

Madam Speaker took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENTS BY SPEAKER
Floral Arrangements Competition

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, you have on your desks some green Oasis and a bowl. Last year the Royal Darwin Show had a competition with members and mayors to make a floral arrangement or otherwise. The member for Fong Lim won last year, so I encourage you to participate if you can. I will find out when you need to drop them off, which will probably be on the Thursday. I hope you support it as you did last year.

Best Wishes to Members

Madam SPEAKER: As this is the last sitting before the Northern Territory general election, I want to take the opportunity to wish everyone the very best. To those who are leaving, best wishes in your future endeavours. To those who are recontesting, best wishes. Hopefully some of us, if not all, will be back in the next term, and perhaps some new people. Very best wishes to you all in whatever you do.

**STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT (FIRST HOME
OWNER DISCOUNT) BILL
(Serial 174)**

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the opposition supports this bill. We believe it is critical that first home buyers receive stamp duty relief when purchasing existing homes.

Labor believes the decision to remove stamp duty relief from existing homes was bad policy, and it had huge implications and repercussions for Territorians. It resulted in a massive 37% reduction in first home buyers seeking finance to buy a home. It resulted in housing market sale levels being the lowest in the Territory's history.

It was roundly criticised by a number of commentators, none more so than Quentin Kilian, the Executive Officer of the Real Estate Institute. Mr Kilian said:

We believe the evidence is now very clear that the policy changes made by the Northern Territory Government in 2015 to the FHOG program ...

The First Home Owner Grant program:

... have not worked in the manner that they were planned and changes need to be made immediately to rectify the imbalance.

Labor welcomes this change of heart in line with Mr Kilian's comments and with what Labor and many Territorians have been saying, that the CLP made a mistake.

However, this government has not gone far enough; the relief offered is not as significant as it should be. Labor has a very clear approach that is different to what the CLP is offering today. Labor will provide stamp duty relief by making the first \$500 000 of any purchase of an existing home free of stamp duty for all first home buyers. This will save first home buyers \$24 000 on their purchase. My office has spoken to all the major banks and they all agree that this will lift the capacity of first home buyers, especially young people, entering into their first home.

That is what we are trying to do. We are losing too many Territorians; we are not having enough Territorians buy their first home in the Territory. We have seen that slump since the CLP made its decision to walk away from first home buyers and existing property assistance. We have to help those Territorians into their first home.

Our changes will mean that more people will buy here. This will free up the housing market for those who wish to sell their house and build or buy a new home or move into an upgraded home. It will mean that more people are investing in the Northern Territory and will stay here. That is what we want; it makes sense for the Territory economically and for our future population growth. We need to have our minds on that goal.

Additionally, Labor's policy is supported by a \$10 000 tradies package over two years, which will provide first home buyers with the ability to upgrade or renovate their homes, or purchase goods locally for up to \$2000. This money must be spent locally.

Labor has a consistent policy position on how to address the population loss under the CLP to down south. How can we help more Territorians buy their first home? How can we stimulate the economy through the prism of keeping people here and entering them into their first home? That is what we want to do with regard to stamp duty relief for first home owners and a stimulus package for first home owners. That is our position and why we support this bill, but, if elected, Labor will improve on this plan.

Finally, the reason we are debating this bill today is because of CLP incompetence and chaos, which has seen an extra sitting day added to the parliamentary agenda. I assume most of us initially had different plans to being here today. Mine was to be riding 100 km or so for a charity, for the Katherine to Darwin Challenge, raising funds for Total Recreation. I had to miss that

today. As a result, I think the CLP members should all make a donation to that very worthy cause. If people are interested they can look up the Facebook page of the Katherine to Darwin Challenge, or Google the good work it does. It is organised by Simon Watts, a real estate agent, and I am sure he has very strong opinions about first home owner grants as well. It would be very worthy of the CLP to donate to that cause today. It is what I was meant to be doing today, but because of CLP chaos and incompetence we have this extra sitting day in addition to the existing parliamentary agenda of the last four years.

Madam Speaker, our position is that we support this bill, but if elected, Labor will be improving on this plan to make sure it delivers, keeps those Territorians here and gets them into their first home. We have to make that difference to the Northern Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I also support this bill and I thank the Treasurer for bringing it to the House. When we first came to government there was an incredibly critical shortage of housing. We had to make some immediate and very important decisions so we could get Territorians into their own homes. Part of that was changing the First Home Owner Grant so more people were building or buying new homes. The direction we took was incredibly deliberate and effective.

It is wonderful to go through Johnston and Zuccoli and see the hundreds and hundreds of new houses in those suburbs. It was a very deliberate policy for a deliberate period of time, and it had a deliberate and positive outcome. That policy has been in place for several years now, since we came to government. The landscape has changed because we have been able to effectively get houses into the market and people into their own homes.

Last year I met with several conveyancers, people from REINT, real estate agents and different groups of people in that market, who explained to me that our policy change had had the effect we desired and older housing stock was not being taken up by the first home owner cohort. They were attracted to building new homes, which is exactly what we wanted to get more houses into the market.

I am really pleased with this change; it is very important. We can now allow first home owners the opportunity to move back into existing housing stock. We want to see a turnover in that stock. It is important not only for people who want to sell their existing home, but also for the related industries, including conveyancers and real estate agents.

The \$10 000 grant will make a huge difference to first home owners who want to buy in an older suburb and renovate, starting with something more humble and building up from there. This announcement is perfectly timed with our announcement of the tradie voucher. People are registering like crazy for that at the moment. With the \$2000, which people can match, it is the perfect opportunity to take advantage of the 50% stamp duty concession on properties up to the value of \$450 000. Coupled with the tradie voucher, people are well on the way to realising their first home owner dreams.

I am pleased to have been able to meet with groups and hear different sides of the story. I am pleased to have been able to work with our government to deliver a stamp duty concession. It is important that we offer both. Make no mistake; we took a very deliberate policy direction for a very deliberate purpose. We wanted to clear up Labor's mess and bring down the skyrocketing rents that we saw in Darwin, Palmerston and the northern suburbs.

I thank the minister; this is a very good concession. It has been welcomed by people in my electorate. A \$10 000 stamp duty concession goes a long way to getting people into their first home. We should see the turnover in existing housing stock moving more quickly now. I know people who are selling, some are downsizing and some upsizing, and they greatly appreciate it as well. Everyone wins with this concession.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I want to place this bill into context. The member for Drysdale touched on it fleetingly, but we need to take a moment to consider the circumstances in which we came to government more fulsomely than the member for Drysdale touched on.

When we came to government, house prices in this jurisdiction were simply unaffordable because the Labor government was sitting on a land release system that had become constipated. Consequently, the Labor government also ran a system of assisting first home owners into existing homes, which meant the price of housing was artificially inflated under its settings. The artificial inflation meant house prices were way beyond the capacity of first home owners to enter the marketplace.

Million-dollar homes in the suburbs – that is where Labor was taking us and it had no policy settings whatsoever to deal with it. Many people were very happy with house prices; they are called homeowners, rental property owners or investors, and they are happy to see house prices go up.

For the party that claims to champion the little people, the battlers, to create an artificial house-price environment of the nature it created was nothing short of treachery when it came to those battlers. We heard those battlers when we were in opposition and we said we would bring house prices down by applying downward pressure, but you have to be extremely careful in that space. When a person has equity in their home, their asset must be worth more than their liability. You are walking on a knife-edge every step of the way.

We knowingly put downward pressure on house prices. We regeared the system so the investment, particularly of first home buyers, would go into the construction sector, which is exactly what happened. The construction sector continues to construct – downward pressure on house prices without destroying people's equity. We understand people are still complaining because their equity is not growing sufficiently quickly. We get that, but we are the ones who decided to back the battlers.

This issue, when we came to government, was squarely on the cost of living in the Northern Territory, and how quickly do we forget. The cost of living was highlighted in daily newspaper articles on people not being able to afford to buy their own home, let alone the bond on rental properties and whatnot.

Fuel prices were through the roof. We deliberately set out to apply downward pressure, yet, all of a sudden, we are the villains in the piece. We kept our promise. We fought for Territorians and maintained their right to buy into homes on an affordable level without destroying people's equity positions in the process. It takes time and care to do that. Now we hear the members opposite saying, 'We support this bill because it is all your fault'. You are supporting the bill because we are putting forward adjustments according to the need of the marketplace.

We are tweaking it to protect people's equity positions and maintain the ability to enter into the marketplace in the first instance. The problem with the members opposite is they think they can promise to change things going forward. We have not heard what the plan is, but they will change things for the better. What is that plan? Will you return to the full system that you had prior to when we were in government?

That is fine by me. I have to declare my personal interests; I own the home I live in. If house prices start to skyrocket, my land and my property will be worth more. However, I wonder about my daughters, who in a few years' time will be old enough to buy their own home – eight years' time for my youngest daughter. What if she wants to

enter the housing marketing and she suddenly realises that she will not be able to unless she has a \$100 000, or 10%, deposit?

That is the situation Labor was positioning us to be in last time. We have put pressure on stopping that from happening. It will return us to the time when housing was not affordable for the battler. That is what concerns me about a change of government in the Northern Territory; Labor will promise anything, say anything and, ultimately, do anything. The unintended consequences of its promise will be felt by the people who need the least interference in their life as possible.

As a consequence, Labor will invariably have to start increasing its tax take. Its own source revenue used to be an enormous source of income, particularly through the stamp duty process. I often think of comments of people like Winston Churchill regarding great social policies, or his comments in relation to socialism. Trying to tax your way to prosperity is:

... like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.

