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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Yellow Ribbon National Road Safety Week**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, paper bags have been placed on your desk, containing material relating to the Yellow Ribbon National Road Safety Week, which is 8 to 14 May. Each year nearly 50 people are killed and around 530 seriously injured on Northern Territory roads. This Yellow Ribbon campaign provides an opportunity to remember those who have tragically lost their lives on our roads and to raise awareness about road safety.

Apart from driving safely, I encourage you to show your support by wearing the yellow lapel ribbon and by spreading the message to families and peers by using #SlowDownNT on social media.

**JUSTICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION) BILL
(Serial 12)**

Continued from 30 November 2016.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, as Australia's national criminal intelligence agency, the Australian Crime Commission, now known as the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, or ACIC, plays an indispensable role in uncovering, understanding and ultimately responding to organised crime in the Territory and the rest of the country.

The Territory's partnership with the ACIC is a vital part of enhancing local law enforcement ability to respond in a timely and efficient manner to emerging criminal risks in the Territory.

Intelligence gathered at the national level by the ACIC helps keep Territory law enforcement apprised of high-risk criminal networks operating in the Territory and provides tools to manage those risks. Among other things, the information and assistance of the ACIC supports law enforcement investigations and informs the development of law enforcement strategies to combat emerging drug and crime networks.

The current bill is part of the evolution of the important intelligence-gathering and sharing role the ACIC performs. In 2015 the federal government announced the organisation, formally known as CrimTrac, would be merged with the Australian Crime Commission, forming the new ACIC. This process was completed on 1 July 2016.

CrimTrac was originally formed in 1990 as an agency within the Commonwealth Attorney-General's department and was responsible for developing and maintaining the national information sharing services between state, territory and federal law enforcement agencies. In particular, CrimTrac services allowed Australia's nine police agencies to seamlessly share information in order to provide enhanced investigation and interdiction outcomes.

CrimTrac served as an essential component of a national policing strategy which minimises the ability of individual criminals and criminal organisations to exploit borders in order to avoid detection or obfuscate their activities. Information sharing lies at the heart of modern law enforcement, and CrimTrac has directly contributed to the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement in the Territory and across Australia.

Among other things, CrimTrac was responsible for the sharing of information through a number of technological systems. Among these are the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System and the National Criminal Investigation DNA Database. The NAFIS allows for real-time uploads of finger and palm prints to a database matching system utilised by police in allowing for quick identification of suspects. Similarly the NCIDD allows police to match DNA profiles across state and territory boundaries, utilising samples collected at crime scenes from offenders, suspects and others.

Hundreds of thousands of such searches are conducted each year and provide a valuable tool to police and law enforcement. CrimTrac also maintained a number of other systems used in law enforcement, including the Child Exploitation Tracking System, which helps to identify victims of child sexual abuse; the National Child Offender System, which enhances child protection by sharing information about registered persons; and the National Police Checking Service, which provides information on the integrity of individuals placed in positions of trust in the community.

The merger of CrimTrac with the Australian Crime Commission improves the efficiency of information sharing by creating the ACIC, which is a one-stop shop for criminal intelligence and investigation in Australia. The enhanced coordination that flows from a combined agency will produce synergies and economies of scale that will help prevent crime before it happens and increase investigatory capabilities available to the states and territories.

The desirability of increased cooperation amongst law enforcement and criminal intelligence agencies has been consistently demonstrated, and such cooperation has been an important factor in preventing terrorist attacks, infiltrating domestic criminal organisations and solving complex crimes.

The role of the ACIC in discovering, investigating and helping end criminal drug enterprises has never been so important in the Territory. The introduction of large-scale manufacturing and distribution of ice in our back yard is causing an epidemic in crime that is rippling through our community and affecting youths and adults, rich and poor.

Ice trafficking and the resulting use, addiction and related crime has drastically increased in the Territory. Law enforcement and government are struggling to keep their heads above the wave of the crime that is trailing in their wake. Treatment providers such as Banyan House have reported increases in admissions for treatment of ice abuse in the order of over 150% in the last two years. In addition our youth are taking ice in record numbers and, fuelled by ice abuse and addiction, are committing property crimes that are more brazen and on a scale that has reached every part of our community across the Territory.

We have seen ram-raids and organised crime sprees, which have become commonplace. Even churches and schools have not been exempt from these crimes. In February at least three schools and two churches were broken into in the space of three days. The following week a vehicle used by the Sisters of Charity of St Anne to collect children from daycare was stolen. There is a common thread to most of these crimes and they have been committed by persons, including youth, who are on ice and need to commit crime to fund their addiction.

Whilst the NT Police do a fantastic job in combating the trafficking and distribution of illegal drugs, which includes ice, they can always make use of additional information and resources. The newly formed ACIC is an important resource of law enforcement in Australia and will help Territory police do their job more efficiently and effectively.

A more efficient ACIC will lead to better, more timely intelligence being supplied to Territory police and should result in less drugs on our streets, fewer organised crime organisations operating in the Territory and eventually less crime, addiction and misery.

This bill is important in that it recognises the merger of CrimTrac and the Australian Crime Commission, and makes the administration arrangements necessary to facilitate the utilisation of the powerful resources that the new Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission will provide for Territory law enforcement.

These resources will assist in the fight against organised crime, ice and other dangerous drugs. I urge the Labor government to utilise the information and assistance available through this new one-stop shop for criminal intelligence to address the increasing crime in the Territory and secure the safety of our families, children and community.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I will speak briefly to the proposed changes to legislation which, although unlikely to register any interest with the media and the general public watching today's proceedings, must pass as this government moves to reshape the Northern Territory's justice system.

Since last year's election result this government, led by Chief Minister Michael Gunner, has made clear its intention to overhaul the way justice is administered in the Northern Territory and announced some dramatic changes to the way offenders and victims are dealt with.

The changes outlined in the Justice and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Crime Commission) Bill are at the opposite end of the spectrum to those I have just referred to. As the Attorney-General put it during the second reading of the bill in November, the proposed tweaks are of a housekeeping nature.

In a nutshell the bill seeks to reflect the abolition of CrimTrac on 1 July 2016, when the Commonwealth agency's functions were absorbed by the Australian Crime Commission. The bill will amend the *Australian*

Crime Commission (Northern Territory) Act and the *Police Administration Act* to remove references to CrimTrac and replace them with references to the Australian Crime Commission.

It also makes provision in the latter act to recognise that arrangements made in regard to the sharing of database information via CrimTrac prior to 1 July 2016 are taken to now be in effect between the minister or Police Commissioner and the Australian Crime Commission.

Additionally, the bill proposes amendments to remove references to the Federal Magistrates Court, an entity that has been abolished in favour of the Federal Circuit Court. The changes present no significant policy issues for the Territory Labor government, and all of us sitting here in the Chamber would be stunned if they ruffled any feathers.

Legislative changes similar to what this government is aiming to achieve with the bill have already been adopted in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, so it is simply a case of ensuring the administration of the NT's justice system is accurate, streamlined and reflects national best practice.

What the Australian Crime Commission is delivering in facilitating an exchange of database information across jurisdictions shares a common value with what this government provided at-risk Territorians through the recently passed changes surrounding the mutual recognition of domestic violence orders, so it is important the NT's legislation accurately reflects the role it is playing.

The steps taken in this bill are small, but they are nonetheless steps towards a rebuilt justice system that affords its administrators the powers to prosecute and protect Territorians in a fair, equitable and expedited manner.

The proposed amendments need to be made, and these are hardly changes that will garner front-page headlines, but they go hand in hand with the Territory Labor government's overall vision of a transparent, accountable justice system that ensures some of the historical transgressions that have sullied the NT's reputation in recent times are never repeated.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill and commend it to the House.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the members for their contributions to this debate.

This bill, although seeming very minor in nature, goes to the heart of some of the points made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition regarding a safe community and making sure we resource our courts and police to do their job properly.

I am very proud to be part of a government that last week announced \$45m for a safer Territory. We will spend that on upgrading and replacing the NT Police Force's core policing system to improve public safety and scrutiny for all Territorians. The Police Real-time Online Management Information System will be replaced with a new system, which will improve the delivery of law enforcement and emergency services to our community.

Our police have a very tough job to do on the front line, keeping Territorians safe every day. They work in very trying conditions. It is very hot at certain times of the year and very cold—in Central Australia—at other times of the year. We need to give them the tools to do their job properly. This government is not only investing in Katherine, in emergency services, but we are investing in Palmerston with the new police station. We are investing in this system to help police do their job and provide them with the right resources.

We are also making sure we give police the allocation of resources they need to do their job by delivering on the 120 extra police officers, which the former government failed to deliver for Territorians.

This legislation is fairly minor in nature, but it talks to a point on community safety. We saw in the recent budget that \$26m is allocated for the Palmerston police station. That will be an additional \$11m for stage two on top of the \$15m that was already fast-tracked late last year for stage one. It will mean the entire Palmerston police station is completed in one project, years earlier than planned. It will provide a 24-hour police station, offering round-the-clock police presence for the Palmerston community.

We are listening to the community's concerns regarding crime and antisocial behaviour and we are acting on it.

In the Katherine region there is \$8m for a new fire and emergency services precinct. We listened to the community's needs. The Member for Katherine lobbied hard for this announcement in the Katherine region.

Not only are we delivering on legislation, we are delivering for the police officers on the beat so they can support each other. We are providing certainty. If police know they will get the numbers through the training academy they can provide the allocation of resources where they see fit.

I pick up on the comment made by the Member for Spillett in regard to ice. We acknowledge that ice is a serious challenge across the country, including the Northern Territory. We believe that Territorians are entitled to control over their lives and need access to high-quality services. As a government we are continuing to implement the NT Ice Action Plan and we are ensuring rehabilitation services are provided across the Northern Territory.

The member spoke about visiting Banyan House; we have a number of community-based providers. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit those onsite and talk to the staff about the important work they provide in helping Territorians get their lives back on track. Madam Speaker, as you would know, the Ice Select Committee conducted an inquiry into ice use in the Northern Territory and reported back in November 2015.

The Ice Action Plan, called Tackling Ice in the Northern Territory, was launched by the previous government in February 2016, along with a website: www.breaktheice.nt.gov.au. We have continued Ice Action Plan because, as a parliament and a community, we need to tackle these measures together. We know the horrors of the impacts of ice on individuals, families, friends and loved ones. We want to continue this plan because it is good work that people in our hard-working public service have delivered on. The plan contains whole-of-government and agency-specific activities to reduce the supply, demand and harms of ice.

The plan is being driven by a standing committee to form a whole-of-government coordination. We saw legislative changes in this House at the end of 2015. We continue to invest in a range of government and non-government services to provide withdrawal treatment and support for a range of substances, including ice. We know the harm that drug and alcohol abuse causes in our community.

There is a mix of residential, rehabilitation, outpatient and outreach services, with a focus on counselling, harm prevention approaches, supporting withdrawal and relapse prevention. Helping people overcome a substance abuse problem is difficult, but the extent of relapse is significant. It is important to provide support so there is no relapse.

Withdrawal and community care guidelines have been established to assist community and private practitioners in managing dependence. We are also focused on supporting young people to avoid drugs and have the skills to say no to drugs. Education resources have been developed to assist school staff and parents to talk with young people about the harms of drugs, increase community understanding of the effects of drugs use, targeting those most at risk, and improve access to telephone information, counselling and follow-up services. The Department of Education is working hard on a whole-of-system approach to positive behaviour and wellbeing.

We can engage with our very young children about healthy choices, eating healthy, getting enough sleep and looking after themselves from a young age. Then as they grow up and face challenges they can use those skills.

Funding has been allocated from the Australian Government in response to the National Ice Taskforce final report. The NT Primary Health Network has been provided funding to commission alcohol and other drug services to build capacity for community treatment for ice and other drugs in the Northern Territory. This is important legislation allowing states and territories to work together. We need to give police the tools they need and the court system access to these resources. This legislation provides for that.

The Justice and Other Legislation Amendment (Australian Crime Commission) Bill 2016 provides for amendments consequential to the merger of the Australian Crime Commission and CrimTrac. CrimTrac is referenced in various Northern Territory acts and regulations. I will talk about the consequential amendments that are therefore proposed to the following acts and regulations:

- *Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act*
- Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Regulations
- *Firearms Act*
- *Australian Crime Commission (Northern Territory) Act*
- *Interpretation Act*
- *Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-Vesting) Act*
- *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Northern Territory) Act*
- *Competition Policy Reform (Northern Territory) Act*
- *Police Administration Act*.

The bill also amends section 11 of the *Australian Crime Commission (Northern Territory) Act* so the quorum for the Australian Crime Commission Board is nine members rather than seven. This reflects section 7F of the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002*.

The new section 172 of the *Police Administration Act* provides that under section 147A, relating to DNA information between CrimTrac and the minister or the commissioner, as in force immediately before 1 July 2016, is deemed from that date to have been in agreement with the Australian Crime Commission.

I note that the amendments to the *Interpretation Act* include definitions of the Australian Crime Commission, the Federal Circuit Court and the Federal Court. Amendments are therefore also made to the *Jurisdiction of Courts (Cross-Vesting) Act* and the *Competition Policy Reform (Northern Territory) Act* along with the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Northern Territory) Act* to take into account the new definition of 'Federal Court'.

At the November 2015 meeting of the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council it was agreed that the necessary legislative and administrative steps would be taken within each jurisdiction to put into effect the proposed merger of CrimTrac and the Australian Crime Commission. Ministers at that meeting also agreed to a new intergovernmental agreement.

Whilst talking about the previous functions of CrimTrac and the Australian Crime Commission, I will recap for the House. CrimTrac and the Australian Crime Commission are two of Australia's national law enforcement bodies, created to provide police with access to national policing information and intelligence. CrimTrac was Australia's policing information-sharing agency. Its operations and governance structures were underpinned by an intergovernmental agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories. The Australian Crime Commission is Australia's national criminal intelligence agency. It was established by the *Australian Crime Commission Act 2002*, which was Commonwealth legislation, and then by various state and territory acts such as the *Australian Crime Commission (Northern Territory) Act*.

The basis of the merger agreed to at that meeting by all states and territories was that the limited interoperability and information sharing between CrimTrac and the Australian Crime Commission affected their ability to support police and other key stakeholders to manage crime-related tasks. Each agency recognised that they had vulnerabilities in the areas that were strengths of the other agency.

For example, the Australian Crime Commission had a sophisticated analytical capability for providing intelligence, but prior to the merger had full connectivity to only 20% of the national criminal information data holdings. Conversely, CrimTrac informed 90% of the everyday, on-the-ground police operations, but its ICT blueprint for national police information sharing 2014–18 recognised the need for analytic capability across its data to better support policing.

As we have outlined, the merger took place on 1 July 2016. The former functions of the Australian Crime Commission following the commencement of the *Australian Crime Commission (National Policing Information Charges) Act 2016* and the older intergovernmental agency agreement was terminated.

Although quite technical in nature relating to legislation and the ability to share information, this is a very important piece of legislation, just as important as this government's \$45m commitment for a safer Northern Territory, which includes a clinical core policing system.

We acknowledge that those working in this space, our police officers and those involved in court processes, have a tough job to do. As a government we want to support them not only through providing resources through Budget 2017–18, but also through legislation.

This is almost a housekeeping piece of legislation. None of the amendments raise any significant policy issues, but nonetheless it is an important piece of legislation. All the other states and territories have also agreed to enact the legislation. I think it was spoken about by the other members in debate that New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland have made the consequential amendments reflecting the merger. This piece of legislation ensures that the Northern Territory does its part.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

LIMITATION AMENDMENT (CHILD ABUSE) BILL (Serial 16)

Continued from 15 March 2017.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, the Limitation Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill removes the limitation period that applies to civil claims for damages resulting from child abuse. The opposition supports this bill.

Currently the limitation period on civil claims, which is the time limit within which legal proceedings must be commenced for child abuse actions, is set out in the *Limitation Act*. The limit is set at three years, which in the case of a minor would be when the person turns 18 years of age.

The Limitation Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill will remove this limitation period altogether, meaning victims of child abuse will be able to bring a civil claim for damages resulting from the abuse when they are comfortable and able to do so, regardless of how long ago the incidents giving rise to the course of action occurred.

These amendments originated from recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2015. Hereafter, I will refer to it as the Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission made a number of findings, and based on these the following recommendations for legislative changes:

1. State and territory governments should introduce legislation to remove any limitation period that applies to a claim for damages brought by a person where that claim is founded on the personal injury of the person resulting from sexual abuse of the person in an institutional context when the person is or was a child.
2. State and territory governments should ensure that the limitation period is removed with retrospective effect and regardless of whether or not a claim was subject to a limitation period in the past.
3. State and territory governments should expressly preserve the relevant courts' existing jurisdictions and powers so that any jurisdiction or power to stay proceedings is not affected by the removal of the limitation period.
4. State and territory governments should implement these recommendations to remove limitation periods as soon as possible, even if that requires that they be implemented before the Royal

Commission's recommendations in relation to the duty of institutions and identifying a proper defendant are implemented.

This bill addresses each of these recommendations and broadens the scope by removing the limitation period on other forms of child abuse, not only sexual abuse. This, quite rightly, includes physical abuse and psychological abuse arising out of sexual or physical abuse.

In normal circumstances where people may claim damages against a person or institution, it should be noted that limitation periods do serve a purpose and are justifiable in a number of ways. When claims are delayed, evidence may be destroyed or become inaccessible, and witnesses' memories become less reliable, increasing the risk of miscarriage of justice for both parties.

Limitations on historical claims encourage claimants to start proceedings as soon as reasonably possible and prevent undue oppression to the defendant. That is why it is important that this bill preserves the court's power to stay proceedings addressed in section 5(5), which states the removal of limitation:

... does not limit a court's power to summarily dismiss or permanently stay proceedings where the lapse of time has a burdensome effect on the defendant that is so serious that a fair trial is not possible.

It is important that the court's powers to prevent an unfair trial not be limited, and this bill does not limit the court's powers in that regard.

The Royal Commission found that while most sexual offences against children were reported within months of the event, in NSW nearly one in four sexual assaults were reported more than five years after the event, and that on average it took survivors of child sexual abuse 22 years to disclose the abuse, which clearly falls well outside the current three-year limitation period in the Northern Territory.

There may be a delay in litigation related to child abuse, or reporting the abuse at all, for a number of reasons. Findings of the Royal Commission were that it is common for victims to wrongly blame themselves or feel embarrassed or ashamed, making it difficult to tell anyone. Even when a victim does report the abuse, it cannot be assumed that commencing civil litigation will be the first priority. The finding was that generally a victim does not disclose until they feel safe to do so and have achieved the right mental state. This frequently does not occur until some time has passed. As a Royal Commission report stated:

Some report the abuse as adults, and for some, this does not occur until many years after the abuse ... Delayed reporting is particularly common in cases of institutional child sexual abuse where, for example, the abuser is a trusted church member ... or a staff member in a boarding school or residential care facility.

It is simply not fair that a person should be denied compensation for the trauma they experienced as a child when they may still be suffering the effects of that trauma, which can be severe and lifelong. They will still be required to properly plead and prove their case in order to recover, but they should be given the opportunity to do so.

In 2013 the Australian Institute of Family Studies conducted a comprehensive study on the long-term effects of trauma from child sexual abuse, which indicated a number of significant links between a history of child sexual abuse and a range of adverse outcomes both in childhood and well into adulthood. Findings showed a link between child sexual abuse and a wide spectrum of adverse social, sexual, interpersonal and physical health outcomes.

Some of the health consequences which can affect victims throughout their lifetime include, but are not limited to, post-traumatic symptoms, depression, substance abuse, helplessness, negative attributions, engagement in risky behaviours, aggressive behaviours and conduct problems, eating disorders, and anxiety. In a 2011 study child sexual abuse was even linked to psychotic disorders, including schizophrenia, delusional and personality disorders.

The findings of other research suggest victims of child sexual abuse are generally at an increased risk of re-victimisation.

The strongest links were with depression, alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorders for female survivors, and anxiety-related disorders for male survivors. These disorders are difficult to overcome and

affect the victim and loved ones. It is inconceivable to imagine suffering at the hand of abuse as a child only to be denied access to a civil court proceeding due to a limitation period when the effects of the trauma are so severe, long term and far reaching.

A memorable quote from the Royal Commission's Redress and Civil Litigation report in relation to limitation period is as follows:

The statute is designed for someone who has tripped over in K-Mart, it is not designed for victims of child sexual abuse.

That is clearly the case when you consider how long the trauma can persist. That is why it is reasonable, given the nature of the effects of child abuse, that the limitation period be removed entirely. The Royal Commission made findings to the effect that limitation periods can be a significant barrier to victims perusing civil litigation against the perpetrators of child abuse. This can occur in a number of ways—often debate over the limitation period and whether or not a claim can extend litigation by years.

The Royal Commission heard from a number of cases in which the claims of abuse were never heard or determined on the merits of the claim. There were a number of cases where victims were deterred from even commencing civil litigation due to the potential for substantial legal costs and time spent in litigation. Witness accounts testify to the fact that by the time they were ready to pursue civil litigations it was already too late.

Research conducted by the University of Sydney Law School for the Royal Commission found that the abolition of a statute of limitations, or time limit, for the bringing of claims based on childhood abuse results in a marked increase in reporting of those incidents. If removing the limitation period prompts just one survivor of child abuse to report and helps just one victim achieve the justice they deserve, it will already be worthwhile.

Child abuse, including sexual abuse, is a severe breach of trust at a young age and can have far-reaching and long-lasting affects for victims. They should not be denied the justice that civil litigations may provide, no matter how much time has passed since the damage occurred.

This bill cannot erase the trauma suffered by victims of child abuse; however, removing the limitation periods for damages can help remove one of the barriers to justice, and the therapeutic impact of these changes should not be underestimated.

This opposition has made it clear on a number of occasions that we are firmly on the side of victims of crime, and it is refreshing to see support for victims upheld in this parliament by way of this bill. Everything we do in this parliament should give due consideration to the rights of victims and should send a clear message that they are supported and protected, as that is our responsibility.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I support this very important amendment to the *Limitation Act*.

It is always important to look across all states and territories when considering implementing reforms. In the case of historical institutional child abuse it appears that all matters seem to fall back to the relevant state or territory to prosecute offences and for civil claims to be made. Therefore it is doubly important that each jurisdiction has its own contemporary legislation and that each jurisdiction does not enact legislation that is contrary to national thinking, particularly in important matters such as compensation for serious child abuse, including sexual abuse.

It is important that the Territory looks at what other states and territories are doing. As the Minister for Justice pointed out in her introductory speech, other places such as NSW in 2016, Victoria in 2015 and the ACT in 2016 removed limitation periods in relation to damages claims resulting from child sexual abuse. Tasmania is drafting such appropriate legislation, and there is no doubt the Territory must do the same. Pleasingly, every state either has implemented or will implement legislation like we are doing with this bill. Our bill is most similar to that of New South Wales.

Considering Australia continues to move through a difficult period of discovery regarding widespread historical institutionalised child abuse, it is important those victims have the opportunity to file for damages, as should any future victims. They should not be limited in time for claims. Many victims do not come forward until a long period has passed since the act was committed, for a range of valid and extremely personal reasons.

This bill removes limitation periods for child abuse claims. Whilst it is a requirement of the national Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, it is also a compassionate and sensible thing for us to do. We all recall that in September 2015 the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its Redress and Civil Litigation report, which, amongst other things, recommended that state and territory governments remove limitation periods that apply to a claim for damages resulting from child sexual abuse; that such amendments should operate retrospectively; that the amendments preserve the courts' existing jurisdictions and powers to stay proceedings; and that the amendments be implemented as soon as possible. I am pleased this bill implements those recommendations.

One of the Royal Commission's most notable findings was that through its years of work and the thousands of allegations it examined, on average it took a victim 22 years to reveal abuse. Limitation periods to sue someone are generally about three years after the harm, three years after someone turns 18 or, in some cases, after six years. That is why the Royal Commission recommended change, and it was right to do so.

