted to show, by our actions, that we will be an open and transparent government.

I thank the Chief Minister for that, and my colleagues, because we are on this journey together. We need to make sure this ICAC is set up and that, for the sake of this House and all our reputations, we clear the air. If there is anything that is not right, that does not smell right or did not go through the process and was just awarded to people or money was given to people or anything like that, we need to make sure it is cleared and appropriately dealt with so everybody in this parliament can move forward. That means Territorians can move forward as well.

What we hope, and what I hope personally, is that people start respecting politicians and the job we do in here, because we do a lot of work in here, and we do a lot more work outside. We treat our jobs with the utmost importance, and a huge responsibility has been given to us by people who do not always have a voice. It is our job to bring the little people, or anybody—big and small business, the mining sector, the anti-fracking people and our constituents, from Ngukurr to Maningrida, Millner, Alawa, Moil and Tennant Creek; I will name them all. It is important that we are accessible to all Territorians so their voices can be heard in here.

It has been an interesting four years in opposition. It was very frustrating because we agreed, on our side, that our values did not match what was happening. There were some good people in the previous government. Two of the best were re-elected, strangely enough. The two people who stood back, did what they said they were trying to do and were approachable were the only two Country Liberals elected this term. That is a sure sign that the CLP did things wrong, but the two who are now the CLP opposition were doing something right to be re-elected.

We must make sure all our decisions benefit all Territorians. We will never get that right; I have learned that in politics. The old adage that if you go to one party—CLP, ALP, the Greens or whatever political party—you split people straight away. It is up to the individual and how they approach and talk to people—people know if you are trying to pull a swift one over them. You need to be yourself. We need to get the trust of Territorians back and make sure we are working so people believe what we say we will do. We stressed during the election campaign that our party will not say we will do anything which we will not do. That time is done. That is part of getting Territorians' trust back. They are sick of it.

I said it was a terrible time in politics, and with ICAC we can move on. Let us deal with what we have to. I have said on many occasions that I believe this will be the most productive Chamber parliament has seen for a while. The calibre of elected members—obviously I am biased as I think on our side they are rippers and better than that side. I truly believe this parliament will be the most productive because the opposition, being the Independents and the two CLP members, want the best for the Territory. They are not combative. We will have some dust-ups, that is politics. When we are here all day and night and someone says something cheeky, we will throw something back. That is any relationship—any situation. I truly believe we will be the most productive because there are good people on the other side who want the best for the Territory, which is exactly what we want. They want to work with us to benefit the Territory.

We have a travel policy that clearly outlines an open and transparent government. That was a gutsy move, telling Territorians where we are going and how much it will cost before we go. The average Territorian will ask, 'How can you spend \$8000 or \$10 000 on a trip when I can take my family around a country for that amount?' That is the cost of doing business. It is also the cost of us being a government that says, 'We will be open and transparent'.

The Chief Minister is heading away, with a massive delegation of business people, to South Korea, China and Japan in the interests of the Territory. We are looking for investment. Businesses are looking to expand, and that is our role as government. I applaud the Chief Minister for doing that. He, like all of us if we travel, will have to put the cost out to all Territorians, because we are accountable to Territorians. We work for Territorians; they do not work for us. We were elected for them. That is why I am here.

In closing, we will work hard to restore the trust and integrity that was lost over the last four years. We will continue to listen to Territorians. We simply must implement this ICAC and deal with the fallout of what happens, and we must keep working to make sure we restore trust and integrity. A Michael Gunner government is an open and transparent government and will continue to be so. Even when times get tough, we will continue to be open and transparent.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for introducing this ministerial statement about the establishment of an independent commission against corruption.

There are a lot of new people here. Fortunately, or unfortunately, one of the things dropped on our desk before the end of the last sittings was this light document. It is actually a fairly hefty document; it is 570

pages. It was written by Hon Brian Martin AO QC. He was the Commissioner for the NT Anti-corruption Integrity and Misconduct Commission, and he held this inquiry last year. Just so you are not scared off too much, of that 570 pages, probably 235 are the actual report. The rest is documents that back up the report. I cannot say I have looked at the report from one end to the other. Quite a few of the articles in the back remind me of things that have occurred in this parliament in my time. When I read those I am very supportive of an ICAC in the Northern Territory.

I like the name that Hon Brian Martin has given it; he calls it the Northern Territory Anti-corruption Commission. That gives us a bit of Territory flavour. If you want to name it at least you can recognise it is ours and not the New South Wales ICAC or some other ICAC.

It is worth going through some of the issues raised, and I will quote from the report in relation to the model he was looking at:

As is apparent from the preceding discussion, there is no 'standard' model for an Anti-Corruption Commission. It is the particular needs of the Territory that must be met as far as is reasonably possible within the constraints of a relatively small jurisdiction with limited resources. Regard must also be had to the existing integrity regime and the extent to which that regime, as currently constituted, is capable of meeting the needs of the Territory. In that regard the resolution of the Assembly carries with it the implication that, in the view of the Assembly, the current regime is not capable of satisfactorily meeting the needs of the Territory. Further, it is apparent from an examination of the regimes in the States that the current regime in the Territory lacks the extensive jurisdiction and powers which have been conferred on the State Anti-Corruption Commissions.

People might not quite understand what he is getting at there. The original motion to set in place the setting up of an ICAC also gave the commissioner the option to look at existing authorities within our government and ask if we could we use those. Instead of setting up an anti-corruption commission, which could be expensive, one of the alternatives is to look at existing groups, like the Ombudsman, for instance.

We have another body which he was looking at in relation to possibilities of other people being involved; I do not have the information here, but there are other bodies within the government that could have been an option instead of setting up a full ICAC.

He went on to say:

Speaking broadly, the submissions expressed the view that an entirely new stand-alone body, superimposed on existing bodies and possessing sufficient staff to conduct its own investigations, is both unnecessary and beyond the resources of the Territory. The resource implications are obvious from consideration of the expenditure by State Commissions. Bearing in mind those resource implications and the existence of bodies currently involved in the current integrity regime, I agree with that broad view.

Basically, it would get messy. The commissioner recommended that we do set up a anti-corruption commission. He said, on page nine of his report:

My Inquiry has led me to conclusions which are set out in this Report. Those conclusions necessarily reflect my personal views and they are conclusions about which informed persons might reasonably hold different views.

In summary, and without endeavouring to list every individual item, I make the following recommendations:

1. *The structure of the NT Anti-Corruption Commission follow the model established in South Australia in which:*
 - *The commission is headed by the Commissioner.*
 - *An office for Public Integrity, acting under the overall supervision and direction of the Commissioner, receives and assesses complaints and reports about corruption, misconduct and maladministration in public administration and makes recommendations to the Commissioner as to whether and by whom complaints and reports should be investigated. In substance the Office provides the administrative, operational and legal support for the Commissioner.*

He also recommended that:

4. *The Hon Bruce Lander QC, Independent Commissioner Against Corruption in South Australia, be employed as the first head of the Commission, with the title Commissioner.*
5. *Mr Lander be employed on a part-time basis for two years with a view to reporting to the Assembly within two years outlining all operations in that period and providing recommendations for the future operation of the NT Anti-Corruption Commission.*

In regard to existing offices in the Northern Territory he said:

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (NT) be repealed and the Office of Public Interest Disclosures be absorbed into the NT Anti-Corruption Commission as the Office for Public Integrity with, broadly speaking, the same functions and objectives as the Office for Public Integrity in South Australia.

Last year, or possibly the year before, I went to a meeting in South Australia where people on Public Accounts Committees get together and discuss various matters in relation to the proper running of governments. The head of the South Australian anti-corruption commission gave a talk, and one of the things he spoke about was how it works in South Australia.

In South Australia if you have a complaint you do not knock on the door of the commissioner first. You knock on the door of the Office for Public Integrity, and it sorts out whether it is an issue of corruption or, as someone said before, maladministration, bad government, bad manners or something that has upset you but is not necessarily something the anti-corruption commission would look at. There are two layers. The top layer is the commissioner and the bottom layer is the Office for Public Integrity, which sorts out which issues the commissioner should look at. That takes some of the burden off the commission.

We have to watch that this does not become a growing bureaucracy. That is one of the concerns people had. We are small; we are not as big as South Australia. From memory, in South Australia is they have 75 staff. There is some sense in leaning on other states, like South Australia—whether we pay them something—and try to use their resources. Technically, we should not have many cases of corruption. We may have had some in the past. If this government does what it says it will, we may not have any more. But human nature being what it is, people fail. I suppose the is trying to say we should make sure this does not become too costly for the government. That is one thing the government should look at.

To some extent it is sad. We have this ministerial statement, and I am not saying it is not good—that is the last thing I would say—but this document has not been debated in parliament. It went to the previous government. Just before an election, if you want to get into a 570-page document then you must be a bit strange, because there are other things to do. I think this document would have been brought back to parliament for debate on some of the issues and the recommendations the commissioner put forward.

The minister said that out of the 52 recommendations, 50 have been accepted, but I have not heard which ones the other two are. Which were the two that were not accepted by the government and why were they not accepted?

There is no doubt there is a need for this. I have lived through an attempt to get changes made to political donations in this House; it was put on the backburner for well over 12 months and never got through. It was kept that way for as long as possible, as a private member's Bill. It was asking for changes similar to the changes in NSW, where there were restrictions on who could donate to a political party. That disappeared.

The inquiry into Foundation 51 and Harold Nelson Holdings was approved by the parliament as a whole, but when it came to having the inquiry the government stepped in and cut the terms of reference in half, and the important parts were deleted. At times it has been very frustrating, in this parliament, to get an organisation or commission that could look at these things without fear or favour. There was a complaint about the DPP, which had not pursued matters relating to Foundation 51, even though police had said there was a prima facie case. The DPP said it was not in the public interest, and that was all. I did not feel that was a good enough explanation.

I imagine that if we have an anti-corruption commission it can look at those things. One of the good things about it is that it can look at it in private. You have to be careful when you ask questions about people who are accused of corruption, there might be whistle-blowers who fear for their job or safety if they speak up about things they believe to be corrupt. They need to be protected as well as people who are accused. It is a two-way street. You do not want people accusing others just because they do not like them. The

commission would want to make sure accusations are based on fact and not hearsay or rumours. To some extent, that is where the Office for Public Integrity would step in and find out if there was a real complaint or if someone just did not like someone else and wanted to take revenge on them.

In relation to Foundation 51, I have always asked that the inquiry includes Harold Nelson Holdings. That is the Labor Party's fund, and Foundation 51 is the CLP's fund. If you are to look at these things, you need to do it fairly and from an unbiased perspective.

The conclusion, on page 235, states:

In this Report I have endeavoured to canvass the principal issues that arise in relation to the establishment of a NT Anti-Corruption Commission. Although a number of details are discussed, necessarily there are numerous operational provisions which will be required and to which I have not referred.

In the framing of legislation careful attention will be required to details which I have not endeavoured to cover. Guidance in this regard can be obtained from legislation in other jurisdictions, particularly in New South Wales and South Australia.

We are not trying to reinvent the wheel; we need to look at how other anti-corruption commissions operate. New South Wales is a classic example of one that has received a lot of attention.

One of the things that in the recommendations is that this commission does not have the power to prosecute. I think it is the same in New South Wales, and it is important. It keeps the prosecutorial side separate from the investigation side. It will be up to the DPP to decide whether what has come before the anti-corruption commission is sufficient to take to court.

There was a lot of discussion about that in New South Wales when quite a few Liberal Party members resigned for receiving more than \$10 000 from developers. Some may have been taken to court, others may have simply resigned, which may have been regarded as enough punishment.

There was a bit of controversy over the role of the ICAC in New South Wales and where its investigative and prosecutorial powers crossed over.

I found the South Australia to be pretty good model when I attended the meeting last year in Adelaide. As Brian Martin is saying, by using somebody from South Australia, at least for the first two years, we can come up with something very good.

I thank the minister for her statement. I agree with everything in the statement. I just say—because this is such an important document—because of the changeover in government we really should have brought this document back for serious debate. I am not saying there is anything wrong with it but it is good that this sort of document comes back to parliament and we look go through the recommendations and have a full-blown debate on it.

I thank Brian Martin AO QC and his workers. This is a serious piece of work; I know he probably did it in larger font so it is a thicker book, but everybody should at least go through the recommendations so when we are required to vote on the Bill later on we at least know the background of where it came from.

Ms LAWLER (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I stand today to support the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice's ministerial statement on the establishment of an independent commission against corruption.

The desperate need and importance of establishing an independent commission against corruption—ICAC—was something I heard time and again during the four years of the CLP government. It was said to me by public servants, business owners, academics and Territorians who had lost confidence in the previous government's decision-making. They lost confidence in the integrity of the previous government and no longer trusted politicians.

Labor went to the election on a platform of restoring trust and promoting transparency and openness in government processes so public confidence in government decision-making could be restored. The commitment resonated with Territorians and it was well supported. This is what Territorians wanted.

