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Alcohol Harm Reduction

Mr HIGGINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

In a media release issued yesterday you misquoted me as saying on radio, 'Banning chronic alcohol drinkers does not equate to treatment'. What I said was, 'You might ban someone from drinking, but how do you actually treat them? It is not good enough to just have a voluntary scheme'.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of that media release and the contrasting transcripts.

Leave granted.

Mr HIGGINS: Why did you mislead Territorians about what I said on radio?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not believe I misled Territorians. We have a government with a mandate from the election to reinstate the Banned Drinker Register. We know the CLP scrapped the BDR in 2012 and left a huge policy gap in terms of alcohol ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. That is a quote they attributed to me and it is not correct. That was the question. It is not a matter of whether the Banned Drinker Register was introduced, taken away or who did what or why. It is that quote I want an answer on.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, if I can finish answering the question, I can outline to the House why it is so important that this House passes the Banned Drinker Register legislation this afternoon. In dealing with the biggest social issue we are facing in the Northern Territory—alcohol-related harm, antisocial behaviour, and abuse of alcohol—we have committed to putting in place the BDR, and behind it, therapeutic measures. I have been through them a number of times. I am sure many members of the House are familiar with them.

We are committed to not creating a vacuum of alcohol harm reduction measures, which is why we left the mandatory treatment in place whilst we were working as efficiently as we could, as a government, to put in place the Banned Drinker Register.

Evidence shows that alcohol mandatory treatment failed Territorians. It cost over \$100m and from that we have little outcome. People were placed in mandatory treatment, and presentations to ED and alcohol protection orders are some of the measures in place. There was a lack of evidence from the previous government about the AMT program.

We released that report a few months ago, which found that there was barely any difference between people who had been through three months of AMT and those who had not. That was from the very limited numbers completing AMT, a program that took over health facilities at Royal Darwin Hospital and cost taxpayers about \$23m per year, with infrastructure on top of that. It was an expensive, ineffective program that the CLP put in place. They scrapped a measure, left nothing to protect the community for a very long period of time, and then put in place a failed model.

New treatment models will be provided to problem drinkers on a voluntary basis. Evidence around the world shows us if you want to treat chronic alcoholics, it needs to be on a voluntary basis. You need to provide the pathways and supports for them, when they are at their most critical point, so they can rehabilitate.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the bill passing in the House this afternoon and putting in place this key election commitment from this side of the House, tackling the issue of alcohol-related harm in our community through the appropriate measures with clinical support. We will be putting in place monitoring and evaluation and will have more to say on that in the coming weeks before the BDR is in place.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Alcohol Harm Reduction

Mr HIGGINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

Will you correct the record or will you continue to mislead Territorians about what I said?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I feel I have answered the question.

Yesterday, the Opposition Leader misled Territorians with his claims about treatment options for the BDR. I have just outlined to the House what we on this side are doing—not playing politics with the abuse of alcohol. I challenge those opposite to step up and do the same. We know that when the BDR was in place last time 16 500 transactions ...

Member interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FYLES: ... were declined and alcohol was denied to those who cause so much harm in our community. I challenge those opposite to pass this bill ...

Mr Higgins: I challenge you to stop misleading Territorians.

Ms FYLES: This was something Territorians want in place, a measure that stops the supply of alcohol to those who cause so much harm.

Mr VOWLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Under Standing Order 31, there were disorderly words. The Opposition Leader is saying 'misleading'.

Madam SPEAKER: But he is not saying 'misleading parliament'.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Michael Pengilly

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery—he has come for a little light entertainment—Hon Michael Pengilly, Member for Finniss in the South Australian Parliament. Welcome to Parliament House in the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Population Growth

Mrs WORDEN to CHIEF MINISTER

How is the government working to increase population growth after years of decline under the CLP?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Northern Territory is the best place in Australia. I do not mind South Australia, but I think the Northern Territory is the best place to live, work and play. We are working very hard to have more people call the Territory home and own a little piece of their Territory.

We love the people who have jobs that are fly-in fly-out, but we would love for them to live and be based in the Territory.

A strong level of population growth in the Northern Territory will deliver greater economic return. We want more people living here. It will help a range of issues, not least of which is GST share. The best way we can attract more people to live and stay in the Territory is through work and having jobs so they are gainfully employed. We know we have to create jobs and deliver better services so they have what they need here and are not attracted by services in other places—and maintain the great Territory lifestyle.

There are many things we must do to ensure we attract and retain Territorians. Reversing the CLP's legacy of population decline and business uncertainty is a tough task but one we have taken on in government. We are doing it in full partnership with the community and the business sector.