I am aware that in the ACT there have been a number of cases in which victims were not able to sue the offender, even when they had proven the harm, due to the *Limitation Act* provisions. In fact, there have been cases in which the victim has been told they are simply out of time. As an additional blow, they had to pay the court costs of the offender. It is a double hit to very vulnerable people.

Another example is when a victim was unable to claim due to legal limitation periods in Queensland. It was the case of *Hopkins v Queensland* in which a victim was abused as a child in foster care. She was unable to sue beyond six years after her 18th birthday but did not become aware of the psychiatric harm she suffered until this period had well and truly expired.

Due to legal limitation periods a group of 15 young women in NSW were statute-barred from pursuing claims against the Parramatta Girls Home, where they were raped and bashed. I do not think anybody here feels that is fair.

I suspect the limitation bill as it currently stands did not anticipate that it would have such a detrimental effect on complex issues like institutionalised child abuse. That is why it is very important that the legislative change is retrospective, with safeguards to ensure the courts have discretion about historical claims or claims that have already been properly examined in the court system. It is very much about appropriate opportunity for justice.

This bill provides much-needed support to victims of child sexual abuse. We know the work of the national Royal Commission is ongoing, and our government will continue to examine recommendations being made. If required we will bring further legislative change such as this before the House.

Well done to the Attorney-General and her department for the work being done on this. It is often difficult for victims to have their voices heard, and it is an important role of any government to assist them in that process and not put up road blocks along the way.

I thank the Parliamentary Library Service for some of the research they provided me in preparation for the debate today. Whilst I do not quote a lot of material in the House, it provides a much broader understanding of the things we talk about, such as the importance of the legislation before the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I support this very important bill. I thank the Member for Sanderson for her views on this bill, as well as the Member for Spillett. I also thank the government for introducing the bill.

I think everything has been covered very well by all speakers, but I want to refer back to the second reading, which says:

The bill demonstrates the government's compassion and commitment to support survivors of child abuse by removing time barriers and allowing them the opportunity to bring their claims before a court.

As the Member for Sanderson mentioned, there were a number of cases in Queensland and NSW where people who had been abused were not able to take their cases to court simply because of time barriers. This is an amendment to the *Limitation Act*, so it removes those limitations which stop people from taking someone to court over matters that occurred outside of the normal limitation period.

The second reading speech says:

New section 5A removes the limitation period on actions for damages for personal injury arising from child abuse if that person was a child at the time of the alleged abuse.

The child abuse covered by the amendment will be sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and psychological abuse arising out of the sexual or serious physical abuse, regardless as to whether such abuse took place in an institution.

It goes on to say:

There is no reason to limit the bill to apply only in instances of child sexual abuse, nor should it be limited to certain places where the abuse occurred, such as institutions.

That is very important. As the minister said in the second reading, we are talking about psychological abuse, which can go on for many years. Some of the victims can start to believe they are guilty in what happened, which is part of what happens when psychological abuse takes place. To some extent they are coerced into covering up the abuse.

It is good that the government has broadened the definition, if you can put it that way; even though it says 'serious physical abuse' it is not defined in the bill. It sets a higher bar when it comes to defining sexual abuse. It also recognises the vulnerability of children and provides adequate time frames for survivors of child abuse to comprehend and respond to harm.

The bill applies retrospectively, which is very important because it means limitation periods will not apply, regardless of when the abuse occurred. That is seen in various sections of the bill. Sections 54(1) and (2) allow those cases to continue on the grounds that the limitation period applying to the course of action had expired, which is key to this legislation.

An important note in the second reading, which falls under section 5A(5) says:

... this section does not limit a court's power to summarily dismiss or permanently stay proceedings where the lapse of time has a burdensome effect on the defendant that is so serious that a fair trial is not possible.

Regardless of the importance of these changes, we have to recognise that time can diminish people's memories, and you need to have something in this bill which allows the defendant to have a fair trial or be heard where there is some doubt about the accusations because of the lapse of time that has occurred.

Part (5) of section 5A says:

This section does not limit:

- (a) any inherent jurisdiction, implied jurisdiction or statutory jurisdiction of a court; or*
- (b) any other powers of a court arising or derived from the common law or under any other Act (including any Commonwealth Act), rule of court, practice note or practice direction.*

That is an important part of this bill to give it balance.

There is no doubt this bill is a very important one. As other speakers have said, it has been introduced in other states such as New South Wales and Victoria. Any legislation which allows victims the right to take someone to court for sexual abuse, psychological abuse or physical abuse, no matter where it has occurred, is something that would rightfully be supported by all members of this parliament. I support it.

Child abuse is one of those terrible crimes that causes distress to many young people, some not so young now. Hopefully those who have suffered will find—perhaps this is not the right word—satisfaction from the findings of the Royal Commission. No one can ever wipe away the pain caused by that abuse, but at least by having a Royal Commission those who were the cause of sexual abuse will be brought to justice. If this change to the *Limitation Act* can assist that, it is well worth supporting.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I also support the legislative changes that will ensure those who abuse Northern Territory children cannot run out the clock on answering for their heinous crimes in a civil court.

Since the national Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was launched in 2013 I, like most people, have watched in horror as the extent of systemic abuse was relived by witnesses, often decades after the fact. In many cases child abuse survivors have been unable to seek reparations for the physical and psychological pain they have suffered because they spoke out too long after statutes of limitation had passed.

With the changes proposed in the Limitation Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill, this government will remove the limitation period in which civil action must be taken against offenders and, in doing so, provide a pathway for some of the most vulnerable Territorians to redress wrongdoings that have caused lifelong hurt.

Currently the *Limitation Act* provides that an action founded in tort—that is, a civil wrong that causes unfair loss or harm—must commence within three years from the date the action transpired. For minors the three-year limitation period begins when they turn 18, irrespective of what age they were when the child abuse took place.

I believe such a time frame is manifestly inadequate and fails to take into account that the mental and emotional effects of such treatment, which can become life sentences, often take many years for a victim to fully acknowledge and understand. If it takes someone who has spent a lifetime coming to terms with the damage caused by those who perpetrated the abuse, are we not causing additional suffering by placing a finite time period in which they have to seek civil atonement? It is mindboggling.

In fact, the Royal Commission's 2015 Redress and Civil Litigation report poses a similar question in regard to whether a limitation period was fair and in the spirit of ensuring a carriage of justice. In the report the six commissioners noted:

Our case studies and private sessions to date leave us in no doubt that many people, while children, were injured by being subjected to child sexual abuse in institutions or in connection with institutions. In some cases, their injuries are severe and long lasting. People can be affected by these injuries for the rest of their lives.

Because of the nature and impact of the abuse they suffered, many victims of child sexual abuse have not had the opportunity to seek compensation for their injuries that many Australians generally can take for granted.

Of the report's 99 recommendations, three pertained to the time frames victims should have to commence civil litigation. The commission proposes state and territory government ensure the limitation period is removed with retrospective effect, regardless of whether a claim was subject to a limitation period in the past.

To date, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have scrapped the limitations periods in their respective legislation, while the ACT has enacted legislation removing it specific to child sexual abuse that occurred in an institution. It is our turn to stand up, take action and prevent the passage of time stopping those who suffered the most abhorrent abuse as children from seeking restitution.

The amendments proposed in the bill we are debating in this Chamber today do not differentiate between abuse that took place in an institution or another setting, and cover that of a sexual, serious physical or psychological nature. This is in line with legislation adopted in New South Wales and Victoria and recognises that any of the abuse I referred to can have a traumatic and far-reaching impact to those on the receiving end of it.

With this bill anyone in the NT under the age of 18 who was abused sexually, severely physically or who suffers psychological damage as a result of the aforementioned acts no longer has a ticking clock adding to the angst of holding the offender accountable for their actions.

It is a perspective supported by the Royal Commission, which stated in its 2015 report:

There is now clear evidence that it is likely to take many survivors years, even decades, to disclose their experience of sexual abuse as a child.

What a sentence. This bill is fair and recognises the difficulties that victims face in simply acknowledging the abuse they suffered as children, let alone the complexities involved in launching legal action against the perpetrator in a timely manner.

It is not about money. Any suggestion otherwise represents a slap in the face for the child abuse survivors who are brave enough to speak out and confront those who betrayed the most intimate of trust. While the proposed changes remove the limitation period in which civil litigation must begin, this Territory Labor government is one that believes a strong society is built on the foundation of an equitable justice system.

This bill adheres to the legal principle of *res judicata*, which refers to a matter that has previously been judged on its merits and is not able to be re-litigated.

Given that the Royal Commission data determined it took survivors on average 22 years to disclose their abuse, the amendments to the *Limitation Act* will provide adequate time frames for them to understand and respond to the hurt they suffered. It will also send a loud message to offenders that Territorians will not condone any type of abuse, be it sexual, physical or psychological, against the future generations of this place we all love and call home.

We have all either witnessed or read about the impact child abuse can have on victims decades after the fact, including mental health issues and substance addictions that can prevent them from leading productive, fulfilling lives.

We cannot undo the revolting actions of offenders or erase the physical and psychological marks they have left. But with this bill we can allow survivors of child abuse all the time they need to process what has happened to them and decide whether seeking damages will help them heal.

Madam Speaker, I support this amendment. It is long overdue and I commend its passage to the House.

Ms LAWLER (Education): Madam Speaker, I support this bill which seeks to amend the *Limitation Act* so that time is no longer a barrier for Territorians seeking damages and justice for a person who has experienced abuse as a child. It is great to see that we are in line with New South Wales and Victoria regarding this.

These changes are about showing compassion for those in society who are most vulnerable to ensure they are not prevented from seeking justice when they are ready and able to. Currently in the Northern Territory the *Limitation Act* requires that legal proceedings in response to an injury or a wrongful act, including abuse, must commence within three years from when the action happened. If the injury or abuse happened while a person was a child the legal proceedings must commence within three years of the person turning 18 years of age.

Most of us who are over 18 years of age can imagine that three years after 18 years of age is still not very old. Most of us would have still been mulling things over in our head and trying to sort out our lives at the age of 21. Most of us would not have had our act together or been able to resolve some of the complex issues we may have experienced as children.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commented that while limitations for some personal injury claims may be appropriate, for example, if you trip on a footpath or injure yourself, time limitations are not appropriate for someone who was abused as a child.

The Member for Katherine spoke about that Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and how horrific it has been to follow those cases. As somebody who has worked in schools as a teacher and a principal, and having been involved with young people in sports, hearing those stories—and the trust that families placed in institutions such as the church, schools, boarding facilities and sporting clubs. It is just horrific to think there were people who abused those children.

While listening to those stories it was traumatic for me to think it might have been my child, niece, nephew or family member. For those of us who are very fortunate not to have experienced those traumas in our lives, we are lucky. One in four children experience abuse in their childhood. It was horrific to listen to the stories through the Royal Commission.

But it is fantastic to see this legislation coming through each state. The *Limitation Act* is being addressed. It is 2017, so why has it taken so long for this to happen? Any sensible person would think this is well and

truly overdue. I also commend the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse for the work that is now flowing out and which other states are involved with.

The Royal Commission heard many times that the existence of limitation periods acts as a significant barrier for survivors of abuse commencing civil litigation. Those stories impart on these people's lives. Most of us may have had friends or people we know who have shared stories with the Royal Commission, not necessarily on sexual abuse but physical abuse, and how those horrors and nightmares stick with them throughout their lives. Those times when your mind floats into empty spaces, it is often those horrors that are relived. The Royal Commission has done a great thing by removing those barriers in the Northern Territory.

One of the impacts of serious abuse is that victims may not disclose what happened to them until they feel safe to do so. Many survivors are unable to disclose their abuse until well into adulthood. All the research and literature says that. For a range of reasons, until you are in a position of strength it is hard to address some of those issues. You may want to block it out and not relive the horrors. In the case where it is members of the church or even close family members, it is often about waiting until that person passes on or there is a change of circumstances. You might remove yourself from that community, especially if it is a church which has a strong influence in a small country town. It is often about having to wait until you have the strength and your personal circumstances change.

Children who have been abused by people who have authority or power over them often blame themselves for the abuse. They think, 'If I had not done something wrong then the abuse would not have occurred. It was my fault. What did I do that caused this?' That is what the abusers perpetrate, power over their victims to make them feel embarrassed or ashamed and to ensure the victim does not tell. They will often threaten them about other family members. There is lifelong trauma that goes with that. For children who have been abused, it is often about blaming themselves.

Evidence suggests that the closer the relationship between an abused child and a perpetrator, the less likely it is that the abuse will be formally reported. That is a terrible situation. Young children who feel guilty and that they are to blame are less likely to report the matter. Feelings of powerlessness, guilt and shame for letting it happen can stay with a person for a very long time, making it difficult to tell anyone about what has happened for many years.

The Royal Commission's analysis of the submissions and testimonies they received identified that on average it takes over 22 years for a survivor to disclose abuse. That is an average, which means there are plenty of people who take a lot longer than 22 years to have the strength and courage to be able to testify against someone who has abused them.

Abuse can severely affect a child's ability to communicate and interact with others and form positive, reciprocal relationships. Further to this, children who have experienced abuse are more likely to have poorer education outcomes and poorer mental health, including increased risk of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Educators see this in classrooms in the Northern Territory. When we talk about abuse we hear it is family violence and sexual abuse that have the biggest impact on children. It impacts their learning. If any of us thought about the feelings we would have as a young child who was physically abused that morning or the night before—how difficult it would be to go into a classroom, sit down and be able to learn. We know the impact of not having a healthy breakfast and how that can distract a child's learning, let alone severe trauma or abuse of any sort.

We can all relate to that. If you have an argument with your partner before work, of course you replay those moments of what you should have said, what could have happened and what will happen that night. As adults we can manage those things and manage our emotions, but imagine a young child having to go to school, play with their friends, sit in a classroom and pretend nothing happened—to fear going back into that household and that situation, whether it is a foster family or otherwise. The impacts of depression and anxiety, as well as substance abuse, can occur as you age.

It is no surprise that people who experience abuse as a child find it difficult to talk about their experiences and problems with family, friends and support services, let alone argue with legal services about whether or not the abuse happened within a permissible time frame.

How hard would it be to talk to family, especially if it was another family member who abused you? Will you be believed by your friends and support networks? Let alone then having to go through those things with a

lawyer and then find out the time frames were inadmissible. You can imagine the added stress that would cause. This legislation is way overdue.

Limitation periods have been described as a great injustice against survivors and victims of child abuse, an injustice which can cause further trauma for victims if they are not able to seek legal redress for what has happened to them. Justice can be part of the therapeutic benefits; I think we can all understand that. If you feel that the person who perpetrated the abuse and was in power has seen the consequences of their actions, that is a step towards being able to heal and understand that it was not your fault and you were not to blame; you were the victim. Seeking legal redress can give people a therapeutic benefit.

Survivors of abuse advocacy, support group lawyers and academics have all called for limitation periods to be removed. Any of us with a heart and some compassion can understand that this should have happened long ago.

The Royal Commission has recommended that all governments introduce legislation to remove any limitation period that applies to claims for damages brought by a person for personal injury resulting from sexual abuse in an institutional context when they were a child. It is right that this bill is not limited to sexual abuse or abuse that happened in an institution. As the Attorney-General explained, the effects of abuse can be equally traumatising, regardless of where the abuse occurred or what form it took.

The Royal Commission also recommended that the limitation period be removed with retrospective effect. This bill will do that. Under this reform limitation periods will not apply, regardless of when the abuse occurred. Those victims who have been ready to take action, but have been unable to do so under the existing legislation—passing this legislation will allow them to come forward and move into a period of healing, and think about the trauma and improve the situation themselves.

It makes perfect sense and demonstrates compassion and understanding to remove barriers that prevent victims of child abuse from seeking legal action. All jurisdictions are enacting legislation to remove limitation periods for child abuse cases.

Survivors of abuse deserve our respect and compassion. We need to make sure we focus on, care for and look after victims of abuse. This bill implements the Royal Commission's recommendations and helps to ensure people who experience abuse as a child can access a fair trial.

I thank the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice for bringing the bill forward, and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Madam Speaker, I support the Limitation Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill.

I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this bill to the House, because it is important. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has exposed to Australia the extent and nature of institutional abuse in our history, including our recent history. As the Royal Commission has stated:

... many victims of child sexual abuse have not had the opportunity to seek compensation for their injuries that many Australians generally can take for granted. While it cannot now be made feasible for many of those who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse to seek common law damages, there is a clear need to provide avenues for survivors to obtain effective redress for this past abuse.

This government recognises this need and is taking action. It accords with the values of this Labor government on our commitment to children and transparency, making sure what we do is right.

As Minister for Territory Families, I have an interest in the bill being brought forward by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. The impact of child abuse is significant, as is the widespread damage that can be experienced by individuals and their families.

As a government we have made a commitment to put children first. We have committed to putting children at the centre of our government. Investing in children and building a safer, fairer and stronger community underpins the future of our Territory. Giving every child the best possible start in life is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do for all Territorians. It will help deliver long-term generational, economic and social benefits for all Territorians.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been harrowing at times. As someone who has followed the commission closely, I think it is important that this legislation supports the bravery of the people who have given their testimony. It has come at significant personal cost to people and has been a very difficult process. In this legislation we honour those people by learning the lessons of what they have put forward, and we are acting to honour their experience.

Measures providing better support for victims of child abuse, in this case reducing current impediments to making legal claims for damages, are critical. I am strongly supportive of the bill.

The work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been far-reaching and comprehensive, and it is encouraging that other jurisdictions such as NSW, Victoria and Queensland have enacted similar legislation to this bill to give effect to the Royal Commission's recommendations. I agree with the Member for Sanderson; this is about us making sure our legislation is contemporary and has a nation-wide response to the issue.

I fully support the approach to this bill to consider child abuse to not only encompass sexual abuse, but serious physical abuse and psychological abuse that arises out of sexual or physical abuse. This is an acknowledgement that all abuse is, at its core, an abuse of power. One of the things the Royal Commission has given us is a new understanding of how to talk about that abuse of power and how it manifests, particularly in the systemic abuse in an institution that has power over children, and the links between sexual abuse and psychological abuse. That is an important part of the way we move forward.

This bill also covers abuse whether or not it has occurred in an institution. This is only fair, for the effects of the abuse are not determined by where the abuse occurred.

The current *Limitation Act* provides an action that must be commenced within three years from the date on which the cause of action first occurred. For minors this is when they reach the age of 18. I agree with the Member for Drysdale; three years after the age of 18 is not long. Twenty-one is still very young; it is when you are still processing those issues, particularly when child abuse triggers such deep-seated emotional and psychological responses. I imagine that very few children who have been abused would be in a personal position to take such action as children, or even in their early adult years.

Removing the current limitation period in place under the *Limitation Act* provides a clear message to victims that as a government and a community we are aware of the real and debilitating difficulties they face in disclosing childhood abuse and seeking action.

As a social worker who has practised for over 25 years, I have seen this time and time again; people will come to you for counselling on a specific issue and it is not long before you scratch the surface and find an underlying issue of childhood abuse. We cannot continue to underestimate the impact of this type of abuse on people. The impacts are far and wide. It is one of the most underdisclosed crimes in our community. Because it is so undisclosed, hidden, personal and so hard to speak about, we constantly underestimate the impact it has on so many people.

We also cannot underestimate the courage it takes to stand up and talk about this. The importance of including psychological abuse in this bill, particularly when it is attached to long-term sexual abuse, is that often the most damaging part is the psychological abuse. It is the abuse of being told you will not be believed, because, 'I am a good bloke and everyone looks up to me. No one will believe you. You are the one who is doing the wrong thing.' Those are messages that people internalise into adulthood.

We cannot underestimate the courage it takes to stand up and tell a story when you still, in your heart, think people will not believe you. Part of this legislation is us, as a government, saying, 'We believe you', by having a process they can follow.

Last Friday I was very pleased to be at the opening of the Alice Springs courthouse. It is a magnificent building. The workmanship that has gone into that building is extraordinary. I was sitting in the courthouse with a full court of Supreme Court judges. It is a very imposing place. It is a very difficult thing to go to court and talk in extremely intimate detail. We are asking a lot of victims when we do that, particularly when we have such low rates of conviction in sexual assault matters.

The new court has facilities for vulnerable witnesses, which is really important. It is a difficult process that can be damaging if people are not ready to do it. By giving people the time to be fully ready, we acknowledge that. That is one of the important things about this legislation.

Territory Families is planning a major reform of the child protection and youth justice legislation. This includes fundamental reforms to the *Youth Justice Act*, *Care and Protection of Children Act*, *Guardianship of Infants Act* and the *Adoption of Children Act*. We need to ensure those acts are aligned. Currently there is no formal decision on how the acts will be amended, but as we progress through consultation across government, the non-government sector and community, we will produce consultation-packed papers into jurisdictional research, holding community forums as well as topic-specific and sector-specific workshops for interested parties to design the advice to government on the legislative reform agenda.

It is a big piece of work we need to contemporise. This is the first step from our Attorney-General in making sure we are keeping our legislation contemporary, lining up with other jurisdictions and keeping the focus of this government on victims of crime, which we have already done through significant reform of domestic violence legislation. This is another step forward.

I am very proud to lead another reform, of which I provided strong direction to my CEO on my first day as minister, and that is a sexual violence prevention frame work. There was money allocated to that reform process in the budget. We need to look at how to prevent such crimes, as has been discussed in the Royal Commission. We need to increase our awareness of sexual violence in the Northern Territory, as well as our reporting levels. We have very low reporting levels, from what women have told me informally about has happened to them. They do not feel comfortable reporting the incidents to police.

Many Indigenous women are not accessing our sexual assault services. Remote women especially have difficulty accessing services. We need to be working in this area much more. This is part of recognising that we respond to historical claims.

I am very pleased to support this bill. It can provide some hope for those who have been seriously abused as children. I do not think we can underestimate the fact this legislation will be a healing process for some people. It sends the message that we support victims of crime, and we are giving a voice to the often voiceless.

I am also equally pleased to be here today, sending a clear message to the community that we care for people who have suffered abuse as children, and that as a community we provide what redress we can.

Ms MANISON (Children): Madam Speaker, I too support this bill provided to parliament by the Attorney-General. This is a very important bill to ensure that victims of child abuse have more opportunity to seek the justice they deserve as their life goes on, having to live through the consequences and tragedy of being abused as a child.

This is an important bill because it shows the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and its Redress and Civil Litigation report, and that action is being taken. Their hard work, and the information gathered—a painstaking, detailed process, but an important one—has been acted upon by jurisdictions to ensure the victims of child abuse have access to better support when they go forward and try to seek justice for the crimes in which they have been the victim.

The report stated that state and territory governments should remove the limitation periods that apply to a claim for damages resulting from child sexual abuse; that such amendments operate retrospectively; that the amendments preserve the court's existing jurisdictions and powers to stay proceedings; and that the amendments be implemented as soon as possible. This government is acting upon that.

It is important work and, to date, we have seen other jurisdictions, namely New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria, remove limitation periods for child abuse cases.

Another important point that I just heard the Member for Braintree discussing is the fact the current *Limitation Act*, to quote from the second reading speech:

... provides that an action founded in tort must be commenced within three years from the date on which the cause of action first accrued.

For minors, the limitation period commences when the minor reaches the age of majority, that is, 18 years of age.

That is a very limited period in somebody's life, particularly after having to endure that type of tragic abuse.

It is vital that governments put in as much support as possible for children and adults who are living their life after suffering abuse. It is important that we do everything we can to protect children in the first place. We said going into the election that we would be sure to put children's wellbeing at the centre of government decision-making. We have a children's subcommittee of Cabinet working on that task. We are developing a 10-year strategy to deal with ways in which we can better support children across the Northern Territory.

The Attorney-General generally sits there as the Minister for Health but, when it comes to legislation such as this, it aligns with some of the actions government is taking in its determination to see better outcomes for children. It is an important part of that process for people who have been victims of child sexual abuse to have a pathway where they can seek justice as time goes on.

