

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS
National Carers Week

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, pins have been placed on your desk for National Carers Week, which is from 15 to 21 October. National Carers Week is about recognising and celebrating the outstanding contributions that unpaid carers make to our nation. Anyone at any time can become a carer. Carers make an enormous contribution to our communities and their caring roles are valued at over \$60bn annually, more than \$1bn per week. National Carers Week 2017 provides you with a chance to learn about carers and caring in Australia.

VISITORS
Step Adult Migrant English Program

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from the Step Adult Migrant English Program and their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 33)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, the first assent for the *Territory Biological Control Act* was in 1986. The *Biological Control Act* was established as part of a national framework of similar biological control legislation across all states and the Northern Territory that mirror the Commonwealth Biological Control Act 1984 and the *Commonwealth Act*. This arrangement remains the present day basis for the scheme.

The main function of these acts including the NT *Biological Control Act* is to provide a legislative framework for the biological control of pests, to provide the opportunity for due consideration a proposed biocontrol activities to ensure they are in the public interest, and to provide protection from litigation under all relevant laws as relevant to the release of a biocontrol agent to control a target organism. This protection applies to all relevant laws declared under the *Biological Control Act*.

The financial impact of pest animals, fish and plants is major for our primary producers when taking into account the production losses and cost of managing any pest. The annual economic impact nationally for pest animals in 2014 was estimated to be almost \$800m, a momentous cost for farmers and governments. There are social costs that are difficult to quantify and our precious environment and biodiversity is always at the mercy of unwanted pests.

Biological control is a management strategy for the control of pests, plants and animals using natural enemies such as insects, fungi and viruses. The myxoma virus that causes myxomatosis is one everyone remembers, released in 1950 to control wild rabbits, which even today remains Australia's worst pest. The rabbit haemorrhagic disease known as calicivirus was added to the mix in 1996 then the new release of the new Korean strain rabbit, haemorrhagic disease in 2017. The rabbit control program using these means of biocontrol continues to be successful.

In our Central Australian backyard European rabbits have caused severe economic losses to farmers and significant environmental damage by changing the landscape and competing with native animals for food and shelter. Rabbits damage soils, causing erosion problems and they destroy native plants. The success of the rabbit haemorrhagic disease has been reported as having reduced rabbit numbers in Central Australia by more the 80%.

Control of our weeds using biocontrol as part of the management plan is no less important. Since 1983, 15 biological control agents—13 insects and two fungal pathogens—have been released to control the invasive plant *Mimosa* in the Northern Territory.

Salvinia is a noxious aquatic fern problematic in northern Australia which has the potential to completely cover waterways and reservoirs. Biological control using a weevil which larvae seriously damages new

growth on the salvinia plant has been successful in reducing the need to control the plant through the use of herbicide.

Years of research and scientific testing of carp herpes virus has been under way since the CSIRO determined that the virus offers a genuine option for biological control of common carp. Carp is the worst freshwater aquatic pest in southeastern Australia, estimates to have an annual economic impact of up to \$500m. Any future release of the carp herpes virus is considered to involve a complex implementation process that will require carefully managed community consultation, engagement and education programs.

Commonwealth biosecurity, environmental protection, agriculture and veterinary chemicals legislation is generally used to instigate biological control. The Northern Territory can also meet this need through its plant health, weeds management or fishery statutes. Nationally approved procedures are used to determine whether the Commonwealth and state *Biological Control Acts* should be applied or not. In order to address any perceived conflict over the potential release of an agent - in fact the consideration of biological control activities under the mirror acts is generally confined to programs which may be a source of controversy or conflict.

Most biological control programs are not controversial, therefore very few cases are considered under the legislation. However, it is very important to have a mechanism to assess, consult on and authorise biological control activities to ensure they are in the public interest should a potentially contentious biocontrol release be proposed. This provides greater certainty for institutions undertaking research into new biocontrol targets and agents for land managing farmers participating in biocontrol programs.

Having biological control in the tool box as a pest control strategy is vitally important. In some cases, there is a high public interest element in any proposed release of biological control agents that the legislation must address. To do this equitably, it is equally important that any legislation that underpins biological control activities keeps up with scientific thought, debate or developments.

This leads into the purpose of the Biological Control Amendment Bill 2017 that I am introducing today. The Commonwealth act was recently amended to provide for the declaration of viruses and sub-viral agents as organisms for the purpose of the act. The Biological Control Amendment Bill 2017 implements equivalent provisions to the Commonwealth act and mirrors legislation in other jurisdictions that has already been similarly amended.

The primary purpose of this bill is to make minor amendments to clarify that the definition of an organism includes viruses and sub-viral agents and to remove the term 'live' from references to 'agent organisms'. This removes any ambiguity in the definitions in light of ongoing scientific debate about the definition of an organism and whether a virus can be considered to be a living entity. The amendment thereby relieves the Northern Territory of liability for losses or damages suffered as a consequence of releasing all categories of agents, whether alive or dead organisms, viruses or a sub-viral agent with authority under the act.

The bill supports the intent of the nationally harmonious approach and addresses a commitment by the states and Northern Territory agriculture ministers in 2016 to implement equivalent biocontrol amendments into all jurisdictions.

I refer back to the development concerning the carp herpes virus in Australia to show how the changes to the definition may be applied. The amendments in the bill clarify the definition of an organism to include viruses or sub-viral agents. It is important nationally that the new definition of an organism is legislated before any future declaration of carp as a target organism and the carp herpes virus as an agent organism are considered under the biological control legislation.

It should be noted that at this time the national planning and approval process is to implement this particular biocontrol program for carp is still under way. This bill also makes a housekeeping amendment in changing the definition of 'council' to allow for the ministerial body of which the minister administering the act is a member, to be changed without requiring further amendments being made to the act.

This act has not been significantly reformed for more than 30 years. The bill converts the existing offence provisions to ensure compliance with Part 2AA of the *Criminal Code Act* of the Northern Territory, introduce some contemporary concepts and language with minimal change to the intent of the provisions.

Due to the age of the act, the bill also revises the monetary penalty levels for all the offences. Logically, this means there are notable increases to the current penalty levels, however the amendment ensures the penalties within this legislation are standardised across similar offences in a Northern Territory statute book.

The amendments that this bill provides are minor and non-contentious, however they ensure the NT is able to participate in future national biological control programs that use viruses or sub viral agents with no change to the legal protection provided by the *Biological Control Act*. T

This bill has been reviewed for compatibility with human rights and freedoms organised or declared in the international instruments listed in Section 3 of the Commonwealth *Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011*. I have tabled the explanatory statements which explain that two clauses in a bill that amend offence provisions for compliance with the criminal code have been found to engage rights referred to in the international convention of civil and political rights.

I move the bill be referred to the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee for report by the first meeting of the Legislative Assembly in 2018.

Motion agreed to.

PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL 2017
(Serial 32)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I moved the bill be read a first time. The *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act* establishes a commission to establish and manage or assist in the management of parks, reserves, sanctuaries and other land to encourage the protection, conservation and sustainable use of wildlife to establish a land holding corporation, the Conservation Land Corporation, in connection with those purposes and for related purposes.

The commission consists of the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Tourism and Culture. The act also states that the minister must establish an advisory council to advise the commission on matters concerning the management of Parks and Wildlife.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act* to allow the minister the discretion to appoint an advisory council rather than the appointments being mandatory. In the 1990s when the previous commission was an agency on its own, commission membership comprised of nine members, these being the chairman of the commission, director, chief executive officer of the Northern Territory tourist commission and another six members appointed by the minister.

I understand Mr Harry Butler, the well-known Australian conservationist, was the chairman of the commission for a long time and contributed a lot to the Northern Territory. In 2001, when the Labor government was elected the commission was amalgamated into a bigger department. In the following years the composition of the commission was reviewed and in 2004 an amendment to the act changed the membership of the commission to consist of the chief executive officer and an advisory council was established in its place.

Prior to 2012, under previous agency arrangements, a Land and Sea Management Board was established that fulfilled the role of the advisory council. When the commission was re-established as a stand-alone agency in 2012, the Land and Sea Management Board was disbanded and the intention was to replace it with an advisory council.

In 2014 a proposed advisory council was identified as a Class C3 advisory and review board, according to the *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act*. In mid-2014 the then minister sent letters to people offering appointment to the council; however, appointments were never finalised.

Section 41 of the act states that the minister must establish council to advise the Parks and Wildlife Commission on matters concerning the management of parks and wildlife. The integration of the commission into the Department of Tourism and Culture presents another opportunity to reassess the need for the Statutory Advisory Council.

The council must be persons who have an interest or expertise and knowledge in matters relating to the environment and the management and conservation of natural resources. My department has a breadth of expertise in matters relating to the environment and, importantly, also includes expertise in managing tourism and recreation.

The department's governance board provides a forum in which the chief executive officer and executive directors consider issues and opportunities arising from whole-of-agency and whole-of-government activities. Various statutory and non-statutory boards with Aboriginal traditional owners also provide direction relating to management, joint managed parks and reserves. With this broad expertise in house combined with well developed, strong, professional relationships with other Northern Territory and federal government departments, non-government organisations and peak bodies, the value of establishing a council to advise the commission, which is now the chief executive officer, was reviewed.

Establishing a statutory body is also a cost to taxpayers. It is usually around \$30 000 per annum in sitting fees, travel, accommodation and administrative costs. I have a strong commitment to consult with the public and stakeholders on the management of parks and wildlife. The department posts major projects and programs of community interest to the government's Have Your Say online community engagement forum. The department is required by statute to seek comment on key matters such as draft park plans and management, which are open for public comment.

There has been no public complaint about the absence of such a body over the last few years. The Department of Tourism and Culture will continue to positively engage with the community on matters of public interest, and external expertise continues to be sought as appropriate. This amendment does not seek to remove all reference to establishing a council; it proposes only to give the minister discretion to establish the council or not. It could also allow me to establish an advisory council for a fixed term to give focus to particular issues if required.

Under the proposed amendment I could still establish a council if there was a complex matter requiring scientific rigor or other expertise that was not readily available in the department or the Northern Territory. A key election commitment for this government is to amend the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* to give greater powers to Aboriginal ranger groups.

Reviewing legislation periodically to ensure it is relevant, effective, reflects changes in societal thinking and machinery of government changes is very important. The amendment to Section 41 of the *Parks and Wildlife Commission Act* was proposed after the need for a council was reviewed. At the same time other minor amendments of a statute law nature have been made to bring the legislation in line with contemporary practices.

I commend this bill to honourable members and table the Explanatory Statement to accompany the bill.

I move that the bill be referred to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for report by the first meeting day of 2018.

Motion agreed to.

PASTORAL LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 34)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, this government recognises the contribution that agribusiness makes to the Northern Territory economy and has sought to make amendments to the *Pastoral Land Act* and the pastoral land regulations to enhance opportunities for diversification on pastoral land.

The pastoral sector is a key component of the government's economy strategy to provide opportunities for economic growth and development. The purpose of this bill is to improve the effectiveness of existing legislation, correct technical irregularities identified since the legislation was introduced in 1992, and provide for contemporary management of the pastoral estate.

The key amendments proposed in this bill address the immediate shortfalls in the act, primarily around subleases and the pastoral lease rent methodology. The amendments before this Assembly will allow for the grant of a sublease of a pastoral lease for non-pastoral purposes and for the sublease to be registered on the title as security.

The proposed changes, which have been advocated for by pastoralists in the Northern Territory Cattleman's Association will provide leaseholders with greater security in entering into subleases with third parties, support investment and further promote diversification in pastoral land use.

The act currently allows a pastoral lessee to sublet land with my consent as minister. However, the range of uses is limited, including pastoral purposes, or those specifically prescribed in regulations. That is tourism, telecommunications facilities, scientific equipment, conveying gas liquid fuels or water energy infrastructure requirements.

In order to enable lessees to security investment from third parties, amendments are required to enable subleases for horticulture, agriculture, aquaculture and forestry in line with recent amendments to the non-pastoral use provisions.

For major projects involving significant investment, the long-term surety of a sublease is the preferred option for investors. Previous amendments to the non-pastoral use provision of the act enhance the process for issuing a non-pastoral use permit to enable diversification into a range of non-pastoral activities, including agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture, tourism and forestry.

These amendments cut red tape and have provided pastoralists with greater certainty and confidence to explore and invest in longer-term non-pastoral opportunities. Since these amendments in January 2014, 14 new permits have been issued and a further five applications are being assessed.

I turn to amendments to pastoral rent. Pastoral rent is applied annually to the 224 properties that constitute the pastoral estate and are currently calculated as a percentage of the unimproved capital value as determined by the Northern Territory Valuer General every three years.

15 years ago, there was a general upward trend in pastoral land values with an unprecedented escalation in sale price and unimproved values. The pastoral industry has expressed its dissatisfaction with the current valuation process and called for it to be either amended to suit Territory conditions or abolished in favour of a new process.

An industry-led pastoral rent review working group reviewed the rent methodology to address concerns from industry about the potential fluctuating nature of rental calculations and to establish a framework for an efficient, predictive and objective process. Options examined were based on corporate structure, property size and the productive capacity of land when used for pastoral farming.

A methodology based on the pastoral property's estimated carrying capacity is proposed to be introduced and has industry support. Carrying capacity is reflective of the land's capacity to produce an economic return and is based on unsupplemented native vegetation.

However, landscapes are not static and changes in estimated carrying capacity may occur over the medium to long term. Therefore, a 10 yearly reassessment timeframe has been incorporated. Even though changes in the estimated carrying capacity will occur over time, they provide a more stable distribution basis for rent calculations.

Other minor amendments include rectifying an anomaly regarding calculating interest for late payment of pastoral rent, as the act currently refers to using a rate which is unobtainable.

The proposed amendments will also see the payment periods for pastoral rent aligned with standard government terms for receivables, being 30 days from invoice date. This will streamline processes and reduce administrative burden by providing continuity across government systems.

The consent to transfer provisions are being strengthened to ensure all proposals to transfer ownership or a controlling interest are assessed, including any foreign interests and maximum holdings triggers.

Finally, a minor amendment sees an increase to the number of Pastoral Land Board members. The legislation currently allows for five members, however due to the nature of the industry, members are often called away at short notice to work commitments. Having a wider pool from which to draw the quorum of four will result in decisions being made in a timely manner.

The pastoral industry is of fundamental economic importance to the Northern Territory, in terms of regional growth, employment opportunities and export income. While these amendments will address the most immediate shortfalls, an overall review is necessary and this government is committed to such a review and will continue to work with industry and other stakeholders to further modernise legislation.

The proposed amendments will allow pastoral lease holders in the Northern Territory to boost the economy through further supporting diversification and investment in the pastoral estate by supporting contemporary pastoral practices.

Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be referred to the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee for report by February 2018.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Note Statement – Early Childhood Development Plan

Continued from 17 October 2017.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, as someone who loves the Territory, not necessarily as someone who was born here, because I think this is true of anyone who loves the Territory, you constantly bear witness—you live through things that happen year after year that are not positive. As much as we love the Territory, we have to accept that there are things we can improve.

That is heightened when you are a member of parliament and you keep having the same experiences either in your electorate or across the Northern Territory. As the local Member for Fannie Bay, we have constant conversation about antisocial behaviour or alcoholism. As a shadow minister or a minister, when it comes to business, you are always talking about the unskilled workforce and what we are doing.

In all my conversations with the Health minister we talk about chronic illness. I am sorry to start on a negative note, but there are generational issues in the Northern Territory.

We have constant conversations about how we respond to those issues. The solutions are expensive and can only result in marginal improvements. It is the nature of attending to chronic illness or other acute issues. There is a lot of evidence to show that.

I remember seeing a graph during my time as a shadow minister. It was a very powerful graph which showed that for the first four years of a child's life you can have this amazing, positive impact on them, but once you get past four years every dollar you spend you see less improvement. The crocodile jaws open up.

We have constantly debated alcohol in this Chamber—alcohol mandatory treatment or the Banned Drinker Register. We are talking about money spent to try to get marginal improvement. As Chief Minister, as the Member for Fannie Bay, and as a Territorian, the reason I am in politics is to try to leave a better tomorrow for our kids and make improvements to the Territory for them.

Of all those big issues, the wicked problems we constantly debate, there is one solution that has not always been embraced wholeheartedly by previous governments because it will take a long time for the return to demonstrate itself to the Territory, but that return will be massive, that is, investing in our kids wholeheartedly in the first thousand days and a little beyond. When they are 16, 18, 20, 22 and later in their life you will see a massive difference in the Northern Territory.

When you do a budget each year over a four-year political cycle you can see why it is difficult. Lots of work has happened in this space before, in our schools and in our health system, but all 25 of us are here to try to find a way to tackle those problems to leave a better Territory.

The conversations we have about alcohol and the BDR are important. You can never ignore the acute end, but in this Chamber we have an opportunity to draw a line in the sand and say we want to leave a permanent gift to our children and our grandchildren, a better Territory, and no Chief Minister, Opposition Leader or Independent will be in this Chamber in 20 years' time having the same conversations we are having now. In my 10-year term, I have had the same debate, not just year but almost sitting on sitting. We have to make this long-term difference and change to Territorians' lives. That is the why. It all comes to our kids. I believe it is something we can all agree and be uniform on.

The most difficult aspect is how you get the time, resources and attention into that early preventative end when the reward is so far away. There is always a short-term issue that arises that requires response. You have to find a way to get the attention and time at that early end, which is why we have a Minister for Children, a Children's Subcommittee of Cabinet, we are trying to move it to the heart of government and have this early childhood plan – to try to ensure we carry out that early and hard work and bed it in so it becomes

almost something we take for granted. We take for granted that you have school, essentially from Year 1 all the way through – a universal education system. We take that amazing system for granted in Australia.

Before day one, Term 1, Year 1, we want to ensure there is a universal system that looks after all our children in the Northern Territory and lifts them up. I often refer to day one, Term 1, Year 1 as the line because we have the universal education system which is very good. However, too many kids start day one Term 1, Year 1 behind and that gap remains. They improve, without a doubt, year on year, but the gap with their classmates is often there. It can be very difficult to close that gap from day one, Term 1, Year 1. Anything we can do before then to make sure there is no gap on day one, Term 1, Year 1 is huge. It is more than significant; it is transformative.

That is what is driving us, why we are here and why we have this policy and the statement. This is what we want to do and we have talked about it a lot. All of us in the Chamber are united in all Territory children, regardless of background or locality, being ready to learn. It sounds like a simple statement to make, but there is much work that goes into doing that. I thank my colleagues and the expert reference panel for what they have done to get us here and how we can take those things we are doing and bring them into one plan.

It is transformational change with a different future for our children, one where they and their families have the tools, skills and capacity to learn and grow. They say parenthood does not come with a book, but comes with almost too many books and too many people prepared to give you advice. We want to ensure that parents have the support and guidance they need. You cannot take it for granted that there will be a family support structure around young families. It is very difficult to raise your first child.

We want to make sure we are there, not with a heavy-handed government approach providing more services to a family or community, but instead using well-canvassed evidence, the knowledge of families and communities to approach raising children properly and with support from the side with NGOs and other community service providers and a nurse who has built trust with you during the pregnancy – different, positive, evidence-based support and services which really help make a difference to a child's life.

Where there is a level of coordination that is obvious to an individual who reaches out, but also government and NGO services intersect in a seamless way, there is a universality of care that we take for granted in the education system. How do we provide it to those kids earlier, so the children do not fall through the gap because of bureaucracy, barriers to information sharing? We have to have joined services. I do not want to ever go to a meeting again where people say, 'We cannot share the data'. How many years have we heard that given to us as an answer for why work cannot be done? We want that to stop. I want to achieve more, but the one thing we can achieve as a government this term is that no one has the excuse anymore that we are not sharing data. This has to go.

Our expert panel led by Olga Havnen from Danila Dilba and Donna Ah Chee from the Central Australian Congress have developed the government's draft early childhood plan. It is important to thank them for their expertise. We recognise that this expert reference panel involves Territorians who are experts. We do not often recognise enough the significant experience we have in our own back yard. They have been joined by others with expertise from outside the Territory, so we have that good friction of energy, intention and learnings. But we should acknowledge we have Territory experts. I thank them for their expertise in guiding this draft plan and providing us with an evidence base to act now and into the future.

The panel, led by the Deputy Chief Minister and the Minister for Children and the subcommittee of Cabinet—it is very important work, bringing them all together and making sure there are no silos, in some sense going back to the sharing point and working together to have universality.

We are now looking for community input for all the thought that has gone into this. We recognise there are a number of people in the community who have not been part of this approach yet who have critical experiences and important learnings who can contribute, grow and expand this plan. I want to see this plan go through another growth cycle based on that experience.

There are better things we can do. I love this plan but it can be better because there are a lot of people in the community who can add to this plan. That is what we are looking for. We are looking for ideas from our families and communities that tell us about place-based solutions to long-standing issues in the Territory. If you live in Yuendumu, Katherine or Palmerston you will have an experience specific to your community that will shape this plan for your community. Each place has a different experience and we want to make sure that is incorporated and captured in what we are doing.

Investing in the early years leads to better life outcomes, health, schooling, education, job prospects; they will be less likely to have interaction with child protection, welfare and the juvenile or adult correctional system. It is proven time and again that investing in our kids will deliver these things. It has to be the right investment with the right places and people.

For this draft plan to become the plan, we have to have community input and know about your learnings from the places you live. It will be a 10 year plan. Our aims will be simple but powerful. We want mothers to be able to access well-supported antenatal care and to give birth to healthy, thriving babies; babies and children to have better birthweights, hearing, eye health and immunisation rates; reduced mortality and lower anaemia rates.

We want our families to be able to access a range of health and community services that can support them. We want to support all families by acknowledging that some families have greater needs and could benefit from a service like a nurse visit on an ongoing basis for a period of time. We want our children and families learning the skills of play and learning as babies, toddlers and young children preparing for school.

We have existing evidence-based initiatives like the a-b-c-darian, parent-led, three-year-old-school, preschool and government subsidised four-year-old preschool. My question to the community is, are there alternative programs that are better, or are there better ways of linking up these services, for example, with childcare, health or community services? What is your experience going through this system that will help us do better for you in your community?

We want less vulnerable children at school age, physically, developmentally, cognitively and behaviourally. This is the result of domestic and family violence and involvement of families in the child protection system. It is vital we can design support that intervenes in a vulnerable child or family's life when the help is needed, but before long-term damage is done.

Family engagement is a key theme of the draft plan. Individual families as communities and a Territory. The reality is this is what we are dealing with; we talk about the acute end all the time. We have the highest proportion of children in the child protection system and we need to look to how we can keep families together through early, local support and if children are removed, how to stay connected to their local community.

We have to make sure those connections are there, that support and help is not lost and we are doing everything we can around our kids. It is a very significant responsibility for us because we can see, other members have spoken to this in the debate, on top of those crocodile jaws you can often see in a child's life when they come through the youth justice system, the Minister for Territory Families will know this very well; they come in at 15, 16 or 17 and you can trace it back and see a series of events. It is often the same story told.

How do we intervene in that cycle much earlier so you do not keep hearing that same story, the same generational cycle we keep seeing? How do we go back earlier and intervene? The most important time remains the first four years, 1000 days and early period between pregnancy, before the baby is born and through to the line in the sand, year one, day one, term one.

Ms Nelson: You are holding your belly!

Ms Manison: I noticed.

Mr GUNNER: I talk with my hands.

Housing may not seem an obvious fit to the Early Childhood Development Plan to some, but building more room for existing houses, building more houses in remote communities, reducing overcrowding and homelessness. The subsequent issues that impact upon childhood development can all be traced back to how we work with and improve on our housing.

The minister for housing is doing significant work. (Inaudible) transformational work. Some of the people I have had the privilege to meet with on community, who are seeing their existing home transformed in front of them, where they have had a say in how that home is changed. 'What is it that you want?' 'Well, I want that room here and that bathroom there, I want a lip to my veranda to stop the snakes getting in so the space becomes usable'.

Sometimes minor change can completely change a person's living space and the family unit experience a completely different living environment. This makes it much easier to look after and support the child and

much easier to have a happy healthy family. Important work that empowers that individual. 'Where do you want it and how do you want it done?'

They are often seeing their nephews and nieces working on the house to do that work, which is an important change to communities. Families in communities are involved in our Room to Breathe program; our housing program for design and building repairs and maintenance.

We have strong Aboriginal-controlled community health services with strong local boards and community involvement. Likewise, we are growing independent schools, with strong local voices on their boards. Community control: putting locals in charge. Locals love their kids, so the more we empower local communities with schools, health clinics and housing programs just makes sense.

A lot of this stuff has not been happening in a coordinated, cohesive, uniform way. It has been happening in fits and spurts. We want to bring it all together. We want to see it all through the eyes of a child. That is the 'why'. Often the 'why' gets lost. This is why we are bringing it all together, it is the outcome we are working towards.

These are the voices the government wants to hear from about how to raise healthy and vibrant children, how to best educate children and protect vulnerable children in our cities and remote communities. Communities have solutions and it is our role as government not just to listen to those communities but to put them in charge of delivering their own ideas. This is what we want to do.

As a government, we know our strengths and our weaknesses. No matter how hard we try, we are inflexible, we are one size fits all and one—no matter how hard we try, we have a rigid approach. We also know we are no substitute for a parent and a loving home environment. But we have a responsibility and a duty of care to exercise and I would probably say it is reluctantly, because we are no substitute. The more we can do to make sure families have the support, are united and stay together, the better we are.

We have to know our strengths and weaknesses.

We are sometimes not good at coordinating our services, particular when there are layers of government involved and tend to refer to other agencies, then work together to solve complex social problems. We want this Early Childhood Development Plan to break that apart and make sure we are coordinating our services. We want to make sure we are working together and not having duplication.

When we looked at this in opposition we realised—people would say, 'would the Early Childhood Development Plan cost significantly more money?' Sometimes, there was either a lack of services in one community and a duplication of services in another. In sorting this out, you will see that by having one coordinated Early Childhood Development Plan and (inaudible) with NGO sector, we start addressing the vacuum of services in one spot and duplication of services in another.

That is the important basic work. Not new to this House as a form of debate. It is something we have been talking about for a long time. We want to finally conquer it through this Early Childhood Development Plan.

Our information services, have led themselves to sharing vital information and supporting families. Our services should be more customer focused so that everyone knows how to access services and how to voice their concerns about our services. Our services need to talk to each other and work together.

In the last 12 months you have seen some structural changes to commence to overcome this lack of coordination, led by the children's subcommittee of Cabinet and the Children and Families Standing Committee of CEOs, where strategic and operational decisions have the attention of our government and agency leaders. We are collaborating more and more. We are collecting our services and bringing it all together.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr GUNNER: We have youth outreach engagement teams with Police, Health and the NGO sector. We are working together.

As Chief Minister I have enjoyed meeting these teams on the ground and seeing how they work in practice, how people come together, how the work environment—which is critical to this—is shaped to lead to better delivery of services. I have seen the positivity of people working in these units. It has been a real joy and privilege to talk with them, hear their stories of how they are working, see their energy and enthusiasm, and see the physical extension of our decisions.

It is one thing to stand in parliament and make decisions; it is another thing to meet with the people delivering on it and see the energy they bring to their work and what they are working towards. It is positive. If anyone wants to do that we would be more than happy to oblige. These are very important people to talk to; you see the energy in what they do.

We are much more open to co-designing programs and services of the NGO sector and across the board. I have discussed this in my meetings with the NGO sector; I try to get together with them as much as possible in Darwin and Alice Springs. The Minister for Territory Families spent a day-and-a-half with the CEO co-designing services. That is important work to make sure it is not just government acting alone; it is not just the NGO sector alone; it is not families feeling that they are alone. We are all working together and everything is aligning and driving toward the one key outcome: a better life for the child.

The government's forthcoming adolescent and child health plan will complement the early childhood plan. The 10-year, \$1.1bn remote housing program helps achieve our goals for early childhood development. A child is not well rested in an overcrowded house and will struggle at school the next day; they need their rest. Our additional \$20m in ongoing funding for schools will ensure more teachers and specialist support, including for disability and behavioural issues, meaning that from the time children start preschool they will have more dedicated supports and will remain engaged in school.

Our partnership with the NGO sector and moving to those five-year funding contracts will provide better retention of staff and more stable, better connected community services. In talking with the NGOs, both in opposition and now in government, their ability to deliver change in the Territory has been crippled by short-term contracts. There are many examples, but one I always go back to is from when I was in opposition. A youth service in Palmerston said it was on this permanent 12-month cycle. It spent two months gearing up, eight months delivering the program, two months gearing down, then it would get renewed quite late and would often lose staff. It would then spend two months gearing up and getting staff back on board, eight months delivering the service, then wind back down again.

You cannot achieve sustainable, ongoing, significant change in a program like that. We have to find a way to deliver five years where we are working towards a clear goal—what the early childhood draft plan delivers. There are clear goals; we know exactly what we are working towards and why; we are getting into a very clear, evidence-based five-year agreement with an NGO. They can have a proper strategic plan, and employment and training, and keep their staff to deliver actual outcomes.

In some respects, in the 12-month model all you are doing is maintenance. That does not get us anywhere. We want to make big changes. You can only do that if you are willing to provide an NGO length of service and certainty. So much of what we do in government is about trying to find ways to provide certainty.