One of the first things we did, as a team, was to encourage more Territorians to purchase their own bit of the Territory to make sure they could call a piece of the Territory theirs. We had the First Home Owner Grant of up to \$24 000 on an existing home and the home renovation grant of up to \$10 000 to give them assistance when they move in and to stimulate the economy.

Since my government introduced these initiatives, 626 home buyers have been approved for the first home owner discount, which is fantastic. The CLP scrapped that. It is 626 compared to zero. We are helping people to own a bit of the Territory. Overall we have seen a doubling of the take-up of government first home owner assistance programs for new and existing homes, comparing the last year of the CLP to almost a year of our government.

A similar story is true when we look at the mortgage data. There has been a 30% increase in first home buyer financing approvals in the Northern Territory. People are buying their bit of the Territory; 284 applications for the home renovation grant have been approved, generating work as well as supporting those first home buyers. The beneficiaries of these grants are spread across the Northern Territory. In particular, Alice Springs has welcomed the fact they can get their assistance.

Firefighters in the Northern Territory

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Madam Speaker, when the Chief Minister was asked yesterday about knocking back the Police Association on its request for a 3% pay raise for police over three years, you gave us a lecture on how well you have been looking after firies in negotiating their EBA, with much echoing from other people.

In today's *NT News* we learned that firies are not being looked after; they are being driven south in droves by low wages, a toxic workplace and a lack of career development opportunities.

Are you looking after the Police Union in the same way you looked after firies? If so, is it a surprise that more police are leaving the force faster than you can recruit them?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question. We inherited a difficult situation with firefighters. They did not have an EBA resolved in three-and-a-half years because of bullying from the CLP. We resolved the unresolved EBA and back paid them to the date of that EBA expiry in good faith, compared to the CLP policy of not giving back pay to the date of an EBA expiry.

We also saw the unedifying circumstances last term of the CLP fighting against the legislation that recognised firefighters are at greater risk of developing cancer in the workplace. We pushed the CLP on that and got firefighters recognition about cancer in the workplace.

We are about to enter into a new EBA with firefighters. The consequence of the delay of the last one is that—as soon as we resolved it in this term and did the right thing by firefighters by honouring the fact they had been in those negotiations for three-and-a-half years, got them that back pay and into a brand new EBA negotiation.

A 12-person recruit squad of firefighters has just graduated and joined the force, I was at that last week. They are going through the process now for another recruitment squad.

The firefighters have asked for the same arrangements as the police, a four-year recruitment plan that takes into account attrition so they have certainty. Through the next EBA negotiations, which we have started—so, had to go straight back to the table again—we will be talking about the issues which would lead to attrition.

Part of the conversation we will have through the next EBA period is about conditions, which is reasonable. We are very happy to talk to firefighters about that. Firefighters know that we respect what they do; they know we stood with them during those difficult years of the CLP government when they were being bullied. They were being bullied by the CLP and they stood up to the CLP. We are working through those issues with them, through the next EBA that is on the table.

Myself as the fire minister, and Gerry McCarthy, the Member for Barkly and Minister for Public Employment, will be talking to the firefighters, working through these issues and genuinely taking them in good faith, which is important.

The CLP engaged, essentially, in bad faith negotiation for a significant period of time. The EBA negotiations are under way right now and we will deal with the firefighters' issues in good faith. The CLP took so long that when we finally resolved the EBA back pay issue, we went straight back to the table, straight back into negotiations.

What we can do to support our firefighters in the Northern Territory; is respect them, work with them and take their issues seriously. We are at the negotiating table right now.

Jobs – Value for Territory Initiative

Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Can the minister please update the House on how the government's value for Territory initiatives is helping protect and promote local jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Port Darwin was on the tour I was on just before the election where we saw steel manufacturers. We went to hear stories, before last year's election, about how local business was doing it tough and their frustrations with government procurement contracts that did not stay in the Territory but went interstate. We saw that money not benefitting Territory businesses—and their frustrations of wanting to see more teeth in government procurement.

Coming into government, we acted on this. We strengthened the Buy Local Policy and added a criteria about the value for the Territory. We want to get the best value for money for Territorians in government procurement. It is an important concept.

The best value might not be the cheapest tender that comes through; there is more to it. It is about the investment they make to the community, the jobs they have in the Northern Territory and the training of Territorians that they put through. There is far more that goes into what the value to the Territory is.

When we came into government we were committed to ensuring that we kept the infrastructure money flowing and kept it going through to local business. They told us loud and clear, 'Whatever you do, we do not want to see massive handbrakes or massive back flips. We want to make sure you get that money flowing through to local businesses'.

