

## CONTENTS

VISITORS .....	1281
Taminmin College.....	1281
MOTION.....	1281
Note Statement – Education in the Northern Territory .....	1281
PETITION.....	1299
Petition No 9 – Restore Motorcycle Education Training and Licensing (METAL) .....	1299
RESPONSES TO PETITIONS.....	1299
Petitions No 5 and 6 .....	1299
MOTION.....	1301
Department of Education Prioritise Recruiting and Retaining Quality Teachers .....	1301
MOTION.....	1318
Budget Priorities .....	1318
MOTION.....	1334
Recognising the Importance of the Northern Territory Annual Show Society to the Community .....	1334
ADJOURNMENT .....	1340

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**VISITORS**  
**Taminmin College**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 10/11 Legal Studies and History students from that very exceptional rural school, Taminmin College, accompanied by their teachers, Kate Eadie and Danielle Hazelton. Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**MOTION**  
**Note Statement – Education in the Northern Territory**

Continued from 14 March 2017.

**Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources):** Madam Speaker, could I please check how long I have left. I started my remarks ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Not long, no. Deputy Clerk, do we know how long he has left? They are checking.

**Mr VOWLES:** I will continue my remarks while they are finding out. I think it was about 10 minutes. I have already spoken for 10 minutes about the inspirational speech I gave a couple of weeks ago. I have another, hopefully, 50 minutes at least.

I could talk about education all day and all night, probably in my sleep and under water as well. Possibly the best school in the world is up there. I went to Taminmin High School. What a school that is. It has not been the same since I left; it has improved. It is excellent to see students taking part and coming here. You have a bright future. We are talking about education, what it means to Territorians and how much we are investing in that space.

The next part of my speech says I was fortunate enough to have a quality Territory education. I got it at Taminmin High School, Jingili Primary School, Howard Springs Primary School, then down to Taminmin. My family moved around from Jingili out to Darwin River, then into Moulden in Palmerston. Then the world was my oyster because I received a great education. I was very fortunate to have opportunities to travel the world doing certain things. But home is home. I am very thankful for all my teachers—they are probably not—and for the education I received. We are talking about a very important thing.

As an Indigenous member of this Legislative Assembly I feel strongly about Indigenous education and am passionate about that. No matter if you are in an urban or remote environment, access to education is important and pivotal for the future of everyone. As an Indigenous member who has strong links throughout the Territory and other areas of Australia, I was fortunate enough to get a quality education.

Education is a passion I have. I will talk later about how I lectured at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. It was something I set out to do as part of my growth and learning, and my want to give back and try to be a part of improving other people's lives by giving them options and access to education.

It is important when we talk about Indigenous education and education in general that it is about inspiring future generations to receive quality education no matter where they are. As my colleague, Minister Lawler pointed out, over 40% of Territory students identify as Indigenous and 46% are located in remote to very remote areas of the NT.

All governments have a duty to serve all Territorians regardless of how challenging that may be. We have a minister who is advocating strongly that regardless of where you are, you have access to quality education. That is not just about having quality teachers, because that is important, but having access to quality teachers. We have a lot of interstate graduates who want to work in the Northern Territory and play their part in inspiring and teaching children and giving them an option to either live in the community or get out and work wherever they want to around the world, which is important. We have a lot of incentives to make sure we give any teacher working in a remote location the support, guidance and training they need.

The 2017 Closing the Gap report still reflects many areas of concern, sadly, in Indigenous education. School attendance rates in the Territory reduced from 70.2% in 2014 to 68.6% in 2016. More concerning, in

very remote areas in Australia, including the Northern Territory, the gap between non-Indigenous and Indigenous attendance was a staggering 24.7%; we need to do better. As a government, under Minister Lawler and the Chief Minister we are trying everything and we will support anything we can to change that figure.

Education is all empowering. It gives us the skill and self-esteem to get good jobs, provide for our families and serve as a good example for others, providing them hope and inspiration to achieve. The feeling of self-worth that comes from having a job and the empowerment it brings is priceless. Regardless of the career we choose, reading, writing and arithmetic are key to being able to get and hold a job. In my discussions with a number of major miners in the Northern Territory as Minister for Resources, their advice is that literacy and numeracy levels are the biggest barrier to more Indigenous employment in their industry.

Regardless of potential, there are minimum levels of English based literacy and numeracy that is needed to progress beyond unskilled jobs. As a government we are looking at skill sets in certain areas instead of having the full training for certain areas. There are particular areas of portfolios, such as in Resources, mines and energy, fisheries and Primary Industry, which is a pastoralist of the cattle industry—it is important that we give every opportunity for everybody to get a job in the Northern Territory, and this is why we are looking at skill sets.

While literacy and numeracy are vital benchmarks, education is much more than just these two things. It is about exposure to and learning about a whole heap of broader endeavours, from creative pursuits such as arts and crafts to physical pursuits such as sports, languages—both international and Indigenous—socialisation, teamwork, planning and self-discipline.

Schools that have a wide ranging curriculum are much more than buildings. Strong and effective schools are vibrant and innovative communities. We are fully aware in the Chamber, as are the young students in the gallery, that schools are important parts of our communities. They are not just about rocking up at 8 am or 8.30 am, jumping on a bus, coming into Parliament House and being inspired by a speech from a former Taminmin College student; they are also about using the library after hours, the sporting facilities and the support you get from the teachers and the school councils.

In remote communities it is pivotal that we have the school support the community. Such an intrinsic part of people's lives in remote communities are the school, teachers and principals. I have been inspired by many teachers in my time; I do not think I inspired them but they inspired me. Somebody asked me once, 'Can you remember your Year 4 teacher?' I said, 'Of course I can; it was Mrs Bath.' They said, 'You never forget your teachers, no matter how old you are'. That is how much of an important part they play in your life.

When you think, 'Oh god, I have to go to school and come back', you are learning a little and you do not think you want to be there sometimes, but teachers play a part in your life and you remember them forever, which is what I have done. When you hear stories like that, how we remember our school teachers, for right and wrong—I am friends with my former teachers; now that I am older and mature I am able to build those relationships. I still feel like a student every time I am with them. They inspire me, and they have pulled me up a few times about my speeches in parliament as well.

I have been involved in the education sector as a lecturer at Batchelor Institute. I was able to teach, guide and mentor while seeing the direct positive impacts of education. To serve my Indigenous peers and people is something that is a tremendous source of pride to me. It is something I wanted to do as part of my growth and development as a person to pay back and help where I could. I waited for an opportunity to come up. I was fortunate to win that position. It was the hardest job interview I have ever had, apart from being a politician when I was going out to 5000 people and asking them to vote for me to get re-elected, which I was, thankfully. Your job interview is to 5000-odd people who vote you in. Have you been doing a good and reasonable job over the last four years?

For the Bachelor Institute job interview, I walked in there—I am pretty laidback and casual, but always professional. I walked in and there were 12 people on my interview panel. I thought I had walked into a court or something. I was shocked, but I had prepared. I might be a casual, laidback sort of guy but I do prepare meticulously. I sat down and had an almost two hour interview about what I wanted to achieve, how I was going to do it and in what manner.

I mention this in parliament because it really changed me. Sometimes it is not about your work experience or credentials; it is about your approach to something and if you will be able to bring people along for the journey. I was fortunate that in that situation I was there for a few years and was able to teach and guide.

They taught me a lot. All the sport and rec officers in remote communities were being sent in to train to do their Cert I to Cert IV in sport and recreation.

We looked at many things, and sometimes it is a simple change to running programs in remote communities that can have an impact. We talked a lot today about youth crime and engaging youth. In remote communities the sport and rec officers ...

**Ms UIBO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 43, I move that the Member for Johnston be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to

**Mr VOWLES:** Thank you for your support, colleagues.

**Mr Wood:** Standing Order on boring.

**Mr VOWLES:** Education is never boring, Member for Nelson. I will stand up and talk all day about education. It is so important to this government.

It is about the inspiring sport and rec officers and how they have taught me a few things. When we get down to certain training—the impact that sport and rec officers have, particularly in remote communities, after hours when the school closes and youth are looking for activities to do. They become the mentors, carers, psychologists, and everything in a lot of communities. It is also similar in town with the SHAK and YMCAs.

That curriculum had some business units; it was heavily involved in business units because it was not always about planning a basketball game. There were a lot of business units regarding basketball, such as how do you order basketballs? You need a budget; you need to write a letter, and how do you ask the CEO of that organisation. It was really important that we had a lot of training.

It is something that I really needed. It was an important part of my life when I became a lecturer at Batchelor Institute, simply knowing that I was, in some small capacity, making a difference. To this day I am still in contact with three of the students I trained. They have done other things. They have stayed in their community but have maintained employment. They are role models in their communities.

Sometimes we talk about role models in education. Role models are not just footy players who we see on the screen who come back to the community for a day or two, sign some balls and kick the footy. Sometimes, more importantly, role models are the local nurse, the local lady or man working at the clinic who is picking up rubbish or working for the counsel. They are local role models to me.

Education is not just for children and adolescents; it is a lifelong pursuit. Education is about adults being best informed and prepared to take responsibility for their children, as parents. It is a teacher's job to teach, and a parent's job to have their children ready for school. They are a key role in a child's learning. It was great to see the Minister for Education, on behalf of the Gunner Labor government, announce the expansion of the Family as First Teachers program.

Getting children to school is essential. Getting children and parents engaged in the process is vital to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. This is also the key to working in collaboration when learning difficulties and challenging behaviour arises. It was great to see the minister announce the 17 high achieving CDU teaching graduates receive permanent job offers in the Territory. Four of these graduates are Indigenous teachers—Territory educated teachers being deployed to teach Territory children.

This is only the beginning as our new Labor government teachers are respected, and those considering a career as a teacher can pursue one with confidence there will be a job opportunity at the end. It was great to hear the minister speak in support of young teachers. Young teachers may become qualified to become teachers, although it is experience that will allow them to develop into great teachers and remain in the profession for many years to come.

Great teachers have the power to inspire the next generation to potentially become teachers themselves. Teachers who are not supported become lost in the system. This government is committed to rebuilding strong education after the last four years of, sadly, the CLP cuts in this area. There have been attempts to rewrite history in this Assembly through the former CLP Chief Minister and Treasurer who gutted 10% of the education budget in one fell swoop, and now sits opposite. It is a disgrace.

They slashed funding and jobs. By the end of the CLP's four years in office 164 teachers were removed from Territory classrooms and 300 staff were removed from the school environment. Funding to provide resources to deliver quality education was also stripped away. Overall 500 jobs were lost in education. Despite all its pre-election rhetoric, the CLP walked away from education in the bush.

I stood in here as an opposition member and heard the crap coming out of the former Education minister's mouth, 'We have not cut anything in education. We have not done anything.' Yet the teachers and community come to us and say they have lost their jobs, they are struggling, their schools are struggling and children are not getting quality education because there are fewer teachers.

I have heard already in this parliament that throwing money at it is not the answer. I agree with that. It is not about throwing money at any issue; it is about what you focus on and how you plan forward. Cutting teacher numbers for bigger classes is not the way to improve education.

The CLP legacy was to harm the most vulnerable, the ones who needed the investment the most. I pay tribute to the teachers, school staff and volunteers who have clung on by the skin of their teeth simply because they are committed and caring enough not to let children suffer as a consequence of the cuts made under the CLP government. They understood that children's futures were at stake, and they had the moral clarity to do their best for the children in Territory schools. I thank those staff again.

I am proud to be part of the Territory Labor government, which is committed to listening to teachers, support staff, parents and school communities, as well as taking on board expert advice. We are restoring trust in government so we can maintain the relationships required to deliver quality education outcomes that benefit Territory children.

We have delivered the \$20m boost to Territory schools. I thank Minister Lawler and my Cabinet and Caucus colleagues for supporting that. As I speak it is benefiting school communities across the Northern Territory. We listened to school communities and organisations within the education sector. The Gunner Labor government will continue to listen and consult with Territory educators and representative bodies.

Our intent is that the Gunner Labor government is clear that education is among our top priorities, and we have backed that up with a strong funding commitment of \$124m over four years. Unlike the CLP, Labor is committed to needs-based funding. I have four primary schools in my electorate of Johnston: Millner, Jingili, Moil and Alawa. Namarluk School and Casuarina Senior College are also in my electorate. These are great schools which are pillars of their respective communities. Those schools are already better off under the Gunner Labor government.

Our additional \$20m investment—I will highlight why I again thank Minister Lawler and the Gunner Labor government. Jingili Primary School—I was a student there—received \$43 311 to maintain current staffing levels and prevent disruption to current programs. This simply equates to not disrupting the children who are trying to get a quality education. Millner Primary School has received \$38 409—outstanding. Moil Primary School received \$40 325.

It is a great privilege to have Namarluk in my electorate. It does a great job at tailoring its education programs to individual student needs—\$70 930. Alawa received \$69 300. A special thanks to Sandy, who does a great job there. Casuarina Senior College received \$553 245 to employ additional teachers and tutors.

I am proud to be in the Labor government, supporting education, implementing focused programs and trying to guide our future, which is our children.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister for Education for her statement. I hope she makes a difference because she has a long track record in education. I believe she is passionate about bringing change to education in the Northern Territory. I also welcome Taminmin. The Minister for Education has gone up to see them and find out if they need more money. Now is your chance to ask for things.

**Madam SPEAKER:** And to build a bigger library.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, a new library is needed at Taminmin. While you have the minister with you as a captive audience, ask her.

Taminmin is a great school for many reasons. It is one of the biggest schools in the Northern Territory. It has some great teachers and great opportunities for people. I am probably a bit biased; I love the VET course and the agricultural side of Taminmin, which is great. I hear the students today are studying law, and that is great as well.

I will make some broader points about the statement. I have looked back and tallied the number of statements in this House since I joined. I will read out today all the statements regarding education. I will go backwards from last year.

We had: A New Direction for Vocational Education and Training by Mr Styles; Challenging Convention, Shaping the Future of Education in the Northern Territory by Mr Chandler; Indigenous Education Review Implementation by Mr Chandler; Building for Education Revolution by Dr Burns; Education by Dr Burns; Education and Training in the Territory, Strategic Direction by Mr Henderson; Education, Investing in the Territory by Dr Burns; Building Better Schools by Mr Stirling; Education and Training by Mr Stirling; Indigenous Education by Mr Stirling; Indigenous Education Employment Initiatives by Mr Stirling; Indigenous Issues of Violence, Joblessness, Health and Education in Aboriginal Communities and the Community at Large by Mr Ah Kit; Training and Education Sectors by Mr Stirling; Achieving Better Educational Outcomes by Mr Henderson; Building Better Schools Initiative Progress Report by Mr Stirling; Indigenous Education Four-Year Strategic Plan by Mr Stirling; Middle Year Education in the Northern Territory by Mr Stirling; Middle Years of Schooling by Mr Stirling; Reforming Indigenous Education and Closing the Gap by Mr Henderson.

We have had many statements in this House about education. When you look at some of the results, you have to wonder a little bit. In 2004–05, remote Indigenous reading for Year 3 and Year 5, it was at a terrible low of 20% and 21%, and for numeracy it was 48% and 16%. In 2008–09, that figure had risen slightly to 26%. In 2010 it had reached 44%. For Year 5 reading for Indigenous students it was 21%, and in 2009–10 it was 33%. For writing in Year 3 in 2008–09 it was 32%, and 2009–10 it was 40%. In Year 5 it was 24%, and 2009–10 it was 30%. In numeracy, Year 3, it was 39% and 43%, and Year 5 was 30% up to 52%.

Looking at the latest figures you will find there is hardly any increase in those numbers. Year 3 reading for 2014–15—which are the latest figures I could get—was 38%, and Year 5 was 33%. Compare that with 2009–10, when it was actually higher at 44% and 33%. For writing in Year 3 it is 39% and it was 40% five years ago. Year 5 is now 24% and was 30% five years ago. In numeracy it is now 52% for Year 3—which is great—and Year 5 is 38%. Year 3 in 2009–10 was 43% and Year 5 was 55%. But in general there has been a decrease in the standards.

Teachers will discuss the benefits or otherwise of the NAPLAN program, and I would be the first to say I have concerns about the way NAPLAN applies, especially in Aboriginal communities, especially if someone asks you about catching a tram. There are issues in relation to whether the NAPLAN as we know it is suitable for all schools. In fact, this morning an article was sent to me called *Literacy for Remote Schools, Looking Beyond a One-Size-Fits-All Approach*. I have not had a chance to read it all, but it talks about the narrow focus of the NAPLAN program.

There is another issue I want to raise, which is the amount of money put into education. We see that, in general, those results on numeracy, literacy and writing, show there has not been any marked improvement over a number of years. Yet in 2001 and 2002 the total operating expense for the Department of Education was \$472m; this year's budget is nearly twice that at \$970m. I ask the question of the minister—we have had many statements in this House about education and have put heaps of money into education, but are the results there to show we have said all these things? We have put all this money into education, but have the results come from those statements and monetary changes we have put into our schools?

Regardless of whether you argue about cost cutting last year or over the last four years, the overall trend does not look good. If we are to speak about helping Indigenous people and closing the gap then we need to see a lot better results for the money poured into education, and we need to have statements that are not just words but will actually change the way things are. It is a big job because not only do you have that problem, you have the problem of attendance at schools. If you look up the latest ones from the 2014–15 budget, and these are the actual amounts—primary students attending at least four or more days per week, 92% are non-Indigenous and 41% are Indigenous.

If you want a real figure about what we need to do to close the gap—there is a 50% difference, which is the gap we have to close. If you look at middle school students attending at least four or more days per week at school, 85% are non-Indigenous and 33% are Indigenous; the gap is even wider. If you look at senior

year students attending at least four days or more per week, 79% are non-Indigenous and 38% are Indigenous—a decrease in the gap size.

If you have low attendance rates, even for non-Indigenous students—senior students, 79%, which is quite low for people attending school more than four days a week. As the minister and others have said, when you add up every day you miss school, you actually lose quite a large amount of education. I raise that as an example that the government needs to show us with each new policy that the minister has put forward this sittings what will the difference be between all those other statements made by both CLP and ALP ministers? The increase in spending, which is nearly double—how is this government going to make a change?

In four years will I stand here and there will be another statement, and will I see another couple of hundred million dollars put into the system. Will I read similar figures? If we do not see changes, not only will the government's policies be a failure but we will not be helping the people we need to help the most, that is Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. If they are to get jobs—as we have always said, education is the foundation of getting good jobs in the Northern Territory. There will never be enough skilled jobs in remote communities, as much as people may not want to think that.

Like a lot of us, sometimes you have to pack up and move where there are skilled jobs. Just look at all the people who fly in and out of Darwin; they pack up where they live and come to Darwin for a job. That can be much harder for Indigenous people because of cultural and family connections. I do not doubt that is difficult. My family and all my children got jobs, some interstate. To get the job they needed they had a good education and were able to do that. I put that forward as, hopefully, a positive contribution to what I think is a welcome statement in parliament about where we are going with education.

Both the Member for Goyder and I have a range of schools. They cross over a bit because they are on the border. Students from Taminmin come from both electorates and even further out in the Member for Daly's electorate. I have Taminmin, St Francis of Assisi, Humpty Doo Primary and Girraween Primary, the biggest primary school in the Territory and rural area; it is bursting at the seams. The minister knows that and is doing her best to assist them. We have Howard Springs Primary, Sattler Christian school, Bees Creek primary school, Good Shepherd Primary School, in Howard Springs, up to Year 3, and Good Shepherd Senior School. Only a few hundred metres from the electorate border is MacKillop Catholic Secondary College in Palmerston.

We have an association with all those great schools. The one thing that is great about them is the teachers. Years ago I did not have a lot of time for teachers. I thought they had six weeks holidays and did nothing much at all. When you get to know them, see the curriculum and what they are asked to do, you realise many of those teachers work damn hard, and not under the easiest conditions. One thing the department has to work hard on is protecting teachers.

I heard a report the other day that Australia is one of the lowest in the raking of behaviour and discipline in classes. That is an issue. Some reasons kids are sent to non-government schools is because they believe there is a more disciplinary approach to education. I am not saying that is perfect, but I get that feeling.

I hate to hear about teachers crying and struggling with their job because they are being sworn at or students are mucking about all the time. It makes it very difficult for those teachers to do their job. We need to make sure teachers are protected from bullying. It is not just bullying between students; it can be bullying of teachers, especially in secondary school, although not exclusively. I will not say which school but I have known, because I was there listening to the report, of primary school teachers being attacked by students. You would not believe that, but it is the case. A number of teachers are quite upset.

If you want to make sure teachers continue to teach and people join the profession, you must make sure their job is protected. We need to look at discipline in schools. A lot of discipline is gone from the days of the strap. I can go to Howard Springs School and pull out the little book which gives you the principal's disciplinary list. Those kids today have dads, mums and family—they had three cuts. That is not so long ago, but we do not do that anymore.

If I was to look at some of the reasons why we are in this situation with our youth today—we do not have that discipline anymore. We no longer have the respect we used to have for a teacher or other people. Some of that is reflected in where kids end up today. That is why they end up in places like Don Dale. There needs to be some rethink about the way we can improve, to get schools to focus so a lot more time is spent learning rather than trying to control a class.

My wife was the Aboriginal assistant teacher at Sacred Heart Primary for seven years. She would come home with a migraine because she would get these kids who did not have anything to eat, so she would make breakfast for them. I had a poultry farm. We used to have cracked eggs. My wife would make egg sandwiches every morning for those kids at school because they did not have any breakfast.

She had kids who were fidgety and could not sit still. She used to say to me, 'If I could just flick them in the ear to get their attention'. You cannot do that anymore; you would be in trouble. We do not have as much control as we used to. People might have other techniques today, but it makes it hard.

I take my hat off to schools, teachers and the great schools in my area. The other day there was a mention about bullying. Howard Springs Primary School is the classic example of the way we should cope with bullying. I do not think we should select a particular group. I do not think it is our job to promote a particular group when we talk about bullying. People can be bullied for all sorts of reasons. Part of the problem with the Safe Schools campaign is that people believed certain groups were being selected and promoted, whereas other groups were not being thought about.

You can be a fat person and be bullied. On ABC the other day they talked about exactly that. We do not go and say that necessarily. The bullying campaign held last Monday at Howard Springs Primary School was great. Every classroom was doing something about respecting the other person, being kind to the other person, helping the other person and not being negative. There was an idea of taking from the bucket rather than putting into the bucket. I saw teachers who are really involved in getting children to understand that regardless of the person's identity, size, gender or colour, you need to respect and be kind to those people.

I take my hat off to Julie Perry, who organises that program at Howard Springs. It is a great thing. That is my two bobs' worth about education. I hope the minister has signed the new cheque for the library at Taminmin. The science lab is there, but you need a library to go to the science lab. If you do not have the books then you cannot do the research. Thank you, Minister for Education, for that wonderful donation.

With all the minister's background and passion for education, the problem sometimes in this education business, like a lot of other issues, can get political and you can bash the CLP for cuts last term. There may have been a need for cuts. You need to be careful there. Education is just as important as health and law and order. You have a budget and the Treasurer has a budget. Education has to live within its means as well. One could argue whether it was cut too much last time. I have heard complaints from teachers. There were not leave teachers available because of the cuts. I understand that. I also would not want to see us sitting here thinking there is a never-ending bucket of money for education.

Just like anything else education has to show that it is achieving results. Looking at the figures, statements and money from the point of view of numeracy and literacy, I am not sure those results are being seen. I have great faith in the minister because I could hear from day one that she is very passionate about her job. I know her background is education, and I will be interested to see if that passion can be turned into something tangible in the next four years. I hope that we start to turn around some of these low figures and give kids a chance, especially Indigenous kids, to be part of closing the gap. They then can become people who help close the gap for other members of the community.

**Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for this education statement because it is a great opportunity to share the value this side of the places on education, as well as what we, as a ministry, are doing in our specific portfolios.

I was not bored by the contribution by the Member for Nelson. I thank him for his contribution. It is really important that we listen to each other's statements in these debates. We are not just talking; we are communicating and being transparent about what we are doing. Particularly in my portfolio of Territory Families, we need to address educational disengagement as one of the biggest challenges the Territory faces today. The Member for Nelson was articulate about that. It has been raised over a long period of time. It is one of the biggest challenges we face in the youth justice system.

A young person's involvement in the youth justice system often coincides with disengagement from school. The links between the Education and Territory Families portfolios is significant, and it is something we need to continue to work on. I am pleased that I have such a passionate colleague to work with who is so collegial in her approach to her portfolio.

The youth justice system we have inherited does not succeed, unfortunately, in re-engaging people in the education and training needed to be successful in their adult life. Our reformed youth justice system will



focus on getting school-aged children back to school and older youth into training for jobs. I share the Member for Nelson's passion for VET programs in this area. The Member for Barkly is very passionate in this area. This will be one of the key areas of work for our teams of youth diversion workers.

We have already announced 52 frontline positions that are in the process of being recruited to and will be based in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. These youth outreach and re-engagement officers will be co-located with other government and, at times non-government agencies, including truancy officers. The advantages of the model we are putting forward are co-location, working together, sharing information and making sure that truancy officers are part of a whole team. Through working together, I am confident they will be able to identify children not attending and having trouble in school and will work to re-engage them before they have contact with the justice system.

We all know that enrolment in education and training is only the first step though. Often young people at risk need intensive support to get anywhere near success. Many times this is due to complex family and community environments where many barriers impact not just on attendance—and I know we focus on attendance, but we need to focus on a child's ability to fully participate in their schooling once they get there. All too frequently children at risk have physical and mental health issues which put them at a significant disadvantage right from the start.

A growing amount of research is being done in Australia and internationally which identifies the prevalence of neuro-developmental disorders in populations of young offenders in custody. Learning difficulties, autism, traumatic brain injury and foetal alcohol syndrome disorder are just some of the problems that many young people face, frequently undiagnosed. This is an important issue.

Some people in my own life—indeed, someone I went to school with quite a few years ago—have recently been diagnosed with learning disorders as adults. The relief those men feel in having a diagnosis and realising that they have not been struggling all these years for no reason—the impact that has had on those men's lives is significant.

How disempowering and frustrating it must be to a child who does not understand why their brain is not working and why they are finding it so much harder than everyone else in the class. We need to work through that diagnosis issue and make sure there is early identification through the education system and early public health interventions, particularly for zero to three year olds that first 1000 days so we are noticing it in that time rather than once kids are in school struggling and starting to feel disengaged. Also, we need processes in place so when kids hit the youth justice system they can catch up.

The additional \$3m a year promised by this government for early support for children through the dual pathways model is a very important part of our youth justice response. We have to take that long-term approach. If we do not intervene early, we will play catch-up the whole way through the system.

We have schools in both our detention centres. Tivendale School is a special purpose school located in the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, which caters for 10 to 17-year-olds who are either remanded or sentenced for a period of detention. The school works closely with the Malak Re-engagement Centre, which is a key part of our wider integrated youth engagement strategy. We are looking at more re-engagement centres as we move forward. The Member for Drysdale is very passionate about a Palmerston re-engagement centre.

