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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**VISITORS**  
**Girraween Primary School**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students who are exceptionally bright and talented. They are from the rural area, Girraween Primary School, and are accompanied by their teachers, Allan Hamdan and Beth French.

Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS**  
**Commonwealth Day**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, yesterday marked Commonwealth Day celebrating the theme 'A peace-building Commonwealth'. A baton set out from Buckingham Palace and began a 12-month journey across the Commonwealth.

The baton will visit people living in the nations and territories of our Commonwealth family in every continent and ocean. Contained within the baton will be a written message that will be opened and read at the Commonwealth Games in Australia next year. The flags in the hall are a reminder of this great day and will remain in place for the next six weeks because the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association executive committee will be here in April.

**Serjeant-At-Arms**

**Madam SPEAKER:** I advise that a new Clerk Assistant Chamber and Serjeant-at-Arms has commenced. I trust you will welcome Mr Sean O'Connor to the role. I take this opportunity on behalf of all members to thank Steven Stokes for stepping into the role of Serjeant-at-Arms these past 12 months and for his continued service to the Assembly. The new serjeant comes from the New South Wales parliament, Speaker Hancock's office. She was a good friend of mine and apparently I am now her last best friend. Welcome, Mr O'Connor, to Parliament House.

**Matter of Privilege – Correspondence from Member for Nhulunbuy**

**Madam SPEAKER:** I have received correspondence from the Member for Nhulunbuy, pursuant to Standing Order 229 concerning a matter of privilege. The member seeks precedence to debate a motion to refer a question to the committee of privileges. The member's proposed motion goes to one of the most fundamental matters relating to this parliament, which is freedom of speech of each and every member pursuant to the bill of rights 1688 as outlined in section 6 of the *Legislative Assembly (Power and Privileges) Act*.

I have agreed to the request. A copy of the motion was circulated to members earlier. I now call on the Member for Nhulunbuy to move his motion.

**Mrs FYLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I do not seem to have a copy of the motion.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Copies will be provided now by the officer.

**MOTION**  
**Referral of Restrictions on Freedom of Speech to Committee of Privileges**

**Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Committee of Privileges inquire into and report to the Assembly on any limitations on a member's freedom of speech in this Assembly, with specific regard to the operation of Standing Order 31 and the power of the presiding officer to expunge words considered highly disorderly from the *Parliamentary Record*, as occurred by a ruling of the Deputy Speaker, and confirmed by the Speaker, in relation to words I spoke in my adjournment speech on the evening of 16 February 2017.

I move my motion today at the earliest opportunity following the censor of my adjournment speech on the final sitting day of February. In research I have since learned these matters are best dealt with at the time

of the event, by dissent; however, at that time I did not hear the Deputy Speaker's ruling on them, then left before the Speaker confirmed the decision.

Nevertheless, as a new member of the parliament, I would not have known to move a dissent motion at the time. I would also have been shocked if I had heard the ruling. Indeed, I was shocked, or rather perplexed, when I learned of the ruling on the following day when my staff quizzed me.

Comically, I confirmed to my staff member that he needed to follow up with *Hansard* and provide the speech to them, to ensure the right spellings of the children's names I had listed. Obviously some confusion followed that directive of mine.

The Deputy Speaker had censored the names in my speech with this ruling:

*Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy, the names of the children will not be recorded in the Hansard as they are in the care of the department.*

At the end of the evening, the ruling was confirmed by the Speaker.

It never crossed my mind that something like this could have happened. I had taken serious consideration of my action and resolve to do so because of my responsibility to the vulnerable in my electorate. I was aware of the *Care and Protection of Children Act*, section 301, which makes it illegal to publish material that may identify a child in the CEO's care, but I was also aware that this restriction does not apply to a member speaking in the Chamber, within the limitations of the Chamber.

I was aware of my right to freedom of speech. I understood this right as being a special privilege granted to me through Westminster tradition so that parliament could not be overcome by the king or queen. In a modern view, a member's freedom of speech is a pillar of democracy granted to ensure a last line of defence for citizens over the state. To me, a member's privilege is to protect the vulnerable when the government—supposedly existing to serve them and to build them up and give them strength—starts to oppress them.

Before I made my speech on 16 February, I had gained details of the cases of these children from witnesses and had consulted with the affected families. On top of this, I am an expert on custom, culture and the world view of the people group affected, the Yolngu. I am a clan leader by custom and law of these people. Moreover, I am an authority of N  arra' Rom, which is the institution of nationhood for our people. This institution is responsible for overseeing our law that protects the weak and vulnerable.

My point is that in considering the use of my discretion, as a member of this Chamber, I was likely the best informed about the children's situation. In my discretion, the discretion of a member charged with the authority of Westminster tradition and the tradition of my own people, I had decided that these children had been wrongly removed from their parents and family by the state, resulting in injustice and unjustifiable trauma.

In the face of this I wanted to do something about it. I did not act maliciously. I did not use words that were disorderly or offensive. Instead I honoured the children of my people. I left information for them that would make them feel loved, respected and wanted. I acted to try to give them hope in the future when they might only feel alone.

Unfortunately this plan relied upon the *Hansard* record. The failure I am trying to highlight is that because of this ruling the department has been allowed to traumatise these children—this is not debatable—while there is no opportunity for redress, no opportunity for healing and justice.

Put yet another way, under this ruling the secrecy invoked by the *Care and Protection of Children Act* has become a tool of injustice rather than a tool of safety. My speech was the balance. Instead of the system protecting itself, my speech was the system correcting itself. This is what a member's freedom of speech is for. No outside influence, like the courts, the government or Territory Families, should get in the way of us doing our job and correcting the systems when it has strayed.

Outside powers should not get in the way of this Chamber providing hope for our people. This is why I find it difficult to accept a ruling to censor a member's freedom of speech justified by the *Care and Protection of Children Act*. It is not a justification of and by itself, the Powers and Privileges Act determines that.

Secondly I cannot understand how I, in my actions on 16 February, breached the limitations of the Chamber. I understand that Standing Order 31 has been described as the limitation in this instance. I fail to see by what interpretation the use of Standing Order 31 is feasible. I believe this requires the attention of the Committee of Privileges.

Standing Order 31 protects the respect of the judiciary, together with the parliaments of Australia and their members. My speech was not addressing any of these institutions or authorities.

I strongly believe this instance of the Speaker's discretion provides the Chamber with a good juncture to review one of its foundational parameters of operation: freedom of speech. A member's freedom of speech is a pillar of the Westminster system style democracy. Every shave removed from this might well lead us to failure.

There have been a few precedents in this Chamber in the past where words have been censored from the *Hansard*. Those examples are potentially justifiable in terms of the protection and safety of individuals and protecting the privacy of individuals. They were not challenged; however, the precedents we know of were also arguably malicious in each instance.

This is in contrast to my own circumstances. My speech cannot be argued to be malicious. Furthermore, today I have provided the Chamber with the rationale that I acted in the interest of the individuals' safety and in the reasonable interests of my electorate. I cannot argue that I acted to protect the individuals' privacy; however, this is overcome by the likelihood that privacy only assisted the offending party.

I understand that on face value this matter may seem clear cut; however, as one digs deeper and gains perspective, I believe this is an issue of importance to each member. Each of our privileges is at stake. This is not selfish; this is a call to remember where we come from, who we are and for what purpose we are here.

Members, when your freedom of speech is at stake, the right of your electorates to be properly represented is also threatened. The right to protect your people is removed. I ask all members to consider this situation seriously and pass this motion.

I commend my motion to the Chamber.

**Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice):** Madam Speaker, the government does not support this motion.

We need to recognise that within this Chamber, as members of the parliament of the Northern Territory, that we are given a highly privileged position. We are afforded parliamentary privilege, which is one of the strongest cornerstones of the Westminster system. This system was established to allow us to have frank and free debate. After listening to the member's discussion this morning—we are not attacking that freedom of speech through what happened.

I recently read the Speaker's procedural bulletin from the previous sittings. We cannot name vulnerable children who are in the care and protection of the department. As a society we need to protect our most vulnerable children. We are not stopping freedom of speech. We are allowed to have frank and fearless debate, which is why we are given parliamentary privilege in this House, but we cannot use that privilege to do something that would put our most vulnerable at risk.

The Member for Nhulunbuy is attempting to use parliamentary privilege to circumvent the law put in place to protect our vulnerable children. I am not sure if this is the most appropriate forum, but it is important to put this on the record because the member has outlined—we have a minister who has held this portfolio for eight months, and in that time she has done a remarkable job.

In regard to catering to the Member for Nhulunbuy, the minister has had a number of briefings. There was another one just this morning. She is ensuring we have a range of measures put in place to make the generational change we need.

I remind the House that child protection and that portfolio is one of the most difficult issues that parliament is faced with. The minister takes her responsibility very seriously. When Labor was previously in government there was a board of inquiry and a number of clear recommendations. We saw changes over the last four years, but I do not want to get into that debate because this is not the appropriate time. It is important to acknowledge the Minister for Territory Families and the work she is doing.

The member is free to debate. His adjournment speech has not been scrapped. All we have done—or you have done, Madam Speaker—is taken the names of vulnerable children off the *Parliamentary Record*. The *Parliamentary Record*, *Hansard*, is there for history. It is a permanent written reminder of what took place in this House. We need to protect those children. The media and other people can access it, and they might not realise the responsibilities of the *Care and Protection of Children Act*. Printing the names of those children would not be the right thing for this House to do.

The other point is that those children need to be protected. They are very young. They are children. We need to ensure they are protected in 30 years' time. We Google so much; if you Google every single one of our names different things come up. We need to protect those children. We do not want those children in 30 years' time, when they have families of their own, to have someone Google their name and find this history. We need to provide respect. That is a responsibility of this House.

We feel strongly about this issue. I have spoken with the minister responsible about this. She takes her responsibility very seriously. We are not stifling freedom of speech, Member for Nhulunbuy. You can come in here and debate. Your adjournment speech is on the *Parliamentary Record*. We are saying that we, as a democracy, have a huge responsibility to protect our most vulnerable children, and their names cannot stay on that record for history.

We have a strong process regarding this, and Madam Speaker has upheld it. Expunging words from the record is not something that is taken lightly. Looking back at history, it has only been done every couple of years or so. We need to ensure we protect these children.

Standing Order 233 reminds us what members should take into account when speaking in the Assembly. This includes considering the need to exercise speech in a responsible manner, the damage that may be done to the person subject of the allegation, the lack of opportunity for people named in the Assembly to respond, and the rights of others and the needs for statements to be accurately based. We have standing orders that guide us.

The community expects that all the above factors should have been considered by the member before he named the children who are in the care of the government. The *Care and Protection of Children Act* creates an offence for publishing material identifying children in the CEO's care. This is to protect those children's privacy and dignity now and in years to come.

I understand the member's concerns. I listened to him today and I listened to his adjournment speech on that evening. The Minister for Territory Families has been working with the Member for Nhulunbuy. She is ensuring we have a stronger system, as well as resources in place to provide the best possible care for children who have to be removed from their families.

Removing children is for their care and safety. It is not something that government agencies take lightly. It is a very fine balance. Under the *Care and Protection of Children Act* a decision has been made regarding these children's care and safety. The minister has been working with the Member for Nhulunbuy regarding this issue, which is the appropriate channel. As a parliament this reflects on all of us, and we need to be leaders in our community who uphold the law.

The government will not support this motion today. We support the words in the procedural bulletin ensuring we have free and flowing debate, which is why we have the protection of privilege in this House. When we are in debate it can get passionate and heated, and we are afforded that protection. It is not a mechanism for people to circumvent other legislation.

I have spoken about the government. The minister has been working with the member. The government takes its responsibilities very seriously in terms of caring for these children. We cannot use this forum as an opportunity to name those children. I remind the Member for Nhulunbuy that the debate is still there. You have raised that conversation. It is something being listened to, but we cannot have the names of those children printed. It does not stand up to the law and does not protect those children.

We will not support this motion. Standing Order 233 is quite concise about exercising our freedom of speech while ensuring we do not use it to shirk our other responsibilities.

**Mr MILLS (BLAIN):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the delicate nature of this matter. The issue of freedom of speech is a very serious matter for parliament. I acknowledge that the motion put forward by the Member for Nhulunbuy specifically refers to that concept of how we manage, protect and respect freedom of speech in parliament. It is on the strength of those words that this motion should proceed.

If a new member has stood and spoken in good faith, given an explanation and justification for the position he has adopted, and then finds that the parliament has removed words from the record, which he only found out about subsequently, then there is a procedural concern. It would be right for us to proceed to privileges to allow us to have a better understanding of how we can protect and safeguard freedom of speech in parliament for all our benefit.

It is not an argument about the specific case. When we are talking about 18C, anti-discrimination and matters being considered at a national level, it feeds right down to a complex and difficult matter. It is at the centrepoint of parliament's capacity to deal with difficult and important freedoms that have been hard won by all the parliaments of our Commonwealth.

For that reason, not the emotive arguments about the delicate matters that were referred to in the speech—I listened carefully to the member during and after the speech. There are matters we need to reflect on if we are dealing with the complex nature of culture and concerns of members brought to this Chamber. The only way to proceed is to make sure we have confidence in the capacity of a parliament to operate with due respect to freedom of speech.

On that basis the right step is for this to proceed—acknowledge the words have been expunged, understand the process, protect and have adequate respect for freedom of speech and in due time have a report brought back to the Assembly. That is a fair and reasonable position.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, this is an important issue for this House to debate. It does not come up very often. The issue of freedom of speech is a fundamental pillar of our society.

The motion before us is not about whether the names of the children the Member for Nhulunbuy used should be expunged; it is whether Standing Order 31 should be used as the means to do that. Section 31 is headed 'Offensive or disorderly words'. I look at that as either slandering someone or using inappropriate language in the House or that the offensive nature of what you are saying is inappropriate.

I had a conversation with the Member for Nhulunbuy. He came to see me to explain what he had done and why he had done it. I agree with the Member for Nightcliff that we have to be careful here. There is a member in the Commonwealth Parliament who has used parliamentary privilege. That has the risk of causing damage to innocent people.

We had a debate in relation to a particular law that the then Attorney-General wanted to introduce which would have named people in relation to particular child offences. One of the issues with that when you name those people you sometimes also make innocent people vulnerable in the process.

It is a complex issue, trying to find a balance between freedom of speech and the right for any member to raise issues of concern. I read the *Hansard* record of the adjournment debate. The Member for Nhulunbuy has serious concerns about the way children in his area are being dealt with by the department. The department is, through this House, able to be criticised if any person believes it is not doing its job. That is part of the debate you are allowed to have.

You have to find the balance between your criticism of how the department deals with people in its care and whether naming those people is needed to have that debate. When I heard the Member for Nhulunbuy—I did not hear the debate at the time—had used those names I did not think that was a wise thing to do. I understand the member is coming from a passionate point of view. He is coming from a cultural point of view, but we have a law that we must protect children. It applies to all people in the Northern Territory regardless of where they come from.

If the member has concerns about the way those children have been dealt with then there are other avenues to which those complaints can be made. Taking them to the minister is one of the ways that can be dealt with. Is Standing Order 31 the appropriate order? Does that standing order have the power to expunge names that were not disorderly or not offensive? That is where I come from. Is that the appropriate standing order to say those words should not be allowed?

We certainly, as the Member for Nightcliff quoted, have Standing Order 233, and in some ways we should be looking at that particular Standing Order in relation to this.

It says, as the Member for Nightcliff said:

*When speaking in the Assembly or in a committee, Members should take the following matters into account:*

*(a) the need to exercise their valuable right of freedom of speech a responsible manner ...*

The word 'responsible' is the key. Is it responsible to quote the names of children? Can you get your point of view over without having to use those children's names?

Section (1)(b) of that standing order says:

*The damage that may be done by allegations made in the Assembly to those who are the subject of such allegations and to the standing of the Assembly*

The allegations in this case might be against the department, but in the process of naming those children the allegations might go back to people who are innocent and are not part of the issues raised by the Member for Nhulunbuy. They are therefore picked up in something other people should not know about. They might be identified in this House by their names being published.

Be that as it may, whilst I have concerns about the publication of names of young people, the question for me is whether the Speaker at the time has power under Standing Order 31 to expunge those names. That is why I would be happy for this to go to the Committee of Privileges.

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, this is a sensitive debate in many ways because it goes to a genuine issue in the community, which was debated. The Member for Nhulunbuy's adjournment stands. There will be many times this term, I believe, when we debate the issue of the duty of care government has to children.

What has been removed from the record is the names of those children. We have freedom of speech in this Chamber and parliamentary privilege. The only constraint in our freedom of speech is that which we apply to ourselves, which we do regularly. We constantly have words struck from the record. Usually in heated debate when someone throws an insult in the Chamber, we remove that word and it is not included in the *Hansard*. We show that constraint.

In many respects the debate today is asking if we should show that same constraint in the naming of vulnerable children. I say yes, as does this side of the Chamber. The Member for Nhulunbuy's argument, and what the Members for Nelson and Blain said regarding the standing orders and their application, is a debate for the standing orders Committee about how that works in this Chamber. It is not a debate for the Committee of Privileges, which is very serious. When you take things to the Committee of Privileges it is of a very serious nature. This is about the constraint we show ourselves through the standing orders.

Considering that we, as a Chamber, are already quite willing to show constraint in our freedom of speech with some of the words we use to describe each other, we can accept that there is a constraint that should be shown in the naming of vulnerable children. Therefore, we do not support this motion. If you want to have a discussion about process with the Standing Orders Committee, that is appropriate. As a Chamber we should stand strong in showing constraint around the naming of vulnerable children.

**Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, the issue is not about my work with the relevant minister; this is respect for a relationship. The issue is a member's ability to effectively represent their electorate.

Motion not agreed to.

## **JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BODY WORN VIDEO AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EVIDENCE) BILL (Serial 10)**

Continued from 30 November 2016.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Madam Speaker, domestic violence is a scourge on our society, affecting men, women and children from all walks of life. In this place a few months ago, every member of this House linked arms to show our support for Charlie King's No More campaign. Amongst other things the campaign encourages men, the most common perpetrators of domestic violence, to take ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member, can you pause so I can let members know that even though you cannot always hear the microphone when you are speaking, it is being recorded. It is a technical issue. Sorry, member.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Among other things the campaign encourages men, the most common perpetrators of domestic violence, to take responsibility for their actions and acknowledge the devastating and destructive impact domestic violence has on families.

The No More campaign is primarily aimed at positively changing the behaviours of Indigenous men, particularly in remote communities; however, the plague of domestic violence is not limited by gender, skin colour, social standing or location. Unfortunately it is a disease which affects all walks and echelons of our Australian society.

The former Country Liberals government made domestic violence prevention a priority and introduced a number of reforms intended to stem the tide of domestic violence in the Territory. This included the development and launch of the \$18m Safety is Everyone's Right strategy, which was allocated a further \$6.77m in the 2016-17 Budget to provide prevention, early intervention, protection and victim safety.

The strategy is aimed at helping to protect and rebuild the lives of survivors of domestic violence and hold offenders to account. This whole-of-government approach currently involves 11 agencies and various NGOs coordinating efforts to better utilise resources and reduce the negative impacts of service fragmentation on vulnerable victims.

The values and principles that drive Safety is Everyone's Right should continue to serve as a guiding principle for domestic violence strategy in the Territory, including the idea that safety is a fundamental human right. Everyone has a right to be safe and live in a society free from violence, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, disability or religious and spiritual beliefs.

The legal system, including courts and protective orders, should provide fair and just outcomes for all victims of family and domestic violence and sexual assault. Lasting attitude and behavioural change will come from men and women taking responsibility for their own actions, supported by effective partnerships between government agencies, non-government organisations and the community.

Leadership and a long-term commitment will drive change in alignment with the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–22. Real change will come from respectful and healthy relationships, and by helping victims feel strong and take action. Governments and other organisations will ensure the best use of resources by focusing on integrated targeted services that meet the needs of victims and survivors of violence.

While men are also victims of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, this strategy acknowledges that it is primarily women and children who are victims and survivors. Responses to domestic and family violence should be evidence-based with ongoing monitoring and evaluation built into the planning and implementation of programs.

The Country Liberals' approach is sound in principle and has been extremely successful. Only 5.5% of clients referred to the frameworks since 2015 have been re-referred. Stated differently, 94.5% of those referred are no longer considered to be in need of critical intervention. In addition, overall incidences of domestic violence have decreased year on year since the introduction of the Safety is Everyone's Right strategy was implemented.

Police crime statistics show that domestic violence related assaults decreased Territory wide by at least 3.4% in 2016, with a decrease of 20% in Nhulunbuy and 7.2% in Alice Springs respectively. While all reasonably minded Territorians would agree that anything short of a 100% decrease is insufficient, progress has been made.

However, once again, it appears that domestic violence is on the rise in the Territory. Over the holidays a significant spike in domestic violence incidents was widely reported, with Dawn House, in Darwin, fielding 78 calls for support in November alone. Dawn House reported that demand for beds always outstrips supply, and they can be full five times over with the amount of need in the community.

The hard numbers on domestic violence in the Territory are familiar and concerning. Three quarters of Aboriginal women in the Territory have been the victims of intimate partner violence, and approximately 54% of homicides in the Territory are the product of domestic violence. Studies reveal that at least one



child is the victim of domestic violence each day in the Territory, with three children per day witnessing domestic violence in their home or elsewhere. To compound matters many of these children are exposed to violence either against themselves or a family member again and again, with 44% of domestic violence offenders destined to reoffend.

The amendments to the *Evidence Act* and *Surveillance Devices Act* under consideration today represent an important step forward for holding perpetrators of domestic abuse to account for the devastating crimes they commit. The current bill is the culmination of innovation set in motion by the former Country Liberals government which began with a trial of body-worn video cameras in late 2014. As part of a successful trial the Northern Territory police force members in Alice Springs, Palmerston and Darwin were outfitted with body-worn video to gather information concerning policy and training, information technology requirements, evidence collection, storage and presentation, as well as camera performance in our varied climate.

That trial laid the groundwork for the full program roll out represented by the bill before the House. The utility of body-worn video cameras is well established. Cameras have been used in other Australian and international jurisdictions, such as New South Wales and the ACT, with extremely positive results on the administration of justice. New South Wales police reported after their own successful trial:

*The ability to record events electronically in real-time has demonstrated a number of benefits for our front-line officers.*

Body-worn videos bolster the safety of the community and police officers by giving them the best evidence available when they are at crime scenes or are engaging with offenders. The ability of body-worn video to bring about a lower incidence of violence or stop officers from having to confront an escalating situation is of huge benefit to their safety and the public's safety overall.

The usefulness of body-worn cameras to domestic violence assault investigations was highlighted by ACT police in rolling out their trial of body-worn cameras. ACT Commissioner John Hinchey stated:

*The value is in being able to pursue charges using the evidence that is captured audio-visually, including the victim's injuries, their demeanour, and immediate reactions.*

Commissioner Hinchey stated that audio visual statements would provide very strong evidence which may result in earlier pleas and improve the efficiency of our criminal justice system.

Capturing video evidence means Territory police officers will spend less desk time writing reports and completing paperwork. As a result they will have more time to respond to incidents in our community. The use of video will help to moderate the behaviour of those who come into contact with police, resulting in less force and fewer altercations with suspects. Further, body-worn video evidence will be invaluable at trial, leading to more guilty pleas and less expensive litigation on evidentiary matters in the Local and Supreme Courts.

The utility of enabling police members to collect contemporaneous video evidence, including victims' statements, at the scene of the crime cannot be underestimated. Not only does concurrent collection of video evidence significantly increase the reliability and impact of statements, it also renders such evidence more reliable by virtue of the freshness of events in the minds of the complainants.