Our investment in early intervention, family support services and child protection means vulnerable families will be supported sooner, preventing contact or further contact with child protection services. Our local decision-making policy, handing back community control in a range of areas—such as health, justice and local government—fundamentally changes the way government works with families and communities. Our job is to listen and act; it is to support our local communities. We take what we hear from our local communities and put it into action through well-thought-out, well-considered, evidence-based solutions.

I am very much looking forward to hearing from key stakeholders, from the community how we can make our draft plan for our 10 year transformation road map for early childhood better.

We are committed to improving lives of all Territorians starting from our very youngest, and for us to do that I want to take this draft childhood plan—I want to get that feedback from all people in our community, particularly that play space experience is about how we can deliver it better. I want to see this plan grow so then we put it in to action—it is owned by all and it will be a very exciting day. I like to think it will be exciting, it will be exciting to me but it will be a very significant day for Territorians.

We have to seek generational change in the Territory. We cannot keep debating our acute issues. We cannot ignore them we have to respond to them, but we have to make a uniform, consistent, significant investment in to our kids. We have to make sure the Territory we leave our children and our grandchildren is better than

the one that we inherited. The only way to do that and make sure that we are reducing the numbers in Don Dale, reducing the numbers on dialysis and the unskilled workforce, reducing all these problems we have in the Territory is by investing in our kids.

All the evidence both in the Territory and around the world shows it is the only way to deliver the outcome is to invest in our kids that is what we are going to do.

I commend the Deputy Speaker on all her hard work—I commend the Deputy Chief Minister—the Deputy Speaker works hard too and has made a significant contribution to our childhood plan as well—but the Deputy Chief Minister as the Minister for Children, in leading the effort towards this plan, I thank her and for bringing this statement forward and for the draft plan. I thank the whole expert reference panel, all the ministers and everyone else who has contributed.

There has been lots of people out there who have lent their support and wisdom to get us here and we are asking them for another effort now in responding to the draft plan to make it even better, and I am very much looking forward to the final plan.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Madam Speaker, I too rise in support of the Early Childhood Development Plan statement and the release of the draft plan Starting Early for a Better Future. I am very proud, and listening to the Chief Minister, to be part of a government that has a vision about not just patching things at the crisis end, which too often in my portfolio of Territory Families we have been guilty in the past of doing—on both sides of government.

We have to have a vision about how the demands on the department Territory Families are reduced, particularly now we have youth justice as part of that department. We know that the answers to solving the issues and the challenges that the staff of Territory Families have each day is about making sure we have a long term vision for our future that is about investing in our children and preventing these issues before they happen.

Territory Families has a critical role to play in early childhood prevention and early intervention is proven to have a significant impact on reducing the number of children entering child protection and the youth justice system.

While domestic and family violence is often a trigger for children ending up in the child protection and youth justice systems evidence shows that the greatest return on investment is to work early with the most vulnerable. The benefits to children extend beyond childhood. They are way of a way of changing children's chances and their pathway in life.

These years form the basis for developing those essential skills and attributes needed to succeed later in life. Experience in the early years have long lasting effects influencing an individual's mental, physical health, social adjustment, educational experience and life expectancy. We know that the vulnerability and coming into contact with the justice system is often multigenerational. It makes sense that investing in the early years and in vulnerable families will not only benefit children but can strengthen communities and break the intergenerational cycle of family vulnerability and offending.

Changing the life chances of children in vulnerable families requires a renewed investment in prevention and early intervention. We need to turn around the way we currently support vulnerable families and children. The government inherited a child protection system which is targeted at the tertiary end of child protection and managing risk, with very little resources invested in family support, prevention and early intervention.

In recognition of this, when we came to government we created the Department of Territory Families, bringing under one roof a whole-of-life approach to supporting families and placing child protection, domestic and family violence and youth justice together within a broader framework of prevention and early intervention.

Across Australia young people are more likely to receive child protection than older children. We know that one in four children in the Northern Territory, by the time they are five years old, will have been subject to at least one child protection notification. It is an astounding statistic. In the case of Aboriginal children, one in two will be subject to a child protection notification and one in four to at least one substantiation of that notification by the time they are 10 years old.

They are statistics that just roll off the tongue, but we have to remember that behind each of those statistics is a child and a fairly horrendous story. If you look at the annual report I tabled last night, we are having increasing notifications and substantiations - and have had increases over many years.

Research undertaken by the Australian Centre for Child Protection in collaboration with the South Australian government shows that a different approach is needed to tackle this enormous issue. We have to stop pretending that this is only a matter of a few exceptional cases. That is how our child protection system is designed. That is what we want to believe about ourselves, but the data tells us that this is a population epidemic and we must treat it as such.

A public health approach is required which reviews the evidence, the data and patterns as to which children and families are vulnerable and why they go into care. From this, broad-based population intervention responses can be developed.

We also need to change our approach to family support services. This includes rebalancing how we invest to include both prevention and early intervention aimed at keeping families out of care, as well as more intensive support once families come to the attention of child protection services.

Evidence shows that the best responses are those that build on universal population services that are available to all, not targeted to a few. We are looking at family support models which build early intervention and targeted interventions into universal services which are familiar to families, such as schools, child and family centres, maternal child health and health centres.

Co-locating family support services and providing wraparound, more intensive support for those who are vulnerable will make it easier for families to access what they need. Child and family centres such as the one planned for Tennant Creek as well as in Palmerston, Larapinta and those in remote communities, provide a great opportunity to develop new service models and to co-locate family support services with maternal child health and childcare centres, as well as other adult learning centres.

The Minister for Education and I visited the childcare centre at Larapinta the other week. It was such a warm and welcoming environment. It was just a playgroup where there were many families and parents – a big range of families – with children accessing the service. I can imagine if you were having difficulties in that type of environment it would be much easier to say, 'I am struggling a bit with this'. Then, the support will come to them at that centre so it is not a big deal or appointment or admitting, 'You will be going to the hospital for another appointment'. It is much more accessible if that person could then talk about your specific issues there. It might be all the intervention that is needed or you can then escalate up.

Those environments are really important because it is difficult to admit you are having a challenge with your child. One of the things I saw last night about sexual assault, but it is similar here, shame is a very sticky thing. It sticks to you and is hard to work through, speak up and say you have issues. One of the things that providing the environment is you are there anyway having fun, your child is enjoying themselves and it is much easier to broach such difficult issues.

It enables an ease of access to different services. It means early childhood workers are more likely to detect risk factors and developmental needs and refer appropriately. Any early childhood teacher could tell you they see these things and if they have the right pathway to refer kids then we are on much better staff.

Evidence shows the home visiting health nurse program has been successful in other jurisdictions in being able to support parents when they are vulnerable and to detect early any safety and wellbeing factors that might place children, mothers and families at risk.

Parents are children's first teachers and the most powerful influence on their development and success in life. As such, the early years provide an important time to invest in parenting skills which must include fathering. That is a really important point and I notice the Member for Brennan spoke about that yesterday. That is one of the biggest failings of our child protection system, fathering has often been invisible in the conversation.

Whether that is positive fathering or that which needs support, we need to make sure it is tackled and it will be one of the big pieces of work in our child protection system. I am lucky to have a colleague who is so passionate about those issues, learning, employment outcomes and wellbeing outcomes for parents and especially young adults.

It is really important to note we have a high rate of young parents in the Northern Territory and I became a parent at 42 and I have used every bit of my life experience to be a parent. It is a tough gig. I often reflect, if I had been doing this at 16 I would be a very different parent than what I am at 42. All the support you need. I was still desperate to see the maternity nurse about breastfeeding or seek some advice.

Over the years we have sought advice from our community health centre, GP and a whole range of services. I am a professional advocate and I can still find those systems daunting and it is also daunting to say you need help around a particular issue. Making sure we have made them accessible and we acknowledge fathering in that way. My partner is a stay-at-home father and he does not have as much access to services as people who are in that situation as a mother.

One of the passions I have as the Minister for Territory Families is commitment to working with our nongovernment and Aboriginal sectors to improve the scope and range of family support services. To this end, Territory Families has undertaken research on the evidence and a co-design and mapping exercise with the nongovernment and Aboriginal-controlled sectors to identify where the gaps are and what the priorities are for future investment.

The Australian government is a major funder of services in the NT. At the moment we do not share an investment or evaluation framework. We are very fortunate to have our federal partners involved in the funding of child protection, family support and domestic violence services in the NT and we are seeking to work in partnership with the Australian government to ensure the services and resources of both levels of government are well targeted and are working to the one planned approach.

We are starting a journey of changing our culture and practice from praising the emphasis on managing the statutory risks for the child to one that promotes safety and wellbeing for the child and their family. I do not think we can underestimate that it is such a significant cultural change to move past the legislation and to see the child. It is a real challenge for child protection systems, not individuals within the system. Workers in Territory Families are child-focused but the system around them does not necessarily support them to make good decisions in that space.

We need that system, the policy procedures, the support for the workers, a system that places kids at the centre while recognising the importance of strengthening the circle of family, culture and community in keeping kids safe and strong.

In recognition of this our government is committed to developing with the non-government and Aboriginal sectors a model of dual pathways. Dual pathways does not necessarily explain what it is. My new communications person, who is not from the sector, says it sounds like a bike path. We need to think about what it actually means. It means that we need an alternative referral gateway. We need another door for families to open for support.

The systems at the community level and away from the child protection system—we need pathways out of that child protection system. At the moment—I have said this before in this House—the system is set up like a funnel which feeds you in one direction, and there are very few pathways out. We want a different pathway that families can choose to take.

Dual pathways will be developed in a staged approach from the end of October 2017, and it will be fully outsourced to the non-government and Aboriginal control sector by July 2019. In 2015 and 2016—and this is why dual pathways is so important and we need to make sure we are very clear in explaining it—approximately 62% of child protection notifications did not reach the threshold to proceed to investigation.

Someone has picked up the phone and made a notification. There is always a reason for that. There is something that person is seeing. It may not be enough for the state to intervene, and we need to ensure that threshold is high because we know our strengths and weaknesses. Once that statutory response happens—and it is a very serious thing for the state to intervene—it sets down a path. Yes, we are getting these calls identifying families as vulnerable.

It is critical that we do everything we can to keep them out the child protection system, but we need to connect them into the support services that address the reason why someone has taken the time to pick up the phone and make a child protection notification. I truly believe people do not do that lightly. As someone who has made many child protection notifications, it is not something you do lightly, and you do it for a reason.

This means we need to improve the range of evidence-based support and services at the local community level.

I will also speak about domestic and family violence because this is a very significant issue within our child protection system. It is an important step that Territory Families has carriage of both domestic family violence

policy and child protection. It gives us some amazing opportunities to really change our practice and to improve the way we respond to families experiencing domestic and family violence.

ANROWS, the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, is a national body that is completely dedicated to researching domestic and family violence and violence against women. Their latest report states that across Australia 61% of women who experience domestic and family violence had children in their care when the violence occurred, which is quite an astounding statistic.

At least one child, according to our data, is subject to domestic and family violence every day in the Northern Territory. Domestic and family violence is often a trigger for children and young people not having a safe place to live and ending up in the child protection or youth justice system. Domestic and family violence is a factor in more than 50% of substantiated child protection notifications. This was a fact I was aware of before I became the Minister for Territory Families, but it is reinforced daily when I see some of the names going through the system and they are kids I knew at the women's shelter. That is the thing we need to stop, that trajectory through all those service systems.

All of the research tells us internationally and within the Territory that pregnancy and early post-natal are times of major adjustment and change. It is also a time when the risk of domestic violence is elevated.

The latest research shows that gender is at the core of domestic and family violence, including beliefs and behaviour reflecting disrespect for women and low support for gender equality.

In recognition of this, this government is committed to developing a gender equity framework and a draft domestic and family violence, and sexual violence reduction strategy is due for release later this year.

Opportunities exist to build on the gains of the early years by introducing family violence prevention and healthy respect for relationships in programs for the zero to eight-year-olds and their parents. Research undertaken by the Australia Institute of Family Studies in 2014 noted a significant gap in family violence prevention, early intervention, and response programs aimed at children between zero to eight years and their families.

The research also noted a need for post-crisis therapeutic services for children that are (inaudible) and address the mother-child bond. Recent research released by ANROWS show that domestic and family violence has long-term impacts on the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children and that specific programs need to be put in place to address trauma and restore parenting with a particular focus on fathering programs.

I am excited—this Friday ...

Mr KIRBY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Under Standing Order 43, may I seek an extension of time for the minister?

Motion agreed to.

Ms WAKEFIELD: This Friday, ANROWS are coming to present this research to the sector in Darwin. I will be attending that meeting for the morning on Friday. I am excited for the opportunities of this research to shape how we make sure that domestic and family violence services and child protection services work better together. Both sectors would say there is work needed to improve that intersection.

As the Chief Minister said, we can no longer accept silos as an acceptable way of working.

I am delighted to be working with the Minister for Education to deliver early childhood programs that are targeted on changing attitudes, values, behaviours and building equal, respectful relationships between and among, men and women, boys and girls.

This includes programs for parents as well as children at each level of school, including preschool. Opportunities exist to engage young men and women in pre and antenatal programs as well as positive parenting programs to learn healthy and respectful ways of parenting. In this way they can act as role models for their children in equal and respectful relationships.

The draft Early Childhood Development Plan notes the importance of developing a joined up, family-centred approach to supporting vulnerable children and families. Such an approach is important, as it recognises the

strong links that exist for children and families across service systems including early childhood services, housing, domestic and family violence, child protection and youth justice.

The need for a shared practice approach—and this is really important, is not just about information sharing or making sure we talk to each other. We must have a shared practice approach across domestic and family violence, child protection and other child family services as highlighted recently in the research undertaken by ANROWS as well as the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria.

A shared practice approach must also include children in out of home care. We need to ensure that these children get the very best support and are accessing the early learning and health services that they need as well as more targeted interventions.

The University of Melbourne has developed a collaborative practice framework for working across service sectors and we will use it as a guide. That will be discussed and presented on Friday.

Opportunities exist to build on the highly successful integrate response and Family Safety Framework, which was originally jointly developed by the non-government organisations with government agencies in Alice Springs. We have recently reviewed that, which shows it is seen by everyone involved as an important way of sharing information and practice.

A similar framework is needed to work with vulnerable children and families at the community level to support dual pathways and other children and families experiencing vulnerabilities. For this approach to be effective shared tools and protocols need to be developed, and all early childhood workers need to be trained in risk identification and responding effectively to vulnerable children and families.

We have a great deal of work to undertake in Territory Families. One of the ways we are trying to expand our work is to expand our footprint in remote communities through developing a hub and spoke model and co-locating with other agencies in 12 remote communities. It is hoped that to provide the right environment for shared practice and mutual support, a hub and spoke model will benefit the implementation of dual pathways, as well as out-of-home care, domestic and family violence and youth services in remote communities.

Deciding a culturally safe and responsive family support sector as well as out-of-home care and child protection systems is one of our biggest challenges. The Member for Namatjira spoke passionately about that yesterday.

Many Aboriginal children in out-of-home care are living away from communities because there are no local placements available. We need to make sure Aboriginal children are in services that provide cultural security as well as continuing a connection to country, culture and language. This will support them to have a strong identity and positive future.

We are reviewing our practices and values, working with Aboriginal communities and organisations to develop locally-based solutions. The Chief Minister spoke of this earlier today.

The government is committed to transferring out-of-home care systems to the non-government sector and investing in Aboriginal-controlled organisations that work with children in care in culturally safe, supportive and sustainable ways.

To this end, Territory Families has recently contracted APONT in partnership with SNAICC, two very important peak bodies in the Aboriginal-controlled sector, to consult widely and develop a model or models for the provision of out-of-home care through Aboriginal-controlled organisations. These are very positive steps.

Along with my colleague, Minister McCarthy, I think we have some great opportunities with the investment into remote and Aboriginal housing—the opportunities to support the people who put their hand up for kinship care and need extra support to make sure they are the right carers with adequate housing. As a government, we are making sure our efforts and investment are coordinated in a way that supports people on communities to have the best possible outcomes.

Other positive initiatives include the establishment of community reference groups made up of clan members and respected persons to work closely with Territory Families by providing advice on problem-solving issues regarding children at risk and child protection matters. This includes joint visits, care planning; the identification of potential family kinship carers and support options; and locally designed services, where

children at risk can be provided with support and accommodation close to home while appropriate longer-term care placements can be identified.

There is much more that needs to be done. We need to invest in improving the support provided to kinship and foster families. These are difficult roles which often involve caring for children who have experienced high degrees of trauma. We currently have very few ways to systematically hear from young people and their families and communities about what they want and how they see the service delivery.

We are working hard to make sure we have the mechanisms in place to ensure the voices, needs and challenges of our kinship and foster families and young people in care are heard and are used to continually review informed care practice policy and service delivery. One important step we have made in this area is the development of the kinship and foster care charter of rights with the Foster Care Association.

We have many good things starting but there is a long way to go. As I said before, I feel very proud to be part of a government that is committed to the future of our children. Working on the subcommittee of Cabinet with ministers with responsibilities in these areas who are passionate about their commitment to children has been completely inspiring. Working positively with the NGO and Aboriginal control sector has been a complete highlight of my first year as minister.

We have some exceptional people in the Northern Territory who are very skilled at what they do. We also have opportunities to take on learnings from the Royal Commission into Child Protection in South Australia, as well as the Royal Commission in Victoria and the report that will be handed down in the Northern Territory in the next month.

We have a moment in time where the evidence is clear that we need to invest in that first 1000 days and that will get the outcomes we need as a community. We have a community that is ready for bold change. In my discussions with people, they are very clear that what we are doing is not working. I am proud that, as a government, we have the courage to take a step forward and say, 'We need to do it differently. Come with us as a community, have your input into this plan and if we all work together the Territory will not be stopped into the future'.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Chief Minister, as the Minister for Children, for delivering this hugely important statement to the House.

Before the 2016 election, we knew we needed to focus on improving outcomes for our children, giving young Territorians the best start in life. Territorians told us that loud and clear. That is why, as a government, we are committed to putting children at the heart of government, making decisions based around children for the longevity of the Northern Territory.

I again congratulate the Minister for Children on launching the draft 10-Year early childhood development plan for consultation just a couple of weeks ago. *Starting Early for a Better Future* sets out an ambitious action plan to change the Territory and how we treat children to ensure that the Territory's children and their families are healthy, safe, engaged and supported. That is a whole-of-government plan to invest in our future and our children.

We know we must start early for a better future. Success in life, good health and emotional wellbeing start in our earliest years. This is a time when we can make the most difference in the lives of Territorians for generations to come. The plan states that for every dollar invested in quality early childhood development services, up to \$13 are returned in the future, with improved outcomes in school, health, employment and reduced contact with the criminal justice system and therefore, expenditure in this area. It makes good sense to make this investment now.

The first years of life are a critical development period for families and have the greatest influence during that time. By the time children start school, they have already had a diversity of experiences, developed abilities and established a sense of identity. The best environments for fostering the development of young children are those which provide the basic essentials for health living such as a stable home, a strong focus on health and mental wellbeing, providing for enriched learning environments that are safe and protective.

Those points sound very basic and should be a right for every child – a stable home, a focus on the health and mental wellbeing and providing an environment that encourages them to learn and be inquisitive. Sadly for many children, they do not have access to that. Recently inquiries and reports have highlighted that some Territory children are more likely than other Australian children to miss out on that good start. Those children

face developmental challenges, have a greater risk of these problems becoming more difficult to manage and become entrenched as they grow into young adults.

In turn, it becomes harder for this generation to raise their own families, keep them healthy, safe and thriving, to prepare those children, their own children for school, and before we know it we have a negative cycle.

To make this plan work we need to work with the entire Northern Territory community and they need to work with us. We need strong partnerships with the Australian government, local government, the non-government sector, Aboriginal communities, controlled organisations and most importantly families and parents.

From the start of our government we have structured the government and public service to work together as children and families an absolute priority. We know that this is not one single minister or government agency that can do this alone. Our Cabinet, our agencies are working together to deliver the whole-of-sector approach to delivering life changing outcomes for our children and the Territory's future.

The Starting Early For A Better Future introduces our vision and I quote:

We want Territory Children to be healthy, raised in loving families in homes that offer a sense of safety and comfort. We want our children to learn and with this education reach out into the world. Together we can raise happy, healthy, inquisitive and engage children who thrive through their sense of belonging to this wonderful place.

I know that I want that for my own children. I want that for all Territory kids, and I believe all members here in the Chamber today would share these aspirations for their children, grandchildren, friends and relatives for their community members, the young people in their community.

Our government is aiming to create the environment to share where all Territory parents are able to have and enjoy this shared vision for their children. We are up to the challenge. The Department of Health and our non-government health partners will play a vital role in delivering better outcomes for Territory children. From the early stages of life continuing to support them as they grow and develop throughout their lives.

There is a huge number of remote primary health centres across the Northern Territory, I think there is over 80. Around 50 of these are operated by the Northern Territory government and around 30 by Aboriginal community controlled health organisations. We have five public hospitals, one in each major regional centre, and as we know through the ministerial report I delivered to the House last week, a sixth hospital will open in Palmerston mid next year.

There are also two private facilities used predominantly by patients with private healthcare, the Darwin Private Hospital and the Darwin Day Surgery Centre. We look forward to working in partnership with all these health providers across the vast land that is the Northern Territory to deliver the best integrated care in early childhood.

Decades and decades of research shows us that the quality health services in the early stage, the early years of life lead to better health outcomes throughout life. The plan states: we will provide high quality core services to families such as antenatal and postnatal care, clinical and public health services, ear and dental programs, childhood surveillance and case management for children with additional needs.

To improve access to antenatal and postnatal care we are implementing a suite of measures. The research is clear, early and continued antenatal care throughout pregnancy has outcomes that will last throughout a baby, a child's life. Our first target is to enhance the maternal antenatal care to reach 70% of Aboriginal women in their first trimester of a pregnancy.

Currently, Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory are far less likely to attend their first antenatal care session during the first trimester with approximately 58% of women doing so. Birthing services are provided at Royal Darwin, Katherine, Gove and Alice Springs Hospitals along with the Darwin Private Hospital. Currently both Top End and Central Australian health services are moving towards an integrated model of maternity services, which provides a place based care wherever possible.

Clinics in the community setting which are staffed with midwives, medical officers, allied health professionals and Aboriginal health practitioners and the effective use of telehealth to minimise unnecessary travel and or hospital emissions, something that is a wonderful opportunity for you to engage with the health professional that you need to engage with without having to leave your community, something that is very important and we are seeing it rolled out more and more across the Northern Territory.

Through this integrated model we will reach out and we will be able to reach more women early in their pregnancy to give them access to the best care and to their choice of treatment.

A major election commitment for our government is to expand the Nurse Home Visiting Program across the Territory. We have committed to funding early home visiting for families with \$1m in this year's budget extending to \$2m in the 2018–19 budget and \$5m ongoing from 2019–20.

The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership program is an evidence-based program providing structured home visits to first-time mothers and has been adapted to be more culturally competent for Aboriginal families, targeting vulnerable mothers. The program was developed in the United States through rigorous research and over the last 30 years has developed into a strong program. It is available for implementation in Australia via a sole licence which is held by the Australian government's Department of Health with the University of Colorado where the program began. The program is delivered from before 28 weeks pregnancy until the child is two years of age, with regular structured home visits and is grounded in theories of attachment.

It provides improved outcomes in pregnancy by helping women engage in good preventative health practices, improved outcomes in the child's health and development by monitoring the infant's progress and supporting mothers to nurture their child and improved parental life course outcomes by helping mothers develop a vision for their own future. This could include continuing education and engaging with employment by either finding work or going back to employment.

The Australian government is expanding the Nurse-Family Partnership program to 13 sites nationally over the coming year. In the Northern Territory we currently have our sites operating in Alice Springs and delivered by the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Santa Teresa, in Darwin by Danila Dilba health service and the Top End Health Service is delivering a hub and spoke model from the Casuarina base and is provide outreach to support remote communities at Wadeye, Maningrida and Gunbalanya.

A fourth site is expected to be announced in the near future. Through this early childhood development plan and our election commitment, we will double the number of home visiting family partnerships to support families and mothers-to-be during pregnancy and into their baby's early days as they settle at home and throughout those vital early years of childhood.

We will embed home visiting as a core program for mothers in the Territory, customised for Territorians. The home visiting program will engage Aboriginal health practitioners and nurses to support families in learning how to support mothers-to-be during pregnancy and how to care for their babies and children. This will provide us with an avenue to boost the baby's birthweight, for healthy mothers to deliver healthy babies.

We will aim to achieve the goal of reducing the proportion of NT babies born with a low birthweight from 9% down to the national average of 6.4% which was from 2014. With a focus on improving the social determinants of health including healthy eating for mothers, household hygiene and living conditions, education for a healthy lifestyle, reducing smoking and alcohol consumption during pregnancy and understanding the barriers to achieving a healthy lifestyle and eating habits.

This will have enormous benefit to the babies. This work contributes to an even larger target to reduce the child mortality rate to the national average. When we support the mother and baby relationship, both mothers and babies have better outcomes in terms of recovery from birth through to successful breastfeeding and beyond the early days.

By increasing the breastfeeding rates we will increase health outcomes for Territory children. We are making gains in this space, the federal government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health performance framework tells us that 98% of Aboriginal children in the Territory have been breastfed; I understand this is the highest in the country and I congratulate all those involved in achieving this outcome.

81% of nonindigenous children in the Northern Territory which is comparable to the rest of the country and a credit to the current strength of the antenatal support system in the Territory. However, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding for Territory children declines after the first month and significantly so for Aboriginal children.

The NT health aim is to increase the rate of exclusive breastfeeding for babies up to four months which leads to vastly reduced rates of infection, including gastro infections and ear infections by passing along a mother's immunity to the baby and helping the tube in their inner ear function better. It is just one example of the benefits of breastfeeding.

The longer a child is breastfed, the less likely it is that child will suffer from ear infections. Hearing loss is a significant issue for children in the Northern Territory. It impacts on the lives of far too many Territory. We then see this not just within the health sphere, but in education, employment, police and our criminal justice system.

The greatest challenge in the Northern Territory is the heavy burden of preventable, conductive hearing loss in Aboriginal children associated with middle ear disease. Hearing loss is a barrier to normal language development in the early years and leads to a risk in attaining educational goals in school aged children.

Added to this is the diverse range of languages used in remote communities, something we should celebrate, but we need to attain oral English skills outside the home environment. We have an added burden with middle ear disease.

Hearing health services have a strong focus on children under five years of age, which is a critical development period for learning, speech and language development. We provide coordinated hearing outreach services with audiology, (inaudible) and health promotion to reduce the prevalence and incidence of ear disease, particularly amongst Aboriginal children.

We aim to reduce the percentage of remote Aboriginal children with hearing impairment. In 2015–16, 31% of children tested had some form of hearing impairment, 22% mild, 9% moderate and a small but significant 1% severe or profound. Hearing impairment is more severe in younger age groups, and this is highly significant in the language and cognitive development occurring during those vital early years.

Enabling parents to keep track of how their child is growing and developing is important in helping them know when they should seek additional support and treatment and what they should be expecting. The Member for Braitling mentioned when she became a parent—and the challenges and support. In my own experience of parenting, keeping track of just two children—and I am a fairly organised person.

It is really important that we give parents the tools to know what to expect and when to engage professional help. That is why we are updating the Northern Territory child health record, or the yellow book, as it is more commonly known, to record the growth, development and immunisations for all children aged zero to five. The new paper-based yellow book will match the functionality of parent-held child health records used in other jurisdictions, and it will have space to record vaccinations and consultations and the capacity to record against scheduled assessments, and growth and development.

It is not as straightforward as every year, perhaps near a child's birthday, that you need to get them their immunisations. The regime is two months, four months, six months; it is not straightforward. This is an opportunity to provide parents with the information so they can ensure they are giving their kids the best start. This book is linked to the Healthy Under 5 Kids partnering with families program, which is available to all children in the Northern Territory and documented in their individual child health record.

The yellow book forms an important communication tool between health services and parents as well as acting as a permanent record of their growth and development. Parents can make notes of concerns, and when they engage with a health professional they can discuss that. It also includes illustrations, graphics and parental advice on topics such as play, nutrition, language development and sleep. I could still do with some more information on sleep; I got home last night after sittings and those monkeys were still bouncing around in their beds.

The book has been developed to be flexible across the Northern Territory, acknowledging our rich diversity and culture. It supports recording of the ages and stages questionnaires on the ASQ developmental assessments. Feedback from consumer groups and practitioners is currently being incorporated to ensure the new record is user friendly and effective, which is what parents want as an educational tool.

The yellow book will be issued to parents and carers by our hospitals after birth, and I look forward to officially launching it in the coming months. In the future we will transition to an electronic child health record to facilitate access to NT child health assessments and immunisations. I do not need to explain to the House how wonderful that will be. We all move at some point, and if you do not happen to have that information with you the health professionals can access it and have all the information in managing children's health in an emergency or an ongoing situation.

The Healthy Under 5 Kids program has been trialled this year in seven remote health centres, and we aim to roll out the program across all Northern Territory health centres in the coming year ahead. This is a universal standardised child and family health program for all families with children zero to five years of age,

irrespective of where the child lives. The program includes assessment of physical growth, developmental assessments, immunisation and maternal health and wellbeing.

It assists parents to keep track of their child's health and be assisted to seek further assessment of treatment as the need is identified.