That is the future of the Northern Territory under a Labor government, which will say anything, do anything and promise anything, and as a consequence of that will not realise the medium and long-term effects of its decision-making processes.

Madam Speaker, should Labor form government in the Northern Territory, I suspect the battlers, the ones Labor says it will champion, will be abandoned because it has to keep its promises to everyone else.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I support the Stamp Duty Amendment (First Home Owners Discount) Bill 2016 (Serial 174). I have been an Independent for just over one year now, and this has been one of my main battles with the government. I started lobbying the government at the end of 2015. In October I moved a motion in parliament asking that it reinstates some form of assistance to first home owners buying existing homes. I then moved another motion of a similar effect at the end of last year.

For me, this is a win. As an Independent I have learnt that your wins are not always obvious and recognised, but this is a win for me. I have fought consistently, particularly for the town of Alice Springs and other regional centres which were affected by the 1 January 2015 policy change, when the government decided to take away any assistance provided for first home owners buying existing homes.

Taking assistance away from those small regional towns, which were not enjoying the same level of prosperity as Darwin, was a bad decision. It was a bad decision at the time, and it was a bad decision when we first came to government in 2012, when it was put to me as Treasurer.

I think the Attorney-General is right. At the time it was introduced, it was a reasonable decision to take away assistance for first home owners buying existing homes in Darwin. That was at the beginning of 2013, after the mini budget. It was not necessary to continue to stimulate the market, but it was never right to take away assistance for regional areas. Places like Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Alice Springs have never enjoyed the same level of prosperity as Darwin. People were continuing to struggle to buy their first homes.

Taking away the assistance for existing homes in Alice Springs was nothing less than a disaster for our town. That bad policy has now been in place for 18 months. We have seen a serious decline in sales to first home owners at the lower end of the market in Alice Springs. It has had a rippling effect throughout the community.

Alice Springs has a finely-balanced economy. If you take away hundreds of sales of homes over an 18-month period, it has a flow-on effect throughout the whole community. Fewer people commit to the town and there is less money flowing in retail and investment; the flow-on effect goes from one end of town to the other. It was not a good decision by the government to change the policy in this way from 1 January 2015.

The decision to change this now is about common sense, acknowledging a change in the economy across the Northern Territory, but it is also political. For the CLP to try to retain government it needed to make this change. The CLP members have finally listened to the stakeholders involved, the Real Estate Institute NT, and the economists who advise them, and they have realised that the Northern Territory needs to be stimulated in this way.

On a personal level, I have friends who have adult children who have been unable to enter the housing market. Because of that, their children have left town to go to places where the cost of living is more affordable and they can buy into the housing market. Others have continued to struggle along in town, living with their parents and sharing houses rather than investing in the place they know and love - their town of Alice Springs.

I applaud the government for finally coming to its senses. I take some credit for this healthy and good decision which affects the whole of the

Northern Territory, not just Alice Springs. I look forward to seeing people in my community back on their feet, investing in the town, and the town being a stronger, healthier local economy.

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the comments by the member for Araluen and that she has been campaigning for this change for some time. It is not the reason we have made this change, but we have been observing the market.

There was a comment made that economists have been demanding this change. That is not true; economists have said not to make the change. All of our economic scientists and Treasury officials have advised us against this approach. It is common knowledge amongst economists that if you provide a grant for the housing sector you place inflationary pressure on housing and drive the prices up. We saw that with the \$25 000 First Home Owner Grant, which was for established and new homes. That is why we made the strategic decision to remove the grant from established homes and increase it by \$1000 to \$26 000 for new homes.

The benefit is that new homes are being constructed, there is an increased level of supply in the sector across the Territory and people building homes, such as plumbers, concreters, tilers, chippies, sparkies, carpet layers and so forth, are gaining more work. In the NT employment sector, outside of government and the community sector, 20% of all private sector employees work in the construction sector, so we have to stimulate that sector.

It used to bother me, especially after coming to government on 25 August 2012 – the cost of living was the number one election issue in all the polls, particularly relating to housing and petrol prices. Every morning you could turn on the *Today Show*, *Sunrise* or ABC 24 and see comments about the price of fuel and housing in the NT being the most expensive in Australia. That is a challenge, being in a regional and remote part of this nation, but there is always something we can do, and part of it relates to supply and demand.

There was an increased level of demand, especially from interstate investors who could see 10% returns on investment because house and rental prices were going up. People were paying nearly \$1000 for a two-bedroom unit, which is unaffordable in most people's equations. The changes we made have put downward pressure on established homes, but have continued growth in the supply market, which is why we have a better supply-and-demand balance now.

We recognise that the downward pressure we have put on established homes has reached a

flattening of the market. There was an option to return to the old model of a \$25 000 stamp duty exemption or a grant for first home buyers.

Our Treasury official said that a stamp duty exemption of \$10 000 was the limit for causing price inflation, or increased upward pressure. That is why we have set a maximum of \$10 000 at a \$450 000 price point, which is the median house price in the Northern Territory.

Have we been successful in reducing the median cost of housing in the Northern Territory? Absolutely, for purchase prices and rental prices; we have also reduced the cost of a new house in the Territory with a number of new developments up and down the track.

It is not only house prices we have driven down; we have also driven down petrol prices. I am reminded of a conversation I had on ABC Darwin last week when I was on talkback for half-an-hour. Adam Steer, the compere, started having a go at me about petrol prices being down and I said, 'Hang on, when the petrol prices were up you were complaining and we put in a place a range of measures, including the NT Fuel Price Summit. We have been attacked along the way for everything we have done and now we are being attacked for petrol prices being low.'

In fact, fuel prices are now the lowest in the nation, and I think that is a positive outcome. It means there is now more fairness and equity for Territorians entering the housing market, whether purchasing or renting. It also means the cost-of-living component of fuel prices is down, which makes it easier for families. We always want to see further downward pressure, but that has certainly lowered prices.

Regarding fuel prices, later today I will table amendments to the Fuel Price Disclosure Bill to go out for further consultation. They are amendments we have been working on for quite a while as a result of the consultation process.

Additionally, in regard to fuel prices and the budget bill which was recently passed, we have committed \$500 000 to a gas-to-liquid processing facility in the Northern Territory. That process can convert Northern Territory shale gas into diesel. We believe we should be able to supply more than half of the Northern Territory's diesel requirements from gas - converting gas to diesel. There will be many jobs, either in Tennant Creek, Alice Springs or Darwin, for the conversion of gas to diesel. The benefits of the process are that we will use Territory gas to make diesel and it will mean cheaper diesel prices at the pump.

Also, from an emissions perspective, we are helping to protect the environment because

synthetically crafted diesel from gas is more emission friendly than the diesel we currently receive from the overseas shale gas industry. Not only are we stimulating the local economy in gas development, supporting the farmers in gas development and supporting some of our regions by making diesel fuel from gas, we are also supporting environmental causes by burning a more synthetic diesel fuel in the Northern Territory than we would normally import.

We need to put into context the amount of diesel fuel that we use. I do not have the exact amount here, but diesel burnt in the Northern Territory is not only from the four-wheel drives on our streets; the tourist buses, which are now more frequent in the Territory because tourism has come back from a 15-year low; the mining or service and supply trucks; or the grocery trucks. It is about the power stations, particularly in regional and remote parts of the Northern Territory. It is not the most efficient from an emissions perspective, but burning a cleaner, greener diesel is much better for our environment. That is on top of the 30-plus communities which will have solar hybrid diesel generators installed.

Returning to the housing issue; Labor has committed to ending the \$2000 tradie voucher subsidy program, which is seeing an injection of up to \$200m into established homes across the Northern Territory, and increasingly supporting the approximately 10 000 homeowner-occupiers in the Northern Territory who want to do redevelopment or refurbishment works on their properties of up to \$20 000. There has been a huge take-up of that \$2000 grant. I am sure the Minister for Business can talk about the number of tradies who have registered and homeowners who are making inquiries on a regular basis.

Labor has committed to getting rid of the program, and that is an error. It is erroneous because you can potentially support 10 000 home upgrades and a supply chain of work, whether that is employing a tradie, supporting the tiling shop or the painting shop, or supporting jobs at Bunnings, Home Hardware, Mitre 10 or wherever it may be. There is a supply chain benefiting from this. For Labor to campaign against that and commit to removing it is a mistake.

Of particular concern is Labor's policy to give \$24 000 as a cash injection to first home owners in established homes. I note Labor said it can be used to help fit out homes, which is good for Harvey Norman, Carla Furnishers and Le Cornu. Although I support local retailers, much of that furniture is made overseas and imported, so it is not really supporting local jobs. Ours is a stamp duty exemption; we help reduce the bill, not give cash, because cash is the inflationary component. The increase from \$10 000 to \$24 000, our

economists say, will create an inflationary model, sending house prices through the roof so people will not be able to afford them.

Not only will they not be able to afford houses at the point of purchase when the price is higher, but you need to extrapolate the increase in the cost and loan period. Twenty-five to 30 years is roughly the standard length of home loan for a first home buyer. It is the interest component of the escalated cost, so instead of buying a house for \$450 000 you buy it for \$550 000. Sure, you have the \$24 000 in your pocket, but \$100 000 extrapolated at 5% or 7% interest over the next 30 years – suddenly you are paying \$500 000 extra for your home.

We know the Leader of the Opposition has never had a job and does not understand economics, but you need to take the life cycle of a home loan into account because that hurts first home owners the most. Compare the \$10 000 stamp duty exemption from the Country Liberals to Labor's promise to hand out \$24 000 as a cash bribe. The cash not only increases the cost of the house and the interest, but you are recognising the income the Northern Territory government receives from the federal government as a multiplier of \$5.60 to every dollar of GST we have paid.

