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Home Improvement Scheme

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your so-called fast-track projects are not creating jobs today. David Malone from the Master Builders Association has left the door wide open for you today. He said:

... we absolutely agree that there is no better time than right now to inject funds into the economy.

He also said:

... there is scope to be way more ambitious—to implement a revised scheme ...

Own it, Chief Minister, rebadge it, expand it, but it is time to turn the tap back on. Can you answer the question asked by the *NT News* today: when will you stop being so outright arrogant and start listening to Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It gives me another opportunity to explain again why we do not support the Home Improvement Scheme and why we took an alternative plan to the last Territory election.

We continued the Home Improvement scheme for about a month, till 1 October, while our first home buyers and renovations schemes came in. As of today, of the money committed to the Home Improvement Scheme, \$7.8m has been spent. There is still \$5m flowing from that scheme that has not been redeemed yet. When the opposition says, 'Look around; the economy is struggling', they are talking about a moment in time when the Home Improvement Scheme is still in full effect.

The Home Improvement Scheme was not delivering and there was no return to Territory taxpayers. There was nothing we could point to and say, 'Here is a return to Territory taxpayers'.

David Malone's comments, which the Leader of the Opposition quoted, were made last week, prior to the announcement of the \$22m stimulus package we have put out. They are old comments made prior to the Treasurer's announcement on Sunday.

The full amount given out under the Home Improvement Scheme was \$12.6m. As of today, \$5m of that remains unredeemed. That is work that is still flowing. When the CLP says, 'Look around you; the economy is struggling', it is directly criticising the impacts of the Home Improvement Scheme. It is acknowledging that the Home Improvement Scheme did not deliver.

We need a more thoughtful approach to this. At the last election we said we would get the money flowing locally, provide certainty and restore confidence. The very first things we did were change how Buy Local works and apply it to capital grants, and change the first home buyers and home renovation schemes. Then we made the tough decisions—we did not outsource them—on how to restructure the pipeline of infrastructure works to make sure there is a mixture of packages and the time line was working across the Territory for all. We have done that difficult task. We turned our mind to the \$22m stimulus package ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. The question was very direct. When will the Chief Minister stop being so outright arrogant and restore the ...

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

Mr GUNNER: Madam Speaker, I have very rationally explained why we are not supporting the Home Improvement Scheme and have chosen to go down a path that sees a return to Territory taxpayers. The CLP has come in here in a position of economic ignorance and does not realise that the Home Improvement Scheme, in full effect right now, is not delivering. Five-million dollars of the \$12m remains unspent, so when they say the economy is struggling they are pointing directly at the results of the Home Improvement Scheme, where we have not seen a return to Territory taxpayers.

VISITORS
Good Shepherd Lutheran College

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of a combined Stage 1 one Stage 2 class from Good Shepherd Lutheran College, accompanied by their teachers, Jacob Fajzullin and Jack Williams. Welcome to Parliament House. They are from the Member for Nelson's electorate. Bombard him with requests for sponsorship.

Members: Hear, hear!

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
Home Improvement Scheme

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

One-thousand-and-fifty-six Territorians signed a petition to the government to bring back the Home Improvement Scheme. Those Territorians are the same homeowners you sneered at yesterday. Why do the voices of these ordinary Territorians not mean anything to you?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I appreciate that 1000 people have signed the CLP's petition, and where they are coming from; they want to see a stimulus in the Territory economy and they want to see action taken.

We took a very clear set of policies to the last Territory election, and I see a clear endorsement for the policies we took to the last Territory election. I see 18 strong Labor Party people who have advocated to get money flowing locally in the Territory economy, providing certainty and restoring confidence.

We took a very clear plan to the election about how we intended to do that. We brought in the Buy Local changes; we made the changes to the first home buyers scheme and the home renovation grant scheme. It was a difficult task, but we restructured the infrastructure pipeline, bringing works forward and making sure work is flowing across the Territory. We have provided \$22m in stimulus that will flow to community groups and others.

I understand exactly what was driving people when they signed that petition—the desire to see action and work in the Northern Territory. I say to them, I have heard you. We will get work happening in the Northern Territory and we will support jobs in the Northern Territory.

Government Promises

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

The opposition will hold this government to account. We will compare what you promise to what you deliver. The opposition has asked you question after question seeking the most basic information, and you have reverted to stories, rhetoric and rants, and have not provided a single detail about the raft of government promises you are charged with delivering. Yesterday we asked how many government employees were local to remote communities in which they reside. You said you had the information but you did not provide it. Will you provide that information today?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that was an interesting start to a question. I will ignore all the negativity. Yesterday I advised the Member for Spillett that the program had started.