The national childhood vaccination schedule provides protection of preventable diseases from children from birth to 15 years. The NT achieves high immunisation coverage in children to protect them from a significant number of vaccine-preventable diseases.

The Northern Territory also achieves high immunisation coverage for Aboriginal-specific vaccines, such as influenza vaccine and hepatitis A. These programs have been very successful and have reduced hospitalisations and illness in Territory kids. At the same time, our coverage rates are slightly lower than the national rates for the five-year-old age group. This is a target for improvement of our early childhood plan.

Our primary health centres are critical in providing good coverage rate.

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing order 43. I move that the minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FYLES: Our primary health centres are critical in providing good coverage rates, approximately 80% of vaccines are given in Northern Territory primary health centres and Aboriginal medical centres, with around 20% in general practices.

The centre for disease control maintains the Northern Territory Immunisation Register and provides a telephone advice line and recall list of all due and overdue children to support health coverage.

In terms of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, prevention is better than a cure. It may be an old saying, but it is nevertheless very true, particular in terms of FASD. I have spoken in the House many times about the effects of excessive alcohol in Territorians and the harm it causes in our families and communities. I am pleased with the early progress of the Banned Drinker Register, reducing the supply of alcohol to those causing so much harm: the problem drinkers within our community.

Over 370 sales were declined in the first month, with over 1500 people on the Banned Drinker Register. Prevention of alcohol-related harm has even more influence and relevance in early childhood, because it has a lifelong impact.

In the case of alcohol and pregnancy, we strongly support the evidence in promoting the message to avoid alcohol consumption during pregnancy. This Assembly undertook an inquiry into foetal alcohol spectrum disorder in 2015 and found that FASD is the preventable disability.

We are committed to developing a whole-of-government framework to support prevention, diagnosis and service development for people diagnosed with FASD. The Department of Health is leading this work and will draw on the select committee's report which made a number of recommendations for actions to reduce the incidents and impact of FASD. This includes addressing alcohol management and support services, sexual health, antenatal support, early childhood support and education services and FASD diagnostic and support services.

The select committee report highlights that the greatest gains are to be obtained through a combination of preventable activities and cross-agency universal supports with targeted efforts.

We know that the earlier an individual receives a FASD diagnosis, the better that long-term recovery outcomes are likely to be. Without appropriate diagnosis and support, individuals with FASD are at increased risk of experience mental health problems, school disruption and involvement with the criminal justice system.

The strategic framework will acknowledge that FASD encompasses a whole of life issues and will focus on building a supportive, cohesive network.

We are supporting the Northern Territory roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme over a three-year period with the complete transition to be achieved by 30 June 2019. Children and young people

diagnosed with a developmental delay or disability, who are eligible, will be able to access disability-related support in the areas of early intervention, therapy, equipment and respite services if required.

At the heart of the NDIS is an individualised support for people with disabilities and at no stage of life is this more vital than in early childhood. We know that early intervention leads to better outcomes and a better quality of life. The NDIS will work with systems providing child protection and family supports including services supporting people experience or exiting family violence.

As the roll out progresses, families and carers of children with a disability in receipt of the Office of Disability Services will be supported to a transition to the NDIS. Throughout this period, the Office of Disability will continue to work closely with Territory Families and child and adolescent mental health services to ensure integrated interagency service and transition planning throughout this period.

It is expected the NDIS scheme will provide \$204m in the Northern Territory – double the current funding that is available. It is expected that it will support about 6500 Territorians and will also provide job opportunities for Territorians.

To complement the early childhood development plan, we are also developing a child/adolescent health plan for a holistic approach to improving the health and wellbeing of young people in the Territory. Given the focus of zero to five in the early childhood plan, a sharper focus is brought to the six to 24 year olds in the child/adolescent health plan. The plan involves multiple government and non-government agencies contributing their expertise to formulate the priorities and key targets. The most important principle of the plan will be using the social determinants of health approach, recognising that health and wellbeing is not just about provision of health services but a wide range of social services provided by many government and non-government agencies.

Of great concern is the Northern Territory's child mortality rate. In the period 2011 to 2015, there were 242 deaths, sadly, of children in the Northern Territory with 74% being Aboriginal children. The principle underlying causes of death for these children were certain conditions originating in the perinatal period defined as 20 completed weeks of gestation to 28 days after birth. External causes of morbidity and mortality included injuries, poisoning and adverse effects that are seen as preventable, including youth suicide. We must take action to turn this around.

An essential component in developing the child and adolescent health plan has been consulting with children and young adults to hear their voices and what they want to see. There has been strong consultation across the Northern Territory, from art work to face-to-face consultations to a youth survey. NT Health and the working group are incorporating the results of consumer consultation into the child and adolescent health plan. I look forward to providing the House with further updates of the details in the child and adolescent health plan as it develops in the coming months.

Unlike the CLP, we know we need to reduce the rates of smoking in the Northern Territory, particularly under 25 years, to the national average. We saw the CLP government roll back tobacco reforms and cut health promotions. Everyone scratched their heads and wondered why on earth, as a Health Minister, you would cut measures that save lives and expenditure on health. As we said in the lead-up to the 2016 election, we will commit to putting in place those measures that were wound back.

The impact of smoking on Aboriginal health outcomes, sadly, starts from a very young age – in fact, during pregnancy can impact on the baby's growth and birth weight. It also has an impact on breastfeeding. The 2017 federal government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health survey tells us that maternal and paternal family smoking is negatively associated with breastfeeding outcomes. Smoke affects the mother's supply of milk and exposure to passive smoking is also a factor in reduced duration of exclusive breastfeeding.

I note I only have a few moments left to speak, but I will talk about my electorate. The Nightcliff electorate is home a number of support services for pregnant women and parents with babies. At the Nightcliff Community Centre is Childbirth Education Australia, more commonly known as CEA. It provides a number of support, education and social opportunities for pregnant women and new parents to promote self-reliance and confidence in pregnancy, birth and parenting. It offers birth preparation courses, pregnancy yoga, monthly morning teas which I have had the opportunity to attend many times and a library of resources. After the birth of my second son, I accessed that library and some of those resources. It provides opportunities for new mothers and parents to have support and meet other families with young children.

We have the three-year-old kindy in my electorate and the not-for-profit group committee does a wonderful job in providing a safe, secure, friendly environment for families who are seeking nurturing and learning programs. This is taken up by families who are not engaged in child care and have a pathway where they can go for two- or three-hour sessions during the week. It promotes an opportunity around a play-based program to stimulate and develop children.

We also have the Rossiter Street playgroup which is a registered playgroup and provides support for parents who stay with their children through those sessions. We have the wonderful Nightcliff Library in my electorate but my children often attend the Casuarina Library sessions. They offer programs like story time for one to five-year-olds. On a Tuesday when they are offered in Nightcliff, after those sessions the playground is abuzz with young children who have been in the library and then they come out.

I could go on but I am pleased this government is doing everything to support families. Putting children at the centre of everything we do as a government is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. We want to help our children grow strong, happy and healthy.

The early childhood development plan sets out our ambitious action plan for change to ensure the Territory's children and families are healthy, safe, engaged and supported. I thank the House for the opportunity to update on some of the work within my portfolios and also within my electorate. I thank the Deputy Chief Minister, the Minister for Children and commend the statement to the House.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable Members, it is nearly 12 noon so we will stand suspended. There is a meeting of the social policy committee in the Litchfield room and the Economic Policy Committee in the Elsie Room, both at 12 noon.

The Assembly suspended.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT Extension of Time

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have been approached about the practice of the Assembly and application of Standing Order 43 when it comes to motions for extensions of speaking times. After considering the longstanding practices of the Assembly and taking advice on the matter, I make the following ruling.

In addition to the existing practice of another member raising a point of order to move a motion for the member speaking to receive an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 43, if this has not occurred by the conclusion of the speech, it will be available for the member speaking at the conclusion of the expired time to move, pursuant to Standing Order 43, that 'I continue my speech' up to a further 10 minutes.

This ruling is subject to the limitations in Standing Order 43 not permitting any extensions of debates with 10 minutes or less, or no confidence or censure motion, and does not contemplate two extensions.

Either another member moves the motion or a member moves their own at the conclusion of the expired time, not both.

This practice will take effect from today and be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration in its comprehensive review which is ongoing and likely to report to the Assembly next year.

MOTION Bill of Rights for Northern Territory Indigenous People

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I move that:

- The Northern Territory Government notes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Using this Declaration as a basis, legislate a bill of rights for Northern Territory Indigenous Peoples.

Australia is a nation where people in the mainstream pride themselves on living in the lucky country and in true democracy where everyone is given a fair go. So, it is most surprising that Australia is, in fact, the only common law country in the world which has neither a constitutional nor a federal legislative bill of rights to protect its citizens. As a nation we are totally out of step with other comparable nations in that regard.

Other nations, which also throughout their history relied on common laws for the protection of individuals' rights, have already come to recognise that their common law needed to be supplemented with a bill of rights. Canada, for example, passed a Bill of Rights in 1982, New Zealand in 1990 and the United Kingdom in 1998.

Despite many attempts at legislative reform in this regard in Australia, to date legislation of a Bill of Rights has only been passed in the ACT and Victoria.

In 1998 the Committee to the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination noted the lack of basic human rights protection in the Australian legal system and that the parliament could override any statutory rights as it saw necessary.

Certainly the Australian constitution also does not provide any protection of individuals' basic human rights. Chief Justice Brennan of the High Court in a case concerning the Stolen Generations, stated that:

Those who framed the Constitution accepted the view that individual rights were on the whole just left to the protection of the common law and the supremacy of the Parliament.

In any society those who will most acutely feel the impact of a lack of protection of their basic human rights will be the most marginalised, especially when they are a minority group, and even more particularly if there are other barriers to their participation in mainstream society such as language difference and geographical and educational barriers, as is the case for large numbers of Aboriginal Territorians in remote areas.

The federal parliament enacted extremely important legislation in the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. However, it is well recognised that the Racial Discrimination Act only goes a small way to meeting Australia's international obligations in this regard. In short it has been unable to bring about any real significant change in equality in Australian society.

Another major weakness of the racial discrimination legislation is that it is forever subject to being amended or repealed by subsequent federal legislation. Whilst that might lead to significant political backlash, it can occur and has occurred in the past.

This year this parliament took a very important step in changing the parliamentary procedures to ensure there is an assessment of every bill's compatibility with seven core international human rights treaties, which Australia has ratified. This was a step towards translating international human rights conventions into domestic legislation. The federal government also has a human rights compatibility statement. These human rights compatibility statements provide benchmarks. However, they by no means ensure protection of the human rights of the most marginalised and disadvantaged Australians.

It would be ridiculous to suggest that Australia is complying with these international covenants and conventions at present or to expect that the requirement of a human rights compatibility statement will bring about the extent of required changes. To suggest that would mean someone was totally out of touch with reality.

We remain way off that mark as long as Indigenous people's right of self-determination is being denied in practice. As long as the rights of Indigenous people to maintain and not be subject to destruction of our culture is being silently denied. Meanwhile, governments continue to impose programs and policies that cut across our traditions.

As long as we continue to be denied our rights to use our own languages, as long as government continue to ignore international best practice in education of our children in remote community schools—a fact which I am convinced is causing the critically low school attendance rates, despite the enormous efforts of teachers. As long as, despite almost limitless extended kin, we are still seeing Indigenous children being removed from their families.

When we look at the rates at which we are locking up Indigenous people, it is frightening how far off we are from those international human rights benchmarks. Our incarceration rates in the NT are some of the worst in the world

These are the harsh realities we all face and there is such a long way to go.

The requirement of a human rights compatibility statement to take into account international conventions is a great change. In Australia, to date, it has been the international instruments that have been the most help

in monitoring human rights. But indeed, only provide a benchmark. It comes back to the will of the parliament of the day.

For example, when part of the human rights discrimination act was suspended 10 years ago at the will of the federal government so that they could implement extremely severe measures at the time of the intervention.

Some say a bill of rights is not necessary, as everyone is in the same boat, as all are protected by Australia being a democracy. Indeed, the rights of the majority are protected in the true democracy, but what if you are a part of a small minority sector of the population that has no political clout? What if the minority has, and continues to suffer, the effect of past laws and policies which tragically contributed to intergenerational poverty? Together with huge gaps, education, health and disadvantage in all areas compared to the mainstream society.

I would suggest we are not all in the same boat, in reality. Some outside that boat, who are a minority, have been continually dealt a bad deal by governments who are willing to sacrifice Indigenous Australians for the benefit of other sectors of the population.

I suggest that the human rights of the marginalised sector of the population are not, in reality, protected. Indigenous Territorians are not merely disadvantaged Territorians. We are the first peoples of these lands and have unbroken, continuing connections to the land and sea of this region that predate this current society.

Internationally, there has been increasing recognition of the unique relationship of the first peoples with the land and collective rights we still retain under international law.

Discrimination has many faces and the United Nations has clearly recognised the very serious and insidious impact of racism over the period since colonisation on the lives of Indigenous peoples, contributing to intergenerational poverty and the present gaps we see in health, education and the destructive flow-on effects to remote communities.

Modern governments will of course continue to make their decisions based on economics and in the interest of the majority of the public. Indigenous peoples as a minority sector of the population will continue to be disadvantaged over and over again by decisions of governments, despite the rhetoric.

A bill of rights for NT Indigenous peoples would protect the Indigenous people's fundamental rights from any possible arbitrary exercise of power into the future and would also be a major step towards promoting a focus in society that promotes tolerance and understanding of culture and racial diversity. A focus which would allow people from all parts of the Indigenous sector of the population of the NT to participate more in the mainstream.

In August, this parliament took the very positive step of incorporating into our legislative process human rights compatibility statements. I now put to this Assembly to take the further bold step of noting the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples in passing a bill of rights for the Indigenous people of the NT based on the United Nations declaration.

I commend this motion to the House.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this important motion before the Assembly today. At the outset, on behalf of the government we welcome the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this motion forward and the opportunity he has to discuss the objective he has in mind, in particular, the recognition and protection of Aboriginal cultural values and the recognition of cultural identity and of things that are important to Aboriginal Territorians. There are all very important matters.

There is also the element of setting standards a government commits to, including steps to address discriminatory practices or acts that directly undermine the things that are important to the integrity of Aboriginal identity and the culture and our society as a whole. We are pleased to respond to this motion, but in doing so, propose an amendment to the motion before us. I spoke with the Member for Nhulunbuy, as I did with the opposition and other Independent members last week. We circulated the proposed amendment which I will now read and it will be formally recirculated.

That is to replace the second dot point of the current motion with, consult with Territorians to develop options for greater statutory and community recognition of Aboriginal law, culture and identity informed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, work relating to constitutional development for the

Northern Territory, consultations regarding Aboriginal justice agreements and the government's consultations regarding treaty and other forms of agreement making with Aboriginal Territorians.

It was a great honour to speak today as the Attorney-General, but I acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues on the government side and would like to particularly acknowledge those Indigenous members in the House on the government benches who have spoken with me around this motion and provided me with their voice. I understand they will be speaking after myself, but I am responding first as the Attorney-General.

It is important that we discuss these matters and the values and principles underlying the motion as we work as parliamentarians to provide good government for all Territorians. It is good to be reminded of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, reflecting the significance of the underlying issues of recognition and respect.

For the culture and traditions of first peoples across the globe, it is perhaps unsurprising that it was 20 years in the making. Commitment, hard work and a belief in its purpose and international goodwill saw the key statement adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 September 2007. Sadly, at that time our own national government could not find it in its heart to support that decision.

We in Australia—with our strong values, and respect for others and a fair go—were one of only four nations to vote against adoption of the resolution. Thankfully, that lack of support was rectified in 2009, when the Labor government, led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, supported that.

In her statement on recognition of the UN resolution, Minister Jenny Macklin recorded the response of an Aboriginal elder she had been speaking to:

... closing the gap is not just about bricks and mortar, it is about self esteem, pride, acceptance, and a recognition of the humanity of our peoples.

Important words, especially when you reflect on the times. A period when we were still wrestling with the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act as part of the Northern Territory emergency response—the intervention. This was a searing moment that cut deep into the consciousness of many Aboriginal Territorians—a continuing, hurtful moment for many.

At its core the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, using its own words:

Affirming that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such.

The UN declaration also highlights a truth that is central to our government's policy agenda:

... control by indigenous peoples over developments affecting them and their lands, territories and resources will enable them to maintain and strengthen their institutions, cultures and traditions, and to promote their development in accordance with their aspirations and needs.

This is why we are so enthusiastic in supporting our great Aboriginal tourism products, including our jointly managed national parks, the development of the national Indigenous arts centres in Alice Springs, the Indigenous art trails connecting smaller art centres and Territory towns with tourism operators. I have been very privileged to visit these communities. As members of parliament, we are given a unique, privileged view of the Northern Territory, but these opportunities connect smaller towns with people who would not have that opportunity—sharing culture while providing opportunities.

Our government support Aboriginal sea and land rangers, Aboriginal pastoral and horticultural activity, the development of local Aboriginal businesses and strong, local participation in our \$1.1bn remote housing investment. My colleague the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources will speak on the importance of Aboriginal sea and land rangers.

The minister implementing the remote housing investment is so proud of the local input. He spoke about that just yesterday.

Our acceptance and recognition of the property rights of Aboriginal Territorians over so much of our land mass, through the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* and the native title legislation.

It was great to recently see the opening of the Gulkula mine training centre in northeast Arnhem Land—another example of Aboriginal participation in resource development. We want to support and expand opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians through northern development, including greater participation in the development of options and plans for northern development.

These opportunities are central to our economic development framework released earlier this year. Our policy to promote local decision-making aligns with the aspirational goals of the UN declaration.

Key features of our government's approach include more community control and oversight of education in the bush, including the place of Aboriginal languages; the development of an Aboriginal Justice Agreement; the design and delivery of our remote housing programs; the care of young people; the management of our remote health system, something I am passionate about; more opportunity for Aboriginal Territorians, where they want to do so, to take ownership of the design and implementation of government services. Most recently, we released a discussion paper on early childhood development in the Northern Territory. The rights of children are central to our thinking.

As a government we are committed to ensuring we provide the best for our children, including recognition of the cultural world in which our children belong. I have also found this excerpt from the preamble to the UN declaration, a telling and thoughtful statement:

... that the recognition of the rights of Indigenous people in this declaration will enhance harmonious and cooperative relationships between the State and Indigenous peoples based on principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith.

These principles are essential ingredients to good government. They are objectives that our government aspires to in all its work every day.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People is an important, foundational document we should remind ourselves of from time to time. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for reminding us of that by proposing this motion in the House.

I now turn attention to the second key point of the Member for Nhulunbuy's motion relating to a Northern Territory bill of rights. While I understand the attraction for a bill of rights for Northern Territory Indigenous people, we do not believe it would be right to leap directly to do a statutory bill of rights in the short term. That is not to say we are not open to the discussion on how these issues might be reflected and the motion be advanced.

Rather, we have already committed to much busy work, including the development of local decision making I have already mentioned, and building a conversation across the Territory, an opportunity for treaty negotiations and agreement-making with Aboriginal Territorians to cement and progress the joint development of the Territory.

In saying this, I am mindful of a speech entitled 'Securing the Rights of Indigenous Territorians' made by Tom Calma, the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner 10 years ago in May 2007. He said:

Our challenge is to ensure that human rights are lived and not treated simply as aspirational. This will require building a culture of respect for human rights.

To be fair, Dr Calma saw a place for a bill of rights as part of human rights' framework. However, my point is our priority should be to work towards ensuring human rights are lived here and now.

In one important way, I can see the introduction of the Banned Drinker Register as a case in point. We have heard the voice of Aboriginal Territorians who too often felt stigmatised alongside other Territorians as they sought to buy takeaway alcohol. The BDR is squarely aimed at problem drinkers – it does not matter who you are, it is aimed at problem drinkers.

Access to takeaway alcohol will be determined by your past behaviour with alcohol, not who you are or where you intend to consume your purchase. Importantly, the reintroduction of the BDR saw our government end the failed policy of alcohol mandatory treatment. That was a policy that criminalised people with a severe health problem, as opposed to helping them. The end of alcohol mandatory treatment and alcohol protection orders is a good example of how our government is taking action to promote human rights.

Returning to the speech, Dr Calma also spoke of a human rights framework that:

... focused on ensuring that different segments of the population are able to participate fully.

This is exactly the objective of our government's work – maximising participation, choice and the opportunity for all Territorians. Dr Calma also highlighted effective participation is essential in decision-making processes that affect us to have as essential for non-discriminatory treatment and equality before the law – a further foundation value of this government.

I have also been interested in the views of well-known authority on the Australian Constitution, Professor George Williams, who has written that an imposed regime would not achieve the same aims of a bill of rights. He said:

What is necessary is change that engenders a culture of rights protection, including a tolerance and respect for rights, built upon the fundamental values held by the Australian people.

We agree with that view. I am also wary of the potential risks of an overreliance of a prescriptive approach to defining discriminatory practice and a focus on what you cannot do, rather than embracing and celebrating cultural diversity and then practising that in everything we do.

In saying this, I note that the Territory legislation must be consistent with the Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act*. Moreover, we have taken action to implement processes that see our legislation scrutinised from a human rights perspective.

One of the recommendations of the select committee that we accepted was recommendation 13, that the Assembly require any member who is introducing a bill to table a statement on whether the bill is compatible with human rights as defined in the Commonwealth's *Human Rights Parliamentary Scrutiny Act 2011*.

That process, as we are all aware in this Chamber, is well under way and plays a part in how our government drafts, considers and formulates legislation. Our government agencies must explicitly consider human rights effects resulting from legislation—a first for the Territory.

This is a key initiative that should help address some of the concerns underlying the Member for Nhulunbuy's motion especially in relation to legislation coming for the Assembly. The work we are doing does not stop there. One key area of work for our government is modernising the Territory's *Antidiscrimination Act*. I released a discussion paper called *Modernisation of the Northern Territory's Antidiscrimination Act*.

The *Antidiscrimination Act* has not been reviewed since 1993, 25 years ago. We need to bring the legislation in to the 21st Century, including so that it is up to speed with modern understandings of human rights and equality.

One of the measures being considered is introducing specific anti-vilification laws prohibiting offensive conduct based on the basis of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. Such a measure would be important ensuring better protections for Aboriginal Territorians from racial vilification.

Community consultations have so far held public meetings in Darwin, Palmerston, Casuarina and Humpty Doo. I know that stakeholder meetings are also taking place and that there will be a presentation to faith based organisations, and as the Attorney-General, I have undertaken to our religious leaders that I will meet with them and hear their concerns.

We need to modernise this act. It is two and a half decades old. The Northern Territory needs a modern antidiscrimination act. I urge all Territorians who are interested to attend the public sessions make a submission to the review so that they can have their views heard in this process. This is an open and transparent process and any changes will be the result of community consultation not thrust out of nowhere on to Territorians. I encourage the Member for Nhulunbuy to make a submission.

Another key part of our work as a government has been to create an Aboriginal Justice Unit within the Department of Attorney-General and Justice. The Aboriginal Justice Unit is charged with leading our government's work on delivering an Aboriginal and justice agreement.

The agreement will allow the Territory government to partner with Aboriginal Territorians to reduce the high levels of disadvantage of Aboriginal people who reside in the Northern Territory; to develop strategies to

address the high levels of incarceration of Aboriginal Territorians and to assist in the reduction of reoffending in the Territory; to reduce the high levels of over representation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory criminal justice system; to provide Aboriginal people with the services that support human rights, individual and community resilience; to provide a framework for agencies, the Aboriginal community to work in partnership, to address the complex issues that result in the current levels of disadvantage of Aboriginal Territorians; to ensure that agencies do not work in isolation in the delivery of projects and programs; to deliver on the NT Government election commitments to enable Aboriginal people in law and justice matters; to establish a model to provide options for the role of traditional leadership in the local court system in the decision-making processes and develop a management process for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the agreement.

An interim primary reference committee has been established to advise as to the development of a government's framework for the agreement. Fifteen reference committee members represent the relevant peak body organisations, community non-government organisations and local government. Other members can join on an as needed basis. The reference committee has now met numerous times as meetings are being held fortnightly with the secretariat and assistance from the Aboriginal Justice Unit.

The Aboriginal Justice Unit will provide at least 12 months consultation with Aboriginal communities, regional centres, government agencies right across the Northern Territory. Six months of consultations are planned in each of the north and south of the Territory. The northern and southern regions consultation plans are based on the land councils regional borders.

Consultations regarding the context of the agreement began in July this year and have included the communities Belyuen, Batchelor, Nauiyu, Kybrook, Palmerston and Acacia Hills. The Aboriginal Justice unit staff have also attended Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin show days to advertise the agreement, advise of upcoming consultation and provide contact details for feedback from the entire Northern Territory community.

Consultations will next occur in the West Arnhem Region for the communities of Jabiru, Oenpelli, Warruwi, Maningrida and Manmoyi, just to name a few.

Consultations with the Aboriginal communities located in Adelaide River, Palumpa, Peppimenarti and Wadeye were postponed out of respect for funeral ceremonials and sorry business which was underway, but I am sure it will be rescheduled.

Further consultations have occurred with major peak Aboriginal bodies, such as the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory, the Northern Land Council, Central Land Council and other major forums, including the NT Aboriginal Public Service forums and the Elders Visiting Program, run by the Northern Territory Correctional Services.

In conclusion, I am mindful that a Bill of Rights enacted by this Assembly, if it were to do so, is still something that could be altered, or indeed repealed, by a later government. The broad objective of protecting cultural rights, paying respect for the different, and addressing discriminatory practices, is important to us, and central to the way we see ourselves as a government and conduct ourselves.

There are matters to pursue in a broad framework of constitutional development, practical leadership by the government in all that it does. Human rights education and the celebration of our cultural diversity. We will pursue this in government, including our day-to-day policy development, dialogues regarding our application of Treaty and agreement making with Aboriginal Territorians focused on conversations about our Northern Territory Constitution in the context of statehood.

This is why I have outlined some of the policy work the government is undertaking and why we propose to amend the motion to replace the second dot point of the Member for Nhulunbuy's motion. I would hope it has been formally circulated this evening. I spoke to a number of members last week on this. We propose to replace the second dot point with:

Consult with Territorians to develop options for greater statutory and community recognition by Aboriginal law, culture, and identity, informed by the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous people, work-relating to constitutional development for the Northern Territory, consultations regarding Aboriginal justice agreements and the government's consultations regarding Treaty and other forms of agreement-making with Aboriginal Territorians.

I sincerely thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for moving the motion. I am pleased to inform the House that the government intends to support the motion as amended. A number of my colleagues wish to speak, so I will conclude my remarks, thank you.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, when we discuss issues such as the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous people, Treaties and Aboriginal Justice Agreement, it is important we consider the unique needs, hopes and wants of all Aboriginal people in the Territory.

We need a whole-of-parliament approach to these issues as they affect all Territorians. ABC reported this week that the Darwin prison population reached record levels of 1047 prisoners. There are over 1700 people in prison in the Territory and we know that over 84% of these prisoners are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. Of that 84%, as many as 80% will end up reoffending.

While we talk about youth, the numbers are even worse. The Territory has the highest rate of youth offending in Australia and 97% of children in juvenile detention centres in the Territory are Indigenous. Over 90% of these children will also go on to reoffend and approximately 60% of these children are in the care of Territory Families.

These numbers are unacceptable and we need community-led and informed initiatives to end the cycle of offending and reoffending. We need to empower Aboriginal people. They are our greatest asset, and the key to the Territory's future.

However, we need to listen. Truly listen to Aboriginal people in order to address these issues in a way that will start to solve these problems. Culturally appropriate education, training and work placement is incredibly important, but this cannot be done without listening to Aboriginal people and determining what kinds of jobs, training and employment are desirable and effective for them and their communities. As the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the bush seat of Daly and a resident of the Territory for more than 35 years, I have made it my mission to sincerely listen to the views of Aboriginal elders, traditional elders and others in the community.

My electorate of Daly takes in communities including, Wadeye, Peppimenarti, Palumpa, Daly and Belyuen, just to name a few. Each of these areas have different concerns and views on issues such as a treaty and the relationship the community should have with the Territory government.

For more than 16 of these years I ran the Daly River mango farm and during that time developed very strong contacts with the local community and many lasting friendships, particularly with Aboriginal Territorians. It was also a time of great learning for me, learning how Aboriginal people conduct their business and communities respond in time of crises like floods which were a reasonably frequent event on the Daly.

As the local member I was elected in 2012 and now the Opposition Leader, I have used my experience on the Daly to try to bring benefit to the lives of Aboriginal people throughout my electorate. One of the key things I learned was the importance of consultation, not the type of consultation practiced by some politicians where they basically tell the community what it is going to be doing for them.

The type of consultation I am referring to is when you ask communities what they want and then use your position as a leader to try to deliver what they want. It might not be 100% of what has been requested, but what is important is that it is what the recipients want, not what the deliverers want to provide.

Having been a regular visitor to Wadeye over many years, I was amazed that the fifth largest town in the Northern Territory had missed out on essential infrastructure from successive governments. This was something I immediately sought to redress. In consultation with community leaders, we were able to identify priorities that would improve access and better amenity within the town.