Under the equation set by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, a model known as horizontal fiscal equalisation, the Northern Territory receives \$5.60 for every dollar of GST it has paid. This is an acknowledgement of the disadvantage of the Northern Territory, its regional and remote communities and its Aboriginal Territorians, who make up 30% of our population. Of that 30%, 80% live in remote parts of the Northern Territory. The majority of our income is to support disadvantaged Indigenous Territorians. Instead of spending the money we are supposed to spend on the most disadvantaged in the Northern Territory, who are in remote areas, Labor will use part of that money to subsidise first home owners in established homes and put the house prices up.

That is a major mistake. For the last 30 years there has been criticism that the money coming from Canberra to help Indigenous Territorians who are disadvantaged is being spent in the wrong areas. This is a perfect example of bad Labor policy. Not only will it put housing prices up in the Territory and harm first home owners over the term of their loan, it is now harming the most disadvantaged in our community because the differential gap of \$14 000 should go to the most disadvantaged in the regional and remote parts of the Territory.

Look at historical issues; a good example is the court action that has been taken, supporting those in the education sector in Wadeye against the NT

government, where money that is supposed to go to Aboriginal people in the West Daly region – Wadeye in particular – has been going to Darwin and the northern suburbs. We should be supporting all Territorians, but that is a good example of where money has not been going back. The argument was won; the money was not going to the bush and now Labor turns up with a policy that money from Canberra which is supposed to support remote Indigenous Territorians will be used to put up house prices in Darwin. That is bad economic and social policy, and it goes against helping the most disadvantaged in our community.

In summary, I want to say to the Treasurer of the NT, the sponsor of this bill, this is the right policy at the right time in the Territory. It is a stamp duty exemption; it is not a cash bribe, saying, 'Here, take the money'. It is a stamp duty exemption of up to \$10 000 to support first home owners in paying their bill when they buy their first property.

The first property is the hardest property to buy – saving the deposit; paying stamp duty; working out conveyancing and legal costs; getting insurance; and connecting power, water and sewerage. All those things are difficult, which is why \$10 000 off a bill is a very important decision we have made.

We know there will be an uptake in established home sales for first home buyers. In regard to the market, the rate of first home buyers in new homes is the highest it has ever been. There has been transference; the policy has worked and new home construction is going quite well.

New announcements like last Friday's about Berrimah Farm – some 2500 properties, including 2000 homes and 500 units – will mean more supply on the market and more jobs. Berrimah Farm is a \$2bn project which will keep about 3200 employed for the next 13 years. It is a great initiative. The amendment we are talking about, regarding stamp duty, will help first home buyers in established homes because we have balanced the market and lowered the price structure.

I commend this bill to the House. The Treasurer has my full support and I congratulate him on bringing this bill forward.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I also support the bill. I am grateful the government has recognised at last that second-hand houses are sometimes the only houses young people can afford. The Minister for Business probably had a second-hand EH Holden like I did, because that was all he could afford too. That is what has been missing in this debate. We have had this debate a number of times and I have been told that we cannot do this because it will affect the prices or

that we need to stimulate the market to build new houses. Now, just out from the election, those arguments seem to disappear and we are having the argument we had 12 months ago. I am not sure the housing market changed that quickly.

I am a little cynical because it is not far out from the election. People have been calling for assistance for those buying a second-hand house; it has come now and I welcome it. I understand there are issues relating to government subsidies towards housing, affecting the price of houses. Some may say it is better to not have subsidies at all, which would keep it on a level playing field. From a banking perspective, first home buyers could be given friendlier interest rates. There may be other ways you can help people without the danger of house prices being artificially lifted, which is an issue that has been present for a long time.

It will be interesting to see. You only have to drive around Darwin to see the old-style houses, old housing commission houses, some of which were built after the cyclone. There are some houses still standing that made it through the cyclone. They do not look anything like the South Australian designed houses you see in Palmerston; they still have some Territory flavour and they are the types of houses young families should have the opportunity to buy.

Another side of the equation is the RAAF houses. If you have driven out to the rural area lately you would have seen a program some of us pushed very hard for many years ago, which is that none of the houses from the RAAF or naval bases should be destroyed. Instead they were taken to 11 Mile and Tivendale Rd. Whilst a number of those houses are still for sale, they have steadily moved into the rural area and other parts of the Territory. This stamp duty approach also assists people buying those houses. It is a good example of recycling and it gives young people an opportunity to buy a reasonably priced house.

It is funny how we do not always look back at history. The Minister for Business might remember this because he has been around a long time and was a policeman, as he always tells me. He might remember that the government did the subdivisions. Government made a decision, sometime in the 1980s or 1990s, to sell land to developers. You could say when they changed that policy they added a layer of cream on top of the price of land. Before, when the government developed the land, it brought a contractor in to install the sewerage, water and electricity. The government was then able to sell the land at a price which, I presume, would have covered most of the infrastructure they were putting in, but maybe not the headworks.

A new process was then introduced. I think Delfin was one of the first companies that came in. The government sold all the land south of The Hub, a great parcel of land, and it recovered the cost of buying the land from the government, which was reflected in the house prices. There have been historic changes which have increased the price of land in the Territory.

I am interested to hear from the minister about how we could put this to use in remote communities. The minister knows that the Commonwealth and Territory governments would have an enormous bill if they supplied all the social housing required to fix overcrowding issues in Aboriginal communities, but I do not think that is likely to happen. The cost has to be spread between governments, non-government agencies and the private sector. That area has become bogged down to a large extent, with issues such as leases of land and affordability, but it is something we must keep promoting.

We cannot say there is a bottomless pit of public housing to continually go to Aboriginal communities. We provide public housing in our towns and cities, but we also expect people who can afford to build or buy their own house to do so. There have been trials – I am not sure how far advanced – on places like Bathurst Island, where leases were taken through a Commonwealth lease and some people have bought their house. Whether we need to have more programs where rent is offset to buy a house, I do not know.

In my area, 11 Mile and 15 Mile, those houses are managed by Yilli Rreung, which is on Aboriginal Development Foundation Association land. That is a complication that will be difficult to solve. A number of people I have spoken to there have said they would like to own their own house. If some of this money could go towards helping reduce the amount of money they would need to buy a house, it would be a great advantage. They could then pay off their house instead of paying rent.

Although we are talking about this in relation Darwin, Alice Springs and the main centres, it would be good if we could promote this to benefit Territorians by providing housing in Aboriginal communities. The issue of leasing will always be a difficult one. It may be an issue when the Commonwealth takes a leading role, as it has in the past.

If I asked the minister how many Aboriginal people own their house on Aboriginal land, I am not sure he could tell me. I suspect it would not be a high number compared with the number of houses the government is providing based on a public housing model.

Minister, I thank you for the changes. Young families will now have the opportunity to enter into a house rather than a unit. The member for Port Darwin said that when his children grow up he may have to provide a 10% deposit of \$100 000. I live in a house in Howard Springs courtesy of my parents. Years ago people in the rural area had problems because banks regarded you as a high risk, and back then you needed 20% as a deposit. I needed some assistance and my parents gave me that, so it is not unusual. It is part of the equation when helping people buy their own homes.

The minister said in his second reading speech:

By introducing this assistance in the form of a stamp duty discount, rather than a cash grant or a full tax exemption, the government is confident that in this period of sluggish market activity, the new stamp duty discount will not place upward pressure on house prices.

There may be a couple of reasons behind why we have a sluggish market. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics states that our population has increased at the lowest rate in Australia. I think the total number of people was 800. You would think we would have a sluggish market if we only have 800 more people across the whole Territory because we do not have an expanding population to stimulate housing activity. It is hard to say.

The other side of it is whether the government has reached a point where it has released too much land. This was an argument where the Labor Party landed in a bit of hot water. In mid-2007 there was a section of the Department of Housing whose job was to look at future growth of the Darwin and Palmerston areas. I understand that part of the department was scrapped because it thought everything was going smoothly and, by the time it was scrapped, all of a sudden there was a hole in the market. When they tried to catch up with that it was too late. I agree; prices went skyrocketing because there was a shortage of land.

On the other hand, there is now a push to open up a lot of land. The market is sluggish, so perhaps it is time to reconsider – this is from the government's point of view; the private industry can do what it likes – if it is time to slow down land release or reappraise the timetable for development.

Once again, I thank the minister for bringing this to parliament. I think it will help young people who want to buy an established house. I call it a second-hand house because that is what you would call a car that is a few years old. That does

not mean it will not do the job though. The government has money for people to spend on doing up faults in those houses, which might also encourage people to think about buying one of those houses.

We will see what happens and if the market picks up because of these changes.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I thank each member for supporting this bill. It is fantastic to hear speaker after speaker stand-up in support of the government's bill. It shows why we needed this extra time in parliament. This was part of the budget and everybody in the House knew that, but they also knew we would require extra time to pass what every member in this House agrees is a very important bill.

I have a question for the members of the House, for my mate from the *NT News* and for the Opposition Leader, who said in his contribution that he does not want to be here today; he wants to be on a bike ride between Katherine and Darwin. It is for a very good cause, and good on him, but he does not want to be here. He said the only reason we are here is because we forced this extra sitting day on, but it is for bills he wants to support. Make up your mind; do you want to be here or not? Do you want to pass this legislation? I take it you do because everyone has stood up and welcomed it. If you want to pass the legislation then you have to be here.