It is important to put on the record, once again, for the opposition with four ears, that it is about local consultation. We will make sure this is different. You guys did not get it for four years; you did not get it for 27 years.

We are debating this today as well, so I have prepared an extensive response for the Leader of the Opposition. Let us go through some points in the time I have to answer. The provision of government employee housing for locally-recruited government employees is part of the Northern Territory Government's 10-year \$1.1bn remote housing investment. The initiative will provide \$200m between 2017-18 and 2026-27. It will deliver additional government employee housing for locally-recruited government employees.

As at 6 October 2016 there were 716 Indigenous Northern Territory Public Sector employees residing in 96 communities, homelands and parks across the Northern Territory. These employees work for 14 government departments, noting that 566 employees, 79%, are employed by the Departments of Health and Education, and I congratulate them on that.

It is important to note that we are doing an update analysis because this is new policy. We are in the field consulting and updating this analysis to make sure we get it right. We are consulting across the Northern Territory to make sure we identify the total up-to-date number and plan for future Indigenous employees.

Not all employees will be eligible for government employee housing. We will assess housing stock, and it will be important to match employees to housing stock when it comes online. It will be imperative to get communities involved that will celebrate the first government employees in regional and remote communities who enter a government house. It will be important to have local decision-making as part of this.

I have lots more to say about this, Leader of the Opposition, in regard to the motion that will come on in this House as part of General Business this afternoon.

VISITORS
Jambi University

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students and lecturers from Jambi University, Central Sumatra, hosted by Dr Daniel Kelly from CDU Law School. Welcome to Parliament House in the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Environment Protection Authority – Changes

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

Could you please say:

1. why the government sacked the EPA Chair, Dr Bill Freeland
2. if a new chair has been appointment and, if so, was the position advertised
3. what changes you are making to the EPA
4. if the EPA will remain independent or just become part of your department?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his incredibly important question. We were elected on a strong platform of environmental reform, and making sure we have a strong regulatory framework in the Territory is a really important part of that. We have unique environmental assets in the Territory, which need to be protected. We have an incredible amount of work to do on our reform agenda.

There were a number of aspects to your question, which I will go through. We have a new direction for environmental reform. I do not think it will be a shock to anybody that we feel there needs to be a really strong departure from the way environmental matters and policy was approached over the last few years.

I notified Dr Freeland of my intention to appoint a new chair to the EPA. With a new direction it is not unusual for a government to also look at new leadership to take us to this new chapter of environmental

reform in the Territory. We have a new chair for the NT EPA, Dr Paul Vogel. He comes to the Territory with 14 years of environmental protection experience in working in EPAs in other jurisdictions. He has spent much of his working life in roles such as this and in environmental reform.

We are looking forward to continuing to work with the EPA to make sure we have strong environmental reform in the Territory.

In regard to your question about changes to the EPA, Member for Nelson, we need to look at how we strengthen the NT EPA. We need to make sure it is able to continue to deliver independent advice to government on a range of environmental matters. Its role is incredibly important to the work we need to undertake as a government. As part of the environmental reform we are currently working on I have asked that we also look at the structure of the NT EPA, and strengthening it, which is important.

The chairperson of the NT EPA was selected from members of the NT EPA, which is how that appointment is made. There is a vacancy on the board as a result of the resignation of Dr Freeland. The EOI process is open until January, and that is a good process which will allow us to, hopefully, get another very good, highly-qualified member of the NT EPA to help us drive environmental reform and increase transparency and accountability in our environmental policy in the Territory.

Police Attendance at Crime Scene

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

I will outline an account of an incident in Palmerston as reported to me to illustrate a matter of growing concern in your government's capacity to deal with law and order.

Two teens broke into a constituent's car. They were caught on CCTV. When the police finally arrived they were not too interested in helping, despite the evidence. Two days later the partner spotted two boys. She rang the police but they do not attend. The other partner was phoned in frustration, and he arrived. He apprehended one of the boys and flagged down a passing police car. The police stopped and then arrested the boy. It is revealed the boy is wanted for other crimes and for breaching bail. When asked why they had not attended promptly the police officer said it was due to heightened scrutiny resulting from the Don Dale inquiry. This is very serious. What actions will you take to encourage our police officers to act fearlessly to serve and protect?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for his question. It is an interesting one, and I will follow up with the Police Commissioner about the police officer's answer.