A major project that was delivered was the sealing of the (inaudible) road, which was an economic but also social measure that all Territorians should add to and continue with. Our communities will not thrive and prosper until there are linkages between them and our major centres and investment in this infrastructure will deliver long-term benefits.

This is in stark contrast to spending \$50m on a new museum or investment in another waterpark in Darwin on a Larrakia sacred site. In Wadeye I listened to the community when they told me they wanted better lights on the footy oval. They were first switched on around this time two years ago and allowed for games of AFL to be played at night.

I also listened when I organised to have the old Wadeye oval lights transferred to the softball oval, opening up another activity for the girls and women of Wadeye to be involved in. It is no coincidence that juvenile crime dropped by around 30% subsequent to the lights being switched on.

As you may know, a few months ago the new police station accommodation complex was also opened in Wadeye. Some critics from outside the town were questioning the decision to locate the police station in the centre of the town along the main drag. These criticisms were typical of outsiders who do not really understand how communities work and who think they know what is best for Aboriginal people.

The request to relocate the police station to the main street came from traditional owners and was about increasing the status and profile of law and order in the town. In many cases, government is telling Aboriginal people what they will do for them rather than asking them what they actually want. It is a mistake that is repeated by governments.

In many ways, the recent Uluru convention on recognition is a look into the future about dealing with issues that directly affect Indigenous Australians. The media reporting I heard conveyed the orthodoxy that the outcome of the convention would be supportive on constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians. The actual outcome was far more broad-reaching, and I think surprised many people.

The recommendations, the most substantial of which is for a treaty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, were straight from the hearts of the delegates there. This has now provided a platform for the path ahead. Whilst these processes are extremely important, the number one priority of Aboriginal people across the Territory is healing the enormous rift when it comes to disadvantage.

Treaties, UN declarations, recognitions and advisory committees are all important issues to Aboriginal people. But the most important element for any group of people is wellbeing, and the Aboriginal leaders I speak to from across the Territory still see closing the gap as crucial to Indigenous disadvantage and empowerment. This is why I have fought at the Cabinet table for funding for roads, new police stations and football lights.

I know from my conversations with Aboriginal leaders in Wadeye and across the Territory that improving the quality of life for their people through infrastructure and economic development is the number one priority.

Consultation is an important, useful thing, but consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders should not be limited to the agenda the government has set. It must be true consultation that takes into consideration the views that may be contrary to the government of the day's current policy platform. For example, Aboriginal Justice Agreements are a great way to provide a framework for collaboration between Aboriginal peak organisations and government concerning Aboriginal justice.

They can lead to the development of justice solutions; they are community led and culturally safe and appropriate; they can lead to joint strategic initiatives that address areas of concern for Aboriginal people, including important issues such as alcohol, drugs, gambling and other activities that lead to antisocial behaviour, crime and violence in Aboriginal communities.

Solutions and objectives need to be truly collaborative and not simply an overlay of government policy or views on Aboriginal people. An example of this is the implementation of creative alcohol solutions in Aboriginal communities, such as the club at Peppi. It may be counterintuitive that a club that serves alcohol could significantly benefit an Aboriginal community, but I have seen the benefits firsthand. At the club, drinking is controlled and antisocial behaviour is addressed directly with the input of the community.

The club at Peppi has decreased antisocial behaviour by decreasing the incentive to bring large amounts of alcohol into the community or resort to abusing other substances.

Another example is the football program at Wadeye, which has given youth and adults alike a recreational outlet and an opportunity to take part in team sports that build up the community rather than divide it. Simply adding lights to the oval at Wadeye has decreased antisocial behaviour and has brought the community together in their love of sport and friendly competition.

These are the kinds of creative solutions that Aboriginal Justice Agreements can lead to, and when they are acquitted with the appropriate level of consultation—respect and sensitivity to the needs of Aboriginal community members.

The opposition supports a bipartisan and whole-of-parliament approach to advancing the interest of Aboriginal peoples and communities. Solutions will not arise in silos and were not properly addressed within a political atmosphere that seeks to advance a particular viewpoint or ideology other than directly addressing the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. If we work collectively and cooperatively on these issues, we can spark the change we all want.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this motion to the Chamber today.

The Territory is a unique place to visit, work and live. What makes the Territory so unique? Its people. We have a rich mix of people from different countries and backgrounds, and the history and culture we share is the Territory. A large part of our identity in the Northern Territory is our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people.

The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—over 30% at the 2016 ABS census. As a Territorian who is very proud to have Aboriginal heritage from the Tennant Creek region, I celebrate my Aboriginal Warramunga heritage. I have embarked on what is important in my life. I have been trying to learn—as someone who does not have that background—my Aboriginal language. I am slowly but surely getting there but it is making me feel I am part of something, and that is important. That is what the Territory does to all of us.

As I said, I am very grateful that being someone with Aboriginal heritage has not presented me with any hurdles in doing what I want to do in life. I acknowledge that it has been different for me in an urban environment that it would be in the vast regions of the Northern Territory. I also know I have not had too many dramas because I have been extremely lucky to be raised in Darwin, protected by my family and extremely protected by my parents. I thank them.

We have all experienced discrimination of some sort. The one that shines out for me was when I was a young fellow, coming from here at 16 to finish schooling, and went to Adelaide to play cricket. There was a big article written about me. I was abused as I walked out the first time because the newspaper had a line saying, 'Ken is an Aboriginal Territorian'. I was welcome to first-grade cricket in South Australia fantastically, but as you can imagine, at 16 I was pretty tough – well beyond my years – so I gave back exactly what was given to me. It opened my eyes because I had not experienced that as I growing up in Darwin.

I was born in Darwin, and lived in Kurringal Flats, went to public housing on Freshwater Road, out to Darwin River and then into Moulden. I had never experienced that and it was never raised in Darwin. Many Aboriginal Territorians have not shared my fortune and have experienced much rougher. As everyone in this Chamber has witnessed many times, I have seen some experiences of Aboriginal people being abused or treated indifferently. That is not only concerning, but something we need to address.

Anyone who knows me knows I make sure, when I witness this, I make my views known very clearly to the people who are saying those things abusing other people. It does not matter whether they are black or white, or whoever it is. It is about how you treat other people with respect and civility.

Everyone is entitled to human rights, but sadly Aboriginal people have not always been able to enjoy them. Australia's past is marred and we need to acknowledge the atrocities of the past, in particular the Coniston Massacre. I raise that as some people are not aware of the Coniston Massacre. In August 1928, a white dingo trapper was found murdered. Ultimately, Aboriginal eye witnesses said it was a senior Aboriginal man who did it.

There was an issue about his wife and other wives with this dingo trapper. Ultimately, a posse – I will not say posse, I have watched too many westerns – was put together and over the coming months more than 60 Aboriginal men, women and children were shot and killed. That is not someone else's history, that is our history in the Northern Territory. They have suffered atrocities, but we also celebrate the richness and enduring strength of the Aboriginal culture.

The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People sets out the standard human rights to improve the circumstances of Aboriginal people and to address disadvantage and discrimination. Aboriginal Australians have fought long and hard to the right to determine their own futures. This is a fight that is ongoing and represents one of many challenges. They have fought for their right to be part of decision making and to have a say in what happens to them, their families and their land.

Often it has been a policymaker far removed from what the reality of an Aboriginal person's life that is tasked to make decisions that affect the lives of Aboriginal people. Investment of money and effort into Aboriginal services rather than Aboriginal people has often meant no meaningful outcomes and a one size fits all approach where the programs that have worked have not been celebrated and shared.

We as a government acknowledge the past and move forward with a focus on the value and strength of language, history and culture. Our government is working with Aboriginal Territorians in genuine partnerships to ensure that Aboriginal Territorians are afforded every opportunity to live a meaningful life, at the table in performing and making decisions that impact their lives.

We are working with them to improve educational outcomes and to develop their land and create economic opportunities. We are supporting their right to have ownership of their land and exercise their right to negotiate the use of that land through native title to generate a livelihood.

As the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Gulkula mining and training centre at Garma festival in Nhulunbuy early this year. It is a great example of Aboriginal decision-making, enterprise and ingenuity on Aboriginal land. It is planning for their futures.

Only this month, (inaudible) and the Central Land Council released their 10 year collaborative plan for the (inaudible) Tanami operation. The Chief Minister and the Assistant Minister for Resources, the Member for Fong Lim and the Local Member for Stuart, Scott McConnell, were also in attendance. This plan sets out how the Yapa and (inaudible) will work together to deliver meaningful benefits from mining to the community, focusing on education, strong voices and employment.

I want to briefly talk about The Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program because I am very proud of what has been happening over successive governments. The Indigenous Land and Sea ranger groups carry out compliance monitoring research activity. In 2016–17 to date, 264 days' worth of patrols were undertaken by rangers and fisheries staff to ensure recreational and commercial compliance with the *Fisheries Act*.

We have compliance training that builds the ability to manage and monitor their country, it is an outstanding outcome. Since 2009, 145 male and female rangers have completed Certificate II qualifications in Fisheries Compliance and there have been 32 so far this year. In 2015 a further 15 rangers took the next step, attaining a Certificate III in Fisheries Compliance, representing the further emergence of a highly skilled and capable workforce.

We are also developing a fisheries inspector policy which will appoint suitably qualified land and sea rangers to hold stop and search powers and if they suspect breaches of the *Fisheries Act*. Applications for individual rangers to become fisheries inspectors, I am proud to say, will open in the coming weeks. The deployment of rangers as fishery inspectors is an important step in realising Aboriginal people's vision of managing their estate and working closely with the government's agencies in service delivery and builds government's capabilities in the enforcement of the *Fisheries Act* with people on their land, country and seas.

I am proud to be a member of the Aboriginal Affairs Subcommittee of Cabinet and the unique opportunity it provides in shaping and guiding Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory. I am very proud to have my colleagues in the Chamber who are part of that. We are working with people that really matter and we will change lives if we keep going on the course we are.

Likewise, I understand the initial discussions on treaty processes have been had and understand the importance of this process on the road to self-determination of Aboriginal Territorians. The Member for Nhulunbuy's original motion pointed to the establishment of a bill of rights for Indigenous Territorians. Member for Nhulunbuy, we ensure the Indigenous members in particular in the Labor party value the right of Aboriginal people. On behalf of all members, we value the rights of Aboriginal people.

We value contribution to the Territorians, to the fabric of who we are as a jurisdiction. We have the improvement of the lives of Aboriginal people at the forefront of our minds with every policy government implements for all Territorians. We are, as I mentioned, working to deliver tangible, meaningful improvements. There will be an opportunity for us to continue this work and develop options for greater statutory and community recognition of Aboriginal or cultural identity as proposed in the amendment put forward by my colleague, the Attorney-General.

I could not be prouder to contribute to this motion. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy. As a born and raised Territorian with Aboriginal heritage who was elected to this Chamber and is now a minister of the Crown, I

have Aboriginal Territorians at the forefront of everything I do to improve everyone's lives. We are focused on doing that from childbirth to the end of our lives. We want a plan and to support people. I thank the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for this motion. I have been listening to members speaking on this as I was interested to hear what other people had to say, not necessarily what I have to say. It is a complex motion and people are speaking from their personal views about themselves as Aboriginal people, or as the Member for Daly said about his story of how people in his area are working through decision-making processes.

I am of the belief that this is a subject that needs more debate than just our time on General Business Day. The reason I say that is that the original motion – not the amended motion – said:

- *That the Northern Territory government notes the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and*
- *Using this declaration as a basis, legislate a bill of rights for Northern Territory Indigenous peoples.*

A bill of rights has been an issue in Australia since the Constitution was first put together. America has a Bill of Rights, as do other countries. It is debatable whether a bill of rights would make any difference. It is debatable whether our Australian Constitution which covers Aboriginal people has enough protection within it that would cover the issues the Member for Nhulunbuy has raised, or would either really make any difference to where we are presently.

Also, one of the issues that is not raised much is how are Indigenous people in the Northern Territory? There are Indigenous people who do not have land and those who do. I should say Aboriginal people because that is the move today – to go back to that terminology ...

Mr Vowles: They are Aboriginal people, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: I noticed when I was in British Columbia three or four weeks ago they now refer to themselves as Indigenous people. Does that term get thrown around a fair bit! I will try to stay with what most people have now said – they would prefer to be referred to as Aboriginal people. The Member for Nhulunbuy might not agree with me because his motion says Indigenous peoples.

I worked on Bathurst Island for quite a while. Two of my daughters were born on Bathurst Island. Aboriginal people on Bathurst Island and Melville Island have never lost their land except for a lease of land to Mr Cooper who ran some buffalo there many years ago. They have had the British sitting very tightly at Port Hurd. They lived a very interesting life in their fort. They were a bit scared to come out. If you read some of the details of their time there, they were probably glad to go.

Tiwi people have kept their language and the culture, even though missionaries came to the islands in about 1911. Much of that has also been woven together, if I can put it that way. I remember houses that were being smoked. The priest first came in and did the incense and then the traditional owners came in and did the smoking ceremony. In some ways many of the concepts that people on the Tiwi Islands had fitted in with quite a bit of Catholic culture and still continue that way.

They keep their own language and when we talk about self-determination is it really going to be enforced by a bill of rights, or is it really in this day and age something that Aboriginal people have to take in their hands and make sure that they take responsibility for that culture.

If we have a bill of rights is it really going to make people in certain communities—are they going to do those things—because to some extent they can do them now. They have the right under our education laws to teach bilingual. Maybe there are issues about how many people are qualified to do it—that is a government decision to improve that service if that is what is needed.

I hear the mention of adult education. If it is adult education that is needed then does it need a bill of rights to say to government why can we not have night school? We had night school, I am pretty sure, on Bathurst Island 20, 30 years ago for adults.

I sometimes use my wife as an example in her time, brought up in the 1950s out bush at (inaudible), now Belyuen and then Daly River. She got an education, it was a mission education, but she got an education. The funny thing is that education without being bilingual, without a bill of rights to some extent is better than what some of the Aboriginal people have today because you only have to look at the literacy and numeracy,

and I stated this the other day, on communities that technically have a right to self-determination and not achieving.

The question would be would a bill of rights make any difference to the number of kids turning up for school—that would be the question needs to be debated in this House. It can sound good and is perhaps a nice document but will it make a difference to a child whose parents have not got an interest in sending their child to school. That is the sort of question that needs asking.

That is what I like about this debate, this debate is bigger than just the few minutes we have here to discuss. You are asking for a debate which covers a diversity of Aboriginal people, there is urban Aboriginal people, there are people who may a little bit of land through native title and there are people who have land through the land rights. I am not sure how many groups of Aboriginal people are represented in the Northern Territory. It is something when people say—my people—it is a bit like if I said my people from a non-Indigenous point of view, I can tell you I would probably get howled down from different groups.

I sometimes feel that there are some people who never get recognised when people say my people. I sometimes have referred it to the little old lady under the mango tree at Port Keats. When they made a decision about splitting the local council I never believed that those people ever had any knowledge that was going to happen or where never asked.

Information from Justice Kirby that I found in relation to a bill of rights might show you that it is an issue that has been before us in Australia. It does have its issues, it is not simple and you have to look at it in relation to our constitution, even though the Territory comes under the self-government act we still come under the Australian constitution.

I would like to read from an article called the Bill of Rights for Australia, by the Honourable Justice Michael Kirby, was given in October 1994 to the Young Presidents' Association, Queensland chapter, and I presume that is probably some legal group. He says, this is part of the historical introduction;

Constitutional background: *Most of the principles of the Australian Constitution are derived from the British constitution. That constitution is not unwritten, as is often claimed. It includes a number of fundamental documents, such as the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights 1688, the Act of Settlement, the Reform Act, and so on. But generally, the British constitution has rested not upon written documents but upon the principle of the sovereignty of an elected Parliament.*

When the Australian constitution was being designed, there were three elements which marked it off from the United States precedent from which much was derived. The fact that the Federal Commonwealth would be established under the Crown. The fact that the Executive would sit in Parliament. And the rejection of a notion of a general bill of rights.

A proposal for a bill of rights was put forward in the Constitutional Conventions. Mr Richard O'Connor advocated the idea. It was opposed by Mr Isaac Isaacs QC of Victoria. The proposal was lost 19 votes to 23. Fear was expressed that a due process provision in such a bill of rights would undermine some of the discriminatory provisions of the law at that time, including those laws and practices which disadvantaged Aboriginal people and the Chinese in Australia.

Nevertheless, some of the provisions contained in the Australian Constitution are equivalent to bill of rights provisions. Some of them have been very important. These include the promise in s 92 of the constitution that trade, commerce and intercourse would be free. Likewise, the requirement that acquisition of property for the purposes of the Commonwealth, must be on just terms (s 51). Some other provisions, such as those dealing with freedom of religion (s 116) and non-discrimination amongst Australians in different States (s 117), have, until recently, received interpretations which disappointed some proponents of fundamental rights. But the hidden potential was to be found in the power conferred upon the Federal Parliament to enact laws with respect to external affairs. It is this legislative power which has enacted the expansion of federal legislation for the protection of fundamental rights based upon international human rights treaties.

This document is too long for me to read, but it would be worth reading for those who want to get more information on the pros and cons of a bill of rights. It was put forward by Justice Kirby to enable debate on this important issue. I note that it does not say that our Australian constitution is not able to protect the rights of Aboriginal people. But a bill of rights might strengthen those rights if brought forward.

As you can see from one of our neighbouring democracies, America has a Bill of Rights, which enables people to bear arms. Many of us shutter when we see what happens in America where the Bill of Rights has 'rights' as they call it, which we would find not to our liking in Australia. When you are looking at a bill of rights it is something that would have to be thoroughly discussed.

In the end I ask the basic question—we live in a democracy; we have a parliamentary democracy in this place; we have a constitution; we have a federal parliament. Is there something lacking in those protections to stop the concerns the Member for Nhulunbuy has? The flip side to that is, will a bill of rights make any difference?

That is the debate we need. More learned people—I am not a constitutional lawyer or an expert on bill of rights. It is an area that has been debated from time to time. It was debated when we were looking at self-government. As you know, self-government did not go much further than that. I am not trying to sit on the fence but this is a good issue for discussion in this parliament. It needs more discussion. Maybe when the government has put its amendments—I think the amendments are slightly different than the ones I had the other day.

We consult Territorians to develop options for greater statutory and community recognition of Aboriginal law and culture and identity informed by United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, relating to constitutional development in the Northern Territory ...

Are there other avenues that would achieve some of the points the Member for Nhulunbuy raised? When I was in the Northwest Territories in Canada—they have a circle of Aboriginal elders who meet once or twice a year, and they have input to the parliamentary process.

There may be other ways we could do that, not just relying on a so-called bill of rights or UN treaties. Is it possible the NT parliament is able to develop a unique model that we can say will achieve the goals of the Member for Nhulunbuy?

I have always felt that one of the things missing from this parliament—I know we have Aboriginal people here, but it would be good to have a parliament, if I could call it that, or a group of Indigenous elders who are representative of the different groups around the Northern Territory. They could come to parliament, debate some of the issues and give recommendations to the elected parliament. There is a belief that they have direct input to the ways parliament operates. Using the Northwest Territories example, I think there is a possibility for that to occur.

The Member for Daly mentioned the agreement that was signed in Uluru recently. Noel Pearson has also been looking at something from a federal perspective—having a group of Aboriginal people who can provide input to the federal parliament. But there is an opportunity for us to investigate whether traditional Aboriginal people can have input to this parliament in another forum, but use parliament as a place to meet and discuss issues that are relevant to their life and culture.

As the Member for Daly rightly said, there are issues that need Aboriginal people to help solve. One of those is the terrible number of Aboriginal people incarcerated. I do not think the answers will come from us necessarily. We would be part of that, but we need to listen to Aboriginal people to see how we can reduce that number of people in incarceration, get kids to school and get people into employment. It is not that easy, culture is a movable feast. How can we make sure languages and culture are preserved? The only way to do that is to have more involvement from Aboriginal people.

Whether a bill of rights would make any difference is debatable.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the motion before the House, introduced by the Member for Nhulunbuy.

As the Attorney-General has stated, our government is pleased to respond to this motion, but in doing so we propose an amendment, that is, to replace the second and subsequent dot points of the motion with:

2. Consult with Territorians to develop options for greater statutory and community recognition of Aboriginal law, culture and identity informed by;
3. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
4. Work relating to constitutional development for the Northern Territory;

5. Consultations regarding Aboriginal Justice Agreements; and
6. The Government's consultations regarding Treaty and other forms of agreement-making with Aboriginal Territorians.

The recognition and protection of Aboriginal cultural values and identity are vital in continuing to recognise and support the oldest living continuous culture in the world. I sincerely hope all members of this Chamber have heard of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and have had the chance to look at it for themselves at some stage.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, on 13 September 2007, adopted the aspirational statement in relation to the UNDRIP. Australia is one of only four nations to vote against adoption of the resolution. Thankfully, that lack of support was rectified in April 2009 by the Labor government led by then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

I am quite ashamed of some of the history we have here in Australia. When reading the UNDRIP, it is like a constant slap in the face to read the articles and think about the history of colonisation here in Australia.

Just imagine how many articles would have been broken if we had the UNDRIP over the past 200 years. I can assure you, almost all of them.

It is not just the dark, sinister history since colonisation, but more recently in the past decade. I will refer to the Northern Territory emergency response, which is more commonly known as 'the intervention'. As the Member for Nhulunbuy spoke to his motion, it has been 10 years since the intervention here in the Northern Territory.

What happened here in 2007 goes against Article 2 of the UNDRIP, which states:

Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

That is from the United Nations website.

I have sourced some information from the Australian Human Rights Commission website about the intervention and some of the background about the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 under the NT Emergency Response Legislation. This was done in order to allow the intervention to occur.

The NTER legislation applied to a wide-range of prescribed areas in which Aboriginal people are the sole or predominant inhabitants, including Aboriginal land, declared town camps and other declared areas.

Some of the significant features of the Northern Territory intervention package included:

- compulsory acquisition of the Commonwealth of five-year leases over declared Aboriginal land, Aboriginal community living areas and town camps
- denial or compensation equivalent to that of which another landholder in the Northern Territory would be entitled for compulsory acquisition
- the exclusion of customary law and cultural practice as a factor relevant sentencing and bail decisions
- the application of income management to residents of prescribed and other declared areas
- the denial of review by the Social Security Appeals Tribunal of income management decisions
- modifications to the permit system to allow greater access to Aboriginal land

This is from the Human Rights Australian website.

This was a shocking move by the federal government of the day and has many after affects that have lasted a decade. The Little Children are Sacred Report was the trigger to the kneejerk reaction by the Howard

government who completely ignored a majority of the recommendations in the report. The report made 97 recommendations and not many of them, at the time, were implemented.

I could not find the exact number myself, but I did find, from the report itself, that quote

The inquiry covered 35 000 kilometres by air and motor vehicle, with 45 community visits and more than 260 meetings conducted.

This was from the inquiry website.

As mentioned by the Attorney-General, the effect of alcoholism and alcohol abuse continues to be a central challenge in the Northern Territory. I look forward to seeing the work and recommendations of the current independent review of alcohol policies overseen by former Chief Justice Riley.

We cannot undervalue the importance of language to identity and culture for Aboriginal people. Not only here in the Northern Territory, and across Australia, but also internationally.

Similar to the Member for Johnston, Minister Vowles, I feel very lucky and very proud to be an Aboriginal person in the Territory and to represent a diverse electorate. I am very lucky with my family history. I have my mother, who a speaker many languages, her first language being Nunggubuyu, her second being Anindilyakwa, several other languages as well as English. She does understand Kriol, but I tell her not to speak it, because it sounds too funny when she does.

The preservation and maintenance of language is extremely important for Aboriginal people in the Territory. People's stories, songs and dances are extremely important to maintaining identity and culture. It is wonderful to see the improvements of curriculum in the Territory in regard to the preservation and maintenance of language. It is important that we have young people and communities supporting language and, of course, the recognition of that importance.

I draw the attention of the House to Article 18 of the UN DRIP which says:

Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions.

This article goes to the heart of the biggest reforms in Aboriginal affairs our government has committed to. We heard from the Member for Nelson before and I acknowledge the point that the weighting of this motion and the issues attached to it are by the far longer conversations than this day and afternoon.

This lead me to mention, similar to the Member for Johnston, that the Chief Minister has established the Aboriginal Affairs Subcommittee of Cabinet in order to discuss some of these larger issues affecting Aboriginal people in the Territory and looking at ways forward in empowerment for Aboriginal people, in particular local decision making. I am very privileged to be the co-chair of this committee alongside the Chief Minister. The Aboriginal Affairs Subcommittee of Cabinet has three permanent agenda items – those being treaty, land and sea and local decision making. Each of these three focus areas directly affect Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

One of the biggest agenda reforms of the Gunner Labor government is local decision making for Aboriginal people. This comes in the forms of developing the Aboriginal justice agreement, having community-controlled clinics and community-led schools.

Last year in 2016, there was an ABC article about the Close the Gap progress. Professor Tom Calma, the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, was quoted as saying:

Governments can't solve the health crisis we have, it has to be done with and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

That is from the ABC website.

This is what our government is striving to do. We want our communities to be strong - whether they be urban, regional or remote – and to take ownership and responsibility of their own futures. Some communities are ready to take control in this decision-making progress and there are some that will need assistance in

capacity building and governance building in order to be empowered to make those positive decisions for their communities.

The NT has a dispersed population and sometimes that old habit of making decisions in Darwin or the major town centres can leave regional and remote people feeling disempowered as just another number on a paper or completely out of the decision-making process all together - the frustrations that I deal with constantly in my electorate of Arnhem.

Our government strongly supports Aboriginal sea and land rangers. The ranger program has Aboriginal people living and working on country, which is a huge success. Caring on country, connections to country and economic opportunities attached on country are all elements of what makes the ranger programs so successful across the Northern Territory.

We have a strong focus on Aboriginal economic development in the forms of Aboriginal pastoral and horticultural activity and the development and support of local Aboriginal businesses. Speaking of economic development, next week on Monday and Tuesday, the eighth Indigenous Economic Development forum will be held in Darwin at the Convention Centre. I am fortunate enough and am looking forward to attending this forum in my role as Assistant Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in order to observe and participate in discussions and networking opportunities, in addition to hearing about the latest challenges and successes in Aboriginal business, both in the Territory and across Australia.

Our policy and practice of local decision-making radiates some of the aspirational goals of the UN declaration. More community control and oversight in regard to design and delivery of our remote housing program means that whilst addressing chronic overcrowding of houses there is local input into the processes of our remote housing package.

I was fortunate enough to liaise with the Minister for Housing and Community Development's office in regard to a very detailed plan for one of the communities I represent, the small community of Weemoll on the Central Arnhem highway, which is approximately three kilometres from Bulman. I looked at the planning and the adjustment of the plans for the Room to Breathe program there. It is a small community that does not have a lot of space to build, but the detail and consultation process were very heartening to see, with the local community deciding what they wanted for the extension of their homes and extra living space and how they identified the needs of their families.

The Housing department was then able to put that onto paper and materialise it into official plans and architecture so there is local decision-making on the Room to Breathe extra living space being implemented, with Aboriginal people being the benefactors and the department taking the advice of the Aboriginal people in Weemoll, which is a wonderful step.

As the local member in that area, I am very much looking forward to speaking to the residents of Weemoll when I travel there next week with Minister Moss and am able to tell people I have seen the plans on paper and know there has been an extensive consultation process for those plans. That is exactly what our government is aiming to do. I am very happy, as the local member, to say it is being done in my electorate.

Speaking of the decision-making design and input by Aboriginal people in the Territory, this goes to article 23 of the UNDRIP, which reads:

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

That goes to the point I made earlier that some communities are ready and biting at the bit to take control and be past the reigns to decide their own futures and the decision-making process to be able to navigate for their own communities and the future of their communities. That is exactly what we are aiming to do with our government.

I am very proud because at my relatively new experience in the life of politics—I was always one of those people who complained about politicians talking too much and not seeing any action. So I am very happy that we are on the side of the action and I can proudly go out as the local member to tell people that what they say to me is being turned into strategy and policy to be delivered, not just for my electorate but across the Territory.

We do not want to have a government completely full of talk. We want to see the action on the ground and, particularly, for people in remote communities. That is what matters to people, being able to see those developments and the successes on the ground. It is really important. We want action, as well as talk and consultation to take the right action.

Our government will pursue day-to-day policy and development, our own dialogue in regard to our application of treaty and agreement making with Aboriginal Territorians and focus our conversations about future aspirations, such as statehood, which is another of my assistant minister roles.

The fight for Indigenous rights is not only an issue in Australia, but on the global stage. This is confirmed by the need for the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which was established on 28 July 2000. The forum has now held 16 sessions since establishment, and the date for the 17th session has now been released. That session will be held from 16 to 27 April 2018 at the UN in New York.

I acknowledge Mr Peter Wellings, from the Office of the Chief Minister, who has provided me with some very informative advice for my speech today.

The fight for Aboriginal rights in the Northern Territory is not a new plight. We have struggled for many decades. I am proud to be part of a parliament that reflects the diversity of Northern Territory communities and am proud to be part of a government that is working on practical ways to empower Aboriginal people in the Territory and not looking at tokenistic gestures.

I acknowledge the motion brought to the House by the Member for Nhulunbuy, and I support the amended motion moved by the Attorney-General.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for the opportunity to speak on this manner and for bringing it to the House for discussion.