I am glad to report, when you look at that work—the changes to the Buy Local Policy—within the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, we saw over 600 staff go through training workshops to build procurement capability across the department, which is important.

During the previous financial year, when looking at tiers two, three, four and five infrastructure projects, we saw that, of 875 awarded, 856 went local. That is 98% of those contracts—to a value of about \$470m—going local here in the Northern Territory, which is an important aspect to support local jobs in the Territory and local business.

This is something we are committed to. We have invested a record infrastructure budget of \$1.75bn. We must see that money stay in the Northern Territory to benefit Territorians and local business to invest in the future of the Northern Territory.

The changes to the government's procurement capabilities were very important, as was ensuring that our departments were well geared up on how to best implement them. I am glad to report that for the previous financial year the figure of 98% for those tiers three, four and five tenders.

Animal Therapy Programs at Darwin Prison

Mr WOOD to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

Prisoners in the old Berrimah prison were able to keep animals. This was an important part of therapy and provided an important service for groups like Wildcare. Sadly, one prisoner committed suicide when he was told he could not take his animals with him to the new gaol.

Has this matter been rectified? Can prisoners be involved in animal programs at the Darwin prison?

ANSWER

In terms of providing programs to prisoners to help them break the cycle of re-offending we know there is evidence around the world through education and the opportunity to participate in programs. There are therapeutic benefits from animals. There were some issues regarding this in terms of transferring animals to the new facility. We have asked for some advice on that. I am personally supportive of where the member opposite is coming from. We need to make sure that, in terms of providing these types of activities within the facilities, we keep security to the highest standard and any other implications.

I am happy to seek further advice and either provide the information to the member in the House or through a private briefing. It is something I have raised and asked about. I will have to seek some clarification on where we have landed in terms of different aspects to this.

Health Care Services

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for HEALTH

Minister, all Territorians have the right to quality health care services. How is this government investing in the health of Territorians across the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question, someone who is passionate about health, sport and healthy Territorians.

Our government is committed to ensuring that all Territorians have access to high quality health care services across the Northern Territory. We are a small jurisdiction in terms of population, but I do not think you would find a more vast context to deliver health services in the world. We have such vast distances, climate changes—we provide a high level tertiary-type skills at some of our hospitals through to the services provided in our remote clinics.

This government is determined to deliver health services close to home for Territorians, acknowledging the many remote areas we have. Two-million dollars has been provided for remote clinic upgrades, ensuring there is an appropriate infrastructure to facilitate quality health services in the bush. We brought forward \$2m in the remote health stimulus work. That was not only about providing health services but providing jobs to Territorians. It delivered 35 different projects across a number of areas to over 20 health centres.

I will update the House on some of the works included in the upgrades and improvements to existing health facilities. We saw works completed—hearing booths in Maningrida, Nguiu, Yuendumu, Ti Tree, Papunya, Lajamanu and Gapuwiyak. There is currently work being undertaken at hearing booths in Ali Curung, Angurugu, Epineuria, Lake Nash, Borroloola, Gunbalanya, Maningrida and more works at Nguiu.

We know that healthy hearing has an impact on nearly every part of a person's life. It impacts a child's ability to learn at school. People with hearing loss are at a higher risk of ending up in our justice system. If we can correct many health outcomes then we can give people the best start in life and keep them on track.

Hearing loss is preventable with early identification and treatment for simple infections. We are investing money across the Territory to upgrade these hearing booths so that we can make those services more accessible.

There are also a number of other projects being undertaken across the Territory such as upgrading clinics, providing additional services at those clinics and helping our hard-working health staff to deliver those services to Territorians. I am very proud to be the Minister for Health. We have staff right across the Territory who are determined to make Territorians' lives better by delivering health services.

I look forward to the opportunity to update the House further on these upgrades.

CDP – Remote Indigenous Communities

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

CDP workers in some of the poorest communities in Australia, in my electorate, are being fined for non-attendance at a rate of 70 times higher than Work for the Dole programs in urban areas. Can you tell me

whether your department is talking with the federal government about how CDP's Work for the Dole scheme is unfairly affecting people in NT remote Indigenous communities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have raised this issue directly with the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I have discussed it with the federal Labor ATSI Caucus, or members of it. Some of them came through Darwin before Garma, such as Warren Snowdon, Pat Dodson and others.

I also had a conversation with Ged Kearney and Sally McManus from the union movement about the impact—there are multiple facets to the issues we have with how CDP is working. There is a growing campaign regarding how we provide proper full-time employment remotely. CDP is a federal program, so our extent is limited to advice. I have spoken with my team about how we want to get involved with this issue in relation to working groups, advice and other things. But from our point of view, in some respects what is underpinning this—CDP or other—is jobs.