There are many things we are doing in this space. We have spoken before in this Chamber about the acute, medium-term and long-term things we need to do. At the acute end we want to see police being responsive to problems—absolutely. We are looking to put on extra police, essentially honouring the broken promise of police numbers from the last term. We are looking to ensuring police have the tools they need to respond to crime.

That was a concerning comment at the end, but I will double check that with the Police Commissioner.

In the medium term, one of the things we want to reverse—we are looking at it as a Cabinet—is the decision made early in the CLP government to cut funding to wraparound services by \$4.8m. We want to make sure we spend time with children before they become troubled kids to make sure they never get down ...

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance; the thrust of the question related to the confidence of the police officers and what you will do to restore their confidence.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, it is not a point of order. The Chief Minister has ample time to answer the question.

Mr GUNNER: It is a mistake if you do not look at this as a big picture and just look at things in isolation. One thing that provides confidence to people is knowing there is a plan that looks at the acute end, the medium term and the long term. At the medium-term end we need to make sure there are services looking after our kids and working with them before they become troubled kids or problems for the police.

The police want to be confident that support services are there so they do not feel they are doing all the work in this space and that everything is breaking down—waiting for a reactive solution. The police are often called after the problem has occurred, not beforehand. We need to do more in before the problems occur—the long- and medium-term solutions.

We recognise that problems are occurring; you cannot ignore the acute end. You have to work with police, and I am working with the Police Commissioner. We have said very clearly that we will honour the broken promise regarding police numbers so police know there will have extra people on the front line with them.

On the back of the work done by the CLP, we have rolled out body-worn cameras, making sure police have the tools they need. There has been a reduction in accusations against police officers in their performance while on duty since wearing those cameras. We heard from the Attorney-General today about evidence that further supports the body-worn cameras and how evidence from them can be used. We are sending a very positive signal to police about how we want to support them by providing extra police officers as well as the tools they need, and by working with our police officers. We are doing that at the acute end, and police officers know we also have plans for the medium- and long-term.

Member for Barkly – Alleged Controversy

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Yesterday I listened to you take the moral high ground against the former CLP government, but you have not been without controversy. You were an accomplice in the dodgy Stella Maris deal, and last year you were exposed in the Hamburger report as the minister responsible for making the \$1bn blunder by building the biggest gaol in Australia for the smallest jurisdiction. Is it wise for people in glass houses to throw stones?

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 109; could I ask you to seek advice on the question; it is essentially asking for an opinion.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, it is out of order because the minister cannot answer whether people in glass houses should not throw stones.

Madam SPEAKER: If you would like to reword your question, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No. I am happy with the question I asked.

Housing – Urban Public Housing Stimulus

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Yesterday you were asked very simple questions about how the fast-tracked an immediate \$5m stimulus for urban public housing will be spent, and you could not answer the question. You talked about a plan to make a plan and said you only just had briefings with your department. It was clear this was a classic case of your government announcing first and working out the details later.

Ten days ago you announced \$10m to be spent this year on Room to Breathe. Can you tell us today, when will the contracts be let, in which communities will the money be spent, and how many bedrooms will be constructed? Surely you are able to give those answers in Question Time today.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there are two parts of that question. Let us focus on the latest stimulus release from the Treasurer and Labor government for urban repairs and maintenance. The program will provide assistance where it needs to support tradies and local businesses. Struggling Territory tradies will have an opportunity to deliver the much-needed upgrades to public housing stock in urban areas.

The Member for Spillett knows the government is bringing forward \$5m on top of the existing program for minor new works and preventative maintenance to urban public housing stock in the five regional centres. It will not only improve the condition of housing; it will also provide stimulus for local business.

Member for Spillett, prequalified contractors are being identified by the department in regional centres and across the greater Darwin area, including those not currently getting work from the department. Scoping

has been undertaken to identify the \$5m of work against specific assets. A more inclusive panel of contractors will be established in each region specific to the stimulus program. The boost to housing repairs and maintenance will deliver better housing for Territorians. It will also create Territory jobs in a sector that is crying out for them after four years of CLP dysfunction and chaos.

As for the Room to Breathe program, we have discussed that a number of times. Once again, the basic premise that you guys do not get is that it is about consultation with Territorians. I do not think you get regional remote communities. I do not think you understand the dynamics and diversity in our regional remote communities, or the policy. You keep asking the same questions, but I will not dictate ...

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: What is the standing order number?

Mr MILLS: I do not know but if he could direct his comments ...

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down, please.

Mr McCARTHY: The premise of this question is that I should dictate to remote communities what we will deliver, where we will deliver it and how we will deliver it. This policy completely reverses that. It is about engagement and building local capacity. In a 10-year program, it is about making sure local people manage all aspects of regional and remote housing—tenancy management and good cyclical repairs and maintenance.