What a timely reminder for everyone about the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. This is such a strong statement from our UN and a great way to show the people that they are committed to the advancement of Indigenous peoples across the globe.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians claim is for recognition as a people with their political and economic rights. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice implies restorative justice through a proper reconciliation treaty that acknowledges the historical wrongs to Aboriginal people and recognises the important work to be done to build a better, brighter future for all.

For our first Australians, questions of economic and political justice is about ensuring that future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander generations have control over their land, lives and destiny with sufficient resources to fulfil their potential as the first people of this country, and pave the way to adequate sovereignty and self-determination.

I have always stood in this Chamber, and on country, and advocated for the needs of treaty and constitutional recognition at the Territory and federal level. I see them as ways forward for our first people. Some people in the Northern Territory are still wrestling, still feeling the pain of the suspension of the racial discrimination act as part of the NT emergency response, commonly known as the intervention.

The Howard government's intervention cut deep to the consciousness of many Aboriginal Territorians; a continuing, hurtful for many; a dark day in the history of our country. The erosion Aboriginal people experienced in the intervention—the roles they played in their community were eroded by this hurtful intervention.

The best way to stop these horrific events is to achieve constitutional recognition and remove the ability to make race-based policy—the ability to ensure that by removing it we can no longer stand in parliaments across the country and make racist laws, and feel good about making them.

The other way is to achieve statehood, to be recognised in our own right as equals on a national stage. I want to touch on our treaty positions and the way we are moving forward with this. When I refer to treaty I mean nothing more or less than agreements between governments and Aboriginal people's such agreements could include things such as a starting point of acknowledgement of our Territory's acknowledgement of its First Nations people, understanding that vital and important role they have with the connection to our ancient lands, the connection and role they play both in a social and economical way in which they contribute to the Northern Territory.

It is a process of negotiation where we are able to unpack and understand the way in which First Nations people see the future for themselves, their children and generations to come. I also see it as the outcomes in forms of rights and obligations, opportunities and involvement in economic development opportunities and continuing stewardship of land, culture and having real input into policy relating to Aboriginal people, a basis for regional and local decision-making and most importantly, through this process, better protection of Indigenous rights.

For some people in the Northern Territory, the word, 'treaty', is sometimes seen as too hard, divisive or hurtful. In some places in the Yolngu country, the word, 'makkarata', is used in the Yolngu language. That means the resumption of normal relations after a period of hostilities. Some people prefer that word because they felt the word, 'treaty', was very complicated in understanding and often described agreements between countries rather than within a country.

I understand and am very fortunate to have many colleagues who understand that when we are talking about treaty in the Northern Territory, that very well means treaty, but also treaties. Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory are diverse, wonderful and culturally intrinsic to the country they come from.

We understand treaty and treaties are two very different but important things, the importance to understand individual nations within the Northern Territory and the way they go around their culture, customs and law is very important. I am very happy to have a government I am a part of that recognises that and continues to do that.

For the future of Aboriginal people to remain strong, overcome disadvantage, we need things such as treaties and these potential agreements at regional levels because they are vital. They will bring together the process in which we can negotiate and talk based on mutual respect that recognises the role in Aboriginal people play in the Northern Territory and in the country for thousands of years.

Listening to Aboriginal people by itself is insufficient to bring about real change. Change must be built on partnerships between our First Nations people, organisations and governments. That can then make real roads to overcoming the levels of disadvantage for people.

Aboriginal people need to be heard and listened to, have power to make decisions that affect them. They must have the opportunity to be responsible for programs designed to meet their needs and to be accountable for the successes and failures that follow. I will not be too much longer because I think a number of my Parliamentary colleagues have very eloquently spoken around this important motion. I support the amendments put forward by the Attorney-General. This is important. It is about the work that the Northern Territory government is doing.

I am happy and fortunate to work alongside the member for Arnhem as one of the assistant ministers for Indigenous affairs. It is an issue she and I are passionate about making sure that this is a thorough process that is not rushed. It recognises the work that needs to be done to make sure that we empower Aboriginal people whether living in the community in Docker River, in the great electorate of Namatjira or in suburban streets of the wonderful electorate of Karama. We need to make sure that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are empowered, can aspire to the goals and aspirations they have.

We must not forget the past. We must not forget the level of hurt and trauma that comes with the past. We need to make sure there are mechanisms in place to help our First Nations people who have been hurt by horrific racist episodes, those dark pages in history with the Northern Territory intervention and its role in eroding the capacity and place of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

It is very important that we do not forget those dark days and continue to look at how we can work with communities to empower them, to make sure that in every program we roll out across the Northern Territory people feel they are part of something important and meaningful and have place.

One of the things that the Northern Territory intervention did was erode the role of men and women played not only in their home communities but in the Northern Territory's social fabric. We need to look at how we can continue to empower and grow people on country to feel inspired again, to feel happy and not subjected to the horrible regime that was introduced under the Howard government.

It was outrageous to go to a remote community and see the big ugly blue signs telling everyone in the country how bad my people were. That was a disgrace.

We have come into this place as the Territory Labor government. We have a strong commitment to working with our First Nations, people right across the Northern Territory to empower them and help them be the people they want to be.

I am thankful to be working with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Michael Gunner to make sure people across the Territory have the tools and programs to inspire people, to enable entrepreneurial thinking in the bush because the bush holds the key to the future of the Northern Territory. We need to consider when we are in this place talking about laws how to grow and inspire people in the bush.

I am looking forward to working with all the members in this Assembly, to having continuing conversations with the Member for Nhulunbuy who has brought this motion to the House for robust discussion. That is what we do here, we have those robust discussions.

I support the amendments to the motion and I continue to work with all members in the Legislative Assembly to make sure that we continue to empower and include First Nations people in local decision-making. That is the only way to build a bigger and brighter future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Northern Territory.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): I wanted to start by thanking everybody who has provided a contribution on this important topic. I do not there has been anything said that I do not agree with.

It is vital for government to acknowledge and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are traditional custodians of this beautiful country. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have cared for this land and practiced their culture for tens of thousands of years, and continue to do so today.

Between 1910 and 1970 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were subjected to racist legislation that allowed the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families. The objective of this action was to breed out the Aboriginal race, as Aboriginal people were considered to be inferior.

These children, who were ripped out of their mother's arms, taken to missionaries, taught to reject their Indigenous heritage and forced to adopt white culture, now form part of what we call the stolen generations. Sadly, the traumatic experience that members of the stolen generations were subjected to, has left members with trauma and grief, which in turn has been passed onto their children and grandchildren.

Concerted effort is required to overcome this intergenerational trauma and I acknowledge the great work that organisations like the NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation are doing through its link up program to help members of the stolen generations connect with one another.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is an important document that addresses the human rights of Indigenous people. The declaration consists of 46 articles that outline aspirational outcomes for all Indigenous people and I am pleased to see that Australia finally signed up to the declaration in 2009 under the leadership of Kevin Rudd.

I would now like to share a few of the articles that resonated with me. Under Article 26, section 1 states:

Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

Under Article 29(1):

Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programmes for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

Under Article 32(1):

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands or territories and other resources.

I wanted to highlight these articles contained within the declaration, as they relate to the work that we, members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Subcommittee of Cabinet are undertaking. The

subcommittee is co-chaired by the Chief Minister and the Member for Arnhem and is comprised of MLAs and nine Aboriginal advisors.

It is important that we have Aboriginal advisors who will provide expert advice on how we can achieve our key priorities that include Treaty, local decision-making and ensuring land and sea ownership delivers on the economic and social aspirations of Aboriginal people.

We held our first meeting in Katherine in late August, which was fantastic. I look forward to working with all subcommittee members to achieve for Territorians.

Territorians must be engaged in decisions that impact on them and Aboriginal affairs is no different. We must ensure that all Territorians have the opportunity to have their say on how the Northern Territory government can facilitate better recognition of Aboriginal law, culture and identity.

As a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman, I have my own dreams of what I would like to see happen in the Aboriginal affairs area. I would like to see all of our primary and high schools include an Aboriginal studies class as part of their curriculum, where all students learn the real history of Australian settlement, instead of the version I learnt when I was in primary school.

Studies where students hear about the stolen generations and the lasting trauma it caused for members of the stolen generations themselves. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, you would well know that we have lost many people from the stolen generations in our lifetime. Where students can learn to say a few words in the language of the local Aboriginal nations, so that they can exchange pleasantries in the community.

I understand that Sanderson High School offered an Aboriginal studies class in the 1990s, which was very popular and well received by students.

In closing I once again thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this important motion before the House and I support the amendment to this motion that was proposed by the Attorney-General.

Mr McConnell (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise too to support the motion and its amendments. I think it is worth taking stock and remembering that the Northern Territory is an Aboriginal place.

Thirty percent of the population are Aboriginal people and outside of Darwin and regional towns Indigenous people make up closer to nearly 100% of the population. This is a place that needs to celebrate Indigenous contribution and Indigenous law, language and culture. It is very much an Indigenous place.

Our future in the Territory is a shared future and it should be a natural human right that Indigenous have equity of access of service and control over decisions that shape their lives. The fact that you should even talk about that in a place like this is quite extraordinary in 2017. I feel frustrated that we have still not progressed to this point. I think we should have progressed further as a society.

Community control of Indigenous communities and Indigenous interests must be real as the Attorney-General stated, it should include community control over delivery and content of education over development of Aboriginal justice agreements, over design and development of community housing, over the design and delivery of government services to communities.

I would also state that in predominantly Indigenous communities just like other Northern Territory communities they should have the right to benefit from the development of an economy and industry. To develop these things we need equity of services such as mobile coverage, dual lane bitumen road, all weather access, police stations, community clinics and other emergency services.

I find it quite extraordinary that one of the biggest revenue raisers from royalties in the Northern Territory is a gold mine in the electorate of Stuart. There is still nearly 300 kilometres of dirt road to get to this mine site that pays between \$75m a year, \$80m a year in royalties in the middle of the Tanami Desert and it is still accessed by a dirt road.

To be able to enjoy that shared future we need that equity of opportunity and the infrastructure to support that opportunity. I hear Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory feel that their voices do not matter in the system and we can see this, as was discussed earlier today, in a decline in voting and participation in all forms of government across the Northern Territory.

We have really collectively eroded the confidence of Aboriginal people in institutes of government over time. The Member for Namatjira spoke at length about the damage that the intervention had done. I can assure you that every time I sit down and talk stories on somebody's veranda or sitting on a tray of a motor car, watching the footy people will bring up the hurt from the intervention.

It is not just people whinging it really has viscerally affected people. They are properly hurt by it. It is a serious problem. The Member for Namatjira and others also spoke about the Stolen Generation—that is still really a living memory, a living torment for so many people.

Government has the capacity to do a lot of hurt to Indigenous people. We need to move beyond that and we need to work more towards recognising the great contribution of Indigenous people to this great place. I urge Aboriginal people to not give up and recognise that progress is happening and that the pace of progress will increase the more you participate in change of the system.

I am impatient too. It is very hard to be patient with a system that is so slow and affects so many aspects of your life.

We are all government mob in here but the general community in Darwin or Alice Springs – government policy changes and it might affect your life to some degree but in a remote community it is very different. For example, we have recently changed from a really productive program we had in the bush for numerous years called the Community Development Employment Program, CDEP. It had become slow and a little bureaucratic over time but not at the fault of aboriginal people; it was the fault of bureaucrats. It was withdrawn then kind of brought back then changed to the RJCP—Remote Jobs and something.

Then it was realised it was a problem which was costing so much money to administer and delivering so little on the ground. Then it was changed by the current federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, to its current iteration the Community Development Program, CDP. Aspects of this program, as it is now delivered, is compared unkindly by many people to adult childcare.

This program does not just affect a handful of people; in communities where there are so few available jobs, this affects a large number of people. I know of communities—this will be denied by the federal minister and they will claim we do not know what we are talking about but I am in these communities all the time and these are my constituents who I talk to all the time and experience the way they are suffering. We see people who do not understand the system they have been forced to participate in who are spending hours and hours on the phone hoping to talk to Centrelink and then do not get the opportunity to talk to them and despite all their best efforts to participate in what is a bit of a ludicrous program they end up having their welfare taken off them. How is this going to benefit anyone? Why are we trying to force people to conform to a system like that?

I want to see as many people as possible in the electorate of Stuart—and other regional and remote electorates in the Northern Territory—participating but I want that to be in things that are valuable and worthwhile to the community. That is what the member for Nhulunbuy's motion really attests; people want to have skin in the game. Aboriginal people want to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives and rightly so. We are sick of seeing things like CDP being modified all the time by well-meaning people who often come from a long way away. The only way we are going to get the substantial change this government wants, and governments before this one, is to listen to people. That is why the Michael Gunner Labor government has some very important initiatives—some have been spoken about before—such as local decision making.

I hope we can work together and urge Aboriginal people, particularly young people, not to opt out of the system. We need the whole of the community to work together to create a great Territory. As a government we need to act and give aboriginal people more hope about the future of their communities and their children. As a government there is much we can do to reduce discrimination, promote aboriginal culture, increase aboriginal control over developments and systems affecting them, respect aboriginal traditional knowledge, culture and practices and above all, respect the human rights that exist for aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

The aboriginal sub-committee of cabinet has a duty and responsibility to develop and promote policy, projects and service delivery changes that will lead to greater equity of opportunity for aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. That is why I am very pleased to be a part of that sub-committee.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Member for Nhulunbuy and other members to elevate the voice of Aboriginal people in all levels of government.

There is incredible opportunity in the Northern Territory for all Territorians and there a real benefit in increasing Indigenous involvement in every level of the Territory. I sometimes am a bit frustrated about 'out bush' and us and them. This is one shared future. We all live here together. Non-Indigenous people benefit from the great Indigenous cultures that live in this place.

There is one place where they will not contribute well. I refer to an article in *The Australian* dated 18 October 2017. This quotes Justice Stephen Southwood saying 'One in 25 Aboriginal men are in prison'. We have to change that. The Attorney-General is working on an Indigenous justice agreement that will be central to changing that. The incarceration rates of Indigenous women is rising, I believe, at quite an alarming rate also. We just cannot have these numbers.

At the end of last financial year there were 1393 adults incarcerated in the Northern Territory. Of those 1393, 1293 were Indigenous men. We cannot go on like this. We cannot come in here and have a battle of rhetoric, we have to have a battle of ideas. This government has ideas and local decision making is one of those. Another is \$1.1m for remote Indigenous housing. Talking about a treaty and establishing the right language around treaty or treaties is extremely important, as is negotiation about Indigenous land management of land and sea and working collaboratively and cooperatively with Indigenous rangers.

We should be particularly proud of the great Indigenous ranger groups we have in the Northern Territory. This Northern Territory government, under the leadership of minister Moss, is working for greater recognition for the contribution of Indigenous ranger groups. I think we have even put some 'cash longa finga' on the table as well. I know we have put money on the table to support ranger groups with purchases of important assets such as a boat or something like that.

We are doing all these things because this government recognises that Indigenous land and labour is the future of the Northern Territory. I know all of us in this place believe this and that is the intent of the motion brought forward by the Member for Nhulunbuy and the amendment suggested by the Attorney-General. It is great that we are talking about these things in the Territory. It has been very interesting for me to hear everyone contribute to this motion. It has made me realise more than ever that I am very privileged to work with colleagues here. We have important work to do for all Territorians, particularly Indigenous Territorians.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION NT Voting System

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the NT parliament inquire into whether the Territory should change from a preferential voting system to a proportional voting system.

Before I start I thank the Member for Stuart for his contribution. As always, he has a lot of common sense and worth listening to.

I am not asking anyone here to either back the proportional or the preferential system of government. I am asking this Parliament to look at a possible inquiry into whether we should stay with the existing system of voting or whether we should move to a proportional or a variation of proportional because there are a number of different types.

This debate is not holding anyone to a particular point of view. It is highlighting that there are some anomalies with our voting system which have come to light a little more than normal with only two members of the opposition.

This discussion is not whether you think the CLP got what it deserved at the last election which is what I heard when I was doing an interview on ABC. Someone rang up and said 'Well they got what they deserved.' That may be the case. But this is what about whether we have good governance and whether our Westminster system, as we know it, with a small number of seats is working properly.

I ask that the government look at some options and there could be variations on those options, but it should also be considered.

Presently, we have three types of voting systems in the NT. We have full preferential which up to last year was the system used in both the NT and federal government elections, that is for the Lower House. But now only in the federal parliament.

The second form is optional preferential—we have two forms of preferential—which was suddenly introduced by the previous chief minister about a month out from the election with discussion at all.

The third system, which we use in local government, is proportional. That has been introduced over a number of years by the Labor government. It is mainly used where there are either no wards in a council or where there are multi-member wards as you see in Darwin.

If you look at the last elections where the two types of preferential voting were held, you come up with some interesting figures. Here I am just using two-party preferred figures to make it simple.

In 2005, the ALP received 51,026 votes and won 19 seats, whilst the CLP won 35,262 votes and won four seats.

In 2008, the ALP received 39,415 votes and won 13 seats which was around about 4,000 votes more than the CLP won in the previous election, but they won 13 seats. Whilst the CLP received 40,614 votes, in other words, they had an extra 1,000 votes above the ALP but only won 11 seats. So they had more votes but less seats.

In 2012, the ALP received the same number of votes as in 2008—39,517 to 39,415—and won only eight seats, five less than in 2008. So, you work that out. Whilst the CLP received 48,961 and won 16 seats.

In the last election, Labor received 45,575 votes and won 18 seats and the CLP received 31,481 and won two seats. As you can see, the percentage of vote under the preferential system does not reflect the number of seats won. So would a change make this better from the point of view of the numbers of votes closer to the number of seats won?

I will run through, for the sake of this debate, some papers: one is on the advantages of proportional representation. There are disadvantages as well and I will cover as well, also the advantages of the existing system.

Proportional representation enables the election of candidates in multi-member electorates in proportion to the number of votes they received. This usually better reflects the proportion of votes received by the candidates on a state or Territory-wide basis than when members are elected to a single-seat electorate.

It also reduces the mismatch between the levels of voter support for a particular school of thought and the representation that it receives.

A 1983 report of the federal Joint Select Committee on Electoral Reform concluded that,

Since the adoption of the system of proportional representation for the Senate in 1949, the composition of the Senate has been much more evenly balanced. Voters have more choice as parties endorse several candidates for each multimember electorate.

I always found this one interesting, not so much in the Territory, but if we had parties more entrenched in local government, this would apply. Voters can choose between parties and different candidates from within the same party. In the Senate in other states you might have five or six, the party would put their preferences for who they think should be the senators with proportional you can say you do not agree with that, the sixth bloke or lady is more important and you can manipulate who you vote for rather than the party telling me who I should vote for.

This contrasts with single member electorates and lists systems where the parties and factions within parties have much more control over who is elected and the voters have correspondingly less. Proportional representation reduces the possibility of safe seats affiliated with one party.

With single member electorate, safe seats are common; political parties generally put most of their efforts in trying to please the minority of voters who are in marginal seats. With multi-member electorates, every seat can be considered marginal, therefore parties must take more interest in the views of all voters.

Voters also tend to take more interest in politics if their vote is more likely to have an effect and actually contribute to maintaining the status quo or changing it according to the voter's views. Smaller parties and Independent candidates have a greater chance of gaining representation in parliament. While this may sometimes create instability when minority governments are forced to seek alliances, the involvement of smaller parties or Independent members enables parliament to better scrutinise the power of the executive. In the words of Don Chipp, founder of the Australian Democrats, 'Help to keep the bastards honest'.

The need for by-elections, this is an important one, to fill a casual vacancy is reduced, as is the expense of conducting by-elections and you will have seen that in the Senate where a couple of people have been found to be illegal; they should not have stood. Instead of having a whole new election, the system allows the next person to take their place.

As the vacating member was elected to represent a proportioned electorate, not a majority of the electorate, casual vacancies can be filled by nomination or recount. Proportional representation in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory: both Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have 25 member Assemblies, the same as us, which are elected through the Hare-Clarke proportional representation system.

As the following demonstrates, this generally results in a government with one of the two major parties elected, occasionally forming a coalition with a minor party, and enabling smaller groups and Independents to participate. Tasmania has 25 members of the House of Assembly represented in five divisions. These divisions have the same boundaries as the five federal House of Representative divisions for Tasmania.

Five members are elected for each of the divisions using a single transferrable vote, the STV system. Tasmania also uses Robson rotation, which is interesting and the process of rotating candidates' names within a column so that the favoured top and bottom positions are shared equally between all candidates rather than having candidates in the same order on each ballot paper. That is a way of trying to get around the donkey vote. It takes the printers a little more work but each ballot paper is different.

A candidate is elected when their total number of votes equals or exceeds a set quota on first preferences, or more commonly, as preferences are distributed. The quota has been calculated by dividing the number of formal votes by one more than the number of candidates to be elected. For the House of Assembly the quota is one sixth or 16.7% of the formal vote. A candidate must get 16.7% of the formal vote to be elected.

To give you an example of how the number of seats gets closer to the proportion of the vote, in 2014 I think the Country Liberal Party got 12.8% of the quota and got 15 seats. The Australian Labor Party got 6.83% and got seven seats, Tasmanian Greens got 3.46% and got three seats and the smaller parties did not get anything.

In 2010, the Liberals got 9.75, so they got 10 seats and the Australian Labor Party got 9.22—10 seats and the Tasmanian Greens got 5.4, which is five seats. There is a much closer correlation between the percentage of the vote and the number of seats each party wins.

Under the Hare-Clark system parties, groups and independents are elected to the House of Assembly in proportion to their support in the electorate. In the Australian Capital Territory, the ACT was granted self-government in 1989. At the first two elections held in 1989 and 1992, all 17 members elected to the Assembly were elected from one electorate, using the modified d'Hondt Electoral System.

From the 1995 election onwards, the Hare-Clark Electoral System was used to elect members representing two five-member electorates and one seven-member electorate. The size of the ACT Legislative Assembly was increased to 25 members—the same as us—at the 2016 population. The population had increased from approximately 275 000 in 1989 to 375 000 in 2012, but the size of the Assembly had remained the same.

The ACT has been divided into five electorates with five members elected from each electorate. These numbers were judged to be a minimum, to provide adequate and fair representation of the ACT community and for a workable legislature, capable of adequate scrutiny of the executive.

If you look at the results in 2016, Labor had 38.43 proportion of first-preference votes and they have 12 seats. Canberra Liberals had 36.72, they had 11 seats, the Greens got 10.28 and got two seats and the other parties did not get anything.

I remember when they first had their elections and it is not showing on my tables, there was the Fried Green Tomatoes Party and the No Self-Government Party for Canberra, but I am not sure they ever got a seat in parliament. The Fried Green Tomato Party might have got one.

We had some interesting parties in the ACT.

In relation to the preferential voting system in the Northern Territory, people might remember we had a conference down at the wharf last year. Charles Darwin University convened a summit to discuss governance issues and possible reform options for the Northern Territory. One option was that the Northern Territory should adopt a proportional representation voting system and multi-membered electorates to enhance the political representation instead of the preferential voting system used to elect 25 members from single-member electorates to represent Territorians in the Legislative Assembly.

On the website established, it continued the discussion commenced at the summit. Ken Parish stated that the preferential voting system is inappropriate for a region with the Northern Territory's population and demography. While it seemed to operate well during the initial decades of self-government in delivering stability, Parish believes that with our current single MLA seats and preferential voting, this increasingly rapid turnover of politicians too frequently results in government with few experienced MLAs and none at all with any ministerial experience.

Labor came to government for the first time in 2001, having no MLAs with any ministerial experience. Logically unavoidable in that circumstance. However, the CLP government elected in 2012 also had no MLAs with any ministerial experience and the same is true of the new Gunner Labor government elected in August 2016.

Members interjecting.

Mr WOOD: I am quoting, so if he is wrong, write to Mr Parish.

The following sections present data from the 2016 NT Legislative Assembly election and for elections in 1990–2016. It compares the proportion of first preference votes within a level of representation resulting from the election.

As I have said before, I do not need to go through it too much; the CLP got 31.8% of the vote and got two seats. What that highlights is that in the 2016 election the proportion of first preference votes as a percentage, Labor got 42% of the vote and won 72% of the seats. The Country Liberals won 31.8% of the first preference votes and got 8% of the seats. The Independents got 18.8% of the votes and 20% of the seats.

This is an explanation of the number of votes required to elect candidates from different parties. In the 2016 Northern Territory election, it took 1846 votes to elect a Labor member, 1930 votes to elect a Liberal member and 2031 votes to elect an Independent member. I am worth more than the rest of you.

In the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly elections in 1994 41% of the first preference vote won NT Labor seven seats with the same proportion of first preference votes. I could go on about the percentages and bore you to tears. What it highlights is that each election you are struggling to get a correlation between the percentage of votes won and the percentage of seats.

I was looking at 2008. Labor had 34 557 votes, won 13 seats. At the next election they won nearly the same number of votes and only had eight seats. They went backwards even with the same number of votes.

It is not consistent. To balance that there are some advantages in preferential voting. This is the opinion of Malcolm Farnsworth who was a secondary school teacher of political studies. He said:

A preferential voting system has four main advantages. One-it ensure only a candidate with the support of an absolute majority of the electorate can win, eliminating the possibility of minority winners. Put another way the winning candidate is the most preferred or least-disliked candidate.

That is why we have the 50% plus one. It is also a good reason I do not support first-past-the post. People can get in who may be the most disliked candidate.

Two-it ensures that voters can support minor parties and Independent candidates knowing that their preferences may be used to decide the winner thus for minor parties and Independents they are not wasted.

I say to people the advantage of the preferential system is that your vote, even though the person you wanted to win may not win, you can still use your vote to influence who does win.

Three-it allows parties of like-minded philosophies or policies to exchange preferences in order to assist each other to win.

Four-it promotes a strong two-party system ensuring stability in the parliamentary process.

Mr Farnsworth's summary agrees with the general beliefs around the advantages of preferential voting. The literature focusses more on contrasting proportional with preferential voting systems in discussing different forms of preferential systems rather than advantages of preferential voting systems.

I should also mention the New Zealand system. It is interesting.

The New Zealand system operates a hybrid model of mixed member proportional representation. Mixed member proportional representation results in a mix of MPs from single-member electorates and those elected from a party list. A party's share of the seats in parliament roughly mirrors its share of overall nation-wide party vote.

In the 52nd New Zealand Parliament there are five parliamentary parties represented by 120 MPs. These MPs represent 64 general electorate seats and 7 Maori electorates. The other 49 MPs are elected from the party lists.

It goes on about how that works in practice.

When we have just been discussing the rights of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory it is interesting to see in New Zealand- is this feasible in the Northern Territory?-there are seven Maori electorates. People can vote for those people and Maoris can stand in the 'normal' electorate as well.

I have spoken to Ian Loganathan from the Electoral Commission. I know that he is interested in this discussion. He has also put out a paper looking at improvements –ideas he is putting forward to improve our voting system in the Northern Territory. The particular issue of how we elect members of our parliament might be something we could pass over to him if we wanted to. He could inquire into it and report back to parliament or we could set up a committee that included him. There is no reason you cannot have experts on a committee. He could help us look at the issue.

It may be in the end we do not change anything, and that is fine. But when I look at the disproportional number of seats we have at the moment, I am concerned about the Westminster system operating as it should be.

The Member for Daly was away last week and we had one other person representing the opposition. I do not think that can work. Theoretically, that member of parliament is a shadow minister for the lot! I must admit, being an Independent, I sometimes feel as if I am the shadow minister for the lot. At least I can pick and choose a bit, to some extent ...

Mr Higgins: Two weeks before I did the whole lot on my own.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I can refer to the other time when the Member for Spillett had to take leave. But you can see that if the CLP got 31 000 votes Labor still would have won under the proportional system, but there would have been a better representation on this side of parliament.

I could be biased and say if we had a system of government as in Nunavut and North West Territories where there is a consensus government, we would not have to be dealing with this issue ...

Members interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Yes, you do not join a party. The 25 people work as a parliament – not a government, a parliament. The ministers and the Chief Minister then elect those people who will take up the portfolios. It is always a minority government because the people who are not minister have the power to sack a minister if they feel that minister is not doing their job.

I have had that discussion here. At present that is far away from reality, especially when you have 18 on one side and the rest over here.

I still believe the issue of proportional representation is worth looking at. After all, it is not new because we have introduced it into local government. I have not gone into all the details of proportional. It can become complicated when you start to look at what happens to your preferences. They are leaked according to a formula. I will let the computers do that, but it works. It has worked in Tasmania for a long time. It has worked in the Senate since 1948. It gives a better representation.

There is a downside – or two – which I nearly forgot. Tasmania is small in area, the ACT is even smaller. When you have five divisions and five members, it is not hard to find one of the members who represents that area. If we cut the Northern Territory into five, my guess is nearly four of them would be at the Top End and the other one would take up the rest of the Territory – a bit like Lingiari – because this is where most of your population is. That is one of the downsides and will not work. So, one option is you either increase this parliament by two and have nine divisions with three people in each division. You cannot really have everyone jammed in the top corner and only a couple of people looking after the bottom. It would be very hard for people living in the bottom part to know who their member is and where they live, etcetera.

There will always be discussions about whether it brings in minority parties. Germany has a form of proportional elections. Other places in the world have similar types of voting. Some of them adjust it to try to make sure there is stability in parliament. For all Germany's ups and downs, it has managed to survive. New Zealand is still forming government. I am not sure whether it has ...