Forcing an alleged victim to relive traumatic events over and over again can be detrimental to their recovery. The ability to record a statement on the scene will diminish the number of times this needs to occur to the bare minimum. This is particularly important in domestic violence matters where witnesses, especially victims, may be reluctant to revisit the events after they have occurred, or may feel pressured not to move forward with testimony after the shock and trauma of the occurrence has worn off. This much was recognised by Coroner Greg Cavanagh in his findings regarding the deaths of Wendy Murphy and Natalie McCormack at the hands of their respective long-time abusers.

Amongst other things, the coroner recommended that police continue to pursue the use of body-worn cameras and a change to the legislation to allow those matters captured on camera to be used as evidence-in-chief. This bill directly addresses that recommendation and will serve as a useful tool in the arsenal of police and prosecutors alike.

When I inquired with the NT Police Association on this bill I was informed that police remain very supportive of this legislation. The Police Association feels that the use of body-worn cameras is beneficial to the community. Video gathering expedites the gathering of evidence, which saves police time and is extremely

helpful in the event that a witness, particularly in a domestic violence setting, decides not to testify. Under those circumstances a contemporaneous record of events is extremely useful for police and in court.

I am pleased to see the bill also includes a number of protections for victims of domestic violence and similar crimes, as well as the privacy of the public and defendants prior to the conviction. While complainants will still be required to attend court and be present for cross-examination, they will be spared the burden of retelling their entire experience since the video footage will be used in place of narrative case-in-chief testimony.

The classification, in Part 2 of the bill, of domestic violence victims as vulnerable witnesses is also appropriate given the emotionally charged nature of such matters, as well as the potential for additional victimisation of witnesses during legal proceedings. It is also proper that recorded statements only be taken from adult complainants given the special characteristics of children and the level of emotional injury which can flow to youth as a result of crime, particularly violent assaults. The bill also properly removes the most significant evidentiary barriers to introducing video evidence at trial, while preserving the discretion of courts in evidentiary matters where justice requires.

A recorded statement may be excluded or redacted if it is unduly prejudicial within the meaning of the *Evidence (National Uniform Legislation) Act*. Informed consent is required for a statement to be admissible. The officer seeking a recorded statement must inform the subject that any statement may be used in evidence, that further evidence may be required in court and that consent may be refused. Translation is required for statements made in a language other than English.

Natural justice is afforded defendants by requiring they be provided with a copy of the statement proposed to be used in court, with any failure to do so potentially resulting in the exclusion of the statement from evidence. The privacy of the parties is also provided for with an offence being created to prohibit the unauthorised publication of witness statements, which is punishable by a maximum of 12 months in prison or 100 penalty units.

The bill formally provides authority for police officers to use body-worn video cameras by amending the *Surveillance Devices Act*. The proposed amendment authorises the use of cameras where:

- 1) the officer is acting in the execution of the officer's duty
- 2) the camera is overtly worn
- 3) the officer has identified him or herself to each party being recorded.

These provisions make it clear to all parties that video is being utilised by police and avoid any unfairness in the use of video evidence in court.

Domestic violence is probably the single most insidious criminal justice issue facing the Territory. There is much work to be done. The Labor government will have some extremely tough decisions to make to stem the recent uptick in domestic violence assaults. Increased funding is needed for existing programs, such as Dawn House, CatholicCare, YWCA and others, as well as new and innovative intervention services.

To begin with, the government should move quickly to back up its public statements by immediately implementing the other recommendations made by the coroner, including introducing offender reporting legislation to allow Territory police to target and monitor recidivist offenders who continue to commit domestic violence at high rates.

Secondly, it should create a dedicated domestic violence court and change court processes to ensure domestic violence matters are dealt with in a faster process with hearings having priority in the listing.

Also, it should implement alternative intervention strategies that allow for a more flexible family-and-community-focused approach. These strategies will assure the victim's safety and give the couple the choice to remain together or separate, while supporting them in making those choices.

The opposition supports this legislation and commends its passage to the House.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** I will not be as long as the opposition. They covered all the areas pretty well. I also had a meeting with the Police Association to clarify some issues. They were very supportive of this legislation.

The use of body-worn video equipment is a move in the right direction. The legislation before us will allow filming of evidence on private premises, which is something that if not allowed would inhibit the use of this type of equipment. It was also said that it stops the victim from pulling out. From my knowledge that happens regularly, when a victim will change their mind and not want to press charges. Having this sort of evidence will enable police to continue with the charges and not let the person guilty of domestic violence get away with it—to put it bluntly.

A victim may be hostile towards police when they investigate a matter. There may be issues that arise at the time and complicate the domestic violence situation, such as an overcrowded house in a remote community. Video recording can enable police to get to the bottom of the issue, sort out who should be taken into custody and then use that evidence in court, which is the other part of this legislation.

As the minister said at the time, the second part of this bill is the admission of an audio visual recorded statement made using body-worn video. This will be used as evidence-in-chief of complainants in proceedings of domestic violence offences. We have legislation that says police will now be able to use these body-worn videos in domestic violence complaints, and the evidence that is gathered by those body-worn videos can be used in court. That is what this is all about, which is a good thing. There is the ability for the magistrate or judge to not allow it in certain circumstances, which is fair. You need balancing pieces of legislation to ensure everything is fair and reasonable.

Body-worn videos are used in commercial television sometimes. Is there anything that ensures those sorts of videos are not used inappropriately? *Territory Cops* is the show. Police turn up at a house and you see people being arrested, and people on other shows are pulled over by police for being over the limit.

Do we have some restrictions on the way police videos are able to be used outside of the normal legal requirements you would expect? I raise that issue because everyone has seen the American TV shows in which there are chases down the road with a camera on the front of the car. Everyone thinks that is fantastic. You also see New Zealand police, New South Wales police, Victorian police and, from time to time, some Northern Territory programs in which videos are used as part of those programs. I am not sure that is an appropriate use of video in the case of domestic violence, but I am interested to know whether we have some legal limitations on the use of those videos for commercial use.

Otherwise, Attorney-General, it is good legislation and I support it.

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I have had the privilege, as Police minister, to talk to police on the front line and go through how they use body-worn cameras. They gave an excellent example the other day regarding an incident that occurred. They showed me footage for a few minutes. At the end of the incident, they asked, 'What was the lady with her young son wearing at the start of the video?' I could not answer the question. I thought a white top and black shorts.

That is an example of the police dealing with something in the moment and then later going back, identifying the woman, identifying the number plate of her car and being able to find her as a direct witness to the incident as a follow-up. Without the body-worn cameras that would have been difficult to do. It was extremely helpful in how they prosecuted that case. The body-worn cameras are very useful.

I had good chats with the police who were trialling them when I was in opposition. Again, they spoke very positively of this as a very useful tool on the front line. I also know from both sides of the fence—defence and prosecution—that having body-worn cameras helps provide greater clarity to what can often be a significant point of contention about the moment of arrest. Body-worn cameras can provide clarity of what occurred during the arrest process. They are very useful.

The question emerges, what else can body-worn cameras be used for, and how can we do it better? The question of evidence-in-chief arises. I note your questions at the end, Member for Nelson. My understanding is that *Territory Cops* does not become evidence-in-chief, as it is the body-worn cameras we are talking of here. The Attorney-General can clarify that later.

Every Territorian has a right to feel safe in their home, their point of business, where they go to work and on the streets. Unfortunately, the incidence of domestic and family violence in our community is quite shocking. We have said repeatedly that it is simply not good enough that on an average day in the Territory four kids either witness or are subject to domestic violence. That is a big issue for us to deal with this term and in the future. We will not conquer this in four years, but we can make a big step in the right direction.

What we are talking about today will be very helpful. It is not good enough that in 2015 there were 2 846 victims of assault per 100 000 residents in the NT, compared to a national average of 811. Almost 60% of those assaults were attributable to family violence. This is a very big issue.

We recognise there is a lot we need to do, and that we are doing, in this space. We have to shake the basis on which domestic violence takes hold and grows: alcoholism, poverty, intergenerational cycles, unemployment and feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. We have to make a difference for Territorians in these areas. We have many things we are working on, from housing to education. We must also fight domestic violence at the point of contact. We cannot let abusers get away with their cowardly crimes to abuse again. We must put the victim first and explore ways to make the system friendlier and more supportive of the victim.

This Justice Legislation Amendment (Body Worn Video and Domestic Violence Evidence) Bill 2016 enables police to use body-worn video to record police observations in domestic violence and other situations that are admissible in court. This is about protecting victims, discouraging offending, collecting good evidence when offending occurs and prosecuting successfully. These are all things that are difficult in a family circumstance, for understandable reasons; in many ways, there are pressures.

This is about making it easier to collect and use evidence so we respond better to the need of the victim and successfully work through the process. These are substantial enhancements to frontline police capability.

To use a powerful and potent example of one reason we are here, in September 2016 the Northern Territory coroner, His Honour Judge Greg Cavanagh, handed down his findings in the inquest into the deaths of two women, Ms Murphy and Ms McCormack. Both women suffered years of domestic violence before their deaths.

In the case of Ms Murphy the coroner found there were more than 45 domestic violence incidences to which police were called between 2003 and her death in 2014. In the case of Ms McCormack police have records of 32 domestic violence incidents between 2003 and her death in 2015. These deaths are more than tragedy. They represent a national shame festering behind closed doors for too long. We have had this debate too many times in this Chamber. We can see the repeated behaviour. We have to keep finding ways to make a better difference. We need to do much more to empower victims of domestic violence, and improve the systems and processes that support them. We have to do better by the victims.

The coroner recommended that police continue to pursue the use of body-worn cameras and change the legislation so as to allow those matters captured on camera to be used as evidence-in-chief. A victim of domestic violence is often so emotionally abused even before the matters escalate to physical violence that the giving of evidence can be incredibly traumatic. This often prevents victims coming forward and taking critical steps towards preventing further abuse.

The admission of body-worn video recordings as evidence-in-chief offers the opportunity to significantly reduce trauma to vulnerable witnesses in these cases. The reforms to support evidence gathered from body-worn cameras, intended in court as evidence-in-chief in prosecutions, will bring the Territory into line with recent reforms in the ACT and New South Wales. The reform will reduce the need for victims to appear in court, resulting in a safer court process for domestic violence victims. It will also assist police in prosecuting offenders.

This is important. This reform is about protecting victims and ensuring police and the courts have all the tools they need to hold offenders to account. The safer victims feel in a trial process, the more likely they are to report domestic abuse, which is a key step in reducing rates of violence. We have to find better ways to make an intervention before it leads, as it sometimes does, to a death.

NT Police welcome the opportunity to capture critical evidence on video to improve the safety of the community and hold perpetrators accountable. More broadly, body-worn video provides benefits to community safety and the safety of the police force.

NT Police has now rolled out 820 body-worn videos to all frontline police members. The initial roll-out provides frontline police in metropolitan policing locations with personal cameras for operational use. It became immediately apparent that people's behaviours are managed much better when they know their actions will be captured on video. We also expect that to flow through to our court system. NSW and the ACT have achieved more early pleas because of this technology; we expect that to be replicated here, which will free up court processes and time.

One of the other issues that confronts victims in these circumstances is the time it takes to go through the court process.

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**VISITORS**  
**Girraween Primary School**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of another class of bright, smart students from the rural area. They are Year 5/6 students from Girraween Primary School. Welcome to you and your teacher, Kate Illic. I hope you enjoy your time at Parliament House.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr GUNNER:** There is broader benefit to this for people suffering from domestic violence. We will reduce the pressure on the courts, and that is a further benefit.

Several other facets of the body-worn system will be implemented during early 2017, including a public upload portal and seamless justice integration access, among several other innovative capabilities. As part of the broader commitment from this government to make our community safer and to protect victims, we have committed \$6m towards building a new Alice Springs women's shelter to support women and children who need to leave their homes. We have also committed to establishing a remote women's safe house in Galiwinku. The minister visited recently to talk to the women there.

Alcohol is a factor in most domestic violence incidents reported to police, so we will reintroduce the Banned Drinker Register to help keep grog out of the hands of abusers. We will continue to support grassroots community action. I am encouraged by some of the work in this space. Last year many of us participated in the White Ribbon march in Darwin. Two years ago there were only four solidarity marches a year throughout the NT, and now there are 10 to 15 a year.

On International Women's Day it was a privilege to hold the banner with Charlie King to say 'no more'. My team, including the Attorney-General, the Member for Brennan and others, stood with us as we marched behind Charlie King's banner saying 'no more' to family violence. We had an excellent representation of Labor members at the march. I thank the Member for Katherine for organising Territory Labor's banner in support of International Women's Day.

Elsewhere in the community we have seen football teams in AFL NT embrace domestic violence action plans. At last year's Tiwi Island grand final I was proud to stand on the oval with the players, teams and other members of the community to recognise the agreements those teams have signed for domestic violence action plans. These are important steps. It is important to see men providing that standard, and all members of the community need to buy in to reduce domestic violence.

Territory woman Andrea Mason won Telstra Australia Business Woman of the Year and Australian of the Year in the NT for her work in breaking the domestic violence cycle. She is an extraordinary woman. Charlie King is an extraordinary man, and his 'No More' campaign continues to gather momentum. We stood in this Chamber and took part. The Territory campaign has gone national as our federal colleagues—the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, also stand and say 'no more' with Charlie.

I am proud of what Territorians are doing, but we have a lot more to do. We recognise that while this is an important step, it is just one step. There is much more ground for us, as a Chamber, to walk over this four years to make a difference in the lives of Territorians, and we will do that.

**Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families):** Madam Speaker, I support the Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Video and Domestic Violence Evidence) Bill.

Domestic violence is at incomprehensible levels in the Northern Territory. In 2015 there were 2846 victims of assault per 100 000 residents recorded in the Northern Territory, compared to a national average of 811. That is more than three times the national average in the Northern Territory. These are horrific, almost incomprehensible statistics. Behind each one of those statistics we must remember there is an enormous personal cost and an individual story of a family. The vast majority of those victims are women and children, with our Aboriginal sisters overrepresented in these statistics.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to taking on this huge task. The government moved quickly to introduce interventions which make women and children safer, and will prevent domestic and family violence. Last month the government passed the Domestic and Family Violence (Recognition of Domestic Violence Orders) Bill, which is a step towards ensuring women will no longer have to go through the long and traumatic process of reapplying for a domestic violence order every time they cross state borders. Domestic violence orders in one state or territory will be recognised in every other jurisdiction.

This will not only save on court time and resources but means that women will be spared the trauma of having to negotiate a new and different court system and having to explain and experience again their personal story of violence. It means that women and children are not placed in potentially unsafe situations while waiting for a domestic violence order to be put in place.

This Body-worn Video and Domestic Violence Evidence Bill is the latest tool to be put in place to reduce the level of fear and trauma experienced by women in domestic violence situations. Body-worn cameras will mean that the court will not be so reliant on women having to relive and re-explain the violence they have experienced. There are countless cases of women, particularly Aboriginal women, who are repeatedly the victims of violence from their partners. There are many factors that make it difficult for women, as well as family members and others in the community, to provide evidence against those who have committed such violence.

The Coroner's report on the death of Ms Murphy and Ms McCormack, as well as the recent book by Alice Springs woman Kieran Finnane, *Trouble: On Trial in Central Australia*, both detail the pressure on Aboriginal women and community members not to report on their family, clan or community in court. If the perpetrator is their partner, the father of their children, a family member or a member of their community, this places increasing pressures on them. Strong obligations, kinship and cultural ties exist. The victim, their family and the witness often have to continue to live in a small community. This is particularly so in the remote and rural regions of the Northern Territory.

Running a women's shelter, I witnessed first hand this type of pressure; relatives were sent to the shelter in a line to put pressure on women. There were threats, payback and intimidation. Yet under all this pressure women continue to self-refer to services like the women's shelter, report crimes to police, make statements and seek the protection of the justice system. I have witnessed extraordinary bravery by women testifying against all odds and standing up in court because they believe they do not deserve this treatment but deserve justice and protection. These women deserve a system that supports them as victims of crime.

Body-worn cameras mean that police at the scene will record the violence and the woman's account straight after the incident. The amendments will mean that videos captured by the body-worn cameras can be used as chief evidence in court in domestic and family violence cases. This will result in less pressure being placed on women who are already experiencing trauma to recount the violence committed. Research shows that women who are victims of violence often find it difficult to accurately retell the events surrounding the violence.

I listened with interest to the Chief Minister's story, admitting that he missed the detail of the video shown to him by police. That was in a calm meeting, watching a video, and he still got the details wrong. Yet we regularly expect women who are in the dark, under pressure and terrified to calmly and accurately recount in court, under great pressure from a defence lawyer, the details of their assault. We are stacking the deck against them.

This means there will be less pressure on these women. The evidence from New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, where similar legislation is in place, shows that the use of videos from these cameras has made an impact, particularly with people doing early pleas. That means the protracted court process that can often happen is shortened, lessening the impact on everyone, including everyone in the court system.

These amendments have the potential to reduce anxiety for the victim by providing visual evidence of the violent incident and quicker court decisions. This means less time that women need to go through reliving the trauma in court and a quick turnaround in cases being heard.

I note the Deputy Leader of the Opposition talked about it being part of an ongoing suite of actions in domestic and family violence. I acknowledged that the Country Liberal Party rolled out the previous Labor government's initiative of the Family Safety Framework. As someone involved in the early trials of the Family Safety Framework, I was very pleased that the former Labor government funded that, and it was working so well that the CLP rolled it out across the Territory.

It has been an important way of giving support to women and of making sure we can support women to go through these processes. They choose to, but this is another layer to that. We are committed to this holistic approach. We cannot rely on changes of legislation. We need to make sure there is service delivery on the ground, and that is one of the reasons domestic and family violence policy has been placed in the formation of Territory Families. It brings together early childhood development, child protection, youth policy, youth justice, multicultural affairs and men and women's policy.

In each of those areas there is always a flavour of domestic violence behind the scenes, either directly driving the service delivery or impacting on families in the system. Through Territory Families I am responsible for the implementation of 36 practical actions from the national Third Action Plan to reduce violence against women and their children. These are our six priority areas: prevention and early intervention, a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, greater support and choice, sexual violence, responding to children living with violence and keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems.

This amendment today supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait women and their children, gives women a greater choice in how they interact with the court system and keeps perpetrators accountable. I am very proud to be supporting it today.

We started work on a new domestic and family violence and sexual violence reduction framework in the Northern Territory. We need to acknowledge that the rate of sexual assault in the Northern Territory is the highest in Australia. Disclosure on this body-worn camera will be important in this area as well.

It is important that I again highlight the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in domestic and family violence statistics. In the Northern Territory eight out of 10 victims of domestic and family violence are Aboriginal women. We are committed to developing models that support Aboriginal women in a way that is culturally safe and respects their agency and decision-making.

We have also pledged \$50 000 to a community-led initiative focusing on primary prevention and education. One project is in Aboriginal communities across the NPY: Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands. The government, as the Chief Minister also mentioned, has committed to \$6m for the Alice Springs Women's Shelter. We will continue to support the Domestic Violence Specialists Service and the Men's Behaviour Change Program based at Tangentyere in Alice Springs, as well as the No More campaign for government departments and White Ribbon Day events.

We recognise the importance of including Indigenous men in this conversation. This year we are supporting a lore and culture gathering organised through the Indigenous Male's Advisory Council. It is important to note that 67% of domestic violence assaults reported to police involve alcohol. The work the Attorney-General is doing on the BDR, as well as our broader alcohol policy—it is really important that it is not just one action, just as this legislation cannot be one action. If we reduce the amount of alcohol in community we will reduce the severity and number of physical assaults.

We are working in Alice Springs to ensure the domestic violence court is safe, so if women go to court they are not sitting in the waiting room with the perpetrator of the crime, as they have for many years. We are also looking at specialised ways to ensure that system is as efficient as possible and the judiciary has the proper training to ensure there is a good understanding of the dynamics of domestic and family violence within the judiciary system.

This is just one part of a suite of things we are doing. I am proud to be the minister responsible for the domestic violence policy. I receive so much support from my colleagues. We are committed to addressing this issue. We need to ensure women feel safer, have greater assurity that they have access to the justice system and that we reduce the level of trauma experienced by victims of crime in our justice system.

**Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I support this bill because it will ultimately help police do their job, and, most importantly, it will give victims of horrendous domestic violence crimes the justice they deserve. In the Northern Territory, tragically, we are faced with unacceptable rates of domestic and family violence.

In 2015 there were 2846 victims per 100 000 assaults in the NT, compared to 811 nationally. Sixty per cent of those were attributable to family violence. That is completely unacceptable. The consequences of family violence have deep social and economic costs to the Territory. Morally, each and every member of this parliament has a duty to do everything they can to stop domestic violence. It is a fact that too many women suffer at the hands of their partners in the Northern Territory. It is a national shame and disgrace.

These women and children need our support. This bill is part of the ongoing effort to tackle domestic violence. There is an unacceptable level of alcohol-related violence. We hear too often these tragic stories and the challenges police face each day as they strive to serve and protect Territorians, which is something they take very seriously in their roles.

In a recent coronial recommendation, following another domestic violence case in which another woman lost her life, the coroner recommended police continue the use of body-worn cameras, as well as a change to legislation to allow those matters captured on camera to be used as evidence-in-chief. This bill moves to meet those recommendations and make perpetrators of these horrendous crimes more accountable for their actions.

We are introducing legislation after seeing the positive impacts happening in New South Wales and the ACT, where, we are advised, it is working well. There has been an increase in early pleas following on from these changes introduced there.

Most importantly it will assist victims in a few different ways. Police will be able to take statements at the place and time of these crimes. This will be a more efficient system, rather than victims having to go in later to recount the situations and relive the horrors of their experience. It will also assist in assuring people can give statements when the crimes are fresh in their minds, rather than having to recall the incidents well after the event. It will save victims from having to relive some of those experiences and retell the stories of their attackers, especially in the court setting.

I listened closely to the Member for Braiting, someone who comes from a professional career and background of supporting and advocating victims of domestic violence, and knows far too many tragic stories from these victims. She said it is really stacked against victims when they are in court situations. It is important to give them support.

What is captured at the scene by the police is able to be used in the courts, and the witness statements recorded on the body-worn cameras can be used as evidence by police when they go forward in prosecuting offenders. It is another powerful tool to assist them in policing and making sure offenders of domestic violence are brought to justice.

Body-worn cameras have been trialled since 2014. In today's modern world, with the advancements in technology, it is very reasonable to expect we are giving police the tools they need for their job. A video recorded statement will be an accurate statement they can put on the record. In this society CCTV is used to assist prosecutions of crime, so a body-worn camera adds another level of assisting police in recording evidence and gathering important statements to take to the courts.

The job of policing in the Territory is incredibly challenging, especially given the level of domestic violence they deal with. We are giving them more appropriate tools and measures to perform their jobs in line with community expectations. This bill ensures procedural fairness will be accorded to defendants to assure they get to see and hear the recorded statement. As the minister said in her second reading speech, the complainant will still be required to attend the court, and their statements can be cross-examined.

The main benefit is the fact these statements can be taken at the time of the incident rather than after. This bill is just one part of a broader framework of how this government is working to tackle domestic and family violence within the community. Ideally we want to get to a point in which the right measures are put in place in the first instance to stop these events from happening, full stop.

We made our commitments clear about what we intend to do in this term of government to give families more support and improve services and the lives of people most vulnerable and likely to suffer from domestic violence. We are putting children at the centre of government decision-making. We are investing in kids to give them the protection and life of opportunity they deserve.

We are investing in housing in the urban settings. A part we are passionate about and will be driving hard is the housing efforts in remote communities in the bush, particularly the \$1.1bn remote housing investment. That will be a core component of what we are hoping to achieve to improve living standards for people in the bush.