The Room to Breathe program will provide additional rooms and innovative living spaces, and we will get to the point where people in regional remote communities will be building new houses.

The opposition does not get it. If you really do not get it, Member for Spillett, we will get you a briefing.

Warren Park Rugby League Facility

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

In this House yesterday, in answering a question in relation to Warren Park, you said you had been speaking to the NRL and that the peak body, not the government, had been speaking to the rugby league clubs. Further, you said they were seeking a home for NRL NT. Given the only club you have been given a seat at the negotiating table with is South Darwin, and that Warren Park cannot function as a home of rugby league unless all clubs are given equal access, why have you denied other rugby league clubs equal access? Have you established, or do you intend to establish, an independent board to manage your intended home for Top End rugby league?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. NRL NT is the peak body for rugby league in the Territory. As the Opposition Leader well knows, there was a submission—I believe it was from 2012 but it came up again in the Public Accounts Committee—that outlined that it believed Warren Park was the appropriate home for rugby league in the Territory. This will benefit clubs. I am quite surprised; I thought you were listening yesterday because there was a lot going on in the Chamber.

We are very excited about this. This will be very good for our sports community and for rugby league in the Territory. We are very pleased that NRL NT is excited about this. They came and stood by me while we talked about this project. It is interesting—this has been spoken about for well over a year, as the Opposition Leader knows. The now Chief Minister spoke about Warren Park about a year ago and how we would make sure the NRL had a home in the Territory.

That was around the time the former CLP government was telling schools, half-an-hour before an announcement, that they would be losing part of their school grounds to facilitate plans for the home of NRL. Where was the consultation there? I think it is very rich to ask this question.

The local NRL clubs will benefit and the code will benefit from having a home. As I said yesterday, Nigel Roy was very clear in saying one of the biggest things that comes up when speaking to the clubs is the importance of a home for the NRL. You know that and we know that. We have fast-tracked the \$25m project commitment because it will create jobs for local people and a home for NRL. It will allow an

administrative base for NRL NT to continue to grow the code. We are very excited about it and so is the community.

I am sure there are players in your electorate who will be excited about it too because it will give them a home to be able to grow the code. You know that is important; you set out to do it and, unfortunately, you forgot to let a few people know in the process. We are really excited to be taking this on and working with NRL and NRL NT to make sure we have a fantastic facility at the home of sport in Marrara, in the Member for Sanderson's electorate.

We will keep you posted on how that unfolds. We are very excited about this project. Thank you for asking about it because we, along with NRL NT, believe it is important. This is a great project that will give local jobs to local people.

Lifeline

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for HEALTH

On 10 October this year Lifeline closed down, meaning face-to-face counselling and interaction with the Darwin community stopped. It also meant that 35 professionally-trained volunteer jobs came to an end. Considering the Top End has some of the highest rates of suicide in Australia, why were sufficient funds not made available from your government to keep Lifeline going?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his very important question. Lifeline's telephone counselling service does continue to operate in the Northern Territory. Calls made to 13 11 44 will continue to be answered.

This is an issue we inherited upon coming into government. As the Minister for Health, I tried very hard to ensure we had a service that was provided from within the Territory. Lifeline has a structure where it takes calls in centres around Australia. Previously our calls were taken in Darwin, but if someone was on the phone already within the Darwin facility, those calls went to other call centres.

The funding was a long, ongoing issue between the government and Lifeline. The previous government, as well as our government, had offered significant funding, which we were advised was enough for the service by Lifeline nationally. Lifeline in the Territory wanted a significant increase, to \$0.5m, something the previous and current governments were unable to do. We negotiated in good faith. I met with Lifeline representatives in the Northern Territory formally in my office. I have also continued discussions post-Lifeline closing. It was closing as we came into government.

I assure Territorians that the number will continue to be answered. People who are in need of support will not notice any difference.

I have been negotiating with people in the Northern Territory who are passionate about Lifeline and how we can continue to offer that service in the Territory, and what the makeup would be. They have advised me that they would like to take some time over the coming months to look at how they could do that. We have also met Lifeline nationally, and we will enter into a contractual arrangement with it to make sure the Territory is playing its part and we are providing our support to this very important organisation.

It was disappointing that the service in the Territory closed its doors, but the delivery of the service is still available. Territorians will still be able to place calls to that number. We will make sure the Northern Territory government is providing support to Lifeline nationally so we are doing our bit.