The other option would have been for the opposition to support the government's effort to increase the sitting time last week and allow these bills to be part of that. That would have been sensible, but the opposition wanted to play politics and voted that down. As a consequence, we are here today on an extra sitting day.

I was struck by the bizarre media reporting in today's *NT News*. They put it all down to one person, the member for Greatorex, who they say disappeared for lunch 15 minutes before the vote was taken. I heard another bizarre interview on the radio this morning with the member for Goyder saying, 'This is all a shambles. This shows the chaotic nature of government that we have this extra sitting day – \$18 000 – and it is all because of the member for Greatorex, who failed to turn up for the vote.'

Does anyone in the House seriously think there are not 12 other people who voted against this and wanted to hold this extra day? It seems to me that the chief political correspondent of the *NT News*, the Speaker, the Opposition Leader and at least a dozen members on the other side of this Chamber, are choosing to ignore the fact they all had the ability to support the motion put forward in parliament which could have extended the sittings

last week to accommodate these bills. There would have been no need for an extra sitting day had the opposition and the Independents supported the government motion.

Lo and behold, today the first speaker off the mark was the Leader of the Opposition, who said he does not want to be here and would much rather do the bike ride from Katherine to Darwin. Good on him. It is apparently only because of the chaos and incompetence of the current government that we have this sitting day today, albeit to discuss legislation that he, the opposition and all the Independents want to support. Is there an element of hypocrisy here? We hear the opposition and Independents say they do not want to be here, but, first bill off the rank, they say they want to support it, and they say, 'Good on the government for bringing it in'.

Mr Wood: I am not on a bike ride.

Mr TOLLNER: No, you are not on a bike ride, member for Nelson; you are on some other flight of fancy. God knows where it will end. You are in a world of your own. I will get to you later on today because you are seriously out there with the fairies, mate. I just listened to your contribution in which you said there has been a slowdown in the market and the market is sluggish, but you support the bill because it helps people enter the market, where you say property prices are falling. Member for Nelson, your words make no sense whatsoever. You are completely on your own in so many different ways.

It was interesting to hear the Opposition Leader talk about opposing the tradies voucher, or Home Improvement Scheme, with \$2000 to home owner-occupiers to improve their houses and support Territory tradies. Why in the world the Opposition Leader has picked that policy to take aim at is beyond me. He knows this is a welcome development for Territory tradies who are seeing work from it. It will keep them working until we see some of the big infrastructure projects hit the deck in 12 to 18 months' time. That includes Defence spending; the work on the northern gas pipeline; additional deployment of US Marines; further Defence build-up in the Territory; and Asia's great focus on Australia, using the Territory as its trade hub.

We will see a lot of investment in 12 to 18 months' time. It is important that we continue to support our tradesmen in the Territory until that work comes on-stream.

The Opposition Leader is opposed to that. Instead he wants to increase concessions for first home buyers, putting the NT back in the same situation as prior to when the CLP formed government, where we saw the worst housing

crisis in the history of the Northern Territory. People were leaving the Territory in droves. People everywhere were complaining about the cost of rent. Living here was simply unaffordable.

When we came into government, the biggest issue for Territorians was the cost of living. The price of housing, accommodation, fuel and groceries were all through the roof under the former Labor government. Now we are in the fourth year of the CLP's first term of government and we have the lowest cost of living in the country, the lowest fuel prices, house prices have eased off, food prices are coming down and there is more work in the Territory. We have nearly the lowest unemployment rate in the country and the lowest cost of living, yet the opposition wants to return to the bad old days where we had a housing crisis.

I am glad all members in the House support this bill. I am glad all the members have put on record their desire to see this legislation pass, because it is, as those opposite say, important legislation that we should be dealing with. Shame on those people who say we are only here because of one member of parliament; we are not. We are here, as I am constantly reminded by the member for Port Darwin, for the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory. That is what this bill is about. I commend it to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer) (by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 177)

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, as shadow Police minister, I meet regularly with the NT Police Association. At the top of the agenda at those meetings are the concerns about police welfare, working conditions and the safety and security of police. It is to the NT Police Association's credit that it is always worried about those issues.

The bill introduced by the CLP touches upon one of those issues raised by the Police Association. The first time the Police Association raised this issue with me was just under four years ago. At that meeting it said the CLP was working on a bill to address this issue, and I said I was looking forward to seeing it come forward and the result of those consultations.

Just under four years ago the CLP said it would work on this bill and bring it to the House. Over those four years the Police Association has regularly asked at police conferences, AGMs and meetings about what is happening with this bill. In recent days we have heard from third-party stakeholders and people who are interested in this bill and the issues it raises about the complete lack of consultation by the CLP with the broader community on the issues raised in this bill.

This bill very much represents an example of what has gone wrong with the CLP government during this term. This bill represents a failure to communicate and consult, a failure of leadership to bring people together on a common issue and a failure to do the work of government.

We have had to go beyond the parliamentary term and hold an extra sitting day for this bill to be considered, despite the fact the CLP was working on this legislation four years ago. This bill is a metaphor for the performance of these government members. They had four years to do it right, bring people together and discuss the best ways to implement the intent of this bill. They failed to do that over the last four years; they simply did not do the work of government. Instead they mistimed this bill. They are now attempting to bring it through today, on the back of zero consultation with the broader community and without sorting out any of the community's concerns.

That is an issue; it is not how governments should operate. The Police Association has raised a genuine issue on behalf of officers. As a government you should try to remedy that issue, but you should do it in consultation and through working with the broader community. It is essentially dividing the community on political grounds, through incompetence more than anything. It speaks to the crash-through politics that has exemplified the Adam Giles CLP government, which is why Territorians are fed up with this government.

We in Labor understand that governing is not easy. We spent 11 years in office trying to bring people together to achieve important social and legislative outcomes. We made mistakes along the way. I can guarantee you that the biggest mistakes we made were when we did not consult, prepare or plan, but that is the standard operating procedure for this current government. That is why this current government is in the trouble it is in.

Having been part of a government since 2001, I know much about the work involved in government. I know the grind; I understand the back and forth of discussion. There is work you have to do when you are in government. You

have to take on the difficult issues and work with people to bring them forward to a conclusion. I understand that the government's legislative agenda has to be planned over time.

I understand that to govern properly a government needs some forward thinking, a view on the outcomes it wants to achieve as a government over time. You have to do the work of government. What is missing from the other side is the desire to do the work of government – bringing bills forward without any consultation and ramming them through. For most of this year we have arrived at the House to find minimal legislation and a daily work program that finishes in the early evening.

They had four years to consult on this bill and they simply chose to not do the work. There was plenty of time to discuss the legislation and do it right. This government has not done the necessary work to properly prepare this legislation. We are only here today because of the failure of this government to jam this legislation through in May, all because one of its members failed to show up to the vote. Despite the Treasurer's protestations, the CLP in government lost control of the floor of parliament and its agenda. It sums up the chaos and incompetence of this CLP government.

It is another example of why Territorians are fed up with a government that cannot control its agenda and cannot do the work of government. There are very serious public policy issues under discussion in this bill. It is crying out for a serious and level-headed public discussion, which has been missing.

The purpose of this bill is to provide new powers that will allow the taking of a blood sample from a person if that person has assaulted a police officer or, in the course of arrest or detention, is suspected to have transferred a substance to an officer. The new powers also provide for the analysis of the blood sample to determine whether the person has an infectious disease and enable authorised persons to disclose those analysed results.

General defences and burden of proof are provided for; a series of definitions is inserted, including for a protected person; an application for a test must be made in writing; the application must be considered and approved by a senior officer; the transferor must be informed of the process under way by the commissioner, including the possible effect; powers are provided to obtain the test from a location where a transferor may be and to conduct the test in a suitable facility; there is a penalty of 100 points if a transferor fails to comply; the process of application is outlined for making an application for a protected person to a

court and processes surrounding protected persons; processes for taking the test are outlined; the disclosure of results is outlined, including for protected persons; there are provisions to prevent discrimination, such as results that are not recorded on PROMIS; and it is an offence to publish confidential information.

Our discussions with police have indicated to us the concerns they have as frontline workers with the conditions under which they work. When I meet with police they tell me the concerns they have about biting, spitting, etcetera. During estimates it was confirmed that there were 270 cases of police officers being assaulted in the last year. I think that is the tip of the iceberg because police deal with a lot in their ordinary working environment. For police, this legislation represents recognition of the issues they face, with the necessary safeguard of requiring a senior officer to make the decision.

For others, this legislation raises concerns of sexual and racial profiling and concerns regarding what is seen as a lack of appropriate safeguards. There are the genuine concerns from police and people raising concerns they feel emerge from the bill. I have received letters and e-mails from AMSANT, the LGBTQI community, the Scarlet Alliance and the Public Health Association, and representation from individuals. To sum up their concerns, they are saying:

1. this legislation is based on fear rather than information.
2. the amendment will encourage compulsory testing without appropriate safeguards.
3. the risk of infection from spitting and biting is so low as to not justify the compulsory testing.
4. the senior police officer making the decision is not medically qualified to assess risk.
5. there will still need to be a follow-up test in three months anyhow, so no stress has been lifted from the shoulders of police who are attacked.
6. it profiles people in the Indigenous and the LGBTQI communities.
7. it goes against the normal doctor/nurse/client relationship, which is focused on consent rather than compulsion.

These members of the Territory community are stating points that are very important to them. There is no question that this should have been taken into consideration when this legislation was discussed. We have the very genuine concerns

which have come forward from the Police Association regarding its workplace.