We have firm commitments to education and reversing the cuts we saw under the previous government. If children are well educated, their future will be bright. Sadly, we saw too many schoolchildren, who would be part of these vulnerable families, suffer the cuts to their school funding.



We are also working with communities. We are making sure there is a greater emphasis on local decision-making at the community level. These are the responsive measures we are taking, but, in addition to that, there are measures we need to take here and now regarding enforcement to give police the support they need to do their job. We are recruiting additional police because we know they do an amazing job in the Territory. They see and confront things that police officers down south probably could not fathom.

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**VISITORS**  
**Palmerston Christian College**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from Palmerston Christian College, accompanied by their teacher, Mark Twine. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Ms MANISON:** Ensuring we boost police resources and ensuring they have the numbers, as well as the tools to do their job—we have all known police officers in our lives, and we see what passionate people they are. They are committed to their job. You can only imagine the frustration of some of the situations they enter into and some of the tragic situations they have to see. Ultimately they want to see justice. It is part of their job and they want to help make a positive change in people's lives. Giving police more resources and the tools they need to do their job to the best of their abilities, such as the legislation we are debating today, goes a long way.

There have been some very big changes to the machinery of government in the Department of Territory Families to better align the services that government delivers to support families, as well as put in sound measures regarding domestic violence policy and its implementation. We have seen some changes, and we have a very passionate minister who is driving those changes to ensure we have better alignment of government services working with the NGO sector and communities. It is a very important body of work.

We are investing in important infrastructure to support victims of domestic violence, such as the Alice Springs women's shelter. That is a significant investment of around \$6m to ensure that families escaping violence have a safe and supportive place to be. We are investing in Galiwinku to ensure women and their families have a safe place to go.

There are other layers which the government is implementing in order to tackle domestic violence. Alcohol policy and the review we will conduct—but also the implementation of the commitment to bring back the BDR and tackling the issue of supply. That is so important because far too much violence across the Territory is driven by alcohol. We are taking a responsible approach to looking at alcohol policy, and one of our key commitments in the election was bringing back the BDR. We are doing that this year because tackling supply is crucial.

I have spoken before about the efforts we are putting into housing. Overcrowded housing situations and poor living standards do not contribute to the wellbeing of children or families; it adds more pressure on them. It increases those pressures. We are doing everything we can to deliver more housing, particularly in the bush. We have a great Minister for Housing and Community Development, who is so passionate about this issue. I love hearing him speak about it. It is about what he wants to achieve in the bush and what he wants to see in the urban setting. It is about investment in housing for vulnerable families who are doing it tough. We need to look at innovative models as to how we can invest in housing.

We know that good housing has a huge impact on the social and economic outcomes of the Territory. Making sure we have appropriate short- and medium-term accommodation is another important factor. I am proud to be the Minister for Children, knowing we are investing in kids and giving families the support they need from the moment mum is pregnant with the bub until that child starts school. We ensure we are giving critical support that families need in those early years. This will ensure children get the support they need if there are vulnerabilities or issues, or if a family is recognised to be a victim of domestic violence.

There is more than just this bill, the tools we give police and the investment in safe accommodation for women and families escaping domestic violence. It is also about looking holistically across government and all the different factors that contribute to the horrendous rates of domestic violence in the Northern Territory; that is exactly what we are doing.

We are working more closely with non-government organisations, looking at ways in which we can give them more certainty through longer-term funding agreements to make sure they are playing their very important roles, because we know they give families incredible support.

I heard the Member for Spillett talking about everyone linking arms for the No More campaign and ensuring there is support for those programs from the ground up. People from communities are taking ownership of the issues, standing up and saying 'no more' to domestic and family violence and are working together. It is great that there has always been such strong support from every member of this parliament towards those efforts. It is important that continues.

There is a lot of work to do in this space. It is critical that we do not relent and continue to do everything we can, as members of parliament—and we all have an individual responsibility; I have to stress that—to combat the horrendous rates of domestic violence in the Northern Territory.

There are different measures this government will take to try to alleviate some of the contributing factors to domestic violence rates. The solutions to reducing it go beyond this bill, but this bill is one important step as part of the process. It will give police greater capacity to do their jobs. Most importantly, it will give victims the greater level of support they need, because what they have already faced is unacceptable.

It is an important bill. I thank the minister and the department for the work they have done and thank the police for the work they have been doing with the cameras. Hopefully this will drive more prosecutions, give victims more of a voice in the system and ensure more people who commit acts of domestic and family violence are brought to justice.

I again pay tribute to police, who do a remarkable job in the Northern Territory in some confronting and traumatising situations. It is frustrating for them because they do not want to have to deal with these situations. I commend Northern Territory Police for their ongoing work; they are amazing. I believe this legislation will give them a greater capacity to perform their vital roles, to serve victims better and serve the community in line with community expectations of what should be done to tackle domestic and family violence.

**Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson):** Madam Speaker, I support the proposed legislative amendments to both the *Evidence Act* and the *Surveillance Devices Act* to allow for the legal introduction of body-worn videos and recording of statements of evidence in proceedings for domestic violence offences.

Much has been said about the use of body-worn video—which is often referred to as body-worn cameras—in respect to the collection of evidence when an incident occurs that can then be used in the prosecution of an offender. We have also heard about the strict procedures being put in place to ensure such evidence is used fairly and in a way that improves outcomes for victims of crime whilst still affording legal and procedural fairness for offenders.

What we have not heard much about, and what I will mainly focus on today, is what I describe as the double advantage this legislation presents to us; it has potential to provide improved procedural compliance by police officers in their dealings with Territorians, as well as provide evidence in cases of assault against police officers. There is evidence that this leads to reduced unfounded complaints against police officers. Administratively, the department and the police must be saying a big amen to that.

Body-worn video, BMVs, were first used in the early 2000s predominantly in places like the United States, England and Brazil. They were usually used as a tool—interestingly, not in the same circumstances that we are introducing them here—to curb police misconduct and provide evidence-based accounts of police officers' actions. They were first introduced in Australia in 2007, with a small trial of 48 BMVs conducted in the Northern Territory as far back as 2014.

Over a 10-year period in Brazil approximately 5000 citizens were killed by police, which presented a real threat to their legitimacy not only in Brazil but across the globe. In addition police use of force is something that we are all conscious of. Over a number of years the media have selectively, and possibly in some circumstances mischievously, highlighted some extreme cases that have been unsettling and suggest that police may rely on the use of force too often. This is particularly controversial given that police are the very people we rely on to keep us safe and uphold the law.

There was an overseas case study—I emphasise that it was overseas—undertaken with results published last year in the *European Journal of Criminology*. I thank our wonderful resources in the Parliamentary Library for providing me some great research in this area. The study determined that the use of body-worn

videos had no impact on the use of force by police personnel. It is a good outcome. This case study studied 10 random control trials over eight police forces in six jurisdictions, and these jurisdictions provided a police service to over two million people.

During the trial well over 2000 police officers wore body-worn videos during 4915 separate operational shifts. It is a significant case study. Several sites did not use cameras, to provide a control condition. The cameras were worn and turned on for the full 12-hour period of every shift, every one of the 4915 shifts. For each of the 10 trials, despite an expectation that monitoring would change police behaviour, there was no effect on the police use of force; their behaviour did not change. It demonstrated that police were consistent in their approach to policing and often responded to incidents with only seconds to decide on a course of action. This is a good thing. It is a great finding.

It is interesting to unpack a little about why that was the case. It seems apparent that when offenders are not aware that their behaviour is being watched, they often continue to act out their lawless behaviour. When body-worn cameras are visible and in use by police officers, an offender's behaviour is far less likely to escalate; therefore there is far less need for police to respond with use of force. That is an interesting and very important side benefit of the introduction and use of this technology in the local police force in the Northern Territory.

In terms of assaults against police compared to the control sites where cameras were being worn, assaults against police were slightly elevated when compared to the control sites. The theory is that when monitors are being worn, an officer may use less force and be seen by a perpetrator as somewhat more vulnerable to attack. During trials in the Northern Territory there was a decrease in this area. That is great news. I have been assured that this will continue to be monitored. Perpetrators need to be aware that they will be caught and prosecuted if they decide to take their frustrations out on a police officer.

In cases of assault against law men and women, body-worn video offers a great source of raw evidence that ensures those who attack the people who are there to protect them and their rights are able to be identified and held to account for their actions. If one of my friends or their child was to take on the role of serving the community as a police officer, I would want them to have the comfort of this extra tool in the event that something traumatic should happen to them while carrying out the duties of their job.

The procedural elements before us legislate to allow three major things to happen:

1. A complainant's recorded statement is to be admitted as evidence in incidents of domestic violence.
2. It importantly recognises them as vulnerable witnesses.
3. It allows the playing of the recording, taken at the scene at the time of the incident, in court.

This trio of changes affectively relieves a victim from having to retell their story in a courtroom. We have heard plenty about the advantages of that today.

Evidence recorded on body-worn videos can provide compelling evidence in cases where victims would otherwise have to recall and write down the facts of a past event. It has the potential to ease the burden when someone runs out of fight instinct and thinks it may seem easier to walk away than to provide evidence in tough circumstances and then experience the follow-up procedure in court.

I know firsthand that sufferers of domestic violence can feel intimidated and discouraged by the perpetrator, and sometimes by their families and friends, from following up verbal statements, and they may change them to lessen the severity of the incident. This is the unfortunate cycle of guilt and submission a victim often endures. Evidence taken on body-worn cameras can take that out of the hands of victims and free them from this burden.

It is my strong hope that body-worn videos will have a flow-on effect—we are already hearing in other examples that it has—to lessen the number of matters challenged in the court by offenders. It has the potential to force perpetrators to face compelling visual evidence of their crimes and therefore significantly increase early guilty pleas. By extension it will provide an incentive in decreased incidents of domestic violence in the first place.

We are always sceptical of the value of new technology in a workplace, but I am compelled to believe the introduction of these small but powerful body-worn cameras will change policing in the Territory. They are not the panacea of evidence gathering but may be a game changer. They will instil further confidence in the

police force and give them another tool to make their job easier and keep the community safe. That is what we are here to talk about.

We are working hard to address crime, particularly domestic and senseless violence, against Territory women. We will hear later this week about the work we are doing to reduce reoffending rates when on bail. We heard the Treasurer talk extensively about the work we are doing in the alcohol space. This legislation is another part of our plan to reduce crime in the Territory. We do not want to hear that another woman has died at the hands of her partner when something could have been done to intervene and help her escape the situation.

There are some very robust elements of these legislative changes—procedures such as serving copies on defendants' legal practitioner but not the offender, and the need for English translations alongside initial evidence that makes these amendments well thought through. I commend the Attorney-General and her staff on those amendments. They have given great consideration to ensure such evidence cannot be challenged on its validity at a later date.

I congratulate them and commend the bill to the House.

**Mr SIEVERS (Brennan):** Madam Speaker, I commend the Attorney-General and this government for all the hard work they have done on this bill. The amendments will not only fulfil the recommendations made from the coroner's recent findings into the shocking death of two women in the Northern Territory but also protect victims and reduce the need for them to appear in court. It will support police and the courts to obtain visual and factual evidence, reduce trauma to victims of family violence when testifying in court and, most importantly, improve the accuracy of evidence.

Family violence is one of the most serious concerns in the Northern Territory. As the Attorney-General has stated in this Chamber, Territory statistics are absolutely shocking. It is clear we all must do more. Alcohol is a key factor in family violence statistics. Let me make this clear, alcohol is not an excuse, and nor should it be, as there is no excuse for family violence. It is very clear in all the evidence that excessive drinking is a recipe for disaster. That is why this government is committed to a holistic and integrated approach that includes listening to the people, the victims and frontline services.

Frontline services deal with family violence on a daily—more so nightly—basis. This government is not waiting for something to happen before it acts. This government is dedicated to preventing family violence, or intervening at the first opportunity. This bill is about collecting valuable and admissible evidence that stands up in our courts; evidence that is visual and auditory in a live environment; and evidence that provides the facts, events and actions as they occur, giving those viewing the evidence a real sense of what happened.

This bill is about protecting victims and the innocent, ensuring police and the courts have the tools they need to hold perpetrators to account, make victims feel safer in the trial process and people feel safe to report domestic abuse, reducing rates of violence in the NT. Body-worn cameras are a key tool in this strategy. There are many more tools to come, which this government has announced, including the reintroduction of the BDR, more CCTV cameras, the Palmerston police station and the recruitment of more police officers.

This government is serious about addressing alcohol issues, which are well-known to be a key factor in family violence. This government is reinstating the BDR for all Territorians. We are cutting off the alcohol before it can get into the hands of those who are known to have issues with alcohol. I am informed the BDR is well on track to come into operation by September 2017. It is another prevention and early intervention tool to combat violence and alcohol-related harm. It is a tool that will reduce alcohol-related incidents and presentations that tie up police and emergency services. It is welcomed by our hard-working frontline services.

Programs and strategies that will complement and enhance this work are in collaboration with the No More campaign driven by Charlie King and supported by me, as assistant minister for men's policy, and many other members of this parliament. The campaign gives a clear message to all Territorians that family violence must stop now. This government has a holistic plan to combat family violence and its contributing factors, including alcohol. This government has listened and is willing to move with the times to ensure our frontline services have the tools and resources they need to do their jobs well.

This government is in touch with the community and its services to address family violence issues. The body-worn cameras will have further benefits to police, prosecutors and public money. Police wearing the

body cameras know they have an independent eyewitness on board, an account of everyone's actions, including theirs, the perpetrators, the witnesses and the victims.

The showing of the footage will also allow the defendant the opportunity to view the recorded evidence before the hearing, which, in many cases, is when the defendant enters into an early plea based on factual, visual and auditory evidence. This saves taxpayer dollars and valuable court time.

Madam Speaker, I support the use of the body-worn video cameras and the amendments to address family violence and support hard-working police and frontline service. I am pleased our government endorses this tool.

Debate suspended; the Assembly suspended.

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BODY WORN VIDEO AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EVIDENCE)  
BILL  
(Serial 10)**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin):** Madam Speaker, I first pay tribute to the hard-working members of the Territory Police Force who are constantly put in horrible situations; they are challenged and put themselves at risk in the line of duty just about every day, particularly when dealing with domestic violence issues. These can be some of the toughest issues to deal with on the beat. Most of us in the Chamber would be glad we do not have to attend those calls.

The domestic violence statistics throughout the Territory are some of the worst in the nation, and the introduction of these cameras will be an added tool for the police in their day-to-day lives. Anything that we, as a Chamber, can do to assist will be greatly appreciated by the people doing this very tough work on a day-to-day basis.

Domestic violence is one of the biggest problems and challenges to the wellbeing and safety of Territorians. One of the biggest challenges to us, as a government, is to try to do the best we can to ensure people are safe at home and in public places, and that they are free from the scourge that is domestic violence.

There are many champions for different causes through the Northern Territory. One who has been mentioned today is Charlie King. His No More campaign is something that everyone in this Chamber has very strongly supported in recent months, linking arms to say 'no more' and make sure domestic violence is at the forefront of people's thinking.

Sport is used as a fantastic driver and educator through the Territory, and it is commendable of Charlie King to see that and liaise with Indigenous elders. The story he tells about their crooked fingers waving 'no more' and that being the birth of the campaign demonstrates the hard work and championing he does for those causes.

The police have been trialling the use of body-worn videos since late 2014. There have been over 800 devices rolled out to use throughout the Northern Territory. The police will use the video devices to make recorded statements, which will be a massive improvement. The complainants will get the majority of the benefit by being able to use video evidence, which a number of speakers have already mentioned. It is an advantage for victims to not be put through the trauma of having to retell their story. That will be a fantastic benefit.

All parties involved in the incident will have access to the video footage before the court process starts. It will be fair for everyone. There is a need for recollections and interviews to be as clear as possible for domestic violence incidents. A couple of people have discussed today how difficult it is to recollect what you have seen even when you are not under pressure. If you have the added pressure from community, family or whomever may be putting pressure on you, it becomes a significant part of the process to have video evidence to refer back to. It can ensure recollections are as clear as possible.

If people are given the option to look at that evidence and then come forward and make earlier guilty pleas, it is a great outcome for everyone. It will give advantages to having these video recordings. The aim is to capture and record all of those events as quickly and easily as possible. There is a theme of putting the victims first which is starting to come through with this government. There is a host of antisocial violence

and crime-related matters that we are dealing with. We are seeking to put victims first to ensure they are heard. We want to ensure things are as easy as possible for them, and they are not put through any more trauma.

Some of the reforms regarding the definition of 'vulnerable witness' will also provide support for the complainants and ensure it is as easy as possible for them to give evidence. This will be an important tool for law enforcement, particularly with domestic violence related issues. We have heard announcements about improvement regarding CCTV and mobile CCTV around the Territory, which help with crime related matters. Having each and every policeman, or as many as possible, accessing mobile cameras will be a massive benefit to all Territorians and to law enforcement.

Recently we heard from police that perpetrators are becoming shrewder than they were in the past. They are covering their faces from CCTV, wearing gloves and are aware of DNA capacities and technical advances. They are not leaving DNA at the scene of the crime. These cameras and any other new-age tools we can use to improve the ability of law enforcement across the Territory will be extremely encouraging. We heard a few times today that there have been significant benefits in other jurisdictions, so we look forward to the same type of benefits in the Northern Territory.

Amendments to the act also ensure that the good work of police in obtaining evidence will not be jeopardised by unintended consequences regarding the compiling of video evidence. The video evidence will make things much easier for the victims. Evidence gathering is critical to ensuring these situations do not escalate. If they do, we need to ensure we do not have any more deaths, like those that have instigated these proceedings.

Territorians will be extremely glad about that. They have been heavily reported on, not only the Territory incidents but some across the nation. I am sure it breaks people's hearts to hear of incidents like that. All we do, inside and outside the Chamber, to make sure domestic violence is curbed as much as possible will be well received.

I was extremely proud on the weekend to walk alongside Charlie King to show our government's commitment. It was fantastic to see Madam Speaker there in her splendid purple hat and outfit, on the back of the purple theme with all the purple umbrellas. It was a fun way to celebrate the advancements of women in the Northern Territory. I am very fortunate that my partner and a number of other women are heavily involved in women's issues.

The International Women's Day gala dinner was on the weekend and it was great to see many of our colleagues there. Some of the funding that is raised from those gala dinners helps victims of domestic violence and goes to women's shelters and services. It would be fantastic to fundraise and hold events for more positive reasons. We are getting access to better facilities, cameras and law enforcement to make sure that in the future the impacts of domestic violence are kept to a minimum.

I commend the opposition's support of this. I encourage not only the government but all levels of the community to do everything in their power to end the scourge of domestic violence in the Territory. This bill will go some way to assisting those at the front line of enforcement.

**Mr McCARTHY (Barkly):** Madam Speaker, I commend the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, and I thank the minister for bringing forward this bill. It applies to all sectors of the Territory and to all our communities. It is legislation for keeping Territorians safe.

As we have heard from many speakers, it is about technological advances in fighting and prosecuting crime. I enjoyed the briefing supplied by the minister to the Caucus and Cabinet. It was a good second reading speech that outlined the elements of this amendment and how it applies to pragmatic legislation across the Northern Territory.

I pick up on some very important points from the minister in this speech:

*The Labor government acknowledges that domestic and family violence is one of the biggest challenges to the wellbeing and safety of Territorians ...*

...

*The government is committed to increasing the safety of Territorians and holding perpetrators of domestic and family violence accountable for their actions.*

Well done, minister. Again I quote from her speech:

*We are consulting on specialist's justice responses and supporting grassroots campaigns, such as the Charlie King No More campaign.*

These are great examples of consulting with Territorians and stakeholders, making decisions based on good evidence and finding conclusions that support Territorians in their homes and communities, especially within their families.

The speech talks about that important phrase, 'break the silence'. I was at a recent Women's Day March in Tennant Creek celebrating International Women's Day 2017. It was a very powerful event. It is always great when Tennant Creek folk get together and block a national highway. With the support of Northern Territory police we all marched down the main street of Tennant Creek and congregated at Peko Park, where we shared some very important information and sentiments among VIP speakers and community members.

I was honoured because Madam President of the Barkly Regional Council asked me to speak. I assessed that celebration. I looked with pride at the younger women who had gathered—the Stars program from the local high school and private businesses and their staff. T & J Contractors staff were wearing nice bright uniforms to put their mark on that celebration. There were older members of the group that gathered as well.

I thought to myself and tried to articulate in my reply that it is nice to be part of the generation that is speaking out, that has broken the silence. When I think back to the wild west of Sydney where I grew up, to my grandmother and grandfather's generation and then to some travel and living overseas that we were fortunate to do in London, I start to process how this has been closeted for generations.

I was particularly interested in the United Kingdom and of the rural areas where the baby boomer generation led this. Now it is the post-modern generations that are speaking out. They are calling it out. Gentlemen like Charlie King have been able to harness that energy, lead and direct it. That is the most pragmatic education and awareness that we can get.

I thanked that crowd. I especially encouraged the younger members of that gathering to remember to continue speaking out, to call out domestic violence, family violence and child abuse. We will not tolerate it; it is completely unacceptable. The more people that become aware, the more people will join in this movement. It is the generational change that will bring about the outcome we so desire.

I reflect on this legislation and have done when legislation of this type is being debated and discussed in parliament. I remember 2013 as one of the most bloody years in the Northern Territory, with an incredible spike in assaults that directly related to the previous administration, the current administration at that time, which was the Country Liberal Party. They were elected to government in August 2012 and they immediately scrapped the Banned Drinker Register with no alcohol policy to put in its place. It was purely opportunistic, cheap politics.

I have told the story—it is on the *Parliamentary Record*—of the night at the Desert Harmony Festival in Tennant Creek in which I was confronted by an extremely intoxicated constituent who was trying to thank me for what had happened. I used that opportunity say to the crowd that this had been a bad move. Consequently in 2013 we saw a spike in alcohol-related crime that directly impacted on domestic and family violence at completely unacceptable levels across the Northern Territory. It was out of control.

It was a small but very strong opposition that held that CLP administration to account. There are still members of that administration in this House who do not like to talk about the past. You can see with this example why they do not like to talk about the past. It was a time Territorians will not get over in a hurry.

The response to that was very chaotic from the government and administration of the day; however, police stepped up to the mark and initiated a number of targeted responses. One was in Tennant Creek where they directly targeted domestic and family violence.

I was fortunate there was a young Indigenous police officer, who was a neighbour at that time—I was able to discuss this with him as a local member. This gentleman, as a professional police officer on the beat, was able to describe the difficulties and challenges regarding addressing domestic and family violence, not only in terms of the sensitivities around confronting the perpetrators and supporting the victims but the tough nature of trying to make convictions.

There were severe gaps in making that chain completely and solidly linked to send that message home that this is completely unacceptable. I talked with him about how we could improve that. He had his ideas, and it was really important for me to learn about the process. I still thank police for their targeted interventions in those days to try to turn around what was a scourge across the Northern Territory from a chaotic, ill-thought-out, opportunistic Country Liberal Party action.

This legislation coming in via a Labor government and early in a Labor term signals that the Attorney-General is very focused on alcohol misuse across the Northern Territory and on supporting women and children of domestic and family violence. This is generating inspiration. We are a young government, in terms of our membership, and are serious about these issues. This legislation signals a great step in the right direction.

It is important to acknowledge this legislation regarding new technologies that are evidence-based, which will support police in the field and on the front line doing important and challenging work. It will also support justice agencies in getting proper results. When all of this work comes together it sends a clear message to the community that assaults and domestic and family violence is unacceptable. These are not good parts of our society; they are a scourge and this government is making some great inroads into addressing that.