Our government has begun the work needed to be an open, transparent and trustworthy government. It was said today that literally within days of being elected the Member for Sanderson, the assistant minister

for bringing back the Arafura Games, travelled to Sabah, and the cost of the travel was put out in a media release. The winds of change blowing across the Territory were palpable. It was a simple act but one that immediately signalled that here was a government that would be open and transparent, and would not be tricky and arrogant.

The Member for Daly talked about a bad government and corruption and the intertwine but. We cannot get confused by the difference between a bad government and corruption, but sometimes it is hard to separate the two.

The Member for Daly also spoke about the cost to set up a ICAC of between \$2m and \$5m. I think the cost will be recovered within the first year of operation.

The goal of the ICAC is to change the culture of the Territory and help protect the community from the misuse of power and authority which, in the last four years, too often went unchecked. The ICAC will be a new office with the powers and independence to investigate the most serious corruption at the highest levels of government. Territorians deserve this. This is what other states have and this is what the Northern Territory so desperately needs.

Chief executives, police and judges, as well as politicians in this Assembly, will all be able to be investigated, and that is a good thing. We can no longer ignore this issue if we are to restore the trust and integrity of government. In a perfect world we would see each and every one of us acting, at all times, with integrity, ethics and morals. The ICAC will be there to remind us all of that into the future.

The landmass of the Territory may be vast but the Territory really is a small place where everyone is connected to someone and everyone knows someone, and everyone has heard the story about—the last four years have been filled with such conversations about the appalling behaviour of the CLP government. It seemed like just when you thought there could not be another shocking or revealing headline in the *NT News*, there was one even more damning than the last. I will not go into listing those headlines. They are all too familiar to us, but now is the time for government to step up and establish an ICAC. This is what Territorians want, and they expect no less.

As the Attorney-General said, in establishing the ICAC we can look to the report by the former Chief Justice, Commissioner Brian Martin AO QC, who conducted the inquiry into how an anti-corruption body could be established in the Northern Territory. The groundwork has been done. The Martin report was tabled in parliament last May, as the Member for Nelson just told us.

An important point is that the ICAC will lead the fight against corruption, but if we are to fully restore Territorians' trust in government, then it is incumbent on all of us to act with honesty and integrity, and it is vital that all our public servants and government agencies do the same.

There must be trust in government procurement processes, recruitment and the appointment of board and judicial positions. This is what should occur and what Territorians expect. If these things break down, our society breaks down.

If the NT Government is genuine about attracting business investment, then our reputation is everything. The integrity of our government, politicians and public service is everything. What business wants to risk its investment in a place that is perceived as corrupt and scandal ridden? Businesses will take their investment elsewhere.

A clear message from the electorate to the CLP government was that the public perception was that it was acting in a self-serving manner, a manner that directly or indirectly benefited them as individuals, and that was occurring at the cost of the Northern Territory's reputation and to the public's disadvantage. The new Opposition Leader, the Member for Daly, in his opening address to this parliament, the 13th parliament of the Northern Territory, all but conceded this point.

Having an ICAC means people who stand for political office or are employed in the public sector have a clear understanding of the perils of conflict of interest, and that we all accept our obligations with candour and honesty. An ICAC ensures accountability. Wasting public resources by dishonest dealings will be managed by the knowledge that individuals may find themselves appearing before the ICAC.

As the Attorney-General said, our government wants the ICAC established and operational as soon as reasonable, but it is vitally important that Territorians have the opportunity to have input into the Bill. Many

Territorians will want to have input, informed Territorians who want to see this done correctly. We must be open to listening to the concerns of stakeholders and the community.

Our government remains open and willing to work on implementing the best reforms, and we will listen to Territorians. In a town where there is a long-standing public view that, politically, it is not what you know but who you know, it is time the Northern Territory stepped up to protect itself, its politicians and public servants by removing the perception of corruption. The ICAC will do that. Now is the time to rebuild the trust in our government institutions. An ICAC will ensure the perception of trust is maintained, and it will ensure those in positions of power are aware that if they abuse that power there will be consequences.

The need for an ICAC sends a loud message that this government is here for the long term, and the long term is steeped in proper practice, not jobs for mates, dirty deeds, shortcuts or quick fixes.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the Chief Minister, the Attorney-General and the NT Government on its first step to establish an independent commission against corruption.

During the past 12 months I have visited many people and families in the Brennan electorate—young families, single-parent families and seniors. It was very clear that people have had enough of the tricky business of the previous government. Our papers and their headlines were full of announcements of significant decisions that many Territorians felt they did not know about, nor were they consulted about. People were upset and felt let down, and some were very angry. People told me how they felt and how they could not trust the CLP. They said they were not listened to, even when they were crying out to be listened to. It was a sad state of affairs, and it continued until the previous government went into caretaker mode before the election. It simply was not good enough.

When I listened to Territorians it was clear they wanted a voice and a government they were able to trust and which would look out for them, be willing to stand up for them and their families and be transparent and accountable in the way it went about its work and business. During my 12 months of listening to the Brennan electorate I found that people were happy to hear about the ICAC. They wanted to know more and stated it was about time this happened, as even their friends and families from interstate would comment on the previous government's controversial weekly headlines. It was clear to all that something had to change to restore the Territory government's integrity, not only to its people but the rest of Australia.

The people I discussed the ICAC with were all for it; they could not wait for it. They also wanted to bring back integrity, accountability and trust in the NT government. The people and families were even more pleased to know that the ICAC would hold all government officials to account, and on any level of government, including politicians, police, judges, chief executives and more, both past, present and into the future.

The ICAC will bring about a system and process to ensure the community is protected from any misuse of power or authority. It will also be a system that is fair and independent. I understand that this is only the first step today and there is much more to do in developing complex ICAC legislation. We need to ensure it captures the cohorts we have spoken about. However, I know that when it is complete it will be a significant moment in the history of this parliament. Further, it pleases me to know that Territorians will be consulted on the Bill and will have the opportunity to provide input into its development.

Rest assured that this Chief Minister is serious about running an open, accountable and transparent government, and that the establishment of an independent commission against corruption is a very positive step in the right direction. It is a direction that will restore trust and integrity in government whilst being highly accountable to its people.

I commend the Chief Minister and the government on the ICAC announcement and I look forward to future announcements on its progress.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I during my campaign and throughout my inaugural speech, which I delivered on 18 October in this Chamber, I spoke consistently and compassionately about trust, transparency and honesty. This message was reiterated throughout all election campaigns led by my Labor colleagues. I spoke of my commitment along with the commitment made by my colleagues to the people of our electorates and the greater Northern Territory to be a more inclusive and honest representative. Throughout our respective campaigns we heard very loud and clear that our constituents want and expect a government to be as open and accountable as possible.

We must acknowledge that a great majority of our community has lost trust in the NT government due to what has happened in the previous four years. It is probably one of the rarest things for anyone to hear me quote a conservative politician, but in this case the previous Prime Minister of the UK, David Cameron, said it best when he had this to say in the foreword of *Against Corruption: a collection of essays*, which was published in May of this year, ironically at the same time our Martin report was released:

Corruption is the cancer at the heart of so many of our problems in the world today. It destroys jobs and holds back growth, costing the world economy billions of pounds every year. It traps the poorest in the most desperate poverty as corrupt governments around the world syphon off funds and prevent hard-working people from getting the revenues and benefits of growth that are rightfully theirs. It steals vital resources from our schools and hospitals as corrupt individuals and companies evade the taxes they owe.

I wholeheartedly agree with Mr Cameron's statement. Any government anywhere in the world must ensure it has an integrity regime ready and empowered to fight corruption. A Territory ICAC, a corruption watchdog, is well overdue.

Creating an ICAC is not only about ensuring better government; it is also about repairing broken trust. Not only have we come into complete fiscal disarray left by the previous government, we have also been left with the task to build and repair the relationship with between our constituents and the government, a relationship that was damaged by false promises, dodgy water licence dealings, jobs for the boys, bad behaviour and bad decisions, all of which was played out in the media locally, nationally and internationally.

I take great pride in being part of a government that is embracing the responsibility of providing the leadership needed to establish an ICAC. This is not the first time I have worked with a government that has taken on that leadership. I worked in East Timor with its government when it established an ICAC.

Now is the time for this sort of leadership in the Northern Territory. It is also the time to support this government which will not only establish an ICAC but is also initiating a judicial inquiry into political donations and reforms of our electoral system, something that is sorely needed. Territorians expect this. I fully support our Attorney-General's declaration that our ICAC policy has widespread support from the community. I read the Martin report when it was released and I am proud of this government for taking on 50 of the 52 recommendations made in that report.

Corruption does not happen everywhere. It happens in pockets of our lives, societies and industries. Having an ICAC helps keep us all accountable. Territorians are fundamentally honest people. This is an attitude, a characteristic, that flows through our home lives, working lives and public institutions. We are people of our word and we take pride in our integrity. We are also very pragmatic, real people who understand that to protect and conserve what we have we must have boundaries, rules, laws and frameworks that hold us all to account.

Our government is very committed to being open and transparent, regardless of the comments made earlier today from the other side of the floor. As a member of this government I am displaying this commitment through my own actions in providing access to my work diary and an up-to-date running report on how the Katherine electorate budget is spent.

As we know, corruption undermines trust in our institutions, businesses and trading markets. It is a divisive and destructive force which, at its worst, reduces faith in the rule of law. All of this has significant impact on any economic and social development, making it harder for people to prosper and for any community to support its most vulnerable.

We are uniquely placed to protect ourselves from corruption, and in order to prosper we have always needed not only to be good at what we do, but honest in how we do it. I am not one to dwell on the past, but many people across the Territory believe that some of the actions and decisions of a few in the last four years have provided us with examples of why an ICAC with retrospective powers is not only sorely needed, but long overdue. I am proud that the ICAC will be empowered to investigate politicians. The Territory expects its politicians to uphold the highest standards and, if they do not, there must be repercussions. A strong ICAC will ensure that there are.

There is an old wives' saying, sunlight is the best disinfectant. In its very simplest form this is what an ICAC will serve to be for the NT, a disinfectant, a prevention, an intervention framework to ensure that future Territory governments will continue what we started on 27 August, that is, a government led by integrity, honesty and transparency, trusted by all Territorians.

I commend the statement of the Attorney-General to this Assembly.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support the statement, the intent of which needs to be supported by all members of this Chamber. We do so to advance the best interests of all Territorians so they can have justifiable trust and confidence in the moral soundness of the decisions made in this place. No one would disagree with that.

How it is configured, the mechanics of it—the Member for Nelson did an excellent job, and I congratulate him for the fine work he does in reading these important documents carefully and making sound recommendations on some of the technical concerns that may face us.

The final point I wish to make is that it is very important that we do not get caught up with anything other than the project of restoring the confidence of the Territory community in its high office of parliament and resort to vengeance and corral this into the last four years as being the only time when unsavoury events occurred. You will immediately start to erode the confidence you are seeking to build in yourselves with an instrument that focuses exclusively on those four years.

I am not suggesting for a moment that scrutiny is not required; it is. But if the community has the view that this is primarily or in part motivated by some kind of vengeance, seeking, in a strange way, to create the impression that you are beyond corruption, then we will walk into territory that may leave us embarrassed in time to come. I say that because the motivation of this has to be clean as well. It has to have the highest integrity. The purpose is not political but to fix a problem. That is one of the reasons I came back, to put my hands to the task of restoring the confidence of the community in the political processes.

I also say it because I have been here for some time. I was the Opposition Leader for much of the 12 years when Labor was in office. Do not try to suggest that corruption only occurred in the last four years. There are certain topics, names and occasions that could be brought into the scope beyond those four years. That will be a test for you. If you start locking on to those four years as being the primary and single focus, be careful that pride does not precede a fall. There are other things that need to be considered, and they would be brought in. If you keep, at the core of this, to having a clear and clean motivation to restore something that is broken in governance and restore it in the sight of the community, then it will come with you.

I am raising a note of caution on how we approach this, rather than why. Most of the speeches have been specifically and explicitly focused on it being a brand-new day, how bright, clean, fresh and good—‘We are good and those guys were bad, and we are going after them because the community is angry at what they did’. It has to be bigger than that, otherwise we erode what we are trying to build.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I agree with the Member for Blain’s comments about the integrity of the commission. I wholeheartedly agree that it needs to be the best commission it can be. If it is not and there are ulterior motives, then it will not achieve anything we want it to.

I listened to the comments of the other members, and while there have been comments about the past government, I truly believe their intentions are all exactly the same. We want this commission to be part of the process of restoring trust in government.

This government was elected emphatically on a platform of trust, transparency and integrity. The establishment of an independent commission against corruption for the Northern Territory is intrinsically linked with, and fundamental to, the promises that Territory Labor made to the Territory in the lead-up to the August election. There is no doubt that the people of the Territory spoke loud and clear on 27 August. The people of the Territory were sick and tired of the previous government, the apparent lack of transparency and its ministers announcing decisions which had enormous impact on their lives and did not appear to follow any proper procedure.