Having a local organisation here is something we value. We know Lifeline does a lot more than just answer calls. It is an important part of the community. Those conversations have continued. The people in the Territory have advised me that, for the moment, it would be best if we sign a contract with the national Lifeline organisation for a period of a year so services can be provided.

This government is committed to Lifeline. We were willing to negotiate. The Chief Minister indicated to me, as the minister responsible, that additional resources would be available, but we were advised by the national organisation that the amount of \$490 000 requested was not necessary. It was a considerable increase from the previous amount.

I thank you for the question. It is something I am happy to keep the House updated about.

Crime Prevention – Government's Plan

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

At a time when the community is feeling the effects of an economic downturn, crime seems to be on the increase. Almost daily we hear of cars being stolen and trashed in Palmerston. It is also very confronting to hear of senior citizens and even a disabled Centralian being assaulted and robbed in public.

We hear of the immediate effect of crime on victims, but we do not hear much about what immediate action occurs to offenders. Many in the community understand that crime is complex and that early intervention is important, but what specific and current actions will your government support to let offenders know the community does not accept or tolerate brazen assaults, thefts and damage?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for his question. There are a couple of things we can do. As Chief Minister, I say it is not acceptable. The best way to send the message that it is not acceptable is a police officer arresting the offender. That is the best message you can send.

I support the police in all the work they do. If someone commits a crime the police should arrest them. We have announced a police station for the suburbs of Palmerston to provide extra support for the police. We have also spoken about CCTV and other things, such as additional police numbers to provide an extra response on the front line. There is a range of things we want to do in Palmerston, with police, at the front end.

In regard to the medium term, I mentioned the cuts to wraparound services before and the need for the Minister for Territory Families and me to work on that. The \$8m a year we intend to invest in students with high-level needs, which includes behavioural needs, has also been mentioned in this House. The Minister for Education has spoken about the Palmerston re-engagement centre and the work we want to do in this space.

Part of the heavy lifting we need to do in government includes making sure we do everything we can to prevent crime from occurring. What can you do before kids go off the rails and things go downhill—the Palmerston re-engagement centre, the work on the wraparound services and the long-term work we do to support parents and young kids, making that difference generationally. We have to be responsive. We need to care for the victims. We do not want victims in the Northern Territory, and we have to make sure we do everything we can to reduce crime and keep the pressure down.

We need to make sure that, going forward, across the length of this term and any term of future governments, we are making a difference by investing in our kids. We need to make sure we are getting on top of generational issues.

I meet with the Police Commissioner regularly to discuss what is going on operationally, what is happening and what else I can do on behalf of the government. We saw the legislation introduced into the House today on body-worn cameras. It will help us on the front line, making sure we are supporting police at the point of incident or arrest, and making sure we get successful convictions.

It is important. It is about the message we send. It goes right back to the start of my answer and the end of the question, about the message you send. We have to make sure when someone commits a crime the police officer feels fully supported in how they conduct the arrest. There needs to be options after that on sentencing and things we can do to make sure we do not create a repeat problem. It is an important task that we are taking on as a government.

Labor Commitments and Costings

Mrs LAMBLEY to TREASURER

Today I was unable to find a comprehensive list of your Labor election commitments and costings on any website. There was not one to be found. Given your mantra of being open and honest, will you table a full list of your election commitments and costings in parliament and give Territorians regular updates as to how they are progressing? Under the Henderson Labor government that is exactly what they used to do.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for her question. Yes, I am happy to provide and table them. We are committed to ensuring we regularly report back on the progress of our election commitments. It is important that people can see if we are honouring them.

When we provided our costings to Treasury, prior to the election, it was an extensive document. All the information was there. We would be happy to provide you a copy. We will arrange that.

It is very much our intention, through this term of government, to continue to update and report back on the progress of delivering our election commitments. We have made quite a start to looking at the delivery of those projects, particularly the infrastructure projects. It is important for a government to report back and be held to account on its commitments, making sure it honours them.

Thank you, Member for Araluen. I will get that document to you.

Warren Park Rugby League Facility – Consultation

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

Can you name two rugby league clubs, other than South Darwin, that you would expect to have been consulted about Warren Park?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. As I have stated on numerous occasions, we are working through the peak body, NRL NT. It is a peak that represents a number of sporting clubs and the strategic vision of the sport in the Territory, as you well know. We are working very closely with NRL NT. This is a really important commitment for us, and I am very pleased that this is one of the projects that has been selected to be fast-tracked.