It will send a clear message. I will take home the opportunity, as a local member, to go into communities, regional and remote, and dialogue and interpret this message. I will make sure people understand these new technologies that support the police and the justice system also mean that if you cross the line and commit abhorrent crimes, then you will face the full force of the law. These loopholes are closing tight.

This is an important message that all members of this House can unite on. We can get behind Charlie King and take this message to our communities. We can add new layers about the good work and focus of a government, and how that interprets into amending legislation to make the tools more effective and powerful.

It is a great honour to be a part of Michael Gunner's Labor government. It is also a great honour to support the Attorney-General at times like this in the Northern Territory when we start to see a generational change; it will be my grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will have the conversation about our generation as the change makers, the people who stood up and demanded that the silence be broken and who worked off evidence-based solutions to make sure we could do everything in our power to ensure that Territorians and Australians feel safe.

**Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice):** Madam Speaker, I thank all members in the Chamber for their thoughtful contributions to the debate and their support for this bill. It has been very interesting to listen to the speeches of people who have taken the time to reflect upon this important legislation.

I will take a few moments to reflect on some of the comments that were made this morning. I note that a number of members reflected on the coronial findings from the inquest into the deaths of two Alice Springs women and the recommendations made by the coroner. In particular I noted that the Deputy Opposition Leader, the Member for Spillett, called on the government to implement those recommendations.

I wish to make it clear, as I have said previously on a number of occasions that the government supports the coroner's recommendations from the inquest into the deaths of Ms Murphy and Ms McCormack. We immediately started the necessary reforms to implement those recommendations from the coroner. We respect the position of the coroner, the work that he and his office undertake and those recommendations to government.

This bill is one of the key recommendations made by the coroner. He recommended:

*... that police continue to pursue the use of body-worn cameras and a change to the legislation so as to allow those matters captured on camera to be used as evidence-in-chief.*

The purpose of this bill is to provide those additional tools to facilitate the giving of evidence of complainants in domestic violence offence proceedings by expressly stating that they are vulnerable witnesses and by permitting the recorded statement of complainants in a domestic violence offence proceeding to be admitted as evidence-in-chief.

Additionally, in line with the coroner's recommendations, the government is investigating a domestic violence offenders register so that police can work more effectively and closely monitor the worst of the worst offenders. I understand that this work is being led by police. They are also looking forward to the Bail



Amendment Act, which we are proposing to pass on urgency in just two days. Electronic monitoring for police bail has an obvious and immediate use on alleged domestic violence offenders, so we are looking forward to bringing that legislation to the House and seeking permission of the House to pass that on urgency.

Another key recommendation by the coroner in that inquest was for faster and specialised processes for domestic violence in our courts. I am proud to be part of a team that has announced it will trial a specialised approach to domestic violence in the Alice Springs Local Court aimed at a better and faster court process. I met with stakeholders recently in Alice Springs about this DV court, and I have seen a comprehensive report on what has been done and what is proposed. I take a moment to acknowledge the Minister for Territory Families and her passion and drive in this space.

We have all spoken today about supporting victims. This is a practical measure that will help victims and our processes. The NGOs, support staff and the local community are working together on creating effective solutions. I am greatly encouraged by the efforts under way in Alice Springs. If successful, this approach could be a model to be considered throughout the Territory. I very much look forward to working with the minister and continuing to update the community on this measure.

Finally, the coroner noted in the inquest that more needs to be done across government on strategies to reduce domestic violence. I acknowledge the work being done by our government, particularly Minister Wakefield. As we heard this morning, whenever she speaks in the House she is passionate about protecting victims, as well as doing what needs to be done to change behaviours and bring perpetrators to account.

I also marched with Charlie King on Saturday—the Chief Minister mentioned this in his speech this morning—on International Women's Day. I thank and congratulate everyone, particularly Charlie, who has led that campaign. Listening to Minister McCarthy talk about how his community is not tolerating this issue, that they are calling it out—that is so important. Hopefully generations into the future will look towards these trailblazers who are saying enough is enough. They are calling it out. They are leading campaigns, whether for schoolchildren or a campaign such as the No More campaign, which has reached so deeply in our parliament, the federal parliament and across the sporting arena.

I acknowledge everybody in this effort. It needs to be everybody, the whole of community, tackling this issue and calling it out. There was a range of very important points made by members this morning. The Chief Minister noted how this bill forms part of our government's wider strategy of giving police the resources and tools they need to protect our community.

The Deputy Chief Minister noted in her comments that this bill not only addresses the issue of domestic violence and its devastation across the Northern Territory, but it aligns with our government's broader agenda of putting victims first. I was encouraged to hear all the comments by members this morning. The Member for Sanderson spoke about how evidence supports the approach the government has taken in this bill and how this bill supports police officers on the front line doing a tough job.

On that note, I would like to add that similar legislation which allows a recorded statement to be used as all or part of evidence-in-chief in domestic violence offence proceedings is in force in New South Wales and the ACT. Each of these jurisdictions have registered positive outcomes since the introduction of their respective legislation, including an increase in early guilty pleas in cases where recorded statements have been made.

The Member for Brennan spoke this morning about how this bill creates a tool for reducing rates of violence in our communities, and I acknowledge that passion. Those comments show how committed he is to seeing our government address this issue of crime and the causes of crime, such as alcohol abuse. I know he is particularly passionate. I thank all the members for their support in speaking to this debate and sharing their thoughts.

This bill amends the *Evidence Act* and *Surveillance Devices Act* and makes consequential amendments to the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act*. The bill amends the *Evidence Act* to clarify that the complainant in a domestic violence offence proceeding is a vulnerable witness within the meaning in section 21A(1) and inserts a new Part 3A which allows the recorded statement of the complainant in a domestic violence offence proceeding to be admitted as the whole or part of their evidence-in-chief.

It sets out the procedural requirements that must be met for the recorded statement to be admitted and creates an offence of publishing a recorded statement without authority. This bill amends the *Surveillance*

*Devices Act* to insert a definition of 'body-worn video' in section 4. It amends sections 11 and 12 of the *Surveillance Devices Act* to provide an exemption from the offences in those sections when a police officer is using a body-worn video in accordance with the new section 14A.

It inserts new section 14A, which sets out the circumstances and the compliance, which will ensure that police officers using body-worn video will not be committing an offence under sections 11 and 12. It also amends sections 51 and 53 to clarify that information collected through the use of body-worn video is protected information and provides for how that information may be used.

The bill also makes minor consequential amendments to sections 60AE and 105F of the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act* to clarify how the preliminary brief and committal brief provisions will operate in the event of any conflict with the new Part 3A of the *Evidence Act*.

This act will commence in two stages. The amendments to the *Surveillance Devices Act* and the *Evidence Act* to provide that the complainant in a domestic violence offence proceeding is a vulnerable witness will commence as soon as possible following the gazetting.

The remainder of the act, the new sections 21H and 21R, and the consequential amendments to the *Local Court (Criminal Procedure) Act*, will commence at a later date. The reason for not commencing these provisions straight away is that police need time to conduct training to ensure that they tape-record statements in a way that is sensitive, is admissible in a court setting and that complies with the legislative requirements of the new Part 3A of the *Evidence Act*.

This means that police will receive training on when to commence and terminate recording using their body-worn video, and the court retains the discretion to exclude evidence of a body-worn video if it is unfairly prejudicial to a defendant. Defence council may make submissions about the value of the footage from the body-worn video when the footage does not capture the entire incident. These are important aspects in making sure we maintain fairness.

Further information about the amendments effected by the bill will be made available on the Department of Attorney-General and Justice Website. This will include a downloadable fact sheet setting out key features and effects of this bill. The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice will also be writing to key stakeholders to advise them of the commencement of the bill and the operation impacts it will have. I am encouraged to hear we have received positive feedback on this bill from many stakeholders to date.

The Member for Nelson raised a question about making sure these videos are not being used inappropriately. I have just outlined what the process is, and I hope that provides assurance to the member that it is an offence to publish this material. It is designed for the reasons outlined: to make the process better for victims and to have an accurate description in court.

In conclusion, our government is focused on combatting the scourge of domestic and family violence we experience in our community. Domestic and family violence is one of the biggest challenges to the safety and wellbeing of Territorians. This bill improves procedures in our justice system. Once passed it will help empower the victims of domestic and family violence, and will assist police and prosecutors in holding the perpetrators to account.

I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT** **Education in the Northern Territory**

**Ms LAWLER (Education):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand here today to talk about the vision this government has for education in the Territory and the actions taken to make this vision a reality.

This government has made a clear and unequivocal commitment to investing in children. We believe that by investing in children we will lift the Territory's social and economic development, turn around long-term

issues impacting on crime and antisocial behaviour, and create more jobs and economic growth into the future.

Investing in children means investing in education and schools. All Territorians, no matter where they live, have a right to a world-class education. A good education can change lives and open up a lifetime of opportunity. It has the power to break the cycle of disadvantage and lift individual families and communities out of poverty.

I want the Territory to continue to grow and prosper, to be a community that is safe, healthy and inclusive. A quality education plays a key role in supporting this vision, which is why this government made clear key commitments to education. We are implementing those important commitments. This Labor government committed to giving kids the best start in life, including expanding the Families as First Teachers program.

We made a commitment to invest an additional \$124m over four years in schools. This means \$20m directly into school budgets each year; \$8m each year for early intervention, tackling challenging behaviour in the classroom and supporting students with additional needs, such as hearing loss; \$2m each year to create a program of school sports, arts, music and health to provide engaging pathways for students; and \$1m each year to support school business managers and allow principals to focus on educational leadership.

We committed to strengthening school quality through a national leading school principal leadership program, mentor support for early career teachers and a high achievers program to stretch the skills and abilities of high-achieving students. We will also deliver a school curriculum that prepares students for the future, including coding training, enterprise education and upskilling digital literacy of educators.

I am focused on ensuring all children and young people have access to a high-quality education in the Northern Territory, just like my family and I have had. We have some of the best educators in the world, and I know the Territory's education system has developed exceptional students. We need to do more. We want to see more young people completing school.

Successfully completing school has a significant lifelong impact. It means individuals have the capacity to care for themselves and their families, manage budgets, live healthier and longer lives, and get a job or start a business. We want to maximise the potential of every child. It is easy to say but complex to achieve. We need sound, long-term plans that are backed by evidence-based and practical approaches. We need funding directed to where it is needed most.

There are almost 45 000 children enrolled in 189 schools across the Territory. Our student population is diverse with over 40% identifying as Indigenous and almost half having a language background other than English. Forty-six per cent of students live in remote and very remote areas, and 64 of the 100 most disadvantaged schools nationally are in the Northern Territory. We have the highest levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and remoteness in Australia. This means the cost of providing education is much higher compared to the rest of Australia.

While attendance rates in other states and territories continue to increase year on year, school attendance levels in the Territory have been declining. Territory students continue to fall behind their peers time and again in national and international assessments. The 2016 NAPLAN results show Territory student attainment is lower than the Australian average in every test domain and year level. There is much work to be done to address these challenges, but I am also optimistic about the future.

A number of Territory schools were recently acknowledged for demonstrating gains in numeracy and reading well above the national average in their 2016 NAPLAN results. Nakara and Wagaman Primary Schools had increased results in both reading and numeracy for students who progressed from Year 3 to Year 5. Students at Nightcliff Middle School who progressed from Year 7 to Year 9 recorded significant gains in numeracy, and Taminmin College saw gains in reading. In the Katherine region, Clyde Fenton and MacFarlane Primary Schools were also acknowledged.

In 2016 we had record numbers of NT Certificate of Education and Training completions. A total of 1399 students attained an NTCET, including 221 Indigenous students. I was especially pleased to see that 15 Indigenous students from remote areas completed their NTCET at their local schools. Secondary education options in the bush can be successful, but only if governments commit to supporting them.

Although I am optimistic about the future of education in the Territory, we have been left with a legacy of problems to fix. Despite all the evidence that shows the importance of education to the prosperity of the

Territory, the CLP government made drastic cuts to Territory schools. In its four years of government it cut \$114m from the Territory's education budget through saving measures and efficiency dividends.

This meant that over 500 full-time equivalent staff lost their jobs and there were more than 300 fewer staff in our schools. Schools like Moulden, in my electorate, had to cut six teachers; Centralian Middle School cut 10 teachers and Angurugu School cut 11 teachers. There are many more stories exactly like that.

With over 70% of government schools located in remote and very remote areas in the Territory, these cuts impacted on local job opportunities for Indigenous Territorians, as well as on our most disadvantaged students. Education was simply not a priority for the previous government. It spent the last four years perpetuating the falsehood that funding to our schools does not matter and that investment in education has no relationship to student results or outcomes for young people and breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

This is just not true. I know it, the members of this House know it, parents know it and, most of all, students know it. Funding to schools pays for more teachers, as well as extra support and resources that maximise equity of access to education. Funding to schools ensures every child is supported to reach their full potential. This government is reinvesting in education and putting resources where the evidence shows they will make the biggest difference.

This investment starts from the beginning of a child's life. We know what happens in a child's first 1000 days, that is, from conception to two years of age. This time has a profound effect and long-lasting impact on their health and wellbeing. During the first five years a child's brain develops more and faster than at any other stage of their life. This is the time they develop the behaviour, language, thinking, social and emotional skills needed for school and for their lives. Our government is working collaboratively so every child is ready on day one of the year they commence school.

I am very proud to be a member of the children's subcommittee of Cabinet with the Minister for Children and a number of other colleagues who, along with the expert reference panel, are developing this government's early childhood development plan. This plan will drive generational change and improve the lives of Territory children. We want families to be the first teachers in their children's lives.

The previous Labor government started the Families as First Teachers program to support young children, from birth to five years of age, and their families. I am pleased to see this program has continued to grow. This program is delivered through playgroups in which children engage in play and early literacy and numeracy activities. Families are encouraged to interact with their children and are provided with advice on how to care for their child and support their learning at home.

Children and families are also supported in the transition to preschool. Staff conduct home visits to better support families and encourage attendance at the program. They work with partner agencies to build the capacity of families and the community to support the healthy development of young children, as well as develop community-based resources to promote early learning and strengthen families' parenting skills.

There is over 40 years of evidence backing the Abecedarian approach, and we use the Australian Abecedarian approach, which is at the basis of all our FaFT programs. Evidence shows that children who participated in the Abecedarian program achieved higher reading and maths results at ages eight, 12, 15 and up to 21 years of age. They were more likely to be employed in skilled jobs or enrolled in higher education, and they had healthier lives.

This government is delivering on its commitment to increase investment in early childhood and expand programs that work. As part of this expansion I was pleased to officially open the FaFT program at Ludmilla Primary School last week with the Minister for Children. The service started with 10 families at the beginning of the school year and has already grown to 50 families attending the new program. This demonstrates a need in our community to support families. We need to give children the best possible start in life and the opportunity to be successful early learners who are ready for school.

Recruitment for the additional FaFT sites is under way, and I look forward to seeing the new programs commence in coming months. Term 2 programs will commence operations at Jilkminggan, Minyerri and the newly-established early intervention learning hub in Darwin's northern suburbs, which will provide targeted support to children with disabilities and their families. The remaining sites are due to commence in Semester 2 in Ampilatwatja, Melville Island, Warruwi, Yirrkala Homelands, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs.

The Families as First Teachers program is an important part of this government's agenda. It engages with families and prepares children for school to improve lifelong education, health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly for Indigenous children and their families. Once children start their formal education at school, we need to make sure they have a quality learning environment with great teachers and support staff, as well as services and programs that support all students to engage in learning. One year of school should equal at least one year of progress for every Territory student. That is vital. That is why this government is backing Territory students and teachers by investing an additional \$124m into schools over the next four years.

As part of this education package we have already delivered \$20m in additional funding directly to government schools for the 2017 school year. We listened to teachers, principals, parents and other stakeholders and have put this money where it is needed most. Through a fair and transparent school funding model we have increased the base funding for every student by \$100, and we have increased funding for students in preschool, transition, middle years and senior years.

Additional funding has been provided to schools with high proportions of Indigenous students. We also targeted funds for student learning in homeland centres, recognising the higher costs of delivering education to students in remote locations. Special schools and distance education schools have also benefitted from the funding boost. All schools in the Territory are benefitting from the increased funding. Schools that would have continued to lose funding under a CLP government now have certainty that they can continue to employ hard-working teachers and support staff in their schools.

Katherine High School, a school that was under-resourced for a number of years, now has certainty and can make improvements in technology infrastructure to better support student learning. We will see more jobs in schools and better conditions, including permanency for staff, smaller class sizes and increased access to professional development.

Students will have access to more programs and better resources. Schools will choose. They will have the autonomy to choose how to spend the additional funds to best meet the needs of their students. We have delivered on our promise to provide more funding to schools, and it is already making a difference.

This means more remote and very remote schools will have the capacity to deliver secondary schooling options, which is a fantastic outcome. Milingimbi School will employ additional teachers and assistant teachers for their secondary program, meaning they can offer both Employment Pathways and NTCET options.

Rosebery Middle School has told me—I was there recently—that the additional funding allowed them to fund and extend their high-performing program. They have also been able to engage an English as a second language specialist and put a teacher in place to deliver the quality Duke of Edinburgh program. Urapunga School, in the electorate of Arnhem, will begin a much-needed program for upgrading student computers.

Taminmin College will enhance its transition program from its feeder schools from Year 6 to Year 7; it will better support students through information and computer technology, English as a second language and student services resources. Braitling School in Alice Springs will increase resources in its early childhood classrooms to give children with low literacy skills extra support and early intervention. Yuendumu School will be able to employ more Indigenous teacher assistants to support implementation of the two-way learning approach in all its middle and senior year classes.

I have just chosen a diverse range of schools, but across the Territory all schools will benefit from the additional \$20m. They will be able to target programs that meet the needs identified by that community, whether it is a Duke of Edinburgh program at Rosebery, information and computer technology and English as a second language at Taminmin, early childhood at Braitling or the two-way program at Yuendumu. Schools will have the autonomy to identify their resources and target where they need it most.

Getting school funding right in the long term is important. Just like we promised in the lead up to the election, an independent review of the school funding model will commence in April. It will seek input from stakeholders and will make recommendations on how the model can be improved to ensure it is equitable, meets students' needs and is transparent and efficient.

We need school funding to be clear and easily understood by principals and school councils. It is important to all of us that funding is clear and transparent so schools can understand their staffing and resourcing. This government is delivering an additional \$1m to support and develop the business managers in schools.

This will include a tailored certificate-level qualification covering business administration, finance and human resource practice. If you are asking people to do more regarding the global budgets, then we need to ensure we have business managers with the skill set to do that work.

This is part of better supporting schools and school councils to focus on children and learning, not just on administration and red tape. Our schools have been making do with less in recent years. We are turning that around by reinvesting in schools and, more importantly, in children.

I am sure that every education minister has committed to improving the education system, to improving outcomes for students. Not all have succeeded. How do we make poor performance good and good performance excellent?

Many of the people in this House who have an interest in education research are familiar with the work of Professor John Hattie. Professor Hattie's research to identify what really works in education to improve student outcomes is respected across the world. The evidence shows that what works is identifying and valuing education expertise, collaborating in the classroom and across schools, targeting resources to meet student needs, and teachers and school leaders delivering evidence-based approaches.

This is backed up by research on how the world's best-performing school systems have made gains. The work of McKinsey and Company shows that the quality of a system is determined by the quality of its teachers. The only way to improve outcomes is through improving teacher practice. Every school needs an exceptional leader. High performance requires every child to succeed. This government is investing in what works.

We are delivering on our education commitment to support teachers from the very start of their careers. We are developing a comprehensive and sustained induction process to provide guidance and support for early career teachers. This includes establishing and maintaining quality mentoring relationships. Evidence shows the importance of providing mentoring and support to teachers in their first two years of teaching. This provides a foundation for exceptional teacher practice throughout their careers. It improves teacher retention and teacher outcomes.

The first two years of a teacher's career are vital to developing and producing fantastic teachers later on. We need to ensure we are using evidence to base our decisions on. Online training and resources will be available by the end of 2017 for mentors and mentees.

We are delivering on our election commitment to create a nation-leading school principal leadership program. Quality school leadership is a vital component of improving education outcomes. We need to encourage our existing high-performing staff to want to become principals. We are developing a renewed professional learning leadership framework this year. This will include provision of relevant world-class programs to develop the leadership and management capabilities of our aspiring and new principals. A newly developed mentoring and coaching framework will be implemented. Early implementation of the mentoring program is occurring with 22 remote principals. Stakeholder feedback will inform future system-wide implementation.

We want being a principal to be a job of choice. Part of that is having a program that supports career progression; the other side is about making principal jobs more attractive by providing better support. There is a shocking body of evidence regarding the deteriorating wellbeing of principals and the significant demand which affects their overall quality of life. At World Teacher's Day last year, in October, I announced this government will also implement a comprehensive program to support the health and wellbeing of our principals and school leaders. This is currently being developed in consultation with the NT Principals Association, and will be launched at the School Leaders Conference in April.

The evidence is clear that to improve education in the Territory we need every child to succeed. This government is committed to implementing a high achievers program. This program will support schools to challenge and stretch the skills and abilities of top performing students. High-performing students have a positive impact on schools, lifting the results of all students.

If students are to benefit from enhanced education programs they need to attend schools regularly. Despite significant investments by the successive governments and the federal government, school attendance remains critically low, particularly for remote and very remote students. Evidence shows that when students attend school more than three days a week their achievement improves substantially with every additional day.

This government recognises that a broad approach with shared responsibility between students, parents, carers, families, communities, schools and government agencies is essential to improve attendance. We have many schools that have attendance over 90% and some with over 94%, but at the other end of the spectrum there are government and non-government schools that have attendance rates around 30%. That is not good enough.

The Every Day Counts strategy is a coordinated, whole-of-government approach for improving school attendance, learning and engagement, and the wellbeing of young Territorians. The attendance strategy focuses on three key priorities, which are safe and healthy communities, strong families and quality early childhood services and schools

We need to keep the focus on improving student attendance, including case management of disengaged young people, because every day counts and every student matters. We need programs that engage students in learning and keep them in school, particularly those who have been disengaged for long periods of time. This can be particularly challenging in our regional towns where small student numbers limit the range of subjects and pathways that can be offered sustainably.

This government is delivering on its election commitment to provide \$2m per year to implement a new Healthy Life Creative Life program. The program will provide alternative education pathways for middle and senior year students in the Barkly and Katherine regions. This will include increased access to art, sport, social and emotional learning, culture, language and learning on country, and vocational education and training to ensure young people are engaged in learning and are job ready in their local communities.

While there are programs and support that all students need to access, some young people have additional needs that cannot be met through mainstream resourcing and approaches. This government has delivered its election commitment to provide \$8m per year to better support and educate children and young people with challenging behaviours and disability; this will improve outcomes for these students, their families and communities. A five-year strategic framework will be developed in 2017 to support an holistic service delivery model for students with additional needs to improve student outcomes. This framework will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders during 2017.

While this long-term planning is under way, we are improving student access to allied health professionals and expanding multidisciplinary specialist support teams to grow school capacity to appropriately support teachers to meet the needs of students. You heard me talk about this in Question Time, but this includes more speech pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists, speech language and communication teachers, and a new conductive hearing loss education adviser.

Next semester we will offer 20 disability teaching scholarships to Territory teachers to grow local capacity. It is important to grow the capacity of Territory teachers. It is important that every student is able to achieve their full potential, and having teachers with specialised skills is vitally important to achieving that. A new autism spectrum disorder intervention program is being established in Palmerston, with recruitment being undertaken for the program to commence in July this year.