Many people here would know somebody who has been a victim of child sexual abuse and has seen, as their life goes forward, the devastating consequences of that and the issues they continue to battle day to day. We have seen this process take place not only in Australia, where there has been significant resources and effort to tackle this issue head on—to understand the issue and extent of child abuse, we are looking at ways to do a better job as a society, as organisations, parliamentarians and governments, to take better care of our kids going forward.

We need better pathways to ensure perpetrators can be dealt with and brought to justice—the importance of that for victims of these crimes to help them move forward. The tragedy is that it is not only a problem extended to this nation. In recent years we have seen a great deal of work across the world, unveiling horrendous levels of abuse with devastating consequences. It is an issue many nations are grappling with to better protect their kids, including those who are now adults. We need to better support them.

This bill is about people in the future who are, tragically, subjected to this type of abuse, and making sure they have greater pathways and levels of support to help them as they progress forward. It is vital that the option is there for them as part of the process of moving forward, making sure perpetrators of that type of abuse are brought to justice.

In the Northern Territory it is important to put these actions and the recommendations of the Royal Commission into place. It is an important process that has unveiled some terrible situations and stories. It has unveiled the fact child abuse of this nature is far broader than you would like to think, and the consequences are devastating.

This bill will go some way in ensuring there are better protections, supports, pathways and avenues in place for those who are unfortunate to suffer that abuse. It is important to have a strong focus on giving those victims the support they deserve. Those people have had to relive pain and suffering. They have done the right thing in standing up and sharing those dreadful experiences with the Royal Commission to see justice served. Their experiences have been heard and acted upon.

People and governments are not sitting on their hands; they are taking action to ensure better support for victims is in place going forward and that we have better systems in place. We must do everything we can to protect our children and support those victims, and this bill shows that the Northern Territory is committed to ensuring that and moving forward. We are serious about putting protections in place for the children of today and tomorrow, and giving adults who live with that experience day to day better support to deal with what they have endured.

I thank that Attorney-General for bringing this bill before the House. It is good to see strong support in this Chamber from the opposition and Independents—understanding the importance of this type of legislation. It helps the victims of child abuse to go forward in their lives and it ensures the important work of the Royal Commission is acted upon.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, as the Attorney-General stated previously, in September 2015 the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which I will refer to as the Royal Commission, released its report ...

VISITORS
Homeschool Students

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Arnhem, please pause so I can welcome some students. Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of some homeschool students and their parents and families. Welcome. I hope you enjoy your time at Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO: It is nice to see homeschool children visiting Parliament House. I echo Madam Speaker's welcome.

The Royal Commission released its Redress and Civil Litigation report. Some of the recommendations outlined by the Attorney-General included that state and territory governments remove limitation periods that apply to a claim for damages resulting from child sexual abuse; that such amendments apply retrospectively; that the amendments preserve the court's existing powers and jurisdictions to stay proceedings; and that the amendments be implemented as soon as possible.

I support the bill, which implements these recommendations of the Royal Commission. The child abuse covered by the amendment will be sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, and psychological abuse arising out of sexual or serious physical abuse, regardless as to whether such abuse took place in an institution.

The safety of our children is paramount. Protecting Territory children is the duty of our families, the wider community and society as a whole. Our children are our future. We even have a Minister for Children, whom we have just heard from—Hon Nicole Manison. The importance of children in our communities is something our government recognises.

As you all know, my background is in education. I taught for five years and have a deep appreciation for young people and their learning and development. I reflect now on the many children in my classroom over the years and how many of them may have suffered child abuse or trauma.

The Minister for Education made the point that we know the negative effects on learning due to lack of nutrition, especially missing breakfast in the mornings. I think now of how much the effects of abuse, both past and present, affect the learner in the classroom.

Children learn with their mind, body and spirit, and it breaks my heart to think that some young people are trying to learn despite damages to their mind, body and spirit. Holistic wellbeing is important. At a young age, when both body and mind are growing and developing at such a rapid rate, any abuse or damage to a child can greatly hinder their learning and growth.

When I was teaching I took students on many excursions. It is a lot of work, and I would not have had the opportunity to do so if I did not have the trust of my students, their families and their communities to care for them and keep them safe during those exciting school learning excursions. Some of trips I took my students on were swimming trips to the neighbouring community, and trips to Darwin, Katherine, Brisbane, Melbourne and Marysville, as well as overseas to Cambodia.

I cannot comprehend the mentality of individuals or groups of people who would, sickeningly, take opportunities, such as excursions, to abuse children in situations where trust is paramount. I am proud to be part of a government that is putting Territory children at the forefront of our decision-making process. I am very proud to be assisting the Minister for Education, Hon Eva Lawler, in my two portfolios, remote education and the Families as First Teachers program.

We have spoken about the Families as First Teachers program on many occasions in parliament. It is a successful program that works. It supports children from zero to five, and their families, in introducing them to education and wellbeing in a safe and fun environment.

This bill adopts a broad approach that is not limited to sexual abuse, as the effects of abuse can be equally traumatising regardless of the form of abuse or where it occurred.

Evidence before the Royal Commission showed that survivors of child abuse can continue to be affected decades after the harm is inflicted. Can you imagine an act or repeated acts causing trauma to a person years and years after it occurred? Times are changing, and society is now openly compassionate and supportive of victims and survivors of child abuse. No victim chooses to suffer. No victim wants to be traumatised. This bill supports those who have suffered child abuse to come forward and get the support they need.

As the Attorney-General stated in her speech, the Royal Commission's research revealed that the average time to disclose childhood sexual abuse is around 22 years. Using this research I will provide an example. A child abused at 10 years old may not disclose the abuse until 22 years later, when they are 32 years old. That is how old I am, and I could not imagine having lived two-thirds of my life with the trauma and anguish caused by abuse. I feel fortunate that I have not had to endure such trauma in my life, but there are others who have not been so lucky.

I am supportive of the Limitation Amendment (Child Abuse) Bill to support those in the community who are our most vulnerable. As the Attorney-General stated this morning, limitation periods are a restriction to justice and ignore the compassion for survivors of child abuse and the justice they deserve. I agree wholeheartedly that this bill recognises the vulnerability of children and will provide survivors of child abuse with the time to comprehend and respond to the harm they have suffered, whether it was recently or years earlier.

Very importantly, the bill applies retrospectively, which means limitation periods will not apply, regardless of when the abuse occurred. Those who have suffered years of trauma from abuse will be able to access support in a time when they are able to confront their abuse in their own mind and space.

This bill demonstrates the government's compassion and commitment to supporting survivors of child abuse by removing time barriers and allowing them the opportunity to bring their claims before a court. I acknowledge and thank my government team members who have spoken today, the opposition for its support of this amendment, and the Independents who support it, particularly the Member for Nelson.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House, and I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this long-awaited legislation before the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to join this debate on very important legislation. I commend the Attorney-General for bringing Territory law to this place. To the young people in the gallery, you have come at a very important time. You are witnessing the important changes and amendments to Territory laws that impact on us all, as citizens of the great Northern Territory. This bill that you are seeing debated in the people's House is about a change to law that is being incorporated across our country.

Other Australian states and jurisdictions are making these changes and the Northern Territory has joined them. It is in response to something quite substantial in the Australian community—the Royal Commission.

The Attorney-General has delivered important information regarding this bill, and the passage of this bill through the House—very carefully prepared, briefed and supported so that members of this House understand what we are doing here, why it is so important and the outcomes it will provide for vulnerable people within our community.

I refer to the Attorney-General's speech in this House. This process started in September 2015 from the Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. There have been some passionate contributions on that by members who are elected community representatives.

It is so important that state and territory governments remove limitation periods that apply to claim for damages resulting from child sexual abuse. It is also important to note the Attorney-General outlined the other jurisdictions that have been processing the same amendments necessary to incorporate this into an outcome for all Australians. To date, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have removed limitation periods for child abuse cases. The Australian Capital Territory has more specifically enacted legislation to remove limitation periods in relation to child sexual abuse that occurred in an institutional context. Western Australia and Tasmania have proposed similar bills to remove limitation periods.

New South Wales and Victoria have implemented broader amendments applying to sexual and serious physical abuse, and in limited circumstances psychological abuse, whether or not that abuse occurred in an institution.

It is important to note that these wonderful young Territorians have witnessed an important bill passing through the House in the Northern Territory and to also understand that if they were to go to Western Australia or Tasmania in the near future they would witness a similar process. This is very important legislation.

In this House members not only research and understand the important elements of the law, but they also bring their own personal experience to this House and to the debate, from their life, family and careers. It makes sense because it gives substance and a context to the debate. What I like in the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory are the local stories—rich Territory history that often relates to our unique nature as Territorians, what I like to call ‘on the frontier’. Each of us brings those values and important life experiences to this.

I spoke at a gathering in Tennant Creek recently, a march celebrating Australian women, particularly Territory women. That gathering was focused on Tennant Creek and Barkly women. It was a great event. There were some keynote speakers. The superintendent of police in the Barkly gave an empowering speech on young women, careers and the opportunities of serving your community. It was a very inspiring speech from the most senior police officer in the region, a person with enormous responsibility that relates to this bill. When you deconstruct who this bill relates to—members of this House have made it clear it relates to all of us and to every child in the Northern Territory.

What underpins the Labor government’s policy—the government elected in August 2016—is the Territory child. That is the underpinning element. The Chief Minister has organised specific structures so every policy processed as part of this government’s work is assessed against its relevance and importance to Territory children.

At that rally I called out a generation of Australians who have called out sexual abuse, in particular childhood sexual abuse. I feel, as an older person, I can add a colloquial layer. The baby boomer generation within this country has made it very clear that we will call out injustice. A gross injustice that has been hiding in the past is childhood sexual abuse.

It is an honour to be part of this generation, which has used the adage ‘enough is enough’ across all aspects of vulnerability and disadvantage within our community and society. These matters often relate to high-level processing in relation to legislation and governance. We have seen this legislation directly tied to findings and recommendations of a Royal Commission. That process gave us great structure to work off. Underpinning that high-level governance was a generation of people who are calling out injustices.

We have heard Charlie King mentioned many times in this House. He leads and mentors a great campaign in reducing family violence and violence against our Territory women. We need leaders like Charlie, who bring a groundswell of supporters from departments and non-government community organisations down to families and individuals.

Charlie, with all his experience, chose football players to champion this cause. What a great idea, to use people we celebrate in our community for being noticed, acknowledged and valued as great sportspeople. We have a new level of elite sportspeople emerging, our Territory women, playing on national platforms in ALF and rugby league. Sportswomen are showing their expertise. They will be able to stand as celebrated people in our community and add to this momentum.

Child sexual abuse is one of the underpinning elements of serious mental health, suffering and pain that has caused people complete disadvantage in achieving their life’s potential. It would be remiss if I did not mention childhood sexual abuse victims as survivors. We need to acknowledge those strong and dedicated people in our community, who have often led this movement within our generation by standing up and being counted. You can relate to those emotional images you see on the television, outside of the Royal Commission, images I witnessed, where people were telling their story. But the underpinning element was that they were telling our community, ‘Yes, but we survived. Yes, we will make a difference. Yes, our participation and our part in the community is to make sure this does not happen to any other kids.’ This includes the institutional level, right down to the individual level.

It is important to note, in this brief contribution to debate, an acknowledgement of the survivors. It is a great concept when you tag ‘survivor’—because people have been through hell, but have an important contribution to make to the ongoing development of our community. ‘We are survivors and we will make sure this does not happen again.’ That mantra is something I feel strongly about. The people you meet in your life, who you can learn from—ask the question, how did you survive? It often provides elements of understanding why others have not done so well, and why others need help.

I remember, as a child, meeting many disadvantaged people in the community, people who were highly traumatised from the First World War. That shows how old I am. I was a child. But these people were still active in our community, and I often wondered why they were so disadvantaged—homeless. These were people living in the community who were vulnerable. I had very supportive family members, who were able to deconstruct my questions and provide a context. It often related to the trauma of World War I, a trauma they were suffering that had intergenerational effects.

It was also important for me to meet survivors of child sexual abuse and understand their stories. It is so important for us, as elected community representatives, to understand and translate that knowledge into our practice and policy that we bring to the Northern Territory.

As Minister for Housing and Community Development, as a minister responsible for local government, a very privileged position, it is important to understand those issues coming through the public housing sector, and the people who have been traumatised and are dealing with their demons. They are coming to terms with all their ongoing challenges and issues. This is not a static space. This is a moving position within people's lives.

I have read some interesting letters from local members who are championing the cause of these community members, bringing those vulnerabilities to my knowledge, to educate me on the constituents we are representing. Those letters make a lot of sense when they come from new members of parliament, who are on the front line, representing their constituents and using those important opportunities through the governance of the Northern Territory. Good on you!

There is one champion in here, whose letter I read this morning. There are a couple of wins, and there will be a couple of hard stories where we need to do some more work, but that is the nature of the beast.

This has been a wonderful debate on this very important legislation. I once again acknowledge the Attorney-General for bringing this important work to the House, for the important work that goes on behind the scenes in the department and, most importantly, for the outcome we will achieve as legislators here today in the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS Essington School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I welcome some students to the gallery, Stage One Legal Studies students from the Essington School, accompanied by their teacher, Mali White. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

PETITION

Petition No 11 – Moratorium on Unconventional Oil and Gas Mining in the NT Division of Lingiari for Seven Years

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 1173 petitioners praying that there be a moratorium on all unconventional oil and gas mining in the Northern Territory Division of Lingiari for seven years. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

We the undersigned respectfully sheweth: moratorium on all unconventional oil and gas mining in the NT division of Lingiari for seven years.

Your petitioners humbly pray that: The NT Division of Lingiari has a moratorium on all unconventional oil and gas mining, fracking, for seven years. This is so accurate data, both good

and bad, can be obtained. The same protection as Darwin, Darwin Rural and Palmerston areas have been granted. We believe this mining poses substantial and unacceptable risks to the NT Division of Lingiari, including but limited to:

- *Contamination of the ground water*
- *Storage issues for toxic waste water*
- *Wells that will degrade over time*
- *Depletion of the ground water/river systems*
- *Increased seismic events*
- *Destruction of our natural beauty and therefore the tourist industry.*

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

LIMITATION AMENDMENT (CHILD ABUSE) BILL (Serial 16)

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank all the members who contributed to the debate today for their support. This is an important bill we are debating today. A number of members from the government side provided comments. I sincerely thank everybody for the time they took to gather those thoughts, read the bill and seek briefings.

I acknowledge the opposition members for their support and for taking the time to get a briefing on this bill.

The Member for Sanderson spoke passionately about the tragic stories across Australia in which victims have not been able to get justice. The member is passionate about supporting victims, and I am proud to work with her and hear about her constituents' concerns. This government will put victims first.

I thank the Member for Nelson for his support with this bill. As he stated, we have taken the wider view on definitions in this legislation. The member made some important comments, and I thank him for that.

The horrible stories we heard at the national Royal Commission demand that legislation in this area recognise the psychological abuse arising from serious physical abuse and/or sexual abuse. As the Member for Nelson noted, the law needs to catch up with the reality of the abuse as it occurred.

I also thank the Member for Katherine for her well-reasoned and considered comments. She is a passionate advocate for law reform and for protecting victims of abuse from being re-traumatised by negative experiences with the justice system. As the member noted, this bill gives victims the chance to heal and then take action to seek justice, which is very important.

We heard from the Member for Drysdale who, as always, is focused on improving the lives of Territory children. It is something she has translated from being a classroom teacher to a school principal to a manager in education and now here, as our Minister for Education. As she noted, this reform is long overdue in the Northern Territory and across Australia. The impact on these limitation periods needs to be removed based on everything we know now about abuse, how it occurred and what the victims went through.

The Member for Drysdale also reflected on a child's learning following abuse. She noted the terrible situation of the powerless guilt and shame that affects so many victims and how that negatively impacts on their ability to get an education. Her vast experience in education is something we are all the better for hearing about.

The Member for Braitling also spoke in support of this bill, and I thank her for her comments. As the Minister for Territory Families, she is making progress across the Territory in implementing reforms to support Territory children and families. I thank the member for her ongoing support for victims of abuse. I note that she recently announced, as part of Budget 2017–18, that \$33m will be invested in frontline services, infrastructure and strategies to support the prevention of domestic and family violence that will

help keep so many Territorians safe. I thank the minister for all the work she does in her portfolio, as I thank all members on the government side.

We have worked on a number of pieces of legislation and brought them into the Assembly in the short period we have been in government. I thank our Deputy Chief Minister, the Member for Wanguri, for talking about our government's focus on putting children at the centre of what we do. She spoke briefly about the subcommittee of Cabinet. This has been a real pleasure; it is something I am passionate about being involved in.

We are putting together a plan to help kids—to make sure that, as a Cabinet, when we are making those important decisions we focus first and foremost on what benefits children, to make sure there are key government agencies that work in the space of helping children and supporting families, and that they are working together across Cabinet.

I acknowledge the supportive comments from the Members for Arnhem and Barkly, both of whom were passionate teachers in a former life, particularly in remote areas of the Northern Territory. Their expertise and contribution to the debate today is very important.

This legislation implements recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse. It is the job of that Royal Commission to uncover where systems across Australia have failed to protect children, and to make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices.

Through the rest of this speech I will be referring to the Royal Commission, but I want to make it clear that I am referring to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse. We have the other Royal Commission taking place in the Territory, so I wanted to clarify that for people listening.

We have heard so many people bravely tell their personal story to the Royal Commission with a view to creating a safer and better environment for all children and seeking justice for survivors of abuse. In September 2015 the Royal Commission released a report recommending the removal of limitation periods that apply to a claim for damages resulting from child sexual abuse in an institutional context.

It is worth quoting the Royal Commission's specific recommendations on this issue. They provide the context for this bill. Recommendations 85 to 88 of the Redress and Civil Litigation report stated:

85. *state and territory governments should introduce legislation to remove any limitation period that applies to a claim for damages brought by a person where that claim is founded on the personal injury of the person resulting from sexual abuse of the person in an institutional context when the person is or was a child*
86. *state and territory governments should ensure that the limitation period is removed with retrospective effect and regardless of whether or not a claim was subject to a limitation period in the past*
87. *state and territory governments should expressly preserve the relevant courts' existing jurisdictions and powers so that any jurisdiction or power to stay proceedings is not affected by the removal of the limitation period*
88. *state and territory governments should implement these recommendations to remove limitation periods as soon as possible, even if that requires that they be implemented before the Royal Commission's recommendations in relation to the duty of institutions and identifying a proper defendant are implemented.*

The bill implements the Royal Commission's recommendation to remove statutory limitation periods for claims for damages for institutional sexual abuse. The bill extends the removal of the limitation periods to include serious physical and psychological abuse arising from sexual or serious physical abuse and it applies to personal injury claims for child abuse generally, not just limited to those alleged in institutions.

The bill will amend the *Limitation Act* to remove limitation periods that otherwise apply to child abuse claims. Amendments include:

- removing the limitation period on actions for damages for personal injury arising from child abuse, which includes sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and psychological abuse arising out of the sexual abuse or serious physical abuse
- providing the amendments apply retrospectively even if a judgement has been given on the basis that a limitation period applying to the cause of action had expired
- enabling the court to set aside a previous judgement determined on the basis on a limitation period had expired, and to take into account any amounts paid or payable by way of damages or costs.

The bill preserves the jurisdiction of a court to consider the merits of a claim and permanently stay proceedings if necessary. The bill applies retrospectively, which means limitation periods will not apply regardless of when the abuse occurred.

Community silence surrounding sexual abuse has meant many victims and survivors have been denied the opportunity to speak out about their experiences. Many victims and survivors are faced with disbelief, blame and a lack of support from those around them.

Sadly, sexual assault is prevalent within our society. In the context of discussing this important legislation that supports the survivors of child abuse, it is timely for me to update the Assembly on what our health system provides for in the Territory to support victims and survivors of sexual abuse. The Member for Brainting, the Minister for Territory Families, also provided helpful information this morning on the range of services and support available to victims through her agency and the funding it provides.

The Department of Health provides the sexual assault referral centres, more commonly known as SARC, across the Northern Territory to provide support for anyone who has experienced sexual assault. This is made available to adults and children, male and female.

Sexual assault can be verbal harassment, unwanted touching or an attack. SARC provides the following services:

- counselling for adults and children who have been sexually assaulted at any time in their life
- information, support and counselling for non-offending parents, family members and partners
- education and information for community or professional groups
- support when going through a legal process
- protective behaviour for children
- working with other government agencies to work on the prevention of sexual assault.

In Darwin and Alice Springs SARC provides 24-hour access to medical, legal and counselling information, and SARC services are also provided in Katherine and Tennant Creek.

In situations where there has been a recent sexual assault, medical assistance is provided and includes screening and preventative treatment for sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy prevention, collection of forensic evidence, screening for drugs where drink spiking is suspected, and provision of medical legal reports.

The main role for SARC when children are referred by health practitioners with suspected child sexual abuse is to provide crisis and ongoing support and information to the child. This is in the form of ongoing trauma-informed therapeutic counselling for the child, and includes protective behaviour education. SARC conducts the forensic medical examinations as required.

SARC plays an important role in coordinating the delivery of services for children and families in the context of formal sexual abuse and assault investigation. It also coordinates other health services, such as mental health assessment or treatment through the Department of Health, and support services provided by the non-government sector, such as Anglicare and CatholicCare.

Sexual abuse is not acceptable in any form or any context. SARC is a service that supports Territorians who are, tragically and sadly, involved because they have been the victim of abuse.

I also draw your attention to an important organisation that the Northern Territory Government provides funding to: Ruby Gaea, which was established in 1987 and is the only non-government provider of specialist post-initial trauma sexual assault counselling, education and training services in the Northern Territory.

Ruby Gaea provides free services to the Greater Darwin region and is a not-for-profit, non-religious organisation which has provided significant assistance to many victims over many years.

Ruby Gaea has professional, specialist, confidential, ethical counselling to support women and children, girls and boys aged to five to 17 years who have experienced sexual assault at any time in their life. Part of the message that Ruby Gaea gives to victims is to assist them in understanding that sexual assault is an abuse of power, a tool of control that is never acceptable, and that it is not their fault.

The Reclaim the Night event is led by Ruby Gaea in the Top End. It is important that people understand and that we talk about these issues. I have participated in Reclaim the Night down Mitchell Street many times, as have many of my colleagues. It gets people on a Friday night—they look up as they are enjoying a meal or a drink along Mitchell Street. It reminds our community that we all need to look out for each other and that no means no.

As the Minister for Health, I am aware there are numerous studies that draw a link between child sexual abuse and negative mental health outcomes. We heard people speak about this in the House this morning. Frequently reported long-term effects of childhood sexual abuse victims can include depression, anxiety and self-destructive behaviour.

It is also well-known that abuse experienced by these victims can sadly lead to self-harming behaviours or even suicide. Tragically, the Northern Territory has one of the highest rates per capita of suicide in Australia.

It is well documented that a history of trauma, including childhood sexual abuse, is a significant social disadvantage. Family violence can increase the vulnerability of young people to suicide. In 2015 suicide accounted for one-third of deaths in the 15 to 24 years age group and one-quarter of those in the age group 25 to 34 years. The rate of child suicide in the Northern Territory tragically is 13.6 per 100 000. That is four times higher than the next state.

Our government is committed to reducing the suicide rate by 50% over the next 10 years. To achieve this we are developing a strategy and implementing the initiatives outlined in the Strengthening Mental Health policy document.

The Department of Health is working closely with the assistant minister for mental health, suicide prevention and disability, along with me. I acknowledge the contribution of the Member for Karama. She is personally passionate about this issue. She was heavily involved in community-based organisations before she was a member for parliament and she has continued that work. I am very proud to have her as the assistant minister for mental health, suicide prevention and disability.

We are conducting round table discussions and town hall forums to inform the development of the whole-of-community suicide prevention strategy. Mental health services, domestic violence organisations, alcohol and other drug organisations, and other organisations that support victims of sexual assault will be consulted to inform the strategy, and members of the community or any other interest group will be invited to participate. It is envisaged that the new strategic framework for suicide prevention will be launched later this year.