My interaction with the people of Fong Lim during the campaign, through doorknocking, telephone canvassing, street stalls and such, showed an overwhelming loss of confidence and lack of trust in the CLP government. Of far greater concern was that it showed a fundamental loss of confidence in the process of government generally. Before I made my decision to run for Fong Lim, I felt the same loss of confidence. The responses I received during the campaign not only confirmed my feelings, they showed me the depth of the community’s feelings on the issue.

There was plenty of talk of corruption. There was a feeling amongst many in the community on the issue, although it was often without any real knowledge of the processes. This is what happens when people are

kept in the dark and there is a lack of government transparency. It is possible those community and individual feelings have some substance and there are corrupt practices being employed. Alternatively, it may be that there is just a lack of understanding and clarity.

In my maiden speech last week I said that in spite of the commonly-held belief that politicians are self-serving and in it for what they can get, it has been my experience that the opposite is the case. By and large I have found that people choose to enter politics out of a desire to help their community, and that is generally the same for everyone. Consistent with this, I would like to think that corruption is not as prevalent as many in the community believe. I agree with the comments of the Opposition Leader that bad government is not necessarily corruption; however, whether it is a matter of transparency and communication or the more sinister option, as a parliament we have a problem. We have to start the process of correcting it.

In my maiden speech I went on to discuss some of the relevant issues when I said:

... if our institutions ...

particularly this parliament:

... are going to survive for the benefit of the community, it is important for us to start making them relevant and to start engendering public confidence in the parliament once again.

It is incumbent on this government to begin the process of restocking that lost community confidence and trust.

That is exactly what the establishment of an independent commission against corruption is targeted at. It is my expectation that it will achieve exactly that. A successful ICAC will enhance public confidence in the institutions of government, the public service and the parliament. It will do this by providing an independent body to investigate allegations of corruption at the highest levels of government.

Past government practices have aided and abetted the loss of public confidence, the emptying of the tank of public trust. It is not good enough, in this day and age, for an incoming government to have the capacity to prosecute whoever it feels like. That situation provides the opportunity for a government to use its numerical superiority to pursue petty, time- and resource-wasting sideshows, often with vindictive motivations, while, at the same time, neglecting to prosecute truly important matters. The establishment of an ICAC removes the choice from the government of the day. Why is this important? It is important because we in this place, and those involved in the business of government, really should be concentrating on performing their jobs to the best of their ability and in accordance with the ordinary rules of probity. If we do that, we have nothing to fear from an ICAC.

I also spoke of my belief in equity, in my maiden speech. Equity is a broad concept, and this is another example of it. An ICAC will ensure we are all playing on the same field and we all understand the rules. A little like having nothing to fear but fear itself, the only individuals who fear the coming of an ICAC are those who have something to fear, and for far too long those people have been able to hide in the Territory.

I moved here from Sydney in early 2012, and it was my observation of the way in which the previous government operated that prompted me to run for parliament. As the Member for Johnston spoke earlier of being in a cafe in Sydney and of his embarrassment, I too felt that deep sense of embarrassment. I knew we could do better; I was not sure whether it was corruption I was witnessing, but it was certainly bad government.

I am not sure if it made the news in the Territory, but the New South Wales Government also had its fair share of scandals and bad government over the years. I suggest, however, that even at its worst the New South Wales Government was probably never as bad as the last four years of the Territory government. There were so many scandals, however, that I did, for a time, lose my drive to be a member of the Labor Party, which I first joined in 1988.

At the time the Labor government had become a shambles, and it was an embarrassment to the public and the party membership. However, New South Wales, like all other states, has an ICAC. It was set up after Nick Greiner won government in 1991, and some might suggest it was set up as an attempt to get at members of the former Wran-Unsworth governments, a little like the Member for Blain suggested earlier. The irony in that case was that the first scalps that the New South Wales Government ICAC secured were

the Education minister's, Terry Metherell, and the Premier's, Nick Greiner. What that proved, however, was that the New South Wales ICAC truly was independent and not a tool of the government of the day.

In more recent times the New South Wales ICAC has continued its work. Unfortunately, and despite some great work, it was in the pursuit of the former Crown Prosecutor, Margaret Cunneen, where the officers of the ICAC appeared to have exceeded the authority of the commission. That is something we need to guard against.

As the minister stated earlier, we do not want to establish a Star Chamber-type tribunal that exercises excessive power without authority. That will be an issue for the drafting and the public comment process. I look forward to involving myself in those processes to try to ensure we have the very best ICAC we can, for Territorians.

The Member for Nelson also spoke about costs, hoping for an economy of scale. That is my experience on the Law Society and the ethics committee, where we regulate our legal profession in the Territory. The other jurisdictions tend to deal with hundreds of complaints of their legal practitioners every year. In the Territory we have around four or five. I expect there may be a similar scale in this instance, but then again, if my constituents are right, maybe we will have more. That remains to be seen.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I recommend the establishment of a Northern Territory ICAC; whether it is called that or the Northern Territory anti-corruption commission does not matter. I recommend it because I believe it will assist us all to do our jobs to the best of our individual abilities. More importantly, I recommend it as I wholeheartedly believe it will provide confidence for the public. It will be one step towards restoring trust in our public institutions. I support the minister's statement.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I support the government's intention to establish an independent commission against corruption, or ICAC, in the Territory. Particularly after the last four years, an ICAC will be essential in restoring faith and trust in government. I, too, am really concerned about how far the public's faith in the government of the Northern Territory, which I am now part of, has been eroded.

I am sure that was the message everyone received in our campaign. The electorates were dissatisfied and disengaged because of the conduct of the CLP government. But it was not just the conduct of the members of government towards each other that worried the people; the people did not trust the decisions being made. People believed decisions were being made on the bias of cronyism rather than the best interests of the wider Territory community.

There is widespread perception that important decisions on contract allocations, water rights allocations, environmental issues, the sale of assets and funding allocations were made without due diligence over the past four years. For example, the previous government got into power making some very big promises to deliver to the bush, many constituents of which are in my electorate of Stuart. I can report that in the past four years not a single house has been built for an Aboriginal tenant in the electorate, yet when the election campaign got going proper real fast, there were lovely, flowery documents with promises of 300 houses here and a hundred-and-something houses there.

No houses were built in four years. This speaks to the fact the government—the collective of people and the industry they were—had become so arrogant that they thought they could simply tell people these stories. To reinvest people's faith in us we need clear and transparent government. This is an important part of that.

It is a sad state of affairs, but we must make dramatic changes to restore faith in government. The Gunner government has led the way in restoring integrity and transparency in government, not just by the measure of an ICAC, but by numerous other things we will do, such as reporting ministers' and assistant ministers' travel costs directly to the House and tabling annual reports rather than the synopsis.

The policy of an ICAC was taken to the election, and the electorate wholeheartedly supported it. Most CLP and Independents members have spoken to this important matter, and they have all been roundly supportive of the process. That is a great thing for me to be able to report back to the electorate of Stuart. I am sure other members of the House are keen to take that information back to their mob as well. That is a good thing, and it sets a good tone for the next four years. Our leader, the Chief Minister, continually talks to me and my colleagues about the importance of the tone of this House. We do not come in here to score points off one another; we come here to represent the best interests of the Northern Territory.

An example of extreme importance that remote traditional owners and Indigenous rangers, pastoralists and horticulturalists have passed on to us is water rights. Perception and actuality, in the community conscience, do not matter much. If the community perceives that things are not being done properly then that is what people talk about around their coffee tables, at barbecues and on the stalls at the RSL. That is why it is incumbent on all of us in this place, by doing things like establishing an ICAC, to make sure those people are confident in us as their representatives.

Decisions relating to water rights will become even more important as the Northern Territory Government tries to balance competing interests and needs to attain sustainable development for the Northern Territory. There will always be competing interests and need, business over environment et cetera. We will always face these types of issues. The only way we will be able to prosecute them well in the community, when hard decisions have to be made by this government, this House, and subsequent governments and members of parliament, is if the community has trust in us. That is why the ICAC is so important.

It will be important that the decisions we make are not made for mates or political expediency, but made based on science and the need for there to be no political bias in these important matters. We are all talking about the excitement of the new Gunner government and the transparency that government will deliver, but another thing the people need is to know that there are checks and balances. I hope the ICAC, as an important part of making the government more open and accountable, will increase the public's faith in government.

I have been on a long campaign, like most in this place, and I was concerned about how many people were opting out of the process we represent here. Some electorates have low voter turnout. The voter turnout in the electorate of Stuart is way below 50%. That is terrible. It is also the belief of the Electoral Commission that there is significant under enrolment. A serious matter I addressed in my maiden speech was my interest in getting people out bush involved and interested in the political process again.

One of the tools I will be able to use in getting that interest in the political process is an ICAC, being able to say, 'There are all sorts of checks and balances. You should have faith in the system. This is a system that can deliver jobs, good healthcare and good opportunities in your community. It is the system that protects your environment.'

For these reasons, and many more, I support the approach of the Martin report in establishing a strong ICAC in the NT. The ICAC will have a broad suite of powers and will sometimes be able to conduct private investigations. This will be necessary to change the culture which was allowed to fester over the last four years.

It has been said by a number of people, but the Member for Braitling said it really well the other day, that we need to remember that the way we conduct our business in this place is being watched. People are interested in what we are doing and talking about, and we need to remember that the way we talk to the wider community is taken on by them, and that is then the way they talk to one another. If we want to be taken seriously in this place we need to demonstrate to the community that we have the appropriate checks and balances to behave properly. It is to do with setting the tone, as our leader has said previously, and the frameworks and matrix—the scaffolding, if you will—that supports that clear and transparent language and tone.

It is necessary that we restore the government's integrity. Like many people in this place, I am a born and bred Territorian, and I have never seen the situation as bad as it is now. People that have chosen to live and work in the Territory also deserve better; it is not just those of us lucky enough to be born here. We welcome everyone, and they all have the right to a good government.

I was concerned, during the election campaign, to notice in the media I picked up on, from having a bit of a media habit—you expect certain things from the Territory media during an election campaign, but I was really concerned about the way the Territory was presented and perceived overseas—in the US, the UK and France. We had a bad reputation.

I agree that the ICAC might cost a proper big mob of money, but the cost will be repaid to Territorians in spades by increasing the confidence in government. We have a responsible government in the Labor Gunner government. We will not be spending money we do not need to, but we need to remember that if we want the community to have faith in us and the business we do in government, we have to invest in certain places. An investment of a substantial amount of funding to support an ICAC is wholeheartedly supported by me, and I can convey to this House that it is supported by the electorate of Stuart.

Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this important statement to the House.

In my mind there is no doubt that Territorians want to have faith in the systems of government. We want the system to be free of corruption and to serve the best interests of the people, and we should expect that. It is critically important that our systems of government and its day-to-day operations are not corrupt, and people can trust the government no matter which political persuasion they are. In many ways it is sad that we are now at the point where Territorians not only want to see the establishment of an independent commission against corruption, but it appears to be a necessity.

We have seen many other jurisdictions deal with this years ahead of us, and we acknowledge we are at a time where we need to strengthen our systems of checks and balances in the Northern Territory. We must ensure that when serious questions on the conduct of government are raised we have the mechanisms and independent authority in place that people can have confidence in when dealing with these important questions.

At the Territory election we asked Territorians if they wanted an independent commission against corruption, and they voted, overwhelmingly, in favour of it. It was clear that Territorians had seen enough unacceptable behaviour under the previous government. It was four unhappy years of lurching from one scandal to another, and a period of government that nobody ever wants to see again. People lost trust in the CLP government because of its actions. We saw some extraordinary situations where it was clear that our public institutions tasked with scrutinising and investigating allegations of corruption and misconduct were not able to deal with the complex questions raised because, sometimes, regrettable actions of the former government were beyond anything we had ever seen.

As the new Territory government we are committed to delivering an ICAC. I acknowledge that significant work on the establishment of an ICAC commenced in the last term of the government; however, I must remind the House that to get the previous government to the point of agreeing to establish an ICAC was no easy matter. In fact, it is fair to say it was dragged, kicking and screaming, to the table.

It was because of the continued scandalous behaviours of the previous government that the then Labor opposition, the Independents, members of the public and the media overwhelmingly made the public case that the Territory should move towards establishing an ICAC. The actions of the last government were remarkable, scandalous and, at times, completely embarrassing.

I take the opportunity to go through some of the policy development work of the Labor opposition that forced the CLP to come to the position of accepting the need for an ICAC-like mechanism. Significantly, we released a policy discussion paper titled, *Restoring Integrity to our Government*, which discussed, in detail, the reforms needed to restore trust and integrity to government. This discussion paper formed part of the record amount of policy development work that Labor did leading up to the last election. In the paper we addressed the case for the urgent and comprehensive action needed to help restore trust in government. In part our discussion stated:

Over the last three years Territorians have witnessed a series of events that has seen trust and confidence in public officials and Government in the Northern Territory hit an all-time low.