Flexible schooling options are being expanded to Palmerston and Alice Springs, with better coordinated wraparound services for youth at risk. This will ensure all Territory students are attending school and are engaged in their learning. We have also established an early learning intervention hub at the old Henbury School site, focused on supporting children with special needs, aged from birth to 12 years, as well as their families.

Services have already commenced, including a new positive learning centre and an autism spectrum disorder intervention program. By semester two there will be an additional autism spectrum disorder intervention program and a Families as First Teachers program. All together the hub is creating an additional 12 positions, including specialist teachers and special education support officers. Those services will be gladly received in the greater Darwin area.

The additional \$8m in funding will also support the expansion of the Territory-wide social and emotional learning program, and a systemic approach to positive behaviour. By the end of 2017 these programs will be expanded to at least 70 schools. Educators know that in order for meaningful learning to take place students must feel safe and supported at school. In a safe and supportive school, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included.

Schools are central to our communities. They not only provide a place for student learning but are often used after school hours and on weekends by community groups; this is something I am very keen to see

expanded. It is important to have quality learning environments that meet the needs of students and are safe and welcoming; this can affect the performance and attitudes of students, teachers, parents and community members.

Over the next four years every school in the Territory—government and non-government schools—will receive \$300 000 for minor new works or repairs and maintenance as part of our Building Better Schools initiative. From July this year the \$56m election commitment will kick start building projects everywhere, from Darwin and Palmerston to remote parts of Arnhem Land and the Barkly. Almost 50 schools have already submitted expressions of interest for the first year of projects. Successful schools will be communicated as part of the 2017-18 Budget announcements.

Complementing the Building Better Schools investment is \$5m for a four-year program for refurbishing and upgrading homeland schools, which will commence with the much-needed work to improve the facilities at Yirrkala homelands. Member for Nhulunbuy, I am sure those upgrades are a welcome addition.

This government listened and brought forward the \$6.5m Tennant Creek early childhood integrated learning centre to support some of the most vulnerable families and children in the Barkly. The facility will include a new preschool that caters for up to 88 children, meeting rooms and visiting specialist rooms, and amenities for food preparation and the delivery of nutrition programs.

Construction for this project is expected to commence in August, with the new facility due to open in February next year. Government is also honouring the investment in capital works programs already planned for schools. I am sure the Member for Spillett knows this and is pleased to hear that Taminmin College, Acacia Hill, Braitling primary, Ramingining and Wulagi school, which all had works planned—we will continue to make sure we honour those investments and roll those projects out. I am sure those school communities will be pleased to see that.

Through these infrastructure projects we will continue to support jobs in the Territory and build education facilities that meet the learning needs of students now and into the future. This government is strategic. We do not plan for right now; we plan for investment into the future of the Territory. The jobs of the future will be more complex than the jobs of today, and we will need a workforce with higher levels of education and technical skills. Our schools need the facilities to be able to teach our young people these skills.

As part of this government's commitment to renewable energy we are providing \$5m for the installation of rooftop solar power systems for schools. These will be fitted with monitoring and measuring equipment. Not only will this inspire our next generation of engineers and scientists to advance renewable energy solutions, but it will reduce power costs for schools, freeing up funding to be directed to more teachers and support staff in the classroom.

Our government will invest \$39m over the next five years for infrastructure at Darwin High School, Darwin Middle School and the NT School of Distance Education to support the delivery of science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, as well as other programs. This will benefit more than 2000 students from across the Territory who access the campus, providing much-needed new classrooms and innovative teaching and learning spaces. This government's infrastructure program is upgrading schools to support the delivery of a contemporary curriculum.

Many jobs we know and understand today will change significantly over the next five years and may be unrecognisable over the next 10. Our government is prioritising implementation of a contemporary curriculum which prepares students for emerging industries. We are delivering on our election commitment to introduce coding training in schools. Coding skills are an emerging essential literacy and need to be developed in unison with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of high-order computation, problem solving and creative thinking.

The Northern Territory has partnered with the University of South Australia so teachers across the Territory can engage in professional learning programs that increase their knowledge of coding. This will ensure they have the ability to implement the digital technologies curriculum. A critical element in maintaining currency of industry and workforce trends is continued collaboration and support of professional associations. We are pursuing strong relationships to promote enterprise education in schools. This is being carried out through InspiredNT through events such as National Science Week and the industry skills council and science and mathematics teachers associations.



In addition, we are collaborating on initiatives aligned with emerging industries, including maritime training, the Pastoral Futures Program, learning on country programs and Girls in Trades. As a government we need to work in partnership. We cannot and should not work in isolation.

This government was elected on a platform of trust, accountability and integrity. I have been working hard to deliver on my commitments to build on and maintain trust with the community, schools, families and partners in education. This includes the non-government sector. In the Territory context all sectors face similar challenges to providing quality education options for families and young people, and there are many opportunities to work together.

I am the minister for all schools. This government has been clear about its support for the non-government school sector and family choice. Families and communities are important partners in education. When schools, families and the community work in partnership, students get better outcomes from their education. School councils and boards are a critical part of creating a school culture and environment that establishes and grows these partnerships. They are best placed to make decisions on what works for their school and their community.

This government believes that local decision-making delivers better outcomes and lasting solutions. This is especially true in our remote and very remote communities. For too long our remote Indigenous communities have had government telling them what to do. We are introducing a 10-year road map that will see Indigenous communities take control over housing, local government, health, looking after children, law and justice and education and training. We will introduce community-led schools so that Indigenous people have more control over decisions on education and training for their children.

Implementation of this commitment will be through a coordinated, whole-of-government local decision-making strategy. We will work collaboratively with schools, families, community and industry partners to reach agreement on education delivery in remote communities and the best way to improve outcomes for Indigenous students. Approaches to community-led schools will be based on local consultation and on guidelines developed by a local decision oversight board regarding how government will work and engage with communities. Implementation will be staged and based on a long-term plan that guides communities through a capacity-building framework.

I will deliver an education system that is fair and equitable for all students; resources schools based on the needs of students; ensures every classroom has a quality teacher and every school has an exceptional leader; respects and values the roles of families and communities in their child's education; builds positive and lasting relationships; creates safe, positive and inclusive school environments that inspire students to attend; and welcomes diversity and values our young people's language and culture.

I will deliver an education system that provides real pathways and options for young people—to jobs and further study—regardless of whether they live in Larrakeyah, Lajamanu, Moulden or Mutitjulu, because every Territorian deserves an opportunity to achieve their full potential, and because every child deserves the best start in life.

I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for her statement on education. There is no question that education is an incredibly important topic that should be robustly, vigorously and passionately debated in this House.

However, I point out that it has been an extraordinary example of government priorities—or perhaps lack thereof—that it would chew up half of its questions in Question Time on a topic that we will thoroughly cover this afternoon. Also absent from today is a debate about the bail bill, which Territorians and the opposition expected to debate today. These do not have to be done in isolation; we could have done all of it today, but we did not. Before us is the education statement which I will turn to.

This government seems to have a very strong and unbreakable connection with pointing the finger and criticising the previous government. It must be tempting for them to follow this track in every portfolio they have as a way to lay blame elsewhere. Territorians have had enough of this finger pointing and blame game. They want to look forward to the future and know what their new government will bring to the table.

I acknowledge there are parts of this statement that outline the government's plans. We support any plans that better education for Territory students. But the finger pointing and criticising of the previous government, particularly when it is not grounded on fact, is a little hard to swallow. As an example, the

minister criticised savings measures and efficiency dividends the former government applied to education, which is ironic if you consider that last month this very same government announced its plan to cut public service jobs by requesting that:

*... all government agencies to look at what savings they can make and take appropriate measures to ensure they are operating efficiently, cutting waste, duplication, inefficiencies and ineffective programs.*

They have announced a review into school funding, which I presume has the goal of introducing savings and efficiency measures, which is generally accepted in the business as code for cuts. I would be careful, minister, in criticising the former government for efficiencies and saving measures when you seem to be walking the path you so heavily criticise.

You have made a lot of claims about the negative impacts of the former government. Your words were, 'teachers cuts', 'under resourcing' and 'student suffering.' Three out of the four schools you mentioned, Moulden primary, a Centralian middle school and Katherine High School, show definite student gains in reading, writing and numeracy under schemes initiated by the previous government.

Where are your priorities as a government and as a minister? Are you interested in the process of funding or are you interested in the result we will see? Educational gains are the only barometer of a successful education policy, not how much money you spend on it. Funding schools is a very important priority of any government. The previous government's focus on education was different to this government, which everyone understands.

We have to acknowledge the NAPLAN and the NTCET results, and look at the effectiveness of those results themselves. At the end of the day it will be your government and your performance as a minister to get outcomes that will be judged, not how much money you spent achieving those outcomes.

All parents want their children to receive the best available education and achieve the best results possible. I do not think anyone in this Chamber would disagree with that. The previous government certainly had a clear focus on the early years and allocated resources to early learning above all. It defined the early years as up to eight years of age and recognised the importance of a healthy pregnancy in influencing positive health and educational outcomes for children. The government also recognised the transition into primary school as a critical time in a child's life. As an opposition we continue to support a focus on early learning.

To that end, it was very welcome to hear this government announce its continued support for the Families as First Teachers program, but, again, it is important to point out that the Country Liberals government was also heavily committed to this scheme. When the Commonwealth funding ran out for this program, the Territory government continued to fund this worthwhile program. It committed \$12.1m in the last budget for implementation of the program in urban and remote locations. It is a great initiative that taps into the importance of family and parental relationships. It is great to see this government also acknowledging that it is an important program and continuing it.

In 2016 \$388m was committed to government schools, and the global school budgets were pooled to enable school communities and leadership teams to design staff models that met the needs of individual school communities. This included counsellors, instructional coaches, support teachers, mentors and senior teachers. Fifty-one Charles Darwin University graduates were recruited into schools from the 2014 teaching graduate pool, including 13 top graduates.

The previous government also implemented the Indigenous employment and workforce strategy with special measures being applied to assist all positions in remote and very remote schools, as well as a number of other positions in which it is important to have Indigenous employment. We were very aware of the disadvantages faced by remote and regional students. The Independent Public Schools program is another example of a great program that increased autonomy for schools who were successful in applying to become an independent public school. It commissioned \$21m for the special school in Bellamack and \$20m for the regional boarding facility in Nhulunbuy, in partnership with the federal government.

One of the schools in my electorate, Durack Primary School, became an IPS. It has been a fantastic and welcome transition for our school community. Parents and teachers alike are incredibly supportive of this transition. It has really given the school an opportunity to focus on targeted areas. Some examples are that the school is busy creating sister school partnerships for learning Japanese, the developing its aquaculture program in partnership with Taminmin College, as well as having schools of excellence for tennis and golf.

All of these opportunities have come true for that school community as a result of the Independent Public Schools process.

While it is not for all schools—a lot of schools will never become an independent public school—for others it has had a tremendous impact on what they have been able to do for their school community. It is a valuable opportunity, and we will continue to see the results of that program as the independent public schools grow and utilise their independence.

The NAPLAN results under the former government showed a number of improvements compared to the year before. Year 3 scores improved in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy; Year 5 scores improved in writing, grammar and numeracy; Year 7 scores improved in writing, spelling and grammar; and Year 9 scores improved in reading, writing, spelling and grammar. That represents an overall improvement in 16 out of the 20 evaluation areas, with participation rates higher across all ages. It is a huge achievement for those teachers, school communities and students working hard to increase those levels.

We saw improvements in NTCET completions. As the minister stated, in 2016 we had a record-breaking 1399 students complete their NTCET, including 122 Indigenous students, which is fantastic. We all hope those numbers continue to grow exponentially.

We hope the government will continue to look at its policies and how it is achieving educational outcomes on an evidence-based measure and not just scrap or condemn things because they were from the previous government. There are some good news stories. This is about harnessing what works and working proactively for the future.

The government has made a number of commitments on education:

- online training for teacher mentors and mentees
- leadership and health and wellbeing programs aimed at principals
- high achievers program
- the Every Day Counts strategy
- the Healthy Life Creative Life program
- a five-year strategic framework
- expansion of multi-disciplinary specialist support
- 20 disability teaching scholarships
- an autism spectrum disorder intervention program
- the expansion of flexible schooling options
- the social and emotional learning program
- upgrades to homeland schools
- rooftop solar panels for schools to inspire the next generation of engineers
- the introduction of coding in schools

The opposition hopes all these initiatives have a tremendous impact on the school environment and on educational outcomes. It will be interesting to see how you will deliver all that given you are still operating under the previous government's budget. We hope you will continue to honour former government capital works projects for Taminmin, Braitling, Ramininging and Wulagi.

This raises the question of how the government will budget for these projects going forward. Do they form part of the government's review into education? If you are having a review how can you announce and push forward with those policies? Do you believe any of those initiatives will be cut as a result of the review? How will a 4% efficiency dividend be achieved when the spending for these programs occurs?

It will be interesting to see how this government delivers on promises and whether they result in better educational outcomes for Territory students. We believe investment in education is important, and we respect the sentiment behind the minister's statement.

We would like to see the conversation focused on the evidence behind the government's approach and a turn away from this talk of money equals better outcomes, and the more money you throw at it the better the education system you will have. We prefer that the conversation revolves around what will achieve results and give the best outcomes for Territory children.

In closing, we wish the government all the success in the world because education is a critical part of the Territory's future. Without well-educated, well-rounded and well supported young people we will not be able to thrive as a community. They are the next generation, and we rely on all of them for the future. As Territorians we all want the very best for them.

I wish the government well on their very ambitious target. We have some serious questions about how they will budget and achieve some of these measures. We continue to raise questions about whether they are evidence-based or whether they are about how much money we can throw at something. We will continue to watch the results of NAPLAN, NTCET and other indicators to hold this government to account as to whether the policy direction is achieving what it set out to achieve.

**Ms Lawler** interjecting.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** We will watch very closely to see the results, and ultimately, minister, you will be judged on your performance on this portfolio.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I remind honourable members of Standing Order 20: no interruption of debate. This is a warning.

**Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Education minister for bringing this statement before the House because education will be a priority of this government. I am proud to be standing here as a former shadow Education minister who has worked very hard with this team and with important education stakeholders in the community. There are wonderful unions, such as the AEU, supporting great teachers. COGSO is a fantastic body that works very hard at a school council level to support schools and make sure parents are thoroughly involved in the education of their children, as well as the outcomes of their community.

As hard as it is sometimes to let go of a portfolio, I could not be more thrilled that the Chief Minister appointed the Member for Drysdale as our education minister. She is a teacher by trade, an established principal, a former senior executive of the Department of Education and somebody who has been here for decades. Education is her passion. Education is her background and experience. She has been there and seen it all. She has seen the historic programs and achieved results. She has seen some well-intentioned programs that have not achieved the results over the years. We have one of the most capable, proven Education ministers that we have ever seen in the chair, and it is fantastic to have her there.

I am thrilled to sit here with somebody who has done a lot of work with the education policy, which went through to the previous election, and to see how she has hit the ground running in delivering those priorities. If we get it right we will make a real difference. It is great to hear that the opposition agrees with the sentiment about the value of education. It is critical and important, but it would be remiss of me not to point out that we have seen an interesting period over the last few years in education. When I was the shadow education minister going through years of data—certainly years of dollars and years of positions within that department in particular—I saw significant cuts to teacher positions, to school base positions and throughout the agency.

Education was one of the areas that cut really deep. There is a graph that the minister has shown—the federal Education minister pulled it out at a ministerial council meeting to demonstrate school funding across the nation. It was a shameful graph because it showed all the other jurisdictions with school funding on the gradual upwards turn, and then below the line was the Northern Territory's previous government's contribution, in which education funding went down and backwards.

In a place that has the poorest rates of school completion, the poorest rates of literacy and numeracy in this nation and the greatest level of disadvantage and vulnerable people, you would think that education would be the front and centre of any government sub-body of work. That is the place that will make a difference to the lives of kids and give them a good future.

Last term we saw protests. I remember sitting here on a General Business day with these galleries full of teachers who were outraged by the cuts they saw in education. We saw numerous protests in front of Parliament House due to the cuts in education. We saw a very disastrous roll out of global school budgeting. Schools were promised that no school would be worse off, but many were, and that is a fact.

If you look at the results over the years and drill down to see the different NAPLAN domains, it is not just a year-by-year comparison because that is not what you do; you look at cohorts and the performance of those cohorts over the years. You make sure you look at how they are performing and, hopefully, see gains over time. You have to look back historically. NAPLAN has been in place since 2008.

The true Territory story of NAPLAN performance shows that the results have been very lumpy. There have been times when there have been upward results, and this has been a reason to celebrate; but there have been other times in which some domains and categories have gone backwards or not moved, and we have not seen the improvements we desperately wanted to see. The results have been lumpy, but we must not stop. We must continue going forward.

The same can be said for attendance. All governments have put in huge efforts towards the issue of attendance. One of the most complex and frustrating issues in education in the Territory is that not enough kids go to school every day; they are missing out on opportunities in their lives because they are not consistently going to school. This means they are not getting the full education they deserve. If it was simple, it would have been fixed a long time ago. It is a complex issue, but we must never lose sight of it. We must work together to make sure all children are going to school every single day. We cannot afford to see attendance rates continue to go the way they are.

We are dead serious about our commitment to education. We took a thorough policy to the election and that is why this is one of the biggest areas of recurrent expenditure commitments we made. We know how important it is. There is \$31m extra a year in the programs we went forward with. That is a significant commitment, particularly when we have financial constraints and challenges. That is how serious we are about education, because we know it is an area that can make a difference. It is critical that we continue to invest and support teachers, school leaders and students.

I am looking forward to seeing what we, as a government, can achieve. I am very glad to hear that the opposition also shares our value of education. We need to never lose sight of the importance of ensuring more kids go to school each and every day. We will be pushing forward with our commitments to education. As my colleague, the Minister for Education, has already noted, one of our key commitments is ensuring children get the best possible start to life with a great education that sets them up for success.

As has been noted many times in this Assembly, evidence tells us that successfully completing school has an ongoing positive effect on the individual. Completing school means Territorians better develop the capacity to get a job and create a decent, healthy life for themselves and their family. Through delivering our policies and remaining true to our core values, the government seeks to maximise the potential of every child. As the Minister for Children I am developing a long-term plan to ensure Territory kids are actively ready to participate at school from day one, term one, Year 1. It is vital we develop long-term plans that are backed by evidence and contain fundamental and practical approaches to achieve our goals.

I am confident that is what our early childhood development plan will do when we invest in improving programs and services that help all children be healthy, get a good education and contribute to our collective prosperity. We will all benefit from that. As I previously noted, every dollar we invest in early childhood will increase productivity and revenue, ultimately, for the Territory. It has been previously estimated that every dollar spent on pre-schoolers will yield almost an \$8 return on investment for the broader economy.

This sort of investment helps to substantially reduce the social and economic burdens of major public health problems such as obesity, heart disease, mental health problems, chronic disease and so on. The investment can help us address and understand the barriers that lead to poor social outcomes and provide effective reductions in welfare dependency.

I acknowledge that in some key areas we will continue to make use of the work the previous government undertook in the early childhood space. It is important to acknowledge that we saw some big cuts in the last term of government, but we also saw committed and passionate people in the Department of Education put together some great early childhood work. We will continue to build on that in this government. I heard the Deputy Opposition Leader say, 'You do not throw out the good work'. We know that you do not throw out good work just because the other side did it. Where we see good work, that work must continue.

There is a bright future for Territory kids. I am optimistic because we have positive plans within education and have also learned a lot from what has failed previously. The previous government left a legacy in education that all members will need to confront when looking at the next phase of policy development processes, particularly the opposition. I do not think we can see what has happened in the last four years repeated, with cuts to education funding and investment.

Our figures show that in its four years of government the CLP cut \$114m from the Territory's education budget, which does not make sense. The education minister stated that these cuts drastically reduced the number of classroom teaching jobs and jobs that provided support to local schools, teachers and students. At one point, the workforce decreased by over 500 full-time equivalent staff and there was over 300 fewer staff in our schools.

With over 70% of government schools located in remote and very remote locations in the NT, these cuts impacted on local job opportunities for Indigenous Territorians and some of the most disadvantaged students. As the shadow minister for Education for some of those years, I was careful to examine the Department of Education's annual report. In December 2015 the department revealed some worrying trends in remote education. There were direct cuts to the most disadvantaged schools and students. According to the annual report, the number of classroom teachers declined from 2044 in June 2012 to 1880 in June 2015, which was a loss of 164 teachers from Territory schools. There was a reduction of 117 Indigenous, mostly female, staff from the Department of Education under the CLP government between 2012 and 2015.

The NAPLAN data was lumpy over that time, and when we looked at remote attendance we saw there were some lumpy results there as well. We all wanted to see significant gains in NAPLAN and attendance, but unfortunately we were not able to see those. Looking at the performance of the previous government, often it seemed to be more fixated on reducing the budget than driving educational results by investing in education. Cutting education funding remains one of the great false economies. Education funding not only pays for more teachers and resources to maximise equity and access to education, but it is also an invaluable investment in social capital.

Funding to schools provides vulnerable and disadvantaged children with a way to escape poverty. I urge members to carefully consider the impacts of education not being properly resourced, when that investment is not made. I will turn to the work I have been privileged to do as the Minister for Children and focus on early childhood development.

A child's first 1000 days are critical and are linked to their long-term health and social outcomes in life. That is why we are committed to investing in the 10-year early childhood development plan. It will go beyond election cycles to achieve long-term outcomes. It is a plan we are committed to because we said we would put children at the centre of government.

We have a fantastic expert reference panel to help formulate that plan. The panel consists of early childhood experts from across the Northern Territory as well as internationally-renowned experts, who will give us their expertise on best practice. I am delighted that two wonderful Territory women will co-chair that panel, Donna Ah Chee and Olga Havnen. It is fantastic to have their expertise. Their work as leaders in the early childhood sector and in Aboriginal community-controlled health services will be invaluable to the guidance of our Cabinet subcommittee. It is wonderful that Professor Frank Oberklaid, who is a world-renowned early childhood development expert, will be deputy chair of the panel.

The children's subcommittee of Cabinet consists of me, as Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Children, as well as the Ministers for Education, Territory Families, Housing and Community Development, and Health. We look forward to working with the expert reference panel and receiving its frank and fearless advice on the best investments in early childhood development, including where we need to go and the solutions we need to put in place.

It was a wonderful experience a few weeks ago to discuss one of our election commitments with regard to early childhood while visiting the Families as First Teachers program at Ludmilla Primary School. That was a proud achievement of the previous Labor government, introducing the FaFT program, which the minister was heavily involved in from an adviser role to government at the time. It was pleasing to hear the previous CLP government's commitment to the FaFT program. It was always heartening to hear how committed they were to FaFT. We will roll out that program to another 10 locations this year.

It was wonderful to visit Ludmilla and the local families there. They are well and truly becoming part of their school community before their children formally start their schooling. The bubs, toddlers, brothers, sisters

and young kids went to the school with their mum, dad, grandma or aunty and engaged with the teachers and support staff at the school by participating in playgroups and play-based learning in literacy and numeracy. The education journey starts much sooner than when they start their formal schooling. It is a sound investment that we are making, not only in the bush—this was initially a remote program—but in our urban centres as well.

We are committed to continuing the investment in the bush, but there is a need for investment in urban centres as well. It is great to see the program rolling out in other locations, such as Ludmilla. We are expanding it to Palmerston, where local families will benefit from getting their children into the program nice and early. For many of those families this is about ensuring they are actively involved in their school and getting into good attendance habits early. It is a wonderful program and it was great to be there.