What are we doing about creating local employment remotely? I will use the housing example. We were trying to find a way to use government money to deliver certain outcomes and sustainable local employment at the same time. So the housing program will be designed around that.

We want all the other things we do with government in local communities to be the same. How do we work with kids in primary school and say that teacher, nurse or cop in the local community should be a local? How do we get that through schools and jobs in the community to create a stable core of locals?

Some of that will be a difficult, long-term task; others can be immediate. The housing program is already showing a pickup in sustainable local employment with people being trained in what they need. You are not training for training's sake, as has been done in the past—train up a bunch of people and hopefully there will be carpentry jobs at the end of it. In the housing program you can train people to the exact work that is needed.

We are working on sustainable employment. I think we can all agree there are some issues with CDP, as there has been consistently in the bush, especially the application of it. I was in Umbakumba a while back with the then candidate for Arnhem, and there were some issues with the breaching and fining side of CDP. We had seen some subsistence theft in the aged care there.

It might sound good in theory in Canberra, but in practice on the ground remotely it does not work. There are some hearings coming up in the Northern Territory to discuss these issues with the senate committee.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Community Housing – NT Economy

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

How will the government's investment in community housing support vulnerable Territorians and provide a boost to the local Northern Territory economy?

ANSWER

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very proud to call Territory property developers forward to submit proposals to lease dwellings for public housing. The government will underpin those opportunities with offering six-year leases. This is an important policy area. It provides financial security for the property developer to get their project off the ground, and it stimulates construction.

As a government, we know the construction sector is one which feeds through the middle economy and puts bread on the table for Territorians. It is an important policy, where we are leveraging public assets to deliver returns. We have an unacceptable public housing waitlist. This policy is directly related to using innovation to address that.

Budget 2017 also delivers \$10m into the community housing sector. We are calling on property developers to come forward and partner with government to design and develop new opportunities for public housing in terms of supply and management.

We want to hear from developers and the construction sector in the Northern Territory about the shifting of up to 750 dwellings into a community housing model. We have some great examples in the Northern Territory. The Venture Housing Company have already conducted some great partnerships with Territory developers and the construction sector to deliver the new community model, something very new for the Northern Territory.

As I said yesterday, I have the privilege of doing research in the south of the country where we are seeing jurisdictions creating great opportunities and outcomes. That is where we are taking this policy with our five-year housing strategy. These are three good policy areas.

It is alarming when you get into a job like this to discover that the previous CLP administration did very little to leverage those public assets to create new opportunities. They squandered the economic opportunities of the INPEX project. Now we have a Leader of the Opposition who is the only one in the Territory criticising the Labor government for creating and saving jobs to grow the Northern Territory.

Telstra Services in Remote Areas

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for CORPORATE and INFORMATION SERVICES

What is the government doing to put pressure on Telstra to provide modern technology mobile telephone services in Belyuen, Wagait, Batchelor, Dundee, Daly River, Acacia Hills, and as you would have seen last night, Adelaide River?

Residents of these towns are sick of substandard, Third World services. Telstra's neglect is affecting businesses, damaging tourism and endangering lives, as we tragically saw in Litchfield Park earlier this year. 3G is old technology.

What are you doing to get Telstra to fix the problem?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I was in Canberra last week meeting the federal Minister Nash on the issue of telecommunications in the bush and across the width and breadth of the Northern Territory, including outside your electorate, Leader of the Opposition.

We have a huge challenge in front of us.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms MOSS: I am hoping that the Leader of the Opposition wants to hear about what we have been doing. We have been very active. First of all there has been a three-year co-investment program with Telstra. The Leader of the Opposition should know this, as it is a program that started under the former government. That partnership has been positive for the Northern Territory in terms of getting more communities connected. The Member for Namatjira was with Telstra when there was greater coverage in Titjikala and recently in Manyalluk; I know the Member for Arnhem has welcomed that.

This is a huge challenge. It will not be solved overnight. I meet regularly with Telstra; the Chief Minister and I met with them last week. They were here for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. We have been partnering with them for 26 years. They are very invested in the Northern Territory. I look forward to continuing to work with them on the next stages of the co-investment program. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will join with us in our push to get the federal government to invest more in telecommunications across the Northern Territory.

Mr Higgins: Oh, here we go! Rattle the tin again.

Ms MOSS: Yes, we are back here again because provision of telecommunications is an important issue ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance. My question was very specific. It was about Belyuen, Wagait, Batchelor, Dundee and all those other areas that immediately butt up against Darwin.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Daly. The minister is answering the question in a general sense.