The actions of the CLP Government have shown a complete disregard for the right of Territorians to open and transparent Government.

They have also shown a complete lack of understanding of the crucial role trust and integrity plays in good Government which delivers for the whole community. Political infighting, a complete disregard for honesty and accountability, and an inconsistent application of policy has led to a drop in business confidence in the Territory.

What follows from the discussion paper is a remarkable, but by no means definitive, list. It is worth going over again to provide some background of why Labor pushed so hard for the establishment of an ICAC-style body in the Northern Territory. The paper goes on and states some actions of the previous government, which included refusal to comply with the spirit and intent of freedom of information laws; and refusal, at times, to be accountable to the parliament, parliamentary committees and the public.

I do not think anyone will ever forget estimates a few years ago when there were questions about ministerial travel and the previous Chief Minister began to read each item out very slowly, line by line. It was very clear he was not keen to answer the question. It was a very straightforward document, and it is a

standard question at most estimates hearings. Ministers usually table the information. When the Chief Minister began reading it out you knew there was a problem.

There were serious questions about the allocation of water licences across the Northern Territory and an appointment to the position of magistrate. There were very serious questions about the CLP slush fund, Foundation 51. We saw people with close alignment to the CLP appointed to some significant positions in the public service, and ones with direct roles in overseeing actions of government.

We will never forget the February midnight coup, when we saw the Member for Katherine try to oust the then Chief Minister, the former Member for Braintree, and a remarkable media conference that followed the day after when the then Chief Minister dug his heels in and refused to go, despite the majority of the government telling him it was time to leave that position. A media conference was broadcast live on national TV where we heard him make some serious accusations about plots by police to orchestrate a coup against him. It raised some questions and was a remarkable media conference.

We heard serious allegations of bullying and intimidation by senior members of government, and all types of slurs, and we had plenty of questions regarding the lack of transparency around ministerial travel, particularly when it came to trips overseas.

This is by no means a definitive list. There were further instances of poor behaviour every week of the government. Again, it is sad, in many ways, that we have reached the point where there is a need for an ICAC.

Going back to our discussion paper, it went on to state that:

A Labor Government will create a Northern Territory Independent Commission Against Corruption. No body currently exists within the Territory to investigate allegations of corruption in public administration in the Northern Territory. Similar bodies currently exist in:

New South Wales – Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)

South Australia – Independent Commissioner Against Corruption (ICAC)

Queensland – Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC)

Western Australia – Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC)

Victoria – Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC)

Tasmania – Integrity Commission

These bodies have different powers and interact with other integrity agencies and statutory officers in ways suited to particular circumstances of their jurisdictions.

It's important that an Independent Commission Against Corruption be suited to the Northern Territory's unique circumstances and work in harmony with the other safeguards in the overall integrity framework. One of the issues that must be considered is the ability of an NT ICAC to co-opt expertise from outside the Northern Territory to assist in investigations and inquiries. The NT Ombudsman's report ... highlights some of the issues the Territory faces due to our size and the likelihood of conflicts of interest arising.

Crucial to the success of such a body in restoring public confidence in the political process will be the powers at its disposal and the interaction of these with other links in the integrity framework.

Issues such as the ability to compel witnesses, the protections afforded those called as witnesses or under investigation and the jurisdiction of the body itself need to be the subject of careful consideration and debate by the whole community.

Questions around the sorts of complaints and issues which trigger the jurisdiction on a NT ICAC, whether the body operates as a standing entity or is formed when required to do so and whether the body has powers of self-referral will need to be considered in the context of the overall integrity framework and the unique characteristics of the Northern Territory.

These are issues that other Australian jurisdictions with well-established anticorruption bodies still continue to grapple with. Some of them were canvassed recently in the review of the jurisdiction of the NSW ICAC.

The paper went on to include a number of important questions for Territorians to consider:

What powers should a Northern Territory Independent Commission Against Corruption have?

What sort of issues should such a Commission be able to investigate?

What sort of qualifications and professional experience should the people who carry out such investigations have?

Should it have the power to initiate its own investigations or should it only investigate issues referred to it?

What rights should witnesses appearing before such a commission have?

Should it have the power to compel witnesses?

Are there any powers or roles currently exercised by other statutory offices, such as the Ombudsman and the Office of the Office of Public Disclosures, that might be more effectively exercised by a Northern Territory Independent Commission Against Corruption?

How can we ensure a Northern Territory Independent Commission Against Corruption works seamlessly with the roles of other statutory offices?

Labor had a tremendous response to that discussion paper. We held public forums and there was a lot of discussion about it. I found it very interesting to listen to my colleagues and hear the feedback they received from their electorates across the Northern Territory about the concerns they have had raised with them and the need for an ICAC to be established.

As an opposition, it was a relief that the CLP government chose to appoint someone of a high standing, a former Northern Territory Chief Justice, Mr Brian Martin AO QC, in August 2015 to conduct such an inquiry into the establishment of an independent commission against corruption in the Northern Territory. I think we all thank Mr Martin for delivering such a thorough report. A very comprehensive body of work was done, which will be well regarded in the Northern Territory for a very long time.

It was delivered to this parliament in May and, given the cycle of government, it was, rightfully or wrongfully, difficult for the government to act on it at that time. We are a new government. We have a clear direction from the people of the Northern Territory that an ICAC must be established. It is a very firm commitment of ours. We will progress the work of former Chief Justice Brian Martin in the establishment of an ICAC. It is a really important body of work, which Territorians want to see.

On principle, we took on board the bulk of Brian Martin's recommendations, and we will establish an ICAC, as he recommended. Speaking of the need for these reforms it is important to acknowledge the hard work of the existing oversighting agencies and their staff. We have some amazing people and dedicated staff in the Office of the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General, the Northern Territory Police and the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures. They do some very important work in the Northern Territory, but it was very clear in the last term of government that there was a need to look at an ICAC-type body because we saw some very complicated situations arise out of former investigations involving the former Police Commissioner and travel. That made it clear that we had to look at our checks and balances and our systems of ensuring integrity, transparency and anti-corruption within government. It was due time to look at the need for an ICAC.

There was a lot of work done in the previous term of government. The then opposition, and now Labor government, actively pursued the establishment of an ICAC because of the behaviour, actions and very serious questions and allegations that surrounded the previous government. There was a great deal of discussion and debate in the community, and we were very proud to drive a lot of that debate through our policy development work in the community.

When we finally saw the government submit—I think it was another time when there was a crisis in its numbers—to the establishment of an independent commission against corruption, it was a great relief. It

was a very productive time and body of work which former Chief Justice Martin pursued. It is a very significant report.

There has been a great deal of work happening, and, as a government, we now have the responsibility of ensuring we continue that important policy work and that we have the right legislative framework to put the ICAC in place and get it right. It is really important that we get it right and do the work properly.

People realise that this body will have powers to self-refer. It will be able to look back at items it feels it needs to. It is important that we do the work and get it right, because this will be a very important body in the Northern Territory, doing critical work as part of helping to re-establish trust and faith in government, which has been so severely eroded over the last four years. That is a tragedy, but we have some wonderful people in the Northern Territory.

I am confident that in the coming years, because of the actions of the new government and people knowing they have a new watchdog—knowing if there are questions of serious misconduct and corruption we have the right body in place that can investigate it and give people confidence that those serious questions are being answered, that in a place as small and close as the Northern Territory, where everybody knows everybody, we have a body set up with the right mechanisms and make-up to deal with various situations. It will be a big and extensive body of work going forward, but it is one we are ready to pursue.

Again, I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this statement before the House. It will be an important part of the work of this government. When we look back in four years' time and see where the ICAC is and the body of work it has pursued, it will be an interesting time. By bringing this important statement to our first parliamentary sittings we are showing our commitment to delivering the independent commission against corruption for the Northern Territory.

Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to comment on the importance of the establishment of an independent commission against corruption in the Northern Territory.

The Member for Nelson pointed out the complexities of the report written by Mr Brian Martin QC, tabled in May 2016, before the end of the last Assembly, with its 52 recommendations. It is a body of work that is important to rebuilding the trust and integrity in our government institutions. That is ultimately what it is about. We saw some bad behaviour from the former government. We had an interesting four years, which is probably the understatement of the year. It was a chaotic time.

I know bad governments and bad decision-making do not necessarily mean corruption, but they completely destroy the trust Territorians have in the systems that are here to serve them. This is what establishing an ICAC is about for the Gunner Labor government. It is about making sure we send a clear message to Territorians that we recognise the importance of the roles we hold and we are willing to be held accountable. That is what people are looking for.

It has not slipped past anybody in this Chamber that the Gunner Labor government was elected on 27 August on a strong platform of trust and integrity. It was one of the three pillars we took to the election: jobs; putting children at the centre of everything we do; and trust and integrity. It has been mentioned on a number of occasions by members of the opposition, which is positive. There is general agreement across the Chamber that we need to do a lot of work to restore the trust of Territorians. Every member of this Chamber heard, loud and clear, in August, that message from Territorians. It is fresh in all our minds exactly what will happen if you breach the trust Territorians have put in us.

We have seen what has happened. It was the Member for Johnston who, in this debate, pointed out that there are two members of the opposition, who have acknowledged some of the things that happened over the last four years, how bad they were and how they eroded trust.

I believe, as a diverse parliament which is here to represent and act in the best interests of Territorians, together we can get that trust back, and not just the 18 members of government. We all know we have to do that. I believe there is genuine will, and we need to do this in collaboration with the opposition and Independents. We can do this together.

We must establish this ICAC to show Territorians that we all agree that we should be held to account for what we do. As many of you will, I remember very clearly the conversations I had doorknocking in my electorate in the lead-up to the election. Trust and integrity were big components of that. I remember conversations with people who, of course, would paint all politicians with the same brush, particularly after their experiences over the last four years. I do not blame them. They wanted to see that their parliament

was professional, that we were debating policies and issues that impact on them on a daily basis in a professional way and were being transparent and open about it. I remember being quite surprised by how often people in my electorate were mentioning members of the former government by name who they simply did not believe were acting in the best interests of Territorians. The Leader of the Opposition captured, in his Address in Reply speech, last week why Territorians were having those conversations with all of us. It was a scandal-plagued four years.

Residents in Casuarina were telling me outright they wanted an ICAC established. It is something that Territorians have banded together on and agreed needs to happen. We are here to represent them. They want to see parliament return to robust discussions about policy and their best interests, rather than the utter chaos we saw over the last four years.

The lack of process and many decisions involving the environment and planning destroyed trust. The midnight coup and the surrounding comments and events will be burnt into the political history books forever, and they destroyed trust. There is a book coming out just before Christmas—probably well timed—that documents some of the last four years. I have said many times in this House in my two years how appalled I was; I feel like I said it on a weekly basis. It seemed that we were getting national media because there was another scandal or something not right. We were spending so much time and energy speaking about those things, but nothing was done to increase accountability or transparency. It is not only up to this parliament; it is incumbent upon all of us to be part of restoring that trust so that people across the Northern Territory get the message loud and clear that we will be accountable and will remember first and foremost our commitment to them and the privilege of the role we hold.

It has been acknowledged across the House that the establishment of an ICAC is not a simple process. The Member for Nelson showed how big that report was, and it is an important report. We have already seen changes to the way the government communicates and reports to the general public about international travel. I will not labour on it too much because I know other members have described some of the events we saw.

The Member for Sanderson went overseas on a very important trip as part of our commitment to bringing back the Arafura Games, and she was the first to put out her itinerary, who she was meeting with and the costs of her trip. That is what we said we would do, so that is what we did. I have no doubt that over the next few days the Chief Minister will do the same, as he said today. This is a completely different way for government to operate when it comes to travel, but in estimates we saw, on that very strange day, the former Chief Minister reading exceptionally slowly just to try to kill time and avoid scrutiny. We are not here to avoid scrutiny; we are here to be accountable for the decisions we make and to act in the best interests of Territorians.

On day one of the new Assembly we unanimously elected the Member for Goyder as the Independent Speaker of this House, a role that, as the Member for Goyder well knows, is not without its own incredible history. Had I not been in the House that night, I might not have believed that or other events that became the hallmark of the former government. It was an incredible night.

We do not need to cast the net far to find examples of why the community across the Northern Territory, from Karama to Central Australia, stood up very strongly against what had become the norm. We heard the message loud and clear, 'We do not want this to be the norm. This has become the norm.' Guess what? Territorians had the power to change that, and they did. They have the power to change it again and they will. We all need to remember that; we are all at the hands of Territorians and we must remember we are here to represent them.

The Attorney-General has already outlined the new select committee for parliamentary reform, made up of a cross section of members of this house, and changes to Question Time to allow for scrutiny. We believe there needs to be a culture shift, and we believe this Assembly is more than capable of achieving it. It is about more than being capable of achieving it, I think we have the desire to achieve it, and that is almost more important. We want that culture shift. We will get there.