It was great to see the program start with 10 families, then grow to 50 families actively participating. In term two, programs will commence in Jilkminggan, Minyerri and the newly-established early intervention learning hub in Darwin's northern suburbs, the old Henbury site. It will roll out to another five locations in the second semester of school.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Ms MANISON:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and Member for Arnhem. What has also been helpful to schools is the extra funding. We are honouring our commitment to put money back into schools where we saw deep and devastating cuts as a result of global school budgets, which meant schools had to make some really tough decisions about teachers, support staff and programs.

I remember scrutinizing some numbers. For example, the numbers of Palmerston Senior College and Rosebery Middle School, were decimated under the previous government's global school budget models, and their staffing numbers suffered greatly at that time. There are many other schools that can tell a similar story. This is about restoring some of those cuts and giving schools the capacity to deliver the programs they need to make sure they have the right number of staff to ultimately give more support in the classroom. It really is so important.

It is also important that we invest in the right infrastructure for schools. We have made a commitment to seeing upgrades to each and every school, and making sure that rolls over this term of government. Schools are always a good investment in the sense that it means we have better schools with better capacity to service their communities. You can go from one suburb to the next, and the suburbs might be right next to each other, but the needs of each school and its community can be vastly different.

You see some great examples of that across the Northern Territory. The schools are a couple of kilometres away and yet the cohorts are so different, and the age of the infrastructure can be very different. Even with new schools, you have the best intended planning but find that once they are operational and people are there, sometimes they need a few changes.

We also have many schools that are aged with their infrastructure. Helping them with minor new works to make the upgrades they would like to see will certainly be a great investment. We are very keen to—the \$6.5m will be put into the early childhood integrated learning centre in Tennant Creek, which the Member for Barkly is very passionate about. It is great to see progress has already begun on that. It was a project we fast-tracked.

There is one thing I will pay tribute to the previous government for. I was in Alice Springs last week and I went to Larapinta Primary School and Braitling Primary School and saw their facilities. Larapinta Primary School, in particular, is one of the best child and family centres and early childhood integrated schools I have ever seen. It is so wonderful, what they have built, so congratulations to all the people involved.

You can see the journey from coming in for the play groups, the Families as First Teachers program for some of the additional support, going through to childcare, the preschool and then the school. It is a seamless entry into school from birth to the end of primary school. It was just one demonstration of how they got the infrastructure so right. It was really well thought out, and it is a fantastic example of what we can see achieved in our schools. It is early days at Larapinta but I am really looking forward to keeping an eye on how things progress.

The wonderful new preschool and primary school at Braitling also has great facilities that engage kids from very diverse backgrounds nice and early, and get the families into the community to get them comfortable with that journey. There are other schools, like Wulagi Primary School, in the Member for Sanderson's electorate, and I always look at Nightcliff Primary School. They are wonderful examples of schools in which children can come into the school community very early. They have great programs and playgroups. Wulagi has been doing a FaFT-type program. There is also a preschool there.

Ultimately, getting children from a very young age into the school community is a model that is the future. It is a fantastic investment. It is something that makes education a priority for families because they get that support early on in the piece. Credit where credit is due, well done to the previous government on Larapinta. That was an outstanding piece of infrastructure. It was wonderful to see it in real work. Well done.

We are looking forward to investing in that space and those early years prior to school to ensure we have the infrastructure to support those communities. It is important to have the right programs going into school communities by using evidence-based approaches and recognising that one school community can be vastly different to others despite being geographically close. It is a reality of the Territory.

I am proud of this government's commitment to education. We should not be making any apologies for making a statement before the House today, on the first day of sittings, to show what a priority education is. We should not be apologising for having questions in Question Time about it either—to have questions asked to ensure we are honouring our commitments to investing in schools, restoring the cuts we saw that went so deep under the last term of government and demonstrating that we are willing to invest in education over this term of government.

We will invest not just in education but the journey that starts from conception through to day one, term one, Year 1. We are making that investment in early childhood development in the NT. We will ensure it is a priority of government. We put children at the centre of all decision-making. They deserve it. We know it stacks up socially and economically, and it is the right and decent thing to give children access to the best possible education.

If children get a great education, their future will be so much brighter than it was before. I thank the minister again for bringing this statement forward. I look forward to more ongoing debates in this Chamber regarding education. We have some highly-experienced members in this Chamber who have been teachers and principals, and have wonderful backgrounds. They are able to bring so much richness from their careers and experiences into this place to ensure we are being scrutinised and staying on the right track. We all want to see this work. We want to get the right results for kids.

I look forward to the hard work and heavy lifting. Fundamentally, you do not end up in this job if you do not passionately believe in what education can offer children and the future of the Northern Territory.

**Mr MILLS (Blain):** Mr Deputy Speaker, the government does not need to apologise in any way for having a statement on education. It is most welcome. The only issue regarding questions during Question Time is a matter of procedure of whether it is pre-empting debate. That is where that comes from, not so much about not wanting to discuss education.

I welcome the opportunity to make some comments on education in the Territory, particularly in my community of Palmerston. My initial comments are made in light of the current law and order issues we are facing in our community. Those law and order issues relate to social breakdowns, family trauma and a number of complex factors in which schools play a critical role.

An assessment of what is going on in our communities and where the crime is coming from shows that the offences being inflicted on communities is coming from within communities as well. The agency that is closest to families is the school. It is through schools that many of the high-quality programs can operate to reach families. There are two schools in particular that I have been quite closely associated with, and I can speak with some authority on the nature of their programs. I only say this because in the light of the complex problems we face as a society and community grappling with law and order issues, juvenile crime and justice, the school must factor very strongly in it.

The Smith Family has run some excellent programs in the schools in Palmerston, and those programs are important. The FaST program—Families and Schools Together—is a critical program that brings families and the school together. It should not be underestimated that the school is the agency that is closest to the families who have the greatest needs. It is from some of those families that we are experiencing the



problems within our community. They can be reached through the school. It is not to overburden the schools but to recognise the strategic placement of schools in our community. The breakfast program is not just feeding those who are hungry; it is giving schools access into the families that are in need and providing support.

It is those types of programs I just referred to—there are a number of them—that are very important in this difficult period. They should be given adequate resourcing to reach further than the school can go, because the brief of the school is education, literacy and numeracy in the classrooms.

Anyone who has grown up in our community has observed the nature of the dysfunction we see around us. I am in a fortunate position; I can talk to many of the young lads, particularly the young lads who are wandering around. It does not take too long, after inquiring how they are going and asking them about their school experience—when they should be at school and they are not—for them to be quite frank that they are having difficulty at school. They have difficulty with reading and school is not holding them. So they find other avenues for excitement, sadly, at a cost to the community and to themselves.

When it comes down to it, many of them have difficulty reading, and they do not have sufficient male role models or mentors to support them and hold them in the school experience, particularly in those early stages of Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. If you do not hold them there, you have lost them for middle school and high school. There are so many of them who are on the periphery of the school. They might be on what the minister referred to as the passive roll; they are not actively engaged. They might turn up on some register, but they are halfway between the two and are very difficult for the schools to manage and are posing immediate and ongoing problems for our community. Unless we address this robustly and with some courage, it will only get worse.

I am getting a bit old now, but I was not here when the galleries were full of teachers who were upset about cuts—and I can understand that. I had left the Chamber and gone on to other things, but I have returned. I came back with memories of the times when the Labor government had been in power for 12 years; the teachers were massed out front, and the minister was in hiding and would not go out and speak to them. Just hose yourselves down. It is not 'we are the good guys now'. It will be challenging no matter what. These are like the fading days of the honeymoon period. The real challenges will rise, and I hope that my contributions will help us to address them, not to oppose them for the sake of a political point. There will be real challenges, make no mistake about that.

The money the current government will be able to spend will be limited, and there will have to be hard decisions made. I take quite seriously what the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, having run schools and observed what works in education and what does not. It does not always relate to the amount of money spent. The deeper question is, what kind of education and how is that delivered?

The easier questions are funding and resources and so on. The harder questions are the quality, and type of education, what actually works in education. Why is our system not doing as well? This is not just the Territory system; it is the national system, and the Territory is not tracking well in that. But why are we slipping compared to other systems in our neighbourhood and around the world? These are the harder questions we need to talk about. There is clear data, evidence-based research that shows our system needs to take some readings in what is happening not only in Asia but in Europe. We are slipping, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

I am not an alarmist; I used to say the very same things 10 and 15 years ago, but it is getting worse. The TIMSS results came out last year. Why are some systems progressing and advancing? Why is Australia, relatively, slipping behind? These are questions that should be the subject of debate in parliament. We should hear these considerations being weighed and presented so we can provide real leadership to those excellent public servants who are struggling day-to-day. They do an excellent job.

A curious point struck me with the fire and emergency services issue regarding gender equity. I can understand those sorts of objectives as it applies in the fire service, but it makes more stark the need to deal with those matters in the education system. The minister would recall the days when nearly the whole staff was female but nearly every principal was a male. That certainly is not the case now. It is difficult to find a male anywhere in the primary schools at all.

If you really want to focus on this gender issue, you can go for a soft target like the fires, but why not try the primary schools? Why not have a gutsy program that will say you are all qualified, but we will choose you two because you are blokes? Why not have some incentives? That is challenging because if equity is the most important objective then I would expect there would be enthusiasm to find ways to get males into

the classroom. It could give those young lads wandering the shopping centres, half in and half out of school, some other point of contact.

You will find this at every school you go to. There is plenty of evidence to show that it is having an effect. So if we deal with the fires on one hand, we have to be fair and equitable and see how that also applies with the teaching profession, from school leadership to early childhood workers.

Other systems have done it. They faced it and dealt with it because the dividend of changing the culture and the regard for the teaching profession in our community is highly valued. That is a challenge if we are going to be fair dinkum about this equity issue. It has to apply not just with the fighting of fires but with the lighting of fires in the hearts and minds of young people, particularly young lads.

Last week I had the good fortune of attending an Austrade event in Jakarta and Surabaya, sponsored and organised by the Indonesia-Australia business week. I chose to go on the education and training stream. For anyone who observes what is happening in our region, you can see a rise in our region, particularly Indonesia and ASEAN, as well as the importance of training for our immediate region. Their economies are growing, and the economies of scale are phenomenal. There are 250 million people in Indonesia and many more millions in our neighbourhood.

By contrast we are a small jurisdiction. We have something highly prized, which is the quality of our education system, particularly vocational training. That is required for emerging economies in our immediate region. The delegation comprised of senior representatives from most of the training institutes across the country, including Tasmania, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and Charles Darwin University.

We heard high-level briefings on the state of the education system in Indonesia and ASEAN. We had the opportunity to visit a number of high quality training centres in Surabaya, East Java. I will be submitting a report on it. I commend to honourable members who have an interest in the role that we can plan a strategic role to provide tradings, particularly through Charles Darwin University.

I was very pleased to have Charles Darwin University in attendance, because many of those jurisdictions are doing impressive things; particularly, RMIT is doing spectacular work. There is still the impression that the Northern Territory is doing good things. Whilst that impression is there, we should take advantage of it. We have a lot of work to do.

Charles Darwin University needs to be congratulated for the work it has done, and is continuing to do, in our immediate region. We focus on cattle and energy to some degree, but providing education strategically to our near neighbour will provide not only an economic dividend—education is a service, an export—but it will also provide an avenue for greater engagement and other kinds of investment with our immediate region.

I would like to hear more about our commitment to the recognition of our strategic place in the region. It is very sad that the Chief Minister did not mention Indonesia in his opening speech to the parliament. There seems to be some reference to it, but we need to see some serious commitment made in terms of Asian languages in our schools.

When I was a principal, the Territory was leading the nation in the engagement of the immediate region. This was demonstrated by the number of students and teachers who were learning Indonesian and other Asian languages, and the Indonesian programs that were running through the schools. Only last night at Charles Darwin University, when I was attending my Indonesian lecture—the young lecturer who was running the program, Dr Nathan Franklin, is a product of the early stages of Indonesian programs that were running in our schools.

The young lady who runs ACICIS in Jakarta, and coordinates all the in-country programs from universities across the country received her introduction to Indonesia from Jingli Primary School. She now works in Central Java and manages a hub based in the University of Western Australia. I have heard reported that the number of students learning Indonesian in NT schools today, in 2017 after we have had Asian white papers, is less than it was in the 1970s.

That is a serious indictment. We cannot keep saying that we have a strategic location but have no evidence for that reality. What capital are we building in order to advance towards that? Asian languages—we are a small jurisdiction, as is all of Australia. We will become increasingly less significant if we do not know how to engage and do not understand the landscape. The opportunity is certainly there with education.

Lastly I make mention of those who step forward and serve on school councils. I may have missed something in my time here, but I have always been an advocate for additional support and training for those who step forward to serve on councils. There should be support for that step of leadership on behalf of a parent representing families and kids.

I understand there were discussions in my early days, when I was working closely with COGSO, about providing some kind of accredited training and support for those who offered their services on school councils. I am not sure whether that has eventuated, but if it has not then it would be good to see if there is some kind of support and recognition of those who step forward. Providing accredited training and support for those who step forward, if they wish it, means they will be able to pay that forward because they will serve in many different ways.

I thank the minister for the statement, and I hope we can continue productive dialogue.

**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Minister for Education's vision and commitment to the future of education in the Northern Territory.

I wholeheartedly agree with Minister Lawler when she says that all Territorians, no matter where they live, have the right to a world-class education. In my inaugural speech, on 18 October, I spoke about what inspired me to improve the everyday lives of the people in the community I represent, and I said that inspiration is the memory of my childhood and my parents.

Every child deserves to feel secure, safe, satisfied and confident, no matter what adversity they face. I also stated in my inaugural speech that I would advocate tirelessly to ensure that the things so many of us take for granted are available to every member of the Katherine community, irrespective of their socioeconomic status or skin colour. That means access to healthcare, long-term employment prospects, sustainable economic growth, a healthy environment and quality education.

I grew up in the working-class suburb of Liverpool in western Sydney. The first school I attended was Mount Pritchard Primary School. My brother and I attended that school for the first two years of our lives in Australia, after which we moved to a different school zone and my parents enrolled us at St Mary's Primary School. They were two very different schools, but I was fortunate as I have fond memories of both.

My parents instilled in my brother and me the value of education. We understood from an early age that a good education could change our lives, and indeed it did. The education we received, along with the support of teachers, opened up so many opportunities that enabled us to finish school and go on to work in sectors we were passionate about.

Our government understands that education is the key to this great Territory's social and economic prosperity. It is the key to more jobs and overcoming disadvantage. I come from a country that has one of the highest rates of poverty and disadvantage in this region of the world. As we have learned through our involvement with East Timor over the last few years, families in Timor value education because they know that a good education has the power to break the cycle of disadvantage and lift families, individuals and communities out of poverty.

My electorate has four government primary schools, one government high school and one private school, which is a combination of primary and secondary levels. The Minister for Education stated that 40% of NT students identify as Indigenous. Katherine has two schools in which 90% of students identify as Indigenous. The previous Northern Territory Government and the current federal government failed the children of Katherine, as evidenced by the results in the 2015 Australian Early Development Census survey.

The previous government cut funding, which resulted in more than 300 teachers and school support staff losing their jobs. It also cut millions out of the system and cheated students out of their share of an additional \$272.5m in Commonwealth funding over the last four years.

The Australian Early Development Census survey showed that children in Katherine are significantly more developmentally vulnerable than their counterparts in Alice Springs and Darwin. Yet we had no comprehensive early childhood approach to tackling this disadvantage in Katherine. Of the five-year-olds in Katherine, 46% of them are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains, and 29.4% are developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains. These are atrocious and disturbing results.

It is a shame, and to the detriment of children, that we had a Northern Territory Government that, through its decisions and actions, did not prioritise education. The old adage is that actions speak far louder than words. I am confident all that will change.

Education is vital to building a successful society for all Territorians. After four years of neglect and unjust cuts in funding, our education system has not performed well overall. The NAPLAN results and the AEDC survey results are evidence of that.

While most NT students continue to fall behind their peers in other states, their attendance rates are the lowest and continue to decline. Last year's NAPLAN results show that student attainment levels in the NT were much lower than the Australian average. Despite all of this I share Minister Lawler's optimism for the future. I am proud to be part of a government that is putting children at the heart of its decisions and reinvesting in education, with nearly \$1m going to schools in Katherine.

In my electorate, this investment provides Katherine High School with certainty of funding after years of being significantly underfunded. It allows them to invest in new technology infrastructure which will support student learning. Macfarlane Primary School, which I have a soft spot for, will be able to provide additional one-on-one support for students with the greatest needs. They will also be able to provide an intervention program for students who need help lifting their literacy levels.

Casuarina Street Primary School will be able to employ more staff to increase support for students with additional needs. In addition to all this I am also very excited about Families as First Teachers being rolled out to include Katherine next semester; this will be a great asset for the community. Educational success requires a child's community to be actively involved. Responsibility must be shared across these communities by schools, teachers and families.

Engaging with parents and families to encourage their children's participation in quality early childhood education services sets a strong foundation for good literacy and numeracy skills, as well as positive patterns of regular school attendance. Children can then progress into primary school with a sound basis for continued learning. As children transition into secondary school, positive primary education provides them with the foundation they need to reach their potential.

Creating multiple pathways from school to training and tertiary education enables young people to gain skills and qualifications to successfully transition into the workplace. High-performing education systems recruit and retain high-quality education professionals and invest in their development to ensure the needs of every child and student are met.

Focusing on teaching school leadership is critical to address disparity of achievement and mitigate the effect of factors such as geographic location, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and family engagement. Our government, as stated in detail by Minister Lawler, is committed to achieving this by encouraging and supporting existing high-performing staff who want to advance their careers. By supporting staff and the workforce we are keeping them in the Northern Territory, which encourages continuity, a great thing for kids in school.

While there is still work to be done in education, I wholeheartedly share Minister Lawler's optimism for the future of education in the Northern Territory. Our detailed education policy is backed by evidence of what works and speaks to the core of my own aspirations for the children and families of Katherine.

I am really excited to be part of a government that acknowledges and understands that to deliver a sound, quality, sustainable system, we need to respect and value the roles of families and communities in children's education. This also includes valuing and acknowledging languages in our communities. In East Timor there was a program called the Maternal Language Program, which taught children between the ages of four and six in their maternal language.

There was some criticism about the program. There were supporters and opponents, but I firmly believe that if we are to give children the best advantage and support in getting them started, we have to engage them in a way they understand. All of this is in alignment with the Family as First Teachers program, which I support 100%.

We will ensure there is a system in place that creates safe and positive school environments to inspire students to attend school every day and support them to achieve their full potential. I commend Minister Lawler's statement to this parliament, and encourage all my colleagues to do the same. I share her optimism, and I look forward to seeing the Family as First Teachers program in Katherine. It is long

overdue. The kids at MacFarlane and Clyde Fenton, the two schools that have been earmarked to receive this program, will benefit from it greatly. Parents and teachers are also excited about it. Moving forward, there is a lot of work to do in education, but we have the right person in that role and the right government to make this a reality.

**Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I welcome the statement from the Minister for Education, which I have been looking forward to. I came into parliament to raise issues about education in Indigenous communities, especially in my electorate. I was not prepared to say something today; I was not expecting this, but I want to keep showing my interest in education. So thank you for the report.

In my electorate I have been to Nhulunbuy area school and the primary schools and listened to what they have been doing, as the Member for Nhulunbuy. The boarding school opened in Nhulunbuy to give a choice of going to boarding school in Nhulunbuy or Galiwinku Shepherdson College. Schools in my electorate have invited me to presentations, and through that I am learning what is being achieved in those communities and on the homelands.

I am very happy to hear names mentioned by the minister, especially the communities and schools in my area. I would like to, not push, but ask her again to consider homeland schools as well, as we work together to achieve homeland schools. Some have been defunded, and policies have come and gone and changed. Some homeland schools have been defunded and people in the homeland centres are wanting to get them reopened. Families and children in the communities can have control over education on country and on teaching before they come into mainstream education and learn better that way, with equal opportunities for everything.

An announcement I have made is that I would like to keep working further on homeland schools. In my electorate we have three bilingual education centres at Yirrkala, Sheparton's College and Milingimbi. I would like to see them going again.

That is all I wanted to say. Education is one of my reasons for being here in this parliament, to try to raise issues and get support from this government.

**Mr McCONNELL (Stuart):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the Minister for Education and her statement to the House. I quote from her speech:

*All Territorians, no matter where they live, have a right to a world-class education.*

We are an incredibly long way from that, but I love aspirations, and that is what we need to aspire to. I have something in common with many of my constituents in the electorate of Stuart, where I grew up and was educated. Most of the people I grew up with from Napperby, Wallara and Yuendumu who would be my age, especially men, are no longer alive. I am not yet 50.

People are no longer with us because of things like accidents on the road, too much grog and domestic violence. The reason why people are dead, kumanjayi, is not because of accidents and deaths at the hand of another; those people were in those situations because they had a lack of hope. They had a lack of hope in the future and in the society they found themselves living in. A lot of that was imposed by an external new boss.

We have to commit to do better for the generations of now and generations going forward from the bush. You will see this as a fridge magnet or something else, but there is an interesting statement, 'To have a quality life you need to have someone who loves you, you need to have something to do and you need to have something to look forward to'. Those things are all very true. Too often we hear about young people, women and others who have relationships of love in their life who have been abused—at least neglected, but sometimes outright abused.

There are people who do not have much to do because we have not given them the opportunity or education to participate in the economy. There are people who do not have much to look forward to in their futures. There are people who are looking forward to getting on dialysis. I am being honest. People are looking forward to getting on dialysis. There is a crisis out there. It cannot be talked about in facts and figures, although that is important work of government and public servants. We need to know the facts and evidence, but we need to deal with this problem in human capital, emotions and willingness to go forward.

That is what we have to do. That is what this government is committed to doing. We have to work collaboratively and cooperatively with everyone in this game. The most important people in the lives of a

child are their parents. We have to really respect law, language and culture. We have to respect what is given to young people's lives from those things. Law, language and culture is important whether you are a whitefella like me or whether you are an Aboriginal person. We need to respect that. This government will do a good job of respecting this, and I look forward to that.

I have limited formal education, provided through various streams of the Northern Territory remote education system. I went to the Napperby School, which is now Laramba. One of the things I remember the most from the Napperby School was the person who did the gardening. He was an Aboriginal man, kumanjayi now, called Mr Brown.

Mr Brown was an amazing guy who was really influential to me and was culturally a very important man. He was an inspiration for me to learn Aboriginal culture, and I spent a lot of time with him. I have two interesting stories that are worth committing a bit of time to. Mr Brown had not seen bananas before, so once at a Christmas party he ate them skin and all. I think he had about 12 of them. He was a great guy. That is an example of how important your experiences are in school, that I have a story like that imprinted on me a long time later. I remember that story well.

Another thing I remember from school is that for some reason we had a lot of this awful Army soap in big blocks. We loved motorcars. There were not many motorcars in the community. I was a station kid, so there were motorcars on the station, but in the Aboriginal community of the Napperby Station motorcars were rare. In fact the only person that had a working motorcar was the Lutheran pastor. That was a Series II diesel Land Rover, for those who are interested. Motorcars were aspirational to us, so we got stuck into carving motor cars out of cakes of soap. That was an incredible learning experience for me. Being an entrepreneurial type, I seriously got into exchanging motorcars made out of soap for other things.

I also spent a fair bit of my time enrolled in School of the Air classes. School of the Air is something we have been very innovative with in the Northern Territory over the years, and it is important. One of my most inspirational teachers later became a well-known ABC radio journalist in Central Australia, a gentleman called Ian Jameson. This is another example of someone from school having a long influence on me. I also attended classes at Yuendumu and was a boarder for a little while at Yirara College. That was another good experience for me. Not many white kids went to Yirara.