As a government, we are putting victims of crime first. We believe that survivors of institutional child sexual abuse have the right to seek compensation for harm inflicted upon them. This bill demonstrates much-needed compassion and commitment to support survivors of child abuse by removing time barriers and allowing them the opportunity to bring their claims before a court.

We heard members in the House this morning talking about statistics surrounding victims of child abuse in regard to the impacts on their education. The Member for Arnhem spoke about the average number of years before a victim will come forward; I think it was 22 years.

When children are young they do not understand their rights. It is only later in life that they come to understand what may have happened to them. It is important that we remove those limitations, because if

they still have that opportunity, no matter how many years down the track, to speak out and reach out for justice, it will go a little way towards the healing process—the long, hard road of healing.

This bill recognises the vulnerability of children and survivors of child abuse. The legislation ensures adequate time for survivors of child abuse to comprehend and respond to the harm by removing those time barriers. We have all heard stories, watched documentaries, read reports and spoken to people, and this removal of time limitations provides for them when they want to make the decision and have the support; then they can come forward. They have not then missed out; they have not been shut out from seeking justice due to a bureaucratic time limit.

This legislation brings the Territory into line with other jurisdictions. NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT have all enacted legislation implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations on limitation periods. Western Australia and Tasmania have prepared similar legislation that is currently before their respective parliaments, or is expected to be introduced in the near future.

I acknowledge the work of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice in developing this bill. A great deal of work has gone into this and we have a hard-working agency behind us, providing that support, including Parliamentary Counsel in its drafting.

This bill is a recommendation of the Royal Commission. We all watched the Royal Commission through the news each evening, or by other means, and its job was to uncover where the systems across Australia failed to protect children. It made recommendations on how we can improve laws, policies and practices. We saw some brave people come forward, and it is now this parliament's job to provide the support and protections in making the legislative changes.

I thank everyone for their time today. This is an important bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

REORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 59, I move that Government Business Order of the Day number four be called on. I advised the Leader of the Opposition that we are bringing forward the Education statement.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Statement – Education in the Northern Territory

Continued from 2 May 2017.

Mr COSTA (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to make a contribution to this important statement about education for Territory kids. Equitable access to quality education is a core Labor value. I acknowledge the excellent work my colleague, the Minister for Education, has done in the last six months, and I genuinely welcome her statement. It is a statement that maps Labor's vision for education and what we committed to in the lead-up to the 2016 election.

This government is all about putting kids at the front and centre of government. In the lead-up to the election it was the Chief Minister's mantra. From day one, term one, year one all children need to be school ready. Our children are our future. It is vital that we invest in Territory children to support their education, health, wellbeing and families so we can give them the best start in life no matter where they live in the Northern Territory.

I quote some key lines from our document:

Investing in kids in their early years is not just smart economic policy; it's the right thing to do. Investing early in kid's lives helps prevent social and health problems developing later on. Experts know it, parents know it and it's what Labor will deliver.

I stand in parliament as someone who has had the benefit of a good education. I went to boarding school in Melbourne, (inaudible) College, for five years, and then attended Melbourne University, where I studied a Bachelor of Education (Primary) but deferred my studies.

My family chose for me to go to boarding school in Melbourne, as many people of my generation did, because secondary education opportunities in our home communities were very limited. For some families attendance at boarding or residential schools offers real opportunity so kids can focus on education in a supportive environment. I know this firsthand. The tyranny of distance and homesickness can be hard, but I see newer models of boarding, like the Tiwi College model at Pickertaramoor, which is working well for Tiwi Islanders. Kids are able to remain on country, be immersed in quality learning in a supportive home-like environment with house parents, and remain connected with their families.

I have had the benefit of being raised by a loving and caring family, who have always valued education and wanted to make sure I had a good education because that was my passport to the future, employment, independent living and to be able to raise and care for my own family. That education is what allows me to walk in two worlds: as a proud Tiwi man who knows his language and culture, but also knows how to operate in the modern western world.

I am not saying I advocate sending all our kids to boarding schools; I can only speak for myself, but having choices is very important. This is what the families of my electorate, Arafura, tell me. They want their children to grow up and have the confidence to walk in both worlds, to maximise their potential and choices in life, to be healthy, educated kids who grow into healthy, educated adults in control of their own destiny.

As I travel around my electorate I see so many wonderful things going on in the schools, from Tiwi Islands to Croker Island and the Arnhem Land communities—a mixture of government and Catholic education systems. I see hard-working teachers and bright kids with much potential.

I will mention a few names of Indigenous people who inspired me to get an education: former Deputy Chief Minister Marion Scrymgour; Esther at Oenpelli School; Maurice Rioli, my idol; and, last but not least, the latest recipient of the Logies for new talent, Robbie Collins.

All the schools in the Arafura electorate are remote, and the students for whom English is not a first language are fluent in several other languages and dialects. But we know, as the minister said, the Territory has the highest level of socioeconomic disadvantage and remoteness in Australia. Without the right support and investment in school infrastructure and resources, along with investment in our teachers and school support staff, our schools and kids will do it tough. That is why Labor's investment of an additional \$124m over four years is so important.

A key part of this election commitment has been delivered in the education portfolio as an additional \$20m directly into 2017 school budgets for government schools. That is \$20m this year. Other members have spoken about what this means for their schools, but I want to place on the record that a number of the schools in Arafura will see just over \$1m out of the \$20m pool. It makes a big difference to Gunbalanya School, Mamaruni School on Croker Island, Pularumpi and Milikapiti schools on Melville Island, and Waruwi School on Goulburn Island.

These schools are planning where their share of this \$1m might be spent to best benefit their school community, whether it be resources for students in their classrooms, additional staffing or other identified needs.

I note that Maningrida intends to use a portion of these funds to fund the vehicle that allows teachers to travel to support students living and learning on homelands. I recognise the importance of supporting the aspirations of families who wish to raise and educate children on their traditional clan estates. I am really pleased to see Maningrida prioritising support for homeland residents.

I wholeheartedly support the minister when she says this government believes that local decision-making delivers better outcomes and lasting solutions. She is 100% correct when she says this. It is especially true in remote and very remote communities.

It is a key platform and commitment of this government to return local decision-making to our remote communities and to Indigenous peoples. As I have heard the Chief Minister say, decisions made in Darwin about the communities I represent are not always right. Decisions made in Canberra, thousands of miles away, are often right. But if the decision is made at a local level by local people who know best—whether that is in Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Waruwi or Wurrumiyanga—the chances are much higher that those decisions are the right ones.

This is very true when it comes to education, which is why Labor has committed to community-led schools to strengthen decision-making and ownership of schools. To strengthen engagement across school communities which embrace the elders, the families, the children and the people who work there.

Having more say in how that schools runs, what it teaches and how it teaches children is important to my community schools because it is empowering.

There are many wonderful things that happen in schools in my electorate, but let me place on the record the success we see at Gunbalanya School, where hand-in-hand with the community it has brought about effective change.

Gunbalanya School co-principals Sue Trimble and my sister, Esther, have demonstrated that more involvement in the community and a change to the timing of school terms can go a long way to having a positive impact on school attendance while making sure that students with their families maintain cultural responsibilities and obligations.

This is a school which adapted its terms to maximise attendance, and it works. In many ways, Gunbalanya School has been a community-led school for years, and being an independent public school has provided the flexibility to strengthen community decision-making processes through a board.

Labor's policy of formalising community-led schools is intended to place decision-making of schools back into the hands of local people, and I am sure the continuing successful journal of Gunbalanya will inform the roll-out of this initiative.

Gunbalanya is a great example of local school leadership, ensuring strong alignment between school-based education, programs and local needs.

I was pleased to accompany Minister McCarthy, who was acting Minister for Education, to Gunbalanya community on 19 January to congratulate the eight students who had successfully completed Year 12. I take this opportunity to offer congratulations to them. Bavorina, Victoria, Lorena, Alexandria, Sharleena, Corinia, Tennisha, Zoe. These young people should be highly proud of their achievements. They are wonderful role models for their peers, and a credit to their families and their teachers.

There are challenges in remote schools, but there are successes as well. Time today does not permit me to talk about all of my schools, which I am trying hard to visit. Two months ago I was at Maningrida and I had the opportunity to catch up with the school principal, Miranda Watt. School leadership is an important part of any school's success. That is why we are investing in supporting our teaching staff and principals like Miranda, developing our school leadership workforce. Miranda is a great asset, and I enjoyed knowing her as a teacher at Garden Point and now as the principal at Maningrida.

Maningrida School stands out as a critically important part of the life and future of Maningrida. I am reminded that in many of our remote communities over half the population is under 25, and Maningrida is no exception.

Maningrida has a proud record of incorporating languages and culture in the day-to-day life of the school and has had great success with some of its nature-based science programs, like those involving Mason Scholes and his work with students at Maningrida, leading to the discovery of 25 new species of spiders, as well as perhaps the largest population of tarantulas in the world.

Miranda has an active school council at work, chaired by Dale Pascoe. Miranda shared with me some of the school council's objectives for the next 10 to 15 years, which include:

1. improvement to homeland educational services, better use of technology and more alignment with Maningrida School curriculum

2. stronger pathways from school to continue education, VET in schools and school-based apprenticeships
3. health and wellbeing to support personal growth and resilience amongst students
4. a dedicated secondary school site
5. a special needs class that reflects the needs of Maningrida as one of our largest bush towns.

School attendance remains a challenge and directly impacts students' outcomes. It is not good enough to go to school part-time. Education is a full-time and lifelong commitment. This is a key challenge for parents, kids, community, and government.

School attendance, especially poor attendance on Fridays, has to be tackled to ensure the learning outcomes we all want to help secure a stable and growing school budget that enables the school to invest confidentially for the future.

Lastly, I cannot leave mention of Maningrida School without touching on the outstanding school-based ranger program there. It exemplifies the way to establish strong pathways between school and opportunity, as well as underpinning active learning of science and life skills.

At Warruwi, Goulburn Island, there is a great little school led by Principal Daryll Kinnane. It is clear to me on my visits to that community that the school is a central and valued part of the community, including providing a key community cyclone shelter when needed. There is a great team spirit evident among staff, and it is a joy to see the kids enjoying school life and actively participating in class work.

This is one of the sites where Direct Instruction appears to be working for that community. Whilst I know this approach does not work for all school communities, this shows that the school needs to have flexibility to use education tools that work for their community and students. This is another example of our approach to Indigenous education, getting away from the centrally-driven model advocated by the CLP and allowing more local decision-making about the tools that work best in each of our communities to meet local needs and circumstances.

Investing in the early years is critical, and programs like Families as First Teachers have proven to be very successful in engaging parents and families in the education and growing up of their little ones. It would be wonderful to see the roll-out of FaFT in Semester 2 on Melville Island in the Tiwis and at Milikapiti and Pularumpi schools. Warruwi School on Croker Island would also see FaFT delivered in Semester 2.

As the minister said, we need to do more. We know we have a long way to go, but I believe we are on the right path. While 2016 saw a record number of students attain an NT Certificate of Education and Training out of the total of almost 1400, we need to see more than 221 Indigenous students complete their NTCET, and we need more than 15 Indigenous students from remote area schools to complete this training.

Ms NELSON: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Mr COSTA: I am proud to be part of a Labor government which puts children front and centre of government with solid evidence-based policies. I am humbled to represent the communities of Arafura and support them with their aspirations. Their children are at the centre of their lives and they know that education is their passport to the future.

Ms FYLES (Health): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak in support of the Minister for Education's statement on her vision, and this government's vision, for education in the Northern Territory.

Education is the key to changing lives. It is the key to empowering young people. It is the key to empowering communities. Whether it is an urban or regional context, or the bush context—such as what the member just spoke so passionately about—schools and education are the heart of our communities.

A number of us on this side of the House were involved in education before we came to parliament. I look back on that time with very fond memories. It is wonderful to see the young people whose lives you were involved in now as adults contributing successfully to our communities. Education is the key to the Northern

Territory's social and economic prosperity. We witnessed the benefits of a good education and the positive role models that provides for our children.

As stated by my colleagues, the Territory has some of the best educators in the world and our education system has developed exceptional students. On this side of the House, a number of us who were born in the Territory completed our schooling in the Territory, and we are very proud of that.

We acknowledge that education does not begin at school, nor does it finish at grade 10 or 12. We recognise that learning is a lifelong exercise commencing at birth and continuing throughout our education, from the primary years, through the middle years and into the later years.

Learning is about culture, family, relationships, health and community. I take a moment to update the Chamber on what our government is doing to improve the education and wellbeing of Territorians, particularly in my portfolios of Health and Justice—the vital role we are playing in ensuring the social and economic prosperity of the Territory.

We have already heard from the Minister for Education about our government's commitment to improving the education of all Territorians. The Department of Health is doing its part in providing programs and initiatives to educate healthcare professionals about better healthcare practices so we can continuously improve the health of Territorians across the NT.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the importance of health and states that no child should be deprived of their right to access health services. The convention also outlines that it is essential that children are provided with the necessary healthcare, with an emphasis on the development of primary healthcare, preventative health and guidance for parents, family planning and education.

The evidence is clear that many of the health and wellbeing problems in adults—such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, mental health problems, involvement in the criminal justice system, family violence, poor literacy, unemployment, and welfare dependency—have their origins in pathways that usually begin in early childhood and are often the result of poor education.

The number of adverse childhood experiences has a strong relationship to health behaviours as well as outcomes during childhood and adolescence, such as starting smoking at an early age, alcohol consumption, sexual activity, illicit drug use, adolescent pregnancy and, sadly, suicide attempts.

NT Health works closely in partnership with other departments, such as Territory Families and Education, along with non-government service providers to give children and their families a continuation of educative healthcare services.

I will take a moment to outline some of the program services and initiatives we deliver. The Healthy Under 5 Kids Program—in remote parts of the Territory the NT Government primary healthcare centres screen all children aged zero to five years old. This program facilitates the prevention, early detection, intervention and treatment of common conditions that cause illness. Child health checks create the opportunity for early referral and management of more serious developmental or chronic conditions. This program provides education about child health services across community, helping to ensure the development of healthy remote communities across the Northern Territory.

The Healthy Under 5 Kids partnering with families pilot program has been developed to provide a universal standardised approach in the delivery of routine child health programs for all children from birth to five years through NT Government health services. The program is being piloted in seven Top End and Central Australian remote government primary healthcare centres. Phase one has commenced in Jabiru, Milikapiti, Robinson River, Elliott, Ti Tree, Angurugu and Hermannsburg. Phase two will commence in the coming month or so. We will start to crossover in to urban primary healthcare centres.

This program introduces a consistent approach to child health visits where every child has access to the same platform of care, support and information. The implementation of the program is complimented by eLearning packages for staff, a redeveloped child health record and the Healthy Under 5 partnering with families parent app for phones. And evaluation of the Healthy Under 5 Kids partnering with families pilot program, prior to the full implementation across the Northern Territory, will be undertaken later this year and early next year.

Northern Territory Health is implementing the child and family health partnering families program, which provides a universal child health service for families with children ages zero to five years. This program is

centred on working with families on their capacity to nurture their child to achieve full potential and provide a range of services, these include child development assessment, screening, immunisations, parenting education and support, post-natal assessment and support, sleep and behaviour management, and referral by qualified child and family health nurses.

Top End and Central Australian Health Services are delivering the Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture program in select remote communities. This program works to provide culturally-appropriate education and support activities about health and wellbeing to women and young girls in the community about health and wellbeing.

There is additional support and education through the Young Mothers are Strong Mothers program, which is a collaboration of the Northern Territory Departments of Health and Education. Young Mothers are Strong Mothers is an integrated, holistic health service model for young pregnant or parenting girls so they can continue their secondary education. This program is delivered by the Department of Education at the Palmerston Child and Family Centre and supported by Northern Territory Health.

This is an important program that seeks to ensure young women can continue their education while becoming mothers. We need to make sure, no matter what the circumstance, that young Territorians have access to education and can complete their schooling so they have more opportunities in life. They can then become great role models for their children.

The school health service includes 15 health-promoting school nurse positions in 16 government schools in urban and regional areas in the Northern Territory. This provides within the school community quality school-based services incorporating primary healthcare and promotion philosophy and principles that maintain, facilitate and promote the physical, emotional and social wellbeing and health of children and young people. This initiative seeks to ensure children are learning in a healthy environment.

I was fortunate to have school-based nurses when I attended school. It is fabulous to see that has continued.

As a government, we believe that improving early childhood health and development is the key to changing our future. We made a number of election commitments to enhance and strengthen the child health initiatives. Education is a critical component to the success of these initiatives and delivery of programs. Our services are universal, targeted and accessible. We have committed to creating an NT-wide early childhood development strategic plan, expanding the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program, enhancing the yellow book and developing a child and adolescent health plan.

The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program provides structured and sustained nurse home visits to women who are pregnant with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, from pregnancy through the first two years of a child's life. This evidence-based program aims to improve the pregnancy outcomes by helping women to engage in good preventative health practices and then supporting mothers to improve their child's health.

If we can raise the birth weight of children, that provides long-term health benefits. If we can provide vital care to a child in its first early days of life then we are setting them up to get the most from education. The Minister for Education and a number of my other colleagues have spoken about the Families as First Teachers program, engaging with families on that path of education. But, through this program we can set them up with a healthy start to life.

The Australian Government is expanding the program with additional sites in Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Wadeye and other locations. The government has committed to a further funding explanation into five more remote communities and we are providing \$8m over three years for that purpose.

NT Health established a child and adolescent health plan project planning group at the end of last year to develop a detailed project plan before engaging with external stakeholders. Representatives across the Department of Health—experts from child health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, Aboriginal health policy, nutrition and physical activity to name a few. A discussion paper will be developed for Cabinet approval and will be holding community consultations. We, as a government, are taking our responsibilities in preparing our young people to get the best from education through health.

The Department of the Chief Minister has led the Early Childhood Development Plan and has commenced stakeholder engagement with a range of organisations and individuals, including Territory Health. We are enhancing the content and e-capability of the NT Health yellow book. The commitment to enhance this

content and integration of the Northern Territory Child Health Record, the yellow book, is to provide for the update to the content of the paper-based child health record to reflect the NT child health program; to enable the accessibility of the paper-based child health record to all parents and carers to assist in monitoring their child's growth, development and immunisations; and to enable recall functionality for immunisations and health assessments so we can monitor a child regularly until five years of age.

For me, a busy mother to two young children, this is vital. It does not matter if you are in an urban part of the Top End or from a more regional or remote community, parents are busy. You have other things to worry about, but you want to ensure you are giving your children the right support, undertaking their assessments and making sure they are up to date with their immunisations. The content of this paper-based record is being developed and is in the design phase for a new paper-based child health record, which will be trialled, and following an evaluation we will roll that out. We will also look to electronically integrate each child's information into the NT My eHealth Record.

This consultation and planning has begun on enhancing the yellow book with eHealth capabilities. There is a related national initiative to develop a childhood eHealth record, although the Territory already has a solution there. We are excited with those opportunities.

A key component of obtaining a good education is having a healthy body and a health mind. It is recognised that we need to make sure we have healthy children going into those classrooms. I believe it is well recognised that hearing loss in early childhood affects speech and language development and the ability to learn, thereby contributing to poor social and emotional wellbeing, which can lead to behavioural problems.

The House of Representatives' inquiry into Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system found that hearing loss was a significant contributing factor for Indigenous children's disengagement with education and their involvement with the justice system. Therefore it is vital that we provide access to hearing services in their early years to help ensure that children are able to access and capitalise when they are provided with education.

Newborn hearing screening is provided at the four birthing hospitals—Royal Darwin Hospital, Gove, Katherine and Alice Springs—and coverage for this screening program in the Territory is consistently exceeding the national benchmark at 97%. This program is for the first day or so after the child is born. The hearing team provides that screening test. Both my children participated in this simple test which can pick up long-term and life-changing impacts.

I recently visited the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children. A little baby, who I believe is about one year of age, had just had a cochlear implant turned on, allowing him to hear. His issue was picked up at that newborn screening test. That is an example of our health services helping to give our kids the best chance at education. Using that cochlear implant he will be able to hear sounds and be able to speak. Hopefully by the time he attends school and, through speaking to his mother, will be able to hear clearly in the classroom.

It is important the Department of Health provides for Territory children, and we are doing that.

Foetal alcohol spectrum disorder is something we have spoken about in the House many times, and we have committed to the development of a whole-of-government FASD strategic framework. There is currently no overarching strategy for prevention and awareness in the community about FASD, and only limited clinical and diagnostic support services for children and adults. This framework will acknowledge that FASD encompasses whole-of-life issues.

There is much we are doing in terms of health education. Our hospitals are used as teaching hospitals, providing opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students. As well as early intervention and working with families, we are making sure there are opportunities for people who have completed their school education and would like to stay in the Territory and give back to our health system.

We operate campuses of the Northern Territory Clinical School of Flinders University of South Australia. Medical, nursing and allied health students receive clinical training at our hospitals. The agency also operates a number of training programs across the Northern Territory.

I am also the responsible minister for corrections, and education is also a vital component of rehabilitation, including for those within our corrections system. NT Corrections aims to provide genuine rehabilitation and

reduce the rate of recidivism. It is vital prisoners are provided opportunities to participate not only in therapeutic programs, but also to gain education and practical employment and training programs.

I recently attended the Darwin Correctional Centre for graduation ceremonies for a number of prisoners who had participated in education and training. They are incarcerated, and they understand the consequences of their behaviour, but we are providing them with rehabilitation and education.

We have a unique prison population and many of the programs have been designed in consultation with elders and non-government organisations, or have been adapted to suit the prison population. We are committed to ensuring best-practice programs are delivered, which is why we are reviewing all existing programs.

As we know, the Northern Territory has the highest rate of Indigenous incarceration in Australia. While our government is committed to finding ways to address this overrepresentation, we must also acknowledge our unique prisoner cohort. Two of the most important educational services corrections provides are literacy and numeracy courses, which are co-designed with elders.

The Elders Visiting Program, which keeps male and female prisoners from a range of regions in contact with their communities, also provides for cultural support and guidance to assist with prisoners during their time in incarceration, and reintegrating them back into community. It also provides for review of those education programs.

Currently prisoners are able to enrol in a course known as QuickSmart, to establish and build on their literacy abilities. This course is a precursor to other vocational training opportunities.

We are assessing the programs that we offer to make sure we demonstrate the delivery methods reflect best practice and ensure they successfully meet the prisoners' needs.

Education is for everyone, whether it is in the early years or later in life. People are lifelong learners, and they deserve the opportunity to improve their personal education and seek further training.

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms FYLES: Education and gaining lifelong learning skills are important. With the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice there are professional development programs and traineeship programs, such as the Solicitor for the NT Graduate Development Program, the Indigenous Cadetship Support program, the Northern Territory Government traineeship program, the Indigenous Employment Program and the Vacation Employment Program. I think we have all come across people in our communities who are involved in that last one, which provides them with the opportunity to access employment and gain valuable practical skills during their university holidays.

The work integrates learning scholarships, university practicals, work experience and disability employment, which I am passionate about. People in our community with a disability still have a vital role to play. You only have to visit Tony Burns' team at HPA to see the benefits and the skills used there. They have quite a few programs there of products they provide. I am driving disability employment within government to make sure we have all members of our community working in government.

The Special Measures plan, correctional officer recruitment programs and Probation and Parole Officers recruitment campaign—there are many programs with the opportunity to offer our public service to access ongoing education and training to ensure we grow and retain our workforce.

I will take a moment to talk about what is happening in my electorate of Nightcliff. I have a number of schools in my electorate. I was very pleased to have the Minister for Education at the fabulous Nightcliff Middle School a couple of weeks ago. I am very proud—my parents taught at the then Nightcliff High School in the 1970s. As I move around the electorate I still run into families whose children my parents taught. I question some of the school camp practices back then, but I am sure the Minister for Education has looked into things.