People, in response to this bill being introduced into parliament, are now saying, 'Here are some of our concerns', but no work was done prior to this bill being introduced to work it through with the police and the community. It would have made sense for the Attorney-General or the Police minister to bring together the police, the police union and the people who have expressed concerns to see what consensus could be achieved. That is the work of government. It has been missed in bringing this bill before the House. The CLP has not done the work and, therefore, where we could have had useful legislation passed by consensus, we have conflicting legislation jammed through in a political climate.

Labor has considered the issues. This bill before us now is based on those genuine police concerns but raises those other community concerns. We have discussed it as a shadow Cabinet. I have discussed it with the Police Association and have listened to the concerns that have been raised. For us, the Labor Party, a party of workers' rights, we have decided to support this legislation as it concerns the rights of Territory workers.

The Labor Party supports the rights of workers, and working our way through this legislation has been our dominant consideration. We are concerned about the deteriorating working environment for our police. It is something I raised during the estimates discussion about the single-staffed patrols, temporary beat locations and bush stations. We are concerned about the safety of our police. It is a concern I will pursue going forward, with the commissioner, either from opposition or from government. We need to protect people better than we do currently.

This is not the process we would pursue when bringing forward important legislation to this House. We will be monitoring the implementation of this legislation, whether it is from opposition or government. I guarantee we will not pursue this method of bringing forward important bills to the House as the CLP has done, despite having had a clear four-year agenda to work on this.

It was raised with me as a shadow Police minister at my very first meeting with the Police Association just under four years ago. The government had this on the agenda for just under four years, yet did not do the work of consulting. It goes to the heart of what is wrong with this government and how it handles the issues it needs to deal with. It does not want to talk to or trust the broader community and, as a result, the broader community does not trust government.

We will support what I consider to be legislation that has been brought forward in a flawed manner. I guarantee this is not how we will operate. We will monitor the implementation of this legislation either from opposition or government; we make no assumption about the result of the Territory election in August.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, goodness gracious me. Four years ago the Leader of the Opposition knew about this and did not write a single letter to anybody or raise the issue in this House once. Miraculously, after four years he asks, 'Why didn't you do this?'

If this is the quality of leadership we are being offered by the members opposite on an issue as important as this, can you imagine what this man would look like as a Chief Minister? How many reviews have been announced by the Labor Party going forward, 30 or 40? Every time there is an issue that is too difficult to deal with there will be another 15-minute-long speech saying, 'We have agonised over this and worried about that, and finally we have come to this decision'.

You had four years to think about it. Nothing prevented the Leader of the Opposition, if he thought this issue was so important or urgent, from taking the matter forward and bringing it before the House as a private member's bill.

If the failure is government's then the failure is also his. He has known about it as long as we have, according to him. Talk about political opportunism. Throw a few hand grenades around the room and shoot through. That is the quality of governance that this Leader of the Opposition is offering as the alternative Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

Let me tell you about the intent of this bill. It intends to give comfort to police officers who are expectorated or bled on as a result of doing their duties, which happens, unfortunately, all too often. I do not subscribe even momentarily to the notion articulated by the Leader of the Opposition that this profiles the LGBTQI community.

I have never spat on a police officer. I have never been arrested by a police officer and charged with an offence. I have never had cause to be taken to a hospital to have blood taken because of conducting that behaviour. If a person does not spit on a police officer or does not resist arrest so violently that they bleed on a police officer, they will not be subject to this legislation.

Yet a police officer has to wait for three to six months for any invading infection to find its way into their bloodstream. They do not know if they can go home to their wife, or husband, and kids

and what they can do in relation to their spouse. We cannot hear a clear message from the Leader of the Opposition on something as straightforward as this. Surely it defies logic that you pander the argument of profiling when nothing in this legislation profiles anybody. What it does say is that whether you are straight, homosexual or black, we do not care. It is about a person who expectorates on a police officer in the course of their duty.

If a police officer is expectorated on, especially if they ingested it, and they want to know if the person who spat on them has an infectious disease – this is not only in reference to HIV; there are far more communicable diseases like hepatitis – surely that police officer has the right to know what diseases the person who spat on them has. That is what this debate is about.

To come into the House and say, 'You have done nothing for four years', when you have done nothing yourself for four years makes you a hypocrite. That much I can understand, but to assert that you want to think about this and its consequences, negotiate and talk to people, and water down the bill so less people are insulted – I cannot think why, in the world of common sense, you want to water down legislation of this nature. 'Oh, we need to build more protections in for the person who spat on the police officer'. No, we do not.

If you do not want to be subject to the legislation that is before this House then do not spit on police officers. Do not resist arrest in such a way that you end up bleeding all over a police officer. Here is an idea: be a law-abiding citizen so you are not arrested in the first place. That is the expectation we should have of people as a community. We make excuses for everybody these days and nobody is responsible.

I feel responsible for the police on the streets of the Northern Territory. Every protection I can bring, within the domain of reality and common sense, is a protection I will afford to the hard-working men and women who protect us in our homes and on the streets every day. If that means some person who has spat on them has to undergo a test so we can find out what diseases they have, so be it. Bring it on. I do not need to go for a watering-down session with critics of the policy.

I understand the other side of the argument that it is all about privacy concerns. If you want your privacy protected, do not spit on police officers. It is not rocket science. It is perfectly sensible that a person who engages in that behaviour will be subjected to a blood test. It is so we can find out what diseases they have and the police officer can at least have the comfort of knowing the person

did not have Hepatitis C at the time of committing the offence, rather than having to wait for the incubation period to be completed to see if they have developed Hepatitis C or not.

The mealy-mouthed, double-each-way bet we just heard from the member opposite suggests to me that there are real schisms in his party about this. There is no shortage of people on his side of politics who will champion the causes of people we make excuses for. I believe in freedom. People should be able to live their lives as they see fit in a free society. I will defend that right every day of the week, but when you use that right to intrude on the rights of a third party, there are boundaries to exercising those rights.

As far as I am concerned, the ambivalence and uncertainty I just heard from the alternative Chief Minister of the Northern Territory makes me certain that, should they win the next Territory election, a government he leads will be an ambivalent, uncertain government which constantly errs on the side of caution and will be petrified, literally, into making no decisions whatsoever. If they cannot make a decision on this without being angst-ridden, what can they make a decision on?

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I was a bit disappointed that the bills were shifted around this morning. I prepared for the bills in the order that was given to us at 7.30 am. I was also disappointed in Labor's position, not necessarily because of what was said, but it seemed to me that Labor commented on the way this bill was put together and said that if it were in government it would not do things this way. If Labor members were unhappy with the way it is now, I would have thought they would reject this bill.

I have had a number of briefings, in and out of estimates. Thankfully we have an extra day because this is a very serious bill, where a step back from the rhetoric the member for Port Darwin talked about, and from the opposition's lack of direction, is necessary. It is my job to see if this is a good bill, whether it is workable and looks after the people it is meant to.

I become cranky, but not often, when there is a presumption that if I speak on this bill and have concerns then I am not supporting the police. That could not be further from the truth. I live in the rural area and have excellent support from the police in Palmerston and Humpty Doo. I know they do a fantastic job.

If you have to do a job at night in the rural area it is not always pleasant. It can be dangerous; the rural area is generally dark and rural blocks can be hidden from view. Police have to investigate domestic violence, drug offences, seizures and all

types of things. It is a difficult job and they are subject to assault not only from spitting and knives, but also being bashed up, which affects them psychologically.

When you discuss a bill like this, it is sad to be told that if you have concerns about the legislation you must be on the other side and are not supporting police. That is a sad situation in this House because we, as parliamentarians, should be able to raise and discuss issues in a mature way so people understand there are other sides to the argument.

I need to put this into context. I have met with the police over this bill, and I thank them for that briefing. It was excellent. I support the ability of police to find out if a person may have been infected, and they should be able to go through a process to find out. I am concerned that there has not been enough work regarding the other people involved in this debate, being those in the hospital and medical fraternity. I contacted some people at the nursing federation and asked if they had heard about this bill. Their response was, 'Thank you for your e-mail. No, the ANMF' – the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Foundation – 'has not been approached by the government re the amendments to the Police Administration Amendment Bill; they do not consult with us. We were not aware of the changes and we have not been approached by any members.'

This is part of what I would do for most bills. I spoke to the police. I wrote to Dr Robert Parker, the President of the Australian Medical Association NT, and asked him. I received a letter back from the executive officer saying, 'I can confirm I have liaised with Dr Parker and he can advise that we hold similar concerns to that of the ANMF. The AMANT was not consulted in respect to the health procedures contained in the legislation.'

I know that AMSANT also opposes it, as do other groups. They have written letters to me and some have seen me individually. The national health professionals' association opposes the bill. I may not agree with every bit of reasoning behind opposition to the bill, but I am concerned that we have not looked at this bill holistically. The reason I say that is because I looked at a document titled 'Mandatory testing of a suspected transferor for an infectious disease', by the Department of Health in the government of Western Australia.

Western Australia has legislation in relation to being able to take blood from a person, but it has a series of protocols for people within the Department of Health. I will read some of the issues it raises. The background to this document is:

This document is intended to provide Health Care Workers (HCWs), employed by WA Health, with guidelines for the management of disease test authorisations presented by WA Police under the Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act 2014 ...

Which is similar to what we have before us; there are sections of the WA act which have been plonked straight into this bill. I have seen it, word for word. Other sections have been put in from our own Parliamentary Counsel:

HCWs may be presented with a disease test authorisation or disease test order, requesting a blood sample to be taken from a person who is, or is suspected of carrying an infectious disease. This Operational Directive (OD) outlines standard procedures for both metropolitan and regional locations, with reference to existing ODs that detail management procedures that should also be followed.