Environmental reform will be an important part of the work to increase transparency, and it has already begun. We acknowledge this by delivering on our commitment to non-government organisations. I raise this because—I have said it before—having non-government voices and the voices of everyday Territorians as part of our policy decisions, discussions and consultation increases transparency and accountability, and it is another example of a layer of accountability we want to make sure is there. That layer was degraded by the CLP government by removing funding from really important NGO groups that play a role in

standing up to government and offering alternative perspectives, and standing up for government desires around things like the environment, health and disability services. We need to hear those voices.

We must build more accountability into the system. One of the things that brought that home—I have welcomed the decision made over the last few days in the federal sphere regarding Port Melville, setting that aside for the federal government to look at. This is why it is important for us to build accountability into the system and make sure we are following proper environmental process not only for the protection of the environment, which is exceptionally important, but when we are looking at these positive economic development opportunities that we are not getting them tangled up down the line because process was disregarded. We need to ensure we tighten up those processes right across the board and we are following the processes set out so we can develop the Territory in a way that provides certainty and stability to all Territorians.

It has been an embarrassing four years. There were a number of accusations made by the former government against its own colleagues, a distinct lack of transparency, and appointments to positions occurred without transparent process. There is a level of hypocrisy appearing already because it was clear the CLP kept the blinkers on when it came to concerns regarding the community and business, particularly when it came to trust and their distinct desire to see more accountability built into our system.

We had a town hall meeting on our trust and integrity paper, and one of the issues which came up heavily was planning. People had lots of concerns regarding planning processes; again, that came down to transparency.

You may ask why I mentioned all these things; it is because we have reached a point where Territorians have stated they have a real issue with trust in government institutions. That did not happen overnight. It was a process or series of events and incidents which occurred over a long period of time. We have a massive job to bring that back. Establishing an ICAC is something we have committed to, but it is also something that gives a level of comfort to the community that we are serious about this and recognise the importance of what we are doing.

It is important to note that the community was really engaged with that town hall process and the discussion paper; it was providing feedback. It is something that the community is not only interested in but sees as essential to the way we operate.

The Deputy Chief Minister talked about the motion that came up in this House on the inquiry into political donations which got through and then was overturned and did not go ahead—another night that left my head spinning.

We have a real opportunity, as an Assembly, as a collective, to start getting this right. We are already showing we are in contrast to the last Assembly, not necessarily just a contrast as a government to the last government. We all have the ability to show that, as an Assembly, we operate differently.

I thank the Attorney-General very much for her work on bringing this statement to the House, and all the members who have contributed their perspectives and spoken about why this is so important. There is much work to be done and a large process ahead. I remind everyone that it will be worth it because we want to ensure Territorians have trust in us all and the systems that are there to serve their best interests.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in this Chamber welcoming the statement from the Attorney-General about the establishment of an independent commission against corruption in the Northern Territory.

I have full confidence in the Attorney-General delivering on this agenda. She mentioned it in her speech in the Address in Reply to the Administrator. She provided the first sittings of this parliament in this new term with the direction this government wants to take and how we want to tackle measures around independence, and provide good government in the Northern Territory so people can again have faith in their public institutions.

What you require when you ask people to have faith is the knowledge that there is a mature mechanism that can investigate us. Unfortunately, that is what it has come to. I like to believe parliamentarians and government can be trusted, but sometimes what you need to earn that trust from Territorians is the knowledge that there is a body that can investigate you if something goes wrong. Unfortunately, especially after the last four years, it cannot be done on your word alone.

The Attorney-General's statement set out how the government will deliver the centrepiece of our agenda to restore trust in government in the Northern Territory. It is a critical and fundamental part of our agenda. If you want to achieve the other things you want to achieve in the Territory, you must have, and we will have, mature mechanisms.

Along with growing jobs in the Northern Territory and investing in children, restoring integrity is a key to achieving much of our policy agenda; the three come together. I pay credit to the Attorney-General for starting the first sittings by laying that out.

Territorians are entitled to know that the public interest, and not the private interest, drives government policy. That should be how we approach things. Unfortunately that has not always been the case. Questions can be asked. We want to try to remove that odium. It helps Territorians to know that there is a body to investigate if a question is asked, if there is evidence it can follow. It also helps us, as government, because sometimes accusations are made. You may say, 'All good, nothing to see here'. But now we can say, 'If there is a problem, this body can independently investigate it. I am saying you can trust me, but in the event that trust is lost, this body can follow up and look at it.' It is not just a question of taking my word for it. It is an important, mature mechanism for a jurisdiction, and it should aid good government.

It is not just about tracking down the wrongdoers; it is about restoring confidence to Territorians in the institutions that are here to represent them and advocate on their behalf, and to make sure people are confident that the public interest is driving policy and not the private interest.

It is the smart thing to do, to invest in trust and integrity. Openness and accountability are essential for business confidence—that we have a fair and level playing field, and economic certainty about how and what we are doing. That is a good environment to create jobs in. Investors need transparency and accountability to invest. Business needs to know it is what you know, what you are doing and the quality of it, and not just a case of who you know to win contracts.

Integrity and certainty build our reputation nationally and globally. The Member for Casuarina touched on that. Unfortunately our reputation has taken a battering over the last four years, and this is one of the important measures in re-establishing our reputation.

Many of the challenges we face, from youth justice to remote housing and delivering better health and education outcomes for our kids, require trust and confidence between government and the community. We will deliver that. Trust and integrity are the foundation of a healthier, smarter, safer, more sustainable and prosperous Territory. I can probably think of a few more adjectives too, Attorney-General. Partnering these measures with the other things we are doing, like a judicial inquiry into donations to inform donation reform in the Northern Territory—which also goes to the desire we have to make sure Territorians know the public interest drives public policy, not the private interest.

We will have that reform process based on practical recommendations of how things work in the Northern Territory. I will be leading that, with the Attorney-General, to make sure we get practical options to reform donations in the Northern Territory.

We will be an active, positive government that does everything it can to address the trust deficit that has formed over the last four years. The importance of trust, as we all know as members in this Chamber—I think we all had to answer this question in some way. The importance of trust and integrity to good governance is why the four years of the appalling CLP government were so destructive and led to such substantial change in this Chamber. The question of trust was pivotal to the last Territory election.

There was a belief that the CLP put its interests ahead of the public's interests, and there were no mature mechanisms to test that. I had my concerns, as did the public at large, but the fundamental mechanism to follow up those concerns was missing. We saw it, through the debates we had during the election campaign—the Sky debate and the Channel Nine debate, and the conversations you had on the doors. Questions were asked, and there was no capacity for them to be answered, for the better or worse of government.

As a government I want it to be known by the public that if they have a question about this it will be investigated and answered. So the smell does not linger, you want to clear the air. There will be a body, independent of me that can investigate me if something goes wrong. That way you can operate in a trust environment and people know it is about the public's interests not the private interest.

Time and again we saw actions which eroded trust in government and integrity in the use of public resources. Foundation 51, a subversion of the electoral laws and the recommendation from the police about the prima facie case fed the strong belief from the public that private and not a public interest was driving policy. That recommendation from the police was powerful.

The lack of transparency around water licences and allocations to CLP candidates—we touched upon much of this in the Labor Party's submission to the Brian Martin inquiry. The CLP was dragged, kicking and screaming, into having the Martin inquiry. Unfortunately it did not make a submission to the inquiry, which I thought was a shame. Labor released a discussion paper and we then had the Martin inquiry, which Labor made a submission to. We were very passionate about the establishment of an ICAC.

I quote from the submission:

The discussion paper articulated Labor's case for the improvement of the Territory's integrity framework in the Northern Territory, in light of dubious decision making of the CLP Government that has led to the loss of trust and confidence of Territorians in Government processes, including:

- *Lack of transparency in the allocation of water licences*
- *Lack of due process in judicial appointments*
- *A staff member charged with corruption offences ...*

There is a case before the courts at the moment:

- *The operation of Foundation 51 and being found to flaunt NT electoral laws*
- *Lack of transparency in the decision to sell TIO, resulting approximately 40 job losses and increased premiums for home insurers*
- *The lack of a mandate in the long term lease of the Port of Darwin*
- *Continued questions about the lack of transparency regarding Ministerial travel and refusal to answer questions about Ministerial Travel.*

During the campaign there was the question of the car, beyond entitlement, to the then Member for Arnhem. Questions were constantly being raised—a sense of wrongness about the past government. It is little wonder that the public faith in government hit rock bottom under the CLP. It is quite clear that the CLP was never 100%, during the last term, behind the establishment of an independent commission against corruption. We will welcome any support this term that comes from the CLP or the Independents for the creation of an independent commission against corruption.

They were dragged kicking and screaming. I was involved in those negotiations with the Member for Nelson, trying to get a reference from this parliament to create an ICAC. It took a long time to get the CLP there. It did not make a submission to the Martin inquiry and, unfortunately, failed to respond to the Martin inquiry before the election. We made a formal response to the Martin inquiry after it was handed down about what we would and would not accept out of the recommendations.

I thank Brian Martin QC for his very comprehensive report. We have in-principle support for 50 of the 52 recommendations, and the Attorney-General has gone through the work plan we face now about how we deal with the recommendations. The two we did not accept were about the appointment of the commissioner. We do not want a part-time commissioner. The person Brian Martin recommended may be interested in the job and may want to apply, but we want someone, from the start, to apply and be keen to be part of the process of setting it up. We think that is very important.

The Martin inquiry recommended independent, broad-ranging and retrospective powers, and Labor has been calling for that for some time. It was in our submission to the Brian Martin inquiry. It is the right model for the NT. It avoids some of the Star Chamber pitfalls of other jurisdictions. We want to get it up and running as soon as possible, but as I said before the election, and I say now, we do not have to panic; we have time to get this right because it will have retrospective powers. We do not have to rush this in the fear that we will miss something.

It is a complex reform. The Attorney-General has a big task ahead. I have full confidence in her doing it, but it is very complicated and we will take the time to get it right. We will consult with Territorians and listen to them and people with expertise in this field to ensure we get it right. One of the concerns—and I am working with the Attorney-General on this—is the ability for the independent commission against corruption—for any potential charges to flow and be successfully prosecuted through the courts, ensuring it all works seamlessly. In other jurisdictions that has been the point of tension. We have to make sure we get it right, that you do not see something go through the independent commission against corruption but not successfully proceed through the other steps. We will take the time to get that right, and we will appreciate advice from people like the police, who are good at investigations and know what needs to be done. As Police minister I will be working with the Attorney-General to make sure that happens.

The Attorney-General spoke about the suite of powers the independent commission against corruption will have, a full suite, as the Attorney-General said, to make sure we have strong investigatory powers. The coercive powers of the ICAC include powers to:

- *enter, search or seize things on public premises or premises used by public persons or entities other than residential premises*
- *require the production of statements, documents or other things*
- *obtain search warrants from respective private or residential premises, motor vehicles or ships, or other forms of conveyance*
- *seek warrants under surveillance and telecommunications legislation*
- *seek authorisation to conduct unlawful activities and assume false identities*
- *require attendance at a hearing and the giving of evidence under oath or affirmation*
- *second staff from other agencies, employ investigators and delegate powers.*

That is an important one. We saw, through some recent investigations in the last term, the complications that can occur in a small jurisdiction like the Northern Territory where people know people who know people; that can make it difficult to investigate sometimes. The ability to second is something we will have to look at and how we do that to make sure we can work our way through being a small jurisdiction; that may include going outside our boundaries, potentially, to make sure we have people who can investigate without conflict. We saw that through the investigations. I do not need to go through it all again; we all know about the travel, the Police Commissioner and the complicated set of relationships that had to be managed by many integrity officers.

- *require a public body to refrain from taking action relating to a particular matter under investigation or to conduct a joint investigation with the independent commission against corruption ...*

We all know the importance of making sure there are no clashes there and that it works properly.

- *exercise the powers of a public body, including the powers of existing inquiry bodies such as the Ombudsman*
- *request or recommend that a person be granted indemnity from prosecution*
- *issue seizure and retention orders*
- *apply to the Supreme Court for injunctions to restrain certain conduct*
- *apply to the Supreme Court for an order that a person's passport be delivered to the ICAC. Independent Commission Against Corruption.*

It is a serious suite of powers. I wanted to touch on that to make sure people are fully aware that this is a very serious body we will be bringing into power in the Northern Territory. Any failure to comply with the directions of the independent commission against corruption will be punishable. It will be a very strong investigative body. It is very important that we have it because there are gaps at the moment. We saw from the submission made to the Brian Martin inquiry by investigative integrity offices that there are gaps in the

NT jurisdiction about what can and cannot be investigated. We simply cannot afford to have those gaps. We cannot afford to have public confidence and trust in government eroded as it was under the CLP.

The Attorney-General touched a little, in her speech, on the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures, who is a watchdog. That is where we go now to see what can provide protection, but it does not provide full protection, and we are looking at doing that under the independent commission against corruption. Brian Martin made the recommendations about what we do with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures with the independent commission against corruption to bring it all together to form a full body with a full suite of powers. The current office does not have broad-ranging powers to initiate investigations of its own motion or have surveillance, search and seizure powers. It has limitations on who it can investigate and has significant limitations on what and how it reports. We clearly cannot afford to have those gaps. We will be addressing that through responding to 50 of the 52 recommendations in the Brian Martin inquiry to have this full body established in the Northern Territory.