Over 90% of students in Tivendale School are Indigenous and many have English as a second language. Many have been diagnosed with learning difficulties and social, emotional and psychological issues. The school operates for 45 weeks a year, offering an education program that ranges from lower primary to senior secondary. They are able to tailor a learning program for individual learning needs.

In addition to the school being based on the national curriculum, Tivendale also offers extended educational programs, including St John first aid training; Certificate I in Food Processing; Certificate I in AgriFood Operation; agriculture, especially working with horses; and an art program which regularly submits works to the art shows Behind the Wire and Rights on Show, which are both great events that run annually.

Tivendale School is staffed by two senior teachers, five classroom teachers, an Aboriginal/Islander education worker and three special education support officers. When I visited Don Dale I visited the school as well. I sat in a class, and I thank the teachers for their work. It is a difficult environment, especially with children on remand moving through more quickly than kids who are sentenced. It is a changeable group of kids they work with. I really thank them for that work.

In Alice Springs, the Owen Springs educational centre is an annexe of the Centralian Senior College and caters for the detainees in the Alice Springs detention centre who are between 10 and 17 years old. Because most of the children held in this centre are on remand and not sentenced, the numbers can vary from six to 18 students. Over 90% of the students are Indigenous and speak English as a second language. Many have diagnosed learning difficulties.

As well as national curriculum subjects, the facility in Alice Springs offers an education extension program. This includes St John first aid training, and detainees are highly engaged in that training. They are useful skills to have. The facility also offers Certificate I in Hospitality, cooking, as well as the Red Dust music program. I thank them for their work.

The centre operates for 46 weeks a year and is staffed by a senior teacher, two classroom teachers, an Aboriginal education worker and two special education support officers. I thank the staff for their work. It is a physically difficult work environment at Owen Springs as it is a small centre with small classrooms. As we redesign the justice system we will make sure education is central to those reforms. It has to be an important part of the way we move forward. We need to make sure that when children are in detention it is a time to support them to get back on the right path when they leave.

It is important to note that an extra position is being created at Owen Springs to support the transition into local education. Sometimes that link has been missed. If a kid is engaged and doing well in the detention centre's school, there is someone to help them link to the existing school. That is an important step forward.

I have discussed previously today the prevalence of neurobiological disorders amongst young people in custody. The other significant factor is that they are teenagers; our society is much more aware than we used to be about how the teenage brain works. It works very differently to an adult brain. Sometimes we have assumed that teenagers are just young adults, but many studies have shown us that the parts of the brain responsible for planning, reasoning, making judgments and impulse control only mature well into the 20s.

Brain science research also shows that when a young person is emotional or with their peers they have less ability to control risky behaviour. On the other hand, the strength of this situation is that juveniles have a greater capacity to change than adults. This is one of the many reasons the response to youth justice and prevention of youth crime must be a specialised youth response rather than a continuation of the adult system.

The consistency and stability of a good school environment can be one of the key factors in getting kids from difficult or unstable homes or family environments through a risky period of adolescence. We cannot underestimate the importance of having a strong school where you feel connected, important and valued, particularly if your home life is less than ideal.

It also means, looking at this as a specialist area, the Territory Families workforce needs to have the skills and knowledge to work through the complexities presented when their clients do not understand the consequences of their actions and cannot respond to the methods normally used for reforming adult prisoners. This is why this government has been very conscious of the need to develop the youth sector and youth workforce.

We are starting with youth justice officers in detention centres and youth diversion workers, all of whom are receiving specialist training on working with youth. It was great to meet them last Wednesday and the trainer from the Australian Childhood Foundation, who was leading specialist training with a focus on a neurobiological approach and understanding how to work with a child in that circumstance.

My plan over the next few years is that we will be able to build up a significant youth worker training capacity in Central Australia and the Top End that is well informed by science, Indigenous knowledge and practices, and evidence about what works, especially in our unique context. A skilled contemporary workforce will be our best tool in breaking the cycle of crime and disadvantage, particularly the youth justice issues we are currently wrestling with.

This is one of the things our education system really needs to set up. The information taught to these youth justice officers is very different to the information I got in my social work degree some 25 years ago. It just shows that education is a lifelong process. There are new things to learn, and our education system in the Northern Territory needs to set young people up for a future that is ever-changing. We need to

acknowledge that education is a lifelong process, but we need that solid foundation of early years, primary and secondary school to set our workforce up to meet the challenges of the future.

I also want to take some time to speak about educating women. Much of the focus on our early intervention strategies is on strengthening families; central to this is empowering young women, especially young Aboriginal mothers. Education, empowerment and health are all linked. We had some fantastic examples of that in speeches yesterday. Women who have a good basic education are much more likely to engage in lifelong learning and participate fully in our workforce and society. It is also an important way to address the gender pay gap.

Investing in education of women has proven results in having better-educated and healthier children. If mothers value education they are more likely to have kids who value education. I have spoken before about my grandmother who left school at the age of eight and was illiterate for a large part of her life. Although she learned to read and developed a rather embarrassing Mills and Boon habit later in her life. She was very passionate about Mills and Boon.

Life is an ongoing learning process. I look at the opportunities given to her as someone who left school so early. I look at my mother who was the next generation along and did not finish high school; she went to Year 10, and became a bookkeeper. She was very frustrated about her earning capacity when working for accountants, as she did all the work and they charged high rates. It instilled in me the importance of getting a piece of paper and the value of ensuring I had a proper qualification.

That has opened up to me, as someone with a double degree, who has had opportunities and encouragement to become university educated—it is extraordinary. I look at my nieces, the fourth generation in this story, and they are heavily engaged in education. They have opportunities to do national science competitions and a whole range of things that were not available when I was in school, particularly for young girls. We have come a long way in this area. It is something we need to continue to do. Equality and access to services is something that we will talk about a lot this week. We need to focus on ensuring Territory women have opportunities to overcome the gaps that, sadly, still exist.

Education in Alice Springs, my wonderful hometown, which I miss dearly—I would like to speak about the government's commitment to education in my hometown. My son started Transition this year. He is in week five or six, and loving it. He and his best mate, Oliver, have a competition to see who can get to school first in the morning. Jimmy is losing, unfortunately, but I blame his father for that. That engagement in school from such an early age, from day one, week one—they have a shop in the school, which he is really enjoying. He broke it to me on the phone that he was on the yellow dot for the first time.

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

Motion granted.

**Ms WAKEFIELD:** This shows that the engagement from day one is so important. The investment that has happened in Alice Springs schools over the last few years—and we are also planning forward—is important. I acknowledge the work of the other side, Braitling school in particular. I am excited about the breadth of investment in Alice Springs. Approximately \$43 000 is going to the Alice Springs School of the Air for additional resources for students to learn digital technology. This is essential for remote students to move forward. They, and staff, need a good understanding because it is a struggle to keep up with technology.

Approximately \$64 000 is going to Braitling Primary School for additional resources for early childhood classrooms. This will enable intervention for children with low literacy skills. As part of the new precinct where family centres are based in schools, this will be an important way forward. There is about \$32 000 for Larapinta Primary School to provide additional support for students in the early childhood section, and to support student behaviour and wellbeing. This is where the engagement in school has to start. My son was engaged from day one. We need to make sure all kids are enthusiastic about going to school. If they are struggling they need to get the right support from day one.

There is approximately \$63 000 for Ross Park Primary School to employ a part-time teacher to undertake individual assessments to support early literacy in preschool and transition classes. I think of my mother who was passionate about making sure, as a family, we were engaged in reading because she said, 'If you can read, you can do anything'. That is what education gives you.

We also have additional infrastructure programs in Alice Springs, including the \$3.13m for the Braitling Primary School stage two master plan, the \$1m Ross Park Primary School upgrade and the \$6.8m Acacia Hills Special School upgrade, which is very well-deserved. That is a fantastic school. I know quite a few students from that school who are passionately engaged with the community, and families work very hard to make sure that school is well resourced. I am pleased, as part of the government, to be delivering that investment. There is also \$2m for the Centralian Middle School athletic tracks and facilities, which will be amazing.

In conclusion, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I am delighted at the attention that has been given to education by this government. I am pleased to be talking about education. I do not think it is ever boring to talk about it. It is one of the basic building blocks we need to have strongly in place if we are to have a prosperous, healthy and sustainable society and community. It is the best tool we can give the next generation.

As my grandmother showed—someone who finished school at eight—once she learned to read more doors opened to her. She encouraged generations of her family to see that education was important. It changed our family's course in life. That can happen to all families. I am proud to be part of a Labor team that is delivering on this core commitment.

**Mr PAECH (Namatjira):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I will start my speech on education by offering thanks to the Minister for Education. I am sure if members in the Chamber look at the Minister for Education they will see a woman who is committed, passionate and a strong advocate for education in the Northern Territory. It is also refreshing to be part of a Territory Labor government team in which 10 members are products of a Northern Territory public education.

I am very proud to be one of those products of the public education system, having attended preschool at Nathalie Gorey and primary school at Sadadeen Primary School. I was then very fortunate to go to Anzac Hill High School, when it was still open. I am very thankful for that opportunity and for former ministers for Education because I believe I am a product of a good Northern Territory education.

I stand in good stead that the Territory Labor government is fortunate enough to have a great team and, as I said previously, a great minister who is capable and skilled to ensure that the Territory government has a solid vision for education into the future. Territorians, no matter where they live, from many places in my electorate, such as Docker River and Ampalitwatja, through to the Steiner School, Maningrida, Katherine and Tennant Creek—all have the right to have a quality top-class education.

We understand that education is the foundation of the Northern Territory's social and economic prosperity. It is the key to my people being able to access jobs and overcome disadvantaged situations. A good education will change and empower people, and that is something we are committed to doing. As the minister has mentioned in this Chamber, a good education opens up a lifetime opportunity. It enables people to set and achieve goals in their life. Whether they want to be a childcare worker, scientist, doctor at the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, construction worker or a worker at Harts Range for the regional council, it can be done through a quality education.

A good education has the power to break the cycle of disadvantage and lift individuals, their families and their communities out of poverty. Schools across the vast electorate I represent, Namatjira, will do very well under a Territory Labor government. They will receive \$300 000 to ensure much-needed works are completed so classrooms are well equipped to deal with the evolving demands and ever-changing technologies.

When I was in primary school we did not have whiteboards; we had blackboards. It is evident that technology is constantly changing. I remember being in school when the first Mac Computers were introduced to Northern Territory schools. The excitement of having to use a computer is a memory I recall dearly.

Schools will benefit from our government increasing its early childhood investment and continuing to expand programs that work. Getting school funding right in the long term is important. An independent review will commence in April. It will seek input from stakeholders and assess the current funding model and make recommendations on how it can be improved to ensure it is equitable, meets student needs and is transparent and efficient.

As an Aboriginal person whose family still resides on our ancestral lands I understand the pressures my people face when it comes to balancing school attendance and cultural obligations. Our government

understands that people in remote communities live in unique and complex environments. That is why we must design a school system that respects and values the roles of families, communities and culture in their child's education, while building a positive and lasting relationship with western practices.

We need a system that creates positive, safe and inclusive school environments for children and families that inspires students to attend, welcomes diversity and values young people's language and culture. The electorate of Namatjira has a range of vibrant and diverse schools, from independently-run schools to Northern Territory public schools. They are very diverse and mixed. The schools in Yulara have, at times, children attending from many different countries around the world.

Nothing is impossible to those who believe. Our government believes in our schools and teachers, and in students becoming future leaders in the Northern Territory. This was confirmed on a recent trip to Hermannsburg. I was fortunate enough to visit the school with Minister Lawler and see firsthand the contribution Northern Territory teachers are making. To see the work, commitment, passion and energy from teachers in those classrooms was very refreshing.

Anyone who says Namatjira is not a winner under this government has their head in the Todd River sand. This government is very committed to making sure the educational outcomes for people in the electorate of Namatjira are at the forefront. With the additional \$20m investment into education there will be more funding for preschool, transition and secondary students, as well as schools with high populations of Indigenous students. The majority of funds were distributed through a student base needs funding model; schools have to decide how to use the additional funding of \$20m that has been distributed.

Many schools in my electorate were looked on favourably: \$34 000 to the Alcoota school for staff training and resources to enhance student learning; \$7000 to the Amoonguna school; \$80 000 to the Ampilatwatja school to employ a local person on the ground with the cultural knowledge to support student learning and community engagement in schooling; \$328 000 to the Arparra school of the homelands to support school readiness for young students and pathways beyond schooling for secondary students, making sure we do not forget the students when they leave high school; \$10 000 to the Bonya school for additional student resources; \$14 000 for the Finke school to support the school-wide positive behaviours program, which assists teachers with delivering programs with English as a second language.

Other schools that will benefit are Imanpa school; Mutitjulu School; Titjikala School, which will offer swimming programs and lifesaving activities to support the community; Watarrka School in the Kings Canyon National Park region; and the Yulara school. That is over \$651 000 of the \$20m allocated to government schools in the electorate of Namatjira. The total benefit to schools in Namatjira from this government, including the \$100 increase to the base-rate funding for every student, is \$743 000. That is commitment.

There are around 600 students enrolled in government schools across the electorate of Namatjira. The average funding per student in Namatjira has grown by over \$900. I am very happy to speak about the NAPLAN achievement results in the electorate of Namatjira. In 2016 the Alice Springs Steiner School achieved above average for Year 5 reading, grammar, punctuation and numeracy. In 2016 Yulara School, which is located at the base of Uluru, a very scenic spot to have a school, achieved above average for Years 3 and 5 across all domains.

Those are great results that highlight the outstanding work of teachers and students in the great electorate of Namatjira. We want to create an education system based on excellence with the ability and desire to succeed. Yes, we are ambitious, but today we have to be. We have to be ambitious if we want to compete amongst others and draw people to the Northern Territory by knowing their kids will have a quality education here.

We cannot be complacent because that can be fatal for the economic future of the Northern Territory. The next leaders are the kids in our schools today. We have to be ambitious if we want to mend the broken school policies we took on from the CLP. Education does not just give people the tools to make a good living; it gives them the character to make a good life, be good members of the Northern Territory, engage in local communities and participate in their advancement.

For the future of our economy and society we need a first class education system for every child. We will do that right now with the work the Minister for Education is doing. I am thankful for teachers' tireless efforts and commitments to helping our kids, young adults and mature-aged students. I acknowledge there have been many debates on how we get there and how we do things, but we know what works best and that is

what we will do. We will work across the spectrum and ensure we are talking and working together to deliver for students.

These debates need to be clear because they highlight what works. Things that work are discipline, rigour, freedom for schools, having high expectations, understanding that no two kids are the same and that learning is an individual thing. Schools that are resourced and well-funded work. Teachers who are welcomed and encouraged work. Now we need to get on with it and not waste any time. We must ensure we are working with students and teachers to deliver the quality education they deserve.

Every year that passed under the CLP passed without proper reform to education. Those were the years that tens of hundreds of students were leaving school without the proper qualifications they needed to succeed. We are doing bold things. One of those things is bringing back the values of a good education. We are also building and developing quality teachers and partnerships with families, as well as confronting educational failures left over from the previous government.

Members of this Chamber in opposition suggest our way to approach things is just about throwing money at it. Yes, money is important, but building relationships is equally important, so is understanding the needs and developing good quality curriculum. That is why, despite pressures on public schools, this government is protecting school budgets. We are building education systems that are strong and require concise work with many different levels, which the Minister for Education is doing.

It is also about the values brought into the classroom. We are not wasting any time in looking after schools and great teachers, and understanding their needs. We believe children need to grasp the basics at an early age. We are delivering a range of early childhood programs to ensure children are well-resourced from an early age and teachers have the support and mechanisms in place to enhance their future training and development.

We also believe that when a child steps into a classroom, the most important thing we need to determine is their success and who the teacher is. We must ensure we attract and keep the best talents. We are acting. When it comes to attracting them, we are strengthening school quality. We are leading a national principal leadership program, mentoring and support for career teachers, a high achievers program, a review of funding models for schools and delivering a school curriculum that prepares students for the future.

Families as First Teachers is a very important part of our strategy because it engages families. It prepares kids for school to improve lifelong learning, whilst bringing the families along the way. I am a proud product of the Northern Territory's education system. I am proud to have had a range of great Northern Territory teachers throughout my years. Namatjira has around 25 public schools. They are great schools. From the independent schools of Docker River, Steiner School and Ampilatwatja to the public schools in places like Docker River and Amoonguna.

The Minister for Territory Families talked about the Owen Springs juvenile detention centre, where young Territorians engage in training by St John Ambulance, Charles Darwin University certificates in hospitality, as well as a whole range of courses offered by the Red Dust Role Models and other programs. It is very important to continue to do this with young people, regardless if they are in school or juvenile centres, to ensure they have solid foundations and are supported to go on and achieve great things in their lives.

I am very fortunate to have travelled with the Education minister to listen to the concerns of the community and teachers, and also what works well in the electorates throughout the Northern Territory. Families as First Teachers is a great model. One of the key successes for young people in the bush is to ensure we bring the families, teachers and students along with us so we are all on the same page and understand the importance of a quality education.

I am thankful our government has taken this approach, and I am thankful to the Minister for Education. I look forward to the continuing support and work that will be rolled out across the Northern Territory so young people have the best chance at success. I hope that in the future I will see many young students from Namatjira in high and prestigious roles throughout the Northern Territory. I will be very proud to say they are a product of public education and a very important and ground-breaking reform that was delivered by a Territory Labor government.

I reiterate that I will constantly be out bush speaking to my constituents about the importance of education and encouraging them, every step of the way, to participate, whether they are young toddlers or senior Territorians who wish to re-engage with the education system by taking a computer literacy program.

Education and training is the key to success. I look forward to working with the minister to make sure we deliver on these important reforms.

**Mr SIEVERS (Brennan):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to hear the Minister for Education's announcements. It is a testament to this government's commitment to put Territory children and families first. I have spoken about education in this Chamber in the past and stated that education is key to our children's future. I am a strong believer in this statement.

Education can open many doors in a very fast-changing world and in the environment we live in today. I believe every Territory child deserves the fundamental right to a quality education. I was appalled to hear about the cuts made by the CLP to the education system. In only four years of government the CLP cut \$114m from our Territory's education budget. How did it do that?

As we have heard from the Minister for Education, the CLP cut over 500 full-time equivalent staff from the education system. This included support staff and teachers, who are integral to our children's education, their future and our families. Last week in Question Time I was very saddened to see the CLP laughing about the education responses. It confirmed to me why the CLP members did not challenge the shocking education cuts when they were in government during those four long years.

Many people know that one of my sisters is a school teacher. I know the hard work my sister, and many other dedicated teachers and support staff, do every day of the week. I am extremely proud to know this government is backing schools, families, children, teachers and support staff. I visit my local schools, and others, including Bakewell, Rosebery and MacKillop, every chance I get. I listen to the teachers, staff, parents and children. One of my favourite times of the week is attending the morning assemblies and seeing the children, mums, dads, aunties, uncles and grandparents. They all smile when songs are sung, theatre or art is put on the stage and the merit awards are announced and presented. They are such happy times for everyone involved.

The government has announced it will put children at the centre of its decision-making. The Education minister's statement confirmed this commitment. It is clear we are investing in Territorian children, not only today but for the long-term. I commend Territory teachers and staff, who work extremely hard and face enormous challenges daily as they accommodate and change their lesson plans or tack, to ensure each and every child in their classroom is supported and given the best education possible.

The great man Mr Nelson Mandela quoted:

*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*

Nelson Mandela changed the world. He put children and education at the centre of his vision and his country's future. This government is committed to the same philosophy. We are working to ensure every child is ready on day one, term one of the year they commence school.

I was fortunate to visit Ntaria School at Hermannsburg a few weeks ago when Caucus held a community meeting in the great remote community. I was pleased to see so many children at school. I caught up with old friends I have not seen for over 20 years. Some are elders now, working in the church, health centre, school and community. It was a great day. What pleased me the most was engaging with the local people, families, teachers and staff.

We were taken through all parts of the school. I was impressed by the Families as First Teachers program. This is a fantastic program and a commonsense approach to engaging local families and developing positive relationships to improve education, health and wellbeing outcomes. I thank the Ntaria School and community for welcoming our visit. It was a day I really enjoyed. I thank the Minister for Education for her hard work and commitment to the Families as First Teachers program. It supports parents to be the first teachers in their children's lives.

Education is far more than just literacy and math. Education is about learning so many different things in different ways at all ages. I believe one never stops learning in life. The dynamics of how to listen, learn and apply learning is an art in itself.

Individual students have individual needs. Many students have additional challenges due to a disability or illness. This government is committed to supporting each and every one of these students. We are supporting this through additional funding for initiatives and approaches that are evidence-based to provide immediate support and improve long-term outcomes. This government is listening to our community,

schools, key education stakeholders and experts. We are ensuring the work being done by the education system will meet the needs of children and families.

The principals and staff at my local schools have met with me to discuss their schools and the needs of children and families. Together we have advocated to ensure these needs are considered in the rollout of this government's education initiatives, with some fantastic results. Schools in my electorate are excited about the opportunities presented by this government's Building Better Schools initiative; \$300 000 for every school over the term of this government is a welcome investment in infrastructure and facilities for schools. It will also provide important economic stimulus through a steady stream of construction projects for locals.

School buildings are nothing without the hard-working and dedicated educators who work within them. This government is investing an additional \$124m over the next four years into our government education system. As part of this commitment we have already delivered a \$20m boost to the 2017 school budgets. Schools are working with their school councils to make sure additional funding is used to meet the needs of the students.

This funding is already having a positive impact. At Bakewell Primary School additional funding will increase the school's capacity to support workforce development and improve student resources. At Rosebery Primary School they have been able to increase hours for part-time staff and purchase new furniture. At Rosebery Middle School, as the minister has mentioned, they will extend the school program for high-performing students and further develop the outdoor education program to include the Duke of Edinburgh's International Awards. They have also been able to employ an additional specialist English as a Second Language teacher and a special education assistant.

Another key component of this government's \$124m re-investment is an additional \$8m per year to better support and educate children and young people with challenging behaviours and disabilities. In Palmerston this funding will see the establishment of a new autism spectrum disorder intervention program and a Palmerston-based flexible schooling option with wraparound support for youth at risk. These are much-needed root services that are welcomed by the community.

All the announcements made this week by the Minister for Education are welcomed by me and my electorate, and I acknowledge all of my parliamentary colleagues with similar stories of how this government is improving schools in their electorates. This government's significant investment is not just about the funding, resources and facilities; it is about quality education, investing in what works and approaches backed by evidence. I was very pleased to hear the Minister for Education speak to these critical points and encompass Professor Hattie's research on what really makes a difference to education outcomes for children and young people.

It is clear that to really make education gains we need a collaborative approach that focuses on how we can all work together to improve the education system through needs-based funding, quality teaching, school leadership and working in partnership with families to deliver improved education outcomes for all students.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will close with another quote from Nelson Mandela:

*Education has long been recognised as a route out of poverty for individuals, and as a way of promoting equality of opportunity.*

This is what our government is working hard to achieve. I commend the Minister for Education's statement and all the members, teachers, support staff and students who are working towards the same goal, which is great outcomes for all Territorians.

**Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not have anywhere near the experience in education that some of the previous speakers have, in particular the Members for Barkly and Arnhem, not to forget the Minister for Education. Let me begin by emphasizing how inspirational each of you are. Unfortunately, a bit like the Member for Johnston, while I had a lot of fun during my time at school I recognise now just how painful it must have been for my teachers, and I take this opportunity to formally apologise to each and every one of them.

I had a really good time at school but I recognise I was somewhat disruptive. It was not until my mid 20s that I came to respect the true value of education. Now, two university degrees down, I have a strong respect for the work our educators do for children. It truly gives me great pride to speak today in support of



the Minister for Education's vision for education in the Territory as detailed in the statement she made to this Chamber.

In the lead-up to the 2016 election the Labor team gave an unambiguous commitment to investing in the Territory's children. The government believes investing in children will benefit the Territory's social and economic development. If we are to have any hope of turning around long-term social impacts on crime and antisocial behaviour, and creating jobs and generating economic growth into the future, this must remain a priority. As the minister said in her statement, investing in children means investing in education, specifically in our schools. All Territorians, no matter where they live, have a right to a world-class education.

A good education changes lives, and well-educated children will change the future of the Territory. Education not only provides opportunity but it is also a tool for breaking the cycle of endemic disadvantage. I have no doubt all of us want the Territory to thrive; a quality education from preschool through to high school is fundamental to supporting this vision.

This government will focus on ensuring all children and young people have access to high-quality education in the Northern Territory. Successfully completing school has a significant lifelong impact. As a government we want to maximise the potential of every child, which will require sound long-term plans backed by evidence-based, practical approaches. Most importantly, we need funding directed to where it is needed most.

As the minister has noted, the Territory has a diverse student population, and this is clear to me just from the two government schools in my electorate. At Stuart Park 4% of students are Indigenous and 35% have English as a second language, while at Ludmilla 66% of students are Indigenous and 62% have English as a second language.

I echo the comments of the Deputy Chief Minister when she said suburbs may be next to one another but the needs of each school community can be quite different. Nothing emphasises the challenge of education in the Territory more than the statistic, provided by the Minister for Education, that 64 of the 100 most disadvantaged schools nationally are in the Northern Territory. We have the highest levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and remoteness in Australia. It is obvious that the costs of providing education are much higher in the Northern Territory than the rest of Australia.

I have noted in this place a number of times that I have two young daughters, Sophie and Eloise. Sophie is 11 years old and is school captain at Parap Primary School. Eloise turned 10 yesterday and, while most 10-year-olds spend their 10<sup>th</sup> birthday at McDonalds, she spent hers in the government lobby. In spite of this she really enjoyed her afternoon, and I thank my colleagues for making her day special and for sharing her rainbow cake.

I moved to the Territory with my family in 2012. When we moved, Sophie was in Year 1 and Eloise was in Transition. They commenced their schooling at Haberfield Public School, in the inner western suburbs of Sydney. Haberfield is a good school. It has great teachers and strong academic records. We originally moved to Parap, where the girls attended the local school. From day one we were impressed with the school, its principal and staff, the level of resources available and the environment in which the girls were learning. Our observations were that the Northern Territory education system was just as good, and in many ways better, than the NSW system we had left behind.

I was very happy with the environment in which the girls were learning. However, in late 2012 and in 2016 we witnessed the levels of support and facilities available drop away markedly. This could only be as a direct result of the funds cut from the education budget by the last government.

Whilst the minister and the government remain optimistic about the future of education in the Territory, we have to be realistic with regard to the problems we have been left with. In spite of the weight of evidence showing the importance of education to the prosperity of the Territory, the former CLP government slashed funding to Territory schools. As we heard a number of times, during the CLP's four years of government it cut \$114m from the education budget. This meant over 50 full-time equivalent staff lost their jobs—fewer teachers and support staff in our schools.

I listened to the Deputy Opposition Leader claim last week that education outcomes are not tied to funding. If that is true, which I sincerely doubt, it can only be so if you start from a level playing field funding wise. We need teachers and resources to be available, and, in spite of what the opposition apparently believes,

these cost money. When you slash \$114m from the budget you simply must create a lopsided field that disadvantages the children of the Northern Territory.