I would like to quote Nigel Roy again, who was with me on the day of the announcement. He was speaking about how excited he was that NRL NT could not only have a home for its sport at Marrara, but could also be part of creating jobs for Territorians and how important that aspect of this project is. That is getting very lost in this. It has been very clear for some time that Warren Park is the rightful home for NRL in the Territory.

Yes, South Darwin sporting club is at the table. They hold the lease so of course we should be speaking to them. Consultation is something you have spoken about on a number of occasions; of course we will be speaking to South Darwin sporting club and working through the peak body that looks at the strategic future of the game in the Territory.

To revisit, it has been just over a year since this issue started hitting the media, when the community was in uproar about the CLP's plan for a home for NRL. Nobody had been consulted or spoken to; a school was going to lose its grounds; the community was seeking public meetings with ministers to speak about what was would happen with parking, lights et cetera. 'We weren't told about this.' We have a really good, strong plan that will give NRL NT a home, which is our ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I asked the minister specifically to name two or three clubs. I hope she is getting the answer now; it is obvious she did not know who they were. I want to contact those clubs to ensure they were consulted.

Ms MOSS: As I have said previously, there was a submission put forward by NRL NT, and it came up again in the PAC. It has been asking for such a long time for a home for NRL NT at Warren Park.

The opposition is grasping at straws a bit. We have talking to the at the peak body, which is very excited about this project, and we look forward to undertaking it and creating jobs for Territorians.

Employment – Chief Executive Officer Appointments

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

One of the first actions of the new Gunner government was to reintroduce the unwieldy super departments that Labor governments seem so very fond of—Gunner's so-called clusters. So far you are yet to appoint a chief executive to the Departments of the Chief Minister, Education, and Housing and Community Development, major departments charged with implementing the government's agenda. Why has your government been so slow to act on this and is it the real reason your government is so far behind the eight ball?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question, which is about the changes to the machinery of government. That is essentially what happened when a new government took office. The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment has managed this very well. It has been an honour to be briefed and commence learning about what it means to be the Minister for Public Employment.

The changes to the machinery of government, effected through the Administrative Arrangements Order dated 12 September 2016, are being implemented by agency chief executive officers. We are proud to say there are outstanding chief executive officers in the departments who are doing an amazing job and are starting to implement the policy of the new government.

Chief executive officers had until 31 October 2016 to provide the Department of Treasury and Finance with finalised budgets, and provide the Department of Corporate and Information Services with finalised organisational structures and payroll codes. The Employee Relations division of OCPÉ supported affected agencies to manage the changes in accordance with the industrial obligations through the delivery of a range of change management information to employees via communication emails and the website.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I am not sure what the minister is reading from or whose question he is answering, but my question was very specific. Why have you been so slow to appoint CEOs to these mega departments?

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. It is about direct relevance. The minister has time to answer the question.

Mr McCARTHY: Member for Spillett, I am telling you the story about the new government taking charge and what is happening in the departments. There is one appointment that is ongoing, and that is the new CEO for the Department of Housing and Community Development. There is an active recruitment process taking place, advertised nationally. It is being done appropriately.

Northern Gas Pipeline

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and INNOVATION

The first pipes for the gas pipeline from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa arrived recently. The company building the pipeline has said that half the contracts will be for Territory businesses. What guarantee does the government have that this will happen?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. You are correct about the pipeline that Jemena is building; it is progressing. I have had meetings with Jemena and my department is having meetings with the company about making sure it is honouring that promise about local employment.

I have met with them and directly asked that question. We are working with them, auditing what they are doing and holding them to account. Having said that, which sounds a bit strict, they have done this with good intentions and are honouring it. I will continue to speak with them and work with them on it.

I met with the majority shareholder for Jemena and the Northern Gas Pipeline while I was in China. The majority shareholder is State Grid, and I had a direct conversation with them in China about making sure Jemena is honouring its commitment to Tennant Creek. As the major shareholder they are also visiting and doing work in the Territory, and have been to Tennant Creek.

With parliament on I could not join them on their recent trip but, post my visit to China, they are flying in and visiting Tennant Creek, having conversations with locals about how they will make this work. To use the phrase used in China, they want to see a win/win—a win for locals in Tennant Creek and a win them as the major shareholder investing in the pipeline.

I am working with them; we are speaking with them; they have made this promise in good faith and are delivering on it. We will keep working with them on how they are delivering in this space.

This is a project that had bipartisan support going into the last election. I pay tribute to the work the CLP did to get it up and running. We were very clear, off the business case from Eni, that we thought there was support for this pipeline connecting us to the east coast. We are very happy to hear about the commitment to locals in Tennant Creek. It is a very strong message of support for the vision we have for Tennant Creek, which we communicated before the election, about it being a service centre.