We have to repair the damage done by the CLP. This is one of the biggest, most important steps towards doing that. We recognise it goes to our behaviour as parliamentarians as well. Our behaviour was part of the loss of trust in the previous term. I also goes to tone, this reform and the judicial inquiry we will have. There is a bunch of reforms we will introduce to restore public trust.

Territorians must have confidence that they and the public interest come first under this government and any future government. It is what they will get under this government. The independent commission against corruption is the beginning of that task. We will put it in place with retrospective powers. People will know, with confidence and certainty, what the powers are in the Northern Territory. They will have trust in their government and know that if something is questioned there is a body to ensure it is investigated and everything is clean. Hopefully we will never have to sit through another debate where people ask questions about decisions the government made and there is no ability to provide certainty, clarity or confidence that a decision of government was made in good faith and in the public interest.

We have hit the ground running. That is why it was good to hear the Attorney-General deliver this statement today to show the path we will follow in establishing this to provide confidence and certainty to Territorians that we are on task. It is a complicated task with a lot of work across different agencies and Bills to make sure it works, but we have an Attorney-General who I have full confidence in delivering it.

It follows on from the reforms we made last time we were in government. We made massive attempts last time for openness and transparency in government. We have a record in responding to community concern. Under the last Labor government we introduced freedom of information laws, supporting the provision of information about government services to the public. We introduced whistle-blower laws and protection for individuals, to improve administration of government services. We established the Estimates Committee, allowing public scrutiny of government's Budget. We established the Ministerial Code of Conduct and limited government use of advertising through the *Public Information Act*. We established the first ever independent Electoral Commission.

I will introduce a Bill to parliament—the *Public Information Act*. Some of these things will have to be revisited. Unfortunately we lost government; that is what happens sometimes. The CLP won on the back of the then Chief Minister, Terry Mills. Over the last term, especially towards the end with the On Track ads under Chief Minister Adam Giles, we saw a walking away from the reforms we brought in on public information and the use of taxpayers' funds in advertising. Some of those reform measures from our last term we will have to go back and do again this term.

We will build on our reforms and have an ICAC. We will have the judicial inquiry to provide practical advice about donation reform in the NT. With a Labor government in the Northern Territory you will see those reform measures for independence, openness and transparency. It seems to always take a Labor government to bring these reforms into the Northern Territory. We are doing it again with public information. We are doing it for the first time with the independent commission against corruption. You can always take pride in what a Labor government will do. We will deliver again for Territorians because it takes a Labor government.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contributions this evening. It is an important debate, and I thank the Opposition Leader for his indication of support.

I will take a few moments to cover some of the issues raised and outline some key points. The Opposition Leader expressed concerns about the ICAC looking back to the time of the CLP government. Our

government has been crystal clear; it was an election commitment. The ICAC we create will have retrospective powers and it will be up to the ICAC to decide how far back it needs to investigate.

I have a feeling, from watching ICACs in other jurisdictions, that it might be a bit like an onion. You start to peel it back and there are more layers. I do not know that for sure, but we will make sure that the commission in the Northern Territory has the power to go back and investigate matters fully so Territorians can have their trust in government restored.

It will not just be the last four years; the ICAC will have retrospective powers. As the Chief Minister has highlighted, many people are telling us we need to get the ICAC in place quickly, and we are working as efficiently as possible, but we need to make sure we get the legislation and the process right. It will have the powers to investigate as it sees fit. That is an important point.

The last four years highlighted the need for an ICAC. Some of my colleagues spoke tonight about the different situations, so I will not go over them, but we did have an inquiry into political donations overturned, and comments and decisions were made that were questionable, so the ICAC we create will have retrospective powers.

The ICAC must have the ability to examine complaints arising from actions that occurred before the legislation was enacted. That is a clear point we make. The ICAC must also have the power to re-examine complaints or matters that either have not been adequately looked at or were inadequately dealt with for whatever reason. There may be questions left unanswered or government agencies may have felt they did not have the ability, through legislation, to look into them. It will provide for all those issues to be reviewed.

We will be implementing a legislative power similar to one that exists in Victoria and its IBAC Act. We are following the guidance of Commissioner Martin. In his report Commissioner Martin notes that the Victorian IBAC Act provides that the Act applies in respect of conduct which occurred before the commencement of the Act. It is crystal clear. Commissioner Martin states, in paragraph 375:

In my view, it is both unnecessary and inappropriate to impose a limitation period on the making of a complaint or report about corruption or misconduct.

It is clearly outlined, for the Leader of the Opposition, who raised that question today.

In Commissioner Martin's view, the primary consideration is that the ICAC must have a wide and unfettered discretion to accept or reject a complaint or report, or to investigate or refer the matter to an agency. Our government supports that view. It is how the ICAC should work. Most importantly, it is what Territorians need and expect. In implementing the ICAC we hope the new Leader of the Opposition backs Commissioner Martin's recommendations. The Chief Minister outlined that the CLP failed to participate in Commissioner Martin's review, but I note the comments from the Leader of the Opposition today and I welcome them and his support. It is very important. In terms of the independence, discretion and strong powers, we need that support from everyone in the Chamber.

I also note the comments of the Member for Nelson, and the Leader of the Opposition raised them, in regard to the cost of the ICAC. Like all of our election commitments, the ICAC was a commitment; it was costed and publicised before the Territory election. The Martin report notes that there is a significant range in terms of cost, from approximately \$2m to \$5m per year. He noted that his figure relied on a degree of estimation and even guess work. In our election costings the government committed \$3m per annum, and we are confident that we have funded the ICAC adequately, but obviously we need to ensure we have an ICAC that is workable. If that figure needs to be looked at I am sure it is something we can look into. But we believe our figure of \$3m is adequate.

All other states and territories have an ICAC in place currently. We are the last jurisdiction, so we need to get that transparency into the Northern Territory. We heard from the Member for Fong Lim that this was one of the issues that arose when people were out doorknocking. I know other colleagues had similar stories. We really need to put this ICAC in place so Territorians can start to have trust. We can restore faith in government.

I believe everyone in this House entered into parliament and politics for the right reason. We need to make sure we put measures in place that protect the integrity of this Chamber. The Chief Minister spoke about it just a while ago. Sometimes there is a perceived conflict of interest or allegations might be made. This ICAC will be there and those matters can be referred to it.

We are not saying we do not have good people right now who do a good job. It is just that we need the legislative powers for the Northern Territory to have a proper independent commission against corruption. This is about protecting the integrity of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and members of parliament. I believe that every person in this Chamber has their heart in the community and the Territory, and that is why we are here. We need a system that allows any questionable decisions to be reviewed.

I picked up on comments opposite about whether this will just be a review of bad policy. No; this is about providing a framework that ensures questionable decisions can be properly reviewed to ensure no allegations of corruption are upheld. Bad policy is reviewed at election time. It was quite clear a couple of months ago what that results of that review were.

This is a measure to protect against corruption. This is about ensuring our parliament and government have a process of being open and transparent. One of the big issues in the last Legislative Assembly was the lack of process around important decisions. My colleague, the Chief Minister, acknowledged some of those decisions, as did other people in the House today, who talked about different decisions. We saw a lack of process which had people questioning. We need to make sure we have a system in place where if a decision is perceived as questionable there is a process that can address those concerns. It is important in restoring the trust of Territorians in our government and the Legislative Assembly.

It is also important that we restore the trust of the rest of Australia and overseas. We became the laughing stock of the nation over the last couple of years with our midnight coups and things that took place. We need to showcase the Territory for what it is, a modern, cosmopolitan place. This is the capital of northern Australia. This is a place where people can do business. We need investment in northern Australia. When you have questionable practices businesses will not invest in the Territory because they will not believe in us or our processes. We need to make sure we are transparent and this a good place to do business. It is timely that this is put in place so we can restore confidence and on the national and international stage people can see the Territory as the place to invest in northern Australia. We need that investment to drive jobs, and this is a small part of that.

We need to make sure the public interest comes first and that we have mechanisms that are always open. From the last four years, the one moment that sticks in my mind is the motion into political donations that was supported and then scrapped. We need to make sure there is a separate body so if people have concerns they can be taken to that body. It is about trust. If allegations are made about a government, those matters can be referred to the ICAC and the public can have confidence in decisions that are made.

Through the ICAC we hope we can change the culture of the Territory, protect the community—and the misuse of power and authority, whether it has, or there a perception that, it has gone unchecked. It is about making sure government power is not misused, the perception is reined in and we have a commission set up where matters can be fully investigated.

Questions were raised by the CLP, but they were never truly behind the ICAC, so I genuinely welcome the support of not only the Independent Member for Nelson, who spoke today, but that of the Leader of the Opposition.

We need to ensure we fill the gaps of what can be investigated. It is time to get it right. We need to ensure we put in place full and strong investigative powers. I have spoken about the retrospectivity of this piece of legislation. We are working as efficiently as we can to get that delivered, but we need to make sure we do not get it wrong; we need to make sure it is robust. It is important in regard to trust being restored. We certainly have a big task ahead, and it is a vital task.

We need to ensure we put in place these reforms; they are important reforms. We need to put these reforms in place for the Northern Territory, to grow the Territory, in a business sense, and grow the strength of our government. I thank everybody for their contributions ...

Mr Wood: Which recommendations did you not accept?

Ms FYLES: There are two recommendations that I think will come back to the Legislative Assembly. I do not have them in front of me, Member for Nelson, but I am happy to—I was reading them this morning but now they escape me. One was regarding the recommendation made about having a part-time commissioner and sharing them with South Australia. We felt that was not the best model. I can undertake to come back to you in a briefing. We accepted 50 of the 52 recommendations. We wholeheartedly accepted Justice Martin's work; we believe it was a good body of work.

We are now undertaking that body of work—the next step in rolling out the legislation and the changes which need to be made to put the independent commission against corruption in place in the Northern Territory. I undertake to further update the House. Members who would like briefings on the process—we are working as quickly and efficiently as possible, but we need to get this right. We cannot, in years to come, have an investigation and then have an issue because of a loophole. I will update the House in the future. If people would like briefings on the process that is taking place, I am more than happy to provide for that.

This is about working together so we get the best piece of legislation and the best independent commission against corruption so the Northern Territory can catch up with the rest of Australia and this can be a place where people have integrity to do business again.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to put on the record my continuing admiration for all the selfless carers across the Northern Territory. As we know, last week was National Carers Week, and I acknowledge Carers NT for a successful week of awareness, support and activities, and for the valuable work and contribution it makes to our community.

As a member of parliament I believe it is important to acknowledge the hard work of the loving and dedicated carers providing essential support to members of our community. National Carers Week is about acknowledging and saying thank you to the significant contributions carers make.

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, a mental illness, a chronic condition, a terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug related health issue or who are frail and aged.

I will provide some compelling statistics:

- There are 2.8 million unpaid carers in Australia, including an estimated 30 000 in the Northern Territory.
- 12.4% of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population are carers, compared to 10.5% of non-Indigenous Australians.
- 78 000 Australians under the age of 15 are young carers; this equates to two or three children in every Australian classroom having some level of responsibility as a carer in their home.
- It is estimated that carers provided 1.9 billion hours of unpaid care in 2015.
- The estimated replacement value of unpaid care provided in 2015 is \$60.3bn, over \$1bn per week, or 3.8% of gross domestic product.
- 27% of primary carers have been caring for 10 to 24 years; a further 7% have been in the caring role for 25 years or more.
- Females make up the majority of carers, representing 56.1% of all carers in 2015.
- In 2012 around 304 900 carers were less than 25 years old, 683 700 were aged 25 to 44 years, 1.1 million were aged 45 to 64, and 580 000 were aged 65 years and over.

Last week's calendar of events for National Carers Week in the Territory was varied and included the community family fun day at the Leanyer aquatic park; Carers NT information stands at the Alice Springs Hospital, the Bakewell Shopping Centre, the Yeperenye Shopping Centre, and Raintree Park; and a carers graduation ceremony, held on 19 October, where the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Hon John Hardy OAM, presented certificates to those who have achieved a Certificate III in Individual Support. There

were cinema screenings in Darwin and Alice Springs; the opening of the new NT Carers office in Katherine; and the carers annual dinner, held at Knott's Crossing Resort in Katherine on Saturday 22 October.

As I mentioned in the list of events, the patron of Carers NT, his Honour the Administrator, presented certificates at a graduation ceremony. The ceremony was to present recipients with their well-earned qualifications of Certificate III in Individual Support.

To provide context to this contribution, imagine trying to enter or re-enter the workforce after providing long-term care for a loved one. Your qualifications may be out of date or your employment direction changed due to your experiences as a carer. Providing unpaid care can be challenging enough without the burden of having your experiences and skills as a carer going unrecognised.