I congratulate the minister and the government for recognising this fundamental problem and acting to correct it. This government is re-investing in education. This government is putting resources where the evidence shows it will make the biggest difference. This investment starts from the beginning of a child's life, recognising the first 1000 days of a child's development, from conception to the age of three, has a significant impact on their health, wellbeing and long-term prospects.

Our brains and cognitive functions develop more quickly during the first five years than at any other stage of our lives. This is the time children develop the behavioural, language, thinking, social and emotional skills they need for school and later life. It has been said time and time again that this government is committed to working towards the goal of having every Territorian child as ready as they can be the day they commence their formal schooling—day one, term one, year one.

The previous Labor government commenced the Families as First Teachers program to support children, together with their families, from birth to the age of five. It is pleasing to see that the former government kept the program, and it will now be funded to grow further. The FaFT program is an integral part of this government's agenda—engaging with families and preparing children for school to improve lifelong education, health and wellbeing outcomes to young Indigenous children and their families. There are decades of evidence backing the Abecedarian approach, which is used in the FaFT programs, and the evidence shows that children who have participated in the program have improved learning, employment and life outcomes.

I am particularly pleased the government's expansion of the FaFT program has seen a new service established in my electorate at Ludmilla school. A couple of weeks ago I attended the new FaFT program with the Ministers for Education and Children. The incredibly dedicated principal, Carol Putica, showed us how the program was progressing.

Ludmilla's FaFT program is the first program in the Darwin city area to be set up. Importantly, it was ready to roll at the start of term one this year. Congratulations should go to Principal Putica and her fabulous staff. Upwards of 50 families now take advantage of Ludmilla's FaFT program. Many come from the nearby Bagot community, while others come from Minmarama and Kulaluk. While this is fantastic news, it is not the whole story.

The FaFT program is being recognised by local families more generally. As great a start it is for families and children from all backgrounds, the broader story is delivering the best start to education for all children. The more we can deliver in this area the better the future will be for the children and families involved, as well as for all of the Territory and Territorians. Once children start their formal education at school, we also recognise the need to ensure those children have a quality learning environment that includes great teachers and the necessary support staff, together with the services and programs to support all students engaging in learning.

This is why the government is backing Territory students and teachers by investing an addition \$124m into schools over the next four years. As part of this education package the government has already delivered \$20m in additional funding directly to government schools for the 2017 year. The government has listened to teachers, principals, parents and other stakeholders and has put this money where it is needed most. By way of a fair and transparent school funding model, the government has increased the base funding rate for every student by \$100. It has also increased funding for students in preschool, transition, middle years and senior years.

Additional funding has also been provided for schools with high proportions of Indigenous students. Schools that would have continued to lose funding under the CLP government will now have certainty and will be able to continue to employ the hard-working teachers in their schools. In my electorate of Fong Lim this means an extra \$62 900 to Ludmilla school, and an extra \$75 000 to Stuart Park Primary School. Thank you, minister.

These funds will be available for items such as in-class support and early childhood writing and reading extension programs. Schools will choose how to spend the additional funds to best meet the needs of their students. This is how it should be. It has been my experience from attending school council meetings, assemblies and other functions, that parents, council members and teachers have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to funding priorities at their local schools. I know, and the minister knows, the value of

listening to these people to inform our funding priorities, to ensure the government continues to meet the needs of students and represent the aspirations of local communities.

The government has delivered on its promise to provide more funding to schools, and is already making a difference. If students are to benefit from enhanced education programs they need to attend school regularly. This is an ongoing issue that successive governments have tried to tackle. The evidence shows when students have good attendance their education achievements improve substantially. I was pleased to hear about the coordinated whole-of-government approach that underpins the everyday accounts and strategy, which is focused on improving school attendance, learning, wellbeing and engagement of young Territorians.

We need to keep the focus on improving student attendance, including class management of disengaged young people, so that no young person slips through the cracks. I have every confidence in the minister when she says she will deliver an education system that is fair and equitable for all students. She has my complete support, and I am sure the support of every other member of the government. I commend the statement to the Assembly. I also commend and congratulate the minister.

**Ms AH KIT: (Karama):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Minister for Education for bringing this important statement before the House. Education is a fundamental necessity for all Territorians. It provided us all with the foundation to learn and understand the world around us and, more importantly, it provided us with opportunities to help ourselves and others. This same opportunity must be afforded to all Territory children, for they are our future and deserve access to the best level of education, no matter where they come from or live.

The Minister for Education has worked extremely hard for the past six months to reform our education system for the benefit of all Territory children. She has the necessary skill set and knowledge of the NT education system and is committed to deliver on our promise to invest in our children and schools. Minister Lawler, I thank you for your efforts, and I look forward to working with you for the remainder of our term to benefit the schools in my electorate.

I am fortunate enough to have three government schools in my electorate: Malak Primary School, Karama Primary School and Manunda Terrace Primary School. They are all unique, and staff work hard to deliver the best educational outcomes for students and their families. I am excited to see that our government has already invested \$20m into Territory schools, and I am excited about the benefit for children and families in my electorate of Karama. This \$20m investment will support preschool, transition and secondary students and schools with high proportions of Indigenous students, like all three government schools in my electorate.

I am pleased to see that our government is working with and supporting schools, and has taken an equitable approach through a needs-based funding model. I am also pleased to see that the decision on how best to spend the extra funding to support students has been left up to schools, for it is the school principals, their staff and school council members who are best placed to make these decisions for their students and children. We said we would work with and listen to Territorians, and we are doing just that.

Karama Primary School is located on Livistona Road in Karama. The school caters for the educational needs of approximately 200 students under the steadfast guidance of Mr Tim Morgan as principal. Tim and his staff work tirelessly to cater to the needs of students and their families through its Tata Family Centre and partnership with the Smith Family. The school is also supported through its school council, which focuses on ways to maximise the educational benefits of children. I thank all school council members for their hard work.

More than 40% of the student population identify as being Indigenous and almost 70% of students speak a language other than English. I thank the Minister for Education for supporting Karama Primary School with additional funding of \$49 800 to enable the school to expand the preschool program to morning and afternoon groups.

Malak Primary School is located on Malak Crescent in Malak. The school caters for the educational needs of approximately 270 students under the stellar leadership of Mrs Lorraine Evans as principal. I first met Lorraine late last year when she was acting as the school's principal, and I was pleased to recently learn at the school's AGM that she has been awarded a four-year contract as Principal of Malak Primary School. Congratulations to Lorraine.

I must admit I have a soft spot for Malak Primary School, as the school holds many wonderful memories for me from my time as a student from preschool to Year 5. It has also been fantastic to catch up with Mrs Rigby who remembers me as a rambunctious five-year-old. The Member for Arnhem also has fond memories of Malak Primary School, as a former Malak Primary School student.

Malak Primary School delivers a number of important programs that support students and their families, including the wellbeing program implemented by Mr James Cavanagh. James works extremely hard to support students in the school setting and he, along with other teachers, is delivering for all students. More than half of the student population identify as being Indigenous, and one-third of students speak a language other than English.

As mentioned, I was fortunate to be able to attend the Malak Primary School AGM recently; I joined a number of dedicated staff and caring parents who want to maximise educational benefits and outcomes for their children and every other child at the school.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

### PETITION

#### Petition No 9 – Restore Motorcycle Education Training and Licensing (METAL)

**Ms MANISON (Wanguri):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 478 petitioners praying that the Northern Territory Government restore Motorcycle Education Training and Licensing (METAL). The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read.

*The Northern Territory Government restore Motorcycle Education Training and Licensing (METAL) to save the lives in the NT*

*We would like to know why government-funded METAL was disbanded and ask if the motorcycle registration fees will be lowered now that the money from them is not funding METAL, and now that a privately run course cost \$350 instead of \$109 under MVR METAL.*

### RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

#### Petitions No 5 and 6

**Mr CLERK:** Pursuant to Standing Order 123, I inform honourable members that responses from the Treasurer to Petitions 5 and 6 have been received and circulated to honourable members. The text of the responses will be included in the *Parliamentary Record* and placed on the website. Copies of the responses have been provided to the Members for Daily and Spillett for distribution to the petitioners.

#### *Petition No 5*

*Reinstate the Home Improvement Scheme*

*Date presented: 30 November 2016*

*Presented by: Mr Higgins*

*Referred to: Treasurer*

*Date response due: 3 May 2017*

*Date response received: 21 March 2017*

*Date response presented: 22 March 2017*

*The Government has listened to the ongoing concerns of the community and has invested an additional \$15 million in an improved Home Improvement Scheme with applications for vouchers open from 20 February 2017.*

*The re-launched Home Improvement Scheme is expected to inject more than \$60 million into the Territory economy and will run until 3, December 2017, unless funding is exhausted earlier. Between 3750 and 7500 Territory homeowners are expected to access the new Scheme.*

*Under the improved Home Improvement Scheme, homeowner-occupiers are able to access a voucher of up to \$4000, on a co-contribution basis, which will go towards engaging small Territory*

*businesses to undertake work on their homes. Homeowners who previously received a voucher can receive a second voucher of up to \$2000.*

*Importantly, subcontracting is now permitted to other eligible Territory small businesses, which means that tradies can get work from other tradies. It also means that homeowners will be able to undertake broader works under the scheme with less red tape.*

*Other changes include allowing up to 50 per cent of the voucher to be put towards Ref: 16/194.14 the cost of goods and materials, which better reflects the nature of many home renovations, and integrity measures, such as site spot audits to ensure compliance. The Government remains committed to ensuring its housing assistance and other economic stimulus effectively supports the needs of Territorians and the business community.*

*The improved Home Improvement Scheme is expected to complement other policy initiatives of the Government, including responding to the need to support jobs and the economy by fast-tracking \$120 million worth of infrastructure projects, strengthening Buy-Local initiatives and releasing a \$22 million Immediate Works Stimulus Package. This Stimulus Package will fund a range of projects across varying sectors and directly benefit businesses and the community with grants of up to \$200 000 to repair and upgrade facilities.*

*The Government also increased first home owner stamp duty relief of up to \$24 000 for established homes. From September 2016 to February 2017, about 280 first home buyers have received the Government's increased stamp duty relief.*

*These first home buyers will also each have access to \$10 000 as a grant to undertake renovations, repairs and improvements on their homes, including up to \$2000 for purchasing household goods from local retailers. To date, about 120 applications have been submitted and \$12 million in first home renovations are underway.*

*Petition No 6*

*Re-open the Home Improvement Scheme*

*Date presented: 30 November 2016*

*Presented by: Mrs Finocchiaro*

*Referred to: Treasurer*

*Date response due: 3 May 2017*

*Date response received: 21 March 2017*

*Date response presented: 22 March 2017*

*The Government has listened to the ongoing concerns of the community and has invested an additional \$15 million in an improved Home Improvement Scheme with applications for vouchers open from 20 February 2017.*

*The re-launched Home Improvement Scheme is expected to inject more than \$60 million into the Territory economy and will run until 31 December 2017, unless funding is exhausted earlier. Between 3750 and 7500 Territory homeowners are expected to access the new Scheme.*

*Under the improved Home Improvement Scheme, homeowner-occupiers are able to access a voucher of up to \$4000, on a co-contribution basis, which will go towards engaging small Territory businesses to undertake work on their homes. Homeowners who previously received a voucher can receive a second voucher of up to \$2000.*

*Importantly, subcontracting is now permitted to other eligible Territory small businesses, which means that tradies can get work from other tradies. It also means that homeowners will be able to undertake broader works under the scheme with less red tape.*

*Other changes include allowing up to 50 per cent of the voucher to be put towards Ref: 16/194.14 the cost of goods and materials, which better reflects the nature of many home renovations, and integrity measures, such as site spot audits to ensure compliance. The Government remains committed to ensuring its housing assistance and other economic stimulus effectively supports the needs of Territorians and the business community.*

*The improved Home Improvement Scheme is expected to complement other policy initiatives of the Government, including responding to the need to support jobs and the economy by fast-tracking*

*\$120 million worth of infrastructure projects, strengthening Buy-Local initiatives and releasing a \$22 million Immediate Works Stimulus Package. This Stimulus Package will fund a range of projects across varying sectors and directly benefit businesses and the community with grants of up to \$200 000 to repair and upgrade facilities.*

*The Government also increased first home owner stamp duty relief of up to \$24 000 for established homes. From September 2016 to February 2017, about 280 first home buyers have received the Government's increased stamp duty relief.*

*These first home buyers will also each have access to \$10 000 as a grant to undertake renovations, repairs and improvements on their homes, including up to \$2000 for purchasing household goods from local retailers. To date, about 120 applications have been submitted and \$12 million in first home renovations are under way.*

### MOTION

#### Department of Education Prioritise Recruiting and Retaining Quality Teachers

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I move that the NT Department of Education establish a proactive program to encourage and progress more males into the teaching profession, with the goal of having at least 50% of all teachers being male teachers by 2027.

Why this motion? It seems to me the teaching profession has become very one-sided from a gender perspective. My concern is not that female teachers do not do a good job; they do an excellent job. I spoke about that this morning. But there needs to be a better balance than we have at the moment. Having male role models in schools is an important part of the education system, especially when children come from homes where there is only one parent or the family is dysfunctional.

What are the figures in the Northern Territory? Figures given to me by the department show the following: the total number of school-based male teaching staff for 2015, including principals and teachers, was 24.6%, in March 2016 it was 23.6% and in March 2017 it was 23.4%. Those figures have stayed static for quite a number of years.

Some people believe there were higher percentages in higher classifications within teaching staff. That is true but it is still not 50%. Of the executive contract principals 39% were males in 2015. That number went down to 32% in 2017. Executive principals were 42.9% male in 2015, and 37.5% in 2017. In 2015 44.4% of principals were male, but that number went down to 41.4% in 2017. Nothing has changed very much over the last few years.

A report into male teachers in South Australia by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the period of 1993 to 2009 concluded:

*Between 1993 and 2009, the proportion of male teaching staff in South Australian schools has generally decreased across all school sectors (government, catholic and independent) and across all levels (primary and secondary). Historically, the proportion of secondary teaching staff who are male has been considerably higher than the proportion in primary schools. Government schools at both primary and secondary levels experienced the largest decline in the proportion of male teaching staff. Despite slight overall falls in male teaching staff proportions primary and secondary schools between 1993 and 2009, independent schools at both levels now have the highest proportion of male teaching staff in the state.*

There have been a number of other reports on the subject of male teachers. One was by Stuart Pearson at Scots College in New South Wales, who identified the following reasons why the number of males teaching is falling:

- *Perception of teaching as a female profession.*
- *Men gravitate towards more male niches in teaching – older students, sport and leadership positions thus removing them from the classroom especially at the Preschool and Primary levels.*
- *A stigma attached to teaching that male teachers have a propensity for paedophilia or sexual deviance if they enjoy working with children.*

- *Many men are drawn to other 'more male' careers first and come to teaching later in their professional lives (if at all) once they have better understood themselves and their call to teaching.*
- *Lack of support from family and friends.*
- *Low salary and low prestige.*

*The impacts of a lack of male teachers are many and varied, key effects identified include:*

- *A lack of positive male role models that value learning and academic pursuits.*
- *An overabundance of alpha-male stereotypes in society limit the image of what it means to be a man for both boys and girls.*
- *An education system that favours the ways girls learn best.*
- *Female teachers find it more difficult to cater for characteristically male ways of learning.*
- *Increased disengagement and resultant behaviour issues.*
- *Boys are not seeing the kind of educated men who solve problems with their words and thoughts and not with their fists.*

Another study was undertaken by Professor Aspland from the Australian Catholic University. She is the Chief Executive Dean of the ACU Faculty of Education and Arts. She analysed the statistics and the ABS came up with her results.

I quote from a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, dated 8 November 2015, headlined 'The great man shortage hits Australian classrooms', written by Liz Porter. She said Professor Aspland:

*... urged state governments, policymakers and schools to consider every possible strategy to increase the participation of men in teaching – from education campaigns to scholarships and even targets. She also calls on teachers themselves to speak up about the rewards the profession offers.*

*...*

*The current gender imbalance in teaching is a problem for Australian society, she says, not just for its primary schools.*

*...*

*Simon Gipson, head of St Michael's Grammar, sees the issue as less about money and more about the fact that teachers are no longer held in high regard, with men who choose primary education courses seen as taking 'the tertiary course of last resort'.*

*The last decade's revelations about paedophiles in schools have also made some young men fear that their choice of a career in primary teaching might be misinterpreted.*

*...*

*But Professor Aspland argues that children benefit from being exposed to specifically 'male' or 'female' modes of thinking and conversation.*

*"It's more than just providing male figures to children who don't have a father at home," she says, quoting a 2013 Macquarie University study which surveyed the views of, 184 grade 6 students (80 boys; 104 girls) and 97 parents.*

*Both groups said that male teachers were important as role models and father figures, and for students – especially boys – to seek help from and confide in. Respondents said it was important for boys to have a teacher of the same gender when learning about puberty and as they approach it. They said male teachers were important for girls' interaction with men – and their consequent understanding of them.*

*One girl described having a male teacher as “like having an additional father, in that you have your biological one but you’ve got another person with a boy brain guiding you through ... between nine and three [o’clock].”*

*Boys talked of the way male teachers ‘seem to understand you more’, with two adding that male teachers have a better understanding of the “rough” way boys play. Female teachers thought getting a bruise “was really bad”, one of them said. “But boys think getting a bruise is all right.”*

I have some sympathy with that.

I have to rely on southern commentators when researching this issue as there does not seem to be much work done on this in the Northern Territory. The minister might be able to give me some information if I am wrong.

This issue is important and needs a higher priority within the Department of Education. It would be interesting to see the stats in remote communities on the breakdown of male and female Indigenous teachers, and to ask if the issue is relevant in Indigenous communities. We need to look at how to make teaching more attractive to males.

I thank the minister for the briefing, and I checked the Facebook advertising the department released. I see two teachers from Girraween Primary School on there. One is Allen and the other is Gillian—I might be wrong. They were great advertisements for teaching, and both teachers are really enthusiastic about their job. There are a few other ads from various schools in the Northern Territory. There is one from a teacher in Maningrida. I say to the department, excellent job with that promotion.

We need to look at how to make teaching look more attractive to males. Perhaps attention should be given to more mature males who have worked in other professions. An example from the *Sydney Morning Herald* is Michael Higgins, who spent 30 years as a manager in an engineering company before moving into primary teaching. He wanted to give something back to the community and wanted a job in which he could see the human consequences of his work. Now in his 15th year of teaching, the 67-year-old father of three and grandfather of 12 is in his third year at St Anne’s in Sunbury, where he teaches grade 5.

Professor Stephen Dinham, Chairman of Teacher Education and Director of Learning and Teaching at the University of Melbourne, believes the shortage of male teachers is due to the combined effect of a drop in relative pay rates and lack of good career structure. What can be done in the Territory to attract more males into the teaching profession? What is the government doing in relation to pay rates and setting up good career structure?

I thank the minister for the briefing because I am informed the pay rates in the Northern Territory are quite good. We are up there with the top pay rates compared to other states. How is the government promoting teaching, especially for males? Is it promoting teaching in the Territory, which is good but not specific to males? Some of the advertisements I have seen the government put on Facebook are giving an opportunity for male teachers to promote teaching in the NT.

It leads to some bigger questions. For instance why is it okay for the government to set in place gender equality and employment in the Police, Fire and Emergency Services department? One answer given to me is that teaching should be based on getting the best teacher for the job, which I agree with. That logical approach is different from the employment policy for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The question should be, should employment be based on gender equality or skills regardless of gender?

If it is based on gender equality then the same approach to Police, Fire and Emergency Services should be applied to teaching. I raise this debate not to say—and when I look back we could do without saying by 2027 you will have 50% male teachers, because there are other issues that need to be looked at.

I looked up the Public Service Commissioner’s latest report. The biggest department in the NT is the Department of Health. Around 75% of all people in that department are female. The next biggest one is Education, and it has about 72% female. Police, Fire and Emergency Services is where you see a difference; around 28% are females. You have to be careful taking figures from the smaller departments, so I am taking them from the biggest ones. Power and Water Corporation has about 27% females.

The total gender balance in the NT public service is 63% females and 37% males working full-time. That is from the *State of the Service Report*. What has been said to me when I talk to people about this issue is that we need to promote males but at the same time we need to ensure they are good teachers. I do not



want to see us putting males in there as picking up some of the issues I am talking about. They have to be role models that are good teachers. That is the difficulty in this debate.

When it comes to trying to deal with gender parity, if it says we will employ teachers up to a certain skill standard, and that is how we judge if they should be employed—if you are looking at a uniform policy then that should apply to other parts of the public service. The Member for Blain recently raised the issue that there have been concerns about how the gender balance policy has caused some problems within the department of Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I see, on one hand, the department wants to make sure we have the best teachers regardless of gender. On the other hand, I believe we need more male teachers.

I think there is one male teacher at Girraween. We had two last year but we lost one. I think there is one male at St Francis of Assisi. I am not sure if there are any at Humpty Doo Primary School.

**Madam Speaker:** There is one.

**Mr WOOD:** One. There may be one at Howard Springs.

Even if we do not want to get into the debate on gender equality, there needs to be more of an effort to get some men into teaching. I will not die on the stake about the 50%; I put that in as a bit of a gamble. The main thrust of my argument is that we need to encourage more men—I understand Taminmin has a few males, but the number is still quite low.

In many ways it is probably more important, from a role model point of view, to have more men in secondary schools because that is when young children are approaching puberty; there are girl/boy issues; there are the social issues young people come up with; they may have come from broken families—there is a need for those people in schools. I must stress that they need to be good teachers. We are not to be putting teachers there simply because they are male or because we think they will be role models for young boys. We should be putting them there because they are good teachers who happen to be male.

I do not want to argue with the government. I simply think it is an issue that has been around for a while. The numbers have not changed for many years. Even schools tell me they are disappointed that there are not enough males working in schools. The big question is, how can we attract more men to the teaching profession?

I congratulate the government for at least attempting that through the Facebook advertisements. They are excellent. If people get on that site they will see some enthusiastic teachers ...

**Mr Paech:** Are you on Facebook, Gerry?

**Mr WOOD:** No, you can see it by getting on Google. You can cheat. I prefer to look at the stars, but there are times I like to catch up on what is going on. I also have three daughters who tell me what is happening on Facebook. I have had friend requests from people I thought were my sworn enemies and it made me think, 'This Facebook does not make any sense'. I thought I had best stay out of that system. People can text, ring or talk to me—normal things. If they do not like me just put it in the mail. It is a way of communicating; I am not knocking Facebook.

I will go off topic; we talked about bullying today. Unfortunately a student from one of our schools committed suicide just last week because of cyber bullying. I went to a class at Howard Springs which was run by the principal, Julie Perry, who was giving a cyber bullying class to parents. It was really interesting. Since then I have released a range of material for parents to pick up from the front of my office—I have a table out the front where they can get it any time of the day—to help promote the issues relating to cyber bullying.

There are some downsides to Facebook and that concerns me. This is not the first case. The Member for Goyder would know there have been a number of other cases in the rural area that are devastatingly sad. My understanding is they were all about comments via Facebook. It has its good side, but it has to be controlled. Be that as it may, that was slightly moving off the subject.

I raise this today to hear what response the government has to increasing the number of males in the teaching profession.

**Ms LAWLER (Education):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for bringing this motion into parliament today. We all agree that recruiting and retaining the right teachers in schools is important to ensuring the educational success of Territory students; however, we have different views on the recruitment focus for the Department of Education, so I am proposing an amendment to the motion. I move the motion be amended to: that the NT Department of Education prioritise attracting, recruiting and retaining quality teachers and implement strategies to build a diverse workforce.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, are you deleting words?

**Ms LAWLER:** I move after the word 'that' I replace it with: the NT Department of Education prioritise attracting, recruiting and retaining quality teachers and implement strategies to build a diverse workforce.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, you can talk to your amended motion.

**Ms LAWLER:** It is well known that in Australia and worldwide there is a gender imbalance within the teaching profession. In all the Western world we see that there are more females than males. This has been the case as long as we can remember; although I remember doing some research once about the history of education and teachers, and after World War II many males were offered teaching positions. They could do a one-year degree to get them into the teaching force. In the early 1950s there might have been a large number of males entering the workforce, but in the 30 years I have been involved with education there have been more females than males.

In the Territory about 23.4% of classroom teachers are male, with a similar portion of all school-based employees being male. One of the issues is that we also have school council employees. School councils can use their funding to employ school staff. This may skew the figures regarding Indigenous employees in schools. Often in remote communities there are teacher assistants, some of whom are male, who are school council employees. Sometimes the figures for education are paid for by government, but there are often school council employees funded through the Commonwealth government as well. Those funds go to school councils. So it is a little confusing.

That gender imbalance is across all stages of schooling. It changes slightly in secondary, but in primary school the proportion of males is only about 11%. My son-in-law is a teacher at Jingili and is one of the 11%. He started in early childhood and is probably one of the few male teachers in early childhood.

The proportion of male teachers in secondary schools in the NT is higher at about 35%, and higher again when we look at the proportion of males in principal positions, which is part of that picture of males being promoted. The salary levels increase as you go up the ladder in the department. I acknowledge Daphne Read, who was the first female principal in the Northern Territory. She finished her career at Driver Primary School in my electorate. She is on the Somerville Board and the Royal Life Saving Board. She is a wonderful female role model in the Territory, being the first female principal.

The Territory data is largely consistent with the data from the rest of Australia, which shows that the gender imbalance is more pronounced in primary schools. There has been little change in that, as the Member for Nelson said, over the past five years. Like some other professions where there is a gender imbalance, training and selection processes for teachers are not biased against any gender. I do not believe we should mix the firefighter issue with the teacher issue. With teachers there is no imbalance in the selection process; you get accepted into university to do your four-year education.

It is not gender biased between males and females, so this is about making sure more males do the four-year teaching degrees. That is one of the issues we see; it is now a four-year degree to be a teacher. Originally it was only one; then it was two, and then three when I first graduated, and then we all had to do a fourth year. It is also a four-year degree to be a lawyer or accountant, which opens up opportunities for much larger salaries.

You spoke about that research, Member for Nelson, and I agree; I think one of the influences—and we will speak more about the others—is salaries. You start as a teacher, and it is not too bad at about \$65 000, and within a number of years you can move up to a \$100 000 career. It influences people entering a four-year degree because it is a four year degree to do teaching.

There is no bias during the selection process to go into training. The reasons behind a lack of male teachers vary. The perception of teachers in the community is probably one of the biggest reasons. It is seen as more of a female profession, which perpetuates that view. There is the issue of the stigma of male

teachers and issues of paedophilia and male teachers having to be very careful about their work with young children and working with females.

The perception in the community and the salary are all things that influence whether a male decides to go into teaching. Teaching is also hard work, and the view of most people is that yes, it has 12 weeks leave a year, but it is damn hard work with longer hours. That also makes people ask, 'Is it a job for me?' when people start to look at their careers.

There is a paucity of research in the Territory on the reasons males do not go into the teaching service. The research I looked at is in regard to interstate private schools in Australia or worldwide. I do not know if there is a lot of research that has ever been done in the Territory.