School can be tough for some students, but I am very fortunate that I look back very fondly at my education in the Territory and the teachers who gave so much to me. Mrs Green, whom I think is in Hermannsburg now, taught quite a few of the Caucus team.

I was very proud to have the Minister for Education in my electorate. I am very proud to be involved with schools, as I know you are, Madam Speaker.

We have a unique program where we are collaboratively working across Catholic, independent and public schools to promote active travel to and from school. Not only am I passionate about this in the sense that it provides access to education for our young people; it is a health promotion measure, getting kids walking and riding to school. The collaboration includes principals from the four schools in my electorate as well as parents, and they have been creating safe routes to school for students, making walking and cycling the most popular ways to get to school in Nightcliff and Rapid Creek.

We have reduced the reliance on cars to minimise traffic congestion, and we are creating an environment that encourages walking and riding. We have ongoing traffic issues, but we have tackled them, working with council and schools.

We have big stickers along the footpath that let the kids know how far it is to their school and which direction. The kids get excited. They count down—400 metres, 300 metres to their school.

On some days 60% to 70% of children at Nightcliff Primary School have walked, ridden or scooted to school. It is great to see the public and private sector working towards a common goal of promoting physical activity and safe travel to school.

Surveys found that in the Dry Season 34% of children are regularly walking and cycling to school, so we are looking forward to expanding and working on that program.

I acknowledge the principals and the assistant principals at Essington, Ms Jaya and Mr Cannon; at St Paul's Mr Hockey and Ms Knight; at Nightcliff Primary School Mr Chadwick, Ms Glennon and Ms Finch; at Nightcliff Middle School, where I was with the Minister for Education the other week, Mr Isaksen and Ms Kaye.

We have fabulous school leaders, fabulous staff that support our schools and wonderful teachers in our classroom.

Mr PAECH: Fabulous Territory schools.

Ms FYLES: I pick up on the interjection. They are fabulous Territory schools.

The Minister for Education has spoken about the additional investment that this government is making into schools. I was horrified to see the disrespect the CLP government had for teachers during its term of government. I know you felt this personally, Madam Speaker. We witnessed cuts to funding, programs, teacher numbers and support staff numbers.

I cannot remember what the debate was, whether it was during a censure or GBD, but I recollect when the galleries were filled with teachers and parents who were concerned and appalled at the CLP government's disrespect for education in the Northern Territory.

It is very pleasing that we have a government that is committed to our schools, providing them with resources. I was thrilled to learn that Nightcliff Middle School has received additional funding. It was impacted by the CLP cuts, so that helps to provide resources for our schools to plan and cater for our students.

I also acknowledge COGSO, the Council of Government School Organisations, which does a wonderful job supporting our schools. We have very hard-working school councils. I know the independent and Catholic schools have a different process, but it is parents putting up their hands to support their children's education. Within the public system, I was thrilled at the Nightcliff Middle School Council meeting earlier this year, where numerous parents turned up, which was very exciting.

Nightcliff Primary School has a consistently large school council that works really hard on making sure there are programs and initiatives that tap into parents' passions and skills, whether it is through healthy eating programs at the school or long-term planning for the school.

The resources that COGSO provides to school councils are worth acknowledging. It represents 33 000 school students across the Territory and 150 government schools. It does a great job supporting our schools.

It is very clear that this Territory Labor government values education. We take education seriously. We value the role that education plays in creating vibrant, safe and prosperous communities. We value education that starts at birth, continues throughout the schools years and remains available beyond secondary and tertiary education. You are never too old to relearn and retrain.

The Member for Fong Lim spoke in his maiden speech about a few careers, but different opportunities arise. If you can capture education and training to support you then it is an important investment. We believe that upskilling our workforce places the Territory in the best position to continue to build a strong and vibrant Northern Territory.

I am extremely supportive of this statement and the work the Minister for Education and her assistant minister are doing in making sure kids across the Territory have the best access to well-funded, well-resourced programs, and that we support our hard-working teachers.

I commend the statement to the House.

Ms LAWLER (Education): Madam Speaker, I thank the members who have contributed to the statement on the government's plan for Territory education—the work we have already accomplished and the work we intend to do to give every child a world-class education. There were some wonderful informative contributions to the debate and many great ideas on how we can do more to bring equality to our system.

A child in Papunya has not the same opportunity for an education as a child in Parap, but the same opportunities as a child at King's College or Geelong Grammar School.

This government knows how important it is that children and young people across the Territory have access to a high-quality education. That is why we have invested an additional \$31m into education this year, delivering on a key election commitment.

As the Deputy Chief Minister pointed out, this is one of the biggest areas of recurrent expenditure commitments we have made—\$31m per year for more teachers and support staff, for more services to support student engagement and learning, and for more resources, because we know how important it is that we invest in education. We are delivering a comprehensive, evidence-based agenda to strengthen school quality and deliver a contemporary curriculum that prepares students for the future.

Many members' contributions to this debate reflected on the value of education and how it has impacted the opportunities available to those in this House who have the privilege of serving their communities. The Member for Stuart spoke about the barriers he faced and overcame, as someone with limited formal education, and the role of his teachers in sparking his curiosity and interest in the wider community.

The Member for Katherine spoke about the education she received opening up so many opportunities. She also spoke about her home country of Timor-Leste, a country with some of the highest levels of poverty and disadvantage in our region. She spoke about the value placed on education as having the power to break the cycle of poverty.

I hope to have the opportunity to visit the government's Senai NT English Language Centre in Dili in the next few months. The centre is forging strong links between the NT and Timor.

The contributions to this debate from many members who were educators, like the Members for Arnhem, Barkly, Nightcliff and Blain, shows that we have a wealth of knowledge and commitment. We have the best chance to make gains.

We cannot do this alone. We must work with our partners in education, with the committed and passionate representatives in our stakeholder groups, such as the Australian Education Union NT; the NT Council of Government School Organisations, which the Member for Nightcliff spoke about; the NT principals' association; the Professional Teachers' Association of the Northern Territory; the special education association; Charles Darwin University; and Batchelor Institute. There are a number of key stakeholders in education.

I am committed to meeting them and listening to them. We have set meetings with those key stakeholders either monthly or every two months. It is vitally important. If we are to make change, if we are to strive and drive improvements in education, we cannot do that alone. We need those partnerships and strong relationships. Relationships are one of the keys to drive improvements.

We must listen to and work with the principals, teachers and support staff in our schools. We must listen to and work with our school representative bodies, and most importantly, with our families and young people.

I thank the many members of this House who recognise the valuable contribution of parents and carers to the governance and leadership of schools through their voluntary service on school councils. The Member for Blain's idea to look at options for providing accredited training to these committed individuals is something I have taken on board and raised in my regular meetings with NT COGSO to see what is possible. Instead of parents only doing courses or workshops with COGSO, it would be great if they could gain accreditation.

This government has made a clear and unequivocal commitment to invest in children, to do right by the next generation of Territory leaders. This is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart and wise thing to do. The Minister for Children, the Member for Wanguri, said that for every dollar spent on preschools, there will be a yield of \$8 in increased productivity and revenue across the broader economy.

The Member for Nelson stated that while he has heard many statements on education from different governments, he sees the same issues and gaps in achievement and attendance. He is concerned that nothing is changing. This government is making changes that make a difference. Our agenda and focus on early childhood is a clear example of this.

We are expanding the Families as First Teachers program and working together on a whole of government early childhood development plan that will drive generational change and improve the lives of Territory children. This focus on supporting families and children is how we will achieve generational change. We need to start at the beginning of a child's life, because that is where we can have the greatest impact.

As Minister for Education, I will ensure the work that is done is based on evidence and firm research. Things did not change because for too long people have acted on a whim and looked for silver bullets. We are a government that focuses on evidence-based decisions.

There has been a clear acknowledgement that to truly shift our system and give every child the best opportunity for success we need to stick to what evidence shows makes a difference. Results show that one-third of the variations in student performance were explained by the degree of equity in the allocation of education resources between advantaged and disadvantaged schools. That is why I am serious about demanding from Simon Birmingham and the federal government that we get a fair share of needs-based funding to the Territory. That is what it is about, the allocation of education resources. That will make the difference between advantaged and disadvantaged schools in the Territory.

This is further backed up by the recent analysis showing that two-thirds of principals reported that a lack of, inadequate or poorly-qualified teaching staff hindered instruction. Socioeconomic differences were also apparent, with a much greater proportion of principals of disadvantaged schools identifying these issues compared to advantaged schools.

This has big implications for the Territory, where the average level of disadvantage across our schools is extreme compared to other jurisdictions. Sixty-four of the most disadvantaged schools in Australia are in the Northern Territory. That is based on reporting, parent income, parent education and remoteness. We hear about the allocation of resources between advantaged and disadvantaged schools, and its impacts, so it is vital that we lobby the federal government so we get the funding needed to be able to turn that around.

Improving the results of low socioeconomic status students to match the Australian average would lift Australia into the top 10 countries in the world in reading and science, and it would substantially improve our position in mathematics. You hear about the poor results in Pisa and Australia in TIMSS—and here is an answer to improving our results worldwide.

It is all very good to talk about results in our eastern seaboard schools, but if we want to improve our standing across the world in reading, science and mathematics, we need to do something about the kids in remote and low socioeconomic status schools.

Territory students, especially our most disadvantaged students in remote and very remote communities, continue to fall behind their peers. While some governments find it convenient to propagate the lie that money does not matter, it does. The evidence shows that. Money well spent makes a huge difference in education. Education funding distributed based on student need and equalising access to resources makes a difference. Money spent on improving teacher practice, leadership development, and approaches that enable every child to make gains—this is the investment that makes a difference. This is where the dollars need to be spent.

We are delivering these important initiatives through our mentoring program for early career teachers, our principal leadership program and programs for high-achieving students. These are the things the contemporary education research shows make a difference. These things cost money.

Some of the members opposite seem to have forgotten their role in the systemic and calculated defunding of our schools and the shameful neglect of our most disadvantaged students and their families. Let us not forget that as a consequence to the CLP ripping over \$100m out of the education system, 500 people lost their jobs. This had a direct impact on the support available to students, especially our most disadvantaged students. If you take six teachers out of a school like Ngukurr, in the Member for Arnhem's electorate, that will have a great impact on the programs that can be offered for those students.

This government knows the importance of investing in our children and in their education. Budget 2017–18 is delivering \$1.1bn in education funding right across the Territory. As we heard from many members in this House, this funding, particularly the \$20m boost to 2017 school budgets, is already making a difference to our students. We have grown the budget for 2017 school resourcing to a record \$489m. I am proud of how Labor's extra funding is expanding the range of secondary options available to students in remote and very remote communities.

The Member for Arafura outlined that his family made the choice that boarding school interstate was the best option for him. However, he stated that the people in his electorate want choices for their children. They want their children to grow up with the confidence to walk in both worlds and to maximise their potential and choices in life. The previous government was against giving these young people choices, pushing instead for everyone to go to boarding school. While this is a fine option for some, it is not for everyone.

As the evidence shows, to really make a difference the pool of resources for schooling needs to be distributed fairly and equitably based on student need. The need to take a look at the way funding is distributed between schools in the NT is something I have heard loud and clear from school councils, principals, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. That is why in the lead-up to the election we committed to reviewing the global school budget funding methodology. The review has now commenced.

The Member for Spillett is sceptical of this work which shows just how out of touch she is with our schooling sector. Those who have been paying attention know that a review of the funding methodology for NT schools is well and truly overdue. This is what educators have been asking for. We are delivering extra into the funding pool for school budgets, not taking away from them. We need to make sure this funding is distributed equitably. This government is unapologetic about its focus on education. We will continue to make sure education is talked about in this House, that there is open discussion and debate, and that there is transparency and accountability.

We have heard loud and clear from families, teachers and health professionals in our community that support for students with additional needs is falling short of what is needed. That is why, as part of our funding boost, there is an extra \$8m each year for early intervention, tackling challenging behaviour in the classroom and supporting students with additional needs.

This funding includes a range of initiatives, including more flexible school options for at-risk youth and scholarships to support more educators to specialise in supporting students with additional needs. Amongst the other things I outlined in my statement, this funding will also improve student access to allied health professionals and expand the teams that support teachers to meet the needs of students. This will include more speech pathologists; occupational therapists; psychologists; speech, language and communication teachers; and a new conductive hearing loss education adviser.

As the Members for Arnhem and Barkly, and others, have noted, hearing loss is a major issue impacting on students in remote and very remote communities. Tragically, over 90% of children in remote areas have some form of otitis media, which often causes hearing loss.

Overcrowding has been shown to increase the risk of preventable conditions, such as otitis media. As the Minister for Housing and Community Development outlined, we are now addressing prevention through the \$1.1bn Room to Breathe program. The Minister for Health and I have also supported the establishment of the hearing and education for life working group. This is an initiative driven by the Council of Government School Organisations in partnership with the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory. The working group also includes the Departments of Health and Education, and will focus on a holistic approach to supporting families to better respond to this important issue.

As a teacher and a lifelong educator it was inspiring to hear from many of the members in this House that a passion for education was one of the reasons they chose to put up their hand to serve their community as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

The Member for Nhulunbuy said he came into parliament to raise issues about education in Indigenous communities, especially in his electorate, which has some of the most remote and disadvantaged schools and homelands in the Northern Territory, and probably Australia. The Member for Nhulunbuy raised the importance of bilingual and homeland education provision to the people in his electorate.

This government has been clear in its support for increasing education options for students in remote and very remote communities. Over half of the \$20m funding boost for 2017 school budgets has gone to schools in remote and very remote areas. As part of this government's Building Better Schools initiative, in addition to the \$300 000 that every school receives for upgrades over the term of this government, there is an additional \$5m for upgrades to homeland schools.

The first schools to benefit from these homeland upgrades will be the Yirrkala Homelands, which has developed a master plan to upgrade its schools. This government supports schools to implement teaching and learning programs that respect and reflect students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Last month the Northern Territory Board of Studies released a plan to strengthen the teaching and learning of Indigenous languages and culture in NT schools.

A revised NT curriculum of Indigenous language and culture will be developed for implantation next year. Induction programs and professional learning for two-way bilingual teaching teams of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers will be part of this work. It promotes engagement between schools and local communities in making local decisions. It is being done in collaboration with local communities, elders and language custodians.

As the Chief Minister said, history shows us that local decisions are usually the right decisions. Our government will give local decision-making power back to the bush in key areas, including education, through the community-led schools initiative. This initiative is about schools being responsive to community needs and communities having decision-making power. The Chief Minister and Member for Arafura pointed out that this is already working in Gunbalanya.

Under the previous government's independent public schools initiative, the school has some flexibility to strengthen community decision-making processes through a board. This has proven successful and will inform the roll-out of community-led schools to other remote areas over the next 10 years. We need to build on the good work happening in our schools and communities, regardless of which party was in government when it was conceived.

That is something the Member for Spillett and I agree on—not throwing out the good work, and we have not. We have looked carefully at programs and infrastructure commitments. Budget 2017–18 invests \$141.7m in improving school infrastructure across the Territory. This provides much-needed economic stimulus and jobs for locals through the improved Buy Local policy.

We have continued to honour a range of school infrastructure commitments from the previous government. Contributions from the Deputy Chief Minister and others also acknowledge the positives of many infrastructure investments of the previous government in schools. The new special school on Forrest Parade, which I am opening on 1 June, is a beautiful school. It is lovely to see about 80 children with additional needs there. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit recently.

Mr KIRBY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I seek an extension of time for the minister, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Ms LAWLER: It was one of my first jobs as Minister for Education to open the Henbury School building. The previous minister, Peter Chandler, was in the audience. I was pleased to acknowledge his support in making sure that school was built.

I have also been to the Larapinta Child and Family Centre and the new preschool at Braitling. It is important we acknowledge the investments of the previous government in school infrastructure. Some of our schools are ageing. Darwin High School, built in 1963, is older than a lot of people in this House. It is good to see we are spending money to upgrade the Darwin High School facilities.

As the Members for Brennan and Stuart said in their contributions, school buildings are nothing without the hard-working and dedicated educators who work in them, which is so true.

We need school buildings that support teachers to deliver a contemporary curriculum. Our government is delivering a school curriculum that prepares students for the future, including coding training, enterprise education and upskilling the digital literacy of teachers. The Member for Casuarina, also the Minister for Corporate and Information Services, spoke about the importance of our ICT infrastructure and how important it is to support this agenda.

The Chief Minister, also the Minister for Northern Australia and the Minister for Trade, Business and Innovation, spoke of the need for the Territory to claim its place in the Asian century. Our curriculum commitments will support this, and we are continuing our strong focus on ensuring students are equipped to succeed in our region and globally.

The Member for Blain spoke about the importance of the language curriculum in Indonesia. He will be interested to know that Indonesian, Japanese or Mandarin is being taught in 40 schools across all year levels in NT Government schools. In addition, hundreds of students are also supported to learn a language through the language centres in Darwin and Alice Springs. A range of languages are being delivered in the language centres.

We are taking advantage of our place in the region, including welcoming more international students to study in our schools and formalising our sister school relationships with schools in China and Timor-Leste. Recently some of our principals and our chief executive made a visit to China to firm up our sister school relationships. Those of you who have been involved in education for a while will know about the Beat Festival in Darwin in late August. This year some Chinese students are coming over to participate in the Beat Festival, which will be amazing.

I was at Wagaman Primary School with the Member for Sanderson about two weeks ago to Skype one of its sister schools in Timor-Leste. There is a lovely relationship between Wagaman and Timor-Leste. It has been formalised by the Education department providing a satellite dish in Timor-Leste. The school did not have the funds or infrastructure to have a satellite dish, so it is fortunate that the Education department has been able to provide that resource for the school.

In formalising sister school relationships the ultimate goal is to give children in our schools a thorough understanding of a multicultural society and of our close neighbours.

As the Member for Stuart said, if we expect our community to do the best we need to give it the best. If we can produce better outcomes in the bush we will achieve better social outcomes across the Territory, and there will be a flow-on effect to economic outcomes.

A good education opens up a lifetime of opportunity and has the power to break the cycle of disadvantage and lift individuals, families and communities out of poverty. This government has a comprehensive plan for education, backed up with \$124m in additional funding over four years. We are investing in what the evidence shows will make the biggest difference. We are investing to make sure that one year of school equals at least one year of progress for every Territory student every year.

It is a pleasure to deliver my statement and to hear everybody in this House speak on education. It is wonderful to set down our pathway and direction for education early in this term of government. Everyone who works in education is committed every day to achieving our goal of one year's progress for every Territory student every year.

As the Minister for Education, I am committed to making a difference for every Territory child.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

**PAPER TABLED
2016 Election Report**

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Northern Territory Electoral Commission's Report on the conduct of the 2016 Northern Territory Legislative Assembly general election.

**CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE REPORTS, AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS AND
GOVERNMENT RESPONSES**

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's Report to the Legislative Assembly March 2017—consideration deferred.

MOTION

**Note Paper – Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People – Report to the Legislative
Assembly and Summary of Recommendations and Associated Minutes of Proceedings**

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I was fortunate to be a member of the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People, and I am very grateful for that opportunity. As a new member in this House, the opportunity did not come with a huge amount of knowledge. That is why I feel that I went in with a really open mind around the process and it was an opportunity to learn, which was really important.

When I first started I was not across how important the work of committees is to the parliament, and over the last seven or eight months I have come to understand that better. Whilst on the committee we had an opportunity to travel to Queensland to look at the parliament there, and that was an eye opener.

That opened my eyes to some very different ways in which things could be done. From speaking to my other colleagues who attended that as well, I understand the way that the Queensland parliament operates its committee system in order to open the parliament to the people.

I did not have any preconceived views, but it was an election commitment of this government that we would take every opportunity to open parliament to the people and make our processes more transparent. I went in with that fundamental idea.

There was a lot of robust debate amongst the select committee every time we met. There was never a unified position on most of the issues we discussed. I thank the Chair of the committee, the Member for Fong Lim, for his leadership of that. I also thank Russell Keith and the committee for their guidance and understanding. They were able to seek out Queensland as an opportunity for us and we were able to do that.

Queenslanders have what they describe as a new system; it has been in place for a short amount of time. In that parliament it is a very new system but has been tried and tested already. It is a much bigger parliament than ours, and a lot more bills and legislation come through that parliament, so it was interesting. The concepts are the same, and Queensland is much better funded, but it gives us opportunity to know where we can grow. It is good to see a proven model that has opened parliament to the people.

Queensland parliament staff talked about their feedback on legislation, which has gone from three or four comments on legislation as it went through the old committee systems to now getting hundreds of groups and stakeholders engaging with the passage of its legislation, which is quite exciting. If we can achieve that in this House it would be fantastic.

It was about bringing people into the work of parliament, and that is what we want to achieve. We want to make sure we demystify the process. This is the people's House; we want to make it more inclusive. We want to raise awareness of the work of parliament and how it affects people; not later, once we have made legislation in this place.

Wulagi Primary School visited today—this parliament does an amazing education program for young students. I did not have that as a child. I expect we will get more students and young people coming through who are more aware of the processes of parliament. For people who do not know the processes of parliament, it is our job to take it out there—it is not just up to the parliamentary education program.

In Queensland there is a person who goes out with the committees to do some work in communities, in areas where legislation might affect people the most. That education officer sometimes goes out

beforehand to do some groundwork and make sure the right people are coming to community consultations on legislation. That is some food for thought as we go forward with the role of education officer.

We do not have a big parliament. Queensland has that luxury and can have a broader education program, but it is something for us to keep in mind.

One of the main things I found while I was a member of this committee related to the processes of passage of legislation in this House. The proposals in the select committee's report are about giving time to consider the legislation in detail. One of the most important things is that it can then be looked at by people outside this parliament.

I acknowledge the work of the departments in developing legislation. They talk to the stakeholders in their remit. Departments have long histories of engagement with stakeholders. Sometimes there is legislation that has unintended consequences. That is the important thing we want to pick up on before the passage of the legislation.

Some legislation will go through quickly, but more complex legislation that will potentially affect people in remote communities—we talk a lot about how many of our communities are remote and how difficult it is to provide services to them. It is exactly the same with legislation and how difficult it is for people to truly understand what we are doing in this House.

Through the proposed changes there is an opportunity for us to take that legislation out. The responsibility will fall on committees to take the legislation out of this House and talk to people on the ground about how it might affect them. If we have specific legislation that talks about remote communities, we should actually talk to those communities. It is a great opportunity for input. This also applies to our towns and cities. It is about voices being heard.

There is another important point—with our current committee structures you are either on a committee or not. If you are a minister and see the legislation coming through, you have a deeper understanding of it, but the proposals enable members of this House to interchange on committees for the first time. We saw that in action in Queensland. It was good to see that if you have a passion—the Member for Karama has a passion for suicide prevention, and I would hate for her not to be on a committee where suicide prevention is being discussed, or for her to be locked out of that committee's work. If legislation was introduced she would be able to interchange with people on that committee and bring her wealth of experience to that committee. That is another exciting thing about the changes being proposed.

I note another couple of things from the report. The first is that we are suggesting acknowledgement of country at the beginning of our parliamentary sittings, along with the customary Lord's Prayer. This is contemporary thinking; it is quite exciting. There is a real opportunity to acknowledge country. We do it all the time, even within our Caucus. It is significant, and in opening parliament we should acknowledge country.

The other matter to note is that there was much robust debate about the names of committees. I would not say it was a unanimous agreement, so I welcome that going to the Standing Orders Committee to develop some terms of reference. That is important work.

I also note annual reports, which come later than our estimates process. Having an estimates-type committee later in the year and teasing that out—a separate process for annual reports—brings a level of scrutiny that is not currently there.

I hear feedback from people who have been involved in estimates previously, where the reports under consideration were almost 12 months out of date. You are always retrospectively looking back, and things move quickly across the Territory, so it is important those annual reports are considered when they are finished in the current financial year.