I have looked everywhere on the website to see whether our Health department in the Northern Territory has similar protocols and I cannot find anything. I e-mailed – admittedly it was on Saturday as I have been working as best as I can on the weekend – to see what the Department of Health’s opinion is on this bill. One of the e-mails I received said it generally supports it, but I have not seen anything to back that up. I emailed Len Notaras, the CEO, and he has been overseas.

None of my inspections of the website enabled me to find anything similar to this document. I will go to section seven of this protocol, under the heading ‘Transmission risk of an infectious disease’ it says:

A risk assessment for a likely exposure to an infectious disease will be carried out by WA Police as part of the process for approving a disease test authorisation.

If the police see this document they will note that under appendix two there is a diagram of what should happen in cases where you have an authorisation. Under 7.2 it says:

As a quality assurance measure, a risk assessment should also be conducted by the attending doctor presented with a disease test authorisation. Conducting a risk assessment will also provide an opportunity to discuss whether testing is necessary with WA Police, in the case where a disease test authorisation has been presented for an incident where an exposure to an infectious disease is unlikely. The risk assessment should be conducted in line with guidance outlined in

the WA Health OD on the Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids in the Health Care Setting ...

Again, I could not find any document similar to that in the Northern Territory. It may be buried somewhere in the Health department’s website, but I could not find anything:

This assessment of a potential exposure should define the following:

- (a) the nature and extent of the injury/exposure*
- (b) the nature of the object causing the exposure*
- (c) the volume of blood or bodily fluid that the police officer was exposed to*
- (d) the vaccination and immune status of the police officer*
- (e) if known, the blood-borne virus status of the suspected transferor (expressed as the ‘source’ in existing ODs)*
- (f) the likelihood of a suspected transferor being HBV, HCV, or HIV positive. In conducting the risk assessment, the attending doctor should consult with:*
 - (i) the RPH sexual health nurse ...*
 - (ii) the Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH) on-call hospital sexual health physician or infectious disease physician ...*
 - (iii) or the regional public health physician.*

Management of a likely transmission of an infectious disease, determined by the risk assessment, should be in line with guidelines prescribed in ODs:

- (a) Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids in the Healthcare Setting*
- (b) Protocol for Non-Occupational Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (NPEP) To Prevent HIV in Western Australia.*

It goes on:

The attending doctor should discuss the findings of the risk assessment with the suspected transferor and requesting police officer separately.

In the case where the course of action from the evaluation and risk assessment conducted by WA Police differs from the course of action recommended by the attending doctor, the process conducted by the attending doctor, including transmission risk, should be discussed with WA Police

In the case where WA Police do not accept the recommendation for action resulting from the risk assessment conducted by the attending doctor, WA Police may request to override the attending doctor's recommendation. The Act authorises WA Police to present with a disease test authorisation, and the courts to provide WA Police with a disease test order.

You can see the protocols which I think are missing in our move in this direction. It is clear from this document that there is a set of protocols which would put in place some safeguards for the police to determine if it is necessary to find out whether they were at risk, and for a doctor to assess the transferor. If there is a difference of opinion between the Western Australian police officer and the doctor, there is the ability for the court to make a decision. There were some other important points in this document. It references another part of the act:

... the taking of a blood sample under a disease test authorisation:

- (a) *states that 'the doctor, nurse or qualified person may take a blood sample from the suspected transferor in accordance with the disease test authorisation. If help is needed for taking a blood sample, the doctor nurse or qualified person may ask another person to give any reasonably necessary help. The doctor, nurse or qualified person, and a person helping the doctor, nurse or qualified person may use any reasonably necessary force for taking the blood sample'.*

It also says:

- (b) *the Act does not specifically state that a doctor, nurse, or qualified person 'must use necessary force' for taking a blood sample.*

It is a clear and precise document which hospital workers can read to know the correct protocol if a person comes in to RDH. They know what the rules are in relation to the taking of blood.

We not only have people in the metropolitan area, we also have people in remote health clinics. Do they have a protocol if a police officer asks them

to take blood from a person? The person might still be drunk; they might be on a drug, a high. The remote health worker being asked might be concerned about their rights and whether they are qualified to do it.

Whilst I accept that the police need this legislation, it is missing things. There is a reference to asking for consent in the WA protocol, which is not in the bill. Before forcing someone to go to hospital, why not ask whether they mind if their blood is taken? There is no clause in the bill which says, 'Are you happy to give blood?' If a person says yes then the rest of this legislation is irrelevant, but that clause is not there. Instead it is that if you are in custody you will give blood. It would be worth having a clause discussing consent. It was also raised in another document I read that there should be something in the legislation which says the police are to ask the potential transferor whether they are willing to give blood. It is only a small matter to include and it seems strange that it is missing.

Another issue I noted relates to references in this legislation to the court. There are two disease test authorisations; one is for an adult offender and one for protected persons. Those protected persons are generally people who have a guardian, are under the age of 18 or, believe it or not, are dead. Adults are required to give blood, but the protected people have the right to go to a court. Reading the WA protocol and then reading this bill, there is one avenue we could include in our legislation. If a person appeals they could appeal to a judge to make a decision.

We need to remember that when this happens the person might not be capable of understanding what the heck is happening, so they might need time to detox – that might not be the right word – sober up or come down from a high.

You cannot do something about the incident just because you have tested someone. I believe there is a series of protocols for police officers in cases like this, and they would know what to do if they are subjected to spitting or they think their blood has been infected.

I think with this process you would not expect approvals in five minutes. You would have to look at each situation on its merit. It may rarely happen, but what would happen if an officer was accidentally cut or spat on? I am not being rude, but Aboriginal people spit. I have relatives – I know it can be second nature. You might say they should not do it, and it is probably an offence under a spitting law, but if they have not committed an offence does this legislation cover the ability of a police officer to then ask them for a blood sample? It does not say anything about that in here.

After listening to the member for Port Darwin, an ex-police officer, I understand his knowledge about working in the police force. You only have to see what is on TV and radio to know it is a dangerous job. As a member of parliament my job is to look at the legislation.

I have spoken to Paul McCue from the Police Association three times; I had a meeting with him and some of his executives last Friday morning. I know they support this, but the funny thing is they said to me, 'We were asked to comment on this bill earlier in the year, but we never saw the final draft'. I wonder why they would send you something to comment on and then you comment, but you do not see the final draft.

They are supportive of what is happening. I rang Paul McCue today and spoke to him about it. I understand it is the union that represents police officers and I know police officers want this legislation. All I am saying to police officers is this legislation is more than just you as police officers; it involves other people, qualified people, doctors, health workers and nurses. This legislation needs to be backed up with protocols, and those protocols should be up now.

We need to ensure there are protocols for people who work in the health area who will be on the front line when asked to do this. They need to be clear on their rights and what elements of force they can apply. There might be good reason, as outlined in the Western Australian legislation, as to why a doctor should first assess the patient – a senior person in the hospital who will assess the police officer, the matters surrounding the incident and then is also part of the decision-making process before blood is taken.

This legislation is not bad *per se*; it is what goes around this legislation that is lacking. I will not support this bill. It is not because I do not think police officers should have the right to find out if they could be infected or not, but we have not finished the process; it is half completed. It would not be right of me to say this is a great bill when the people on the other half of this equation have not been part of this discussion. As I said, the nurses and the AMA said they had not been part of it. I would have liked to have heard their views, but those views have not come to me. If they come back and say, 'We are satisfied the protocols are okay', and the Australian Medical Association says, 'Our doctors are happy with what is in the legislation', then I would say fair enough. I am not the expert, so that is why I ask people who are experts in their fields. The information I have from those people is, 'We have not been consulted'.

Madam Speaker, there is a big gap that has not been filled. Until we can see that it is filled, this

legislation should not be passed. It seems to me that the people in the community who have spoken to me – the lesbian groups, AMSANT, the Aboriginal health worker groups, the AMA, and all those other groups – should have their chance, along with the police, to look at this more broadly. We need to see whether we have a piece of legislation that will do the job it is meant to do, but at the same time protect others, especially in the medical profession, who will have to respond to the clauses in this bill.

Mr STYLES (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, police officers face a range of issues on a day-to-day basis. These encounters have a very real likelihood of occupational violence while carrying out their duties, such as being spat at or bitten, or having faeces, blood, urine and a whole lot of other things thrown at them. This is not only a filthy and disgusting act, but the distress and uncertainty police officers face following biohazard incidents can last for periods of up to six months during incubation periods until they are advised they have not contracted a disease.

This not only affects the police officer, it affects their family, partner, husband or wife and the people around them, particularly impacting on intimate relationships with wives, husbands, partners, etcetera. I ask the Opposition Leader and the member for Nelson to consider some of the following points.

The legislation is aimed at being able to identify if there has been any transfer of communicable diseases. Standard testing of blood will be for chronic, untreatable diseases, such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C. The legislation will also be flexible enough to allow testing of other infectious diseases; however, this will be prescribed through regulations. An example was highlighted in South Australia recently where a worker's compensation claim was submitted by a police officer who contracted oral herpes in the line of duty after she was spat at and it landed in her mouth.

The decision to proceed with this policy intent is a political decision. Western Australia and South Australia have both introduced similar policies with the same issues raised by relevant stakeholders.

I want to address some of the member for Nelson's concerns. The commissioner advises that a risk assessment will be included during the consideration of a disease test authorisation. This will form part of the Northern Territory Police internal procedure. A senior member will contact the Department of Health's on-call physician to determine the level of risk of potential disease transfer. This will assist the senior member in making a decision. A section will be included on the application for the advice provided by the on-call physician so a decision can be made by the

senior member prior to approving, or not approving, the application.