Schools are a microcosm of our society, and we want the workforce and schools to reflect that as much as possible. That is the same with the police force and firefighters; the closer you can align your workforce to represent your community—it is a much better match for everybody, and that all students feel they have those connections.

That is not just for gender balance but for increasing the number of Indigenous staff and the number of migrants and other diverse groups. Increasing our teaching workforce to be a reflection of the broader Territory community is vitally important, not just in regard to having more males, but the Indigenous staff and diverse multicultural groups as well.

I understand the value in students being able to identify with a positive role model within the school community; that is an issue. It is lovely for all of us to be able to have connections. When you have a diverse workforce it is about whether Indigenous kids and migrant refugees have role models and feel they have connections. Inclusive school communities that value diversity and teach respectful relationships create environments that set young people up not just for academic success, but to be successful leaders in the community. Respectful relationships and positive role models are the premise of a number of programs.

One of the things that has happened over the past 10 years is the Clontarf Football Academy programs. Those numbers are not necessarily included in the Education department figures because it gets a third of its funding from the Northern Territory Government, the federal government and philanthropically. Those Clontarf programs provide great role models. The staff at these programs are employed through various academies and are not necessarily in the department's statistics. The males are strongly represented in the workforce.

I was at Dripstone Middle School the other day and there was a great male role model leading the Stars program for girls. These programs operate school-based academies for Indigenous boys and girls, providing mentoring support to attract and maintain engagement until the completion of Year 12. There are 13 academies in middle and senior schools across the Territory catering to about 900 boys and 800 girls. Schools without a specific Clontarf academy or girls' program have autonomy through their global school budgets to provide local mentoring and role model approaches for students. This includes primary schools.

Many schools work in partnership with other youth services to provide mentoring and positive relationship opportunities. There is anecdotal evidence regarding those connections. That is one of the great strengths of the Clontarf foundations and the Stars program. It is about having role models and adults providing wraparound services to make sure kids continue their schooling through Year 12.

A few campaigners for initiatives to increase male teacher numbers have successfully identified explicit evidences of skills or attributes associated solely with male teachers and how these might benefit the education outcomes from both male and female students.

Ultimately I want the best-possible teachers in the classrooms of Territory schools, regardless of their gender or background. Member for Nelson, you identified that. It is all very well having a male teacher, but if he has no skills in teaching reading, literacy or numeracy, or has poor classroom management skills, it is to the detriment of the students. He may be the world's greatest role model but unless he can actually explicitly teach kids, it is of no benefit to their education.

It is not just about gender; it is about the quality of teaching. A male or female who starts as a teacher has to be on probation. They have to have performance management and align to the standards all teachers have to meet. If they are not a quality teacher they will not pass the probation process.

This is about having the best possible teachers in every one of our Territory classrooms. There are no silver bullets to solve issues or drive improvements in education. This is about making sure we have quality teachers in all classrooms. Being male or female is a second choice.

Many of the people in this House who have an interest in education know the research of Professor John Hattie. If not, I encourage you to Google him and find out. He often talks about the distractors that all too often are the focus of public and political debate relating to education. These are ideas that do not pass the test of having a real, measurable impact on student outcomes. John Hattie has a hierarchical list of the greatest impacts of a range of things we see in education. Is it small groups, having a male teacher or explicit teaching? Some of these things he calls distractors.

There is a real risk that setting targets relating to male teacher numbers is one of those distractions. School effectiveness research suggests students need quality teachers, not necessarily male teachers. AITSL, teaching and leading for quality Australian schools in 2007, is very explicit about that.

We should prioritise policy responses that evidence shows will make an impact on student achievement. Territory students, especially the most disadvantaged students in remote and very remote communities, continue to fall behind their peers. We need to invest in approaches that ensure every student gains a year's growth for a year's input, and more than a year's growth for disadvantaged students who are falling behind.

Educators, parents and students know—and research backs this up—it is what the teachers know, do and care about that is the most important part of the learning equation. All teachers, regardless of gender, can have a positive effect on their students. If we are to make real gains for all students, teachers must be supported to be exceptional at what they do.

This is where we will make real gains for Territory children. This is where government is investing resources. While I agree with the sentiment of the motion from the Member for Nelson, and I support increasing the diversity of the workforce, we must have recruitment strategies that focus on selecting candidates based on merit. We need to ensure students have a teacher selected on quality and not on gender.

Schools are responsible for the merit selection of teachers. It is up to the recruitment panel at the school level to select the best person for the job. We know that under global budgets it is now up to schools to recruit those teachers. It is about merit selection in the public service. Teachers are public servants in government schools, so it is about merit selection.

Over the last few years, schools have been making do with less. They have fewer staff and less resourcing. It seems that another casualty of the previous government's de-investment in education has been that the proactive teacher recruitment strategies have ground to a halt. They are, no doubt, the victims of the severe budget cuts inflicted on the agency.

In about October last year, there was a realisation that there needs to be a richer pool of teachers for schools to recruit from. The Department of Education is doing some really good work to recruit teachers. There is a long list of teachers on the teach in the Territory website that schools can look at to match the skills and year levels they are looking for. Labor's \$124m four-year education package will give Territory schools the capacity to hire staff and offer more attractive positions with improved access to professional learning and longer-term roles, as they have greater funding certainty.

Twenty-million dollars has already been rolled out directly to government schools for the 2017 budget, delivering on a key part of the commitment to reinvest in education and put kids at the heart of our decisions. Schools will decide how to spend this money to best meet the needs of students. In most cases this will be through the employment of more teachers.

To support schools to access quality teachers when they need them, I have asked the department to return to the year-round focus on encouraging and attracting people to become teachers in the Territory. There is no point leaving it to the end of the year when most of the university graduates have lined up jobs. We need to ensure there are human resource staff talking to universities, talking to students in their final year and organising practicum placements in the Territory. It is not just CDU; we cannot get enough teachers out of CDU to fill the vacancies in the Territory. This is about talking to universities across Australia and enticing experienced teachers to come to the Territory.

The Department of Education's strategic workforce plan prioritised the development and implementation of strategies to attract and recruit a quality diverse workforce for all locations. The plan includes a renewed focus on teacher and educator recruitment and attraction strategies to strengthen the pool of suitable, quality candidates for teaching positions in the Northern Territory. From my experience in Central Australia, a teaching couple is a highly valued thing in a remote community because you get two for the price of one. If you have a teacher house you can have a teaching couple share the house, but they also support each other and are often the people who stay in those communities long term and make it home.

Nationally there is a good gender balance for Teach for Australia; some of you may have heard of this program, which includes a Teach NT campaign. The Teach for Australia program targets graduates who already have a four-year degree in some other area, and then they do an intensive education degree, like a master's degree in teaching. This is done through Deakin University. It is similar to the graduate diploma but this is attracting top level graduates from other degrees to do a Master of Teaching through Deakin University. Then they are employed for a period of two years, and if they enjoy it they can continue further. We have about 31 associates, as they are called, in the Territory and about 50% are male. That is a positive program.

As part of our election commitment, one of this government's key commitments was to support early career teachers. It is a well-known fact that in the first five years of teaching something like 20% or 30% of teachers resign and choose another career for a whole heap of reasons; we need to put in place mentoring and support for those first few years of teachers' careers. Hattie's research about that shows if those teachers are supported in their first couple of years of teaching they go on to be great teachers.

It is about learning the skills early on to be a good teacher. You can do a four-year degree but it does not necessarily give you that depth of experience in behaviour management, working with parents or writing school reports. You learn those things on the job. Those first two years are vital. One of our key election commitments was supporting and mentoring teachers in their first two years to ensure they become exceptional teachers.

Member for Nelson, I thank you for raising this matter. It is always great to have any debate on education. I hear loud and clear the same things you do about it being nice to have more male teachers, but I do not think it is valuable to set targets. It is more about a whole community—it does not just fall on education departments to recruit more teachers and make sure there is a gender balance.

It is about the perception of teachers and how we, as a community, encourage children and people to really think about teaching as a great profession. It is about people supporting teachers, because it used to be seen as a great profession, but then those issues of behaviour management—some of those things put people off from becoming teachers. How do we, as a community, value teachers so this is seen as a great profession to go into?

Things such as salary levels then flow on from that regarding teacher EBAs; all those negotiations can look at those things around pay. This is more about the community and society encouraging the best and brightest to become teachers, and encouraging young males to go into teaching as well as people who have had other careers and may be looking for a career change. That is one of the positive things about CDU; they take a large number of mature-aged students. How do we encourage adults who are looking at a career change to get into teaching?

Member for Nelson, thank you very much for bringing this matter to the House. There are a number of people on this side who are very interested in speaking to this motion. We need to focus on attracting, recruiting and retaining quality teachers who reflect the diversity of the population in the Northern Territory. This is about Indigenous teachers and encouraging a range of cultures and communities to step up and become teachers.

I thank you very much for bringing this motion, and I will support—I am putting the amended motion here, but I am also very keen to encourage more males to take up the profession.

**Mr MILLS (Blain):** Madam Speaker, I support the motion that has been put before the Chamber by the Member for Nelson. I note the Minister for Education attempting to separate the issue as it is played out in the Police, Fire and Emergency Services and the classrooms. It is difficult to separate the two when we are focused on a gender or diversity issue, or identity politics. We are being distracted from what the business is all about.

The climate has changed dramatically. I grew up and started my working life as a farmer and then, for a number of reasons and circumstances, I went into teaching. I started at the early stages when the teaching profession had some esteem and was a path that was admired to some degree. But because I had been educated in an older era, as a mature-aged student in the teachers' colleges, I could not help but notice I was being indoctrinated with a new way of thinking at the teachers' college.

We seem to be focused on these grand themes of equity and gender equality rather than the simple process of education with knowledge that could be taught and tested. It seemed to be more about feelings. I was also assisted because I had some Army training, which is quite practical, direct and concrete.

The culture in education had changed. As a young father going through teachers' college, I can clearly remember—and I use this to illustrate the changed environment—one time my daughter was playing in the playground in Perth and there were many other kids playing there. It was nice to see her begin to interact with the other kids. I was the only male in attendance. There were many mothers sitting and talking to each other, but I had no one to talk to because I was the only male there. Mother groups were sprinkled around the playground.

My attention was on what was happening with the kids on the playground. My daughter was going across the monkey bars. She had connected with another kid, and as they were going across the other girl got into difficulty and panicked. She feared that she would fall and she could not go forward or back. I saw this and the look of fear on her face, so I got up to assist her. The moment I walked into the sand pit area near the monkey bars to put my hands up to help her, the whole climate of the playground changed. Every mother stopped talking and all turned their attention to me as though I would perhaps visit harm on this poor kid. None of them, up until that point, even noticed her.

I distinctly felt that, and I know many males feel that these days. That is the change to the culture that has occurred, not just in that playground but in our whole society, where it is not admired but questioned because we have this other agenda being played constantly. That is what makes it very difficult. I cannot easily support the amended motion. On the face of it, it looks quite benign but it is still distracting us from the core issue in the same way we are being conned by this firefighter issue. We could easily be seduced into thinking this is just about those fine-sounding words 'equity' and 'diversity'.

There is no problem with anyone from any background, irrespective of their racial identity or gender, being involved in the fire service, as far as I understand. I want it proved to me that the standards in place to get into the fire service are designed to preclude anybody. They are designed to ensure we have the highest standards so that if someone is stuck in a building, the person going in to provide assistance, the firefighter, has the strength to lift a beam off that person. The standards are there to ensure the safety of the recipient of care, rather than to deliver some other subtle social agenda.

It appears to me that social activists have become very involved and animated in this area, distracting us from the real business. Mr Hattie was mentioned—the distractors. This is a distractor from the core business. When it comes to the firefighting business, there are females—one is a former student of mine, who managed to get in on her merits. She passed and beat the males to a standard that was not there to preclude her, but to ensure she was competent.

The change now is that you might be competent but you may not be the right gender. Therefore, if you are not the right gender, you need to be. We need the fire service to reflect the expectations of the community about gender and diversity in the fire service. Is that what they expect? I thought if firefighters were rushing into a building and people were rushing out of it for safety—if they go in to help, the last thing on the person's mind is, 'What is your racial background or gender?' They want to know if you are competent, irrespective of those things.

We need to not be distracted from the core business. The objective of the firefighting enterprise is to serve and protect, the same as with education. Education's purpose is to educate. The Member for Nelson has pointed out that we focus specifically on the needs. Are we getting a good deal? Are we addressing some of the deeper issues we see emerge in the classroom and in society, where there needs to be a greater space for males to have a positive influence?

I am not talking about compromising standards or anything like that; I am simply highlighting that there is an educational need here, not a social need to satisfy people's feelings, but to ensure those young people are educated well. There is a very strong argument for the need of a greater male presence in the education system. Diversity becomes a distraction; it becomes the objective, and that takes us away from education.

We could focus on equity and diversity in the nursing profession when we should never be distracted by this but always vigilant that it is about delivering health services. I will use an example that will probably upset some people. I have never heard gender being referred to so much as since I have been in this Chamber under this new administration. It seems to be applauded and talked about as if it is some great achievement all by itself. That is fine; no one is against that.

It struck me the other day when I heard someone talk about White Ribbon Day, which seemed to be more about gender than violence. It seemed to be about a movement to be celebrated rather than abhorrence of whatever gender it might be visited upon. That caused me some concern. We can easily be distracted from the real issue. I am horrified by violence in all its forms, but I would never want to be involved in something that is using such a strong concern of our community, the need to protect, to ensure we are—we seem to be characterising it as a gender issue when, first and foremost, it is a violence issue. I am not for one moment suggesting that it is not an issue that has a particular gender profile, but the issue itself is violence.

With firefighters it is about the safety and competence of the firefighter, as with teachers it is about the capacity to educate young people: Nursing is not about diversity in the workplace so that people feel good about it; it is about the delivery of quality healthcare. That is why I support the Member for Nelson, as a show of support for the need to not be distracted by these other things that take away the strong focus on the core business we are here to attend to. We must always be vigilant, not distracted, and remember the original story of the culture of the playground changing because of the other agendas, fears and phobias that are lurking around and distracting us from the core business of delivering quality care.

We talk about law and order issues. When I see a young person who clearly should be at school during school hours—they are often young men. I am fortunate I can talk to them, and I do. They are pleased for me to engage them. They genuinely think I might be questioning or threatening them, but I am not. They know me and are very pleased to engage a male. They talk about their learning experience, and their learning experience is genuinely not a happy one.

They are not happy at school. They started to lose their way in Years 3 and 4. When the magic passed they could not succeed. They failed to learn to read, and that space got filled by others. Another thing that may offend is there is a common view that the education system has been feminised; activities for young lads are not there. The manual arts centres are closed down but we have many arts and crafts. That is fine, it is easy to deliver, but it does not reach the young men particularly well.

I have been through so many facilities and toured so many schools, and I see the manual arts areas all covered up and closed down while there is art everywhere. Art is fine; I love art and I was an art teacher. But I know some of the lads I was trying to reach I could not reach through art, but I could reach them through fixing a lawn mower. That would reach them.

Let us not be distracted. The core business is to make sure we attend to the need at hand. I will be giving my support to the Member for Nelson.

**Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development):** Madam Speaker, I am honoured to support the minister in having this debate in the House. As usual the Member for Nelson brings interesting and challenging issues to this House for debate.

The minister responded on a pragmatic level about this issue. She is a very experienced educator, not only as a classroom teacher but an experienced person in educational administration and management. This is a debate about quality teachers. It must be.

The Member for Blain added an interesting dynamic by speaking about distractions. This really is about quality. The minister has embarked on a great policy journey—growing education from the building blocks of quality education and teaching, good attendance and engagement, diversity in the workforce and the strengthening of school community. The policy is very clear. It will be a great journey. I am sure it will receive bipartisan support in this House.

I want to bring a historical perspective to this debate from both a personal and professional angle. I commenced a career as an inference primary trained teacher in 1976. It was an interesting time in that intake. When I started my training there were seven women to one male in inference primary training. Out of that intake it represented around 15%. This was in the mid-1970s. There was disparity that related to far more males in secondary education. That reflected, at that time, on more of the opportunities for manual arts and technical training education. It was challenging to go in as an inference primary trained teacher,

but it was also a really great experience. At the end of the day it was not about gender; it was about delivering quality outcome.

That was how you achieved the support of your students, their parents and significant adults, and the community. It was about delivering educational outcomes. That is exactly what the minister has put to the House in this debate. I was very fortunate in my family to have three celebrated inference teachers; they were all my mother's sisters. One was an inference mistress in a leafy suburb of Sydney. The other was a celebrated teacher in a Catholic mission school in Papua New Guinea. She served there for many years, returned home after independence and taught in Mount Isa. The other sister was a celebrated inference primary senior who served her career in the United Kingdom.

Those three particularly strong women taught me just as much as the Armidale Teachers' College taught me about inference primary training. Everything I did was based on rhythm, rhyme, movement, song and dance. If you adhere to that teaching methodology you were in the game and really on the road to achieving the outcomes of a good educational environment for your students. This is not only in regard to the cognitive aspects of their learning but also the really important premise that you need to have the students beat you to the school gate the following day. With good, exciting and enhanced inference teaching, that was the case. I was very privileged to see that roll out through my early teaching career in the NT.

The minister said there is no silver bullet to this debate, and whilst I agree, my best memories were in silver bullets. They are the best memories by far of my teaching career in terms of the outcomes that were generated, in a collegial sense, in relation to a region of teachers on pastoral property schools in the Barkly. They were all engaged and significantly committed; they achieved great attendance, engagement, participation, community involvement and those important educational outcomes.

The 1970s were a period of awakening for a generation that spoke out about domestic and family violence, and about child abuse. It was resonating in the early 1970s that we needed to speak out. There had been decades in which a lot of these inherent problems in our society had been closeted. I am privileged to be part of a generation that saw that articulation of the problem and that speaking out.

That directly related to a feeling from male colleagues that maybe inference primary teaching was not for them. They seriously picked up on that movement in society that challenged—which created, in my opinion, a fear. Secondary teachers progressed and male colleagues progressed in that profession, but I personally know colleagues who re-trained, dropped out and went on to other careers.

An interesting anecdote around that was colleagues that chose to stay in the conservative confines of the east coast—and I will talk about the south coast of NSW. By the time we got to the 1990s there were significant changes in family dynamics, and there was a rise in family breakdown and divorce rates. This was documented over a number of decades.

By the 1990s in Sydney, for example, there were family breakdowns and divorce; because the real estate values were so lucrative, the divorce settlement allowed one spouse to separate and purchase another house. What it reflected—and this is anecdotal evidence from friends and colleagues—was a population increase of single parent families, generally single mothers, in the smaller coastal towns on the south coast of New South Wales.

There were male children growing up without a positive male role model in the family. In those schools there was a majority of female teachers in the primary section. The issue the Member for Nelson is concerned about was compounded, and you saw that connected to an increase in the need for good behavioural and emotional support.

There was no doubt that these families coming out of the city and resettling in rural environments were bringing significant challenges with them in the family context. That related to kids in single parent families, particularly male children, who were in the process of trying to readjust to their new social circumstances. I found that very interesting—keeping in contact with colleagues and friends who were living through that when I chose something completely different.

Education was one of the agents of change that needed to reflect the changes in family structure. Consequently, the Member for Nelson's motion resonates with me in that respect. The minister's speech—which I have read—is a pragmatic movement about quality teachers. As the Member for Blain said, it cannot be distracted from that. Any distraction would detract from the outcomes we are looking for.



The new policy initiatives—and I commend the minister and this Labor government—relate to one aspect of attracting, retaining and supporting quality teachers. It also relates to very targeted educational investment. You will see in the *Hansard* and hear in this debate how our minister has moved very swiftly in addressing some serious inequities, which were created, in a contemporary sense, over the last four years, to allow school communities to start to rebuild the diversity they know they need. I am sure on the south coast of New South Wales in the 1990s those schools were probably going through similar challenges about good coherent school communities making decisions on how to address this new diversity that was emerging in those rural coastal villages and towns.

One of the initiatives from our minister and the Labor government that will be interesting to watch is the rebuilding of community capacity in the community-led schools model. That will enable the school community to take a good, close look at their needs and analyse and articulate them on a place-based approach. The strengthening and building of what our government policy reflects is the local decision-making. That allows opportunity. We are seeing a significant return in the equity of education, with our minister not only focused on the salaries budget and the human resources but also the infrastructure advancements which will be celebrated across the Northern Territory over the next four years. We see the community-led schools model attracting those resources that are most appropriate for improving the educational outcomes in their community.

Member for Nelson, you are a great volunteer. I have seen that in Tennant Creek. You have travelled all the way to Tennant Creek to show outstanding commitment. I know a bit about your life, having worked with you over the years, and I know you do a lot of volunteering in the community. That is really the secret; that is the crux of the school community that reflects our generation and that we have missed. This will come up in my contribution to Madam Speaker's debate later about show societies and good, positive community volunteering.

The community-led schools model, the concentration on diversity and the mantra on community volunteers coming into schools—that is where you can really go after the gender balance. I had a good experience with this in Tennant Creek because of one of my sons gave me no choice. He put me into a corner; I tried to back out but it did not happen.

Over eight years we ran a junior rugby league development project. Funnily enough, the heartland of AFL is the Northern Territory, and I celebrate AFL of course, but there is something about rugby league; it is in my blood, it is my culture and passion. When you bring out a rugby league ball, tackling bag and pads and those sorts of drills, you tend to attract males with the highest support needs who are looking for opportunities to legally take out their aggression in a public place.

If you are smart and you can craft that properly, you deliver some significant returns. In Tennant Creek it was directly linked to trying to stabilise, engage and support these complex-needs students within the town community. Not only were you offering them good physical and sporting outcomes but you were also doing lots of liaison and negotiation with their teachers about keeping them in school, keeping them engaged and preventing disengagement.

There were new levers to use and they were very powerful. It is something I promote with a lot of our young teachers when I have that conversation opportunity, which is, what do you do outside of school? What did you do before you came to the Territory? If you hear, 'Well I am actually quite accomplished at softball', then my advice is to start a softball team. Engage with your students outside of the school environment because you have the opportunity of developing good, positive relationships with your students, their families and the significant adults in their life, and to understand them on a holistic platform. I guarantee that will improve the behaviour, support and management strategies within your classes.

The more we can do this, the better outcomes we will achieve. I am sure the Member for Nelson knows this because of his extensive and generous volunteering. The Teach for Australia initiative the minister spoke about was good to read in the minister's presentation and to hear the anecdotes regarding that. I can vouch for that in terms of specifics of a gender balance story that is inherent in the Member for Nelson's motion. Teach for Australia has had a great concentration on Tennant Creek.

I have met some great teachers over the years who have come through this program, and there is certainly a balance of male and female teachers. I have met some great young and not-so-young men who have come in through this project. It is good to hear the minister speak about that. It relates directly to the Member for Nelson's motion about the gender issue. It is delivering improved outcomes in the maturity that comes with a Teach for Australia candidate and their life experience, often having studied and practised, or studied and are converting to that important education component of their tertiary degree.

Things are happening; there are some great opportunities. The minister is clear about the policy and its intent from Michael Gunner's Labor government. I support the amendment. It is important to have a debate on ensuring we focus on the real issues and outcomes that will be delivered through quality education in the Northern Territory.

I am pleased to see the advertising campaign. When you come from a town like Tennant Creek, a town working closely with the Minister for Tourism and Culture to turn around economic outcomes, you cannot do better than word of mouth and a human story that says, 'I stopped in Tennant Creek. I went to the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre'—which will be significantly enhanced under this government's policy—I visited Battery Hill; I went to the old telegraph station. I stopped at Lake Mary Ann. I visited the old hospital museum. I went to the historic Catholic church, the longest church in Australia, and I stayed two nights'.

When that story is told around the campfire at Newcastle Waters the following night, or Devils Marbles, Taylor Creek or beyond—that is where the real difference will be made. The minister is focused on the iconic arts trail, the Territory story. It will be word of mouth that will be the most powerful advocacy.

To all members in the House, we can do the same thing in supporting quality teachers in the Northern Territory. I can vouch for that because at one stage I had five members of the McCarthy family in education in the Barkly. I was planning a coup actually, but then they deserted me after a number of years. They went off to these far-flung places such as Byron Bay and Sydney.

It is a powerful mechanism. We can support the minister, Territory children and the Northern Territory Education department by ensuring our powerful message, talking up the Territory and advocacy for bringing people to the Northern Territory, will make a difference.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for bringing this motion before the House. Just two weeks ago we celebrated International Women's Day. I spent a lot of time attending events that championed gender equality, having conversations with women about the victories and challenges women, over generations, have faced on the journey towards gender parity.

I think this motion comes at a really appropriate time when we are all thinking about gender equality and related issues. It is refreshing to see the topic brought into the Chamber. I am pleased with your initiative, Member for Nelson; it is good we are debating this, but I am more pleased to see the minister's amendment.

My contribution to the Member for Nelson's motion is focused on the importance of increasing diversity in all industries dominated by the opposite sex and the value of broader diversity in every industry, not just education. Across Australia and the Northern Territory there are many industries and professions that demonstrate a proportionately high number of men or women in what we think of as traditionally male or female dominated industries. From the contributions we have heard today it has been fairly consistent that teaching is one of those traditional 'female dominated industries'.

Bryan G Nelson, author and founding director of Men Teach, an organisation aimed at increasing the number of men working with young children in the United States, says there appears to be three principle barriers to men entering the teaching profession. The Member for Nelson and the minister went over them, but I will touch on them briefly.

The first barrier is stereotyping gender roles. Teaching and most professions centred on the care of children are traditionally seen as female, and this may act as a deterrent to men who may otherwise be interested in the profession. Another perceived barrier that Mr Bryan G Nelson expresses is a lower pay and lower status associated with teaching compared with other industries in which men traditionally dominate. The third attribute Mr Nelson describes is a perceived fear among some men that there could be a negative stigma attached to them when working with young people.

One solution to eroding these perceived barriers is to have more men in teaching, dispelling some of those stereotypes and fears, and being positive role models for other prospective male teachers.

Richard Ingersoll, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said that with so few men currently teaching, other men may be less inclined to view it as a desirable option; he describes this as a snowball effect. It is possible that by diversifying any given profession and widening the number of people who are reached by role models to aspire to do the same job—my hope is that this strategy is not only for teaching

but all professions in which stereotypes and perceptions are a barrier to men or women entering the profession.

The latest annual report to come out on the Northern Territory Department of Education shows that men represent only 23.2% of classroom teachers in the Northern Territory, which is slightly higher than the national average for primary schools, 19.1%, but lower than the national average for secondary schools, 41.6%.

Within the teaching profession there is also a very clear gender disparity in regard to subjects being taught and the professional advancement of men and women. The latest annual Council for Educational Research teacher survey for 2014 indicated that in Australia about three-quarters of physics teachers are male. In addition, chemistry, computing, IT and mathematics have more male teachers than female teachers. On the other hand, only one-third of English teachers and less than one-quarter of language teachers are men.