I am getting a little indulgent in these stories. I agree that facts and figures, which government did what and so on is important, but we need to bring emotion to the debate to show that government will provide people with something to be positive about in the future. That is what we will do. That is what a good government does instead of cutting dollars or just relying on numbers on a national scale. We have to bring emotion to the debate because we have to get people to invest in it. The community will only invest in this if we talk to them. How many people are interested in facts and figures? They are important but we have to bring emotion to the debate.

Getting back to my story on being a boarder at Yirara, I was amazed to see liquid milk. I could not believe it. I had only ever seen powdered milk. I knew there were cows. I knew the story of milk and cows. There were none at Napperby. A little bit before my time they used to milk goats when it was a mission. I was absolutely amazed. It was incredible. They had these great big vats of milk on wheels, and they used to wheel them around in the mess. It was amazing to me.

My parents were of the opinion that work experience was more beneficial to me than a formal education. I was not encouraged or supported by them to be successful at school or to pursue a higher education. Parents are important; in the life circumstances I found myself in, my parents provided me a loving upbringing and so on, but they did not get the relevance of education. That is why the relevance of society and government supporting children is so important. We have to do this together with the parents. We need to provide a safety net to people who do not have enough interest from their parents, but we still have to respect parents and their role.

My interest in the outside world came about due to a couple of tutors and teachers who sparked my curiosity. There was an opportunity afforded to me to live in the United States with another family. I was about 13 years old. This introduced me to an entirely different world and way of living. Without exaggeration, it changed the course of my life. I lived in a place called Redwood City in California. It was an incredible experience. I was young, but I was drinking Henry Weinhard's, which is a type of boutique beer; I was smoking cigars and burning people's Christmas trees when they put them on their lawns. That was the culture of the people I was with; I had to immerse myself. It was very important.

Outside of these influences, the lack of formal education has been a significant barrier for me to overcome in my life. My last formal piece of education was Year 6. I had no secondary schooling at all. This has made me work harder in some areas, given me drive and made me who I am. I am proud of who I am; however, I cannot deny that my limited education has made it difficult for me at times.

For other Territorians with limited education, this is compounded by fewer personal opportunities and English as a second language. Often the barrier is too high. Think about the experiences I am talked about; I had the support of parents who pulled together the money to send me to the US. Many of the Aboriginal people I grew up with would never have been able to do that.

English was my first language. For many of the people I grew up with, English was not their first language; it might have been their second or third. Lack of education leads to the lack of ability to get a driver's licence or to find and keep a job. It leads to the lack of ability to interact positively with the rest of the world. It sometimes leads to crime and gaol time. It leads to loss of hope. In some extreme cases it leads to suicide, something that is far too common in our communities.

There is no doubt in my mind that there are a number of things we can do to close the gap between remote communities and the rest of the Territory. This is why I support the minister's statement on education today. We really need to create more opportunities for people who live remotely in the Territory. We have a lot of jobs that people cannot access because they have inadequate formal education; so the sooner we can do that the better.

I agree with the minister that this investment will produce results for all Territorians. There is no better long-term investment to change communities. The investment in remote schools, particularly in teachers and human resources, has been sorely needed. We have heard from various speakers to this statement about how important teachers are. My little stories about how influential teachers have been on me are examples of that. You need good bricks and mortar, but without good human capital and teachers it is challenging.

I support the investment in schools to change the status quo. Supporting good teachers and effective principals is the cornerstone of improving remote schools, or any schools. Another key is starting early. The investment in the Families as First Teachers program is important. Children learning social, emotional, thinking and behavioural skills early at school will make their later school years much more productive. Various speakers today have made that clear, perhaps a little more eloquently than I have. Involving the parents in early education can also provide positive learning environments at home to reinforce what is learned at school. It may develop a love of learning in parents so they can help children attain their goals.

All citizens of the Territory, wherever they live, deserve a good education; I commend the minister for making that clear in her statement to the House. We will only reach our educational goals when the government and teachers work hand-in-hand with our communities. This investment demonstrates that the government is serious about its commitment to this implementation.

Many parents in remote communities and pastoral properties are committed to their children's education. I see them send their kids to boarding schools in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland; some entrepreneurial parents even send their kids to the United States. I still have no idea why they did that, but it was a brilliant experience. I commend these parents for seeking a better future for their children. I hope it is not too long before the best educational opportunities are available a little closer to home.

I am committed to bilingual education, but sometimes the debate about bilingual education is overshadowed by many of the other very real issues in education. I once visited a remote school where a nine-year-old child was having difficulties. A community elder tried to explain instructions in language, thinking that the lack of English was the barrier for this child. The child—this is what the traditional owner told me—could not take instruction in the local language either. Whether this was due to a hearing problem, learning difficulty or behavioural problem is an issue that has not been identified in that student. That is where these investments are so important.

To expect our community to do the best, we need to give it the best. If we can identify these issues early and connect children with solutions, they might not fall behind and lose hope. This will be better for all Territorians. Success in school is important for success later in life. If we can produce better outcomes in the bush we will achieve better social outcomes across the Territory.

I commend the government and the minister for this investment in Territory education. I believe this commitment will improve outcomes for all Territorians.

**Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I also commend the minister for bringing this statement to the House today. It is one of the most important things we can talk about in this Chamber.

I echo the comments made by the Deputy Chief Minister about how much faith we have in the Minister for Education. I am proud to have her as a member of our team, and I have the utmost faith in her experience and passion in this area. Her passion for education is shared by the entire Labor team. This is important in my electorate. Whenever I am in the community people want to talk about what is going on in their local schools, and make sure their kids have the best opportunities in life. I also want to mention how proud I am of my colleagues, the Members for Arnhem and Barkly, who have strong backgrounds in education.

I was raised by two teachers, both of whom have worked in the Northern Territory and international education systems for almost four decades. The importance of education has been instilled in me from a young age. My mum worked with the Education Union, so the fight for teachers and what they provide to kids is something I have always been aware of. I have been part of some of the rallies in front of Parliament House over the last five years. I remember there being a cardboard coffin laid down by a drama teacher at CSC.

This has been a topic of debate for a long time. It is important to get it right. I am a product of the NT public education system. I started at Parap Primary School, in the Chief Minister's electorate, and undertook my secondary education at Darwin High School, like a few others in this Chamber. I have very fond memories of my Territory schooling. I still see some of my old teachers around Darwin. Judy Boland is probably the most famous teacher in the whole of Darwin. She is still teaching Northern Territory kids about the history of Darwin and a range of other things.

Public schooling in the Territory has given me a strong foundation for further study in adulthood, as it has for generations of Territorians. It gave me an appreciation for teachers who work around the clock to support students, not only in difficult times of study but also in difficult times in life. They provide a curriculum, but they also work with students on their health and wellbeing, and support them through some tricky transitional times in life. They often work with some of the most disadvantaged families as well. Education is about opportunity. Regardless of where you come from, it is the most important leveller, and it ensures that every child is able to reach their full potential.

Education was talked about in Question Time; it is so important in the alcohol debate, the family violence debate and the debate on intergenerational issues in the Territory. Getting education right is one of the biggest protective factors for kids in the Territory. Investment in schools is investment in the future of children and a vital factor in the pathway of someone's life.

We talk about a dollar figure when we talk about investment, but we are not just talking about dollars. We are talking about teachers, school resources, technology to assist schools, and the bricks and mortar. The Member for Stuart is right; bricks and mortar are important, but a building is just a building without quality teachers. It is really difficult to fathom that over the last four years in office the previous government cut a whopping \$114m dollars from the Territory's education budget. That is important; that is 300 fewer teachers and support staff, which impacted my electorate.

It was an issue that was talked about in the Casuarina by-election, and it is raised with me on a regular basis. My local schools saw teachers and programs go. When I was doorknocking I met teachers on stress leave who were seeing valuable programs being cut from their schools. That was a reality, and that was the human face of that dollar figure we talk about. It is frightening to imagine the impact of such a retrogressive measure on kids, should it have been allowed to continue. I am really pleased that we have a team which is committed to ensuring that it does not continue.

Combined with the clunky implementation of significant new funding policy in global school budgets, those four years under the former CLP government were incredibly hard on local schools. On top of that we had a revolving door of ministers. I am glad we are reviewing that funding and that schools and the community will have an opportunity to be part of the process. This is about continuously improving, making sure we are taking what we do with an evidence base and giving kids the best possible outcomes.

It is fantastic and important to the education statement that we now have a Minister for Children, the Deputy Chief Minister, a Minister for Territory Families and a subcommittee of Cabinet who are all focused on children. All our portfolios are relevant to the education statement and to the subject of education, but it is great that those ministers come together with a specific focus on kids in the early years.



Instead of slashing support for schools we are investing an additional \$124m over four years. This includes an additional \$20m into school budgets, which will be invested according to needs. This will mean better educational outcomes for preschool to transition kids, secondary students and Indigenous students. I am particularly pleased about the \$8m per year for social and emotional learning programs. That is incredibly important, and it is something that is difficult for schools to deal with on a daily basis. It is great that they will get the resources they need to provide additional support. As the minister said, all students have the right to feel safe, secure and included in their school environment. This will support schools to do that.

I am excited about what this means for the schools in my electorate. I have some brilliant schools in my electorate, but I will also mention two others that were in my electorate before the redistribution. They are very close to my heart, and they do an incredible job of educating and growing the potential of young people.

Schools that would have continued to lose funding under the CLP government, like Alawa Primary School, now have certainty and can continue to employ hard-working teachers in their schools. While this school now sits in the Member for Johnston's electorate—like Nitmiluk Primary School, which will benefit from a \$70 000 injection—Alawa holds a special place in my heart for the inclusive community that it nurtures.

Dripstone Middle School will receive \$328 000 for an extra teacher to develop a comprehensive curriculum package and to enable continued delivery of additional programs, such as drama and ICT. Nakara Primary School will be able to afford additional and much-needed classroom support with more than \$60 000.

Nakara Primary School had fantastic 2016 NAPLAN results. The school recorded increases in reading and numeracy for students who progressed from Year 3 to Year 5. I will speak more about them because they have been leading the way through their Move More Learn More program. I thank the Minister for Education for coming to Nakara Primary School. We both went to see that program; the kids love it, and it was great to see it in action.

It is with immense gratitude that I recognise Britany Roestenburg and the staff at Nakara Primary School, Peter Swan and his team at Dripstone Middle School, Carolyn Edwards and the team at Henbury School, and Lorraine Hodgson and Sandy Cartwright at Namarluk and Alawa Primary Schools.

Carolyn Edwards was recognised in last year's NT Telstra Businesswoman of the Year Award in the public sector and academia category. Many of us are familiar with Carolyn. Sitting with other community leaders that night, I could feel the admiration for her work in promoting Henbury School and securing involvement from the local business community. She has managed to garner a lot of support for the school. The fundraising they do at the Henbury corporate luncheon every year is important to their fundraising efforts and to getting more resources for kids.

To ensure children are receiving a well-rounded education, it is important that school is not just about writing and maths. There are many opportunities for students to learn in many other ways. I am pleased that my various departments are assisting with this and working with schools. For example, the Department of Tourism and Culture runs the important Be Crocwise campaign, which strives to raise awareness of the dangers of crocodiles and to influence people's behaviour in and around the water. The Territory is home to a large number of crocodiles, and it is important to instil a sense of croc safety in Territory kids at a young age.

The Be Crocwise team presented to over 4000 students last financial year, which is an incredible effort. The new website was recently launched to coincide with the new school year, and it contains some fantastic resources for parents, teachers and students. I encourage all members to check it out and pass on the details to their community members.

I also had the great pleasure of presenting the Keep Australia Beautiful, Be Crocwise award to Humpty Doo Primary School for its students' important work in promoting croc awareness and safety in their school body. Well done to them. We were all singing the jingle for Channel 9. It was very catchy. It is really good work they are doing with their peers.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources delivers a number of environmental grant programs that provide a useful resource for schools to educate students about our amazing environment, alongside addressing their environmental priorities.

The Container Deposit Scheme Infrastructure Grants are available for schools for the collection of beverage containers. Gray Primary School and Manunda Terrace Primary School have recently benefited

from the scheme. The flow-on effects of students taking the recycling message back to their families increases the impact across our community, with less waste being disposed of to landfill, which is a great outcome.

The new round of environmental grants for the 2017-18 financial year is due to be released in May, opening up brand-new opportunities for schools across the Territory. I have had the message hammered to me by Nakara Primary School students who have been learning about recycling and reusing, so I am pleased they are doing that. I always love going there and getting them to teach me the new things they have learned about the environment. They will be the next group of leaders in all these areas.

We also provide the Artists in Schools program, which is an important initiative offering students the opportunity to express themselves creatively and build self-confidence. The government invests about \$90 000 in the program, which provides a welcome source of employment for resident Territory artists as well. The art and education sectors and the community support this important program, recognising the value of providing quality art education experiences for young people.

In particular, remote schools with limited access to creative arts opportunities, including School of the Air, benefit strongly from this program because it helps to increase student engagement and attendance. This government has very strong investment in the arts. This is an area of meaningful employment across the Territory. It is fantastic to nurture and foster this early in creative kids through schools. It is an incredible tool.

In the Northern Territory, information and communication technology also makes a significant contribution to teaching and learning across the curriculum. The Minister for Education talked about digital literacy becoming increasingly important. Everything we are reading and all the research we are seeing is pointing towards a rapidly-changing world of work. Kids are preparing for jobs we could not have imagined when we were in school, and it is changing every day. We need to make sure we are preparing kids to make the most of those opportunities. Services are increasingly being delivered through ICT, which ensures we can participate in and benefit from the digital economy and prepare for the future world of work.

The minister spoke about coding in schools, which is really exciting. Through the Northern Territory Government and Australian Government programs, all Year 9 to 12 students have individual access to a computer. For most of us that was not a reality when we were in school. Leanyer school, for example, is delivering engaging, exciting and innovative learning experiences that empower students to achieve better learning outcomes.

The school has classrooms equipped with modern networked computers and printing facilities. It has minilabs with Internet access and interactive whiteboards—I do not think I would know how to use one of those—in each classroom, and a standalone computer lab with modern computers and printing, scanning and recording facilities. Classes can be booked into these facilities to do specific ICT activities. The school's library is equipped with a bank of modern computers for students to research, finish work and do a range of other innovative projects.

We see outcomes from the uptake of ICT enabled and focused education through events like the CDU Code Fair. I have spoken about that in the House before and how excited I was to see so many young women participating in it, which is really important. RoboCup Junior and the Skills 2021 Expo—where young Territorians demonstrate the skills that schools are helping them develop.

ICT for education in the bush is absolutely crucial, and I am not the only member who has met with the Isolated Children's Parents' Association. This is an issue that is incredibly close to their heart. The Northern Territory Government Satellite to All Remote Sites, STARS, is an online learning system that has transformed the delivery of remote education. It has made the Alice Springs and Katherine School of the Air world leaders in the delivery of remote and distance education services. We have to do a lot more in this area, which I will speak about in a moment.

The virtual classroom means that expert teaching skills can be provided to a number of small remote communities simultaneously. Reliable quality broadband offers the potential to reduce turnover in teaching staff in remote communities, expanding reach and connection. Nevertheless, the STARS network has limitations in what it can deliver, and the educational needs of growing communities are quickly outstripping the capabilities of the network, especially in terms of available bandwidth.

It is the Northern Territory Government's view that every opportunity should be taken to minimise the demands on finite satellite resources. The provision of services over terrestrial networks, such as the

existing fibre optic connection, should be prioritised by the federal government. This reduces cost to consumers and maximises the opportunity to deliver satellite communications to areas where there is no other option.

The ability to broadcast stories using rich media solutions provides real 21<sup>st</sup> century skills opportunities for remote teachers and students. The NBN is crucial to communities in the Northern Territory. It has the capacity to deliver new services, particularly in education and health. The Australian Government's current position is that all remote communities in the Northern Territory will be serviced by satellite; we do not believe this is the best solution, particularly when 34 communities already have the reliable fibre optic infrastructure which could be used to connect them to the NBN.

The Northern Territory Government will continue to lobby the Australian Government to ensure that significant Northern Territory communities are serviced by the NBN over the terrestrial infrastructure. I call on the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Daly, and Senator Nigel Scullion to join us in the fight to secure these better connections. I have put that out before. We want to secure better connections for Territorians in the bush.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Ms MOSS:** We want to make sure we improve connections for Territorians in the bush because it is important for crucial services like education.

When I reflect on what my life might have been without the support I received and opportunities afforded to me to help me develop as a young leader, I can only imagine I would have had significantly fewer choices. Without a decent education I would not be standing here today, and that decent education came from the public education system.

Twenty million dollars into school budgets might just sound like a number, but it is so much more than that. It means kids will be more likely to get the extra help they need at school to succeed. It means kids with particular needs are less likely to fall through the cracks because schools are struggling to provide an appropriate level of classroom resources. It sends a message to principals, classroom teachers and support staff that we recognise and support the incredible work they do every day to equip the children of the Northern Territory with the knowledge, skills and values they need to become well-rounded, contributing members of our community.

The Territory's children are our greatest asset. They are the heart and soul of the Territory and they deserve the very best chance to grow, thrive and learn. Investing in schools is an investment in the future of this wonderful place we all call home.

I commend the Minister for Education for the immense work she has already done and has yet to do, and I commend the statement to the House.

Debate adjourned.

#### **PAPERS TABLED**

##### **Travel Reports from the Members for Spillett, Blain, Arnhem and Fong Lim**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table travel reports from the Members for Spillett, Blain, Arnhem and Fong Lim.

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

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's Report to the Legislative Assembly November 2016—consideration deferred.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling):** Mr Deputy Speaker, International Women's Day is celebrated around the world each year. It grew out of the struggle for women to have better working conditions and the right to vote. It has now developed into a movement that seeks equality and justice for all women. It is a day of reflection on how far we have come and a day to contemplate what is needed for the future.

Last week the Territory celebrated International Women's Day; however, the activities and events to recognise the many achievements and contributions of Territory women, past and present, have continued well into this week. I am fortunate to be part of a government that truly believes in, and has demonstrated a commitment to, achieving gender equality. The Northern Territory Cabinet has a female majority for the first time in Territory and Australian history. Our government is passionate about a Territory where all women, no matter their age or circumstance, are able to reach their full potential.

Our government is committed to enhancing Territory women's involvement in key decision-making boards by ensuring that by 2020 we have a minimum 50% membership of women. This is a practical commitment that includes government statutory boards, ministerial advisory committees and parliamentary external advisory committees.

This year 15 organisations received a total of just over \$20 000 through the Office of Women's Policy in Territory Families, and many of us here tonight attended those events. I spent International Women's Day in Galiwinku. It was critical I visited the women of this very remote Arnhem Land community to show them they have the backing of government, despite the many obstacles of remoteness that confront them.

The women of Galiwinku have been seeking a women's safe space for years. One elder told me she first raised this as an important issue in the 1970s. They want a space in which women can have conversations about how to make their families and communities safe. They also need a secure space for women to have time out and to rest and plan what their next steps might be.

This government has allocated \$1m to build a safe space, as well as recurrent funding to support that safe space. Finally a government has listened to them, and I am proud to be part of that government. The women of Galiwinku told me they are keen to use the safe space to reinforce and strengthen cultural practices and traditional ways of dealing with family violence, while also supporting Australian laws.

The women and men of this community talked about how the men have a significant role in combating violence and changing men's behaviour. I am proud that I am the minister responsible for both men's and women's policy. There are areas in which women must take action, areas where men must take action and areas where we all need to work together. It was an honour and a privilege to spend International Women's Day with the women of Galiwinku, and I thank them for their inspirational leadership. I look forward to working with them as we go forward.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge some of the events that took place in my electorate over the past week. There was an excellent turnout of over 80 people at the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame International Women's Day breakfast. I thank Julie Ross, president of the hall of fame; Jeanette Shepherd, the new business manager; Diane Newman, the excellent curator there; and the community members for all the hard work they put into running such a successful event.

Marguerite Baptiste-Rooke, the manager of Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia, spoke about gender equality and the inequality still experienced by women from multicultural backgrounds in Alice Springs and around the country.

I have often spoken about how Alice Springs has become a very multicultural community. Much of the work of the multicultural services is very important to that community. They also hosted a lunch; so thank you, Marguerite, for being very busy on International Women's Day, along with the rest of your team. It was a great event for the multicultural community of Alice Springs.

I acknowledge the International Women's Day event run by Cultural Connections NT, which was focused on connecting women to share their ideas about what a just, caring, democratic and violence-free Alice Springs would look like. It was held in cooperation with the PERLA Aboriginal Corporation and is important grassroots work being done across the Territory.

Lastly, there was a screening of films on International Women's Day at Alice Springs Cinema, facilitated by the Central Australian Women's Legal Services and the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Committee. They provided free tickets to the film *Hidden Figures*, free popcorn with a drink and door prizes. Those tickets went like hotcakes. Thank you for organising that event, and I heard some very good feedback

about it. The Alice Springs Amnesty Action Group hosted a screening of *Daughter of the Lake* for another event at Alice Springs Cinema. Thank you to the owners of that business. They are committed to the community.

I finish by paying my respect to all Northern Territory women for the important contributions they make to the fabric of Territory life in workplaces, communities and families every day. The Territory is a great place for women supporting women. I also thank my colleagues here tonight for having such an overwhelming presence at those events. Isn't it great we all look so fantastic in purple.

**Ms AH KIT (Karama):** Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I will speak about Darwin Community Arts, which delivers community art activities out of the Malak shopping centre. Ten years ago Malak was known as a hot spot for violence amongst young people, break-ins, vandalism and other antisocial behaviour. Now it is a hot spot for arts and culture, and a hub for positive community activity.

There are still break-ins and trouble, but things have improved in the last 10 years. Darwin Community Arts has contributed to this change through its persistent work with communities. The Malak Marketplace is one recent example of this positive work. Everybody has heard me harp on about it time and again because it is an amazing initiative. The marketplace is a DCA project. It was the City of Darwin's Community Event of the Year for 2016.

Darwin Community Arts continues to host the hugely popular monthly community dinner in Malak. The dinners started in 2009 and have continued to grow with little or no funding since then. The monthly dinners are held in the Chambers Crescent Theatre on the last Monday of every month. Catering is provided by My Sister's Kitchen, another Darwin Community Arts project which started some years ago as a food and art project. It has now grown to become a small community catering project run by DCA members.

The dinner also provides an opportunity for local performers to entertain attendees, with an average of 200 people making up the audience each dinner. The Chambers Crescent Theatre has hosted hundreds of community events, ranging from theatre performances, concerts, meetings and parties. In addition to the Malak Marketplace and community dinners, Darwin Community Arts also runs a community shed, which was inspired by the Men's Shed and is open to all members of the community who make and share art.

Activities of the shed include Our Common Threads, which is a textile arts program; Monday music jams, which is an informal jam session for musicians of all ages and skill levels; Malak Community Garden, which is a garden with art created by community; Beats and Clips, which makes digital video and music; and creative workshops on lead-lighting, origami, jewellery making and other arts and crafts.

Darwin Community Arts also runs the Malak Telecentro, which is a community Internet access facility, every weekday afternoon; Frontline Media, a community-based digital arts program; CemeNTworx, a community theatre program; and Arts Access Darwin, which is the arts and disability program for the Darwin region.

The Darwin Community Arts motto is, 'Never underestimate the power of a million amateurs with keys to the factory', which they borrowed from Chris Anderson of *Wired* magazine. I wish them the best of luck with their work towards this motto in my electorate and others in the coming years. I look forward to supporting them wherever possible.