Ms MOSS: As I said, we work in strong partnership with Telstra to ensure we are continuing to connect communities across the Northern Territory. As the Leader of the Opposition should know, it is a challenge. I hope he joins with us to help get more funding in this important area across the Northern Territory. Quite frankly, it is another area in which we could all be fighting more strongly for Territorians. It is all well and good to ...

Mrs Lambley: You are the minister. You are paid to do it.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms MOSS: The federal government is paid to do it too, Member for Araluen. I have just been in Canberra advocating for Territorians. I welcome you to speak to us about the issues in your electorate, please do. I can get the department to talk to you if you have specific concerns. I have just come back from Canberra where I spoke on this very issue ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Jobs – Indigenous Territorians

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

How is this government investing in jobs in the bush for Indigenous Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know members of government are very passionate about making sure we are creating jobs across the Northern Territory and I am pleased to support that in my role. This week I have spoken about World Ranger Day, which was on 31 July, and the fact we announced grant programs.

The reality is, Aboriginal ranger groups are vital to the work we do in conserving land and sea across the Northern Territory and the preservation of our natural assets. Many of them are under-resourced for the work they do, and we are proud to have announced and opened those grants.

I want to provide an update on the Aboriginal carbon unit, which has been established to facilitate and deliver carbon abatement land economic development opportunities on Indigenous land. We are investing \$500 000 a year in it and we have a dedicated officer. There is membership from the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation, the Chief Minister's department and Bushfires NT. We held a forum yesterday. There are many people from land councils and organisations across the Northern Territory who are very excited about the enormous potential for economic development that is offered through carbon farming.

This was talked about at the Australian ranger forum, at the CLC camp in Alice Springs. This is an economic opportunity for people in remote areas. There is some tremendous work being done in the Member for Arnhem's electorate, particularly on this and by the Jawoyn rangers. I am pleased to be doing that work.

I imagine the discussion paper for the legislative change to the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* will be out over the course of the next month. Then we can consult with land councils and Aboriginal ranger groups on that important commitment we have made to them as well.

Speaking of my visit to Canberra, I also made representation to Minister Frydenberg's office on wanting some certainty about the future of funding for the North Australia Fire Information tool. It is a website that is used by a number of different ranger groups ...

Mr Higgins: Go and visit the Member for Solomon and the Member for Lingiari. Did you rattle the tin with them a bit as well?

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms MOSS: Madam Speaker, seriously! Maybe the Leader of the Opposition would like to come with me next time and talk to his colleagues.

The North Australia Fire Information tool is exceptionally important and I am pleased to continue to advocate for certainty on that so those organisations can continue to use it. I would appreciate that advice coming back from the federal government soon.

VISITORS

Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities Advisory Group

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of members of the Animal Management in Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities Advisory Group. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. Enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Tennant Creek Mining and Resources

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

I had the privilege of travelling with you, minister, to Tennant Creek recently where we attended the opening of the Edna Beryl gold mine. Can you inform the Assembly of how the government is investing in the Tennant Creek region to develop it as the Territory's resources services hub?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank the member, as my assistant minister for Primary Industry and Resources. He has come with me on the road as a fierce advocate to industry for government.

I had the pleasure of being in Tennant Creek with the Member for Barkly; the Chief Minister; the Member for Fong Lim; and the Member for Lingjari, Warren Snowdon.

On 12 July the construction phase commenced on the Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline, an \$800m project. Importantly, for this government and for Territorians, the \$800m commencement of the pipeline creates—I will say this slowly—900 jobs during construction and up to 600 jobs for Territorians. We have been talking about locals, and this government wants to create opportunities for locals to have a job and win contracts.

We are talking about \$112m earmarked for local contractors and more than 100 contracts for the Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline alone. That happened on 12 July. We are calling that week 'creek week' because on 13 July I had the pleasure of opening the Edna Beryl gold mine with the Member for Barkly; the Chief Minister; the Member for Fong Lim; and the Member for Lingjari, Warren Snowdon.

Invites went out everywhere. It is the first gold mine in that region in 12 years. We are a government that is getting on with the job, we are keeping our heads down and getting on with the job of providing opportunities for Territorians to have a job, stay in their town, win contracts, have a future and not have to travel anywhere. That is what we want to do in our four years, make sure we look after Territorians first.

The local community is excited by the feeling in Tennant Creek. It is buzzing. The shopping centres, cafes, restaurants and hotels are full. Not only that, we have the Mount Peake vanadium project and the Ammaroo Phosphate Project. This means hundreds of jobs for Territorians, a future for Territorians. We want to get on with doing what we have to, to provide a future for Territorians.