At the moment it is likely to be a 50-50 split between that and estimates; a suggestion is that at the end of the 12-month period we will look at it and decide whether we want to spend more time on estimates or on annual reports.

There was robust debate, and not 100% agreement by the committee on all points, but that is democracy. It is reflective of the makeup of the committee. Good on everybody for voicing their views and those of their colleagues. As a government we have to make this work. It is our commitment, so we need to be careful and listen to all views.

I will finish on the point of petitions, and I welcome others to look at this issue. There was a lot of disagreement and debate about petitions amongst the select committee members. It was a contentious issue that came up repeatedly at all our meetings, because the people on the committees come from diverse backgrounds and represent diverse electorates.

In my 5500 constituents there might be 2000 who feel passionate about a local issue. It is easy for me to get 2000 signatures on a petition, but if you are in a remote community you would be lucky if you can get a couple of hundred names.

Does it matter whether or not they are on the electoral role, and does it diminish the voices of the people on those petitions? It is a robust debate and a good one for us to have, and I am glad we have started that conversation.

In lots of ways this is just the beginning of the conversation. I am pleased that in 12 months we will have another look at this to see how it has worked. Queensland talked about doing this and has tweaked it along the way. We will have to suck it and see.

I welcome the hard work that has been put into the report. We can continue to disagree; the important thing is that it is okay. What matters is the work of those committees. It may not be the names or specific functions, but it is the work and the outputs of committees that matter.

Those are the two important things from me, along with acknowledgement of country and annual reports.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, we are quite happy with the report. The procedures of how this parliament functions and reviews legislation should constantly be opened to see whether we are doing it right and whether people feel they are involved.

This process started during the term of the last government and has continued in this government, and the committee discussed a lot of different ways of doing that. Part of the problem we had on the committee was that we had new members who had not been through the parliament and they struggled a bit, but they did well in taking those things on board.

It is interesting that if this report is adopted, one of the first pieces of legislation that could be passed out to one of these committees to look at is the floor space issue in the *Liquor Act*, but we will see if that happens.

The recommendation in the report is to have the committees based around portfolios. There is still a bit of contention about whether that is accepted or not. While we would prefer portfolios, that constantly needs to be reviewed. The issue of petitions has caused much debate and there is some concern as to whether the number of people who sign a petition make it important—or is it if you have a whole group of people or demographic that are affected by it?

A good example is a bush electorate. If you have a whole community of 200 sign a petition, how much weight does that carry compared to 2000 people out of the whole electorate? That is our concern. I believe that is something that needs to be thrashed out into the future.

The other interesting thing is the hours around the estimates and around the annual report review. I have had a lot of discussions and the final outcome was that the total for the two of those would still remain at 60 hours. The opposition and Independents have discussed this at length, and we unanimously feel that a split of 50-50, if that is decided or put forward in the motion, would not be acceptable to any of us.

The split of that 60 hours, especially in the first year—there should be emphasis still on the estimates and then gradually move into a transition, and over time you work out how many hours you would need for each. We are very much of the view that the decision on that split should sit fairly and squarely with the Independents and the opposition. I will give you an example of why that should occur. If any government in the future wanted to avoid scrutiny of its budget, there is nothing to stop it allocating 59 hours to annual reports and one hour to estimates. That is a danger that we leave by allowing that to stay.

The opposition and, I am sure, the Independents agree that those hours should be left for us to decide, more or less. The total hours are there, but it is a very important issue. The budget should be scrutinised. To alter the estimates process from 60 hours last year to just 30 hours this year—we would not accept that lying down.

We will await the motion on estimates and how it is structured; I do not want to enter that debate now. We are happy with the report and the way it is. We will be interested to see which recommendations the government will not accept. I think it will probably accept most of them. Whether they end up being referred to the Standing Orders Committee, I think, is acceptable. I support the report.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I wish to add my two bobs' worth to this discussion. Opening parliament to the people was a process that I was fortunate enough to come into half way through. I acknowledge that a significant volume of work was done by my parliamentary colleagues prior to my commencement on that committee.

Opening parliament to the people is an issue that is extremely important to everyone in this Chamber and the wider Northern Territory. Engaging with those we rely on for support is vital in a modern world and an ever-changing process. That is the process we are seeing in this day and age in parliaments right across the country and the world.

What a modern parliament looks like and how a modern parliament works is very important. Parliamentarians are in an ever-changing environment and we, as elected members, must evolve and change if we are to remain engaged with our electorates in contemporary parliaments into the future. It is vital to include young people in this process, as well as those living in remote and rural areas, because parliament is not just a place where we send people to talk about issues, but is a place in which we represent our constituents to make sure they are being looked after. I think any way we can engage our constituents to see us in the parliament fulfilling that role is a good one.

Today there is a growing expectation of active involvement in community engagement. People expect us to be active participants in public debate, and they should expect that. Territorians want their voices to be heard and they want their opinions considered. This report has considered many aspects of how we can enhance their experience with this parliament.

In modernising the parliament there is an obligation to ensure we enable and create an environment that is welcoming of people, a place to educate and inform the public about the current roles and mechanisms of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, and engage people in the accountability process and the information of public policy.

Only parliament itself can modernise parliament. That is a role we have undertaken on this committee to ensure we do this in an appropriate manner. I also extend my sincere thanks to the committee staff for their hard work and dedication to ensuring the report was done on time and dealt with in the utmost professional manner. I thank my parliamentary colleagues, the Members for Fong Lim, Sanderson, Karama, Nelson, Daly, Araluen and Stuart for all their hard work and dedication as members on this committee.

Like the Member for Sanderson mentioned, the report goes into detail about a number of reforms that need to occur in this Assembly. One of those is the acknowledgement of country. We meet on Larakia Nation land every day, and I believe we will be sending a strong message back to our first peoples of the Northern Territory if that acknowledgement occurs every day in line with the prayer. I think there are a number of significant proposed recommendations being put forward, which I hope are being considered. There are a few items that have been referred to the Standing Orders Committee. I welcome those items going to the Standing Orders Committee for some robust discussion.

As a committee, we engaged in many robust discussions about a number of the recommendations and proposals. I thank the Leader of Government Business, the Member for Nightcliff, for her passion, drive and commitment to ensuring this parliament is open to the public and reformed to the best of its ability. Leader of Government Business, I offer you my sincere appreciation and thanks for some really robust discussions.

I agree with the recommendations put forward by the committee and the Leader of Government Business. I welcome the matter of petitions being referred to the Standing Orders Committee. The Member for Sanderson and the Leader of the Opposition have also raised this as an issue.

As a member who represents regional, remote and rural parts of the Northern Territory, this is a matter I advocated very strongly in the committee. Many communities in the great electorate of Namatjira have very small but significant populations. There are a number of communities that consist of anywhere from 50 to 100 to a couple of hundred people. It is important that the matter of petitions be referred to the Standing Orders Committee to discuss what would be considered an appropriate way to ensure petitions are read

and people living in regional, remote and rural parts of the Northern Territory feel that when they bring a petition to this House that it is treated in the same manner any urban petition would be treated.

I also raised concerns about that matter, because coming from an electorate like my electorate, Namatjira, I have one of the highest number of outstations scattered throughout my region. I want people living in the outstations, remote communities and rural areas have the same access and the same process and procedure in this House that people in urban areas would have. I welcome that decision and look forward to discussing the matter of the standing orders.

I also think it is very important to talk about the proposal of the new committees—one being social and economic. That is a great position to lead into. That structure is very inclusive and will allow for a lot of accountability and scrutiny.

I pick up on the Leader of the Opposition's concerns about the time allocation. There was some concern regarding whether you would give 59 hours to annual reports and one hour to estimates. Thankfully the CLP government is not in power, so I can comfortably say I do not think this government would take that position by any means. But I note the Leader of the Opposition's position on that. I think that should be discussed.

I support the recommendations and look forward to working with all my parliamentary colleagues in this Assembly to make sure we continue to look at ways to reform the parliament. Territory Labor has a strong tradition in this Chamber to reform parliament and look at engaging the general public in the Northern Territory. That has been evidenced by previous Labor governments, when regional sittings occurred in places like Alice Springs. We made sure our local constituencies had the opportunity—we had school groups being taken through Central Australia to see parliament.

I love sitting in here and seeing schools from the Top End visiting. I would love to see more schools from the great electorates of Namatjira, Braitling, Araluen and so forth have the opportunity to see that. I would love that. I understand there are some significant costs involved with that, but the results and benefits to the local community to be able to see democracy in action is very rewarding.

We are a team with a strong record of making sure we open parliament and the democratic process to Territorians to see firsthand their House in action. I look forward to working with everyone in this Chamber to ensure that we continue to open parliaments because, as I said previously, only parliaments can truly modernise parliament. We need to work effectively together to achieve that outcome for the good of everyone in the Northern Territory. I look forward to further work in that area.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I will say one thing about school children coming from Central Australia to the Assembly. I would like the Assembly to go back to Alice Springs. In the past it was once every two years, and to overcome that gap between them and us it was worth the effort of running parliament in Alice Springs.

It was also good for me, as a member of parliament, to have an opportunity to catch up with residents and local councils of Alice Springs and the surrounding areas to get an idea of what is happening, so I can gain a more rounded education of matters that are not just for the Top End but for Central Australia. That would be good.

I thank all committee members. The Member for Fong Lim, our Chair, did an excellent job considering he has only been in parliament a fairly short time. It is not easy being a Chair of a committee. I also thank the Members for Araluen, Karama, Daly, Namatjira and Sanderson; our Clerk Assistant Committees, Russell Keith; Committee Secretary, Julia Knight; Senior Research Officer, Elise Dyer; Administration and Research Officer, Annie McCall; and Administration Assistant, Kim Cowcher.

Without those people this document would never have been written. Those people have the experience to put together all the discussions we have, which sometimes can be disorganised because of the various opinions. They are able to put those together and come up with a document that is readable, understandable and mostly makes sense.

I support most of the recommendations in the report, although I have some leanings otherwise. I have heard people congratulating the government on being open and transparent. Regardless of your views on a previous bill that went through parliament, if the government was fair dinkum about what it will do now, it would have used that in the termination of pregnancy bill, gone out to the people and established that committee.

It would have been a good example of saying we will not wait for this committee to come up with its recommendations. This committee put out draft recommendations before the end of last year, which said to send all the bills to a committee. If this government is fair dinkum about what it is trying to put forward here, which I support, it would have done it with that bill. It did not do it and I feel so disappointed, regardless of my views, that it did not take that opportunity.

I supported the idea of sending bills to a committee long ago. I remember meeting people at a CPA meeting where one of the clerks gave me a rundown of how this system works in Queensland, and I raised with the previous government that that was a better way of doing things. Being a unicameral system we do not get a second chance unless we debate through the consideration in detail stage in parliament.

In some ways, the second chance for us to debate some things is for a committee to scrutinise a bill as a tri-partisan body that can take it to the community, depending on what sort of legislation it is. It can inform and discuss with those who will be affected by the bill and hopefully come back to parliament with an agreed statement about whether the bill should be passed without amendment, should be amended or should not be passed at all.

Not everybody will be on the committee, so even though the committee may come to parliament with an agreed position, members of this House still need the opportunity to debate that, otherwise it would be undemocratic and you would not be including the whole of parliament.

It will be slow in some ways because you can look at these issues up to three assemblies. Bills will not go through as quickly as some have over the last few years, unless they are on urgency. If they are on urgency government has to show they are genuine urgency bills. It will slow things down to some extent, but it is a better way of doing things. You will have an opportunity to be involved and provide input to the legislation. That is the way it should be.

A number of issues were raised. The government has to agree to the recommendations; this is not a fait accompli. Having been on the committee I know the government has different points of view than the committee. What the final recommendations will be with the blessing of the government, I am not 100% sure. I hope it takes up most of these recommendations.

The idea of portfolio scrutiny committees—I have been to Canada and that is what Nunavut and the North West Territories do. The minister comes to those meetings and discusses his or her legislation before the committee. You scrutinise the minister. That needs to be part of what we do as well. We should be able to call the minister into a committee meeting and say, 'Minister, please explain what this piece of legislation means'. That tests the government on whether it knows what it is talking about. That is what happens in those unicameral systems.

I can live with the changes to when this committee will sit. The agreement is Monday mornings will be when we meet the public and on Wednesdays we will discuss the responses to the public meetings amongst ourselves. That is better than what was put forward, which was to crowd everything in on Wednesday morning.

From the point of view of mechanics—the government said, 'No, you will not get any more staff'. We need to make sure we have adequate staffing for this to work. If we have a lot of bills, travels and reports—if the government believes in the system and how it works—we need the backing of adequate staff to make sure it does. Otherwise we will be putting an enormous workload on a few people and that will not be good for the morale of the Legislative Assembly.

I have thought about this a number of times. I have been on the Estimates Committee, but last year was the first year I missed it because I had to go to the north of Canada. If you cut that from 60 hours for estimates, regardless of the annual reports, you will kill the whole system. You have a lot of portfolios. Most years we do not cover all portfolios. Several times we did not get to discuss the port. It is always at the bottom of the pile. One year we made sure the port was on top.

We already struggle to cover all portfolios. There will be departments that prepare their bits and pieces for that portfolio, but they can almost guarantee they have wasted their time. It would not be a bad exercise to go back through estimates and see which portfolios were never asked about. Some of it was because there were too many rubbishy questions like, 'How much carpet is in this room? What is the square meterage?' Both sides used to do it. I have been to enough estimates to know they used to do it all the time. I would sit there and ask, 'When are we going to ask the deep and meaningful questions?' It was a tactic, and we had

the problem where questions would be answered on the floor by the minister when it should have been answered before estimates, and then questions can be asked about the answers.

People would remember the famous example of the previous Chief Minister, who read a statement so slowly that it took up an enormous amount of time in estimates. That was an abuse of the estimates system.

There can be efficiencies, but I also feel that if we knock out too many hours from the Estimates Committee a number of portfolios that we should ask questions on will miss out.

I would rather leave the annual report system as it is. I use it for a few questions—someone said it was out of date, but it is not out of date. You will find in those reports there are programs that are continuing. You give the minister the opportunity to say what happened to that program and how much money was spent on it.

If you want to use the up-to-date annual reports, I would rather have estimates come out after the annual reports are completed. You could then say they are both contemporary and make sense. There are plenty of questions in the previous estimates. You can look at last year's actuals as well as this year's estimates; that is all part of what to look at.

I would prefer to leave it as it is, because I do not think cutting hours for estimates will improve the situation.

We have had many debates on the hours for estimates ever since the Estimates Committee was established in 2002 or 2003. We did not have the Estimates Committee before. My memory is that people used to stand here until the sun rose, asking questions of the minister until they ran out of questions. The system we have now is an improvement on that.

In regard to petitions, I note that the Member for Namatjira talked about going back to the standing orders. I just checked and the only thing I can see—perhaps someone can prove me wrong, but the only thing going back to the standing orders for investigation is the options for enabling electronic petitions through the Assembly's website. The rest of the committee recommendation is that:

... the Assembly provides that any petition conforming with Standing Orders with more than 1000 signatures be set down on the Notice Paper ...

It did not say there could not be any petitions, but it needed to be a fair-sized petition before it was put on the Notice Paper and people could speak about it.

I would be concerned if a small community's voice was not heard simply because there might not be 1000 people in the community, so how it will work in practice I do not know. I notice you have to be a resident of the Northern Territory, which is important, but whether you have to be on the roll is one thing that was discussed. That is a bit like saying you have to pay rates to vote in local government elections. Once upon a time you did, but now you could live in a caravan park and you are allowed to vote as long as you are on the roll.

Should people be able to sign a petition if they are not on the electoral roll? Who will check it anyway? It will be hard to check because you could look on the electoral roll and sign someone else's name. It will be warts and all, and what we have put here is reasonable, but I am concerned about small communities.

I noticed Recommendation 29, which says:

The Committee recommends that the House Committee investigate the appropriate level and model of library services for Members of the Legislative Assembly, having regard to services provided in other jurisdictions, the research support needs of Members, and the need for independence in Members' research support.

Lo and behold, it is the Independents who struggle with independent research. I am not knocking the two people—they are very good people—whom the government selected on our behalf to be research officers. They are doing some work for me at the moment. But I find it strange that the government can appoint whomever it wants to help in research—whatever they do up there on the fifth floor, getting speeches ready et cetera. They can select who they want.

I was at Taminmin the other day and we were asked to talk to the students as part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association speech. The Opposition Leader said to the students, 'I don't speak without getting advice. I have 10 people ...'—10 people! There are five of us and we have two people. They selected the people they wanted to work on the fourth floor. We were told who we had to have.

I do not want anyone taking this the wrong way; the people upstairs are doing a good job. I use them at present, but I do not have the flexibility other people have. Why?

Recommendation 29 says:

... the research support needs of Members, and the need for independence in Members' research support.

My research people have been selected by the government. There is something wrong there, something unfair to Independents. Maybe the parties do not like Independents. Most of the time I have had a part-time research officer who would help me at meetings. If I did not have anything for them they would be doing the research I had an interest in. They would go out bush with us to help us. We do not have flexibility, but if you take this recommendation as it is, perhaps there might be changes.

I understand it is a 12-month trial, and I accept that, but I do not think it is fair the way Independents are treated when it comes to research. I do not want to labour on that, because there are plenty more recommendations; there are 30 recommendations in this document.

This is one thing I like about committees: I like working with members of the opposition and government. Even though we have argy-bargy and people do not agree with you on various issues, committees are a good chance for people to throw off the shackles. Although, I have been to committee meetings in days gone by where there has been some dissent that has upset the balance. But it is good to have committees.

I look back to the days of the Council of Territory Co-operation; when it was working it worked well. It fell apart to some extent because one side did not want to belong to it anymore, but the concept was good. While this government has such a majority, the Council of Territory Co-operation would be a good thing to scrutinise the government's projects. The Member for Barkly is looking at housing; he would remember that the Council of Territory Co-operation visited places and checked on the standard of housing and asked people what they thought about their houses. It checked on a range of things, even the gas stop from Channel Island Power Station. We investigated that, and we investigated the issue of cruelty to cattle in Mataranka.

It was important to have that type of committee. The PAC, technically, can do that. When the balance of power was shifting in the last sittings we were able to investigate the debacle of Richardson Park. Did we find out some truths? Yes.

Once this committee is finished I do not know where the government will head, because there are no committees. It is pretty light on in that area. My recommendation is to look at the Council of Territory Co-operation, which is like a PAC—whether the government wants to use the PAC for that purpose, I do not know. We need a committee that performs that overall scrutiny of various government operations.

I thank the Chair; I think he did an excellent job. It is not easy work first time around. I also thank all the staff who helped out and the members of the committee for their good work in bringing this report to parliament.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I, too, was fortunate enough to join my colleagues on the select committee to look at how we can better open parliament to the people in the Territory.

I acknowledge my fellow committee members, the Members for Sanderson, Namatjira, Nelson, Daly, Araluen and Stuart, and our Chair, the Member for Fong Lim. I thank you all. I also acknowledge the committee secretariat, which provided fantastic support, especially to us first timers. They made my experience a bit more comfortable—First Clerk Assistant, Russell Keith; Committee Secretary, Julia Knight; Senior Research Officer, Elise Dyer; and Administration Assistant, Kim Cowcher.

I was able to talk to people in the community about my experience on the select committee, which was a positive point for me. They were very supportive of us taking this initiative. It has become apparent to me since I came into this position that Territorians want to know more about parliament. They want to know we are working hard every day and keeping their best interests at heart, which is relevant and comforting.

I appreciated seeing the stakeholder contribution to our green paper. One of the highlights for me was that the NT Youth Round Table was included and encouraged to have its voice heard and have its say. It is important to understand that if we are mapping a future for the Territory, our parliament and the way forward we have to do it with young people sitting at the table.

A gentleman came into my office a couple of months ago, who was excited about the select committee and looking forward to the report being released. More importantly, he asked me how he could have his say on the bills that come before parliament. I found that very encouraging. I sent him a follow-up letter and let him know that the report was coming out and there would be ample opportunity for him to provide input. It is not that Territorians are not busy enough in their everyday life—we debate many issues here and every one of them impacts directly on our people. They should be able to have their say and should be encouraged to do so all the time.

Parliament belongs to the people, and it is really important for us, as their elected representatives, to remember that. Parliament House is the House of the people. It was interesting for me to have my partner attend one of our late sessions in Parliament House last week. He was not aware that you could do that. I wonder how many other Territorians are not aware that you can come into Parliament House at any time, pass through security and watch what we are deliberating here. Our business is their business; we are talking about the future of the Territory and how to make it better.

I was surprised that he really enjoyed it and will probably come back this week, which is promising. If we open more opportunities to more Territorians, who might tell other people and be invested in the way we go forward?

One of the things from our report that I am really looking forward to is that committees will be able to consider bills prior to them coming to the House. I am also looking forward to our official acknowledgement of country and traditional owners.

It is a sensitive topic, but I am also looking forward to time being allocated to review annual reports. I worked in the NT Government from the age of 19 until I took this job, which is nearly a decade-and-a-half. I have been on the other side, as have my colleagues, the Members for Sanderson, Brennan and Drysdale. The public service puts in a lot of work. It does the hard yakka and there are many sleepless nights.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, I have been able to sit in on estimates in Parliament House and watch this side of it. There are a lot of unopened folders. A lot of blood, sweat and tears go into preparing information that is not even asked for. As someone who has worked hard in a department to pull that information together, I know it can be deflating.

I am definitely on board with all the decisions to do things differently. I am not 100% happy with every recommendation. There are many in there, but that is okay as long as it suits Territorians and our purpose for being here.

I support our report. I appreciate all the hard work of our support team and the committee secretariat, and I take my hat off to my colleagues and our Chair, the Member for Fong Lim. I look forward to opening parliament to the people.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, after Territorians elected Labor last year, the government set out to establish the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People. The purpose of the committee was to explore parliamentary reform as a remedy to the dysfunctional CLP government, which saw public trust in the institution of parliament plummet. The parliament was an absolute disgrace. It was an opaque game of musical chairs.

It is important that the public has confidence in the parliament because that is where their representatives sit, deliberate, debate and pass laws. An open parliament lets members of the public see how it all works and it gives them access to their parliament, their House. It ensures that all views, not just those of a privileged few, are heard, considered and reflected upon.

We have already implemented some changes to Question Time, which gives more time for opposition and Independent members to ask questions of government ministers. This important reform ensures that the government is properly scrutinised and that the opposition and the Independent members are gathering questions from their constituents. We also increased the amount of time allocated to General Business on

each Wednesday, and we brought forward general business to earlier in the afternoon to allow a higher level of community attendance and, therefore, scrutiny.

The basic principles of accountability, probity and the free exchange of ideas are why we run for parliament. This parliament is enabled by the peaceful and orderly electoral process and a population of Territorians willing to place their trust in old institutions. These old institutions can and should be subject to continuous renewal. Territorians are very reasonably expecting more meaningful input and transparency from parliament and our government, and this government is willing to provide that for Territorians.

The recommendation that we establish portfolio scrutiny committees is acceptable to the government, and we will seek to draft terms of reference this year. Portfolio scrutiny committees are commonplace in other jurisdictions, where they consider matters and bills. We have seen in other jurisdictions, especially Queensland, which is also a unicameral parliament, the immense benefit these committees brought. Indeed, in a unicameral parliament, generally the government has a majority and is able to pass bills with little review. The addition of a level of review in a scrutiny committee will add this much-needed layer. If the public has confidence that parliament properly considers important matters and legislation, it will have more confidence generally in the important institution of parliament.

As we envisaged that these committees will be issues based rather than skills based, I think our committee Chairs will see real competition. Of course, we will need to allocate scrutiny committees time in order for them to properly perform their role of scrutiny. The work of committees is essentially the work of this Assembly. If we want scrutiny committees to properly function we need to ensure they have time, resources and facilities. This government is serious about getting that right. We are determined to ensure that when we make laws for Territorians they are good laws.