The Carers NT Group Recognition Project is a labour market training program which provides just that, formal recognition of the skills and knowledge carers acquire in their roles as unpaid carers. The first of its kind in Australia to be delivered in Darwin, the program was developed to assist carers to gain a qualification that will prepare them to gain employment or to advance them in their current employment. Funded by the Northern Territory Government and the Human Services Training Advisory Council, through the Labour Market Training Program, the qualification uses both recognition and a gap-fill training methodology.

The Carers NT Recognition Project provides the opportunity for formal recognition to unpaid carers who have spent years caring for, supporting and advocating for those in their care. It is designed to empower unpaid and unrecognised carers, and boost the pool of potential employees in the sector, while providing carers with a greater sense of wellbeing and an improvement in economic security.

The Carers NT Group Recognition Project aligns with the identified priorities of the National Carer Strategy. The strategy aims to address the disadvantages faced by many carers, the lack of services and support for their carer roles and the difficulty they experience in gaining education and training, and entering the paid workforce. The formal recognition of skills within the Australian Qualifications Framework enables carers to participate in paid work if they choose to do so.

The 16 carers from Darwin received a Certificate III in Individual Support during National Carers Week. The recipients of this well-earned qualifications were Alison Tillack, Yvonne Smith, Lynette Hansen, Kyaw Aung, Martin Tareha, Victoria Lima, Olivia Kelly, Sheena Bailey, Deborah Brown, Mie Mie Aung, Annita Politis, Setiyani Hewitson, Sandy Scaife, Racheal Kroes, Sarah Hona, Helen Aitkinson and Jack Owen.

I will now share comments from one of the participants, Yvonne Smith, about the Certificate III course. Yvonne said, 'I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to study the Certificate III in Individual Support through Carers NT. I have been a full-time carer for my brother for two years now. He is terminal with cancer. I left full-time employment to care for my brother because he is a single man and was no longer able to look after himself. I must mention that the respite provided by Carers NT was crucial for me to participate in and complete this course. Thank you so much.

'For me, the first most valued outcome from this course has been the recognition and affirmation that it gives me for my life sacrifice, my hands-on experience and new skills and knowledge that I have acquired as my brother's carer. That is personally very empowering, such a boost to one's self-confidence. This course provides me with a new qualification for my achievement. I am sure it will be appreciated when I re-enter the workforce.

'Secondly, and the most powerful outcome of this course, has been the openness, support and sharing of experiences, knowledge, fear, joys and emotions with other student carers, people just like me, taking care of their family in need. They are beautiful people from all walks of life, caring for family with so many varied conditions. I was in awe! Yet our role and task to care, advocate and empower is common!

'This course provided me with the realisation, especially when life becomes so very confined as a carer, that I am not alone, that we are all doing a significant, fantastic and much-needed task. And the fact that our role, skills and knowledge are now recognised and acknowledged is absolutely fantastic!'

In closing, I acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all carers in the Northern Territory. I also acknowledge the support provided to them by Carers NT. I especially acknowledge the work of Steve Vitone, the Chief Executive Officer of Carers NT, and all his team for their efforts towards ensuring the success of Carers Week across the Northern Territory.

Lastly, I thank the 30 000 Northern Territory members of our community for their wonderful work and for making me aware of these wonderful achievements. You are to be commended for your dedication.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is great to be provided the opportunity to be the assistant minister responsible for bringing back the Arafura Games. It is a great honour, and it is not often in life that you can combine two loves: sport and future business opportunities for the Territory.

In a past life I was a sports adviser for the Labor government and I had the privilege to advise ministers Ah Kit, Vatskalis and Lawrie. A great part of that was focused on building the Arafura Games to reach their potential. A friendly sporting games was the main focus, with, later on, some aspirations to try to use the games for business leverage in Asia. Therefore there was a great deal of sadness when, in October 2012, the previous government suspended the games pending a review that never happened. In my mind this was very short sighted, and in the minds of many Territorians it was more than disappointing.

Territorians had, over years, built up family friendships with visiting teams and competitors and local sporting groups. They had worked so hard to establish strong sporting ties with our Asian neighbours, and all that simply fell away. Anecdotal, during my recent campaign I had no less than three of my now constituents answer their doors in very tatty Arafura Games T-shirts. They, along with many others, strongly lamented the loss of the games and talked enthusiastically about their time volunteering or being involved in another capacity which gave them great personal satisfaction. However, I digress.

On Sunday 11 September I learned I had two new assistant ministry roles: the assistant minister for multicultural affairs, which is quite broad; and the assistant minister for bringing back the Arafura Games, which is quite specific. But when you think about it, the two align and stand me in good stead for the task ahead.

The next day I met briefly with the Department of the Chief Minister, sorting out some crazy last-minute passport issues, and by early afternoon Tuesday I was on my way to Sabah. After two lots of media and 21 hours in transit I arrived. This was a really big welcome to politics for me as the new government gladly fulfilled its commitment, which we have heard a lot about today, to being transparent and up front on the cost and intent of overseas travel.

I was even hunted down in the airport for a quote for the media just as my flight was being called. I must have looked a real sight, stuffing down my late lunch, which I have to admit was Hungry Jack's, dressed in my Madonna travelling T-shirt and jeans and being stuck in front of a news camera with no makeup on, as everyday commuters wandered past with much amusement on their faces. As I said, it was a rapid welcome to politics.

I was the first overseas traveller so I was the test bunny, but I consider myself to be privileged. With all the details of the travel out in the open, the response was positive. This is what Territorians clearly wanted, better accountability for their taxpayer dollars and clear answers on how their leaders are using their taxes to leverage a better future for the Territory. In line with the government's policy on transparency—the total cost of this trip was \$3463, which was reported prior to my departure.

In Sabah I joined the Northern Territory business delegation at the Sabah International Exposition, with 145 exhibitors from 20 countries. It was a unique opportunity for the government to support the delegation organised by the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation.

The Northern Territory delegation included Mr Greg Bicknell and Mr Greg Ireland, both from the Chamber of Commerce; Mr Stuart Kenny, who is the General Manager of the Northern Australia Austal Service; Mr Sean Mahoney, who is the principal of the International College of Advanced Education; Mr Kevin Peters, who is the CEO of the Industry Capability Network; Mr Paul Bicknell, Contract Manager with Northern Transportables; Mr Mark Hough, the Director of Managing Matters; Ms Jaya Srinivas, who is the vice principal at Essington School, and many of us know Jaya; and Mr Brent Campbell, who is also from the Chamber of Commerce, in the international trade division. I place on the record my thanks to each of those people and organisations for their support during my trip. It was very much appreciated.

With Malaysia as a key competitor at previous Arafura Games, this trip was an appropriate first step in reengaging with the government of Sabah to demonstrate the Northern Territory Government's commitment to the games and to get an early indication of potential support for the return of the games. I was fortunate to have a meeting with Datuk Tawfiq, who is the Minister for Youth and Sport in Sabah. Datuk Tawfiq showed great interest in Sabah taking part in future Arafura Games, and several of his

advisers in the room, interestingly enough, including the General Manager of Sports, had previously competed in the games. They spoke enthusiastically about their experiences and love for the Territory. Several of them even told us they have come back to Darwin between games with their families numerous times. This meeting went very well and laid a strong foundation for future discussions based on an acceptance that the games would return in 2019 and the Northern Territory would like to see a delegation from Sabah as a part of that competition.

During other activities I met the Sabah Deputy Chief Minister, the Brunei Consul General and the Assistant Minister for Tourism, Culture and Environment, along with Ms Hiroko Matsuo, head of the Consul for Japan in Sabah. I raised the prospect of the games with each of them and they showed great interest in them returning in their Asian region. I also met Mr Anthony Cheng, the Northern Territory Business Development Manager—who may be known to several of you—who is based in Singapore.

I was, at one point, fortunate to be seated next to Mr Peter Bellew, who is the new group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysian Airlines and was interested in the possibility of athletes—of course we would expect him to be—travelling from Malaysia to Darwin for the 2019 games, and who also generously provided me some of his thoughts on the future changes the Darwin airport could experience with the recent partial Chinese investment in Virgin Airlines—a little bit about Darwin possibly becoming more of a hub, like Singapore, to get to other places.

I also participated in a tour of the expo as a guest of the Deputy Chief Minister, who is quite cheeky, and several of his senior ministry members, which was a very enjoyable experience. Both the Philippines and Brunei had extensive representation and I was able to talk to exhibitors during the tour. I was also able to spend time at the Northern Territory delegates' exhibit as well as the accompanying Essington School stand, and it is very clear that the Northern Territory is held in high esteem by not only the organisers but the other stallholders and participants.

I was also fortunate to have a business lunch at the invitation of the Chamber with Datuk Andrew Sim Men Kin, who is the Honorary Consul for Australia, based in Kota Kinabalu. Datuk Sim was interested in the return of the games and could be a key person in the region to ensure that future trade opportunities are maximised through the games.

This visit was very much a toe in the water for the new Labor government to seek feedback on the concept of the return of the games, and it was a strong show of support for the trade delegation and its efforts in leveraging new opportunities for business and education through the expo.

Initial feedback from all future stakeholders was that they would welcome the games' return in 2019, and that the lead-up time was appropriate to get the model right to ensure strong buy-in from all competitor countries, and they look forward to being part of discussions and planning. And that is exactly where we are at. The Arafura Games will be an exciting opportunity, in 2019, for local and Australian sport, tourism and business.

The return of the Arafura Games will not be about my capabilities alone. It is about how we as a community, a government and a business community come together and plan for the games in a way that provides maximum return for the Territory. I picture it like this: the old Arafura Games was like a vintage car, for those that like car analogies. It was what we had, and over time we modified it and devalued the vintage car. But now we are dealing with blueprints for a new car, well before it is assembled. We can add what we want, tweak it a little, and what we put forward is what we will roll off the production line in 2019. It might seem an age away but it will be here before we know it, so the real work starts now, with a good plan on how to return the Arafura Games. That work has begun and it is work I look forward to.

I would like to now fulfil the final part of my commitment, and that of the new Labor government, and seek leave to table my report to this parliament.

Leave granted.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Sanderson for that thorough report. It will have my support. One of the big mistakes the CLP made was to scrap the Arafura Games. Whether they were up to standard at that time is debatable, but for me the value of the Arafura Games is the value of meeting people from countries nearby. In a world that is, to some extent, full of hate and distrust, the Arafura Games, in its own way, can help bring a positive side to our relationship with other countries.

It has my support, and you might have even more support if you had a masters' version of the Arafura Games at the same time. We have the Paralympics, why not have a masters' Arafura Games. It might sound funny, but in athletics you can run several events at one time. I just finished the masters in Alice Springs. There is a time for your age bracket, and the fast athletes are recognised at the same time. It is a great opportunity to start something that will be of benefit to the wider community in which we live, and I think that is great.

I will just say a couple of things today; I do not want to rehash the debate we had today about Question Time.

I was a little disappointed. We discuss the rules of how this parliament should run. The debate today might have been offset if someone on that side had said, 'We are going to change the way Question Time works'. Do not forget that we now have a new committee which will look at the way this parliament operates, but we have brought forward a change to Question Time before that committee has had a chance to do its work, and that work may take some time. You may say this change may never have occurred if you had not brought it forward.

If you are look at consensus and trying new ways going forward, it would have been good to get a couple of people from each side and tell them what you were thinking of doing and asking if they would like to have a coffee out the back to talk about it and see what the practical implications are. But we did not do that. I still have my doubts about why it is being done. I struggle to see the sense in the change. I am very supportive of having a day without Dorothy Dixers, but the other part of the equation is a bit strange.

We have a Standing Orders Committee, which is made up of people from the government and the opposition, and Independents. Today you introduced a sessional order which says that for the term of this Assembly this is the way we will operate Question Time on Wednesdays. Why not use the Standing Orders Committee, which is there for that very reason? Give it to the committee and let it discuss it and bring back its view on it to be debated in parliament.

I think we missed an opportunity to show leadership. If we believe in consensus, open government, transparency and trying to do things as a parliament, sometimes you need to be careful. Now that there are 18 on one side it is probably harder to think of this as our parliament. It is not your parliament or my parliament; it is our parliament, and we stand here representing the people. When we are dealing with issues relating to how we operate in this House, we should all be on an equal footing. It should not be you, us, them and this and that. I put that down as something I am concerned about.

I am also surprised about another issue, which I read in the paper today, that all of a sudden we will have two half-day public holidays. I had never heard of half-day public holidays in my life. I do not know where this idea came from, but I gather it came from another state. I do not know much about it yet as I just heard about it today. I worked at Howard Springs hardware for 16 years. I have not been a politician all my life, believe it or not. I have had another life out bush, and then I moved from Daly River and Bathurst Island and made a home in Howard Springs. For 16 years, full-time and part-time, I worked nearly every weekend.