A member: Yes, it is part of the problem.

Mr WOOD: Yes, it has taken a while. But has New Zealand fallen apart? From my point of view ...

A member: Yes.

Mr WOOD: That is right, there is the north and south island. Right. I wish they would break apart for rugby union so they only have half the team to play Australia. They would probably still beat us.

From a party's point of view you will argue, 'I do not want that. I want our party to have clear domination as we do now, so why would I support a system which might mean I have to go into coalition?' I believe coalitions are healthy and make parties work harder. They do not just roll over, 'Here is our legislation. Too bad, oh dear, how sad, you have to put up with it'.

It also means you are also more inclusive of the people in the Northern Territory because if it 5% of people are voting for the left-handed party, at least the left-handed people will believe they will have some input into the way parliament is operating. At the moment, under preferential – a bit like me now – my influence might be debatable. If I was involved in a coalition because they needed the numbers, it can make a difference. That is about all I have to say.

There were many numbers that knocked the member for Brennan over because there were a lot in one go but it was important to have that in *Hansard* so people reading understand there is a vast variation between elections with the number of seats parties have won compared to the number of votes they have won. From a democratic point of view, that looks a bit weird. If there were 100 people here maybe that variation would not be so great but for a small number of seats it is more amplified. We only have small electorates so movement within them can cause changes in the stats. I use to sit here and listen to people argue about crime stats. Crime stats in Nhulunbuy – there were two cars stolen last month with none stolen the month before so there was a 200% increase in car thefts. You can get that variation in statistics when you have small electorates.

This is not saying this is where we should go, this is simply asking if the government be willing to, at least, enquire into whether our voting system is a reasonable one. Is it good for the governance of the Northern Territory? Does it make the Westminster system in this parliament operate as it should or do they think it is presently okay and think the CLP only got two seats, oh dear, how sad; live with it.

I am not that worried about what the CLP did last time, I am more worried about making this parliament work better. This is Westminster system and it needs a good opposition to keep the government on its toes. The member for Daly is probably trying his best but it is a lot of work when there are only two and that is part of the reason why I bring this before parliament today. It is there for consideration and I am interested to see what the government thinks.

Having talked to the Northern Territory Electoral Commissioner, I think he would be quite happy to participate in a discussion – other people who might be worth discussing this with are people like Ken Parish who ran the summit. Get a group of those people together and maybe get some nuts and bolts and bring a report back to parliament. I imagine the government would have to decide if it wanted to take it any further. I will leave it at that.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also rise to speak on this motion from the member for Nelson in regard to the electoral system. In listening to the member for Nelson there are a couple of things members of this house need to remember including the proportion of votes. While the opposition cops a lot of flak and people saying there are only two members, the thing that needs to be remembered is that we got 31% of the vote. While everyone says, 'Poor you, there are only two of you' there is a very little gap between two and 10 seats and that needs to be borne in mind.

The other thing I warn the members on the other side about is—I have said it before—you do not win your seat from a sitting member; the sitting member loses that seat. You win your seat on true merit when you win it for the second time and are judged on your performance. The first time you win it you are being judged on your predecessor's performance, unless the seat was a vacancy. It is a philosophy I bear in mind and I hope a lot of members remember that during this, their first term. It is something that drove me in my first term; you need to prove yourselves.

The motion acknowledges that we have a preferential voting system in the Territory and the recent changes by the previous government made it an optional preferential voting system. The merits of that system were debated in this House when that change to legislation was brought into effect. It needs to be remembered that it is important on all electoral systems that they must be fair and equitable across the jurisdiction and give equal weight to every vote, regardless of who casts it and where they cast it. One vote one value. That is a long standing principle of the Australian democracy.

I was disappointed when I saw the Member for Katherine post on Twitter that it should be based on land mass. Moving away from that one vote one value principle, and I hope that the Chief Minister did reprimand her for that because it is an underpinning basis of our democratic system here in Australia.

Personally, I acknowledge that optional preferential voting may lead to members being elected with a reduced vote. On the other hand I also acknowledge that full preferential voting leads to a situation where one must vote for all candidates regardless of how distasteful or repugnant one may find some of them to be. If you dislike someone you still must give them a number, whether it is number three being last or number nine being last.

This debate has been had in the past, at this point of time we have the optional preferential voting in the Territory. I acknowledge the irony of the Labor government in Queensland shifting the electoral system back to full preferential from the optional preferential voting in order to benefit from the Greens votes in Brisbane. Only for One Nation to arrive back on the scene in recent years and currently polling at 18% of the primary vote. The next Queensland election is going to be very interesting and one that we should watch for that reason.

Similarly in South Australia they have the Xenophon factor and his South Australia Best Party is currently polling about a quarter of the primary vote there. What we can see here is that in certain Australian jurisdictions the traditional two party system has been challenged. I will always support the retention of the two party system as it is the most compatible with the Westminster system and it leads to the most stable form of government, most of the time.

This advent of the rise of independence and minor parties, I am sure is part of the reason the Member for Nelson has moved this motion here today. When we look at the Territory wide percentage of the primary vote for all parties and independents, as the member said, that we get the following:

Labor got 41.35%, CLP got 31.17% and Independents got 18.45%. The corresponding distribution of seats would be 10 to Labor, eight to the CLP and five to Independents. On the face of that I would be quite happy with that sort of result. I would be a much better position with a lot more back up. I do not propose that we shift the full preferential system. On the European model where majority government is a pipe dream and the results is government based on wholly alliances and unstable coalitions.

Although this is not to say that political culture does not play a part. We have seen many countries in Europe produce stable government in minority and, Germany is a classic example. However, there exist systems which take into account proportionality and the requirement of a majority.

In this country we have the Hare-Clark system currently used in the ACT and Tasmania and in New Zealand they have what as the Member for Nelson has said what is called a mix member protocol representation of MMP. Hare-Clark can regularly produce hung parliaments if there is a strong third party choice such as the Greens in the ACT and Tasmania. It does also produce majority should the electorate will it, which is exactly what happened in Tasmania in 2014.

If people do not understand the Hare-Clark, it is in simple terms combining three or five seats into one and then you vote in five members. If you consider the current structure of this parliament it is highly unlikely, or I could almost guarantee that the members opposite would ever vote in favour of that. Without being critical of them the reason for that is that if you look at the northern suburbs you have five seats all held by Labor based on the voting percentage you would only get two or three of those members. The representation would have been better.

It should be noted that this sort of result is considered a landslide and rare—and I am talking about the Tasmanian one in 2014, not about your one here.

Whoever followed Tasmanian politics leading up to the last election would understand why such a landslide occurred which I will not go into.

The other alternative, the MMP, which the member has also spoke about has been in use in New Zealand in the past 21 years. This system rarely produces a majority but theoretically is more stable than Hare-Clark but is the gap between minority and majority is much smaller due to the allocation of list MPs to make up the difference between the percentage of the vote won and the percentage seats won, under the regular method of voting.

To use the example that I raised before, the CLP only won two seats at the previous election despite winning 31.7 of the popular vote which would, on crude mathematics, entitle us to eight seats. In order to bridge that difference, a second ballot is run parties rather than on electoral divisions. A number of seats are then allocated for the party vote, hence the term 'mixed-members'.

This results in party representation in the House more closely reflecting the popular vote. As New Zealanders found, it can be a good alternative to the Upper House which does not exist as it rarely result in majorities. Therefore, genuine legislative debates and negotiations once again occur on the floor of the House.

Sadly, in unicameral parliaments with majority electoral systems governments rarely afford to their opposites, the ability to contribute in any tangible way to the legislative process. This current Assembly being the case in point.

A couple of other points I wish to raise on the Territory electoral system is the plight of the rural representatives. As the Territory electorate becomes increasingly urbanised, the rural electoral divisions become larger with the populations remaining largely the same.

I acknowledge that the entitlements and travel rules are different for us in the rural areas and that it is more than adequate—and fine by me—my problem is that those who are represented, suffer. So it is the representatives that suffer. When the electoral sizes are larger it becomes a matter of time as to whether the MLA can physically get to every part of his or her electorate and whether they can make contact with everyone in their electorates.

As the members of rural seats would know, you spend a lot of time in your car travelling and satellite phones just do not quite cut it. That is even before you add the complications of the wet season and the resultant isolation. Sometimes I like that.

It is something that the government should be looking at, especially now that the Labor party has significant representation from the bush. Something that I am always hearing from those in my electorate is that this government does not seem to understand that the Northern Territory exists beyond Berrimah.

I call it the Berrimah fence and I say that members of government need to lift their heads and look over that fence. The government's programs and spending would not suggest that it does that. That is how the people

from rural and regional NT suffer. They simply do not get the same services and attention from government those in Darwin do and it is unfair. Ultimately, what we do always come back to is representation.

The question I do wish to raise in regard to redistribution is, 'Are they necessary every single turn?' If you look at my seat of Daly, it used to be Victoria River. It went from Timber Creek, the other side of Katherine, and came all the way up to Cox Peninsula. That was then changed to the seat of Daly and those boundaries were altered.

In 2012, Timber Creek, Pine Creek and Douglas Daly were taken out. There was an attempt to take out Nauiyu where I actually lived when I was running for the seat. But that was retained. I moved in Acacia Hills in Darwin specifically to be in my electorate still and moved the office to Berry Springs. Yet the first distribution after that was going to chop Berry Springs out of the electorate, so my electoral office which had cost a lot of money to move into the electorate for the very first time was then going to be immediately taken out of the electorate.

Plus my wife was taken out of the electorate because our house was chopped out and she could not vote for me. So that is one vote I knew I missed out on. She did actually say that she wanted Madam Speaker to call in to see her before she was guaranteed to get a vote there either.

I understand the complexities around the Territory's seasonal population and its transiency. It has sort of plagued me and the people of Daly with these constant changes. Is that the best way we can serve the territory to have those changes every four years? The government has initiated the review into donations and I think one of the follow-up inquiries into that is to review the electoral system.

While I do not necessarily agree with the Member for Nelson's full motion I think there are some major problems in the representation in this parliament, from having both the Darwin and rural seats and the population movement, as well as how people in the Territory generally vote. That is around that percentage split in the two party preferred system. Whether something like the Hare-Clarke or proportion one would work, I do not know but it is incumbent upon this parliament to look at those.

I am looking forward to when the government actually does produce some sort of discussion paper in regard to the review of the *Electoral Act* and how it works. A lot of people in the Territory need to get an understanding of how the system works, the votes are cast and preferential voting works. All of those things need to be explained to voters before they can give a true contribution to that review.

There is a lot of confusion about how the voting system works and how the last system worked, preferential, the confusion between the Senate and the House of Representatives in a federal election, the council and state elections. That is a constant issue I find right across the Territory so I am looking forward to that review coming out. If the government goes some education around that before a discussion paper comes out I think we will get some true and valid comments coming back from the people of the Territory.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contribution to debate so far. I want to let the Member for Nelson know we will be opposing this motion today and it is based around two fairly simple reasons ...

Mr Wood: Does that mean you will support it tomorrow?

Ms FYLES: I am pretty sure we will oppose it again tomorrow but you are welcome to try to bring it back, and next sittings as well.

1. A parliamentary inquiry is not required as there is already a public process on electoral reform under way.
2. A proportional voting system, while beneficial to some political parties and politicians, would be less beneficial to a broad segment of Territorians.

When we came to government, we had a clear cut set of election commitments on electoral reform and Territorians want that. We set them out very clearly in our restoring integrity to government and there was a whole section on electoral reform, including a particular section making voting easier, picking up points from the Leader of the Opposition who just raised those.

To remind members of where we were prior to the 2016 election, we had a government, the previous CLP government, who would do anything to get re-elected including, sadly, changing the rules into the lead up to

the 2016 election. There can be no doubt, regardless of whatever spin they tried to put on it; their changes were designed to 'save the furniture', to try to hold onto as many seats as possible. I am not sure if they were even entertaining the idea of minority government at that point.

Territorians spoke loudly and clearly around the chaotic, dysfunctional CLP government. They changed the way we voted, from a full preferential to optional preferential and it was interesting hearing the leader of the opposition speak about confusion. They created that confusion by us having a different system to the federal government.

They introduced ill-thought-out and in some areas—I am sure you would agree with me, Mr Deputy Speaker, a farcical 100m rule at polling booths. We understand that Territorians want changes, I do not know why, I love Election Day and I always have. Some people want to see changes to booths and the set up on polling day. For others, the how to vote cards were out of town. It was just a farce.

We believe those decisions contributed to one of the worst voter turnouts recorded in the bush. We believe it is very important to consult directly with voters in the community to talk about how they want to exercise their vote.

We will be consulting on a variety of issues. In particular, we will consult on six main areas: the voting system; using modern technologies to vote; enrolment; election canvassing; electoral boundaries; and the appointment of statutory officials.

We are in the process of preparing a discussion paper to take to the public and we expect that to be happening in the coming months.

I must be clear that the discussion paper is one part of the electoral reforms we have committed to. We have a separate donations inquiry to investigate the financial aspects of elections. We are reforming the way elections are run and funded and we are talking to the community about what they want to see.

Getting back to the issue at hand, what is front and centre of that discussion paper will be the voting system. We believe, Member for Nelson, this is where it would be appropriate for you to make your submission and you can make your submission in all areas, not just the voting system.

We do not believe that it is relevant to have a potentially expensive and time-consuming parliamentary inquiry into one aspect of the electoral reform, when we already have not one, but two examinations that will help reform our electoral processes.

When we look at what the Member for Nelson wants—proportional representation—it is very clear, I believe, what his motives are about. It is not about strengthening the voice of the people in the Territory, it is about strengthening his position within the parliament. Proportional voting has distinct, perceived advantages and disadvantages and I think, when we consider the uniqueness of our electorates, it is not the right system for the Territory.

I think we can cast our mind back—it was interesting hearing from the Leader of the Opposition talking about different results in the past 17 days. For a modern example, the New Zealand election, where we have had the Mixed Member Proportional system, a variant of proportional voting. The consequence is that a party with just nine seats of 120 has the power to choose the Governor of New Zealand. Proportionately they might have the right number of seats, but you would argue that that relativity of power to the votes they received is not fair.

We only need to look at the Australian Capital Territory, the Hare-Clark system, another variant of the proportional voting system. The ACT has only delivered one majority government since self-government, meaning that the balance of power has been with just a few, not the many and I do not agree that that is the right system for the Northern Territory.

The processes we have in play are important. We need to restore that trust and integrity in terms of taking the Territory forward. I note our small electorates. It is important to realise the size of our constituency in terms of 140 000 eligible voters, with candidates depending on their numbers and voter turnout and need significantly more to win seats. I do not think it is unreasonable to ask an elected member to have a decent amount of seats to be represented in parliament. Under PV, the most likely list system, people can get elected with next to no personal votes.

We have seen that in other States, examples of that in terms of Pauline Hanson's One Nation banner in Queensland. Malcolm Roberts received 77 votes and was elected as a senator in Queensland. That is somebody, that I do not believe, if he stood in his own right, would have ever have been elected to public office. He benefited from one of biggest disadvantages that the proportional voting system in the senate—no scrutiny of the individual candidate.

In terms of our electorates, I note the comments from the Leader of the Opposition. We have some of the largest electorates in Australia and in the world. If we had a version of proportional voting, we would have multi-member components, which would increase the sizes of those areas. It would almost be impossible to serve a constituency over such great areas.

We believe that the issue of a fair parliament that we need to take the inquiries we have in place forward. We have outlined a number of reasons regarding practicality. In terms of the Northern Territory parliament, we have in place, processes for transparency around government taking things forward—our political donations inquiry and the electoral reforms. We have processes to put in place that put trust and transparency back into government.

You could look at historical facts in the Northern Territory. If we had proportional voting since 1974 seven out of the 13 elections would have most likely delivered hung parliaments or coalition governments. You can go back in time and replay figures based on the votes. Whatever you think of the CLP being in power for a long time—and 27 years certainly was a long time. You might believe that Labor has too big a majority. At least having one party in power delivers—I believe—a more stable government, which is a better government for Territorians than you see with coalitions or hung parliaments.

The government will not be supporting the motion that is before the House this evening. We believe that the processes in place are adequate and would like to look at things holistically rather than just one aspect.

We will not be supporting the motion.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): If ever I heard a party-biased opinion of our governing system I heard it then. How to protect the parties from having the right to rule. It is so annoying when I hear people say you might have to form a parliament where other people might have to be involved. Oh dear, how sad. We are all here as representatives of our electorates.

The problem is that you come in here thinking we are only here to represent our party. That is why you do not want this to change. I have to laugh. I am sure the Attorney-General said that I only want it because I want to increase my own power. Fair go. I got about 72% of the vote. It is more than likely that under the proportional system I am going to lose some of that if you look at the way proportional works. It is not that easy for an Independent to get in.

I find that nearly insulting. If I stand in the next election I could lose it tomorrow. The point is that there are times when you must stand here and ask if this parliament is operating the way it should. The Attorney-General did not deal with the issue of whether two members of the opposition makes a good parliament. It was never even mentioned. It was, for stability, we cannot have that.

Look at the ACT and Tasmania, Germany. Have any of those parliaments collapsed? Has the Senate collapsed? It has made the government work harder. One of the problems when governments like yourself have got 18 seats is you can get arrogant and push things through.

I know a bill that was put through earlier this year was exactly that. There was no way that anything I said made one iota of difference. It was never discussed out bush. It went through because you had the numbers, simple as that.

I understand that is the way the system works. All I am saying is that we could make it work a little better according to the Westminster system if we had a decent number of members of the Opposition relative to the number of votes.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, if you look at the percentage of votes that the CLP got—31%, a third of this Parliament. That is 8 seats. They have not got 8 seats, they have got two.

You would think that a normal person discussing this would think that perhaps there is something wrong with that. No, we are not going to deal with it. We like the system we have got because it gives us absolute power. We are not interested in the governance of the Northern Territory, we are only interested in ourselves.

I did not come to this Parliament to think of myself all the time. If you look at debates we have had in this Parliament I have debated issues that I thought were of benefit to the Northern Territory. I win some, I lose some. Sometimes governments pick them up later on and reintroduce them under a different banner.

I came here to put this motion before Parliament because I thought the way our system is working has some faults that need to be looked at.

I am happy that the Attorney-General says that we are looking at electoral reforms and that they will be looking at voting systems but I am not sure that is what she meant. Whether it was the voting systems, proportional or preferential or whether we are going to have optional preferential or full preferential or whether we are going to use IT. There was no description of whether that would cover what we are talking about today.

The funny thing is it was the Labor Party that introduced proportional representation into local government elections – and now it is telling me it does not like it. It is quite happy to put it into another level of government it controls. It has told all of those governments with multimember wards that they will have proportional representation. If it is good enough for local government, why is it not good enough for this government? Has it been a problem in local government?

It can bring some funny results. I mentioned one today where a person in one council had two first votes and was still elected to the council. I am not sure they were representing the people. But, you have to remember if people did not vote for that person but gave them second or third preference, it means that person had support; they just did not get the first vote.

When the Attorney-General said the One Nation representative in the Senate only got 78 seats, the only reason that person got into parliament was because a lot of people who were voting for the Senate may have put him as the second or third preference. Although he did not get the first preference, he got the second and third, which meant there was quite a proportion of people voting for the Senate who thought he was a reasonable candidate. If they did not, he would have received the number 10 vote and would not have received the flow-off of votes from other people.

It is simplistic to say that because these people got this many votes, how should they be elected? That is because people voted, but maybe voted on their second or third preference for that person. It is common for political parties which do not like minority parties or Independents holding the balance to try to downplay the proportional system because they do not want it because it does not do their majority any good.

Of course, the Attorney-General was a bit slack in history when she talked about the instability of minority governments. I am not here to pat myself on the back too much, but Labor had three years where it had stability. That is when I had an agreement with Paul Henderson. Was there anything wrong with that system? Did the Labor Party fall apart? One of the good parts of that agreement was that Labor was not to change its Chief Minister in that period of time. That helped and stopped people nibbling away at the Chief Minister's role.

It was a minority government. I can tell you now it was not easy. If you think that for someone who holds the balance of power it is a piece of cake, I can tell you it caused a lot of ageing of my life in those three years because it was difficult. But government worked because we sat down and worked through the issues. It nearly – by the skin of its teeth – happened in the previous government's term when the Member for Blain only won by 32 votes. I received a phone call in a hotel next to the Glasgow airport from the ABC breakfast program which said, 'You do not have the balance of power because the CLP won the Blain seat'. So, even with preferential you can still have minority governments; it is not something that is specific to proportional voting.

I do not mind the Attorney-General saying they will not look into it because she said I will have an opportunity somewhere else. But it was some of the aside remarks that sound as if, 'We might look at it but if it does not sit within our policy – that is, the two party preferred system is much better and we do not like the proportional system' - I am not sure the inquiry into our electoral system will make any difference.

It is a bit like some of the issues in relation to promises made to the AHA, 'We will have an inquiry into the *Liquor Act*, but we have already agreed on this, this and this'. So, will the inquiry into the *Electoral Act* actually be relevant when it comes to whether we should have proportional or preferential? After listening to the Attorney-General tonight, I have my doubts. It was basically a short speech from the Attorney-General, which

said, 'Thank you for your contribution'. She does not believe that I did it with any integrity, she said I did it for my own power base. What is my power base? One seat? That is a big power base.

She does not think that having minority governments or governments that are a combination of parties and maybe Independents is worth even thinking about, even though our neighbours across the waters there have had it going for 21 years and it has things that I think we should also look at. I mentioned it before. Whether it work in the Territory but there are nine Maori seats. Is that a possibility?

We could learn from other governances but if we stick in this mode simply because we want the two-party preferential system to continue, then we will continue to have strange parliaments where people get 31 000 votes and two seats in this parliament.

If someone can tell me that is the way it should be then I will go he because I do not think this is good for the parliament. I am not a member of the opposition. I am used to working with an opposition. The opposition takes the brunt of all the shadow ministries. I am there to represent my electorate and also to raise issues independent of both the government and the opposition and I see that as my role.

It is harder for us as independents to operate when we know that the opposition is not operating on all cylinders. I'm not saying that they do not work hard but it does not operate, as you would say, a normal opposition would work.

I thank the members who have contributed. I will look forward to where we go with the review of our electoral system and interested to see what the government says about the type of voting when it puts its submission into that particular electoral reform consultation.

Thank you very much.

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION **Assessment of the Northern Territory Onshore Gas Industry**

Continued from 3 May 2017.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): The Northern Territory economy is at tipping point, population growth is stagnant, established businesses are shutting their doors, the construction phase of the Ichthys project is wrapping up meaning thousands of jobs will be shed.

At the same time as Commonwealth revenues are declining, expectations on the Territory government to deliver services are increasing. The budget deficit is at record levels, debt is souring again after the previous government's efforts to bring it back under control. To compound this, we have a government in charge of the economy that claims to support business but then, through its action, does exactly the opposite. This is a government that actively opposes private investment and it has, as the cornerstone of its economic policy, a new museum and an underground car park for public servants both to be funded by the taxpayer.

Instead of promoting private investment into the Northern Territory, this government is doing exactly the opposite. It appears to be doing everything it can to keep it out. With minimal private investment and with a huge debt burden what is left? Go cap in hand to Canberra, pleading with the Prime Minister to bail them out.

This attitude brings no credit to the Chief Minister and no credit to the Northern Territory. We need to do something about it because it is not new. The Territory small population and enormous disadvantage means that we have no choice but to derive most of our revenue from the Commonwealth. It is our jobs as leaders to try to develop the industries that will sustain the Territory now and into the future.

It is our job as leaders to aspire for a better future for our children and grandchildren, to tackle the disadvantage that runs through society and, most importantly, to aspire to grow a Northern Territory that will one day be able to stand alone. To stand on its own two feet.

The motion about which I am speaking today is shrouded in a motion and has the potential to divide the Northern Territory. I acknowledge that from the outset. I also acknowledge that there appears to be passionate opposition to onshore gas development in the Territory but there is also support for it. I do not want to pretend that the issues around onshore gas are crystal clear or that there is an easy answer to the many questions around onshore development.

I believe that as a representative of the Daly electorate in the Northern Territory Parliament and as the Leader of the Country Liberal, it is my job to work with the community to find ways forward for the development of a safe, sustainable, onshore gas sector that delivers benefits for us all. I think the Chief Minister should be doing the same.

In 2014 the previous Country Liberal government commissioned eminent scientist and public servant, Dr Allan Hawke, to conduct an inquiry into the economics and environmental impacts of on-shore gas development in the Territory. Dr Hawke is beyond reproach and to describe his CV as impressive is an understatement. Chief of Staff to former Prime Minister, Paul Keating; Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Secretary of the Department of Transport and Regional Development; Secretary of the Department of Defence. He was former high commissioner to New Zealand, as well as chair of the numerous inquiries including one into the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission.

This is a tiny snapshot of Dr Hawke's career and it is important. It establishes both his independence and his capacity to undertake such a review. The Chief Minister and senior ministers of his Cabinet would acknowledge that the body of work he carried out was untainted by politics or influence from third parties. If the Chief Minister disagrees with that assertion I would like him or if he is not speaking on this one of his ministers to take the opportunity presented by this debate to explain why. I found it surprising that considering the strength of feeling associated with this issue, only about 150 people attended community meetings in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin during the reviews consultation phase. There are far more yellow, lock the gate triangles in Darwin than people who are prepared to attend the public meetings on this issue across the entire Northern Territory.

At the top of the list of concerns raised was water contamination. This was first and foremost in the minds of the community. Other key issues included social, cultural and environmental impacts. Water use, rivers and aquifers, health concerns, short-term benefits, long term impacts, moratoriums, monitoring and compliance, future emissions, chemical usage and the regulatory regime. Dr Hawke provided a realistic take on communities concerns with his report stating,

This is not to downplay the need to manage risk which, like the possibility of human error, is always present but advances in technology and techniques to manage risk have gone ahead in leaps and bounds over the last 40 years.

But his conclusion was unqualified. This inquiry's major recommendation which was consistent with other Australian and international reviews is that the environmental risks associated with hydraulic fracturing can be managed effectively, subject to the creation of a robust regulatory regime. In addition to the bigger picture, Dr Hawke and his inquiry team looked into specific areas of concern for shale gas development in the Territory. On the issue of individual well pads the report finds that the environmental impact, which includes social and cultural effects, is likely to be small and readily mitigated but the accumulative impact of extensive well development may be significant.

Dr Hawke recommended multiple well pads to reduce the environmental footprint of the gas development. Ensuring well integrity was a key aspect of his report, Dr Hawke identified that application of leading practice in well construction, combined with rigorous integrity testing and effective regulatory oversight should result in a very low probability of well failure. Additionally, a ground water monitoring regime would be, to use his words, desirable. Water sustainability was also addressed.

Dr Hawke acknowledged the need for careful management but also pointed out water requirements for on-shore gas development are small in the context of other licensed water users. He concluded that chemicals pose a low environmental risk, providing that leading practices are applied to minimising surface spills and manage flow-back. He recommended a transparent, full disclosure policy to mitigate public concerns.

Dr Hawke also addressed waste water management which he identified as similar to other mining and industrial processes. He said on-site treatment and recycling are desirable where possible and advised that further investigation is required to test whether it can be applied in Australia; 263 submissions were accepted as part of Dr Hawke's report and scores of interviews took place.

Dr Hawke also undertook significant desk-top research, liberally referencing a selection of the many inquiries and independent reports conducted into onshore gas extraction over recent years. These included:

- Engineering Energy-Unconventional Gas Production, a 2013 study of shale gas in Australia by the Australian Council of Learned Academies
- the World Energy Outlook Special Report on unconventional gas 2012 by the International Energy Agency
- the final report and recommendations from the 2012 Gas Market Task Force
- the 2014 Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas in New South Wales
- the Royal Society and Royal Academy of Engineering 2012 review into shale gas extraction in the UK
- Evaluating the Environmental Impacts of Fracking in New Zealand 2012
- Drilling for Oil and Gas in New Zealand 2014
- Environmental Impacts of shale gas extraction in Canada-the report of the Nova Scotia independent review panel on hydraulic fracturing 2014.

I listed these individually for a reason. I want to make the case very clearly to the Chief Minister and Labor members that not only has a body of work already been conducted in the Northern Territory it has also been undertaken elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

The work has already been done. Guess what? The findings are similar the world over. A well-regulated on-shore gas industry will not hurt the environment. Dr Hawke's findings reflect this. I quote:

The environmental risks associated with hydraulic fracturing can be managed effectively subject to the creation of a robust regulatory regime.

There are many myths and conspiracies around onshore gas development. One of the most famous contained in the 2010 documentary *Gasland* where a Colorado man lit his water tap on fire. This is often cited by those opposed to the industry as evidence of water contamination as a result of onshore gas industry.

The reality was somewhat different. In response to *Gasland*, the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission found that the water contained biogenic gas that was not related to oil and gas activity and there was evidence that methane had been present for decades.

Dr Hawke's terms of reference sought clarification around the myths and untruths that go with onshore gas development. That is what he has done.

In response to Dr Hawke's findings the previous Territory government laid down some very clear guidelines in order to establish the process of building a social licence for onshore gas development. It would not grant exploration or development permits in residential areas nor would it grant acreage release and exploration permits where there is a land use conflict where it applies to areas of intensive agriculture, areas of high ecological value, areas of cultural significance and areas of strategic importance such as tourism spots.