It was a Labor government that first brought the vital function of the Estimates Committee to the NT Legislative Assembly, and it will take a Labor government to make improvements to estimates. The estimates process is the shining light of transparency, allowing members of parliament to cross-examine ministers and senior public servants on expenditure and the budget. It might be a bit uncomfortable for a minister or an agency head, but I am sure many Territorians would relish watching people squirm under the light of transparency during an estimates hearing, whether it be here or in another jurisdiction.

As the Member for Nelson raised in his contribution to debate, who could ever forget that disgraceful moment in 2015 during estimates that saw a former Chief Minister read his answer very slowly to draw out the length of his response to escape scrutiny and thumb his nose at the noble intent of estimates.

What a moment that was, a proud day for the former Member for Braitling as all his backers applauded him, no doubt. I think it summed up the previous government. They were happy to beat their chests when they had the upper hand, but cowered when we shone the lamp in their faces. It is important to reflect on the Member for Nelson's contributions regarding estimates. I have seen him on a number of occasions, a great estimates performer, as an Independent member—he values good scrutiny.

It was not just that example of a Chief Minister speaking ridiculously slowly and denigrating the system of scrutiny—it was absolutely disgraceful from a first minister and elected official of the parliament. There were a lot of other tactics: the Dorothy Dix questions, which I found very amusing, were purely designed as time wasters and would come one after another, especially late in the evening. When we saw them directed to a minister to deflect any real scrutiny, it was obvious the tactic was well designed, planned and implemented.

Another one I remember from the last administration was the aggressive committee member who was put in a chair to intimidate opposition or Independent members in their questioning. They were extremely intimidating events. I saw colleagues, new to parliament and opposition, inflicted with this low and dishonourable tactic.

It went on year after year. There were great challenges for the Chair of the committee, being a government member. I often wondered how the Chair really thought about that estimates tactic that was underhanded and deceitful, when the role of a Chair is so important in making sure the process is above reproach.

The change that is proposed takes into account concerns, which were lessons vitally learned in this parliament. Those concerns have been raised by Territorians who lost faith in this system, particularly in the last four years of the CLP administration.

It is important to look at the proposal around estimates to split estimates into two hearings: one in June for the budget and one in November for annual reporting. I am surprised the Member for Nelson, who taught me a lot about the content and nature of annual reports and good scrutiny of government, tonight did not reinforce what I thought was a strong resonance of his use of annual reports and the basis for scrutiny of a good government.

The committee got this right. I note the strong level of support received for the change. I have no doubt this change will bring much-wanted scrutiny on two important public sector processes. I am the first to admit that it will be a task to get through all the annual reports for a minister in time for the November estimates hearings, but with an open and transparent parliament, this is a level of commitment the public expects from ministers of the Crown. Each of these estimates weeks will get 30 hours, and I look forward to our government bringing this amendment to sessional orders.

To ensure the entire Cabinet is scrutinised, the combined amount of estimates time the Chief Minister and Treasurer will receive is eight hours, while for each other minister there will be no more than seven hours. This reform will ensure all the things government does, whether popular or unpopular, has the opportunity for scrutiny during this important process.

Estimates will now look something like four days in June for budget estimates and three days in November for annual report consideration.

Acknowledgement of country has been mentioned in this Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, and I am proud to stand with a government that strongly supports the Assembly acknowledging country every morning that it sits. For many of us it is a matter of course, custom, manners and respect that country and its traditional custodians are acknowledged.

We meet on Aboriginal land and we debate on Aboriginal land, so it is only fitting that we at least acknowledge the land on which we meet every time parliament sits for the important work we do. It is 2017 and I am sure many Territorians would be surprised that we have not done it already. This is something we need to do, and we will support this important recommendation.

The work of the minister, the crossover between the legislative and executive branches of government, is vital to the good function of government and can profoundly impact on people's lives. We support ministerial reports being debated in the morning session, where the issue may not require a full ministerial statement. In implementing ministerial reports, we are adding another function of accountability to a minister, keeping it brief while allowing substantive debate on the floor.

While we endeavour to get things right the first time, it does not always happen. Small mistakes are what makes us human and are a wonderful aspect of human dynamism. This means we will adopt an important protocol about reviewing policy every 12 months. That is the mark of good governance, good opposition and good policy.

The public should expect a high degree of performance, accountability and transparency from the Assembly, and I am pleased to support the measures that will open parliament to the people. The more space we can put between us and the last government the better. Territorians will see the benefits of more accountability and scrutiny on the people who represent them. That means trust.

I look forward to revisiting these ideas in the future as technologies and methods of communication change, and no doubt this, as a process, will engender continual improvements.

It is fitting to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the members who made this happen, including the Member for Fong Lim, who chaired the committee, and the Member for Araluen, who was the Deputy Chair. The Leader of the Opposition and the Members for Karama, Stuart, Namatjira, Sanderson and Nelson all served on the select committee.

I also acknowledge the committee's secretariat. I have fond memories of working on parliamentary committees, both sessional and select committees, and the support provided to members of parliament is highly professional. I am sure the new members involved in the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People have experienced that; they are great Territorians who work with us in this place. They are professional and provide that incredible level of support that enhances your job and delivers the best outcomes. Well done to the secretariat. I have had the pleasure of working with them. They have supported our elected community representatives to deliver a great outcome and a great agenda to address some

sad history in regard to the Northern Territory political system—some new territory to regain trust and ensure the people of the Northern Territory are front and centre in all that we do.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, the government thanks everyone for their contribution.

I move that the motion be amended by inserting after the word 'report', 'the Assembly adopts Recommendations 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25 and 30, and refers Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 19, 23 and 26 to the Standing Orders Committee for inquiry and report on procedural matters'.

I am proud to stand here today as part of a government that is responding to recommendations by the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People. I acknowledge all members of the committee for their hard work, especially the Member for Fong Lim, who chaired the committee, and the Member for Araluen, who was the Deputy Chair.

I also thank the Opposition Leader, Gary Higgins; the Member for Karama, Ngaree Ah Kit; the Member for Stuart, Scott McConnell; the Member for Namatjira, Chansey Paech; the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood; and the Member for Sanderson, Kate Worden. They all served on the select committee. We all know the level of work involved in committees and we sincerely thank you for that.

The minister was just remembering fondly his days of committee work. In the previous Assembly I was on the Public Accounts Committee for the full four years, and it was an interesting four years.

I thank all the staff who supported the select committee. Their support is vital not only to the running of the committee, but for strong outcomes and recommendations to the Assembly. I note from my own committee experience that they remind you of things and help you to be organised.

One of our first actions as a new government in this Assembly was to establish the select committee in October 2016 to explore parliamentary reform. We saw a chaotic and dysfunctional term of government over the last four years, which resulted in all-time low levels of confidence in us in our positions.

Territorians sent a clear message at the last election that they would not put up with it, and we all agree it should never be repeated. As parliamentarians we debate and strive to find solutions to some of the most challenging issues facing the Territory. Territorians must have confidence that we will truly act as their representatives. They must have confidence that their views will be properly reflected. They must have confidence that we will approach those matters with the respect they deserve.

As a government we implemented changes to Question Time. My colleague, the Member for Barkly, spoke about that. We have allocated Wednesdays for questions from the Independents and opposition benches, and we brought forward General Business Day to a slightly earlier time frame, allowing for a higher level of community attendance. I think the Wednesday afternoon Question Time period followed by GBD provides for Independent and opposition scrutiny.

The Labor Caucus has previously supported some of the recommendations put forward by the select committee in its green paper, and there has been a high level of communication between me and the SCOPP, including the formal correspondence on a draft of the committee's recommendations in February and March, and attendance at a meeting in March to discuss the government's position. I thank the committee for allowing me that opportunity.

The government notes that this report was tabled to the position of the Speaker on 28 March by the Member for Fong Lim as the Chair of the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People on 2 May 2017.

The majority of recommendations are agreed to, but we propose that the recommendations I read out at the start of my speech will be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for inquiry and report on procedural matters.

One of the reasons we wanted to send those matters to the Standing Orders Committee is to make sure, as they are very procedural in nature, they fit with the standing orders of this House, which is essentially our rule book for running parliament. Also, there was a strong and robust debate in regard to petitions, and we do not want to exclude people or for people to feel like we are not including them in the process. The

intention of petitions is to provide for opening what would be the threshold to bring a petition to this House. We represent very diverse electorates.

I will never forget the previous Chief Minister laughing at 74—or perhaps it was 90—emergency department nurses who had signed a petition. I did the maths and figured out there were some 1600 staff at RDH. Nearly 100 of them signing a petition is quite significant. The way they were treated with such disrespect sticks in my mind.

I am looking forward to standing orders working that through so we can ensure—we have a process currently around petitions and I think that works well. We genuinely want to open it up to further debate, but how do we get there? That is why we have referred a number of matters to the Standing Orders Committee so we can look at what sessional changes need to be made. By referring them to the Standing Orders Committee it will report back to the House and there will be further debate at that point. We have looked at the recommendations and there are a number of procedural aspects to implement. We want to ensure the standing orders clearly outline those procedural changes.

I will now touch on some of the recommendations in detail. On the matter of portfolio scrutiny committees, which relates to Recommendation 4, we propose that this matter be referred to the Standing Orders Committee to draft terms of reference for these committees. It is requested that the Standing Orders Committee will report back to the House on the terms of reference. At that point we can continue the debate.

I note that the proposal to establish portfolio scrutiny committees has its basis in a discussion paper that was put forward to the Assembly in 2015 by the then Speaker. As I noted in that paper many other legislatures have committees that regularly consider legislation before parliament. The proposal to establish these scrutiny committees is one that the government strongly supports. There has been consideration around how to future-proof such committees. The reality of government agencies is that, from time to time, the realignment of responsibilities becomes necessary.

It is therefore envisaged that these scrutiny committees would focus on social and economic issues so we can ensure that issues do not fit neatly into them. It is anticipated that it would be considered by the Standing Orders Committee as part of developing the terms of reference that they could establish the names. These groupings and this focus provide the required flexibility to respond to changes in department structures and responsibilities whilst future-proofing this.

If you look at an issue within my portfolio of Health, for example, it may be more of an economic review that is needed or it could be social impact policy scrutiny. We need to ensure that we cater for that.

The proposed assignment of portfolios, as detailed in Recommendation 4, is not supported, but we are looking forward to moving that to the Standing Orders Committee. The way we feel as a government is that once legislation is introduced to the parliament it is envisaged that the Chairs of the committees would meet to determine the focus of the bill and refer it to the appropriate scrutiny committee.

We are willing to work with these committees as a government. If they meet on a Thursday at lunchtime they could address the legislation that had been introduced that sittings and then work out the focus of that legislation. There may be the odd occasion that a second reading speech would be done after the luncheon break on a Thursday, but I am sure arrangements could be made to cater for that so we are not keeping members here who may travel from out of Darwin unnecessarily. We allow the Chairs of the committees to determine the focus of the bill and refer it to the appropriate committee.

The select committee report proposes changes to Standing Orders 176, 177 and 178 to provide for the scrutiny committees to take on all the functions of the Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee, the Public Accounts Committee and the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for their assigned portfolios. We support that the current level of functions and powers of these established committees be transferred to the new committees. As such, Recommendation 14 and a new Standing Order 177 are not supported as the powers of the Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee, which are proposed in this recommendation, go much further than is currently the case.

We strongly support the allocation of Assembly meeting time on Wednesday for the scrutiny committees to conduct business. These committees are to be established to provide further scrutiny of legislation and are considered Legislative Assembly work. Committee work is Assembly work; the allocation of Assembly meeting time reflects this. These committees will give Territorians an opportunity to directly interact with the

Legislative Assembly. We acknowledge that the committees will need to hold hearings at other times to hear from as many Territorians as possible.

Committees will retain ability for flexibility should they wish to meet outside of sitting times. I have listened to the debate today regarding estimates, and in our discussion paper prior to the election we raised the option of changes to the estimates process. The former Labor government first introduced estimates in the Northern Territory, and the Member for Nelson's contribution reiterated that the process was different. I recollect former members of the House also explaining that process here in this Chamber.

The former Labor government introduced the role of estimates, and it plays a vital role in providing scrutiny of government budget and expenditure.

We have had that process in place for more than 15 years and we feel it is appropriate to consider improvements. We have talked about it today in the House, so I will not go back over it, but we remember the previous Chief Minister, at estimates in 2015, trying to wind the clock down.

Prior to the election we proposed that consideration be given to splitting the estimates process into two separate weeks. One week would remain as the current time in June to scrutinise the budget expenditure and output by way of budget considerations. The other portion of the estimates would be moved to later in the year to allow scrutiny of agencies' annual reports, tabled in the October sittings, and it is proposed to hold a week of annual report scrutiny in November.

As a government we are strongly supportive of this measure. We will review this in 12 months' time, but it is an opportunity to provide scrutiny not only to the budget and the consideration of the Appropriation Bill, but also the annual reports. They largely get forgotten, apart from a few adjournment speeches, and there is a lot of information in them and a lot of hard work goes into them. It is proposed that an even split of 30 hours would occur for estimates and annual reports; this will allow an appropriate amount of time for both important focuses of the Assembly.

To ensure there is appropriate scrutiny of all ministers, it is proposed that the combined time for the Chief Minister and the Treasurer, appearing before the hearings of both estimates and the agency annual reports, would not exceed eight hours, which is currently their time frame for the two weeks. For all other ministers the global time limit would be seven hours across both hearings, so the ministerial times would be the same, but they would be split between the week of annual reports and the week of estimates.

Should the Assembly agree to these amendments and changes, it is proposed that this year's estimates committee will take the new format: a week in June and a week in October or November; we would allocate 30 hours to each week; and the global time for the Chief Minister and the Treasurer will be eight hours, other ministers will be seven. That could be split; perhaps the Treasurer could have five hours in June and two hours in November. You can work it out there.

We propose that the three sitting days currently assigned in June—they are not actual sitting days, as they are already nominated for estimates—be moved to November.

Petitions—I touched on that before but I will just come back to it. We want a process that allows petitions to be a part of the process a bit more, and I think sending that to the Standing Orders Committee—the complex debate we have heard within the government benches and committee. I have already spoken about it.

In achieving our goal of opening parliament to the people and allocating time to these debates we need to make sure the matters debated in the House are truly representative of the Territory. The Standing Orders Committee will provide that opportunity.

I understand there was a high level of debate amongst the select committee on this matter. The committee members, as with our government members, representing the diversity of the electorates engaged with that debate. We will take that to the Standing Orders Committee hoping we can come up with a process.

We support the acknowledgement of country. We do this as a Caucus already; we acknowledge that we gather on the land in Darwin of the Larakia people and pay our respects. We believe it is appropriate we recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as traditional custodians of the lands we meet on. This is nowhere truer than in the Northern Territory. It would be fabulous to have the Northern Territory parliament adopt such recognition.

We have our prayers in the morning; it is a moment for reflection. It would be fabulous to acknowledge the traditional owners who allow us to gather on their land, and what a beautiful place it is.

It is proposed that Recommendation 26 be referred to the Standing Orders Committee to develop procedures for ministerial reports to be read in the Chamber. It is proposed that ministerial reports be debated in the morning session, as they may be for important issues that may not warrant a full ministerial statement to be debated in parliament. Notice of the topic for discussion would be given on a previous sittings day and debate would be capped at two hours, providing for important information to be shared.

We have spoken extensively over the past week about the tough economic times we are facing in the Territory. There are a number of recommendations which have budgetary implications and we are unable to support them for this reason.

At Recommendation 20 the SCOPP proposes additional staff to provide committee support. The combined additional budget required to bring Recommendation 20 is an additional \$500 000, bringing total recurrent funding for committee support to \$1.2m. However, it is expected the streamlining of committee work from three committees to two committees would provide for adequate committee support from existing resources. We are unable to support Recommendation 20.

Parliament House only has infrastructure to record audio and video of a single proceeding. The SCOPP proposes at Recommendation 21 that funding be provided to enable independent recording for the Litchfield and Ormiston rooms, but this would again require significant investment, so we are unable to support Recommendation 21.

The Latimer House Guidelines specify the Commonwealth principles on the accountability and relationship between the three branches of government. The Northern Territory population of the Legislative Assembly is noted as a challenge in its small size when establishing an independent parliamentary service. The establishment of an office of the Legislative Assembly or office of the Clerk as an autonomous— instrumentally, we are unable to support Recommendation 27.

The SCOPP report recommends the House Committee inquiry into the provision of adequate financial analysis service for members. We believe this is already catered for through the Department of Treasury and Finance, so Recommendation 28 is not supported.

The SCOPP recommends the House Committee investigate the appropriate level and model of library services. We do not support that recommendation. We feel there is current provision provided through the Department of Tourism and Culture through the Northern Territory Library. I acknowledge all the library staff; they helped me when I was in opposition by providing information. We get emails each day advising us they are open during sittings for us to access.

In relation to amendments to the *Audit Act* the Auditor-General noted that the *Audit Act* does not provide the power to audit agencies actual effectiveness, efficiency and economy in meeting objectives. We do not support the recommendations in this report, but the select committee recommended amendments to the *Audit Act* to provide the power to the Auditor-General at Recommendation 16. We believe the recommendation and amendments to the act are not supported, we feel the best process for any such change would be through the relevant minister.

We recognise these are significant changes for running of the Northern Territory parliament. In implementing these changes we need to make sure as a government and parliament we get it right. We support Recommendation 30, which provides for a review of all adopted recommendations after 12 months of operation.

I feel that I have outlined the government's position. We look forward to the 12-month review. This is something new for the NT parliament. For those of us who have been here for four years or eight years—I am not sure how long you have been here, Gerry.

Mr Wood: Forever.

Ms FYLES: It is an exciting opportunity. We would like to review it thoroughly. I have clearly outlined the government's position and I thank everyone who has contributed.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for her amendment, although I do not agree with it all. The problem is that we did not know what you wanted to amend until you stood up just now.

The portfolio committee is a better process. It was difficult to cover everything in a short time and take it all in, but I think the division of the portfolios is a good way of doing things. What concerns me—and I cannot ask the minister to respond—is that we are talking about having two committees operating side by side. If one committee does not have the Hansard facilities, how will that operate? One of the recommendations was to improve the sound and recording system in one of the other rooms.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I outlined that we have a number of committees now that do not all meet at the same time. I am sure we can cater for that. If, at the end of the 12 months, we find that it is a hindrance we will review it.

Mr WOOD: I understand that, but the committees will sit formally Wednesday mornings. Wednesday is the only day they will sit. The recommendation was that the committee would sit on Mondays for public hearings and do its work on Wednesday mornings. The impression I got from you was that they will only sit on Wednesday mornings. I hope that is not the case.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is our General Business Day and I would not want it to be drowned in committee work. I do not mind a specific committee meeting on that day, but if it includes public hearings as well it is not a good proposal. The Assembly is sitting on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, so there is nothing that says it cannot sit from Monday to Friday. We always get into trouble for the days we sit in parliament, so I do not think it will hurt to use Mondays for what would be regarded as part of parliamentary sittings.

I will look at the recommendations that the government has rejected. I am a little disappointed. The government has every right to reject recommendations, but it was a bipartisan committee made up of a majority of Labor Party members, some Independents and opposition.

After all the discussion we had, I thought we came up with some reasonable recommendations. I am disappointed that some of them have not been taken up by the government.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I note my thanks to each of the members of the committee. This committee worked well, in my view as Chair. I thank each of the members from the government side, the Members for Sanderson, Karama, Namatjira and Stuart. But what made the committee work particularly well was the Member for Nelson's input, as well as that of the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Araluen. Their experience was invaluable to the considerations of the committee.

As the Member for Nelson pointed out, without the assistance of the First Clerk Assistant, Russell Keith, and his staff, this report would not have been possible. I am proud of the report and the work of the committee, and I thank each and every one of you.

I continue to support each of the recommendations. A lot of thought, discussion and debate was put in. There was also a lot of agreement amongst the committee. I am not sure that came across in the debate. Whilst there was debate in the committee, the level of agreement when it came to voting was fairly unanimous.

This committee was set up as one of the first orders of business of the incoming government and, as has been pointed out, it came about largely because of the level of dysfunction in the previous government.

We have a unicameral parliament in the Territory. One of the problems with a unicameral parliament is the lack of review of legislation passing through the parliament. The committee was charged with reviewing and recommending the best way forward.

As you know, the library occupies a position in this building that allowed for an upper house, and clearly that is an expense we cannot afford in the Territory.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, the motion has been moved for the amendments, so you need to speak on the amendments.

Mr COLLINS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I have no more comments.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 18

Noes 5

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

Mr Higgins
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mrs Lambley
Mr Mills
Mr Wood

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is now that the motion as amended be agreed to.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 18

Noes 5

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

Mr Higgins
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mrs Lambley
Mr Mills
Mr Wood

Motion as amended agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, Dr Mickey Dewar passed away, surrounded by her beloved family at her second home at Aireys Inlet, Victoria, on 23 April 2017, following a brief illness.

The loss of Mickey is devastating. The legacy she left the Territory is great. Mickey lived and worked in the Northern Territory for nearly 40 years. Her work was varied: teacher; researcher; writer; political adviser; curator; and librarian. She executed all with integrity, intelligence and diligence, but it was for her work as one of the Territory's finest historians that we remember her with such gratitude and respect.

Mickey Dewar was born on the first day of 1956 in Melbourne to Elizabeth and Jeffrey Dewar. She has two sisters, Adrienne and Carol. Her parents were two very different people. Her father was Scottish protestant, driven by the ethic of hard work. Her mother was almost the opposite in character, very much a free spirit. Mickey embodied these two strong and contrasting influences.

Mickey was 17 when she began her Bachelor of Arts at Melbourne University, but by the end of the 1970s the writer Xavier Herbert had woven his magic and the north of Australia beckoned. The ancient Greeks of her history honours thesis were abandoned forever.

Mickey won a Commonwealth teaching scholarship and in 1980 studied a Diploma of Education at the Darwin Community College. One of her earliest postings was to teach post-primary girls at the Milingimbi bilingual school, and she spent a year in that beautiful community.

Mickey married David Ritchie in 1980. Their son, Sam, was born in 1983, and their daughter, Susannah, two years later. It was while parenting two young children that Mickey completed her Master of History at the University of New England, then a PhD in History at the Northern Territory University.

Mickey was not shy of hard work. It is an understatement that Mickey was passionate about stories from Northern Territory social and political history. She lived and breathed Territory history and was fully committed to promoting a more complex and nuanced understanding of our region with a national discourse.

In 1994 Mickey became the Senior Curator of Territory History at the Museum and Art Gallery of the NT. Under her charge were six heritage-listed properties and the Northern Territory's regional museums. One of those properties was Fannie Bay Gaol, and she wrote its social history in 1999 in an excellent book called *Inside-Out*.

The Cyclone Tracy gallery at MAGNT is a monument to the creative Mickey Dewar. As an exhibition it was ahead of its time in the way Mickey grounded it solidly in a social and architectural context. The exhibition's dark and small room, with the eerie sounds of the cyclone mixed with the midnight mass, is still a feature to this day.

Mickey then had a change of vocation when the Labor government was elected under Clare Martin in 2001. She became one of Martin's most trusted senior advisers. Later, when she worked in the Northern Territory Library, the bells calling members into the House would still fill her with delight at the promise of government.

After politics Mickey went back to her true love, historical research, doing all kinds of consultancies for the government and non-governments sectors, and working on her own research projects.

Mickey had published many journal articles, books, reviews and reports on Northern Territory history, literature, politics, heritage and collections development. She also won a long and impressive list of history awards, prizes and fellowships. Two of her books were shortlisted for the New South Wales Premier's History Awards for community and regional history. In 1998 she received the Jessie Litchfield award for literature, and in 2011 she received the Chief Minister's Northern Territory History Book Award for her book *Darwin – no place like home*. Mickey had a real knack for finding a catchy a title.

With Clare Martin, Mickey worked on a collection of oral histories from past Northern Territory Chief Ministers. Its title was *Speak for Yourself. In Search of the 'Never Never' and Snorters, Fools and Little 'uns* were others.