Police in Alice Springs

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Yesterday I asked you about figures I was provided by the Police Association—100 full-time vacant positions at the moment within the NT Police Force, 21 of which are vacant in Alice Springs. Those positions have all become vacant over the last 12 months, I was told this by the Police Association yesterday.

What are you doing about this crisis within the NT Police?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I met with the Police Commissioner today, because the figures the Member for Araluen was quoting had not been raised with me and I wanted to check the situation. They are not figures the Police Commissioner has.

The member spoke specifically about Alice Springs, and the advice from the Police Commissioner is that police based in Alice Springs fluctuates between 200 and 220 based on remote rostering and there is not that vacancy situation. The commissioner did not confirm the Member for Araluen's numbers.

The Opposition Leader asked about overall numbers, and I am happy to talk about that as well. He talked about June to July, but I have done a bit of a favour here. I went with the pay period immediately at the election, which shows a couple of extra police. At that pay period it was 1419 and the current pay period it is 1420. There is one extra police officer from that period, plus the four-year recruitment plan.

The numbers the Member for Araluen quoted do not bear out with the numbers from police. The numbers that the Leader of the Opposition has do not bear out either.

What I have said consistently—because there seems to be constant games played with police numbers on how they are counted before and after the election—is that I will be held to account on the numbers in the annual report. They have been there year-in, year-out for an extensive period. For better or worse, the annual report number is how I will be measured. When we had this argument last time, with the then CLP, even the ministers for police disagreed about the count. On the same day in two different interviews you had the Chief Minister at the Police Association saying one thing, and the police minister on radio saying a completely different thing with different numbers.

To make sure there is one consistent measure which I am held against, it is the annual report signed off by the Police Commissioner, for better or worse.

I have sat down with the Police Commissioner and worked through the numbers quoted yesterday by the Member for Araluen and the Leader of the Opposition. I am happy to be held to account to the numbers reported in the annual report for years under both Labor and CLP governments.

We have that four-year recruitment plan so that there is certainty about police numbers. I do not think we could anything more.

Education – Investment

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for EDUCATION

The schools in my electorate of Katherine told me they have benefitted from additional funding under this government and that schools are rebuilding their workforce after the devastating cuts from the CLP. Can you update the House on how this government's investment in education has resulted in more jobs in the Territory and better outcomes for our Territory kids?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the story in education is a good one. When we talk about jobs and numbers of teachers it is only good news for our government.

We know that giving every child the best start in life is the right and smart thing to do. Unfortunately the CLP did not realise that and we had four years where our schools were deprived of funds. There were cuts to school funding and we saw teacher numbers reduced by nearly 300 FTE.

We have invested \$124m and delivered on our promise of \$20m into school bank accounts at the start of this school year. Now parents, teachers and students across the department, across education, know there is an additional 178 FTE—additional staff—in our schools from August last year.

I have told you before, educators make great citizens. They are the people we need in the Territory. The good news is that some of those are new recruits, some are new to the Territory, but it is also jobs for local people.

Now we have global budgets. Schools can look at who they recruit. Most of those are teachers, but some schools like Bakewell, in the Member for Brennan's electorate, have chosen to put in counsellors, youth workers or trainers into their setting.

It is wonderful to see 178 extra FTE. When you talk about additional people into the Territory, giving people jobs is great news.

In the Territory, 70% of our schools are in the bush. These additional positions are not just in urban areas, but are in bush schools and remote communities. We are providing pathways for people in remote communities through those additional jobs.

Families as First Teachers is something I often talk about; 67% of the FaFT workforce is Indigenous. It is wonderful to be able to see those people having real jobs in our community. Member for Nhulunbuy, when you are talking about CDEP, it is great to see there are jobs for Aboriginal educators in our community.

Our government has a target of 166 more Aboriginal teachers by 2026. We are well on track as there have been an additional 20 Aboriginal teachers in the past 12 months. That is something I am passionate about, making sure we get to our target of 166 more Aboriginal teachers in our schools.

All we saw were cuts under the CLP. I am happy to be delivering on our election commitments on education.

Gambling Laws in the Northern Territory

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Minister, I refer you to the website your government set up, sa.nt.gov.au, to announce your strategic partnership with South Australia and a joint Cabinet meeting between the two Labor governments in May this year. Given we are now in a strategic partnership with South Australia, when will you get your strategic partner, the South Australian Labor government, to cancel its proposed point of consumption gambling tax because of the havoc it will wreak on the Territory?

Chief Minister, will you take the side of Territorians or the side of your grubby Labor mates in Adelaide?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will not use the language of the Leader of the Opposition, but this is clearly something we are fighting SA and other states on. SA is the vanguard, but not the only one in this space. Other states are looking at doing a point of consumption tax as well.