Achieving a social licence is an important part of the way forward outlined by the Allan Hawke Inquiry.

Based on the substantive weights of agreed expert opinion the inquiry found that not only would a robust regulatory regime manage the environmental risks associated with onshore gas, there was no justification whatsoever for the imposition of a moratorium on the Northern Territory onshore gas industry which is where the Labor Party re-enters the story.

As I hope I have already outlined the Hawke Report was thorough. It looked at the science and tailored its conclusions to the Territory's conditions. Its findings were made public in early 2015. Just one year later, months out from the Northern Territory election the then Opposition Leader announced a moratorium on shale gas development pending another inquiry.

This came out of the blue and was completely at order with what the Hawke Report identified. The Hawke Report states that

It is at the political level that the balance can be struck between promoting gas development and setting the environmental management parameters, facilitating land access and fostering the Territory's economic development.

In other words it is up to us, the politicians who represent our communities, to argue the case for onshore gas. Industry too must have a role, but it is us, the Territory's elected members that must put the very compelling case for onshore gas development in the Territory. It is also us that must convince the community that the benefits of onshore gas outweigh the risks.

If I had dollar for every time the Chief Minister or one of his ministers mentioned evidence-based policy in the House I could buy a new Rolls Royce and retire comfortably for life to a villa in the south of France. The evidence is there, Chief Minister, in the Hawke report and countless other reports conducted into the onshore gas industry, evidence-based.

Exact amounts of gas in the Territory are unclear, but some estimates have put the figure at 61 trillion cubic feet in just one reserve, the Beetaloo Basin, about 500 kilometres south east of Darwin. It is estimated the Territory's gas reserves could power Australia for next 200 years. It should be noted that Dr Hawke said:

Commercial shale gas production in the very near future is unlikely due to logistical difficulties and the high costs associated with labour and hydraulic fracturing, but given the state of the Territory's economy and the Chief Minister's hysteria about declining Commonwealth revenues, given the opportunities represented or presented by a shortage of gas on the east coast, it is folly to unnecessarily delay the process any longer than is absolutely necessary.

That is the truth behind the moratorium, it is unnecessary. The Chief Minister is always being vague about the reasons. He babbled on about the science. The Attorney-General said something once on radio about examining the social impacts but it was not until recently that the real reason was exposed.

NT News reporter, Ashley Manicaros let the cat out of the bag. His 1 July report under the heading, 'Unions Stacking the Deck', goes into detail about the war between Labor's parliamentary team and their trade union masters. The first sentence is (inaudible).

A factional brawl over onshore gas is unfolding, placing pressure on the leadership of Chief Minister, Michael Gunner. The (inaudible) has been busy signing and renewing members to the Territory Labor party ahead of yesterday's June 30 deadline. The move is part of a larger left strategy to ensure any decisions regarding onshore gas are made at the ALP conference and not by the Gunner government Cabinet.

Driven purely by self-interest, some of Labor's left-wing, union-opposing onshore gas development, the Maritime Union of Australia is driven by a desire to protect its members who benefit from offshore gas development. As Ashley Manicaros points out:

Its members would suffer if there was onshore gas development.

The article quotes a member of Labor's right who said:

My Gunner will not press ahead with any onshore gas decision in order to secure his leadership position.

Only federal Labor intervention saved the bacon of the Labor party Secretary, Kent Rowe, who the Left Union had identified as:

A sacrificial lamb to send as a warning shot to the Chief Minister.

Six weeks after that article appeared, Ashley Manicaros wrote another, saying how the Australian Workers' Union stands ready to provide a workforce should the ban on fracking be lifted. This is an old fashioned union turf war with the Chief Minister, who cuts his teeth in Clare Martin's electorate office and not the workshop floor struck right smack in the middle.

It does not take much to join the dots here. The Chief Minister's onshore gas moratorium is not about the greater good. It is not about Territorians, the environment or the science. It is about Labor's internal politics and the union turf war.

Sarah Everingham on 9 October in an article on the ABC website, shed light on this issue:

Unannounced, there is a war on in the Labor party over who will make the decision on whether or not to allow and foster this industry in the Territory.

Ms Everingham revealed that the membership of Territory Labor has decided in favour of holding a special conference designed to prevent the Chief Minister from making a decision about onshore gas.

What did the first Territory-born Chief Minister do? He wrote to the Labor Party national executive – the faceless men in Canberra – asking them to overrule the local branch members' call for a meeting. The moratorium is not about the science or community concerns, it is about internal Labor Party politicking and a union turf war. It is not about the potential 6300 new jobs predicted by Deloitte Access Economics, it is about keeping one job – that of the Chief Minister. It is cynical politics ahead of good policy, self-interest ahead of what is right.

The moratorium they announced while in opposition and then hastily slapped into place after the Territory election is not about science or an evidence-based approach. The science has already been done extensively. The Chief Minister and Labor are having a lend of Territorians and Territorians deserve better than this.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, since this was first brought before the Chamber – which was a very long time ago – quite a bit has changed. Nothing has really changed regarding the decision - which we are still waiting for - but the context in which that decision is being deliberated has changed. I will speak to that in closing.

I thank honourable members for their contributions. This is a very important debate. The intention in putting this forward – a very long time ago – was to have an unvarnished look at the economics of the Northern Territory and what onshore gas exploration would mean either way – if we went with it or did not – so we would have that plain information before us.

At the end of the day, I guess I have been freed from operating in a strict political paradigm. I see we have a problem that needs to be resolved. I acknowledge that, politically, it was probably a no-brainer that those in Labor – going into the election – would choose the position of a moratorium. I thought that was quite a reasonable thing to do.

I would have thought that you keep people assured that this is not about whether we do or we do not, but at the time, the Chief Minister was basically reassuring Territorians that this was to ensure we get the settings right. That was the original contract – make sure we give enough time so we get the settings right. That means how do we do this responsibly, safely and maximise the benefit for the Northern Territory? I thought they were the settings that were being considered.

Now it seems to have moved to a different context of yes or no, whether we do or do not. It is not about getting the settings right. It seems to have moved from the settings around the economic benefits, the social impact, the environmental considerations and how we manage it to more political considerations. That feeds directly to the mood of the electorate and how they feel about fracking.

I am concerned that this is becoming increasingly entrenched in a Mexican stand-off. I said on air - and I will happily say it in here – that even though I am essentially a conservative in my political views, I was in Canberra as a representative of the Northern Territory when the Chief Minister was in attendance, as one of the 14 members of the senior business group in the Territory promoting the Territory opportunities and looking at problem solving. Bill Shorten, the federal Opposition Leader, and the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, both attended and addressed the crowd. We had the local Territory representatives who were serving federally.

I was uncomfortable with the comments made by the Prime Minister at that time. I see that we have a problem needing to be resolved. I still have faith in the Chief Minister that, at the end of the day, this will be his decision with the support of his colleagues and of course, there are other things going on. Why I was concerned and uncomfortable about the comments made by the Prime Minister, was that it entrenched the standoff and places it very strongly in a political context, to deliver a clever line to say, 'pull the trigger, Gunner, pull the trigger'.

Yes, a clever line, but that does not help resolve the issue. What I would have thought would be a more constructive approach would be acknowledging that we have a genuine aspiration to develop the north and I would have looked at the \$5bn that has been sitting there and come up with something constructive. How

do we find the point in the middle here, rather than seek to find a political point? I fear that this is then going to entrench the Chief Minister and the Labor Caucus into a Mexican standoff of a political nature, when we should be unencumbered from that and think about the right thing to do.

I thought that this was about – we really need to do this, there is enough science to support it going forward, but how do we gain the social license? How do we win the confidence of Territorians? How do we ensure that we maximise benefit environmentally, economically, socially and so on? That is the project we should be involved in.

I will make no bones about this. I will continue to say that I think it is the Commonwealth Government that has a role to play here to be more constructive and find a place where we can work through this, as a community so that we can make our contribution in a sensible way, to the Commonwealth.

Also, in the context of the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement to be concluded, most likely in November, is a perfect opportunity to find some opportunity for manufacturing, using the aspirations of our near-neighbour, that is interested in accessing the gas, using some of their raw materials to manufacture fertilizer here, for the world.

We could end up in a situation where we have manufacturing in the Northern Territory; we could have the cheapest domestic gas in Australia and have manufacturing drawn from all around the country here in the Northern Territory. We could, and it would make a big difference, particularly in our remote areas. We could have all of that, but we have to make sure we avoid the political framework that seems to govern the way we think about such things.

The question should be, how then, can we have all of that responsibly, sensibly and leave a genuine legacy and solve the problem together and then be able to move on and leave a solid, real legacy.

It will be difficult; I have been in the Chief Minister's position, making tough decisions. There is a certain element of faith required to make a decision like this, because not everyone is going to go with you for a number of reasons. Some of them just do not like change, some are fundamentalists and cannot accept—they are left and green and cannot accept this.

I have family members like that, you cannot reason. It becomes very difficult and you do the best you can, respectfully to engage and provide quality information, but at the end of the day, you are required to make a decision. I think the decision needs to be one ensuring that we get that social license, how we can solve this problem together and then begin to move on and start laying solid foundations.

I think we can do it and I am happy to play my part. I think there are quite extraordinary opportunities here, but how do we do that?

If we go back to some of the decisions made in the past. To get the gas from Central Australia to come up here to Darwin from Mereenie. That was a significant, gutsy decision at that time. We are still benefitting from that decision. If you go back and revisit the decisions made at the time and the pushback there was from the community and the cost and so on, it was a fairly serious decision and we congratulate them for making it. It was not an easy decision at the time.

I was leading a Cabinet of sorts, if you can call it that, to provide gas to Gove so we could keep Gove going. I had an understanding with Rio. It required faith on both sides and we believed in the future of the Northern Territory that if we did that, we would be able to have that gap closed. It would have stimulated economic activity in East Arnhem; it would have brought gas to surface because there would be a gas pipeline that would have brought more gas into that pipeline and it would eventually start to expand the Territory grid. I believe we could have done it.

There were those with political motives that ensured that that did not happen. As a result, we have had damage to Gove. They have scored their political point at the devastating effect on a community. That is what worries me here, and I would urge cabinet members, members of the caucus to look through this—you have an opportunity here to make a big and significant decision.

It is not easy and that is the nature of politics. It is challenging. It is the art of compromise. How do you solve this problem? How do you thread that needle? How do you get that social licence? How do you provide that leadership? How do you lead the legacy? How do you ensure you do it properly? How do you ensure that you do it for the right reason?

As we are meeting here, there are over 50 business men and women down in East Arm. They are receiving a presentation on the economic story that flows from shale exploration in the Beetaloo Basin. It is not a pro-fracking meeting. It is a meeting to provide clean data of what this actually means based on the US experience and the UK experience.

It is run by the manufacturing council. They have made it clear that it is not a pro-fracking meeting. It is to look at the information from one of the proponents, Pangaea. They have done their analysis and they are presenting basically their own figures to the group so that they can make their own assessment.

I think it is time for people to step up and to not play the easy, simple game which has got very poor returns but play the harder game that it is going to give us great returns. That is to really weight it up. It is not going to be easy. The business community there were basically challenged. You are going to have to fill the space a bit. You are going to have to provide some leadership. You are going to have to speak up and ask the hard questions.

Not everybody in that room—I was there only a couple of hours ago—are not all desperate to frack irresponsibly. They believe there is an opportunity here and we must maturely assess it. I think it is in that frame of how do we get the settings right, not do we or don't we—because that lives largely in the political paradigm because you are scared that people may not like it—you got to provide leadership. It is how do you do it well? How do you play your role in the Northern Territory to contribute to the Commonwealth? How can we draw in investment from our north?

I know there are significant players to our north who would like to partner here in manufacturing. I know that we could have cheap gas here in the Northern Territory. I know we could change our economic forecast outlook for years to come. That is the potential.

With that I thank members for their contribution. There is an enormous challenge here for us. It is not easy but it is, I think, an opportunity that we really have to assess as being probably the opportunity for the Northern Territory at this point in time.

Motion not agreed to.

VISITORS

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to Ms Rhonda Higgins, the Leader of the Opposition's wife who is in the gallery. I wish her a warm welcome with her accompanying party. Welcome.

Members: Hear, Hear!

MOTION

Local Business and Jobs Creation

Continued from 23 November 2016.

Mr MILLS (Blain): It is quite clear I was not prepared for this but I am accustomed to public speaking and I have something I could say. When I was at the meeting just then with the 50 business people, their greatest concern is to find local young people who can be involved in the projects there waiting for us to participate in. Hopefully it is onshore gas exploration done sensibly, responsibly and the like but we need to be able to find how we can get those young people, particularly those who do not have the aspirations to find that work. That leads us to making sure we have robust vocational training available to those on the margins.

I acknowledge and encourage all of those working in that space, especially those indigenous employment agencies and those who run those traineeships to keep up the good work and make sure the money being provided for contracts and tenders for positions make full use of that money to ensure that benefit flows directly to those young people, especially those indigenous young people who are aspiring to participate and to play a role.

That leads me to another very significant industry that is undervalued; the horticultural sector. The value of that sector is great than the proceeds that come from the Ord River area which is the horticultural area in the Top End. What they suffer from is a lack of workers. That seems astonishing and is another problem for us to work out. How do we get those who are able to work to actually work? That is one of the more difficult aspects of workforce development and for employment. There are jobs but why are they not doing them?

Whilst that project is being considered, there are other opportunities there for us. We cannot wait forever trying to sort that conundrum out because that is something that has been going on for 20 or more years. We cannot have the horticultural sector and its capacity being diminished because we cannot find those workers. While that project is going on we should be able to find a means whereby that work can be done by those in our region who would value that opportunity to work with a special visa that is not tied to them gaining Australian citizenship but gaining access at key times to do that work, return home and come back when required; a guest worker program with no pathway to citizenship but a straightforward contract.

We need to do that to ensure the industry stays strong. While the other project is going on how do we get those who are underemployed or unwilling to work to work? We cannot stop one while we deal with the other, we have to work together. If we do not keep the industry going and give them confidence to invest, the industry will suffer and be diminished and there will be no work for anybody. We have to recognise there are those challenges on both sides.

It has been said that people without any hope draw back and shrink. At the moment there is not a lot on the horizon to give people a sense of hope or direction. I am not making these comments to try hurt or criticise the government because we should be bigger than that. Most of the time in this Chamber there has been something on the horizon. When I first came in, what was on the horizon was the first tranche of onshore gas with ConocoPhillips. Then there was the railway – the end of a dream – which had been talked about for decades; it came. It did not dramatically change everything but it did change the way we operate. Then we began to look for the next big thing. We did hunt for it.

A lot of you who are fairly new here see the history of the world only in terms of the last horrible four years and now the golden dawn has arrived and everything is wonderful, and nothing happened before that four years.

There was a Labor government for 12 years. During that time they had the opportunity to do full master planning of where industrial estates should go so that when the next big project came along there would be a place of it so there could be that long-term planning. There would be land made available for when the next big project came.

When young families wanted to invest in a house and land, raise their kids and send them to the local school it would be affordable. In that twelve years they did not do that. They did not do it. As a result the price of housing went up significantly, eroding families' capacity to be a family. Two were working just to service mortgage repayments. It is a shame that it happened.

Moreover there was no plan to have a dedicated industrial estate which had already been nominated at Glyde Point. When the next big project came, everyone was aspiring to economic growth that was INPEX it was significant. It made a big difference. Detractors say they have not noticed any difference. You would have noticed the difference if it had not have come.

That has promoted and given opportunity for great growth in jobs and opportunities to change the local labour force, the labour market as did Conoco. It takes some adjustment. There are some growth pains in all of that.

In all of that it is the desire to train and retain local people. Training is an ongoing challenge.

Because of the poor planning in those 12 years it lost some of its value. The price of housing went through the roof. We had a land shortage in the Northern Territory and that did diminish some of that great benefit. I say that because planning is very important.

So where is the next major industrial estate going to be? Have you worked through that? We seem to be talking about social engineering in this last twelve months. How we all feel good. We really have some big things to sort out. How do we get employment in the bush? How do we start changing the way we operate? How do we make those housing projects meaningful and sustainable?

I hear the talk. I welcome it, but I have heard that before. I am hoping that we start to see real gains, Minister for Housing. I think you have a great opportunity to ensure that the maximum number of people are getting the maximum benefit in real work.

We can then move I would hope to a responsible framework around onshore gas exploration and bringing gas to surface that there would those who are already work-ready to be able to add their skills to the next chapter in the Northern Territory's development.

There are planning issues. It is sequenced. One then leads to the other.

The opportunities we have now need to be responded to with an eye to the future as well. Time will move on. I know. I feel I have only been here for a couple of years, but it has been 18. The debates seem to be, I am sorry to say, practically the same all the time. Nothing really changes. I see the same drunks in the park no matter what passionate speeches-people almost in tears about how they feel about alcohol but nothing changes in Bennett Park. That is the acid test.

Underneath the water tower in Palmerston nothing really changes. For all the statements about jobs nothing really changes until it actually happens in the bush, or it happens with a young person who makes the decision.

We have some real challenges. Hopefully we can keep it real. To get some of these under-employed into employment is not an easy task. How many of you have tried to encourage someone, write a CV and go for a job application-someone at the local footie club? I have tried to help kids get jobs at Woolworths. That is not an easy thing. They think, 'That will be good. I can help them'. Then they do not turn up because they feel ashamed. They think they might let you down. It is hard work.

We can give speeches in here and we can beat up the other mob by talking about how good things are now and how bad they used to be. It is hard work to make real change. I do not see enough of that happening. Maybe in the next couple years we will see something. What I am seeing at the moment is a fairly closed, small debate about social things that are all pretty interesting, but we have some profound, very raw issues confronting us on a daily basis in our car parks, shopping centres and the bush. I can only see that it will get worse.

We have social change coming of a magnitude I do not think we have seen for some time. We have seen schools lose families. I know of a school in Palmerston that has lost 15 families. Those families have made a social and economic contribution to the Northern Territory, and they have left because the economic prospects in the Northern Territory are bleak. They have made a decision and moved to other places, principally in Queensland, because the job opportunities are better there.

These are people who are sniffing the wind and saying it is time to move now. When 15 families leave one school—that is just one school. I happen to know the principal. Shocked when the assessment was done—the impact it has had on that school. These are families who make social contributions, like committees and so on. They are also employed. Their contribution into the community keeps other businesses in operation.

If anyone in the Chamber or Caucus has had a look at the mortgage stress figures for Palmerston, it is 32% of households have mortgage stress now. Interest rates have not gone up. When you have 15 families leave, that leaves a hole in the economy and in our community. That is just one school. Thirty-two percent mortgage stress were the ABC figures through their assessment on the *Four Corners* program about two months ago.

What is mortgage stress? It is when the income for that household is barely sufficient to make the repayments. That is significant. That to me is a powder keg. That feeds straight into employment. If we start having families unable to continue and sell their house because they have to go for the future of their kids then it will have a compounding affect. I am only saying this because we could talk about job creation and how Labor should do a lot better job and all that sort of stuff. I could give that speech, but we have some very serious problems. Very serious.

Thirty-two percent is a third of all those with mortgages in Palmerston, which is 1000-plus households. The mortgage stress in the northern suburbs of Darwin is less because they are more established, but in Palmerston 32% is representative of many new young families moving there.

I fear for what might happen. That could mean people choose to leave rapidly ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Blain, unfortunately, your time has expired.

Mr MILLS: Having said that, I support the statement.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): I move that the House now be adjourned.

Mr HIGGINS (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for this indulgence. 22 November will mark the fourth anniversary of the death of a very close friend of mine and Ronda's; Natalie Ede Tolson. I say some words in dedication to Natalie, a young woman who left a significant mark on all of those who knew her, and to this day she is still missed with a mixture of fondness and sadness. I thank the Leader of Government Business for allowing us to this at this stage. I welcome Natalie's family and guests in the gallery.

These words are based on information provided by her family, particularly her father, as well as professional colleagues like Henry Gray, her old boss at the Leanyer school where she worked for a number of years, in the education department, with CEO, Ken Davies.

I want to begin by apologising to Natalie's loved ones, friends and colleagues for the significant delay in delivering this eulogy to the House. It was an admission that should not have occurred and it is my great honour to be able to right that wrong.

Natalie was born at 3^oam on 26 April 1967, when her mother went into labour the doctor noticed the baby was in the wrong position and he proceeded to turn her around. When labour resumed again 12 hours later Natalie had returned to a preferred position and the dye was cast. Instead of dolls she preferred more practical presents like a scooter or a plastic hammer to help her father fix the car.

At Ludmilla primary school she would be dressed and ready to go before 7^oam. When she was seven she fell off the monkey bars before school and broke her arm. Despite the pain she did not tell her teacher until 9.30^oam when she had difficulty in writing.

Her first year in secondary school came as a shock. It was 1980 and she hated it. When asked to write an essay on her first week in high school Natalie in characteristic fashion emphasised the failings of the education system for not adequately preparing students for their transition from primary school. The essay scored 18 out of 20 and the teacher's comment was 'can't be that bad, Natalie'.

Growing up Natalie was a marching girl from four years to 18 years. At 14 she trained four to seven year olds known as the Marching Midgets. Natalie did highland and Russian dancing and at the self-government day ceremony in 1976 she received a standing ovation for a display of Russian dancing she did with Callum McLean.

Natalie also played the piano but for the family the 5^oam practice sessions were a bit much. Unlike the rest of her house mates Natalie found sleeping a complete waste of time. She loved Girl Guides and was the first person in Darwin to receive the junior leader certificate in Brownies. She was ecstatic to use the skills she learnt to go to an international camp in New Zealand then in 1983.

After graduating Year 12, Natalie was accepted as an exchange student in the United States. She needed a job and worked for six months at Mitre 10 in Casuarina by day and waitressed at Holtze Cottage Restaurant from 6^opm to 12^opm at night. I can recall, one dinner that I had at Holtze Cottage where I found a plastic cockroach in my meal that had been given to me by Natalie.

She spent 12 months in Kansas where she prospered loving the faces, the new places and the new challenges. Arriving home in 1986 she enrolled at the Darwin University and completed her teaching degree with my wife and specialising in deaf and blind pupils.

She moved to Alice Springs in her fourth year to do relief teaching and enrolled at Western Australia's Curtin University as an external student in special needs education. Following her final exam, Natalie boarded a Qantas flight back to the United States to be a camp leader in Washington State for three months. More adventure followed when she accepted an invitation to go to Northern Ireland and after three months in Belfast, bombs and all, Natalie moved to England to take up a nanny job in Oxford. It was here in England she met Tony, her wonderful husband to be, although he cannot make sausages.

Also while here, her beloved nanna Fraser passed on. She was devastated because she always believed one day she would be with her nanna again. After a whirlwind romance following Tony around England for the British Motocross Championships, Tony received the devastating news that his mother had suffered a brain aneurism. Five days later while racing Tony crashed resulting in an eight week stay in hospital. Over

the next two months Natalie held Tony's family together with both Tony and his mum in hospital at opposite sides of London.

A year later 27 Australians, including most of those people up there I think, and my wife and I travelled to England to share Natalie and Tony's wedding. They also witnessed Tony wearing pink pig slippers as he escorted his new bride from the church. I have some of those photos but I do not have them with me at the moment.

Their baby daughter, Jamie, was born on 5 November 1994. Tye was born on 9 August 1996. The family returned to Australia in April 1998. With the support of her parents, Natalie threw herself back into teaching and secured a job as sports teacher at Leanyer Primary School where she worked for a decade. She worked in a range of school leadership roles, including at Woodroffe Primary School and in corporate position which included Senior Program Manager, Assessment and Reporting at the time of her death.

Natalie made an outstanding contribution to education in the NT, both as a teacher and in corporate leadership roles. She was recognised in 2012 with the Chief Minister's medal for outstanding and meritorious public service. She also made a substantial contribution at a national level through her involvement in the national assessment program.

In a memo sent to colleagues after her death, Education CEO, Ken Davies, summed up Natalie and the grief and shock that surrounded her death"

Her knowledge, intellect, professionalism and compassion will be sorely missed by her colleagues within the school support services across the Territory and nationally.

I speak for Rhonda when I say that four years on, Natalie, we still miss you, the good sense and kindness that was a hallmark of your life. You were a great friend, a great Territorian and you will be missed sorely by the many people with whom you came into contact.

Ms LAWLER (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also speak about the beautiful Natalie Ede. As most people in the House know, I worked in Education for 30-odd years and worked with Natalie during that time. I have very many fond memories and, like everyone in Education, was heartbroken with the news of the passing of Natalie.

My most recent contact and the busiest time I worked with Natalie was when I was the Executive Director in Alice Springs and Natalie was working as a senior project manager for NAPLAN and doing all the assessment work. As the Member for Daly said, that was vital and tough work the Education Department needed. It was cutting edge at a time of considerable change.

At the time, I was in Alice Springs and we were having a good look at our data. I met with Natalie often and had a lot of contact with her then. I then moved to Darwin to be the Deputy CE. As you do as Deputy CE, I worked late and often e-mailed Natalie and would get a ping back straightaway because Natalie was still at work as well between 6 pm to 8 pm.

I was involved in the nomination for the Chief Minister's award for Natalie in 2012. There was no one more deserving than her. There was considerable heavy lifting that needed to be done at that time on the national assessment program and we were very fortunate to have Natalie in that role. We would often talk about Natalie on the 14th floor in the Mitchell Centre and say, 'That girl works so hard. She is such a hard-working, conscientious employee.' You could not have asked for a better person and a more worthy recipient of the Chief Minister's award in 2012.

I had contact with Natalie as well when she was a PE teacher. I remember her as being a very fit young woman when she was working at Leanyer. Henry spoke at her funeral and I know how the people at Leanyer school looked up to Natalie and were in awe of her energy and commitment to education and how very much she was missed at all levels by schools and corporate staff.

Natalie was a true leader. It would have been interesting to see where she would have ended up if not for her unfortunate passing. She was one of those people who was going places in Education. I am sure her conscientiousness and hard work would have been rewarded with more and more promotions.

The curriculum and the national assessment areas were based at Harbour View Plaza and that was Natalie working at the time she passed away. The team moved – probably about 18 months or two years ago now – to the Mitchell Centre. The people that moved have made sure Natalie has moved as well, with them.

They have a room in the Mitchell Centre that they call Natalie's room, because they wanted Natalie to move with them and make sure her memory moved with them.

It is lovely—if you are working in education on that floor, they will say, 'the meeting is in Natalie's room', so she is well remembered by the staff in curriculum in Education.

It is a pleasure and I thank you very much, Member for Daly, to have this opportunity to speak to Natalie at this time. As you know, and as we all know, she will never be forgotten by her Education colleagues. She was somebody that was a real leader, loved by her colleagues and is very much missed to this day, by her colleagues.

To her family and all of you here, it is lovely to have you in this House and have the opportunity to talk about Natalie. I am sure her children will carry on her memories. All of us in Education will remember Natalie very fondly and acknowledge her hard work, conscientiousness and her contribution to education in the Territory.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Family and friends in the gallery, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly, we thank you for travelling in this evening and wish you well on your safe travels from this evening onwards.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to open my speech by referring to a statement by a large number of eminent Australians launched in Melbourne on 28 August calling for a repeal of the intervention policies, some of which were strengthened and extended in 2012 by the Stronger Futures Legislation.

The statement calls for an end to the 10 years of severe control measures, which it says, 'are a stain on the Australian nation'. Controls, it states, have accelerated child removal, suicide, and Indigenous incarceration rates. The Statement also calls on governments to work with Aboriginal Leaders in genuine partnerships that will see productive employment programs without the threat of loss of income if they miss an activity and the financial hardship this causes.

This parliamentary sitting coincides with Anti-Poverty week in Australia from 15–21 October. I guess most Australians when they hear the word 'poverty', in all honesty think of people struggling to survive in Third World countries overseas. And indeed it is heart-breaking to see images in the news of the suffering of so many people in those situations.

I would like to draw your attention today, to our own backyard. In my electorate, for example, there are some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia.

According to statistics in the evaluation report for income management in the NT, where the Basics Card applies, it shows that every fortnight about one-third of families are running out of money a couple of days before they receive their next income payment. They are running out of enough money to buy healthy nutritious food for a couple of days each fortnight and are just managing. From my own experience, on communities this is particularly where no member of the family is on good wages.

What are the primary causes of this poverty? According to research by CDU on six remote communities, including in East Arnhem Land, we are looking at almost nine out of 10 adults surveyed on remote Indigenous communities, lacking the literacy skills to be able to cope in the workplace.

I repeat, almost 90% of the adult population. This is a huge contributor to the intergenerational poverty seen in remote Yolngu communities. A factor which defines people's entire lives as being dependent on welfare or on remote employment programs provided by the government.

However, the root causes of poverty in remote Indigenous communities of North East Arnhem land are far more than just literacy issues alone. It has been 10 years since the intervention and still Yolngu are still talking about the hurt caused when the super shires came into being and so many Yolngu lost their jobs.

Many people had certificates for working in essential services but they lost their jobs overnight and were told to train for something different in the Work for the Dole scheme. Even the grass cutting around the community was no longer done by local people. The message that it gave people was that they had nothing worthwhile to offer towards running and maintenance of their community.