It is good work. It is happening. I am meeting with them regularly, as is my department, to make sure it is happening. I am happy to keep answering questions about that. If you have a permanent interest in it, Member for Nelson, I can provide you updates as I get them about how it is happening. The Member for Barkly keeps a strong interest in this space and is asking very similar questions. We are being very responsive to him and are happy to be responsive to you to ensure we are delivering on jobs for locals in Tennant Creek as a result of this pipeline investment.

School Suspensions

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

There appear to be high levels of what you refer to as passive enrolment across the Territory, with nearly 1000 students on that register. This surely must be an area of critical policy development on your part. To gain a better understanding of the nature of this problem, can you provide the number of suspensions from schools in Darwin, Palmerston and rural, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs for Semester 1? How many of these students were suspended and directed to a facility or program, and what were these programs? How many students were suspended from school into the community? Further, who is responsible for students when they are suspended, schools or families? If families, how is that managed?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for his question. There is a number of things in that question. If there are behaviours that are inappropriate at school, students are suspended. I am sure you are well aware of that. Suspensions are taken seriously. They do not happen every day. Teachers work hard to make sure there are in-house suspensions and strategies for students rather than suspending them.

However, if it gets to the stage where a student needs to be suspended, the parents and carers are responsible for those children. I presume most of the schools would then continue to work with the families to make sure there were teaching, learning and support programs for children during that time, and they would make sure there was a re-entry meeting. Before a child returns to school there would be conversations around the behaviours that are expected of them at school.

Students get suspended for a range of reasons—which I am sure you are aware of—such as fighting and a heap of other reasons.

Attendance is a complex issue, as are suspensions, which are the last resort for schools. I do not have the figures on suspensions at hand, but I can get them for you. Schools work very hard not to suspend children. That is the last resort. It is about re-engaging students and keeping kids in school. Probably all of the secondary schools in our urban settings, including Palmerston, in your electorate, have programs like the Stars program, a role model program for girls, and the Clontarf program for boys, which addresses the issues of students who may be disengaged from school or are finding it difficult to settle in at school. There are good people in the schools who work hard to make sure the kids stay in school every day and are in the classroom learning.

One of the issues, Member for Blain, is that there has been \$114m worth of cuts to Education over the last four years. When you make those cuts, you impact schools and take away the extra teachers. If you talk to the staff at Rosebery Middle School, which is in your electorate, they will tell you about the additional

programs that have been cut, such as dance and drama, the programs that have a big impact on the kids you are talking about. You also take away the behaviour support people as well.

We are putting dollars back into Education to provide fairness and equity for all kids in the Territory to get a great education.

Economy – Meeting with South Australian Premier

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

In two questions I have asked you about your vision for the Alice Springs economy you have referred to your meeting with the South Australian Premier, Jay Weatherill, scheduled for later this week. In April 2015, just 18 months ago, the previous government signed an MOU with South Australia to advance tourism, environmental causes and mining. What is your agenda for this meeting? What will you be asking the South Australian Premier to do? Do you think Jay Weatherill has the answers to our escalating crime problem in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for her question. A couple of things have been conflated. I will not be asking Jay Weatherill for domestic advice about crime in Alice Springs. It is about having a shared vision for Alice Springs as the capital city of Central Australia, which provides services to that border region. One of those services is, funnily enough, police and how we work across borders, which is very important.

There was an MOU signed by the then Chief Minister, Adam Giles, and Premier Jay Weatherill. We will discuss that at the meeting and how we can update it.

One thing I will not do in a meeting with a fellow first minister is verbalise that first minister and the outcomes of that meeting. We will be very clear with Territorians, especially Centralians living in Alice Springs, about the outcomes of that meeting, once we have had it.

We will have an excellent conversation about the things we have a shared interest in. I have spoken about some of those already. We have the Stuart Highway, which goes from Adelaide to Darwin. The Premier and I are interested in how we can talk about the promotion of that highway as a tourist experience. Premier Weatherill has expressed interest in our arts trail idea, which we will talk about. There are benefits in talking about what is, in my opinion, a fantastic Australian experience—driving the Stuart Highway—and how we can market it.

We will discuss many things of shared interest. I want to be careful with what I say going in to that meeting because I need to give the Premier the courtesy of meeting with him and coming out afterwards with the discussions we have had.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Will you ask him about public holidays? You guys can high five on that now.

Mr GUNNER: It is interesting hearing the comments from the Member for Spillett. South Australia has part-day public holidays, which are of significant benefit to South Australia and are fair recognition of the work done on those evenings.