**Mr PAECH (Namatjira):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak on a matter that is important to me and my constituents. Outstations, known to many as homelands, date back to the 1970s, but we have evidence that the movement dates back to the mid-1960s.

One of the drivers for returning to country was to be on one's own country rather than other people's country. Another driver was overcrowding and long waiting times, even in the mission times. This is important because it predates unnecessary rubbish that homelands are just an artefact of the 1970s government policies. This movement was alive and happening prior to those policies, and it would have happened whether government supported it or not.

Small Aboriginal groups, often families or closely-related community members, left mission-run larger communities to move back to their ancestral homelands. My people did this for a number of reasons. Many of those reasons ultimately led to Aboriginal people living healthier and stronger lives. Outstations are expensive to live in and historically do not get much support from governments.

Escaping dysfunction was historically one of the main drivers for Aboriginal people leaving major settlements. There was a high level of social dysfunction and political instability. Their role and duty of care was for country, that deep connection to the land and responsibility as caretakers and custodians of the land. They protected sacred sites, maintained country—such as firebreaks—and had the ability to continue to practice cultural customs and obligations.

Homelands in the Northern Territory give Aboriginal people a sense of home and connection to this ancient land, their land. Every time I travel in the vast electorate of Namatjira I see large groups of families from larger communities escaping to outstations to visit families, have some respite and reconnect with their culture and their traditional country. It is estimated that about 10 000 people live on 500 Northern Territory homelands.

When I am out on the lands with my people, I sit down and talk with them about the importance of outstations and homelands. I told my constituents that this sittings I would highlight the reasons why people love their homelands and why they are important to us.

I have some quotes I would like to put on the record from some of the members of my community:

*We can escape from the alcohol. Some of our families from communities come to homelands to escape alcohol-related problems.*

*We come back to the peace and quiet, and sit down where we can hear our country talking to us.*

*Being on my country allows me to be happy and paint good stories on my canvas.*

These are just some of the quotes from Lena Puller, a senior woman in the Utopia region.

It is evident that outstations play an integral role in the Northern Territory social fabric and our vibrant and culturally rich history. There is an argument that it is in the national interest to have people on country looking after country, maintaining knowledge and looking at border controls of coastline outstations. Coastal homelands are often where lost people—tourists—are found, in very remote seas of the Northern Territory.

Keeping culture alive and strong is a matter I hold close to my heart. Allowing my people to live on their ancestral homelands is something I will always fight for, inside and outside of this Chamber.

Outstations and homelands are modern day incubators which provide our people a purpose. They encourage people to pass on their skills and cultural knowledge to the next generation of our mob to care for country and culture. Homelands underpin much enterprise and activity, such as arts and craft, music, health, natural resource management, fishing, tourism and pastoral work.

I cannot express how wonderful and strong outstations are. People living on outstations face difficulties and challenges like no other in the Northern Territory. Outstations and homelands can be expensive to support; there is no doubt about that. The sheer distances, low populations compared to large communities and extensive transport costs for food and fuel are just some of the costs that add to the complexity for people living on outstations.

Until recently, the federal government provided recurrent funding to state and territory governments to provide municipal and essential services to homelands and outstations. Supplementary funding, usually linked to specific projects, could also be available under the Commonwealth Indigenous Advancement Strategy and the Aboriginal Benefits Account for the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth does not specifically report on funding for homeland communities.

Under the national partnership agreements negotiated as part of the post-intervention Strong Futures policy, the Commonwealth provided a 10-year funding commitment to continue supporting homelands. In 2015, under the previous government, a deal was done to transfer remaining funds for the remaining years—coinciding with the Western Australian government revising the sustainability of smaller communities—with an eye to defunding and withdrawing services like health, education and government services.

In 2015 Senator Scullion agreed to provide \$154m remaining from the 10-year commitment in exchange for the Northern Territory Government taking full responsibility for homelands; municipal and essential services. I understand those funds were quickly spent by the previous government, with no eye to the

future. That is a disgrace. The Commonwealth has effectively wiped its hands of the community's most disadvantaged people, who were granted the right to return to these lands by federal laws.

The Turnbull government has turned its back on them. Our government has a well-thought-out policy on outstations that begins to address some of the deep and unresolved issues, and provides certainty for some of the most disadvantaged people. We are focused on addressing much-needed reform to ensure service delivery is something that occurs within appropriate time frames and is completed to a standard like anywhere else in the Northern Territory. Housing and infrastructure are certainly areas that are long overdue. People living on outstations have long called for better services to be delivered and opportunities for new housing.

I extend an invitation to federal Indigenous Affairs minister, Nigel Scullion, and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to come out. It is time to come out. I have done it. Come out and see the conditions that people who reside in outstations and homelands have to put up with. Scullion will say he is out bush all the time, but I am yet to see 'ol Nigel. Come out and see the ageing infrastructure his government has done little to address.

**Mr WOOD:** A point of order, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker. You must address other members of parliament by their correct name.

**Mr PAECH:** Senator Nigel Scullion. The consequences of the policy vacuum started when Amanda Vanstone was minister in 2005. She labelled outstations as cultural museums. Come out and meet some of the nation's most disadvantaged people. Come and see what life is like outside of the east coast for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Walk a mile in their shoes.

They bang on and on about closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, so I encourage and challenge them to come out with me and meet the people to hear firsthand—and find creative ways for the federal government to continue to support and fund these vital places. I have no issue with taking federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Senator Nigel Scullion, or the Prime Minister out there. It is very important that they come out and see the level of infrastructure that is needed, and the level of commitment by the Northern Territory Government to maintain that Aboriginal people have the right, and are able to, exercise self-determination on their ancestral land.

All I ask is for the Prime Minister and Indigenous Affairs Minister to come out. They will enjoy coming out; there is no doubt about that.

**Mr SIEVERS (Brennan):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, on Saturday 25 February, the Members for Solomon and Drysdale, and I hosted a Palmerston family fun day breakfast at Sanctuary Lakes. It is a beautiful park located in the middle of the Brennan electorate. It was a fantastic event, with many families attending with their pets. Some stated there were well over 350 people in attendance, and I suggest this is close to the truth due to the number of bacon and egg sandwiches and sausages we cooked.

The Member for Solomon, staff and the Palmerston Labor team pulled together to provide free coffee, water, face painting, a jumping castle and a full breakfast to everyone who came along. The mums, dads, grandparents and children, from all accounts, enjoyed the morning.

It was amazing to see so many families having fun, enjoying themselves and taking advantage of the events organised, as well as interacting with our staff and members of parliament. We had some Young Labor team supporters attend in all their gear, hats and shirts. I thank them so much, as they did a live video to the community with us, so my personal thanks to Froz, Sophie, Anhes, Suleiman and Ayisha; you did a fantastic job.

The event also raised money for Royal Life Saving NT, and we asked every person to donate a gold coin. I understand some people even donated more dollars than a gold coin, and a significant amount of money was raised that morning. I thank Boof the Barra for attending; he was a hit with the kids and grown-ups. I also thank Jill and Kate from Royal Life Saving NT, who did an extremely good job in the heat of the morning.

I thank the ETU, and in particular Dave Hayes, or Strawbs, as he is better known. He always supports our events, and we appreciate the barbecue trailer and ongoing support. I also wish to thank all of the Palmerston community for its support and for enjoying the family day with the Palmerston team and Luke Gosling.

We had the best time together. At the end of the event the community and staff talked us into doing the ice esky bucket challenge, which was also a big hit. It ended the event with a laugh and a great video. I must thank all our family, staff and friends who organised the community fun day, and I make special mention of Amy, Hiccup, Chewie, Nicole, Luke, Eva, Tommy, Kirby and Kirby, little Lenny, Olga, Sharon, Dong, Siobhan, Rol, Steve, Kirsty and all the Palmerston Solomon team.

They cooked the barbecue in the sun, set up the tent and ran to the shop to get extra food and drinks, and they made our Palmerston community fun day a huge success. The families attending commented and appreciated the efforts our team put in. I thank you all and look forward to working with you in the near future as you are such good fun to be with, whatever the event. Thank you.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise some issues related to Question Time today. I had not seen the Labor Party's response to the Australian Hotels Association's questions, and there are a number of things there that concern me. I say this in relation to the government announcing it is reviewing of the *Liquor Act*, and at the same time they appear to have made some points back to the Australian Hotels Association about their concerns.

I presume this was before the election, so I am just trying to get my head around how the review will fit and what has been promised to the Australian Hotel's Association. I will give you some examples of issues that perhaps need review. One of those is to retain Sunday trading restrictions. It says here, 'Labor will not change Sunday trading arrangements preventing standalone bottle shops and liquor stores from trading'.

If you have a review why are you not reviewing that? I live next to a hotel and I happen to have my shop next to a supermarket. The hotel can sell alcohol on Sunday, but the supermarket 20 minutes away cannot. It seems strange to me; we either have no trading on Sunday or we allow those two places to trade.

I do not know why it is that way; it is probably something historical. I thought, how will we have a review if that issue cannot be reviewed? Has it already been promised to the AHA that it will not change? For instance, 'maintain the existing hours for on-premises licence revenues', was the issue.

The Labor Party said, 'Labor will maintain existing hours'. Is that the reason we cannot have a review or discussion about lockout laws on Mitchell Street, because the government has already promised the AHA that it will not change the hours? This is why I am finding it very difficult to work out where Labor is going in relation to what the really important issue is. I have heard the Chief Minister speak today about the problems we have in our society with alcohol, but the government has promised certain things to the Australia Hotels Association, and I am wondering how they will fit into this review.

Another issue is licence applications and density of licenced premises. It says here, if elected Labor will cap the issuing of all takeaway licences unless it is associated with a restaurant in an accommodation service. Applications for takeaway licences in greenfield suburbs will be considered, but with strict guidelines.

So on one hand it is saying they will cap the issuing of takeaway licences, but then they give plenty of reasons why they will still be allowed. It would be good to see what that means in practice, especially when it says these takeaway licences will be considered within strict guidelines. What will those strict guidelines be?

I presume it has a lot to do with supermarkets. I do not know of any Woolworths or Coles supermarket that has ever been rejected from having a takeaway licence. How that will work in practice, I am not sure. In regard to the issue we debated today, the public area of bottle shops, Labor said, 'We will restrict the public area of a bottle shop to a maximum of 400m<sup>2</sup>'. If that is in place, how do you discuss it in a review?

The question that still has not been answered is, whose idea was the 400m<sup>2</sup>? Did it come from the AHA? Was it their idea, knowing if they chose that area it would limit any big people coming into the market? I am not here to support Dan Murphy's. I think we have enough outlets. Be that as it may, the discussion is about the size of the bottle shops, and I am interested to know if the AHA decided the 400m<sup>2</sup> would be a good idea and the government agreed with them.

What discussions were held with the licensees who do not belong to the AHA? Supermarket people? As far as I know they do not belong to the AHA. They have an altogether different group. Were they involved in these discussions? I do not know.



There needs to be some clarity about this issue. I did not know there was a promise before the election that this would happen. For me, this came out of the blue, and then I am told this was a pre-election promise. Who in the public would have seen this document? I do not think many people would have.

There is another thing here on smoking. Labor will not be changing smoking arrangements in its first term. I am interested to know what you will do in your second term. We have strict smoking regulations today, but I read that and wondered what you have in mind in relation to smoking.

This is an interesting one; it says 'issues from 2012', so obviously the AHA had some issues left over from previous times. It said Labor will use powers under the *Local Government Act* to prevent special levies or rates to licensed venues and late-night venues. Why are they interfering in that? It is a local government issue; if the AHA has a problem it goes to the local government.

I am not sure why any Territory government would be interfering in that issue. Is it so they stay on the good side of the AHA? I would not have thought it is the role of Labor to be using its local government department to override an issue for a local council. Another interesting one is the buy back. It was mentioned during the week, that Labor will not rule out any options in dealing with the issues arising in some places, but it will not be introducing a general program of buy back.

From memory, Labor bought two licences some years ago in Alice Springs, but it was very costly. People have their liquor licences almost for life, and governments have a problem trying to put a value on those licences in order to buy them back. Again, I am interested to see where the government is going with that.

The AHA also asked about wet canteens and licenced social clubs, an issue that has been around for quite a while. I presume this is the discussion about whether there should be wet canteens or licenced social clubs on remote communities on Aboriginal land. It has been an issue for a long time. it says here:

*Labor supports the introduction of alcohol management plans in regions across the Territory.*

We have had those for a number of years:

*We will ensure that all voices are heard in the decision-making around these plans; we will respect the wishes of local decision-makers as to how they manage alcohol in their region.*

I agree with that; it is a good response.

You have to make sure the loud people are not the only ones you hear. Sometimes the people you need to talk to are the ones who are not at the meetings or are a bit shy. You have to make sure everyone is involved, especially regarding issues as serious as having a licensed social club in the community.

There is another issue here which I do not understand—maybe someone can tell me what it means—about short-term letting, or unregulated accommodation. It says Labor will undertake a review into the unregulated accommodation market. Perhaps someone from the government can explain what that is aimed at. I am not sure what the unregulated accommodation market is. It is one of the issues raised by the AHA, and that is the response from government.

I was concerned when I heard today that we are having an alcohol review. The Attorney-General said they will look at everything. I asked about lockout laws—it will not happen because they just said they will not do it. How can you look at everything without looking at everything? The lockout laws have worked in Newcastle and Kings Cross. As you know, this is a very powerful industry.

The alcohol industry is very powerful, and if it does not get what it wants it will lobby. There was a reduction in hours in Kings Cross—thankfully not too much. When you see the pressure being applied for the government to approve Dan Murphy's you will see the weight of the alcohol industry. It does not muck about when it feels it is getting a raw deal from governments. You have to be wary that you do not necessarily give in to these big companies. They have to prove that they will not cause social problems in our society. Government has to prove why 400m<sup>2</sup> is the minimum size for bottle shops.

I hope this debate continues at another time.

**Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak briefly about a man who was a constituent about 75 years ago.

I was lucky enough to meet Keith Dwyer at one of my mobile offices on the esplanade over the Bombing of Darwin weekend. He was in a wheelchair, being pushed along by his young son, who was probably only a few years older than me. Keith looks like he is in his 80s, but apparently he is in his 90s. When I asked how they were and if they were here for the commemoration of the Bombing of Darwin, he mentioned that he was on the harbour the day the bombs fell.

It was a remarkable conversation. We ran into him a few times over the weekend. It was amazing to hear him describe what happened on that day and what he saw; the hair on the back of my neck stood up. His son was kind enough a couple of days later to send me a few pages from the memoirs he has written. I will read a couple of excerpts, but I will put a bit of context to it.

Keith was employed by Qantas Empire Airways—as it was called then in Darwin—as a boat hand and driver to service the C-class flying boat on Darwin Harbour. This involved unloading freight and mail from planes, then assisting the engineers who maintained the aircraft.

We were fortunate enough to run into him a number of times over the weekend. He made a lasting impression on me. His son has emailed me a few pages of the documents where he has written about his experiences.

This is from the morning of 19 February. He starts off by going a bit of context:

*The small wharf had been so busy that we could not tie up to it unless we were loading or unloading, so we stayed alongside the flying boat in the work launch that had thick rubber fenders so as not to damage the flying boat waiting for a call from the shore. About 9.30 we received a signal from the wharf to go in and pick up the flight crew and the engineers ready to board.*

After loading up the launch with gear, they came back alongside the flying boat. They were obviously unaware from the wharf and out in the middle of nowhere. Somebody then said that there seemed to be a lot of activity onshore, with people running and signal flags flying on the naval signal tower. The next thing he knew there was a tremendous noise and a lot of smoke, and they just sat there alongside not knowing what was happening.

Then there was another explosion that they could see; it was coming from the wharf. Someone yelled out, 'The japs are here', and they started calling out to anyone in the flying boat to come out. People had already started to jump into the boat. They realised that nobody had time to leave the launch. The Station Engineer, Norm Roberts, told the coxswain, Jack Wallace, to get away from the flying boat, as it had wartime overload of fuel and it would explode if it was hit. When they got clear of the flying boat they looked up and for the first time and could see the bombs as they left the Jap aircraft. They shone as they fell down towards the wharf.

I found amazing the clarity with which Keith remembered that day 75 years ago, as a man now in his 90s, but 20 at the time. He was fit enough now to still sit through the commemorations at the cenotaph, and also come back to Parliament House and enjoy an ale at the reception afterwards. It was mentioned during the speeches that to be able to meet and pay tribute to people who served is an honour. It is an honour that we will not always have. It struck a chord with me to be able to spend some time with him.

Keith explained that he was not in the services at that time, he was working for Qantas, but he spent some time in the Air Force later. He went on to write:

*By this time there was a very heavy cloud of smoke from the burning ships and broken oil pipes at the wharf being blown over to the flying boat. We just sat there well clear, not knowing what to do when we saw the dive bombers attacking the ships in the harbour. We then saw a dive bomber appear out of the smoke, very low level, coming straight at us. The engineer told us to get down in the bottom of the launch to make him think it was an empty launch.*

*The dive bomber was so low to the water that when he saw us, he dipped one wing to fire at us, but he had to pull up straightaway and the bullets ripped past us on the port side and brought up a spray of water for about 100 yards. As he flew over us, we could see the rear gunner looking backwards. He went over us so fast that even he did not have time to turn around and fire on us.*

Keith went on to explain that they did not really know what to do. They knew they could not stay near the plane. They could see some people in life rafts in the harbour from boats that had been sunk, so they went over and helped tow some of those life rafts to the safety of the shore. Whilst they were doing that, there

was shrapnel falling all around them from the *Neptuna*, one of the boats that had been bombed and was exploding. She had ammunition on board, so it was a remarkable sight as they were trying to make their way out of that area. In retelling his story, Keith explained that they hid in the mangroves until the bombers had finished. They came out when it was safe and headed back to land. They did not really know what to do after that.

Keith explained that his mother and sister had been evacuated some months before, but his father and he had stayed in Darwin. Shortly after the initial set of bombings, Keith met with his father, who was packing all his belongings, water and rations to leave for Tennant Creek. Given that Darwin was under fire, there would have been no work and no money. He had little chance of earning a wage if he stayed, and he knew he could get work in Tennant Creek.

The thing that struck me reading through the memoirs was that Keith explained that he last saw his father on that day riding out of Darwin on a pushbike. I believe he rode down the track a bit, stopped at an army camp and was lucky enough to pick up a ride for a bit further. Keith saw his father a bit later on when they were reunited in Tennant Creek some time later. He was pretty grateful for getting that ride with the army truck.

It was an absolute honour to be able to meet with Keith Dwyer at the Bombing of Darwin commemoration. He was a gentleman, and he and his family were extremely proud of being able to come back to Darwin and retell some of his stories. When you hear the stories it amazes me to think how much things have changed in 75 years, an era gone past. It was a pleasure and an honour to meet him and I thank him for being able to retell parts of his story.

**Ms MANISON (Wanguri):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it is with great sadness this evening that I rise to remember a wonderful person from the Wanguri electorate. Brenda Judith Day passed away on 14 February unexpectedly and far too early in life. Brenda was a very special person and dear to my heart. She was a lady with an amazing smile and a gentle soul, and she typified a true Darwin lady.

Brenda is the beloved daughter of Ralph and Valerie Day. She is a wonderful mother and best friend to Shellbea. From my observations she was one of the best and most loving mothers I have ever met. She had a son named Darcey who tragically passed away when he was very young, and she loved him very much too.

Brenda was a sister to Gavin and Robert, and was a wonderful aunty, cousin and friend to so many. Part of the privilege of being a member of the Territory parliament is the amazing people you get to meet and become friends with, and Brenda and her family have been some of the most special and dear people I have had the honour to know.

At Brenda's funeral it was clear how dearly loved she was by so many. It was a huge turnout at the Darwin Community Church at the 23 February funeral, and people overflowed to outside the church. There was not enough room for all who came to support the Day family and pay their respects to Brenda. It was especially lovely to see so many members of Brenda's family make their way up from down south to be there.

We heard about the loves in Brenda's life. Shellbea and her family were the centre of her universe. We also heard about what a wonderful sister, friend and cousin she was and how she loved her Wanderers footy club and Brothers rugby club. It was also confirmed what a Darwin lady she was, how she loved cruising around Casuarina or one of my other favourite spots, Spotlight, running into friends out and about, and having a chat and a coffee.

We heard about her achievements in her teaching degree, the support and friendship she gave to others and what a good and kind person she was. At the service the Day family's close friend, Rhonda Coats, delivered a beautiful eulogy and tribute to Brenda. As part of that she asked us to write a letter to Brenda's beloved daughter, Shellbea, to share memories of Brenda with her, so as time goes on Shellbea will always be able to look back on how special her mum was to so many.

I would like to share my letter to Shellbea so that it is here, with Shellbea and on the record of this parliament, so people can always look back to see what a special lady we lost. My letter says:

*Dear Shellbea,*

*I am so sorry you lost your beautiful mum. To me, your mum was a very special lady and someone I always loved to see and her greatest strength was being an amazing mum. You could see how*

*proud she was of you every day and how much she loved you. So I hope that even though all the sadness you will feel missing her going forward in your life, you always can see that you made her happier than anything else in her life and never forget how proud of you she was. I know she will always be looking down on you and be with you in spirit each and every day.*

*I can actually remember when I first met your mum. I am pretty sure the year was 2011 when I was at the V8 supercars with my husband for a work function he was attending. I was in a corporate tent where your mum was working with the caterers and I remember seeing her big smile and I was really impressed by how friendly and helpful she was, when usually you don't get great service like that anymore. So she made an instant impression on me.*

*Then a few years later I was out campaigning to become the Member for Wanguri and she stopped by the side of the road to wish me luck and always gave me a wave during my campaign when she drove past.*

*From then on I have enjoyed getting to see you and your mum and family at Hibiscus, around Casuarina, at school and all the different places around Darwin.*

*I feel so lucky that through my job I got the chance to get to know you, your mum, your grandparents and Rhonda and I have been able to share some really special time with you in your life. Times like when you were elected onto the SRC and received awards. You could always see your mum there supporting you, and just how proud she was of you.*

*What I loved most about your mum was her smile and how friendly she always was. Being around her always made me feel good—she was that type of person who had so much care for everyone around her. She was what I would describe as a 'salt of the earth' person. And I am going to miss seeing her at the shops and around Darwin because she was a really special lady that I admired a lot.*

*I admired her because I thought she had such a beautiful outlook on life and because of the love she gave to those around her. These days, you just don't see that in people and it is a very selfless attribute.*

*What makes you so special, Shellbea, is that you have so much of your mum in you. And that makes you an incredibly kind and wonderful person, and is why you have so many people around you that love you so much and will take care of you and love you just like your mum did.*

*If there is anything you ever need, Shellbea, Jenny and I will always be there for you too. But I know you have very special and wonderful family and friends who will all make sure you get everything your mum would have ever wanted for you.*

*It is going to be incredibly hard going through the rest of your life without your beautiful mum, but you are a very special person, Shellbea, and I know you have the love and support around you that will make sure you have a great life ahead, and those people will help you achieve what you want in life.*

*Never forget how special and wonderful you are, and that just like your mum, your strength is your ability to make everyone around you happy. You always made your mum very happy and proud.*

*We all love you, and we are here for you if there is anything you need.*

*Love, Nicole.*

In the few years I have known Brenda I have admired her spirit and her approach to life greatly. We have lost an amazing mother, daughter, sister, cousin and friend. My deepest condolences to Shellbea, Valerie, Ralph, Gavin, Robert and the dear friends and family of Brenda. She will be missed. May she rest in peace knowing her daughter, Shellbea, will always be surrounded by the network of love that was in her life.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.