There is an argument that the level of risk of an officer contracting an infectious disease is low. For a frontline police officer the continued risk of exposure is great, particularly since the police have a positive obligation to protect people and the community by attending, responding to and dealing with incidents, especially since they may engage the use of force on a regular basis. Most occupations are not obliged to provide a service if a client or customer refuses it. For example, a doctor does not have to provide a health service if a patient does not want to be seen or refuses to be treated; whereas, a police officer has a duty to keep people and the community safe, regardless of whether they are asked to intervene or not.

Being a former police officer, I have been in the situation we are describing. I will give an example to help the member for Nelson understand. It was in the late 1980s, in the city, and we were called to a violent disturbance on the street. When we arrived there was a guy fighting another man, and there was a lady there, who was the guy's partner. He was punching the other man and punching his wife. A few other had people joined in on the side. We were sent there because people were being injured. I was one of the two police officers who attended.

The subject of this story was covered in blood and his mouth was bleeding. He was punching the other man; the other man was punching him. When we arrived we tried to stop it, then he started to punch me instead. The other man started to punch the other police officer. Then the man's partner started crawling over my back and was trying to scratch my eyes out. It was a pretty violent situation, but someone had to go in there and fix it. In the process of all of this, he took a great chunk out of my arm. I still have the scar on my left arm from where he bit into it.

He was bleeding like a stuck pig and there he was, biting into me and transferring blood to me. At the end of all this I had a great hole in my arm and was saying to myself that this was not a very good situation. This was in the late 1980s when there was Hepatitis B and C, and HIV. We had been told about the transfer of bodily fluids and blood on TV.

I ask the member for Nelson, and others opposite, how do you think I felt when I went home? I did not know if I had contracted something from this guy. I had no idea about his history, what he had done, where he had been or what he had been up to. He was arrested and taken into custody, then I had to have the wound looked at. As a result, I was sitting there wondering what I would do. I spoke to my superiors and we looked at the

legislation. It was not the first time this type of incident had happened.

I think the first time in the Territory was when Magistrate Hook went through the legislation with us that night and gave an order that blood was to be taken for the purpose of analysis for infection. I do not know if there was debate afterwards as to whether the magistrate did the right thing or not, but that is not what I am here to discuss today.

I had to go home and say to my wife, 'I don't know where I'm situated'. My kids were very little at that stage, so I did not have a conversation with them about it apart from explaining where all the bruises, lumps and bumps all over me had come from.

This is something police officers face day-in and day-out. When everyone else is going down south, the police officers have to go north; we are sent here to keep the peace and protect life and property. That is one of the paramount things police officers do. They cannot say, 'We are not going in there either', because someone has to go in there and fix it. This legislation is about making sure we protect the police officers.

I concur with my colleague, the member for Port Darwin, who said if people do not want this legislation imposed upon them, they should simply do what 99.9% of the rest of us do and follow the laws of our community. It is not hard. This is something our parents taught us. Rules are made to keep us safe. When you conduct yourself in the community, you should do so in a peaceful manner. There are people out there who do not care about you, me, your mother, cat, dog or anything else. They do not care and they will do anything to prevent the police doing their job and keeping the peace in our community.

I had the blood test and, fortunately for me, after days or weeks, I cannot remember, I was informed that this person did not have any communicable diseases that they knew of. I was able to go back to my wife and say, 'I have a clearance so we are okay'. How do you conduct an intimate relationship with your wife in the next six months if you do not have this legislation? It is one of the most important things, having a healthy relationship with your wife. How do you kiss your kids?

Some people may say there is a low risk, but there is a risk, low, medium or high. If you are a police officer who has been subjected to some of the things we have been talking about and you want zero risk to your partner, husband or wife, then you have to say, 'I cannot touch you', until there is a time when somebody says you are clear. If that is six months, I do not think that is good enough.

The people who are looking after us, ensuring we are as safe as possible in our homes at night, should not be subject to that. If people want to break the law and bite, spit or throw faeces at police officers then that is their decision. The police officers are trying to protect the whole community. If someone wants to tell me that offenders can stand-up and say, 'It is not fair that you take my blood because I spat all over and punched and kicked police officers', then that is a point of difference.

I have spoken to police officers about this and they are all saying, 'Yes, about time. Thank you very much.' Their families are impacted by this as well, in a major way. Imagine if you became infected with a communicable disease; what happens then? It could wreck your family life. This is a very serious issue.

To the people who say, 'I will go out on Friday night, and if I want to punch and spit at police officers I will do that if I chose, but you can't take any blood from me', I have a simple message for them: sorry, but I am not on your side. I am on the side of the people who keep us safe in our community and the families of those people who send their partners, wives and husbands out every day to make sure we can be as safe as possible in our community.

The police have done a great job. Look at some of the other issues coming up today. Crime is down. They are doing a fantastic job. Crime is down right across the Territory. With Operation Trident in the northern suburbs, where my electorate is, crime is at the lowest level we can remember. It is a fantastic result. These people go out every day and put themselves on the line. As a community we should be standing not behind them but next to them, saying, 'We support you 100%'.

The member for Nelson mentioned that if you do not support this you are supposedly against the police. I agree with you. You have the ability to not support this. I do not for a moment believe you are against police officers doing things. It is about a process. I hope you have spoken to some individual police officers about this; I have spoken to people who have been around a long time. I have spoken to a few new police officers who are ex-students of mine. I asked what they think about this, their family situation and some of the things I have spoken about, and they are 100% behind what we are doing.

Regarding what you said about if a person is still drunk, generally in those situations you ask people. I have done that for a blood test for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. When you have to take a blood test you say, 'Mate, do you want to do this?' If he says, 'No, I

do not want to do it', we say, 'We have to do it, so how do you want to do it?' If a person is high on ice or something and a blood test needs to be taken because of a driving offence, you will not have a massive fight in a clinic or hospital or wherever. Common sense prevails in what I believe is 99.99% of the time in these instances. The procedures that the commissioner said will be put in will be followed.

Madam Speaker, there is a lot more I could say on this, but I think others have things to say. As a former police officer who has been through this, I will stand next to any police officer, and I say to all the police officers out there, we are here to support you with this legislation.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Members' Guide to 2016 General Election

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have placed on each of your Chamber desks a letter containing the members' guide to the 2016 general election. This document is prepared by the Clerk and the Office of the Assembly, providing information and advice on administrative matters relating to salaries, vehicles, offices and staff in the lead up to and as a consequence of the Northern Territory general election on 27 August this year. Where a department is aware of a member's proposed retirement, those members will be approached by the department individually to assist their transition to retirement well in advance of 27 August.

RESPONSE TO PETITION Petition No 63 – Ban Unconventional Onshore Gas Mining in NT

The CLERK: Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 123 I inform honourable members that a response to Petition No 63, presented on 26 May 2016, has been received and circulated to honourable members. The text of the response will be included in the *Hansard* record and placed on the Legislative Assembly website, and a copy of the response has been provided to the member who tabled the petition for distribution to the petitioners.

*Petition No 63
Ban Unconventional Onshore Gas Mining
in NT
Date presented: 26 May 2016
Presented by: Ms Purick
Referred to: Minister for Mines and Energy
Date response due: 16 May 2016
Date response received: 24 June 2016
Date response presented: 27 June 2016*

The NT government understands there are community concerns about the emerging oil and gas industry in the NT and is committed to working with Territorians to develop a best-practice petroleum regulatory model in line with community expectations.

In March 2014, the Hon Adam Giles MLA, Chief Minister of the NT, appointed Dr Allan Hawke AC as the Commissioner of the Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry under the Northern Territory of Australia Inquiries Act. This Inquiry was called in response to community concerns about hydraulic fracturing.

Dr Hawke's report into hydraulic fracturing was tabled in parliament 26 February 2015, and the NT government accepted all six recommendations.

Dr Hawke's investigations reviewed the best scientific reports and evidence available and did consider such concerns as raised in the petition before reaching his conclusions.

The key finding of the Hawke Inquiry is that the environmental risks associated with hydraulic fracturing can be managed effectively in the NT subject to the creation of a robust regulatory regime. The report is available from the inquiry website at: <http://www.hydraulicfracturinginquiry.nt.gov.au>

A comprehensive review of the NT's existing regulatory framework is underway with new Environmental Regulations to be implemented by July 2016. These new regulations were finalised after the release of the Hydraulic Fracturing Inquiry report and they encompass the relevant recommendations and findings.

The NT government also released Guiding Principles in 2015. The Guiding Principles cover land access, well design, construction and operation, water management, air and noise emissions, community and social impact, chemical and waste handling, rehabilitation and decommission and local content. The Guiding Principles set out the minimum expectations of how the oil and gas industry will conduct itself while the Territory's framework is also being reviewed. These Guiding Principles can be found online at www.onshoregas.nt.gov.au

There is a significant amount of misinformation in the public arena

regarding the practice of hydraulic fracturing and other aspects of the oil and gas industry. To counter this, the Department of Mines and Energy has undertaken extensive community consultation and public forums to provide factual information on the hydraulic fracturing process. These consultations continue and the department is engaging with the CSIRO to provide independent factual information at these meetings.

Given all the measures that have been undertaken the NT government is confident processes and practices are best practice and the Department of mines and Energy is well placed to regulate the industry.

I would like to thank the petition organisers and the members of the public who have taken the time to sign it.