I am very much looking forward to the meeting with Premier Weatherill. I respect the fact he recognises the importance of Alice Springs and the services it delivers beyond Territory borders. We will work together on those shared services and how we can better support people who live in the Territory as well as those outside the Territory who are supported from Alice Springs. A mountain of work is done in that area, and that conversation will happen over several first ministers' meetings.

I commend the Premier and the previous Chief Minister for getting this ball rolling. It is a very good forum for us to have these conversations on how we can better work together. There are significant things when it comes to economies of scale and shared ideas. Another one of those, on the police front, is violent offender reporting, and we are working together on that legislation, which will make a significant difference in the family violence space. It picks up on a coronial recommendation ...

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Fuel Prices in the Territory

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to TREASURER

I wanted to ask a question of the Chief Minister but a minister cannot be asked two questions in a row on Wednesdays, so I will redirect my question to the Treasurer.

The previous CLP government's proactive measures saw Darwin petrol prices fall to around \$1 a litre. Listening to Territorians, I know they are concerned about high fuel prices returning, and it is hitting their hip pockets, putting businesses under pressure and costing jobs. Today the pump price for unleaded petrol in Darwin is 129.5c a litre. In Sydney it is 107.6c; in Adelaide it is 105.5c; and in Brisbane it is 120.3c. In 2014 the previous government brought together key stakeholders in the distribution and supply of fuel, and pressured the suppliers to lower the pump prices. Minister, what is your government doing about the soaring cost of fuel?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. As we discussed last sittings, fuel prices are something that hit Territorians hard. We all feel it. This is a place where people have lots of cars, and fuel does have a significant impact on the family budget.

We have seen rises in fuel prices. Since October, global oil prices have risen as oil-producing nations have sought to cut production. Our advice from Treasury is that over the last month retail petrol prices have risen across the country and in the Territory.

In the Northern Territory we have seen prices rise 11.1 cents per litre on average to what you have just said, 1.293c per litre. Treasury estimates that despite this rise, the retail margin in the Territory appears to be broadly in line with the national averages. However, we are very keen to keep a close eye on making sure we do not again see the price gouging and the increases that were out of control.

I do commend the media, which ran a huge campaign in the Northern Territory—driven from the front with Pete Davies, hand-in-hand with other television and newspaper outlets—and put a huge amount of pressure on fuel prices.

In my first few weeks as Treasurer I met with the ACCC and discussed this very matter with it and the work it had done and its recommendations in its November 2015 report, looking at Darwin petrol markets, more regular fuel price reporting and encouraging more competition.

Another element we spoke about before is that other jurisdictions, like New South Wales, are looking at ways to enhance transparency around fuel pricing and so forth. We are looking at those types of measures here to see what we can do and whether or not they would work in the Territory.

Fuel prices do hit home and they hit hard. We have seen world oil prices influence the prices of fuel in the Northern Territory, as they have nationally; that is out of our control. However, keeping a close eye on fuel prices and making sure we never get to the point they were in the past is something we are committed to. We want to make sure fuel stays at a price that is in line with the rest of the country so we are not getting ripped off just because we are in the Territory.

Darwin Festival

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

Last week you referred to a commitment of \$1m per annum to fund the Darwin Festival, which is great news. You also talked about establishing a community-based board to propel the Darwin Festival. When will the funding start to flow, and how and when will you re-establish a board? A program needs to be set and events need to be booked now. When will an artistic director be appointed? Will the Darwin Festival definitely go ahead next year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for this important question. Yes, there will be a Darwin Festival in 2017. As I stated, we are big supporters of the Darwin Festival, and we are making sure we see it go ahead.

We can all agree that we have an exceptionally vibrant arts community in the Territory, and we have a lot of great stories to tell, not only about Darwin but our region, to those who come here domestically, internationally and to local visitors. It will go ahead and the money will kick in next year.

If you are on social media I am sure you have seen that it has a very active Facebook page. They are putting the call out to local artists and making sure collaborative work is progressing to put the program together for 2017.

We want to see it happen in 2017 and, beyond that, to make sure we have a Darwin Festival with a strong identity that showcases the best of, particularly, local artists. It has a fantastic program for visitors and locals to enjoy. The Darwin Festival has a long history in the Territory. If you go to the Portuguese and Timorese club you can see the big boat made for the Bougainvillea Festival some time ago.

The festival has grown since then. It has undergone a number of chapters in its history, and this is one of them. There is a lot of work to be done. I look forward to updating the House on the progress of Darwin Festival.

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