It is really hard for the world outside of our remote Yolngu communities to really understand how much damage is done every time there is yet another program imposed on our people like that. Another failed program, that I should add, costs the government millions.

I really believe that a lot of people working throughout the different Australian governments who are truly want to see positive changes to closing the gap but a solution will only come when our rights of self-determination are prioritised; when both changes are made so that there is truly space for Yolngu and Balanda to work together to find a way forward in genuine partnership; when we talk about reducing poverty we are also talking about reducing the incarceration rate and the suicide rate.

These things are closely linked.

As the statement of those many eminent Australians I spoke in opening stage, as great damage has been done, we need to be serious about respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. We need to heed their cause for equality, including regional agreement-making, sovereign treaties and the proper recognition of their long denied rights.

I seek leave to table this statement of imminent Australians on the continuing damage caused by the discrimination, racism and lack of justice towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by the continuation of the Northern Territory intervention.

Leave granted.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about an event I went to a couple of weeks ago with the Member for Sanderson. That was the 40th anniversary of the Casuarina Football Club, or the Rowdys as they are affectionately known. It was fantastic to be joined by the Member for Sanderson; the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club is in her electorate so that is the home base for Casuarina FC. It was fantastic to be there to celebrate such a momentous occasion for what is a community-based sporting club.

This is a club that has really strong cultural and historical ties between the football club and the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club. In 1977 both of those clubs were established and created by the East Timorese community in the Territory. The flags still feature in the Casuarina Football Club logo they proudly use on all their material. It is something you feel very deeply when you engage with the Casuarina Football Club, their ties and connections back to heritage, culture and our community. It is a very special thing.

The Rowdys put their growth over 40 years down to a number of things, commitment, loyalty, selflessness and passion. Most importantly, it is vital to mention the families who are involved in Casuarina Football Club. It is families like the Bernardino family, three families have played for Casuarina Football Club. Diamantino played for many years, as did his children, including his daughter, Ana, who is now the retiring president of the Casuarina Football Club.

It was a wonderful night. It was an opportunity for us to get together with all the current players and there are a lot of all ages in Casuarina Football Club. It was also a great night for Ana and other members of the club to revisit that really strong history and where they have come from and to talk about the people who have contributed over a very long period of time to what is a very strong club in 2017.

It was fantastic to see Iman become the newest life member, it is an honour that is bestowed upon members of the club who have contributed many hours over a very long period of time and people who have played, I think, over 200 games. It is a significant recognition of contribution to the club and there are a growing number of life members whose contribution is recognised and was recognised at the 40th, which was fantastic.

There are three women I wanted to mention in the club tonight, Ana, who is the retiring president, but also Paula DeCosta who is the retiring treasurer and registrar. She is well-known to anyone who is in the club; she and Ana have been incredible advocates for fundraising and getting more people into the club. I have had many conversations with both of them, particularly as they came towards their 40th anniversary about how they wanted to mark that and really showcase the generations that have gone through the Cas Rowdys.

I also want to mention Kiralee Upton. Kiralee Upton is the social media officer for Casuarina Football Club, she is also their photographer. She is actually a bit of an all-rounder at Casuarina Football Club. She was the 2016 volunteer of the year and she is a proud mum of players in the Cas Rowdys as well. She created a number of amazing centrepieces for the night that put some of our current 2017 teams against photos of teams over the years. It was a lovely evening. Kiralee thinks of everything and anybody on the Cas Rowdies Facebook page knows she is very active at keeping people up to date; sharing the photos, their successes

and celebrating the club. It was fantastic that Jonathan Uptin came back for the day to MC the event. He was back for only a very short time – he is a fantastic MC – but that demonstrated that at the heart of Casuarina Rowdies is family and the families that contribute.

I thank Anna, Kiralee and Paula for all of the time they have put into the team while they have been acting in those roles. They are actively seeking for other people to come through the ranks and fill those leadership roles within the club. They have done some fantastic work fostering some of the young women through the club and they are taking a really active approach to growing women's participation through Casuarina Football Club which is fantastic.

I and other members are looking forward to the upcoming 40th anniversary of the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club later this month. I mention that because of the strong ties between the two clubs. Anna at the Portuguese and Timorese club was recognised on the evening for all of the assistance she provides to the Cas Rowdies. The food, once again, was phenomenal and I am always happy to go to the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club for a function. Everybody knows I am after those tuna puffs and I end up with a heap of recipes when I leave.

Anna is an absolute pocket rocket and she gets stuff done. It is an amazing community so I am looking forward to going to that and celebrating another club that is really important to our multicultural community but go Rowdies. It is a growing club. I assisted with their sign-up day and left with my electorate officer signed up so she is now also a Cas Rowdie. I am looking forward to seeing Lucy Gunner play with the Rowdies.

I understand they got the nickname Rowdies because people turned up to the games with posters and get into the celebrations and got a reputation for being a bit rowdy. We love our sport in the Territory and I want to thank the committee, the team and all the families who show up week after week during the footy season to support the kids and our wonderful teams. What a great season it has been but thank you very much to the people who put in massive amounts of volunteer hours to support our community clubs.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to talk about the 2017 Exercise Executive Stretch program that was conducted from 5 to 7 October 2017 at a number of sites, including the Larrakeyah Defence Precinct, RAAF Darwin and Robertson Barracks. The Northern Territory and Kimberley Defence Reserves Support Council Chair, the Hon. Clare Martin, with the assistance of her council and the Defence Reserves Support team recruited 15 prominent people from the NT business community with three of these recruits being local MLA's, the member for Fong Lim, Jeff Collins, the member for Nelson, Gerry Wood and myself. Of the 15 participants, all were local Darwin residents with the exception of one government executive from Alice Springs.

Throughout the Exercise Executive Stretch, participants experienced a taste of the navy, army and air force training and it was an experience of a lifetime. The Australian Defence Force reservists receive some of the best training available and it is about personal development, organisational skills and a lot of self-discipline. Activities ranged from experiencing the gruelling physical exercises of an ADF trainer on the ground, to capsizing a boat and lifesaving exercises required in the water, with Naval water operations. We manoeuvred a very expensive RAAF Explosive Ordnance Demolition Robotic Vehicle, tried on the bomb suit, conducted operations under night vision skills—I enjoyed very much—firearm skills, survival and team building skills. We abseiled walls, repelling from ledges, all of which was conducted under great Army personnel guidance and support.

A highlight of the course for me was having the best sleep under the stars in one of the hottest nights in our build-up season. Unfortunately, my sleeping associates had the worst night as I found out in the morning. It was not due to the humidity, apparently as history will record, there was a noisy loud roaring sound all night. Reportedly, this was coming from somewhere near my swag.

To say I was not the favourite person when I woke up is an understatement. In fact I was greeted with a, 'thank God you are awake', instead of the expected, 'good morning'.

Then there was the member for Nelson's culinary skills. He took inventory of his ration pack out loud, then with particular focus selected his course of his meal for the night and then laid back to chew on his acclaimed, 'worst ever fruitcake he had ever tasted', and as he laid back and nearly caught himself on fire in my camp oven.

I could go on with the story's, as it was a very challenging course with some members experiencing some minor injuries to sprains and some screaming out loud in fear during the challenges. All of which was managed very well by the Executive Stretch staff and Reservists

The 15 participants all completed the course and many completed every challenge. They faced their fears, whether in the bush, the air or the sea and they were challenged mentally and physically. Most importantly they came out as a team that worked hard together to get the job or task done, and they should all be congratulated.

Members of Exercise Executive Stretch 17 included: Clare Martin, Camille Fong Lim, Craig Allen, Mathew O'Connor, David Ryan, Linda Fazdeen, Paul Sharp, Carrie Altamura, Maggie Strauss, Chris Day, Paul Cook, Michael Zampa, Jeff Collins, Gerry Woods and Tony Sievers.

Some of the feedback notes from the course included:

- Challenging, fun, worthwhile and a must for any organisation with Reservists on staff
- Challenging
- Tough but rewarding
- A must do for any employer
- High level of business networking from across the territory. Great understanding of the Defence and ability train our servicemen and women
- Give it a try
- Give it a go, you will surprise yourself!
- Eye opener to what being a reservist can involve
- Educational and eye opening to the Armed Forces and the role they play
- EES. Be challenged by Defence
- Don't pack Prada ...

I do not know what that one is about:

- Awesome experience and would highly recommend to anyone

I must acknowledge and thank everyone who supported Executive Stretch 17 and they include:

- LT COL John Papalitsas CO NORFORCE and his Teams who provided support on the WTSS, night fighting equipment and water drills including the swim test, capsized drill and improvised flotation and intro to field craft. He also provided the sergeant major and ex medic
- WGCDR Steve Parsons CO 13 Squadron RAAF Darwin and his crew who provided the bomb suit, bomb robot and the brief on the PC Orion
- I BDE Operations, who provided the Protected Mobility Vehicle (PMV)
- HMAS Coonawarra Commander Viktor Pilicic RAN who supported with the morning PT patrol boat tour and intro to the Rhib
- Major Michelle Griffith and Captain Josephine Symonds for the roping exercise
- Mr Peter Still for the battle simulation centre
- 8 Close Health Company for supporting the PT on Saturday
- HMAS Coonawarra organisers, Lieutenant Commander Philipa Hay and Chief Petty Officer Tony Thomas
- The patrol boat and captain and crew for a great experience on the sea

- WTSS Conducting Officer Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Styles
- Water Operations WO2 Scott Hannan and WO2 Andrew Grant who did the improvised flotation
- WO2 Robert Kelly for the field stuff
- Night vision stuff, Klaus Werner
- Battle simulation centre, Mr Peter Still
- RAAF Flight Sergeant Craig Rochester for the bomb suit and robot; and Squadron Leader Duncan Flemington.

Then there was the Defence Reserve staff who were with us every step of the way and kept us on task and on time. Their sense of humour and smiles were very appreciated, especially when it got tough. These great people include: Captain and Territory Reservists Manager, JJ Roncevich; Operations Manager, Chris Cate; ex-Sergeant Major, Sergeant Bob Richards; ex-medic, Lance Corporal Jamie Ackers; and ex-liaison officer and Chief Safety Officer, Captain Jack Olchowik.

The exercise Executive Stretch 17 was a challenging, fun, and a worthwhile course that I will honestly never forget. I gained a fantastic understanding of what reservists do. They are well trained in difficult, stressful to challenging situations. They learn many skills and to operate under difficult and tough circumstances. Defence Reservists bring all these skills and strengths to any employer. I know a business will be stronger for having reserves in its workforce. I commend any employer and business who supports our Defence Reserves. I also applaud anyone who serves their country. They do a fantastic job and I encourage everyone to give the reserves a go. You too will be impressed.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, my sincere thanks to all the Defence Reserve staff, all the staff at HMAS Coonawarra, the Larrakeyah Defence Precinct, NORFORCE, RAAF Darwin and Robertson Barracks for making this Exercise Stretch 17 such a success. Look out, members of parliament, as I believe we have nominated you all for the next Executive Stretch challenge.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, my apologies, I promised to go first. Tonight I speak about the recent NT Build national conference held in Darwin last week. Unless you are from the construction industry you may not have heard of NT Build. With a large section of our Territory population working in steady employment or within the public sector, this scheme replicates some entitlements we probably take for granted – that is, portable long service leave.

Just over 10 years ago, people who worked in the construction industry in the Northern Territory would not have been able to access long service leave. They would come and work on job for a few months or years, depending on how big the project was and then leave and go to another job for a few years. All that time they were working in the same industry and in none of that time were they accruing any long service leave entitlements. Essentially, they could work through their entire career in the construction industry in the Northern Territory and never be able to access long service leave at all.

A bit over 10 years ago, in the mid-2000, a few unionists got together to try to resolve this. It was probably around the time when the original Bechtel Darwin LNG project began in Darwin. The reason that brought it to the forefront is because interstate workers would come to Darwin, some for the first time, with those big gas projects. Getting projects of that size and nature delivered on time and on budget is a critical thing. We have all heard about some of the projects being delivered at the moment and some of the blowouts associated with them.

At that time, with the Bechtel project, it was the first experience for some of the workers down south coming up here. They had access to portable long service leave in the southern states, and when they came here that would not replicate or be recognised. So if someone worked seven or eight years in a southern state and came here to work for the next two or three years, they would possibly go back to their state and re-set and start from zero. It was critical that they got the mess tidied up and got entitlements sorted out.

It would have put the entire job of Bechtel in jeopardy. Thankfully, good sense prevailed and the then Treasurer, Syd Sterling, worked with the unions and employers to set up the NT Build fund. This sees a small percentage levied on major projects to ensure people working in the industry can have a nest egg put away

for them to access the entitlements of long service leave. They are a genuine entitlement for people and not a luxury that some workers get and others do not.

There are a number of these funds around the nation. The people involved in these funds often have national conferences, and we were lucky that last week their conference was in Darwin and in the great seat of Port Darwin. I should give a big shout out to the fantastic staff at the Convention Centre, who do dozens of major conferences and attract a lot of tourists. There were a number of people who were up that week a few days early or stayed a few days after the conference. It is very good to see those people in town and staying for a few days to enjoy some of the sites we have around the Territory, not just within Darwin but also the outlying areas—make sure that they put their bit into the Territory through tourism as well.

I was proud to be granted the honour of closing their conference, which had around 60 reps from around Australia. I thank Michael Martyn, the Chair of the NT Build board, and Theo Tsikouris, who has been managing NT Build for quite a few years and gave me the opportunity to speak. From all accounts they put on a fantastic conference for the week.

It was a real treat that they had Peter FitzSimons also speaking that morning. For those who do not know Peter he is a well renowned military historian and book writer. He was an Australian Wallabies player and played a number of tests for Australia. He is also leading the republican campaign across Australia. He started off the speech extremely well, and a lot of people know he is married to Lisa, who has just left one of the morning shows to head to an arrival morning show. He mentioned that early in his speech, and he mentioned that he is part of a crew that bats well above his weight as far as his wife's good looks go. He was also happy to acknowledge there was another of us in the room who fell into the same category.

It was a tough gig to speak after him. He would have spoken for well over an hour without notes. He had a vast array of statistics in his head about everyone he had ever spoken to about military conventions, different wars and commemorations and the way we honour some of the people who have played a part in those wars.

It was a tough gig to come on after him. Thankfully there was another presentation in between me and him so I was not straight after him and knowing that some people were looking to head straight to flights that they were not going to be standing around and listen to a politician talk.

It was a great pleasure to be able to explain my understanding and my recollection of how that scheme came on board. I was not directly involved with it but I was in and around the union movement when it happened. To be honest the full gravity of the situation, because I had never worked in the construction industry it did not dawn on me until afterwards until I worked a little closer to the construction industry, but it was great to be able to go there and share some of my recollections of the people that were involved in getting that scheme off the ground.

I was also able to share some stories about Theo who I had worked closely with, while I was at power and water, and Theo was at the Commissioner of Public Employment. We worked through that time with Theo on a number of interesting enterprise agreements and also some significant changes that were borne out of some tragedies—with people passing away in the Northern Territory because of changes to the superannuation schemes that they were involved with their families did not get the entitlements that they were or should have been entitled to—and we did a few years of hard work and thankfully with Syd Stirling as Treasurer and good people like Theo helping us work our way through those debates, arguments, issues and mediations at the time we were able to make sure that people that were not entitled to as full filling a death benefit for the families under a new superannuation scheme, we did tidy some of that up.

There is a Northern Territory Death and Invalidity Scheme that does ensure that people, when the worst case scenario possibly happens, that they are entitled to a reasonable recompense around that. With the NT Build happening and getting off the ground at a similar time, it was some remarkable times in the Northern Territory, I was happy to share some of those similarities with people.

I would like to thank Theo and his team for giving me the opportunity to speak at that conference. The opportunity to meet Peter was an experience of its own and something that I will never forget and I would like to wish NT Build and all of their staff all the very best.

The economic future of the Northern Territory is still an ongoing battle and a very tight situation at the moment, but they can be sure that we will be locked in behind the NT Build Scheme as far as we can to make sure that we can attract workers to come here—workers can be sure that they will have long service leave entitlements to them for the duration of the time that they are working here.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, continuing on part three of what has been happening with me in the Arnhem electorate, I have moved on to October now, thankfully, so hopefully we will finish it up tonight.

On 3 October I was fortunate to be in Katherine working from my electoral office and attended a morning tea organised by Colleen Wakefield, the coordinator at Carers NT, in the Katherine office, to attend Greg Kelly's speech about his journey. A very interesting one—Kel's Ride—which you can find and follow on Facebook.

Kel has been travelling the width and the breadth of Australia and he intends to do New Zealand and then over to USA. So he is going to be doing the width and the breadth of three different countries to raise funds and awareness into the research of young onset dementia. Greg Kelly has young onset dementia himself and it was a very interesting story that he shared.

He is a highly successful financial adviser, comes from that background, and it was interesting hearing his story and unfortunately learning a bit more about how many people are affected by young onset dementia. It was wonderful to be able to hear that story firsthand from Greg Kelly who is doing Kel's Ride.

If you are on social media and you are able to follow it there is also a song that one of his friends has made. A beautiful song that he shared with us at the morning tea and you can purchase it on iTunes. It is on the Facebook page and that will raise some funds for the ride as well—across all of Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

That was Tuesday. I drove up to Darwin and on 4 October travelled to Nhulunbuy to chair the Indigenous Business Round Table. I thank the Chief Minister for allowing me the opportunity. I love visiting the township of Nhulunbuy. I do not get there very often at all but it is a beautiful township.

It was wonderful to chair two sessions in the morning and in the afternoon in Nhulunbuy and to learn about some of the successes and challenges of the Aboriginal businesses and that particular region. Some of those issues are widespread across the Northern Territory. It was wonderful to be able to learn in that capacity. I thank Chris Langworthy from the Office of the Chief Minister for his advice and being able to report directly back to the Chief Minister in his capacity as adviser in that office, and Lynn Walker who is based in Nhulunbuy. Thank you Lynne for your support, and the background information about the businesses, those who attended and what is happening in the Nhulunbuy and Gove area. It is very interesting.

Back down to Katherine for the end of the week, and happy to be visited by my colleague, the Minister for Health, the Honourable Natasha Fyles. Minister Fyles attended a number of stakeholder meetings with the Member for Katherine. I attended two which related directly to my area of the Arnhem electorate.

The first was with Sunrise Health Aboriginal Corporation with the new CEO, Dr Daniel Tyson and the Chairperson Miss Anne Marie Lee. Dr Latif was there as well. It was wonderful to be able to attend that meeting with the Minister and for her to meet the new CEO of Sunrise Health. It was a very productive meeting and one that will establish some very important relationships, particularly with our government over the next three years.

The second meeting I attended with Minister Fyles was at the Katherine office of Carers NT. It was very interesting to hear from Colleen. The doors of our offices back onto each other and I see her all the time. I was nice to visit her office with the Minister. Importantly it is Carers' Week this week and we were all wearing the badges to symbolise it. Carers work 24/7 sometimes, 365 days a year. A lot of those people are doing it because they love and care for people.

It was wonderful to hear about the work that Colleen and her colleagues are doing in regional Territory settings, particularly some of the connections into the Arnhem electorate. I learned quite a lot in that meeting and will do some follow-up meetings with Colleen to see how I, as local member for some of the communities and areas that Carers NT from Katherine services can support them.

The next morning I got to enjoy the Katherine markets which even though I am a Katherine resident I do not get to do that much. Minister Fyles was there with my local member, the Member for Katherine Ms Sandra Nelson. We got to chat with the Mayor of Katherine, Mrs Fay Miller. It was interesting to hear the concerns of people within the township and the region. I learned quite a lot.

This was just before the PFAS report on Four Corners on ABC. It was interesting to hear the anxiety levels in the community of Katherine. For me as a resident it was very heartening to hear of the hard work the member for Katherine is doing in her electorate the electorate that I live in, and the force she is pushing on

the Federal government to take responsibility for the situation that Katherine, Katherine residents and Katherine regional residents are experiencing with the PFAS levels in their water.

I travelled up for sittings last week and then at the end of last week I was privileged to be able to represent the Chief Minister at the Native Title Ministers' Meeting which was held in Canberra on Friday 13 October. I was in Canberra the day before and actually enjoyed some really nice weather. I took all my really warm clothes and was quite surprised that it was beautiful weather down there. I was wearing my beautiful (inaudible) Festival T-shirt, so rocking a bit of the electorate still interstate and wonderful weather in Canberra and was hosted by Senator George Brandis, the federal Attorney-General, for the Native Titles Minister's dinner as well as the Senator for the Northern Territory, the Hon Senator Nigel Scullion.

That was wonderful for me in terms of networking and hearing some of the conversations across colleagues from different parts of the country and the various different jurisdictions which made it much easier to slip straight into the meeting on the Friday morning.

That meeting has not been held since 2014, and will now become an annual meeting. I think it is very important for the jurisdictions to be meeting on a 12 month basis if not earlier, depending on what pressing issues come up in terms Native Title.

I came back to Darwin midnight on Friday. I stayed the night here and then headed straight down to Katherine so I was able to attend the Mataranka Charity Ball which is in my electorate. It was fantastic. This was to raise money for Beyond Blue which, as we know, assists people with anxiety and depression. I thought it was wonderful and people frocked up in Mataranka. There were people in suits; there were people in suspenders; there were people in ball gowns and I almost felt under-dressed in my pretty little party dress. It was wonderful to be able to see people in such a small community putting time and effort into fundraising and awareness for such an important service which Beyond Blue provides for people who are experiencing anxiety and depression.

I also got to catch up with Mayor of the Roper Gulf Regional Council, Ms Judy McFarlane, and had some good chats with her and there were many local authority members who I have met quite a few times. It was really nice. I felt very welcomed to be there and people were very happy. I said the condition of me going to Canberra to represent the chief was that I was able to come back in time to come to the Mataranka Charity Ball, so they were very impressed by that, which is great.

This brings us to—thank goodness—the present day. This morning I had the privilege to listen to my colleague, the Honourable Eva Lawler, the Minister for Education at the National Indigenous Education Conference which is being held here in Darwin just across the road in the Hilton Hotel.

The last time I attended a National Indigenous Education forum was in 2011, so wonderful to see it back here in Darwin. Of course, just a high calibre of speakers and really wonderful to hear from the Minister for Education about what is happening in our NT scope, which I think is wonderful.

I want to wish all of my parliamentary colleagues a very happy one year anniversary for our inaugural time into the parliament. A year ago today which I thought was wonderful. I have my red flag family here so thinking of them on this day and, yes, happy anniversary for 13th Assembly.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Thank you Mr Deputy Speaker. Tonight I stand to provide an update on the highly successful and ever-popular Malak Marketplace. As the Dry season comes to a close, there are only two more market nights left until the end of this season.

Marketplace organisers and stallholders will be finishing on a high as the marketplace has managed to consistently attract over 2000 people each Saturday evening. This is a huge accomplishment. I understand that some of the other markets may have experienced a reduction in the number of visitors they have had this same season.

The marketplace organisers believe the success comes from the Malak Marketplace being the most innovative market on the scene with its core values, excellent management, and successful marketing strategy. Malak Marketplace is the only market in Darwin that has significantly committed its management practices and stallholders to eco-friendly and sustainable development. This is a huge task and I am pleased to advise that the marketplace has received a Brolga award nomination for its extraordinary quality standards.

The Malak Marketplace is not just a regular Dry season event to feed locals. It is much more than that. A visit to Malak Marketplace from interstate and overseas visitors and tourists support eco-tourism. The

marketplace can help inform and inspire eco-tourists through its promotion of cultural awareness and commitment to environmental responsibility.

In the words of the Malak Marketplace organisers:

The Malak Marketplace provides locals and travellers from all over the world with a unique Darwin market, ecofriendly visitor experience.

I want to share the intricacies involved in delivering this innovative community market. It is a huge list so bear with me. The marketplace consists of:

- Locally grown produce with seasonal Territory-sourced produce featuring high on every menu
- Locally produced foods where local cooks and chefs have created dishes inspired by both their cultural background, ethnicity and their proud Territorian identity
- Locally produced arts, crafts and souvenirs
- The market promotes businesses created by multicultural and immigrant community members
- Supports community projects, workshops, events, small business owners and sole traders

The market holds sustainability practices and principles at the core of its operations some of which include:

- a measured amount of water in containers for store use
- free water stations being available for our volunteers, kids and public
- washing up and other waste to be disposed of in water waste drums provided
- no liquids or any sort of oils can be tipped down drains or sinks; in all instances, liquid waste must be disposed of in drums
- Producers are encouraged to use sustainable or drip irrigation
- Stall holders are encouraged to save grey water for use on gardens
- Management monitors and records monthly water usage from a common area water meter
- Encourages and promotes the use of solar rechargeable lighting
- Restricts stall holders to a minimal number of electrical and/or gas appliances per stall
- Uses LED lighting and all of the iconic decoration lanterns
- There are no energy monitors installed in the main switchboard
- No double adaptors can be used and stall holders are encouraged to consider the current rating of cooking equipment and appliances when using power boards
- Stallholders are advised to use gas cookers
- There is a strict shutdown time for electrical appliances from 8:30 pm, which is half an hour before the market closes
- Stall are encouraged to serve foods that have low energy consumption per serving, for example salads and other non-baked goods
- Stall holders may only use compliant electrical cables and equipment
- Nonorganic waste is taken to the most appropriate recycling station

- Eligible containers are taken to the container deposit scheme for recycling with the proceeds going to the Darwin community arts
- Organic waste is taken to a compost solution in Malak's community garden
- Plastic or non-recyclable materials are banned from Malak Marketplace
- Stallholders are told they should provide paper bags or bags made from recycled or biodegradable products
- Stall holders must provide prepared food and drinks to customers in compostable, recyclable or reusable containers
- All eating utensils, serviettes and stirrers should be single use and compostable
- Oil waste is collected and recycled by Fryer Fuels and market-goers are encouraged to bring their own containers to the marketplace
- All stallholders are encouraged to use recyclable containers and from 1 January 2017 the Malak marketplace will remove all single use plastic bags – EPI or otherwise – plastic containers, utensils, knives and forks, etc. from the markets but reusable jute and large paper market bags will be on sale for customers.

The Malak marketplace also offers visitors and newcomers guided market tours with face to face conversation with the local growers, farmers and stallholders; the marketplace delivers a friendly, safe, authentic and quality tourism experience. It preserves cultural and indigenous relations to land and community space and the market values cultural integrity and authenticity in business. Malak marketplace currently meets all the requirements needed to become a certified Ecotourism Australia destination and aims to increase its connection with eco tourists and travellers from across the world through its online reach.

In only its second full year of operation, the Malak marketplace has made a significant difference to the community. The marketplace is more than just a night market as it activates a space in a community which has not always been recognised for its positive aspects. The Malak marketplace is unique in a city of markets as it has a strong emphasis on sustainable farming practices, organic products and environmental sustainability. The marketplace has gone one step further, curating clear signage and labels for all its farmers and produce and has put up clear, information signs prompting questions to get to know your farmer.

There is a greater level of transparency when shopping at Malak Marketplace this season, as the organisers have partnered with Clean Living in the Tropics which has devised frond braiding as a way of making clean-living, sustainable. Environmentally friendly and or organic approaches taken by businesses, apparent to customers.

FronD braiding is displayed at the marketplace as a way of assisting communication and facilitating conversation about clean living. For example, a business that presents a claim of five fronds indicates that it has a very strong approach to clean living, sustainable, environmentally-friendly and organic practices. Five fronds indicates that a business takes a very strong approach, four fronds, a strong approach, three fronds, a moderate approach, two fronds, a partial approach and one frond indicates an emerging approach. This means that either the business does not employ a clean living approach or it has not claimed a frond rating yet.

Each stall at Malak Marketplace was given a frond rating to provide a transparent approach to Malak Marketplace visitors and customers. So, be sure to check out the frond rating for those who will visit the marketplace in the future.

Since its first six-week trial in 2015, the Malak Marketplace has superseded its goals by achieving a platform for farmers using sustainable or organic practices growing from one farmer to seven. These farmers are Nottley Farms, Nottley House Harvest, May Spray Free, Tropical Fruit and Asian Greens, Prayer Farm, Thompsons of Litchfield, All Things Eatable and Eva Valley Meats.

The marketplace has also supported 12 new and like-minded businesses that have started from scratch. These businesses are Orrigo NT, Needle in a Haystack, Tame Roots, the Taste of Italy, Thompsons of

Litchfield, Nottley Farms, Just Friends, Monlico, All Things Eatable, La Bistro Riqueria, Africa Food and Prints and Recreated Art.

As if this was not enough, the Malak Marketplace's list of achievements continues with the following: the marketplace has almost reached 6000 likes on its Facebook page in only two seasons of operation; the marketplace engages with the local multicultural community to embrace diversity and welcome everyone; the marketplace is also subsidising rent for local arts and craft stalls that have grown from four to 12 this season.

The marketplace continues to develop strong relationships with its health and wellbeing stalls, delivering weekly free workshops to the community on how to choose products with a lower toxicity and to make them yourself; the market makes access to clean, organic produce affordable as the customer buys straight from the local farmer; the market provides a safe, fun and cultural outlook for locals and families with the best local bands and young emerging talents taking the stage; and the market also injects over \$2m per season into the local economy.

There have been a couple of reviews provided by people. The main point I wanted to leave people with is that Malak Marketplace's Facebook page has received 53 out of 78 five-star reviews.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.