Small businesses have to pay higher wages. Without seeing the details of what has been put forward, if the government decides to introduce changes regarding some environmental issues, regulations or laws—it might be asked to bring in an environmental impact statement. Before the laws are introduced you might say, 'Let's look at how that will affect not only the environment but the people who work on the land or in businesses'. Look at the issue of hydraulic fracturing; the government said that before it gave it a tick it would look at the impacts on the environment and speak to experts.

We are going to bring in two half-day holidays, which I understand means that people working late on Christmas or Easter will get higher pay rates. That might sound good, and I can understand the Chief Minister saying the Labor Party represents the workers. That is fine; I do not have a problem with that, but in an economy that is slowing down and is a bit shaky—I said on the radio today that businesses are telling me that if they do not know where the contracts are then some of them will have to retrench workers. That will be a hard thing to do just before Christmas.

On one hand it is easy to say we need to protect workers et cetera. On the other hand you also have to protect businesses, because either they will go broke and the workers will not have a job, or they might say they cannot operate in those hours because they cannot afford to, and therefore the customer service will not be provided. I am not sticking up for any one industry. If you ask me to stand up for the AHA, I am not

the right bloke. I have had many an argument with it about some of the things it has promoted, such as extra pokies. It does not agree with the Newcastle hours in Mitchell Street to reduce violence in the street.

I am not here to stick up for the AHA, but I do not know what the effect of this will be on other businesses. I am a bit uncomfortable about this, unless someone can show me they have done a study on what effect this change could have on small business—not big business; some of them can afford to take on the extra charges. Has anyone done a business impact study? There will be an extra cost on business. Which businesses will be affected? Businesses are not all the same; some businesses might be able to afford it, but other businesses might say it is a bit too much.

We know that the economy is slowing, and if you read the *Weekend Australian* or other articles recently, although we are still number four, we still have a lot of growth, from an economic point of view, mainly because of INPEX. As soon as INPEX goes, next year—it is coming up. Keeping the economy ticking over and keeping people living in the Northern Territory—the Chief Minister spoke about the movement of people out of the Territory—is a key issue we will have to face.

If you are saying you will create and develop jobs and encourage people to stay here, and on the other hand you are saying you will create two half-day public holidays, which will increase the cost of employing—it seems to me that we should say, 'Whoa! Let's look at this as a whole', because it could have an effect on the moral of business as well as an economic effect. We have to take that into account.

I am saying to the government that I do not know the details of what it has put forward, except what I have heard today, but I recommend that if it is going to put something like this forward that it comes up with a business impact statement. That would be a wise thing to do to ensure it is seen to be not only looking after the worker but also considering the small-time employers, who may have a family in the Territory.

Ms LAWLER (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are wonderful schools and childcare services in the electorate of Drysdale. I have visited many of them, and I look forward to spending time in all of them.

This Friday is World Teachers' Day, and I look forward to acknowledging the Territory's outstanding teachers and celebrating with them. I hope all members of the House spend time on Friday celebrating and acknowledging the wonderful teachers we have in the Territory.

Drysdale is home to a diverse range of schools and early-childhood services. I will start with the older students and work my way down, touching on some of the wonderful childcare facilities and schools I have in my electorate.

The Principal at Palmerston Senior College is Sue Healy. There are about 550 Year 10, 11 and 12 students at Palmerston Senior College, and it was one of the inaugural independent public schools. I was fortunate in my first week as Minister for Education, and as the local member, to attend Palmerston Senior College and observe the restorative justice program the college runs in partnership with NAAJAA. I saw some student leaders learning how to mediate and work with students who have breached the school rules, and work with their peers. It was a great process and the students were very responsible. It is a great way to operate in a school, to have the students being responsible for leading the consequences for some of the minor misdemeanours in the school.

I take this opportunity to wish the Year 12 students at Palmerston Senior College all the best with their Year 12 exams. The language students have started their exams, and the rest will be starting in the middle of November.

There are three public primary schools and one non-government primary school in Palmerston. One of the primary schools is Driver Primary School, and Rob Presswell has been principal there for a long time. There are about 480 students at Driver, with a positive parent group. I attended the school AGM earlier this year, and I was impressed with how many parents wanted to be on that council. It was wonderful to see so many families putting up their hands to be on that council.

Driver Primary has a Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden and a garden farm, where the children grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh, delicious food. I have been fortunate enough, on a number of occasions, to have the opportunity to eat some of the food prepared by the students. It is a wonderful addition to the school. You feel so peaceful and relaxed as you walk past the paw paws into the kitchen garden area, and they have a nice shed where the kids take their lessons. I am sure the children feel the same. It is lovely for them to be out of the four walls of a classroom.

Driver is working towards being an independent public school, and I am looking forward to being able to make an announcement about that before the end of the year.

Gray Primary School is another public school in my electorate, and it has a special place in my heart, as I worked there in my 20s. I gave it the best years of my life, my early 20s. The principal, Rebecca Stapleton, is leading a great school. I visited last Friday to present the merit awards at the school assembly, and, for all of us, shaking hands with little kids who are so proud to be at the front of the school getting their merit awards is one of the best jobs we have as a local members, seeing the beaming faces and congratulating them. It is a great school and it was lovely to be at the assembly and see all the kids being orderly and attentive.

Gray Primary School has a low socioeconomic status, and it has put in some wonderful additional programs over the years to nurture and grow the students and work in partnership with their families. Some of the programs, such as with the Smith Family programs and Somerville Community Services, have been running for a long time.

The third public primary school in Drysdale is Moulden Park Primary School. Drysdale is lucky to have some wonderful schools, but it also has long-term principals, and we know that makes a difference in a school. Wendy Jordan has been principal at Moulden for a long time; I think it is close to 20 years. I was fortunate to attend Moulden's end of semester school concert in late July, and what a wonderful night that was. Everyone was so happy and proud of their kids. A lot of work goes into running school assemblies and concerts, and I know how much time goes into rehearsals and preparing costumes. The Member for Arnhem would know that as well, as a teacher. Hours and hours of work and preparation go into a three- or four-minute performance, but they are appreciated by families and always happy nights for schools.

Good Shepherd Lutheran School is the private school in my electorate. It is on the corner of Emery Avenue and Temple Terrace. I have not attended that school in my new role as the Minister for Education, or as the Member for Drysdale, but I have a trip lined up in the coming weeks. Good Shepherd has two campuses, but the campus in my electorate is the primary school. There are Transition to Year 5 students at that campus, and the older students are at the Howard Springs campus.

Drysdale also has some wonderful childcare services. As well as schools there is a number of quality early learning and childcare services in my electorate. These services are an important part of the education and care system for young children, and they support families to meet their work and family commitments. All education and care services across Australia are rated against the National Quality Standard, and I am sure most of you are aware of that. The services are assessed against the seven key quality areas that are important for children: education programs and practice; children's health and safety; the physical environment of the childcare area; staffing arrangements; their relationship with children; their collaborative partnerships with families and community; and their leadership and service management.

In my electorate is the Gray childcare service, which is rated as exceeding the National Quality Standard. There is the Rising Stars early learning centre, which is also in Gray, and it has been rated as meeting the national standard. I was fortunate enough to attend its open day a few weeks ago, and the hard-working staff do an amazing job. It was delightful to see, even though it was a Saturday, the children running in so excited to see their carers. There is also Scallywags Child Care Centre, which is rated as meeting the National Quality Standard. It is beside Moulden Primary School and is rated as working toward the National Quality Standard.

I am also fortunate to have the Palmerston child and family centre in my electorate, and many of you would have a child and family centre in your electorates. Mine has an outstanding manager, Jackie Bradshaw. It is not physically in my electorate but the centre is managed by Gray Primary School. So even though the building is not in my electorate I claim it because Gray manages the facilities and programs.

The Palmerston child and family centre includes family support activities; health programs, with a visiting doctor; a long-day care service; and the Young Mothers are Strong Mothers program, which helps young mothers in Palmerston complete their schooling. This program is not just important for young mothers but also their children, as the service also provides parenting support. The evidence is very clear; one of the best ways to improve young children's outcomes is to educate their mothers. The centre had its first birthday party recently, and I was very fortunate to be able to attend that and be part of the excitement of its first birthday.

I acknowledge the hard-working principals, teachers, school support staff, childcare directors and childcare workers who contribute so much to the Drysdale community.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I pay tribute to the Brothers Rugby League Club's present and past players, administrators and supporters.

Territorians love their sport and rugby league is no exception. The brethren is an iconic Territory institution, and rugby league is a sport where strength, speed, endurance, leadership, teamwork and courage thrill spectators and players alike. Above all, rugby league is about character and respect for the great traditions of the game, on and off the field. These attributes were on display recently when Darwin Brothers hosted the biannual conference of the Confraternity of Brothers Clubs, from 7 to 9 October.

More than 100 delegates converged on Darwin for the conference. The confraternity is a closely-knit organisation of 38 junior and senior rugby league clubs throughout Queensland, located in all the states' major cities and towns, from Cairns in the north to Logan in the south, as well as Darwin, in the Northern Territory.

The breadth of the conference agenda was reflected by Darwin Brothers' club president, John Adams, who said, 'It is about game development, junior development and pathways, as well as how to run a club professionally. We talk about all sorts of things to do with kids and their wellbeing.' I acknowledge John for his leadership during the conference, and I particularly thank the Minister for Tourism and Culture for supporting the welcoming reception for conference delegates at Parliament House. Both the minister and I were undertaking work in Alice Springs at that time, but I am told the 80 guests who attended the function thoroughly enjoyed the comradery and legendary stories about great achievements of the past, both on and off the field.

A guest from Logan Brothers Club said he travelled to Darwin a day earlier than originally planned because of the Parliament House reception. Another Queensland visitor said he made bookings for 25 club members to make the trip to Darwin, and the Brothers' Sistaz team representatives were well represented at the reception and the conference.

I send a big congratulations to the Sistaz, who defeated Bundaberg in their match on the Saturday of the conference weekend. *NT News Sports Correspondent, Jack Hislop*, captured the highlights of the Sistaz' thrilling victory in his article on page 26 of the *NT News* dated 10 October:

Hat-tricks to Jaylene Bonson and Tanisha Garling helped Darwin Sistaz cap a memorable season by defeating five-time premiers of the Bundberg competition – Bundaberg Brothers – 52-10 at Warren Park on Saturday.

...

A chip-and-chase from Garling was the highlight of the encounter. The centre kicked from just before the halfway line, before regathering and outpacing her opponents to score a runaway try in a sensational fashion.

Halfback Bonson capped her remarkable season by touching down for another hat-trick, while Tamika Pollard, Jaala Alley, Jordan Ah Sam and Dana Kane also crossed the stripe.

Sistaz coach Ros Solien said she was thrilled with her team's execution.

Congratulations to everyone involved in the conference and special thanks to all the confraternity visitors from Queensland and elsewhere in Australia. I extend my best wishes to the Brothers and all the rugby league clubs, players and supporters in the Northern Territory.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this time to inform the House of a serious incident which has occurred in my electorate of Arnhem, in the town of Jabiru. It was reported that late last night that an off-duty police officer awoke to a loud noise and went out of their home to investigate what had happened. The officer found that two women had crashed a vehicle into the gates at the Jabiru police station.

The women explained that they were being chased by a man, who later arrived at the scene. The police officer tried to subdue the man and was subsequently attacked. The police officer was punched and stabbed several times with a screw driver. The officer was later able to overpower the man and restrain him. The officer was able to receive assistance from colleagues after alerting those who were living nearby at the police station complex. The police officer was taken into medical care overnight at the Jabiru health clinic, and I commend the medical staff who worked hard during the night to stabilise the police officer.

The police officer was stabbed six times with a screwdriver. Three of the stab wounds were, horrifically, sustained to the neck. This is an unexpected, reckless and disgusting attack of opportunity. I am relieved to inform the House that the man who attacked the police officer has been arrested and is no longer a risk to the public.

Today I called the police media communications team and spoke to the director, Mr David Rose, about the incident. The director has given me permission to acknowledge the hard work of Sergeant Rob De Vos, who is the police officer attacked whilst trying to protect the women at Jabiru last night. I offer my full support to the Jabiru police station and community of Jabiru township at this hard time. I especially offer my thoughts and support to Sergeant De Vos and acknowledge his family, which is supporting him after such a senseless ordeal.

I highly commend Sergeant De Vos for his actions last night and thank him for his quick action and bravery. Despite being an off-duty officer, Sergeant De Vos displayed his training and expertise in an unknown and dangerous situation, in which his skills were extremely valuable in keeping the situation contained, with the cost being his own safety and wellbeing. The skills employed by Sergeant De Vos meant the rest of the Territory heard the news of a terrible and opportune attack rather than a fatal outcome.

Last, I offer thanks and commend the work of the emergency services personnel in Jabiru and the support services which assisted in this incident. It is the professionalism and bravery of those people who serve in our Territory Emergency Services which keep citizens and visitors safe in all parts of the Northern Territory. To those people working in Police, Fire and Emergency Services, I say thank you for your services and commend you all for being our unsung heroes.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.