Although men are represented as a lower proportion of the teaching profession overall, relative to their numbers they are overrepresented in the higher-paid and higher-level positions within schools. Across Australia, the latest Staff in Australia's Schools survey for 2013 shows that 42.5% of principals at the primary school level are men, and 58.3% of principals at the secondary level are men. This indicates an even more acute problem than the relatively low numbers of male teachers overall.

We have more men than women teaching and role modelling in sciences and maths, and a higher proportion of men teaching at the secondary level than the primary level. There are more women at the primary school level and teaching languages and arts. Research also shows that men in the teaching profession are rising to the top jobs and becoming leaders in schools, whereby the female teachers, despite their numbers, are staying in the classroom.

Already, at a young age, children are seeing leaders and subject matters in schools divided by gender. They see the pay gap and the factors that lead to it at work. It raises a question of unconscious bias and what role that might have in impeding gender parity in the future. Although it is important to recognise that we could all benefit from more males becoming teachers, role models and gender barrier breakers, which is very important, we must also acknowledge that we would benefit from more women teaching in the fields of science, technology and maths, and more men teaching at the primary school level and taking on languages and the arts.

It is also really important that we create pathways for women to rise to the top of the teaching profession. It is important that children see diversity amongst their teachers at all school levels, from catering, cleaning and grounds staff, administration, human resources, departmental heads, leadership teams and principals. You might ask why. Yesterday I happened to be reading a gender and politics research paper by Menzies. On page 10 there is a quote from Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC. It is in relation to increasing the number of women in Defence. He says:

*The reason we're doing this is for capability. We need to be the best Defence Force we can be and we're not going to do that unless we address the gender imbalance that we have.*

That is, diversity:

*So for me personally, I'm keen for the Australian Defence Force to become more diverse because diversity enhances capability. It's been my experience diverse teams challenge each other, they see the widest range of risks, are able to come up with creative solutions to those issues that arise.*

That is a fantastic quote that encapsulates what we are talking about today. There are numerous examples of gender disparity in many industries, where both men and women are not represented or rewarded equally. We know women across Australia, on average, earn 17.3% less than men, and in the Northern Territory that gap is even wider at 20%.

Of all the working women in the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy, 56% are in the administration stream and only 24% of men in the department are in the same stream. Only 13% of nurses in the Northern Territory are men. There are disproportionately more women in part-time and casual employment. The 2016 Senate inquiry into women's economic security in retirement shows that women retire with about 46.6% of the superannuation of men, which is another important issue that needs to be addressed in order to achieve gender parity.

I could go on with many examples; these are patterns that repeat across sectors. It is not inconceivable that if gender parity is role modelled during a child's formative years it will have a positive influence and create opportunities for the future. My research has shown that it is not so important to have excellent male role models as being specifically gender tied, but that children need strong positive role models, full stop.

I am glad the Member for Nelson brought this motion before the House. I am even more supportive of the government's amendment. The opposition will be supporting the amendment.

I would like to see more initiatives that encourage both men and women to undertake and excel as leaders in sectors that are traditionally dominated by the opposite sex as a wider strategy to achieve gender parity. I also think it is just as important that recruitment remains merit based. A number of us have mentioned that today. We need to continue to employ the highest-achieving graduates and keep them in the Territory, and encourage young women to pursue trades, agriculture, mining and technology-based professions.

In respect of the original motion, we need more men to choose teaching because they see it as an important and viable career for the future, and have those men move into non-traditional subjects and be involved at primary school level. To the same degree we need to encourage and help women through supportive and flexible work arrangements, mentoring professional development opportunities and other proactive measures to move into teaching non-traditional subjects and progress within their profession to the higher-paid leadership positions.

Madam Speaker, the issue of gender parity is complex but there is much we can do. I am supportive of any initiative that works towards gender parity. Diversifying the role models that children have at a young age is a step in the right direction. To that end, I support the motion.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, to echo the Education minister, the recruitment and retainment of the right teachers in Territory schools is critical to ensuring the educational success of Territory students. This is why I support the amended motion put forward by the Minister for Education. I believe this amendment will support the sentiment of the motion put forward by the Member for Nelson, whilst keeping the recruitment process fair and equitable.

As a former teacher, I want the selection process to be that the best person is selected for the job and not driven by a choice based on gender. I understand the points made by the Member for Nelson that attracting more males to the profession would create a balance of gender in schools, and I acknowledge the motion he has put to the House.

As the Education minister stated, schools are microcosms of our society. I hope the education workforce in our schools reflects our society and communities as much as possible. While I agree with the sentiment of this motion and I support increasing the number of male teachers in schools, as the Minister for Education said, our recruitment strategies must focus on selecting the best candidates possible based on their merit. This will ensure Territory students and schools have the best teachers selected based on the quality of their practice and not their gender.

Whilst there are some deficits in male positions in schools, on the flipside there has been growth in terms of women leadership roles within Territory schools. This is becoming more of a common occurrence across the NT. It is inspiring to see the GENIUS collection of schools, which all boast female principals. GENIUS is the group of schools that collaborate in the southeast region of the Arnhem electorate.

Groote Eylandt, Numbulwar, Bickerton Island and Umbakumba make up the self-named GENIUS collection of schools which all have female principals. They are Tania Kolomitsev and Stephanie Blitner based on Groote, Cheryl Dwyer in Numbulwar, Sarah Rowe on Bickerton Island and Irene Singleton at Umbakumba. It is reassuring to know these women are not in their positions because of their gender but because they are the best person for the job. There have been some great male principals in the past, and I acknowledge their hard work. It is very difficult in some of these remote schools.

Whether someone is male, female or transgender, the best teacher should have the job. The right people must be selected for the job no matter where the school is. There are many demands in working in a school, and at the end of the day the best thing to know is that you have a quality staff behind you, being the assistant teachers and support staff who are able to support the students with the best educational opportunities available to them.

Schools are responsible for this recruitment and merit selection process. It is up to the school to select the best person for the job. Labor's \$124m four-year education package will give Territory schools a much-

needed boost to help recover from the drastic cuts suffered under the CLP government. The Education minister stated she is a big supporter of the department's permanency project, which aims to increase the proportion of the workforce in ongoing positions, specifically school-based positions in the Territory. I also support this push to get more permanent staff attracted to and retained in the NT.

This government has been very clear about our support for teachers and having the best teachers in Territory schools. I acknowledge the motion from the Member for Nelson; however, I support the amendment proposed by the Education minister in order to strengthen this motion.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I was not planning to speak on this motion, but after hearing some of the history I thought I should add to it. I support the motion the Member for Nelson put forward, while I also support the amendment.

When you look at the number of teachers we have at the moment who are male, and that gender split, it makes you think over your own life and how things have changed. The minister mentioned there may have been a difference 50 years ago. After the war some of the returned servicemen were offered the opportunity to become teachers. They were also offered an opportunity to become doctors, and the first family doctor I had was one of them. I sincerely hope he had more than 12 months training. I relied on him.

It made me think about my own family. I will not say how old I was, but I remember getting my watch and it was 1962 in a town called Frederickton, which is north of Kempsey. My grandfather was the principal of that school. He was one of the returned servicemen. That was the first connection I had with male teachers. I went to a Catholic school in Griffith, which had nuns, so all women. When I finished there I went to a Marist Brothers school, so they were all men. With the number of people going into religion nowadays, the numbers have varied there a bit.

About 50 years ago it was a reasonably even split. We need to have a look and see why the numbers have changed. When we moved to Darwin in the 1980s, my wife decided that because our four sons were at school it was a great opportunity for her to go back to university and become a teacher. This educated me in a lot of things, including cooking. She did her degree at Darwin university. She got a scholarship for her last two years, and that was a fantastic incentive. It is something we need to ensure we continue.

The number of males in her group who went through university—there were about 40 in that year and, from memory, there were two males; one finished. I do not know how many finished the whole way through, but there was not an incentive there, or I am not too sure what the disincentive is for men going into the teaching profession.

My brother-in-law, Rhonda's brother, is also a teacher. He has just retired and is in Sydney. It is interesting that there is an even split out of a family; there were two girls and one male, and one female and one male are teachers. Our own family has four sons; one of them did one year at university to become a teacher and then decided he could not handle children. He left and did something else. He got married and had children anyway, so he was unable to avoid it.

Daphne Read was mentioned today for her involvement with schools and Somerville. She also has a lot to do with swimming. The other teacher who needs mention is Miriam Rose; she was the first Indigenous teacher. For all the men in here who walk up the corridor on the other side, there is a painting at the end and that painting was done by Miriam Rose. She said, 'Whatever you do, do not stand in front of that with a woman because you will fall in love with her'. That is a warning she gave me.

The Member for Nelson also discussed some of the subjects that have dropped off, and something I remember doing at school is woodwork. I am not sure how many places teach that anymore. I think they are the sort of things that male teachers can help with. There is a female teacher at Taminmin who does maintenance on vehicles, so there is equality there.

This is a motion that needs strong support. Gender equity in every field of work needs to be looked at. The population is more or less a 50/50 split and that should be there in every field. As the Member for Arnhem said, we have to get the best for the job, but that means you have to attract the applicants. We need to look at how we can attract more men and have them interested in becoming teachers. I do not agree with setting a target; I would rather have some other KPIs for it, but that is my belief. I will be supporting the motion and the amendment.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, one of the disadvantages of having my left arm tied up is I cannot write notes. If I use my right arm it looks like I have been to grade two writing school. I have tried to

remember a few things. I thank you all for participating. I have a different opinion on the words 'building a diverse workforce' because I see it slightly differently. I will not worry whether this goes to a vote or not because I put it up as a general discussion.

I see diverse workforces as more or less being—yes, you might have a great number of Lebanese, Aboriginal or Canadian people, whoever is in your community—that you have male and female members of that teaching staff. I make that distinction in that diversity. We need to promote teaching as a good occupation. To some extent I have always regarded teaching as a vocation. It is a bit like nursing. You are a teacher; you were meant to be a teacher. I see it more in that way.

I enjoyed some of the contributions, especially the Member for Arnhem's; thank you for your contribution. The Member for Barkly always gives me a pat on the back. I do not deserve it. I enjoy umpiring, by the way. If I can get this arm fixed—I will not be here for the rest of the day I am taking this off to the hospital. It is not doing very well. If I get it fixed I will be back with the Clontarf people. If you ever want to see inspirational men, they are the Clontarf people. They are fantastic.

I have a daughter involved in Clontarf in Canberra. I hope she is not listening. She is back in Darwin now. She worked for the Prime Minister's department. She was always cranky about Clontarf because she said there was not enough effort put into women's sport. My understanding is that it is better now than it was. When I told her that the other day, she said, 'and about time too'.

Getting back to Clontarf from a point of view of male role models, I was very impressed when I went to Tennant Creek and saw the reactions of some of those young boys. As society changes, I agree with the Member for Barkly that boys need a bit of biff. I am not saying biff in a bad way. They need rough and tumble. They want to climb a tree. They will probably end up like me.

If you start to withdraw the ability for people to express themselves as they are, as young males, you are inhibiting their growth. They will hurt themselves at times. They will fall off the bike. I was petrified the first time I got on a bike, but you took a few falls and that is how it was.

I came from an Aussie Rules background, but I am ecumenical these days. I referee soccer and I am a patron of the Bears and Swamp Dogs. I love them all. When I was young the closest thing I got to rugby was British Bulldogs. My mum was always a bit cranky when I came home and she found my jumper was twice the size it was before I went to school. We would all line up like Braveheart on the end of the hill. We would all charge down and you had to tag or catch anyone. They were the things boys enjoyed.

Like the Member for Daly I was brought up by nuns and mainly religious people. Although laypeople were moving in, they were all men. I only have good memories. There is so much said about the bad things in Catholic schools, and it is a disgrace. Do not get me wrong, I am ashamed of what has happened. But I remember teachers I would walk over hot coals for. They went the extra mile teaching me how to do math and geography. They would take the classes after school. They were fantastic. I thank the nuns. They were the joeys. I had a picture here last night of Mary MacKillop.

My aunty was a teacher; she taught geography and loved geology. She taught all over Australia, from Glen Innes, Surrey Hills in Melbourne, and Wentworth in New South Wales to Kalgoorlie-Boulder in Western Australia. She was a teaching nun. She would have joined at 18 and she died at about 98. There is some teaching in my family as well. We all love teachers; well maybe some people do not love them because they got clipped behind the ear, but I would not be here today if it was not for good teachers. We should honour and promote that profession.

There are opportunities through Teach for Australia. I heard about it in the briefing, but I had not followed it up. Older people, male or female, who have other experiences—maybe not the qualifications that you might find academically through a university, but life experiences—and are seen to be mature people with good knowledge should find ways into the teaching profession. It does not mean you take them in. I fully understand the minister saying they still have to be top quality teachers. You will get someone who has been working for 30 years in a company and might look good, but if they do not have the ability to teach then that is not good at all.

The other issue I am troubled about is that the Member for Arnhem said, and I understand, that we need to get the best teachers based on their ability to teach, rather than based on their gender. But that is the problem I have when I hear that we will do gender balance work with Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I agree that we should be employing people in Police, Fire and Emergency Services based on their ability to do the job.

We should not make the job any less. We should say, 'That is the job. If you are a fireman or firewoman, you will have to climb a ladder, carry things on your back and put out the fire'. That is all you should have to worry about. It does not matter whether you are male or female. Can you do the job? There are two different perspectives on employment. It is a slightly different one for education compared to Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I would rather they were all the same.

There are some jobs which will always have a gender bias because there has to be for privacy reasons or whatever. There will not be many, but there will be some jobs in which you cannot avoid that. Nursing has been one for years. It is unusual to run into a bloke and ask what he does for a quid and he says, 'I am a nurse'. It is not to say we should not promote it. It is good. It is a profession or a vocation.

I will not go on too much longer. I raised this to raise the need for more debate on this issue. It is funny, much of this has come from female teachers I have spoken to. They have a concern that there is a whole school of female teachers, with only one man. They are concerned that there is an imbalance in the school and it is not healthy. We need role models and someone who can go boom, boom, boom but who is also a proper teacher. Finding that balance is important as well.

Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions. I forgot to thank the Member for Spillett. I appreciate all your comments. It has also given us an opportunity to thank teachers in general. I can nearly put two words together now ...

**A member:** Just.

**Mr WOOD:** Just. But, of course, unlike the Member for Johnston, my speeches are never boring.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

### **MOTION Budget Priorities**

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls on the government in the upcoming 2017-18 budget to fulfil its election commitments, manage our finances responsibly and govern in the interest of all Territorians.

Last week I indicated to the government that I would move this motion, and I said it was an opportunity for many of the backbenchers to put their ideas forward to the Treasurer on what they might like to see included in the upcoming budget. This is to get them involved in debate during General Business. I was pleased today to hear the Member for Arnhem speak. That was very good, and I hope it is an indication that we will have more of this in here today.

I was also very happy when the Member for Katherine finally responded to General Business last week. The only trouble was it was in adjournment. An adjournment is not a time of debate. The Chief Minister said he sees this as an opportunity for opposition and Independents, but it is not; that is a myth. General Business is the opportunity for anyone in this House to bring any business forward. It is a perfect opportunity for backbenchers to bring items forward that they want to have debated in this House. It is their opportunity to represent their constituents ahead of their party. They are elected by their constituents to represent them, and that is what they should be doing.

I will give you an example. On 7 May 2014 I moved my first ever GBD motion as a government backbencher. I will read that motion:

*I move that this House expresses its support for the investigation into the feasibility of a gas pipeline which connects the Northern Territory with the Australian eastern seaboard.*

What has come of that motion? Some of the backbenchers need to think about it. We now have a pipeline plan, a proponent, a route—assuming they will get their ducks in a row. I raise this because I am proud of it, and I want to demonstrate the power that backbenchers can have if they have the gumption to act and speak up during General Business.

During the first session of this parliament we also moved a motion seeking support from the government to get whole-of-government support for the alcohol policy, to work together to implement measures that we

believed would help bring down crime rates. We did not get that support. That was a show of our solidarity, which should have included all the elected members representing Territorians. How disappointed was I? The first olive branch was extended to try to improve this parliament, how it works and how it represents the people, and it was thrown out.

I worry that the members opposite are unaware of what General Business really is. I worry that in private, as well as in the Chamber yesterday, the Chief Minister is misleading people about what General Business day is. It is not exclusively for opposition and Independent members. It is for all business that is not Government Business—which has not gone through Cabinet.

Just as Question Time is the Labor backbenchers opportunity to ask questions of the government ...

**Ms FYLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I do not have the number and I apologise, but I question the use of the word 'misleading'.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Opposition Leader, perhaps you should refer to the government and not a person if you want to talk about 'misleading'.

**Mr HIGGINS:** I withdraw 'misleading'.

Just as Question Time is the Labor backbenchers' opportunity to ask questions of the government though the ministerial staff may tell you what to ask, General Business day is also your opportunity to raise and debate in this House any matters important to you or your electorate. It is the proper time to do it.

I have also stood up in General Business and raised the issue of the Environment Centre and Dr Stuart Blanch. He was criticised by a previous minister of the previous government. I stood up and made the point that everyone in the House should listen to every opinion and involve themselves in every debate. On this side we implore the Labor backbenchers to start speaking out and stop being taken for granted by their colleagues in the government. That is the end of the preamble.

What does the opposition want to see in the next budget? We want to see three things; we want the government to keep its promise to Territorians, to manage our finances responsibly and to govern in the interests of all Territorians.

The Gunner Labor government was elected on the back of a pledge to create 12 000 to 14 000 jobs a year. The opposition is desperate to see what government is doing to create these jobs. I wanted to ask the Chief Minister that yesterday when he said there is an Internet site that has the CVs of all the people out of work. Does that website also contain the job description of any of those 12 000 to 14 000 jobs?

The unemployment rate has jumped from 3.5% to 4% on the government's watch. How the government was going to create these jobs was always a bit fuzzy and lacked detail, but a lot more needs to be done than tinkering at the edges of the Buy Local program and resuscitating the Home Improvement Scheme, which you stopped by delaying—sorry, reprioritising—infrastructure spending. Creating 12 000 to 14 000 jobs is what the opposition wants from the government, as well as 36 000 to 42 000 over the next three years.

We want the government to manage our finances responsibly. The CLP's 2016–17 budget focused on stimulating the economy with substantial investment in infrastructure—the infrastructure budget that still stands today. The \$1.7bn infrastructure spend was aimed at creating job opportunities while improving public facilities across the Territory. It was investing in strategic infrastructure for future generations of Territorians.

The 2016–17 budget also provided additional resources for frontline services, diversification of the economy, and encouraging private investment in the Territory. The 2016–17 budget was also putting downward pressure on the cost of living through the continuation of the Sport Voucher Scheme, the Back-to-School payment scheme and the early childhood services subsidy. The 2016–17 budget invested directly in services and infrastructure to support Indigenous Territorians and provided initiatives that focused on economic empowerment and delivery of essential infrastructure and key government services to regional towns and remote communities throughout the Territory.

What have we seen since then? The Gunner Labor government cancelled the successful Home Improvement Scheme, and then, after a four-month hiatus, resuscitated the measure. The Gunner Labor government contributed \$20m in the last budget for this stimulation package, re-announcing so-called job



creating election commitments like Warren Park and half a police station in Palmerston, neither of which will create any real jobs for years to come. They banned a national anchor tenant, Dan Murphy's, at Darwin International Airport, sending a clear message to them, a dozen other businesses and at least nine construction companies which expressed an interest in the project that the NT is not open for business.

Now we have yet another review, another expert panel and another considerable time delay before this government makes a decision. Just when you thought no more harm could be done to the private sector investment climate—with legal action being taken by Dan Murphy's against this government for making regulations that were beyond the power of government for an unauthorised and improper purpose.

The government imposed a fracking moratorium and set up an independent inquiry, which will not report until December 2017. At the rate this government makes decisions there will not be one until well into 2018. This again sends the message that the NT is not open for business.

The government needs to focus on wealth creation. This needs to be a whole-of-government approach to have all policy settings aligned to enhance incentives to take risks and create opportunities, rewards and hope. The government needs a big vision for the Territory, a vision that talks about strategic productivity enhancing and game-changing infrastructure that captures the imagination of Territorians and the nation.

The government needs a plan to grow the population, a better plan than the two half-day public holidays. Those are some of the bigger Territory-wide issues that I would like to see prioritised in the budget. I was giving members the opportunity to speak on projects in their electorates, and I have not even mentioned the Daly yet. I want to see a few things occur in the Daly. If the Treasurer has a pen ready I can give her a list. I would like to see the sealing of the Ooloo Road continue. The minister for primary production must be pushing that in Cabinet; I hope he is. He told me he is, but I just hope he is.

The other thing I would like to see is the end of Barramundi Drive done. That is for the fishermen. Five kilometres of this road have been done, and we have a public boat ramp at the end of it. We have one kilometre of bog, so we need that sealed as well. While we are talking about Dundee, let us look at Javelin Road and Mermaid Circuit. Dundee Creek's Facebook page shows that they are constantly asking questions. Can you get up and down Mermaid Drive? Can you get across Rocky Creek? We need a few of these things done.

While we are talking about boat ramps, there is a whole stack of unmaintained boat ramps in the Daly. I would like to see some money put aside for upgrading and maintaining them.

If anyone goes to Batchelor or Adelaide River and speaks to some of the people who are older than me, you will hear them constantly saying how the senior people in those areas have no public transport. How do they get to the hospital? How do they get medical services? I would like the government to have a close look at transport for some of the people who are further out of town and how they get in and out of hospitals. They have clinics there, they get referrals, but they do not turn up at the specialist appointments because they do not have transport. It costs the government money anyway, so potentially there could be savings.

The Cox Peninsula Road also needs an upgrade, that is, Hardy and Berry Creek. People do not know where they are. Hardy Creek is on one side of Berry Springs school, and Berry Creek is on the other side.

If you write to any of the ministers and say, 'Minister, can you tell me where the cyclone shelter is for the people of Dundee?' They are told it is Berry Springs school. During the financial crisis we threw all this money around with schools. This is what worries me with what is happening at the moment; they upgraded Berry Springs school and put in a cyclone shelter. The only problem is that as soon as it starts to rain, Berry Creek and Hardy Creek flood. So if you are at school you cannot get home, and if you want to go to the cyclone shelter you cannot get to it.

One of the constant problems I have is with regard to water, and the minister for Environment knows the issues of water. It is about reticulated water. We have a lot of blocks that are developed in the Southport area, not just Berry Springs in general. There is no reticulated water. These people have to cart water in trailers, and we would like to have that looked at. There is the same problem at Wagait.

We have a whole stack of intersections that have had an increase in traffic. We have put some lighting on them, but we need some turn lanes. That is on Finn Road and the Cox Peninsula Road. If people drive there during night-time they will see how dangerous it is. We have had lights installed but I am not sure

when we are getting the electricity installed, so the Treasurer might like to find out when we will get the electricity. We do have electricity in rural areas, so that would be good to see.

I have already mentioned Berry and Hardy Creek and the flooding problem in the Berry Springs school, but that also raises the question about Dundee and the cyclone shelter. There are about 400 to 500 people residing in Dundee, but there is no cyclone shelter and they have no chance of getting to Berry Springs school, which would be about 90 kilometres drive, until we get the bridge across Rocky Creek. Can we make sure that gets done as well, Treasurer?

Some estimates are being done on this because we asked for them. It is about \$40m, but now we can spread it over a few years. This is in regard to the banjo connections. For the people who do not know what a banjo connection is, you use these when you drive down the highway and see water metres sticking out of the pipes. That is where people get billed for their water, from that point.

If their pipes go under the line—it was a cheap way back in the 1980s and 1990s when they ran all these lines to all these properties. They are about 25 years old, and a lot of the Rural B Pipe that they used at that time is starting to downgrade; plus, we do a lot of work on the highway and if any of these are under the highway they then get broken.

It is uneconomical for these people to fix them; they have to pay a fortune to get the highway dug up. We need to start to address that problem. There is an estimate of around \$40m. I am not asking for that \$40m up front; \$10m would do for starters, or \$4m every year for 10 years, but we really need to make some sort of commitment to start to address that problem.

This has been a somewhat free range discussion, but what the opposition would like is some discussion, debate and input from the backbenchers. This is an opportunity for them to stand up and ask the Treasurer for some of the things I have been speaking about. Like the tradies scheme I am sure the government will eventually wake up to itself that building the private sector is the only way we can diversify our economy and create jobs. It is the only way the government will be able to create those 12 000 to 14 000 jobs per year that they promised; and that is a promise it was elected on.

From this side of the House, we will support the government any time and it makes a good case to manage our finances better to grow the private investment. I will leave it at that. I am sure all the backbenchers have a list as long as mine, if not longer, and that is not the complete list, Treasurer. I can give you the full version rather than the abridged version.

**Ms MANISON (Treasurer):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this very important General Business item in which he has called on the Assembly and the government in the upcoming 2017-18 budget to fulfil its election commitments, manage our finances responsibly and govern in the interests of all Territorians. The government will support this motion; it is a very sensible motion and is in line with the expectations of Territorians.

Before I go into some notes I have prepared, I will speak about a few items the Leader of the Opposition raised, particularly in regard to General Business day. I am a very big fan of yours, Member for Daly, and I got to spend a lot of quality time with you when I was in opposition, prior to you being elevated to the Cabinet, on things like the Estimates Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the FASD Committee; we had a lot of quality time together.

One thing I found a bit out of the ordinary though was some of the tactics the government had used in the prior term, particularly for the estimates process, for example, in which there were Dorothy Dixers coming in from government members to government ministers. There were times when I wanted to say, 'Bravo. That is a good strategy to get your line up and get a good grab on the news that night, but also to get the debate where the minister wanted it to go.' But that was not usually how estimates worked nor was it in the spirit of the Estimates process of really giving the opposition and the Independents a full go ...

**Mrs Lambley:** Let us see how you go.

**Ms MANISON:** I do not think we will be asking each other Dorothy Dixers, Member for Araluen.

**Mrs Lambley:** Really?

**Ms MANISON:** No. I will be mortified if Caucus members come in—spinner off we go. It is just not my style. The Chief Minister was very sincere in what he said yesterday about this being General Business day. We

have an opposition of crossbenchers with five fiercely independent Independents. Yes? The Member for Araluen is agreeing. You all have agendas in the electorates you are representing and your interests, and this is your time to be able to get what you feel is important on the agenda of the parliament for debate.

I do not want to see a time where—bless them, there were some people in the previous government who had an amazing capacity to fill time, and they did a very good job of it. I learned a lot from the previous Member for Sanderson; he was the master of filling time. Sometimes the previous Member for Fong Lim would come in and have a spray. Sometimes I was entertained; other times I was horrified. I will never forget—I keep coming back to it, it will always burn in my memories—the Tinker Bell contribution to debate on Nightcliff Island—the Tinker Bell phone, unicorns, Peter Pan. Read it on *Hansard*. It was quite a contribution.

It is important to respect General Business time. We have a fantastic, passionate Caucus who are welcome to make contributions to the debate when they would like to contribute. We are also serious about ensuring you have the time you deserve to scrutinise the government and bring forward important matters to the parliament. It can be very difficult to get the items up for debate on the agenda outside of an adjournment period of the parliament when you are in opposition and on the cross benches. It is important to place that on the record.