Mickey had a way with words. Her reputation as a writer was great. She had an enormous capacity to read widely, absorb information and then write coherently and engagingly on new insights. She felt the Territory was the only place in Australia where history was not segmented, that the natural, Indigenous and European were intertwined. Mickey did not specialise in one area of Territory history; she explored widely—missionaries in Arnhem Land, social housing in Darwin, and Northern Territory literary fiction about explorers, World War I bicyclists and Victoria Cross winners.

Mickey wrote numerous biographies of Territorians, and documented the histories of many of our significant public buildings. Mickey was not just a serious academic history writer; she was a great storyteller. Her many animated presentations on Territory history at conferences, workshops, lectures and in the media are memorable.

She made the Territory's social and political history better understood and valued, and importantly, she made it come alive. Not surprisingly, the ABC loved her. She gave often and willingly of her time and expertise. She held listeners spellbound with her passion for telling the stories of the Territory.

Mickey also sat on various committees and councils, the Place Names Committee and the Heritage Council of the Northern Territory being two where she made valuable contributions. In all her work Mickey was highly professional and generous with her time and ideas, always encouraging her colleagues.

Not content with being a terrific historian with an unquenchable thirst for learning, Mickey studied to become a librarian and then to gain a master's degree in library information management. She worked at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education library, and in 2013 took on the position of heritage coordinator at the Northern Territory Library.

Mickey brought her broad knowledge of Territory history to the library and often amazed visitors with her ability to answer the most obscure questions. She gave the library her incredible creativity and curatorial skill in the exhibitions she created whilst there. Her latest work was the development of an exhibition for the Northern Territory Library exploring the breadth of Northern Territory history.

The active Fannie Bay History and Heritage Society and many areas within my electorate of Fannie Bay have significant historical and cultural value. I often spoke with Mickey, seeking advice about these places and institutions, and the best way for me as a local member to either protect them or celebrate them.

She was always generous and willing with her time, and her advice was always on point. Speaking as the local member, the Fannie Bay electorate was better for her knowledge, experience and willingness to share it. She loved the Northern Territory.

I found Mickey to be a valuable mentor. I once spent 10 minutes praising the Cyclone Tracy exhibit to her; lavishing it with compliments without realising that she was the one responsible for it. She sat there politely hearing me out while I told her about how wonderful this exhibit was. Perhaps the worst experience of mansplaining in my life—how it was a beacon for visiting friends and relatives, and at the end of it she kindly explained to me it was one of the first things she did after finishing her degree. She was a fantastic asset to the Territory.

Whilst Mickey inspired us all with her understanding of and passion for the Northern Territory, our thoughts today are with the most important and most loved people in Mickey's life, her family: David, Sam and Susannah. Rest in peace, Mickey.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk of a fantastic event recently run in Alice Springs for the first time, but I suspect will be an ongoing event in our calendar. May 4, as we all know, is Star Wars Day.

I acknowledge Scotty McLaren, who is well known to Alice Springs listeners of Sun FM as a breakfast announcer and a Star Wars tragic. Through his passion he organised an event at Alice Springs called Celebrating a Galaxy Far Far Away on Tatooine. It included the *Imperial March* on the lawns of Lasseter, and a screening of *Rogue One* and *Episode IV: A New Hope*.

I confess, the Chief Minister has strong views about the order in which *Star Wars* should be watched, and he and Scotty will be in alliance on this one.

One of the things I love about Alice Springs is that people who are passionate get opportunities to act on those passions in our town, and people back them. This was an extraordinary event. I know Scotty was able to get a lot of support from the town council, and the Alice Springs Town Band, played the entire soundtrack at the event.

The Desert Sports Foundation, Lasseters, the RSL, Bunnings, the local toy shop at Tonz-A-Toys and Yeperenye all backed Scotty and his vision of this event. Looking at the photos of all the young children dressed up in their Star Wars gear—there were a lot of Luke Skywalkers there and a few other characters that I was not as clear on, but they were very enthusiastic fans, with parents dressing up as well.

You know you are doing well when you get recognition from the Lucas fans relations team, which publicly congratulated Scotty on the event. He has plans for next year. I am not sure if we spied two moons over Alice Springs that night, but almost, if you squinted. Well done, Scotty, for that work.

We also had Heritage Week in Alice Springs. I am very fortunate to live in and represent an electorate with such a strong history and so many heritage sites, including the Telegraph Station and the Old Gaol. Some fantastic historic sites are part of Heritage Week each year. Heritage NT and the National Trust did fantastic work. I acknowledge Kevin Diflo, who was involved in organising a lot of the events and is a driving force. He is a strong part of our community and I thank him for his volunteering.

I attended the seniors' morning tea, which was fantastic. I heard some fantastic yarns and tales of Alice Springs past. Loraine Braham, a former member of the House and former Speaker, is always there with a great story on Alice Springs, so it was great to see her at that morning tea. There were many well-attended events at the library. I acknowledge the work of the Alice Springs library.

It is a very well-supported service and the council should be very proud of the work they do. We have some amazing librarians. Every time there is a week like this, there are events at the library. There were three events during Heritage Week at the library, so I thank them for their work. Thank you also to all the volunteers who made Heritage Week such a success in Alice Springs.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I wish to put on the record some of the achievements in my electorate of Casuarina and also to say thank you.

I wish to express my deepest thanks to Laura Mulready at Dripstone Childrens Centre. Many people in our community know Laura Mulready and have their children at the children's centre at the front of CDU on Dripstone Road. Many know that Laura will be moving back to Ireland soon, after running the centre over the last two years. We know how valuable and hard-working carers are as they work with our kids in the early years of development. It has been an absolute pleasure to meet Laura and see the positive achievements and milestones at the children's centre since her appointment, especially in the centre's environment.

The outdoor play space is looking beautiful and it still holds so much potential. It just got a new bee hotel added to the improved garden. I have to say a big thank you to the department of Primary Industry, which came in to teach the children about bees, which is pretty cool.

The children's centre now has a distinct focus on loving nature which permeates through all their activities and identity. It is truly something that the children, families and staff can be proud of. It is all about nature-based play and there is a much broader community engagement focus at the children's centre, which I think is brilliant.

Dripstone Childrens Centre has three new additions that we should welcome: Tilly, Rosie Lala and Cottontail, the rabbits. And the chickens are laying eggs, which is a great experience for those kids.

Last year was Dripstone Childrens Centre's 30th birthday bash, and it continues to go on from strength to strength, particularly under Laura's leadership. I was very happy to support National Science Week activities last year; we made ice cream out of liquid nitrogen and we froze and smashed flowers. Everyone was pretty delighted, including me.

I thank Laura and the parent body for their immense work in creating such a positive learning and nurturing environment for those children. I wish Laura all the very best on her next chapter and look forward to catching up with her at the centre later in the week. I wish her well.

I also note that last sittings I talked about those in my electorate who were finalists in the NT Young Achiever Awards. On what is one of the most positive nights of the year, I was really pleased to see Rian Smit from Lyons receive the PTTEP Health and Wellbeing Award for her mental health LGBTQI advocacy.

All the finalists and winners on the night are inspiring leaders in our community, and it is an important reminder to us all about how much our young people contribute on a daily basis to our community. They are not just leaders of tomorrow; this is what they do day-in and day-out as Territorians. They are leading today, and the Young Achiever Awards is a brilliant example of that. It is a brilliant time for us to recognise it, but we need to recognise it all year round.

The Young Carer's Award always gets people choked up; the room is always incredibly supportive. Young people, families and community members are getting out there and supporting our young leaders. It is an absolutely brilliant night, so it is important that we remember outside of the Young Achiever Awards to continue to be cheerleaders for our young people.

Congratulations to all of the winners, including Young Achiever of the Year, Mark Munnich. It has been a privilege to watch Mark grow over the years. His ongoing commitment and passion for the Northern Territory is undeniable. Many people have had the privilege of talking to Mark. He is very bright, has a fire in his belly and has a lot of energy. I do not know where he gets it all from. He has a lot of energy to make a difference in the Territory and he made an impression in this House as a member of last year's Commonwealth Youth Parliament.

We are so fortunate to have such a vibrant youth community and a bright future. When we have so many conversations about young people in our community that are often in a negative light, it is important we continue to recognise that.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am standing up tonight to talk about an exceptional Territorian, an up-and-coming country singer. We are fortunate tonight that she has come in to join us. Born and bred Territorian, Kim Koole. What an awesome name!

I am a relative novice in regard to Kim's singing, but my good friends, Raquel and Ambrose Nichols-Skene, who many in the House will know, are fans. Ambrose has been playing in her support band. I am lucky they introduced me to her music very recently; it is nothing short of impressive.

I am now the proud owner of Kim's new CD, and it plays in the electorate office on a regular basis, whether my Electorate Officer likes it or not. Whilst Kim is not a Member of the Sanderson electorate, the Member for Karama is very fortunate to have her in her electorate. I am happy to consider her an honorary member of the Sanderson electorate because she fits in her well with our hard-working, happy and positive community.

Darwin also offers us three degrees of separation, and I have discovered that Kim is the daughter-in-law of my great and long-term friend, Peter O'Hagan, who many of us know not only from the Labor Party, but also from his great work with the Rapid Creek Landcare Group.

Kim grew up in Darwin, with plenty of fishing and camping trips with family—a fairly normal Territory life from what I hear from my colleagues, who were very lucky to be born in Darwin. That is most people's experiences here in the Territory. It makes us jealous every time someone jumps up and tells us all about it.

I am told that on these family trips Kim was exposed to a variety of music influences—one of my favourites, Creedence. I am not so sure about the Eagles or Slim Dusty. I am more of a Charley Pride and Robert Cray girl. But we can agree on Creedence as a decent musical influence.

I am also advised that Kim began singing at the ripe old age of five, in various church productions. While most of us were off playing with our dolls or in the back yard with sticks and action figures, Kim was already honing her craft. She knew from a pretty young age that she wanted to seek out a career as a singer, and it is great to see her now keeping true to that path.

At the age of 11 she joined a local community band as one of four lead singers. That is pretty amazing in itself. They sang at various community events, including a festival held at her primary school. At 12 she was introduced to country music, which is a genre she loves. A year later she began to learn how to play the guitar and commenced the next steps in starting to write her own songs.

I am sure Kim attended Marrara Christian College, which gives her more right to be an honorary constituent of the Sanderson electorate.

Kim's story is much like most musicians in the Territory in that she did not pursue her dreams until after she finished school, but was confronted with the harsh reality of the industry and the directionless attitude that many school leavers face. I think many of us can relate to that.

After a short dabble at university, Kim, on her mum's urging—mums always urge their kids to do the right thing—entered a few local talent competitions, winning each one. There are no surprises there. She was then recommended to compete in the Adelaide River country music talent competition, which she did. Again, no surprises—Kim came out with first place in song writing, second place in vocals and the overall prize of a scholarship to the CMAA Academy of Country Music in Tamworth. Once you have listened to Kim, those accolades will not surprise you.

Since then Kim has jammed with Kasey Chambers, performed at the Tamworth Country Music Festival, been invited to play at the Adelaide River country muster, Darwin Show and local pubs. She has done radio interviews and made her way to Tamworth for the 2013 festival. Her song *Blue Skies* made her a finalist in the 2013 NT Song of the Year Awards.

In January 2014 Kim was on her way to the CMAA Academy of Country Music to study all aspects of country music with the likes of Amber Lawrence, Pete Denahy, Kevin Bennett, Tamara Stewart and many other great country music influences. What an opportunity!

The academy's graduation concert was a great surprise for Kim, as her now husband, Tim, surprised her and proposed. They married in June 2014, and I have stalked their wedding photos; there is no shame in that. They have an appropriate country feel to them. Good on you, Kim.

In December 2015 Kim began hosting a weekly country music hour on a local community radio show, Darwin 97.7, every Wednesday evening, a role she has very much enjoyed.

Kim has since been spending her time writing songs and playing gigs, and she recently recorded her first album, *Blue Skies*, which features a truck load of her own songs. The music is definitely country, very laid back, and reflective of her life in the Territory. If anybody wants a copy, she has them on hand.

In a recent interview, Kim provided a tip to young musicians that they should enjoy themselves on stage. From my observations she certainly does that.

Having read a recent biography of Kim, she tells of a lack of self-confidence due to getting teased. It is very clear to me from her performance a couple of weeks back, at the salubrious Noonamah Tavern—our Speaker of the House was there as well—she has overcome that lack of confidence. It was fabulous to see her on stage.

Last weekend she performed at the Katherine Club. It is great to see her taking her music out of Darwin. This weekend she will be headlining at the Freds Pass Show. Everybody will get an opportunity to listen to her. That is an opportunity for us to get out and support her before she becomes too famous to know that any of us exist.

Well done, Kim. Keep kicking your personal goals, and keep shining the Territory light. You make us all proud; we will be watching you as you go.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to update the House on the grounds in Palmerston. On Saturday afternoon the Member for Drysdale and I attended the opening of the Palmerston Spanlift Stadium, home of the Satellite City BMX Club. As assistant minister for sport, and proud resident of the Palmerston community, I had great pleasure in attending and opening the fantastic event.

The Northern Territory Government spent \$1.98m upgrading Spanlift Stadium to refurbish the track and install a roof over the complex. The single span roof built by Spanlift Australia is 68 metres wide by 105 metres long. When the 7104 square metre roof was lifted into place it was the biggest roof lift ever carried out by Spanlift, and possibly the biggest in Australia. It is huge.

The new facility will help local BMX riders to improve their skills during the Wet and Dry Seasons. It will also enable the Satellite City BMX Club to host local and national competitions, which have a positive financial flow-on effect to all of Darwin and Palmerston. Many years ago some of my sons raced at the same BMX track. The sport of BMX helps build teamwork and great friendships while being a fast and exhilarating sport.

BMX racing is now an Olympic sport. This new facility and our NT riders will be working toward the ultimate test in October, when the club hosts the 2017 NT BMX titles. I am informed the Satellite City BMX Club has lodged an expression of interest with BMX Australia to hold a national series in 2018. This would provide a potential economic benefit to the local community.

I want to convey a huge thank you to Daniel, Plugger, the committee and the community members who got behind this project and finished it. It is fantastic to have this Olympic sport and one of the best infrastructures in the great city of Palmerston. I am sure that now we have this state of the art BMX venue, with a lot of practice we will be soon our Palmerston BMX riders in the Olympics.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I deliver an adjournment on the opening night of the 2017 season of the Malak Marketplace. It was amazing to see more than 3000 people turn up to support Darwin's newest and most innovative market on the scene, the Malak Marketplace, on Saturday 29 April, between the hours of 4 pm and 9 pm.

The General Manager of the Malak Marketplace, Lina Paselli, believes the success of opening night was due in part to the NT Government's investment of a \$20 000 grant, which helped the project team promote the market through flyer distribution, banner advertising, TV and radio interviews, newspaper articles, listings in print media, websites, social media pages, the newsletter *Market Life*, and even the foodies' festival Territory Taste.

In its first year of operation the Malak Marketplace made a significant difference to the community. More than just a night market, the Malak Marketplace activated a space in a community that was not always recognised for its positive contributions. The Malak Marketplace is unique in the city of markets. It has a strong emphasis on sustainable farming practices, organic products and environmental sustainability.

This year the market banned the use of plastic and allowed the use of biodegradable packaging only. From its opening back in 2015 the market banned soft drinks in favour of more healthy homemade beverages, including organic iced tea, lemonade and tonics. The Malak Marketplace management team's top clean-eating food stalls and lifestyle/health stallholders are committed to educating the community about organic produce and products.

This awareness was promoted at the recent Territory Taste Festival, where Malak Marketplace not only exhibited but hosted four sell-out clean eating master classes, something I am sure I could use. Stallholders also held information and cookery workshops during the Wet Season.

The Malak Marketplace encourages the community and market goers to educate themselves about the food they eat and methods used to grow, transport and prepare it. The market has produced specific signage and labels for all its farmers' stalls to prompt people to get to know local farmer and growers and know what questions to ask of them.

Malak Marketplace partnered with Slow Food Darwin and Top End, and throughout the market season will host cooking classes. Both projects have shared values and visions of linking the pleasure of good food with a commitment to community and the environment.

The Malak Marketplace's management team of passionate volunteers have worked tirelessly to create high standards for the market. The team has carefully chosen the best like-minded and local food health/lifestyle and arts and craft stall holders to help support the market's values and long-term vision.

This season the Malak Marketplace welcomed 11 new local businesses, with several preferring to operate exclusively as part of the Malak Marketplace. These businesses choose to do this, as the marketplace aligns with their values and vision of eating and using fresh, Territory-grown produce and organic ingredients wherever possible.

The marketplace draws on its surrounding community to present a truly multicultural event. Many stalls feature unique multicultural fusion cuisine that uses local produce and organic products. The combination is award-winning and part of the marketplace's unique signature. It continues to celebrate cultural diversity every market night.

This year Malak Marketplace's art and craft space, championed by grassroots arts organisation Darwin Community Arts, provides Territory artists with a unique area from which to showcase and sell their work.

Each market offers a huge choice of quality food, fresh farmers produce, health and lifestyle products, arts, crafts and live entertainment. There are plenty of tables and chairs for easy dining and relaxing. This year's market evenings include a new happy hour between 4 pm and 5 pm, where special kid-sized plates are served at kids' prices.

There is weekly yoga, new monthly market tours, cooking classes, a free area for community organisations, and art exhibitions. As part of its commitment to community education, Malak Marketplace is also promoting community educational events, such as the Mad Food Science family event, and a screening of *That Sugar Film*, both of which aim to encourage people to move to healthier, more nutritious diets.

Winner of Community Event of the Year 2016, the Malak Marketplace has established a reputation as a safe, sustainable community event that celebrates diversity and promotes community involvement and social engagement.

I would also like to talk a bit about Fat Pigeon, a heavy metal youth band which recently took out the 2017 Battle of the School Bands competition.

In 2013 three primary school boys shared the same interest in music and started the conversation of forming a band called Rock It. Their first gig was playing classic rock tracks at the Anula Primary School fete.

Twelve months on, in 2014, two of the band members, Jo and Sam, caught up at Sanderson Middle School, where they signed up for the available music and song writing classes. The seven students in that music class expressed their interest to form the first school rock band called Kings of Queens, and challenged themselves to participate in the Battle of the School Bands competition in 2015.

The first year experience of the Battle of the School Bands gave Jo and Sam the determination to go back for more in 2016. In 2016 Angus and Ianne joined Jo and Sam and together they formed Fat Pigeon.

The four band members bonded well and it was beneficial that they all attended the same school. In 2016 Fat Pigeon went all the way to the finals and received the encouragement award at the Battle of the School Bands competition.

This year saw a number of changes for Fat Pigeon as they went in search of another member who could play bass guitar and sing, as they needed to replace Ianne due to school commitments.

At the same time there was another cover band called the Intergalactics, which was also in transition and in search of members to fill vacancies in the band. As such, Jo, Angus and Sam joined Michael's band, the Intergalactics, at the end of 2016. In return, Michael joined Fat Pigeon to replace Ianne on bass and vocals.

Mark South, Michael's dad, saw the opportunity to coexist and leverage the key talents of the two bands based on their respective genres. This partnership enabled the Intergalactics to be a rock covers band, and Fat Pigeon to be an original thrash metal band.

Mark's drive and vision saw Michael join Fat Pigeon and they become the most polished thrash metal band in the Battle of the School Bands competition for this year. Fat Pigeon and the Intergalactics have received a great level of support from Darwin Community Arts, First Sunday Blues at Pint Club, and Dolly's open mic night at Hibiscus Tavern. I know they are grateful and humbled by this support.

Fat Pigeon's story of hard work and perseverance should serve as inspiration to not only young community members, but to all community members in general. I look forward to watching the band perform live at Bass in the Grass on 20 May, and I am sure this opportunity will open many more doors for them.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I wish to acknowledge that May Day was last week. It is a time we traditionally celebrate workers and their rights around the nation and world. We commemorate workers around the world who have lost their lives through International Workers' Memorial Day, which is not that well known through the Northern Territory, but it is all around the same time of year.

This year we commemorated International Workers' Memorial Day on Friday 28 April as a sign of respect to the hundreds of people each year who go to work and do not make it home to their families. We can all acknowledge that having a partner, parent or family member set off to work in the morning and never return home would be one of the most devastating set of events you could ever endure.

The proactive unions and businesses I have worked for have made sure workplace safety is paramount in ensuring people in all jobs, particularly high risk industries, return home to their families every day and night.

I want to pay my respects to workers around the world who celebrate May Day on 1 May. I have, through my previous roles, been fortunate enough to travel and attend a number of different May Day celebrations. The most remarkable of these would have been the Havana May Day celebrations in Cuba. A number of us had the pleasure of traveling there in 2010. It is an experience that no one could ever forget. To see over a million people take to the streets in a parade that lasts for hours is a sight you could never forget. To say that the people of Havana embrace the idea of workers celebrating everything they have to be thankful for

is an understatement. All walks of life and all professions proudly walk, carry flags and banners, dance and sing their way through this amazing celebration. It is as much a celebration of their freedom and way of life as it is for their workers' rights.

The pride with which the Cuban people celebrate May Day is not fabricated in any way, shape or form. The passion reflected through this celebration is reflected through every other level of their lives. We witnessed the comradery right through the community and the pride with which they spoke regarding the low unemployment levels, education systems, health systems and the general ingenuity they use daily to go about their business. It is something to behold and something they are rightfully proud of.

It is with similar pride I recall helping to organise some of our May Day celebrations in Darwin during my time with the Electrical Trades Union and through being Secretary of Unions NT for a couple of years.

I take this opportunity to recognise a number of people who have helped through Unions NT, in past and present roles, and their involvement in the May Day march and celebrations this year. The march through the streets of Darwin, from Woods Street to the esplanade, through the wonderful CBD—my electorate—of Port Darwin, took many weeks of organising. In this day and age, in our fast-paced lives and careers it is a huge effort for a bunch of very committed volunteers.

I acknowledge this year's May Day committee, which included Bryan Wilkins, Bronwyn Channon, Francis Koulakis, Christine von Wootten, Kay Densley, Mick Huddy and Dave 'Strawbs' Hayes.

I recognise the winners of Delegate of the Year, which is an honour bestowed upon one delegate from each affiliated union in recognition of their dedicated efforts above and beyond the call of duty. This year from United Voice was Debbi Lees; from the AMWU was Terry Barnes; from the CFMEU was Tony McConnell; from the AEU was Trevor Collins; from the CPSU was Alma Hanna; from the ANMF NT was Kay Stevens; from the MUA was Rick Brewster; from the ACTU was Red Woolley, who helped out a lot through the Build a Better Future campaign; from the ETU was Daniel Burns; and Wayne Kurnoth from One Mob, the Indigenous union movement.

I understand the amount of time, effort and energy that all of these people put in. A very special award was given out for lifetime achievement to Rod Promnitz and the late Curly Nixon, so there were a couple of very touching moments at the dinner when those awards were announced.

As a proud previous winner of one of these awards, I know firsthand how passionate these people are. Delegates do not get paid extra to perform in their roles and it often takes up hours of personal time each week. They are the first people who workers turn to when something goes wrong. They are part-time safety representatives, part-time mediators, part-time marriage counsellors and full-time technical experts, all the while performing their substantial role, often under much scrutiny from management.

I also acknowledge Erina Early, Thomas Mayor and Kay Densley for their untiring efforts through Unions NT and Alan 'Hopper' Paton and Bryan Wilkins for their commitment over many years to May Day celebrations and the unions they respectively work for.

Lastly, I thank the sponsors for the May Day Dinner over the weekend: the Northern Territory Government; Cbus; Hall Payne; Coverforce; Statewide Super; Halfpennys; and HESTA. I will finish by noting with great interest that this Michael Gunner Labor-led government proudly supports the May Day dinner, supports Territory jobs and stands with NT workers, which is a far cry from what they got under the previous regime.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.