Our Treasurer has been one-out at either those meetings or MinCos with the other treasurers, including no protection from the federal treasurer. We have an issue in which South Australia has commenced its consumption tax against what we believe is good policy. The best, safest place to gamble is in the Northern Territory. We have world-class regulations and an environment that is good for people who choose to bet.

We want Australians, when they gamble, to gamble safely. Online gaming and poker cannot be done in Australia. You hear stories about Australians gambling on unsafe websites overseas. We have a safe environment here. As Territorians we should be proud of the fact we have developed that world-class regulation. We have 350 jobs.

I raised this directly with Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison when he came to Darwin. I was not reassured by the conversation that the feds understand the extent of this issue. They often have a crack at us about having own-source revenue. This is own-source revenue for us. It is very concerning that the federal government's response in this space seems to be slow and indecisive.

The best case scenario is for us to convince the feds into a national regime that provides some security and certainty because we know for a fact that NSW and Victoria—let us be clear, this is not a political thing; this is states looking at what might be a cheeky way to poach some money and do the NT over. They are doing a short-sighted cash grab, in our opinion.

We have made it very clear ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr GUNNER: We are working very hard to protect jobs based in the Territory, and the best way to do that ...

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Youth Crime – Prevention and Support

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Can you please explain how this government is investing in programs to divert young people away from a life of crime? What is being done to support victims of youth crime?

ANSWER

Thank you for your question. I know that you are a passionate advocate for not only young people, but also victims of crime in your electorate. I very much enjoy working with you, having that passion, because we have a lot of work to do in the reform of our youth justice system.

We have focused on three main messages and three main areas of work. Firstly, we want to stop crime before it happens. Secondly, we want to make sure victims have a greater voice in the justice system. Thirdly, we want to make sure we help our kids, who are our future. I know it sounds cliché, but that is the future of the Territory. When we talk about jobs, the future and our economic future, we are talking about the future for our kids and we need to make that they are able to take that challenge going forward.

This week I have had the pleasant experience of talking to some victims of crime. This is something we have all had to do in this Chamber. We have all had to listen to difficult stories. It was a pleasure to meet with Wayne Woods and Shirley Downing who have both gone through the victim conferencing, through the Jesuit Social Services.

By putting victims first and giving them a voice by directly confronting—where they are comfortable, this is all victim led and up to the victim how much they want to be involved. When the victim faces the person who has caused them harm, it gives them a sense that they have had a voice in the justice system. We know it has a good outcome for victims. That was the message, loud and clear. Both Wayne and Shirley said they found this a positive process. They had been very angry and upset when they were victims of crime but this gave them a voice and a place to be heard.

It is easy for people to talk about being soft on crime; we need to do the things that work. This type of approach gives victims a higher rate of satisfaction when they do not go through the handling of the justice system. This is not the soft option. Kids have to face up to the person that they have directly harmed.

Many kids find this much harder than going to court. We are committed to the system. I am proud to have met both Shirley and Wayne. I thank them for standing up and talking about a difficult experience. We are a government delivering real results, looking at the long-term outcomes for young people and giving victims of crime a voice.

Gaming Machine Figures

Mr WOOD to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

For many years, the numbers of gaming machines, gross profit and the tax taken from those machines for every hotel and club in the Territory have been published in the annual reports of either the licencing commission or the Director-General for licencing.

Could you please explain, in light of the government promise of openness and transparency, why those figures are no longer published and why they were difficult to extract from the government when I asked for them, or was this a pre-election promise with the AHA?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, gaming machine gambling is an issue across the Northern Territory. Under the former government we saw an explosion in the number of gaming machines in the Territory. This was not backed by evidence; the gambling prevalence survey at the time was well out of date. The previous government dragged its feet on doing a survey and releasing that information.

Gambling can cause harm to Territorians, particularly families. It is an addiction and we need to make sure we have the appropriate support. In terms of those figures, I will take some of the member's question on notice and provide a further update.

This government has put a cap on gaming machines. The increase under the previous government was not in the best interest of Territorians, particularly in the lack of evidence, with the lack of that gambling prevalence survey.

We have concerns regarding the numbers and the explosion of numbers under the CLP government. I will take on notice the second part of your question and update you at a further point in time.

Darwin and Alice Springs CBDs

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

How will this government's investment in initiatives to activate the CBDs in Darwin and Alice Springs create jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Namatjira is very invested in ensuring our CBDs are enlivened and properly represent the vibrant and creative community we have.

The creation of Live Darwin and Live Alice through Mbantua is the product of listening to the local community, businesses and Territorians who have told us we need to do more to activate the spaces in our CBDs and bring more people into the CBD area. That is something we all care deeply about.