I want to highlight the request list you had in regard to the budget. It brings to the attention of everybody in the parliament the deficits across the Northern Territory, which are far more obvious in remote electorates' roads, housing, infrastructure, health clinics and schools. It is the reality of the Northern Territory. We see significant deficits in important infrastructure. We are chipping away at it. We are having a go, but it is a challenge that presents itself in each electorate. Just because you do not sit in the government does not mean we ever neglect your constituents. We work together for outcomes. That is the spirit in which I intend to work with you as infrastructure minister and Treasurer.

Thank you for bringing it up and for having frank conversations with me about the needs of your electorate. We will try to get that information to you from the agencies to help you inform your constituents who are knocking on the door. That is a commitment we give to you.

It is an interesting time in my life. In 40 days' time I will be delivering the first budget of this government. It is a huge task. There is a lot of responsibility on my shoulders. We are focused on delivering a budget that is fiscally responsible, honours our commitments and delivers for the Territory now and into the future. Make no mistake, this budget will be delivered in the context of some significant economic and fiscal challenges, some of unprecedented proportions, for the Territory.

Territorians should feel confident that, despite the challenging set of circumstances, this government is tackling these issues head on. We are committed to delivering on our election commitments to support the economy, build and protect jobs and do what we can to restore trust in government. To understand the context of the upcoming budget, it is important to have a clear understanding of the last term of government and the pressures we feel are weighing on our fiscal outlook.

We saw a chaotic government in the last four years. It was a government which took its eye off the ball. It was more focused on infighting than getting on with the job of managing the Territory's economy. During those four years the major drivers in the economy were some major projects, in particular the Ichthys Project. We saw the rise. Those economic times translated into increased revenues across the Northern Territory Government.

The previous government had the opportunity to ride that wave when things were on the up; they had an economy on the rise with vast opportunities ahead of them. Despite having an almost perfect set of economic and fiscal circumstances, they had challenges going forward. Those challenges came from so much chaos, dysfunction and infighting. It was very difficult for them to focus on the job of governing for the Northern Territory. During those good times they failed to plan for the inevitable downturn following a record project the size of the Ichthys Project.

This year we have seen a recent commercial dispute and the impact it had on jobs, but we know we will see the movement from the construction phase to the operation phase, and that will put more pressure out there. It is important that the government is responding to that, which we are doing with a plan to support jobs.

It is also important to acknowledge that when we came to government, if you look at the pre-election fiscal outlook, we were left with debt and deficit, despite the fact the previous government sold the farm. They

sold TIO, leased the port for 99 years, sold the buses and closed the printing office. Just prior to going to the polls the pre-election fiscal outlook showed an expected deficit of \$876m. We know the debt sat at about \$2.7bn. As the Treasurer, I am sitting in this post at a time when we face some vast challenges.

The Territory's medium and long-term future is bright, and there are immense opportunities ahead. As a new government we inherited some immediate and unenviable sets of economic circumstances and a slowing economy. That is an absolute fact. In addition to that we have external forces at play that stand to deliver significant fiscal challenges to the Territory due to declining GST funding. Fifty per cent of the Northern Territory's budget is provided through the GST. This equates to \$3.3bn in the 2016-17 budget alone. Another 20% of our budget is funded through funding agreements with the Australian Government, and that leaves about 30% of the Territory's budget funded through own source revenues.

We have a small population. We deal with some of the most remotely located populations in the nation. We have the highest proportion of Indigenous Australians, and tragically, we have the highest level of disadvantage. We live with the challenging reality that we have the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy, the poorest school attendance, the most overcrowded housing, some of the largest gaps in life expectancy and some of the most appalling rates of incarceration. Our reality is that we live with challenges no other jurisdiction contends with; nonetheless, we do everything we can within our limited budgets to deal with this.

In our mid-year report we incorporated our election commitments and changes to the machinery of government and demonstrated how we are delivering on our election commitments, managing our finances responsibly and, importantly, how we are putting Territorians first. Since then we have seen the Commonwealth's Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, MYEFO, and the GST figures are alarming.

The report showed that the national GST pool would be almost \$5bn lower than estimated over the forecast period to 2019-20. The national collection pool is down, and this will have a negative impact on the Territory. When nationally people are spending less on GST items, it hurts the Territory. We have less access to those critical GST funds. Slow population growth in the Territory is also costing us. For every person who leaves the Northern Territory we lose GST funding. This is approximately \$13 000 per person.

Our annual population growth is slower than other jurisdictions; it is currently at 0.2%, and a year ago it was 0.04%, in comparison to the Australian average of 1.4%. We are behind in population, which hurts the GST share the Territory receives.

On Friday I am meeting with the nation's Treasurers at the Council of Federal Financial Relations. We have a big agenda and, frankly, the GST will be my top priority. I will work to get absolutely every cent that I can. I have some real concerns about declining GST revenue and the impact it will have on our budget going forward. It is simply no longer delivering what we need in the Territory, and there are no signs of it getting better; nonetheless, I will be putting forward the Territory's case on the strongest terms available and fighting for every cent we can get.

In coming to government we immediately hit the ground running to deliver on our election commitments to Territorians. We are delivering on our plan to support jobs, invest in kids and restore trust in government. We immediately put our plan in place to support the economy and to deliver on our election commitments. The budgetary effects of the election commitments form the baseline for the 2016-17 mid-year report.

Examples of some of the measures we incorporated include:

- looking at school resourcing and at reversing the cuts we saw to schools, and investing in teachers, support in the classrooms and delivering programs to engage kids in school
- looking at preschool resourcing
- building a new Palmerston police station
- delivering the extra 120 police that the previous government failed to do
- starting to deliver the important independent commission against corruption
- delivering immediate changes to first home owners stamp duty concessions for established homes
- reconfiguring government agencies to cut waste and duplication

- committing to an extra \$1.1bn over 10 years for remote Indigenous housing across the Territory. This is the biggest investment that any Territory government has ever made in remote Indigenous housing; we are already seeing the Room to Breathe program being fast-tracked.

In response to the concerns we heard loud and clear from businesses about the slowing economy, we also decided to fast-track \$120m of our election commitments to new infrastructure projects to support local jobs across the Territory. These were important policies that the government committed to and was able to introduce in a fiscally-responsible manner by also introducing important savings measures.

We have also implemented a range of sensible and appropriate savings measures with our changes to the machinery of government. We want to see waste and duplication removed. It is important to note that these measures are designed in such a way as to not impact the delivery of core government services, and we will see more responsible measures coming forward in the future, something that any fiscally responsible government looks at every year in the preparation of a budget.

The difference between this government and the previous government is that we are making these tough decisions. We are taking sound and responsible measures to ensure we continue delivering the important services we need in the Territory. Most importantly, what we have heard from people loud and clear are their concerns about making sure we keep people in jobs and in the Territory, and that we do everything we can to support the economy at the moment.

We are making the hard decisions while ensuring we get the balance right at a time when the community needs government to support jobs and the economy. We believe it is in the interest of the Territory to have the most private sector investment that we can get into this place, and that is what any government will strive to do. I heard the Leader of the Opposition and was heartened by his words about the sensible support that the opposition will give to good, sound private sector investment and development.

When we see our construction figures down, a slowing economy, state final demand going down—now is not a time for government to take its foot off when it comes to investment in sound stimulus and infrastructure measures, particularly when it comes to supporting jobs.

Our mid-year report was our mini-budget. It demonstrated how our election commitments will be delivered and how we will show fiscal discipline whilst not putting handbrakes on a slowing economy that needs support. Incorporating all these factors, the 2016-17 mid-year report showed that the projected fiscal deficit was little changed from the PEFO, standing at \$875m in 2016-17. Put simply, the mid-year report showed that the budgetary effect on delivering in line with our election commitments did not hurt the Territory's bottom line.

This is a government that is listening to Territorians. With that said, we did take the necessary action in November last year and announced the \$22m Immediate Works Stimulus Package to support local jobs. This package was designed to complement the previously-announced infrastructure plan supporting smaller infrastructure projects across the Territory and, until we saw that, some of the fast projects ramped up in the second half of this year.

The \$22m stimulus package was divided into \$10m for the community grants targeting community organisations, community groups and not-for-profit groups—we have had a huge uptake on those. We had \$5m for the construction sector and builders that focused on urban public housing and repairs and maintenance, making sure we bring more of those properties online. Going outside of the people on other panels, opening it up to other businesses to do the repairs and maintenance to get those houses turned over more quickly—but it is ageing stock. I think people take more pride in their home when it is nicer.

There has been a real focus on roofs, fences, bathrooms and kitchens. We all have public housing dwellings in our electorates. Some of them are pretty old. In all fairness, there are people who have been in those places for decades and have been really good tenants. They do not complain much so let us get them fixed up and make sure those houses have an even longer life span.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Ms MANISON:** There is \$5m to support the steel industry going forward—looking at great infrastructure such as bus shelters, shade structures, fencing and infrastructure within parks. There is \$2m for remote

health clinics to deliver upgrades. Together these strategic investment programs will ensure more government contracts flow through to a greater range of industries, supporting jobs in parts of the economy where we need it.

We brought back the Home Improvement Scheme bigger and better, and we took on the chin the criticism we copped for not doing it sooner. We listened and brought it back, and it was the right thing to do. The response we received with regard to that—people are encouraged to come back in, spend another \$2000 of their own money and get a \$2000 voucher. People who have not accessed it can access a \$4000 voucher by, again, matching it dollar for dollar. It is expected to generate about \$60m for the local economy and support local jobs. We have received some very strong feedback on the impacts of that. All these policy measures are providing important support to jobs and businesses in the Territory.

We also made changes to the first home owner discount for people wishing to buy an established home in the Territory, with 330 Territorians now having purchased their first home, including 141 in Darwin, 83 in Palmerston, 72 in Alice Springs, 19 in the rural area, eight in Katherine, one in Tennant Creek and one on the Tiwi Islands. They also have access to a \$10 000 home renovation grant to give them extra incentive to take the plunge and buy a home, to call the Territory home for the rest of their life and to support small business. We have had a great response to that so far.

We continued the \$1.7bn infrastructure program. I have made it a priority, as minister, to keep pressure on the department to make sure it never takes its eye off the ball in ensuring those tenders go out and that we continue to see record months of expenditure and tenders let out.

We also made changes to the Buy Local scheme to make sure we see more business flow through to Territory businesses. We have heard the difficult and frustrating stories of local businesses that cannot understand why jobs sometimes go interstate just because of a little money when the real value is having people in the Territory receive the work. We are not saying to only base tenders on spending more money simply because people are in the Territory; there is a value for money component of it, but it is a lot more targeted. We will see value for the Territory in the long run by ensuring government procurement is well honed in to support local business.

While we hear that we are getting the support for the jobs we need, we know the conditions remain challenging, nationally and at the Territory level, especially over the next 12 months. At the national level Australia continues to expand at a moderate level, led by strength in Australia's exports; however, national income and consumption growth remains subdued. This has fiscal implications.

As mentioned in the federal government's budget update, the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook shows the national pool of GST revenue will be down by \$5bn. For a small jurisdiction like the Northern Territory, which is 50% reliant on that GST pool, that will hurt. The local economic conditions are challenging at the moment. We see that private business investment and construction are lower. These factors put more pressure on own source revenue raising capacity such as payroll tax collections and so forth.

We have seen weaker prices in the housing market. That puts pressure on our capacity to generate own source revenue. We are tackling these challenges head on. We are committed to delivering on our election commitments to support jobs in the Northern Territory. At the moment that is what people need.

As Treasurer I will be doing everything I can to make sure we maximise revenue coming into the Northern Territory, manage our finances responsibly and get the balance right of ensuring we are supporting the economy, jobs and business where we need. It is a fine balance and a tough challenge but one I am taking on. I have a fantastic Cabinet team who are all committed to delivering on our election commitments. We are doing everything we can to deliver for Territorians and make fiscally-responsible decisions.

The economy needs responsible fiscal management. It is about: responding to an evolving set of economic circumstances and being pragmatic rather than being stuck on idealism, being bold and responsive when needed rather than shy and slow, and supporting businesses and jobs when they desperately need that support rather than pulling the rug out from underneath them and the economy. We have a big job ahead.

I cannot stress enough that it is also about getting the right level of confidence in how bright the future is for the Northern Territory. I do not want to say it is all doom and gloom. There are challenges but there is a bright future ahead. We try to pull the right levers in the economy to support the jobs through this period. The future is bright. We can see great investment and opportunities on the horizon. We must ensure we

keep people in the NT. We will see a transition with jobs as major projects wind down, but there are optimistic signs, such as more mines.

We will keep investing to build tourism, boost construction jobs and support small businesses. I am optimistic but I am not blind to the challenges. I am doing everything in my capacity to lobby my federal counterpart in Canberra, represent the Territory and bring back every cent I can, particularly with the GST challenges we have coming up.

There is no doubt that this will be a budget that honours our commitments to Territorians. As the Leader for the Opposition highlighted, the need is immense in every electorate. There are things we need and want done, but the bucket of money only goes so far. We will do everything we can to ensure the money is invested in maximising opportunities for the Territory, delivering more jobs and making sure we get the money out the door at the rate we need it to go whilst getting the best-possible long-term return for the Northern Territory.

There will be some challenges, but it is something that every government faces in delivering on their priorities. We are completely committed to making sure we deliver on our commitments to Territorians, that manage the budget responsibly and in the best interests of the Northern Territory. That is a key point.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this motion today. We look forward to the debate on the budget in the next sittings. I am looking forward to going to Canberra, putting the Territory's case on the table and lobbying my federal counterpart. I am really positive. We will have a budget that delivers on our commitments, is fiscally responsible and delivers for the Northern Territory.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, we have just heard the Treasurer, who has been in place for seven months, talk about the fact she will be delivering her first budget in about 40 days. That is 40 days in which we will be expectant and waiting with great anticipation for what this new government will deliver.

We have just heard a fairly bleak story about the state of finances in the Northern Territory. Although we have heard the Treasurer say that she is optimistic and she has confidence, we are also hearing very clearly that revenue is down, the proceeds from the GST are down nationally and our share of that pie will be less than what it has been in the past. No doubt expenditure by this new government will be high. What happens in that scenario? What happens, theoretically, is you either go into further debt and increase the deficit or you make cuts and reductions in some of your expenditures.

I am curious to see exactly what this new government will do. Already Central Australia experienced a cut of approximately \$27m from infrastructure projects. That happened in November when this new government undertook a reprioritisation process on infrastructure projects. They decided to defer and cut a number of projects across the Northern Territory and put in place prioritised new projects that they thought were a more important priority. It came as a great disappointment for people in Central Australia, who had a net amount of around \$27m of infrastructure project funding taken away just months after this new government came to power. It was very disappointing and put a lot more pressure on the Central Australian economy that we expected.

There were some new announcements made. They are positive. We have the new women's shelter for \$6m and the new Alice Springs Youth Facility for around \$7m. They announced \$13m of new infrastructure projects and took away a whole lot more, which was very disappointing.

This government has been slow to get the wheels turning. It is a fair comment. As an Independent member of parliament, a former Treasurer of a former government, I think things have been moving very slowly. I will refer back to some comments the Treasurer made in the first sittings of parliament, the first time this government sat in this Chamber.

We heard from the Treasurer on 26 October, when questioned about government investment in the Northern Territory she said:

*We do not have decisions right here right now. We will not make these decisions at the drop of a hat.*

She was referring to decisions on investing in the Northern Territory, and what this government would and would not do when it came to stimulating the economy and investing generally across the regions and urban areas of the Northern Territory.

She said that no decisions would be made on government infrastructure investment until after this government had held their economic summits across the Northern Territory. I believe those economic summits have not occurred yet in all of the designated places they will be held...

**Ms Purick:** They finish next week.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** They finish next week, yet we are seven months into this government. In the first sittings of parliament the Treasurer said:

*We cannot make any decisions until after the economic summits.*

They are not finished yet. This is an indication that things are moving a lot slower than they should. When you come to government you really do not know what you are in for; it is a shock the amount of information you have to absorb, the need to get across your portfolios and understand what your job is. It takes a long time.

Having said that, this government had four years to prepare for government; I think they knew pretty well two years out that they had a very good chance of winning, and they had a lot of time to plan exactly what they would do. That planning is not evident; there did not seem to be a lot of thought put into exactly what they would do when they came to government.

They did not decide to put in place a mini-budget, which I found bewildering. I just heard the Treasurer say the economic report that was released last year, the MYEFO, was basically a mini-budget for this new government. I do not accept that; a mini-budget is very different to a MYEFO, a PEFO and all those other reports that Treasury spits out at regular intervals throughout the term of government.

A mini-budget was an opportunity lost by this government. It would have reset the economic agenda for the Northern Territory, made commitments on spending and given an explanation to the people of the Northern Territory as to exactly how this new government would manage the finances from when the mini-budget was announced until the announcement of the first full budget, which in the case of the former government was about five or six months.

Even though that might not seem like a long time, it is a very important period in which the government should have done a very thorough analysis of exactly what the state of affairs was in the Northern Territory and how they would proceed. We really do not know; we are still in no man's or no woman's land in terms of what exactly this government is doing fiscally and economically in that space in the Northern Territory. That is why I am looking forward to this budget in approximately 40 days, to get a clear indication of exactly how the public money of the Northern Territory will be spent.

It is a big responsibility. You cannot hide from transparency or your real agenda, and it has to be made very clear. We heard the Treasurer speak about some of the good things they decided to do in hindsight after she made the announcement in October that she could not possibly make a decision until after the economic summits. They have been forced to make some good decisions on funding community organisations, small infrastructure projects, the reintroduction of the Home Improvement Scheme and the First Home Owners Grant.

That was an election commitment they honoured very quickly, a fantastic move that has changed the landscape in Alice Springs. Houses are starting to turn over again. There is a sense of prosperity, positivity and some confidence because that was put in place very quickly. I commend the government for that.

I will take some credit there; it was part of a 12-month process before the last election, campaigning the Labor opposition and me to get that back in place because it had a detrimental effect, particularly in places like Alice Springs, on the whole economy. It was not a positive decision by the former government and it took them a long time to realise that. They brought something in at the end, but Labor has brought in this very generous package for first time home owners.

I do not have a clear recollection of too many election promises made specifically for Alice Springs. I like to keep all my speeches very closely tied to my electorate of Araluen, in Alice Springs. I do not recall there being many specific election commitments made for Alice Springs. I specifically recall that the rolling out of nighttime youth services, was a key election commitment made by this government well before the election; that has not happened yet.



As we all heard, last week in this Chamber the Minister for Territory Families was unable to give a time frame as to when we could expect that, apart from alluding to information that would be imparted to the community through the budget process. There is no detail of what that will look like, and I find that very disappointing.

Another election commitment that affects Alice Springs is the moratorium on fracking, which I support. That was a sensible decision at the time and it still is. In lieu of this scientific inquiry into fracking—I understand what the government is doing in this space. I think it was a sensible, well-thought-out, rational approach to what will be one of the greatest dilemmas that this government has to face. What they do with that report when they receive it at the end of the year—a lot of people will be watching very closely from all factions within this debate.

One thing we have heard from the Chief Minister repeatedly is his great love of Alice Springs and his commitment to prioritising Alice Springs. It is great to hear. Today I hear he loves Palmerston too. It is great to hear a Chief Minister excited about these regional centres. It is important that we do not slip off the radar. Already people are saying to me, 'This is a Top End, Darwin-centric government'. They can see it already; there are cracks emerging with taking away \$27m from our infrastructure projects. That is not a good look for a Chief Minister and a government that claims to love Alice Springs.

I will always believe this sentiment. It makes me feel positive that the next three-and-a-half years of this government will deliver for Central Australia and Alice Springs. One thing I questioned the Chief Minister on, in the first sittings of parliament in October, was his commitment to revitalising the CBD of Alice Springs. That is a very important project for our town. It has created some excitement, as has the continuing commitment to the national iconic Indigenous cultural centre and art gallery. That was a commitment made by the CLP government which this government has, thankfully, embraced. We look forward to that and to the Chief Minister's commitment to revitalising the CBD in Alice Springs, just as he is committed to revitalising the CBD of Darwin.

There are some gaps in what this government has not committed to. I guess you cannot commit to everything, and there are some glaring deficits in terms of what we are not hearing from this government. One of the first decisions made by the government in December or November was extending public holiday penalty rates for workers in the Northern Territory. This was one of the most confusing debates I have heard in my time as a member of this Chamber.

We were told it was a great thing to increase the number of public holidays, and therefore extend penalty rates for workers, to grow the population. I still to this day cannot understand how that will work. Paying more for staff in a stretched economy that is under enormous pressure—we saw 800 people lose their jobs last week, and we have this obscure strategy to grow the population. I would like to see some evidence-based data on whether or not this strategy has been effective in growing the population further down the track.

Mining is at the lowest ebb it has been in the Northern Territory for decades. It is not the fault of the government; it has been a trend over the last couple of years. It is at its lowest ebb now because of the moratorium on fracking. People are very concerned about this. Mining at its lowest ebb for decades in the Northern Territory. We are an economy that depends on mining, and for this government to step into power with this as the backdrop is very difficult. The Treasurer did not talk about mining specifically, but she should because mining is a very important part of our economy.

What is the future for the Northern Territory? If the Treasurer is telling us that she is confident, that she is optimistic, then what is it? A lot of people cannot see where it is all going at this point in history. The loss of jobs, as recent as last week, and mass firings or redundancies will continue with the completion of the INPEX next year.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 9: I draw your attention to the state of the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Araluen, we have a quorum again, so you can continue.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** One thing the Treasurer did not talk about in her speech earlier was the cost of crime in the Northern Territory. The cost of 97% of the population in the Northern Territory having experienced an increase in crime in their community—how you measure this is difficult, but I know that businesses across the Northern Territory are suffering because of the cost of crime.

Businesses are closing, businesses are considering closing, and businesses are considering moving interstate. One such example is Peter Kittle in Alice Springs, which has been the target of endless crime for an extended period. I am not surprised to hear that such a strong, successful company is considering leaving Alice Springs. There are also other examples of businesses leaving.

In order to stimulate the economy and ensure this population grows, or even sustains, this government needs to start addressing crime across the Northern Territory, except for Nhulunbuy, which only experienced a slight decrease in the level of crime over the last 12 months.

I cannot emphasize this enough. It is all very well to come into parliament and talk about the wonderful things happening in some areas of government, like education and the great infrastructure projects, but you need to be open and take responsibility for the fact we have not seen crime like this in the Northern Territory for a long time. Unfortunately the NT Police crime statistics that were released on Friday afternoon illustrate that.

I will not labour crime, as I only have 60 seconds to go. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this motion. This is the time for us to talk about the management of the NT's finances. We are leading up to this government's first budget. It is under enormous pressure, but it also needs to step up, take responsibility and start making some real decisions, not only on the easy things but the complex things.

They need to be open and up front about what they will cut because they will not be able to afford to pay for all their election commitments and beyond without taking us into serious debt and deficit.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I reiterate some of the points made by the Leader of the Opposition, particularly echoing his sentiments regarding GBD being a really important time for the free flow of debate and exchange of ideas outside the traditional party lines you see in debates on legislation and other matters. The Leader of the Opposition is a great example of a backbencher who was never afraid to utilise GBD to talk about issues that were important to him and his electorate.

The Opposition Leader and I have been talking lately, and we are seeing a loosening of the rules the Labor Party backbenchers are subject to. We are starting to see backbenchers contribute in debate, which is excellent because, at the end of the day, we all need to have full membership of this parliament. To do that you need to be able to freely and proudly represent the views, ideas, concerns and aspirations of your electorate. This is the right forum for that. Taking the opportunity to speak on motions introduced by the opposition, Independents or government is a critical part of the process. We cannot underestimate the value and impact of those contributions on the community.

What does the opposition want to see in this next budget? As you can see from the motion, we want three things: the government to keep its promises to Territorians, manage the Territory's finances responsibly and govern in the interests of all Territorians. On that point, I mention the Member for Araluen's comments. We are starting to hear that the Berrimah line is reappearing under this government, and we hope the budget is not reflective of that culture.

Turning to election commitments by this government in my shadow portfolio areas, in July last year as an election commitment, the Chief Minister committed to closing Don Dale as soon as possible. Fifteen-million dollars was allocated but not available until 2018-19. I ask, why? So far the explanation has been that you would like to see how to shape that expenditure once the Royal Commission hands down its report.

In addition to that \$15m, which was intended to cover a replacement Don Dale as well as works at Owen Springs, which seems ambitious—\$15m is a lot of money, but whether it is enough to build two new youth detention facilities will remain to be seen. We would like to see that \$15m allocated in the 2017-18 budget so those works can be brought forward as determined by the government, whether or not they are done sooner or after the Royal Commission.

If they remain to be done after the outcomes of the Royal Commission, we hope the government is ready to deploy works immediately after and fulfil its commitment to the people of the Northern Territory. It is important that the government lives up to its commitments on police stations and police numbers. Territory Labor promised 120 new officers, a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week police station at Nightcliff and a brand-new full service police station with a watch house in Palmerston.

The Palmerston police station worries me. The Chief Minister today answered my question in parliament and the government has gone out to design—I find it very interesting that you can seek expressions of

interest on a design without the person being able to design the facility suitable to the land that it will go on. I find those two things slightly disjointed. The people of Palmerston await an announcement on a location, whether it is Crown land or private land, and whether that \$15m, which I acknowledge has been brought forward to this year, will go far enough.

Fifteen-million dollars is a huge amount of money. Whether it is enough to buy or lease land and deliver a fully serviced police station remains to be seen. Under the government's own plan building of the first half of the police station will commence at the end of this year. That component does not include a watch house. What benefits will that bring to police?

Ultimately this is about enhancing police capability, police numbers and police responsiveness in Palmerston. Let us not forget the rural area because the Palmerston police, who do an amazing job, have a huge area to cover; it extends into the rural area. Without a fully operational watch house and without having seen the plans, I question whether or not all of the works should be brought forward and done at the same time. Otherwise we are just building a new version of what we have at the moment.

I will be keeping a very close eye on these pledges, and the Palmerston police station is one to watch. In a question I asked earlier this week, or last week, about the delivery of the Nightcliff police station—I know the Member for Nightcliff is very passionate about seeing that reopen, but she was extremely non-committal on a time line. Again we will wait and watch to see what the government does with this commitment.

The Police Association has made it very clear that due to the large number of resignations in the Northern Territory Police Force it will be a very difficult task to recruit 120 new officers by 2020.

We have seen increases in crime across the Territory. People do not feel safe in their homes and their communities, and they want something to be done. We have seen countless businesses, as the member for Araluen said, across the Territory being repeatedly targeted. Charities have been affected, such as the Red Cross shop, as well as a number of schools and churches in Palmerston and the northern suburbs. It is clear no one is immune. No one is left untouched by the crime wave we are experiencing in the Northern Territory.

Since Labor has come to government we have seen Territory-wide home break-ins increase by 76% and motor vehicle thefts by 22%. The most shocking increase has been in commercial break-ins, which are up a staggering 121% Territory-wide. That is businesses having to fork out for additional security, CCTV, replacing broken windows and damaged, lost and stolen products. This cost to business eventually becomes a cost to Territorians. I shudder to think of the cost collectively.

The impact on individual businesses, charities, churches and schools is shocking and damaging at such a difficult time in the economy. Crime continues to be a major threat to the future of businesses in communities. The latest Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce survey placed law and order high on the list of its top 10 priorities for 2017, listing it at number three. It noted that businesses are suffering from the increase in insurance premiums and down time, as well as all the costs associated with rectifying damage.

We urge this government to continue to keep its eye on the ball when it comes to crime. We have seen community-led crime meetings in Palmerston, which is fantastic. I commend Serena Dalton, who has done a wonderful and professional job, as a volunteer and member of our community, to pull together so many stakeholders and Palmerston residents to share how deeply concerned they are about what is happening.

We want this government to keep temporary beat locations. We are not sure why it is shying away from giving us a solid answer on this. They are referring it off to police, who seem to be a convenient scapegoat for this government when it does not want to deal with something. They push the matter on so they can point the finger elsewhere. As a government your job is to lead, direct policy and take responsibility for it. It is not fair to point the finger and leave so many issues, such as sorting out the electronic monitoring bracelets, with police.

The temporary beat locations led to a 13% drop in alcohol related assaults in the 2014–15 year after being introduced. We will be watching to see how crime progresses. We hope the bail amendments passed last week have some impacts although the government missed an opportunity to address the *Bail Act* and implement measures that would make an impact on crime in our community right now.

I support the comments of the Leader of the Opposition on the importance of living within our means and managing our finances responsibly. When we talk about the economy, particularly the budget deficit, it is

important to remind the Labor government and its new members that in 2012 when the Country Liberals came to government it inherited a very precarious budget situation with a projected debt of \$5.5bn. That is a huge amount of money for a jurisdiction of our size.

The Treasurer has talked at length about the reduced receipts from the Commonwealth Grants Commission. I note the previous Treasurer gave those same warnings to the Labor Party in opposition, which they chose to ignore. A similar drop in federal funding was forecast in the forward estimates. This should not come as a shock to the Treasurer. It is a pity the Labor Party, when in opposition, opposed every effort made by the previous government to reform the economy. As an opposition we have been very open in saying we will take a different tact; we will support the government in any effort it makes to reform the budget and create opportunities for Territorians.

This is not a blank cheque of support, but where this government makes good economic or financial cases for changes in the way the government does business, we will happily consider each change and judge it on its merits. We will not be opposing changes for opposition's sake as the Labor Party did for the previous four years.

What we want most of all for the Territory is a plan for what happens post INPEX. People are already asking us, 'What happens when the resuscitated Country Liberals tradies scheme runs out? Is there a plan?' The short-term stimulus plans are just that; they are short-term. They cannot work over the medium and long term. They are purposeful and targeted sugar hits for economic activity, but our economy needs nutrition for a more sustained, longer-term economic activity and growth.

Our budget is already straining, so the real question has to be asked, where will that activity come from? It will certainly come from the federal government in some quarters, for example Defence, but we really need to attract strong private investment. In respect to private investment, since day one this government's policies have been against private investment. It is against the onshore gas industry, Dan Murphy's and the hospitality industry with its part public holidays. It went against tradies by scrapping the scheme, until it changed its mind, which we welcomed.

This is where we want to see a change in approach from the Gunner Labor government. We also want to see the government start to govern for all Territorians, and that includes simple gestures such as speaking for the many and varied electorates during General Business day.

The \$27m of infrastructure in Alice Springs which was reprioritised by this government very early in the piece has hit Alice Springs very hard. We have heard the Member for Araluen mention this a number of times in the Chamber. We call on the government to reverse this decision, especially the \$11m in stormwater rectification works for the Alice Springs hospital.

In respect to juvenile detention, the opposition also believes that diversion and detention programs could be supplemented by additional spending on VET training, work experience and the extension of the successful adult sentence to a job program and the youth offenders' sphere. Just a few weeks ago the Territory Sentenced to a Job program was described as a model program for the rest of the world, resulting in 80% of prisoners engaging in various types of employment. The *NT News* stated that the program is well ahead of the nation and making a real difference. There is no compelling reason why we could not or should not extend this very successful program to youth offenders and give them the chance of a new start.

Admittedly there would be details that need to be ironed out. In a visit to Don Dale a few weeks ago I learned that the average stay of detainees is reasonably short, making the planning of education and skills training a real challenge. One way to solve this would be to work with the judiciary to craft creative sentences that require youth offenders to complete a specific training course or VET program.

The government must provide the judiciary with viable and result-driven alternatives to detention. The basic framework for such a program already exists. Indeed, Division 6 of the *Youth Justice Act* allows judges to sentence offenders to complete an approved project so long as the youth is suitable for participation in that project. Once the judge determines that the youth is eligible for participation, the judge and the young person each sign a community work order which typically requires that the youth complete the project in order to discharge his or her responsibility.

Instead of purely recreational programs or traditional detention we should be sentencing youth to a job and a future through Division 6 of the *Youth Justice Act*. In addition to providing youth with marketable skills we would be building in a mechanism for offenders to compensate their victims, pay fines and, quite literally, pay back their debts to society.

The bonus is that once they have finished such a program they will be over 40% less likely to reoffend and far more likely to find long-term employment, according to research conducted by Dr Lois Davis. Additional funding and a sustained focus on the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol in our community is also needed on an urgent basis by this government. Foreign governments have been required to issue travel warnings to travellers in Alice Springs, and restaurants in Darwin have been forced to shut in their patrons.

Property and violent crime are likely fuelled by alcohol and, increasingly, drugs such as ice. The government has pinned its hope on the Banned Drinker Register, an ill-conceived 400 square metre floor space cap, to solve the problem. It was interesting today in Question Time that the Chief Minister, in response to a question from the Member for Nelson, said that everything is on the table when it comes to its alcohol review, and the government will take all the recommendations and look at them for implementation; just last week the Attorney-General said quite the opposite.

She completely ruled out a floor price on alcohol, and the Chief Minister previously ruled out lock out laws, which the Attorney-General crystallised in her answer during Question Time. It is hard to take this government seriously when you are talking about an approach to alcohol and dealing with alcohol-related harm and alcohol-related crime.

With respect to ice we need a more comprehensive approach. The Opposition Leader has been to Banyan House. It is experiencing huge increases in people presenting with ice addiction. Ninety percent to 100% of youth offenders self-report being on ice or having an ice addiction at the time of committing an offence.

We need to ensure that Territorians have access to the resources and services that they need, and part of that is providing sufficient ongoing funding to domestic violence and legal service providers. The Commonwealth has expressed an intention to decrease funding to legal service providers by up to 30%. Such a cut will have a desperate impact on the Territory.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you for your enthusiasm, everyone. I am buoyed by confidence that you are taking what I am saying seriously.

I will certainly be urging the Coalition government to rethink the impact of this decision once it is made. I will call on the Territory government to come up with a plan to backfill this funding gap for essential legal services so that any decrease in funding will not impact service delivery to the most vulnerable Territorians.

We would like to see the Safety is Everyone's Right strategy, announced by the previous government in 2014, continue. The previous government allocated an additional \$6.77m in the third year of the program. This includes funding to provide essential services, such as the Central Australian Women's Legal Service, with frontline services to victims of domestic violence.

Last, but definitely not least, in the electorate of Spillett I would the government to honour the commitments of the previous government. The Kirkland Road and Woodlake Boulevard intersection requires significant upgrade. This is something my community has been talking about for a long time. I understand it is a difficult intersection for the department of Transport to come up with a lifetime solution for, but there are a number of measures that could be taken to address safety around that intersection.

Unfortunately the intersection is on a bend and there is a rise on the land because of the railroad track that is in close proximity to the intersection, which causes all sorts of line of sight issues. Speed is also a factor, going from 100km zone to an 80km zone, and in times of wet weather or peak hour on Kirkland Road it is an incredibly difficult intersection. Durack is literally around a u-shaped road called Woodlake Boulevard, which exits onto Kirkland Road. There is another exit further up on University Avenue. There are only two ways for people to get out of their suburb, and this Kirkland Road/Woodlake Boulevard intersection is one of them.

I have written to the minister, as I have with all these projects, but it is something the department is aware of and it needs to be given priority. It is, importantly, something that will not just affect the people in Spillett or Durack; it affects people in Driver, Marlow Lagoon and Moulden, and people coming down Elrundie Avenue from the rural area, who are ducking up Finn Road to get to town. An upgrade to that intersection will have a huge flow-on effect to Palmerston and the rural community.

Another important community project is the Durack Primary School kiss and go. With all its blessings, being a lovely road that many people live on, Woodlake Boulevard is too narrow. The minister will be thinking there are many schools experiencing problems with their kiss and go areas, and that is true—I am not devaluing that—but the additional complication for the people in Durack is that the road is so narrow that when cars park on either side it is difficult for buses and other people to get through. You have no chance of getting around parents indicating to turn right into the school.

The congestion at that school around pick-up and drop-off time is huge. It causes a lot of problems. An important fix to the kiss and go area at Durack would not only impact the school community, it would impact everyone in Durack. Woodlake Boulevard is the central arterial road. Everyone in Durack lives off Woodlake Boulevard. Hundreds and hundreds of Territorians would benefit from a concentrated effort of money being put in place for that project. It is distinct from the school having to apply for it to be a capital works project.

I mentioned the police station, and I will continue to ask questions on the completion of that project and whether or not the watch house works will be brought forward.

We would like to see a continued commitment by this government to invest in the new Zuccoli primary school. The construction is starting on the new Zuccoli Catholic primary school, and on that same site there is room for co-location of the Zuccoli primary school. Zuccoli is growing at a terrific rate of knots. Last weekend we saw the opening of the Zuccoli Aspire Display Village. The Treasurer and her family were there; it was wonderful to see her in Palmerston. I think it would have given her a terrific context to see how big Zuccoli is, how much bigger it will be, and how quickly the suburb is growing.

Every time I go to Zuccoli I am astonished at how many new streets have completed houses with people living in them. There is a huge number of young families, people starting their lives in the Territory, people wanting their own block of land to bed their roots and start a family. A public primary school will be a wonderful contribution to that community. It will provide kids with the ability to attend a local school, which is really important as there is no school in Palmerston east. There are no schools in Farrar or Johnston, besides the senior school.

My last point is in regard to getting the government to commit to beautifying Farrar Boulevard, which is an arterial road. It turns into Zuccoli Parade further down. There have been many issues with this road because it still sits with the department and has not been handed back to council. It needs a lot of love and support.

Looking after roads and landscaping communities are not the main focus of big departments. In the scheme of things they look after, worrying about whether the roundabouts on Farrar Boulevard are attractive to the community would not be high on their priority list. It is a very high priority to people in my electorate. In this job, the smallest changes you can make are the ones people enjoy and appreciate the most.

When you come home every day and see the lack of care and love put into your suburb—small changes and small amounts of money can go a long way. Farrar Boulevard is something that people continually come to me about and continue to push. I will continue to seek commitment from the minister to put aside some money in her department's budget so this can become more of a core focus going forward.

There are other projects out there; I have not named them all. The resealing of the Channel Island road from the Elizabeth River Boat Ramp to Chung Wah Terrace is certainly a safety issue and requires an upgrade. I cannot tell you how often I hear constituents tell me that the intersection of Elrundie Avenue and Tilston Avenue is a priority. There are numerous crashes at that intersection. People who live in Marlow Lagoon report it to me all the time because they can hear the crashes from their houses.

Elrundie is an extremely busy road now. It always has been but especially now that it is more arterial to the rural area. Tilston Avenue is a key road for people living in Moulden and Driver. Hopefully the Member for Drysdale, whose electorate straddles Tilston Avenue, can also get on board and champion an upgrade of that intersection. That will make the lives of thousands of Palmerston residents much safer.

I have come to the end of my time to contribute to this motion. I commend the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this bill to the House. We will be watching very keenly to see how this budget is handed down and delivered. We hope it is a budget for all Territorians, it delivers economic certainty, gives hope to Territorians and reaches out to all electorates in a way that makes Territorians feel included.

I hope this government can dispel the myths that the Berrimah line is back in force. That is something that the Country Liberals government worked very hard to remove. As a government it is incumbent upon you to govern for the best interests of all Territorians. We urge the Treasurer, in her deliberations with her Cabinet colleagues, to finalise the budget to take that matter very seriously. We look forward to hearing from her in May.

**Mr HIGGINS (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you to everyone who contributed to this debate tonight. The opposition brought this motion into this House for two reasons. One reason is to give members an opportunity to put on the record what they are trying to get for their electorates. From that point of view we had a few silent people. The second reason is that it is an opportunity to say to the government that these are the things we want from the budget.

What I have heard from a lot of people is that they want the government to stick to its commitments and promises. Since the election I have spoken to a lot of people in my own party and said to them that I see the role of opposition, especially in this first year of this new government, as ensuring the government keeps its election commitments, whether they are policies we agree with or not. It is incumbent on opposition to ensure that government meets its election promises. That is one of the things I will be doing.

It was also a good opportunity to list some of the things people see as needing to be done in our electorates. The Treasurer has reiterated the same view previously, that one of the key difficulties the Territory faces is in regard to infrastructure—the expanse of land we have and the high cost of building that infrastructure. That starts with roads. I used to get asked what the key things in my electorate were, when we were in government, and I said, ‘The three Rs’. People used to think that related to education but I said it was ‘roads, roads and roads’.

I wish the Treasurer luck in 40 days. I hope she brings a budget that meets the aspirations of Territorians and meets all the election commitments, as well as addresses some of the problems that have arisen since the election. I specifically refer to crime and the drug problems. They are problems we need to address. We knew about the alcohol problems. These are areas we need to concentrate on in this budget and setting a path forward. I comment the motion to the House.

Motion agreed to.

#### **MOTION**

##### **Recognising the Importance of the Northern Territory Annual Show Society to the Community**

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly calls upon the NT Government to:

- recognise the importance of the annual Northern Territory Show Society shows to the community, tourism, culture and the economy, and:
- that the seven agricultural and community shows, being Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Adelaide River, Freds Pass, Borroloola and Darwin Shows, are recognised as important community and economic events in the Northern Territory
- that the NT Government commits to a five-year core funding model to the NT Show Council such that the shows can operate efficiently and effectively and deliver a quality product for all Territorians
- that the NT Government takes government responsibility from the Chief Minister's department to the more appropriate department of Tourism and Culture and/or sport and recreation
- that the government fund an appropriate expert to undertake an economic impacts statement of the seven shows so that a full and proper understanding is gained of the importance of the shows to the community and economy.

Anecdotal and historical evidence suggest that agricultural shows hold great meaning for Australian communities; however, their social and economic impact has not been fully established or understood either across the country or, specifically, here in the Territory. We all like going to the show, enjoying the displays and activates, and some of us put in entries to the shows, but not many people think about what it takes to put a large show together. How much does it cost to get the Showmen's Guild to town and present Sideshow Alley? How many volunteers are needed, and where do the judges come from?

The Royal Darwin Show is a major event just like the V8 Supercars or Glenti Festival. Yet the three-day show was not considered this way by governments past. I am hopeful the current government will change this and ensure that Territory shows are given due consideration in standing, funding and other support.

The show movement is one of the oldest continuous events in post-colonial Australian history. The first show was conducted in 1822 on the site of what is now Parliament House in Hobart, nine years before the establishment of the Port Arthur penal settlement in Van Diemen's Land. Originally shows were established as a vehicle for agriculture and produce display. At the end of the century they had evolved to include displays of industrial machinery competitions, showcasing human skill, cultural shows and entertainment.

The shows were a vehicle to inspire and facilitate rapid advancement and improvement in Australian agricultural practices. Competitions were the primary means through which shows promoted superior agriculture produce and stock; however, show societies also undertook a wide range of activities, in those days, relating to agricultural development, such as the dissemination of climatic and disease rates and other issues. This occurs today at our shows, for example, there is information on banana freckle, cabomba weed and diseases in plants and animals.

Shows were also a vehicle to bring people together in the vastness of the land because many families and people were geographically isolated. A once a year agricultural show presented opportunities to meet, talk, exchange breeding patterns and learn of new pastures and for families to have an enjoyable downtime.

At the core of all shows, from the beginning of time to modern times, has been the activity of farming or rural activities. Shows were about, and should be about, rural activities, rural pursuits, rural happenings and how and why farming of any scale is important to all of us. We should never lose sight of the basic fact that shows are about produce, farming, agriculture and all that goes with living and persisting off the land.

Over the years shows have changed and modernised. They have moved with trends, fashion, modern practices and challenges. In today's time, shows are challenged even more by competition of leisure activities, the need for volunteers, ageing infrastructure and funding models. Agricultural shows have been popular in every state and territory of Australia since the very first show. Today is Brisbane's Ekka show, which attracts over 400 000 visitors each year. The Sydney Royal Easter Show is Australia's biggest annual event, attracting close to one million visitors over 13 days.

The smaller shows in rural and regional areas continue to be popular amongst locals and tourists in the Territory, including Freds Pass Show, which attracts 25 000 to 28 000 people over two days, and the Royal Darwin Show having 50 000 to 60 000 people through its gates over three days. The other Territory shows are Alice Springs, two days; Tennant Creek, one day; Katherine, two days; sometimes with a camp draft and rodeo, Adelaide River has a two-day show, rodeo and camp draft activities; and Borroloola, one day.

The Royal Darwin Show was established in 1951 when I was not even a twinkle in my parents' eye, but I digress. The Alice Springs show was set up in 1960; Tennant Creek has been there since 1980, 38 years; Katherine has been going for 51 years; Freds Pass has been going for 38 years; Adelaide River is well over 25 years old; and the Borroloola Show, a small community show, has been going for 32 years.

The activities that take place at a show are many and varied, such as ring events, pavilion exhibits, wood chopping, trade displays, dog and horse events, horticultural exhibits, rodeo events, art, craft, cooking, demonstrations of sheep shearing, milking cows, sheep dog trials, side shows, entertainment and so much more.

I recall the Royal Brunei Army Band having a spectacular show at the Royal Darwin Show. Then there was the monster truck that was about 30 feet tall which rode over and squashed cars. There have been superfast cars, horses versus cars, fire-eating people and, I recall when I was a kid, the headless man and the half man/half woman. It took me a few years but I think I have worked out the half man/half woman, who was real. I do not know about the headless man, but his chest went up and down; I am still working on that one.

Each show has many sections for entering exhibits, and each year there is often a special theme and awards for the smartest, most beautiful, most crafted and most well-presented horse, dog, cat, chook, pigeon, pig, goat or whatever. Adults enter, children enter and everyone has a go.

Given the length of NT shows you can see that they have been a part of the Territory's landscape and community, and they have contributed substantially to a town's spirit and social and economic success. With each show in each Territory centre there is an army of volunteers who make it all happen, whether



they are helping with checking and entries, giving specialist talks or judging. Each show's society has paid staff and the size of the show and budget dictates how many staff.

Shows do not happen overnight, and I know from personal experience that once a show finishes, planning starts on the next year's show. The work and commitment is continuous and unrelenting. Securing the army of volunteers needed is one of the biggest challenges for shows, and with the increasing demands on everyone's time it seems fewer people volunteer. We all need to step up and find people who will step up with us to ensure shows keep going and going well.

Historically, shows have been eagerly anticipated once a year—a cornucopia of sights, sounds and tastes, and a premier site for mass entertainment. Mabel is dead keen to beat Mavis in the fruit cake section to make up for not winning last year; farmer Joe wants to ensure he continues to have the title for the biggest pumpkin; little Mickey is keen to once again decorate his bike to try to win the title of best decorated pushbike; and I want to make sure I keep beating my sister, Melissa, with prize-winning mandarin liqueur or limoncello. The cost of ingredients—one bottle of quality vodka, lemon, sugar, water and a dash of magic—\$45; first prize in the class, \$10; value of beating sister, immeasurable.

Over the years the variety and frequency of festivals, cultural and sporting events have increased, making agricultural shows one of the many recreational activities that people can participate in.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that attending the show is up there, but it is behind going to the cinema and a zoo. Shows are well ahead of music concerts, museums, theatre and musicals, so they have their place in our communities and their value should never be underestimated. Economically the 587 shows around Australia involve 4000 showmen and showwomen working with agricultural show societies, and the estimated 5.9m visitors to shows equates to an estimated \$965m economic impact of all shows in Australia.

Some states have undertaken research into economic and social impacts, but no work has been done properly or fully in the Territory. We do not have a complete picture of what our shows contribute to the community. Some work was done last year on the show facilities and governance; however, I have not seen those reports yet. I am very interested to see and read them.

Show societies, as a rule, do not collect critical data to tell us economic impacts, and that is the main reason to seek support for an independent person to do just that kind of research and work. This data can demonstrate to government and others just how important the shows are to the Territory. Data can be attained from shows as to the number of people through the gate, sponsorship, site fees, donations, and other sources of revenue, but there is so much more that comes from shows.

I note that at the Darwin Show I easily burned through \$300 to \$400 over the three days on food, drinks, rubbish toys and some gadget that works for a couple of days and then conks out. Then I spend a huge amount of money on my ute for the beaut ute day. Two years ago I bought new tyres for my ute and kissed goodbye \$2200; I know, more money than sense, but that is what a show does to a person.

There are other people who spend good money for the show on preparation of horses, cars, dogs, displays and so on. After all, the Darwin Show is a royal show, and winning an event, section or award has a certain level of prestige attached to it. Let me give you an example of the spend that exhibitors put into a show. Let us use the dog people as an example because I know them well, unfortunately. At the Royal Darwin Show there are about 200 exhibitors. That is 200 types of dog at that show. Half those exhibitors come from interstate—Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Mount Isa, country Victoria and country South Australia.

Travel takes upwards of a week for some—accommodation, fuel, food, rest stops, dog entries, entry fees and entertainment for when they arrive. Most of the interstate travellers start at the Alice Springs Show, go on to Tennant Creek and then up to Darwin. The travellers are in the Northern Territory for the best part of a month, if not more. That is a lot of spending, and we have no data to show how much that one group of people spend while in the Territory.

I have rounded up some costs from dog travellers from an Adelaide couple, Liz and Rudy. They spend about \$5000 over the month. Another woman, from Cairns, spends \$1500 for one short trip to Darwin. One family which came from Perth, and still comes every year, spent the following last year: three people's airfares, \$2500; three dogs on the plane, \$600 per dog; accommodation for humans in Alice Springs, \$600; hire car in Alice Springs then up to Darwin, \$600 to \$800. When they get to Darwin they stay 10 to 14 days, which includes a three-day fishing trip worth \$1500. For dog food and booze they spend \$1000; dog entry,

\$500; and memberships, \$200. This family is coming back to Darwin this year, and bringing American friends.

Wendy from Mount Isa goes to Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Darwin with three dogs over six weeks, and she spends \$10 000. Paul and Sharon travel from Perth each year, towing a van to do the show circuit. They do some tourist activities and try to get as much low-cost camping as they can, but still manage to spend between \$10 000 and \$12 000.

There are so many more—remember, there are 100 interstate visitors each year coming to the Northern Territory with their show dogs. And you thought I was mad spending \$2500 on my ute wheels. The dog people are but one activity of economic contribution. What would the horse people, sideshow alley people, hat sellers and visiting food stores spend? We do not know for sure because we have not researched that.

Commercial exhibitors spending for display materials, wares and services—we do not know how that translates to after-show sales and work. There is no data. When I staged and organised displays for the Minerals Council we spent upwards of \$5000 on material, shirts, refreshments, passes, prizes and sundries. It does not take long to add up to substantial levels of spending.

How much money do the 50 000-plus people spend at the show? Let us say there are 20 000 adults who, conservatively, spend \$200 each; that is a \$4m spend in one day, and that is conservative. What is the collective spend on the businesses to support displays, signs, pull-up banners, lights and giveaways? What do the special show guests spend—the jumping pig people, the Bundy truck people visiting from interstate, visiting entertainment or food vans, the show bag people who travel the Territory show circuit? More research is needed to fully understand their contributions from all quarters.

Let us not forget government and local government contributions, substantial by any standards, and the general promotion of the Territory and the town or centre a show is held in. A new visitor might return to stay, away from show time; how is that data captured?

If we know what the economic impact is, government and other stakeholders can make better-informed decisions to support policy settings and behavioural changes. Commitment to improving an event such as the show circuit is critical to improving the lives of all Territorians. Let us look at the social impact. What does social impact mean? It means social capital and quality of life issues, such as safety, trust and a sense of purpose. Social impact also describes the changes to individual and community connectedness, health and wellbeing.

A wide range of stakeholders participate in agricultural shows, including competitors, judges, show people, exhibitors, entertainers, volunteers, businesses, governments, professionals, community groups, service groups, schools, families and children. I do not know the number of people involved, but I think it is over a thousand for the royal shows and hundreds for smaller shows.

I can think of many positive impacts from shows and a few negative ones, such as traffic congestion. Knowing shows like I do, the three key positive outcomes are family fun and wellbeing, promotion of local produce and services, and the community's participation in a local event. The better the show is run and operated, the higher the positive impacts, which is a good reason to ensure that shows are successful and operate with good foundations, which includes a positive funding model and support from government.

Let us not underestimate the benefits to children and young people, including promoting schools, improving students' life skills, learning about participation and competition, assisting in classroom activities and curriculum, to list a few. Agricultural shows have a long history of involving volunteers from every part of the community—judging, stewarding, time keepers, bar staff, vet services, legal advice and gatekeepers. This contribution is also a positive impact on individuals who like the involvement, contributing to the improved sense of community and being engaged in a positive activity.

Volunteers are recognised by show societies and further afield in volunteer awards. This builds the social capital of individuals, organisations and the community. We all benefit from the volunteers. Social capital is much talked about but little understood. It is now understood that life is easier in a community blessed with the substantial stock of social capital. Social capital describes the social networks, norms and trust within a community that help people work together for the betterment of the community. Social capital relates to trust, cooperation, efficiencies and economic growth.

Agricultural shows foster social capital by developing community resources and creating social links between individuals and groups, perhaps even businesses. Everything about shows promotes and

positively contributes to growing social capital, volunteerism, holding meetings, involving schools and playgroups, organising parades, competition and fun activities, as well as involvement by government organisations such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Darwin City Council. Other things that contribute to social capital are membership of the show societies and involving cultural groups, service clubs and community-based groups.

Contained in this motion is a call to commit to a five-year funding model. This is not an out of the ordinary request as the current government, in October 2016, committed to a five-year operational funding model for an Environmental Centre, Arid Lands and the Environmental Defenders Office. I am not suggesting that the Environmental Defenders Office and the Environmental Centre operates in the same way as the show society; however, the fundamental reasoning should be the same—giving certainty, providing clear commitment and ensuring these major and economic and social contributors are placed appropriately within the government's thinking and planning.

Another part of the motion is to place the support and funding with the department of sport and recreation, which is within the larger department of Tourism and Culture and not with the Chief Minister's department. In no way am I suggesting that the Chief Minister's department is not the premier department; rather, I believe it is not the right fit. The Territory agricultural shows are not policy things; they have policy around them but they are not policy things. They are major recreational events and should be treated and respected accordingly.