We have taken action to make sure there is a solid program in place. As part of activating our CBDs, I was pleased to see the Member for Namatjira open the program in Alice Springs, and to stand with the Chief Minister and the Member for Port Darwin as we talked about the Live Darwin program. This program offers up to \$50 000 of grants to our local artists and organisations to undertake arts and cultural programs in our CBDs, not just for locals, but the enormous number of visitors who come through the CBDs.

The programs will offer two funding rounds of activity up to 30 June 2018. In Darwin we have two incredible creative producers in CJ Fraser-Bell and Katy Moir, who are well respected in the arts and cultural sector. Their production support will be provided by Brown's Mart.

Anyone who went to A Night in the Mall—the Member for Port Darwin and a number of other members were there—would have seen how incredible Darwin city was that night. They would have also seen the start of our Live Darwin Hub at the bottom of the Paspaley building. The Paspaley family have been very generous in allowing us to put the Live Darwin arts hub there. The whole program will be coordinated out of that space. If you have not seen it yet, please go. The amazing Instagram exhibition that was at the NT Library is there, as well as the Parrtjima skirts and they are absolutely beautiful. They are from the Parrtjima Festival in Alice Springs last year. I encourage everyone to have a look.

We have received a huge response of 41 applications for the Darwin round, and I look forward to making further announcements about what the program looks like. I am very excited to see the ideas coming through. It has been very warmly received in Alice Springs and Darwin, and is a really exciting time to showcase our identity as the Northern Territory. It is a brilliant program and I look forward to building off it.

Mining and Major Projects – FIFO Workers

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

The Chief Minister's thought bubble yesterday raised the spectre of government threats to mines and other major projects that use FIFO workers. Is the minister aware of how much research has gone in to the proposal? For example, how many workers currently fly in and out of the Territory? Is the minister aware of which agencies will be in charge of your new red tape in this process, and will this form part of the mine approval process?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I attended the SEAAOC opening and listened to the Chief Minister's speech. It is important to have a presence at SEAAOC and the Mining the Territory conference, which is not only about resources, but all the other mineral sectors. It also fills up our hotels and restaurants around town at this time of year.

Mr Higgins: What about FIFOs?

Mr VOWLES: I will get to FIFOs, Opposition Leader. I still have two-and-a-half minutes. I understand we have 6500 FIFO workers. That is an area we need to address. It was very appropriate for the Chief Minister to mention in front of the industry yesterday that we will not hide away from things we want to do. Governments want to make tough decisions. We will make sure we look after Territorians first.

As I said regarding Edna Beryl gold mine and the Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline, we want jobs and a future for Territorians. We do not want people coming here and then leaving. We want people to come to the Territory to work and stay here. This is what we want to do with our jobs.

The Chief Minister and I meet with industry weekly or monthly. We have constant contact with the industry; we raise our concerns and they raise theirs. That is part of being an open, transparent and consultative government. We are here to look after Territorians. We have 6000 FIFO workers. Yes, we understand that if you are a FIFO worker you could be categorised coming out of Darwin, flying to McArthur River or to the Tanami. We are looking at interstate FIFOs coming in, not intrastate ...

Mr Higgins interjecting.

Mr VOWLES: We will sit down, as we have done for nearly a year in our government, Leader of Opposition, with the industry and work through policies we want to implement. We are doing that in a number of areas about legislation, security mining bonds and different policy directions. What we have learnt from the four-year term of your government is we must talk to people before we ram it through parliament. We want to work with industry, not against it. Not just with the mining industry, but Tourism and Primary Industries—every industry. We want to sit down with them and find a solution ...

Mr Gunner: He will be a pro-FIFO.

Mr VOWLES: Do you want to ban FIFO? That is not cool at all. We will continue to sit down with industry to work through how we can get jobs for Territorians and keep people here.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.

Written Questions Unanswered

Mrs LAMBLEY to Madam SPEAKER

Madam Speaker, I have a procedural issue to raise, pursuant to Standing Order 114.2. It is about Written Questions not being answered within the 30-day limit. Over the last couple of months, I have ...

Ms Fyles: You should have come to estimates.

Mrs LAMBLEY: ... written many questions. Despite the estimates process, I continue to generate many Written Questions for the government. I draw to the attention of the government question number 80, 85, 114 and 113 which were all submitted well over 30 days ago to the Chief Minister and the Minister for Territory Families.

Madam Speaker, I ask that you write to the Chief Minister seeking reasons for the delay.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, in accordance with Standing Order 114.2 I will write to the relevant minister seeking advice as to why information has not been provided to the questions in the timeframe. I will do that today.