In the past the NT Government provided funding to the NT Show Council, which then dispersed the funds to the show societies. This eliminated the need for the show to go directly to different departments for funding, but it still had the opportunity to fund different sections if the department wished to be involved. The NT Show Council was formed in 2001, with the NT Government providing \$660 000 for three years. This was not sufficient funding to allow the societies to become self-sustaining in the ensuing years. From that money they had to pay a consultant to do a report to government which, as I mentioned, we have not seen.

Previously the funding was allocated based upon attendance at the shows, Royal Darwin, Freds Pass, Katherine, Alice Springs, Adelaide River, Tennant Creek and Borroloola. I would like to see a substantial amount of funding to ensure these organisations can become self-sustaining in the future and not keep coming back and knocking on government's door.

I recommend funding of \$1m per year for a period of five years or the term of the current government to the NT Show Council. The idea of the show council was that it was a cooperative voice to government for all the show societies rather than each individual society going to government. It was also a medium for sharing ideas for entertainment, cost sharing methods, governance and meeting challenges associated with show societies.

We need to know and understand the contributions of shows to the Territory community and economy. Without that comprehensive knowledge show societies and government cannot properly plan for the future. There has been some work undertaken by a consultant. While I do not take away from that work, which I would like to get copies of, if possible, I am asking for the government to consider a proper economic model for all Territory shows as a package.

This is not an extraordinary request. Much research has been done on interstate shows, so there are heaps of papers for reference for the qualified people, probably here in the Territory in accounting firms, who could do the work.

There are figures on the economic contribution of the V8 Supercars; who does that work, and where do those figures come from? The economic contribution from the horse racing carnival—who does that work, and where do those figures come from? The economic contribution from festivals and the Mitchell Street Mile—who does all that? All those events contribute to the success of the community and put funds into the economy. Who is doing that, or are they just figures being plucked out of the air? I would like to know. If they have a figure then someone can do that work for the shows, and we can get a figure to see how big and important they actually are.

In closing, shows should be considered a major recreational event in the Northern Territory. They are critical to the community, economy and social wellbeing of us all. The shows want to move towards self-sustainability and are keen to work with government. An investment now will bring great returns into the future. There are quality people across the board involved with all Territory shows, most of them on a volunteer basis. I think we owe it to them to get all those shows on solid footing going forward.

I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms MOSS (Tourism and Culture):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I respond to the motion brought forward by the Member for Goyder. Noticing the time, we will need to have a good conversation outside of this before it comes up again.

I thank the Member for Goyder for raising this motion. This government values annual agricultural shows across the Territory and their importance to the community. I also commend the Member for Goyder, who is well known for her abilities to defend the chooks at the show. She will camp out and make sure the chooks are ready to go for show time. That takes a lot of dedication. The Member for Goyder will be pleased to know that we support the motion, and I will talk more deeply about each point raised by the Member for Goyder.

The responsibility for shows sat with the Department of the Chief Minister; however, in recognition of their natural alignment with activities and outputs of the Department of Tourism and Culture they were recently transferred to sit within my portfolio. That will be welcome news for the Member for Goyder. I am honoured to be the minister responsible for ensuring the show circuit remains a popular and important part of Territory life.

The Gunner Labor government has enjoyed visiting the seven agricultural and community shows across the Territory: the Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Adelaide River, Freds Pass, Borroloola and Darwin shows. I can hear some competitiveness in the Chamber on which show is the best. I think they are all fantastic, and I have no doubt we will all be at them again this year.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Let us keep this show on the road.

**Ms MOSS:** Let the puns begin.

We are a government for Territory kids, jobs and community. We know how much the shows mean to local families and the agricultural sector as a place to connect, showcase and have a fun and memorable day out. It is a place to compete if you are into things like polocrosse, and a range of other activities.

The shows provide a chance to showcase agricultural and primary industries, community organisations, businesses and local talent. There are a lot of fun and rides and attractions—such as flying pigs—exhibitions and food stalls. It is important to the community and a great place for people to come together.

Each year over 100 000 people visit one of the seven shows on offer across the Territory. They do not happen without a lot of hard work. I recognise that committee members, stallholders, volunteers and staff put in so much work to ensure the shows are a success every year. Defending the chooks is just one job. There are many others involved in pulling off one of these brilliant shows.

We recognise that staging the shows is not without its challenges. As well as requiring a lot of hard work from community members, the shows come with a significant and rising expense. The show societies must work harder each year to keep crowd numbers up, particularly as more options for family activities become available. It is a good time to take stock of our shows and to look at their place in contemporary society, particularly considering the first show was staged in the Territory in the 1950s, and to consider how we can ensure their ongoing viability and sustainability.

I would also like to talk about the showgrounds themselves. The Territory showgrounds are more than just areas of land set aside for the annual show. They are valuable multiuse facilities that host an array of community events and activities attended by half a million people annually, including weddings, concerts, sporting events and expos. The showgrounds host the marquee show once a year. The showgrounds are a critical part of their respective communities' social and recreational space.

The Member for Goyder is very familiar with Freds Pass Reserve and its position as a wonderful community amenity. I am pleased the Chief Minister's office has been working with Freds Pass Show regarding its sustainability. It is very well attended and is home to many of the rural area's most famous sporting clubs and associations.

The Darwin Showgrounds are a Top End icon, with some 50 000 people attending the show each year and thousands more visiting for dog training. It would be remiss of me to not also mention the cat shows. I am

definitely a lover of the cat show, so are my colleagues the Members for Johnston and Arnhem. Defence Force training and military exercises, equestrian events, exhibitions and expos also take place. The showgrounds also serve as a key emergency service location for the Top End, which is really important.

The Adelaide River Showgrounds hosts the legendary Adelaide River Races, Anzac Day commemorations and serves as a caravan park throughout the year, which is a fantastic use of community space. There is some love for the Adelaide River Showgrounds here in the Chamber from the Member for Daly.

Jubilee Park in Tennant Creek hosts the show and is home to a number of community events. It is regularly used by many clubs and organisations.

Blatherskite Park in Alice Springs hosts a fantastic show and plays host to important activities of multiple clubs and groups. Most recently it started hosting the Show and Shine car display at the Red CentreNATS. The Borroloola Showgrounds hosts sporting carnivals and NAIDOC week festivities. The Katherine Show is one of the most popular events on the town's social calendar. The showgrounds are the home of the Big Rivers AFL league and numerous other events, such as Territory Day and Australia Day.

I understand the direct economic impact of activities held on Territory showgrounds. Events held there are estimated to be around \$40m each year, with the shows alone generating about \$16m. I take the Member for Goyder's point that we need to do a lot more work regarding data collection and their value to our community.

It is with this in mind that the Gunner Labor government supports the motion brought forward today. The social and economic benefits of our shows and showgrounds are clear. They deserve an appropriate level of structural support and guidance to thrive. In supporting this motion, and as the minister responsible for shows, I am keen to look at the long-term needs of our shows so we provide support in an ongoing and strategic way, rather than a piecemeal way.

There is a comprehensive review under way which is looking into the governance and sustainability of Territory showgrounds and show societies. I will be very keen to see the outcome.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, we all love a good show, but this show has come to an end. It is 7pm, so the time for General Business has expired.

Debate suspended.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Ms LAWLER (Drysdale):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will talk about the exceptional work of school councils in my electorate. School councils give parents the opportunity to take an active interest in their children's schooling and to work closely with teachers and principals to guide education services in schools.

I have had the honour of attending annual general meetings in the schools in my electorate over the last few weeks. It is part of the *Northern Territory Education Act* that by 15 March all schools are required to have their AGMs present their annual reports to their councils. It was great to see parents engaging with their school community and having a say.

I congratulate Cecily Boulton on her appointment as Chair Member of Gray Primary School Council. It was a pleasure to hear about the achievements of the school in 2016 and its plans for the future. Last year the Student Leadership Council designed its new 2017 school uniforms, and the new Gray school uniforms are looking fabulous.

The Year 4 students organised a very successful Anzac Day assembly. There was a large scale re-planting of trees, and they set goals in reading and maths for the students. It was great to hear that they achieved those goals. I have mentioned the principal, Rebekah Stapleton, and the great work she has done at Gray previously. Congratulations to Cecily Boulton and Rebekah Stapleton for the great job they did at running their AGM and seeing the families involved.

I congratulate Mrs Nicki Elliott on her appointment as Chair of the Moulden Primary School Council. Nicki has been a steward of the council at Moulden for quite a few years and is someone who goes in, does the

hard work and runs a very good meeting. It is always a pleasure to attend those school council meetings. It is a great school with strong community involvement.

I was very interested to hear about the school's partnership with Real Schools, which focuses on maximising teacher commitment, caring students and connections with the community. They have been doing professional development with Real Schools.

I congratulate Mr Chris Quince on his continuing appointment as Chair of the Driver Primary School Council. This year Driver Primary commences as an Independent Public School, something the school community worked hard for. It was great to hear that Driver Primary is using its increased autonomy to pursue innovative initiatives focused on engaging families and the community. I am very interested in their Parents Connect in the Kitchen program, a great program that welcomes parents into the school to enjoy morning tea with their children.

When you attend a Driver school assembly, the class that puts on the performance that day and runs the assembly invites the families to their kitchen. They have a lovely set up; you get to eat some of the food they have grown in the garden and cooked, as well as have a cup of tea. The children, parents and teachers are all there. It is a lovely morning. The school's Kitchen Garden and Farm program offers a very unique experience for everyone at Driver.

I congratulate Ms Renee Prosser on her appointment as Chair for the Palmerston Senior College School Council. Renee is also the Chair of the Rosebery Middle School Council, so she will provide another important link to foster collaboration, cohesion and connection between these schools in Palmerston.

Palmerston Senior College is committed to providing pathways for students. In 2015 it introduced a Police, Fire and Emergency Services Cadet Program. Some of you would have seen those cadets. The police cadets were at the International Women's Day March a few Sundays ago, and it is great to see them at different functions during the year. Last year the first cohort of students graduated from this program.

Palmerston Senior College is also a Cisco Networking Academy and the only Northern Territory provider of an internationally recognised information and technology qualification. These subjects are designed to provide students with skills sought by telecommunication companies locally, nationally and internationally.

It is so important to acknowledge the contribution of council and board members, who volunteer their time to attend meetings, assist with events and engage with families and other stakeholders in the community. For parents who work, it can be very hard to engage in school during school time. Being on the school council or board gives those parents, who may not have time during the day, to be a part of their child's school. I commend all the people who take time to be involved in school councils.

I also acknowledge the work of the Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations, COGSO, which represents the interest of families and school communities of children attending Northern Territory public schools. COGSO works to improve the quality of education. It engages parents and families with their school, and provides valuable support, training and information resources to support participation on school councils. They run governance training across the Territory, and they do a fabulous job with that.

School council roles and responsibilities are very important because they contribute to the educational functions of the school. They provide an important voice, advise principals about the education needs of the community and build links between parents, community groups and schools. School councils also determine the use of school facilities and prioritise how the school's budget will be allocated to best meet the needs of students. Effective school councils develop a culture within the school community which embraces and values all community members.

Research shows that when schools, families and communities work in partnership, students get better educational outcomes. School councils and boards are a critical part of creating school culture and an environment that establishes and grows these partnerships.

The school councils of Gray, Driver, Moulden and Palmerston Senior College, which are in my electorate, provide important leadership and community connections for their schools. I commend their work and look forward to attending their meetings throughout the year.

**Mr SIEVERS (Brennan):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not talk about football tonight. I have chosen something else to talk about, but maybe tomorrow night I will talk about football.

On Sunday morning I had the pleasure of participating in the Darwin Black Dog Ride for 2017. The Black Dog Ride began in 2009 as one man's ride to raise awareness of depression. This man was Mr Steve Andrews from Western Australia. Mr Andrews started the ride as some of his close family and friends had been suffering a silent struggle with depression and, sadly, lost their lives to depression.

Steve then embarked upon a solo month-long motorbike journey around Australia, raising over \$34 000 and engaging thousands of Australians with his message of awareness about depression. Since this time thousands of Australians have joined the motorbike ride, now known as the Black Dog Ride, to support Steve's cause and raise awareness of depression and suicide prevention.

The Darwin Black Dog Ride 2017 was a huge success. It was organised by Mr John Benham, with a large number of fantastic volunteers who provided a morning breakfast, a safety briefing, free water, raffles, media, Black Dog merchandise and an enjoyable and meaningful day of riding. There was companionship and a strong unity to raise awareness of depression and suicide prevention.

In attendance were over 300 Darwin motorcycle enthusiasts who came from across the Top End, and a great group of people who come together once a year to join thousands of motorcycle owners across Australia. The motorcycle groups consisted of men, women, children and a little mascot dog named Winston, who is the national mascot of the Black Dog Ride. All proceeds from the donations and fundraising activities on the day of the ride are gifted to local mental health projects or organisations.

The largest group of riders attending on the day was the Badass Silverbacks, supported by the NT Women's Group and the Barnyard Animals, who are well known for their support of many charities and fundraisers in Darwin, including the recent No More Campaign. Statistics provided to the Black Dog Ride charity advise that every year in Australia one million adults and 100 000 young people live with depression. Fifty per cent do not seek treatment and nearly 3000 will take their own lives every year. In Australia suicide is the leading cause of death of people under 45 years of age.

I was very honoured to be involved in such a worthy cause. Talking about and raising the issue makes a difference, as does being with buddies you can trust, to get the conversation going and seek support. I thank John Benham for organising such a great event, and I thank all my co-riders in Darwin and all over the country.

A big thank you to the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services; the Palmerston RSL; Deb and John Dowd and Rachel Hewson; John and Sharon Locke and Yvonne Smith; the water providers; the scissor lifts; the media; Mickey T Photography; and the volunteers and services that supported the event.

Finally, I thank Rob Jordan; John Humphries; Gary Smith; Nigel Brenton; Mark and Connie Hoy; Wendy Leete; Mark and Nikki Elliott; John McCluskey; Dean Harrison; Mark Lemons; the Badass Silverbacks; the NT Women's Group; and the Barnyard Animals, who are extremely passionate and supportive of NT charity motorcycle rides, and are committed to making a difference to men's and women's health in the NT.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to continue explaining my wonderful trip to Groote, Bickerton and Numbulwar—this is part two—because I was rushed yesterday and did not think I would take up all the time, but I did.

I had some wonderful meetings in Alyangula and Angurugu on Wednesday 8 March, two weeks ago. Thanks to the Arnhem electorate liaison officer, Kara Burgoyne, who organised this trip. She did a fantastic job, and I am looking forward to more trips to Groote and Bickerton.

On Wednesday 8 March our first visit was to Alyangula Area School, where I did a wonderful walk-through with the new principal, Tania. She started teaching at Groote for the first time, so it was nice to learn she has done a full circle around the Territory and is now the principal at Groote. It was lovely to walk through the school with her; she did not frighten anyone by telling them I was there, so it was really good to see all the students and teachers in their element, from early childhood up to the secondary classes.

After the school visit we went to South32, which is part of the GEMCO mining company, and met with Mr John Hansen. He is looking at development in the communities with South32, so it was good to talk to him about some ideas, what South32 is doing and the future planning of Groote Eylandt.

We had a meeting cancelled, unfortunately, but we were able to fill that by visiting Groote Eylandt Lodge's art gallery. A lot of the local art is provided through ASAC, Anindilyakwa Services Aboriginal Corporation. I was able to purchase a beautiful piece of artwork, which is now hanging on the wall in my parliament office.

I am proud to have it on display. The Groote Eylandt students who did their parliament tour on Monday got to see it and have a photo under it, which was great. Hopefully they will go back and tell the family it is hanging up at parliament.

I also bought a beautiful silk kimono bush-dyed jacket, which I wore last week in parliament. That was made by the bush (inaudible) and art centre crew based in Angurugu. It was really nice to support local business there.

On to the Anindilyakwa Land Council—I met with the CEO Mark Hewitt. Kara and I had a good chat with him and heard about what the ALC is doing for future planning for Groote. They know the mine will not live forever, so they are looking well into the future and planning for the people, businesses, families and the future of Groote.

We visited Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Enterprises, with Coralie Ferguson and chairperson Alfred. We talked about all the developments—GEBIE also has an offside, which is Groote Civil Constructions, GCC. It is doing a lot of housing projects at Groote, so I acknowledge its hard work. There are a lot of local people involved in those projects, working for local families, which is great to see.

The last official visit of the day was with Senior Sergeant Tanya Woodcock and community engagement police officer, Deb. Tanya and Deb do a wonderful job. They have both been on the island for quite a long time and they plan to stay. They are looking at community safety and action plans for local people in Umbakumba and Angurugu. They are based in Alyangula and know a lot of people on Groote. It is great to have people dedicated in law enforcement who are community-minded. It was good to talk to Tanya and Deb at that community safety action plan meeting.

The next day I was excited because I was off to Numbulwar to go home and visit family. I arrived early and waved to several people, went into my first meeting at the police station and visited Sergeant Paul Major and his offsider. There was a lot of community interest and push to lobby for a community safe house. That is something I will write to the Minister for Territory Families about. The closest safe house is in Ngukurr, which is 150 kilometres away and not accessible during the Wet Season.

In Numbulwar the night patrol senior houses women and families if they are in an unsafe situation in their own homes. That is a big concern for men and women in the community. That is something I will write to the relevant ministers about. We had a long conversation about that.

There were also good stories from the police. A police officer was working with a crew of elderly and young men to build traditional canoes. It is not something that has been done for a long time, but the knowledge is still in the community. It was a project they were doing that weekend, provided they did not get rained in. I have seen some nice photos recently; they were able to collect the bark for those canoes. When I go back to Numbulwar it will be nice to see how the project went, what they did with the canoes and if they have used them on the water.

I visited Melissa Connors and Kathy-Anne Numamurdiridi, who are the GEC and IEO in Numbulwar. Kathy-Anne is my first cousin; it was great to have a meeting with her. Melissa Connors has been really wonderful in supporting everything I do when I go to Numbulwar. She is one of the best GECs that I have ever seen. She always has a huge list of things to discuss with me. Every time I pop in for an afternoon tea she already has her list to talk through. It is good to have Melissa and Kathy-Anne working in those roles in the community.

I got to hang out at the ALPA store. They do a really good job. There are a lot of profits going back into the community and their social program. I am happy to support ALPA. They are the largest employers of Indigenous people in Australia. It is wonderful to have those types of businesses in community stores. Well done to ALPA.

It was pay day so it was very busy in the shop that day. It was nice to see people and they were excited to see me. That was a really nice visit. It was an informal meeting but very important. The community store is often a hub. It was nice to be out there.

The last official visit of the day was the Roper Gulf Regional Council—the Numbulwar office service shire manager John Terepo. He is wonderful. He was a workman when I was there as a teacher, and now he has taken on a leadership role. He is learning and enjoying what he does. He is a good role model for young men in the community who might aspire to take on that job one day.



Finally I come to Friday. This was a jam packed day as well. We visited FaFT at 8.30am with Joanne Pickering, who is the FaFT coordinator and was wonderfully welcoming towards us. The Education minister will be happy to hear that babies as young as two months old are enjoying the FaFT program with their mothers. It is a big, social part of the community. It is nice to have those families in the community and feeling welcome in the school at an early age. They are leading early learning.

It was the Families as First Teachers preschool day, so we visited FaFT, did some reading and took the young ones across to the preschool, where I left them to run amok with the preschool teacher, Irene. I went to the Numbulwar clinic for a visit. My cousin Roland is one of the health workers. Roland (inaudible) was also one of the Red Flag Dancers who came into the Chamber in October. I visited with Roland and the area manager, Kim, who came from Groote for the day. We spoke about the clinic and the process of moving into the new clinic this year. I am not sure of the exact date it will open, but it is pretty exciting. It will be a big event, so hopefully the Health minister will come with me to open that.

Early childhood assembly, the Numbulwar homelands with Bob Burrows—back to school again for the secondary assembly, thanks to Chris O'Neil, the senior teacher there. He has taken on my job. I kind of tricked him into it, but I am happy that he stayed.

I finished visiting family and seeing people informally in the afternoon. Then I went back across the beautiful gulf to Groote Eylandt, where I spent the weekend and one of the highlights of my trip, relaxing, which I often do not get to do. I visited the top springs at (inaudible) River, which was beautiful.

Kara took me, some friends and her family to enjoy the water, crocodile free. You will be happy to hear I have both my legs and arms. We enjoyed the beautiful river, so it was a really wonderful weekend, which was enjoyed after a big week of work.

**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Mr Deputy Speaker, today I travelled to Katherine to join several constituents to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Katherine. We gathered to remember and commemorate what can only be described as one of the most terrifying events our town has ever had to endure.

It was an incredibly sobering moment to consider that on this day 75 years ago about 90 bombs fell unexpectedly from the sky some mere hundreds of metres from where we were sitting today, and it left an indelible mark that helped forge Katherine's history and spirit. It was the day World War II came to Katherine. Katherine has a rich past that draws on, among many other things, ancient Indigenous culture, European exploration, the construction of the overland telegraph line and the development of the region's renowned agricultural sector.

Each one of these influences has shaped our town into one that attracts about 250 000 visitors every year, many of whom visit the Katherine museum to immerse themselves in the region's history. You only have to step inside any of the surrounding buildings to lose yourself in a journey into the past. It is a fantastic building and it is very lovingly looked after by Simone Croft and her assistant, Robyn.

What many of the 250 000 visitors generally do not know until they arrive at the museum is the explosive role that Katherine played in World War II for one afternoon on 22 March 1942. Like the visitors, we also have many Katherinites who can see just how close the war came. In an age of smartphones and reality television it can be difficult for some people today to fathom just how horrific the bombing raid would have been for those living and working in the town at the time.

On 21 March 1942, Japanese pilots completed reconnaissance of Katherine and its aerodrome, taking aerial photographs in a prelude to what would be the furthest inland attack on mainland Australia during the war. At about 12:20pm the following day, nine Japanese aircrafts—officially designated Mitsubishi Navy Type 1 Attack Bombers, more frequently referred to as 'Bettys', especially by the allied forces of the time—appeared in the sky above the town, and from a height of about 20 000 feet began their bombing run.

It was barely a month after Darwin was decimated and an attack that nobody saw coming. From the bellies of their fuselages the Bettys dropped bombs of about 60 kg, known as daisy cutters, which fell to earth in a rain of destruction and peppered the aerodrome with gaping craters and shrapnel. The daisy cutters took their toll on the ground around the bombing site, but Katherine also experienced human loss as a result of the Japanese attack.

Dodger Kodjalwal, a 42-year-old Indigenous man, was killed by shrapnel while hiding behind a rock near the Gallon Licence Store. It is thought he was inside Katherine's hospital when the bombing raid began,

and he fled the building fearing for his life. There were several others who were injured on that day, including Noel Hall, who had one of his fingers severed by shrapnel.

Following the attack the magnitude of the damage was assessed, with one official report describing it as:

*About 85 bomb craters of varying sizes were located. The holes were scattered all over. If there had been any planes on the taxiway system, they would have undoubtedly been destroyed.*

The scars of the bombing raid are still visible in Katherine today. There are rocks along Gorge Road that were savaged by shrapnel three quarters of a century ago, and they still bear the distinctive marks of the terror that fell from the sky that day. Outside the Gallon Licence Store a crater more than one metre deep remains, partially obscured by weeds and debris, but it continues to tell its story.

I believe the crater is the setting for one of the most iconic photographs ever captured of Katherine on that day. The image I refer to shows Postmaster-General linesman Jack Corbell standing in the middle of the crater, grinning as he inspects the damage caused by a direct hit by one of the Japanese bombs. To be truthful, that photograph is actually an iconic photograph. I love that photo. It just shows strength, resilience and Northern Territory humour.

The attack put Katherine on the map of towns in the Northern Territory that were targeted by, and survived, a calculated Japanese bombing raid. It secured its place in the books of Australian military history. It is that history that I would like to see preserved by having the story told many times over for many more years. I was fortunate enough to be invited to the commemoration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Darwin last month, and it is was during those formal events that my resolve was strengthened for greater recognition of Katherine's role in World War II.

It gave me great pleasure today to congratulate Simone Croft and the Honourable Mike Reed on their collaborative efforts in documenting the story of the bombing of Katherine. They published a book together which was launched today at the ceremony.

These are stories that must be documented. The bombs that fell over Katherine that day, 75 years ago, made a permanent mark on the landscape and have shaped the community and its spirit in a way that none of the 300 people who called it home at the time could have predicted. Seventy-five years later, we must do whatever we can to ensure that Katherinites never forget the day the Bettys came to town.

I will end my speech with a quote from Sir Winston Churchill:

*Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.*

*Lest we forget.*

**Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to briefly to put on the record tonight that over the last few days in Alice Springs the Australian Association of Social Workers NT branch has had its annual conference called Diversity, Dust and Dedication. I cannot think of a better title for one in Alice Springs.

I thank the NT branch for having the conference in Alice Springs. There were over 100 delegates attending the conference. It is really important that regional centres get access. There was a wide range of people presenting who I do not think would take the opportunity to do that if the conference was in Darwin.

This is really important to showcase the great work of the people of Central Australia, particularly those in social services. There is a great deal of innovation that we need to showcase in the area.

I acknowledge the two convenors, Kutcha and Denise. They worked very hard. It is a lot to do on top of a full-time job to organise a conference like this, but it was very successful. I am looking forward to seeing the abstracts and hearing the stories of what they talked about.

I also briefly note that on Sunday I attended a Black Dog Ride in Alice Springs. It was a fantastic event. I note the Member for Brennan talked about the event in Palmerston, but I have to say, it was a fantastic event in Alice Springs. We had over 90 participants, which was amazing. It was great.

Everyone met at Desert Edge Motorcycles, where there was a barbecue cooked, very ably, by Rolf and Diane. It was a great start to the day. Jimmy had his sausage before 9 am. It was extraordinary. Then the

bikes took off. There were some beautiful bikes. There are a lot of very passionate motorcycle enthusiasts in Alice Springs.

They headed off to Glen Helen, where there were scones put on. Thank you to Glen Helen Homestead for that great work in support of the project. Then they headed back to the Long Tan Bar at the Returned Services League in Alice Springs. I thank Rolf, who was the lead rider, and Gary, who was the Tail End Charlie. I also thank the guys who drove the trailer in case anyone broke down. I understand it was an event-free ride and everyone had a good time.

I acknowledge Richard and Jacqui, who are the drivers of this event. As the Member for Brennan mentioned, it is an important event which raises funds for depression, a significant issue in our community. It is especially an issue for men in remote and rural communities, such as Alice Springs. Many families have been touched by depression and/or suicide. It is a deadly disease, but it is treatable. Events like this encourage men, especially, to talk about suicide and depression in a way that is comfortable.

I thank the national organisation, but I also thank the grassroots guys organising events like this, especially Richard, whose passion for this issue was very clear to me on Sunday.

I look forward to next year's ride.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I love hearing members' adjournments at the end of the evening, from trips in the bush to motorbike rides, sausage sizzles and the stories from your electorates.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.