TABLED PAPER **Public Accounts Committee 2015-16 Annual Report**

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I table the Public Accounts Committee 2015-16 Annual Report and associated minutes of proceedings.

This annual report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee in 2015-16. The committee has undertaken two formal inquiries, being the Inquiry into Funding of Rugby League Facilities in Darwin and the self-initiated Inquiry into Repairs and Maintenance on Town Camps.

The committee's reports on these inquiries, which contain recommendations, have been tabled in this Assembly. The committee held a number of public hearings on matters of public interest, including the Palmerston Regional Hospital, Northern Territory Correctional Industries, homelands funding, and government and ministerial travel undertaken through Latitude Travel.

The committee has maintained its interest in performance reporting and has received briefings from the Auditor-General regarding reporting service information. The committee examined a number of departmental annual reports to assess their compliance with reporting requirements and wrote to the heads of agencies to inform them of the findings and seek information absent from their reports.

The committee hosted the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees' mid-term meeting in Alice Springs, which was attended by members of

Public Accounts Committees and their secretariats from most Australian jurisdictions.

I thank the committee members who have worked productively together since my appointment in what has been a busy time for the committee. I also thank the individuals and organisations that have made submissions and provided evidence to the committee, as well as the chief executives of agencies who have continued to be responsive to the committee's requests for information during the course of our work.

MOTION

Note Paper – Public Accounts Committee 2015-16 Annual Report

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 177)

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr GILES (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their comments in relation to the amendments to the Police Administration Amendment Bill. I note that the member for Nelson will not be supporting it. I also note the wishy-washy nature of the Leader of the Opposition, trying to have a bet each way and not backing the Northern Territory Police. Let me make it clear, the Country Liberal government is backing the Northern Territory Police Force.

The purpose of the Police Administration Amendment Bill 2016 is to provide for the mandatory blood testing of a person who has, in prescribed circumstances, transferred a substance to a police officer, and to enable the analysis of that sample to determine if that person has an infectious disease.

Early detection will allow appropriate medical, physical and psychological treatment to be provided to that police officer. I will go through a few key features of the bill to provide clarity for those who do not appear to fully grasp its content. I will also provide responses to issues that have been raised, most notably by the nurses' federation and the organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex populations.

A key feature of the bill is to organise a blood sample to be taken from a person by a medical practitioner, nurse or qualified person, and the analysis of the blood sample for an infectious disease. The bill will also provide powers for

police to apprehend and detain a person to enable the determination of an application of a disease test approval, or to apprehend and detain as long as reasonably necessary to enable the taking of a blood sample and to enable the disclosure of the results of the analysed blood sample to be provided to the authorised persons.

Regarding the history of the bill and its consultation phase, the Northern Territory Police Association has long lobbied for police to be given broader powers in seeking non-consensual orders for intimate procedures on offenders who spit, bite or otherwise assault an officer in a way likely to have transferred blood or any other bodily fluid to that officer.

The NT Police Association sought reform in line with the current model that is operating in Queensland. The bill is based on the *Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act 2014* from Western Australia. That follows a jurisdictional comparison where it was considered that Western Australia had the most appropriate model, as it provides a level of transparency of the processes.

In late 2015, the following organisations were targeted in consultation relating to introducing similar powers under the *Police Administration Act* as in the *Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act 2014*. They include the Police Association, the Law Society of the Northern Territory, the NT AIDS and Hepatitis Council, the Chief Magistrate and Chief Justice, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Information Commissioner.

During that process concerns were raised by the Law Society, the NT AIDS and Hepatitis Council, the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Information Commissioner. I will go through the concerns that were raised, and I will provide a response.

One concern was about the infringement of a person's rights by the conduct of a medical procedure without consent. The response is that there is already power, under section 145 of the *Police Administration Act*, which provides for this.

Testing will only occur where there has been a transfer of a substance from a person to a police officer, following an assault of the officer by the person, or during the arrest or detention of the person. The procedure will be conducted by a medical practitioner, nurse or qualified person. Oversight is provided where approval for the procedure is given by a superintendent or above, or a Local Court judge in instances where the transferor is a protected person, who is satisfied there are grounds for such disease testing.

In relation to the disclosure of a person's private health information, analysis of the blood sample

will be conducted by a pathology laboratory. Provision of the results will only be disclosed to the transferor or affected member, their respective health practitioner or psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker and, where required, notified to the Department of Health's Centre for Disease Control. This will maintain, as much as possible, the confines of the doctor/patient relationship and ensure sensitive health information is limited to authorised persons. Information relating to a transferor's medical result will not be placed on the PROMIS system, the Police Real-time Online Management Information System.

It is acknowledged that there is potential for false positive and false negative results. The intent of this legislation is not to change how officers respond to biological exposure incidents, but to provide a means for early identification to reduce stress and anxiety for exposed officers and their families, and contribute to decisions regarding treatment and appropriate counselling.

Transfer of bodily fluids from victims, or a person an officer is providing first aid to, is a question that was raised. This power does not apply to situations which are not a result of an assault against a police officer, or during an apprehension or detention of a person. Police take all reasonable precautions against exposure to contagion, such as personal protective clothing apparatus and Hepatitis B vaccinations, which are appropriate in such situations.

There was a question about the transfer of a substance from a person to a police officer's clothing or skin that is intact. The power in this bill does not apply to those situations.

A question has been raised about the reinforcement of a common misunderstanding of the way blood-borne viruses are transmitted. The Northern Territory Police Force is working with the Department of Health to provide guidance and education, for example, appropriate material and information sessions about infectious diseases which could potentially be transferred to police officers.

There are questions about detaining those not linked to serious criminal offending. Assaulting a police officer is an indictable offence and, in its own right, a separate offence in the *Criminal Code Act*, section 189A. In some circumstances it can attract a penalty of up to 16 years' imprisonment; otherwise, if found guilty, summarily three years.

In regard to inequity in appeal mechanisms for protected and non-protected persons, a high level of oversight should be provided to persons who are youths or incapable persons who may not fully understand the overall implications of compliance.

In relation to no discretion by the decision-maker to evaluate the likely risk of infection, Northern Territory police will include a process for risk assessment to be made by an on-call physician, prior to seeking a disease test authorisation. The information provided by the physician will be noted by the senior member on the application for a disease test authorisation. It was not considered appropriate to make this process legislative; it will form part of the internal policies and procedures under this new regime.

There was a final question about detaining a person for disease testing when the person has not been and will not be charged with an offence. A person has committed an offence if they spit at or bite a police officer.

It is interesting going through some of the information which has brought us to the position of introducing this bill. I think the key question is what is the problem being solved? The problem being solved through this proposed amendment is an issue of workplace health and safety for Northern Territory Police officers. We will be supporting the welfare of NT Police officers following a biohazard incident, allowing early identification of potential transmission of an infectious disease to an officer, or provision of prophylactic medication, treatment and counselling, further reducing stress and anxiety for exposed officers, especially their partners and families, including their children. We will be allowing notification of results from a transferor, identifying a positive result to an infectious disease to obtain appropriate treatment and counselling through the health system.

It is important to look at the circumstances in a numerical point of police officers who are spat at or bitten in the line of duty. In the financial year 2013-14 there were 27 cases of officers on the front line being spat at or bitten, with a potential transfer of saliva, blood or faecal material, which has caused disturbing and distressing situations. In the financial year 2014-15 there were 35 incidents. In this current financial year, which is drawing to a close, there have been 37 incidents.

Of the incidents which occurred in 2015-16, needle and syringe, or sharps, had an occurrence of one; there has been one occurrence where an alleged offender has vomited on a police officer; there have been 19 occurrences where a police officer has been spat at or upon; there have been 15 occurrences where a police officer has been exposed to a potential transfer of blood; and there has been one instance of a police officer being bitten.

I will run through some examples which have occurred this financial year. I will only read a few, and I will not include any identification in these

examples. An offender who was placed under arrest resisted violently and in the process bit a police officer on the wrist, then, immediately after, bit the officer on the hand. The bite caused the member's skin to break and expose blood. The member attended hospital to have the wound cleaned and bloods taken. That officer, under the current regime before this bill passes, will have to wait three months to identify whether or not he has been subjected to the transfer of a communicable disease.

I am not a police officer, but I can only imagine the amount of pain and suffering an officer goes through, emotionally, physically and psychologically as an individual, and how that also impacts on their families, especially from an intimate point of view with their partner, or the play time they may have with their kids. I think this legislation is a no-brainer.

I will give more examples to prove the point. An offender was taken into protective custody and placed into the back of a police vehicle. Without warning, the offender spat through the cage directly into an officer's face with the spittle making direct contact with the officer's right eyeball, cheek and nose. The officer attended hospital to have bloods taken.

In another example, while arresting an offender the officer was bitten by the offender under their left armpit. The bite caused instant pain, bruising, swelling and a 5 cm laceration. Medical treatment was obtained at hospital and a blood test completed; a tetanus injection was also received and the wound dressed, but this officer has to wait three months as well.

Another offender had a cut lip and spat a combination of blood and saliva into an officer's face; droplets of spittle landed in the officer's eye and face.

It is horrific to hear about the circumstances in which police operate in the Northern Territory, but I find it offensive to think there may have been the transfer of a communicable disease with no current testing regime that can shorten the information cycle to be less than three months.

In another example, members attended a general disturbance and arrested a person. That person was handcuffed and placed in the rear of a police van due to their high level of aggression. While checking the welfare of the offender, the offender spat at an officer, hitting the officer in the face. When the police officer made a second arrest the offender in the van again spat at the police officer. The affected police officer placed antibacterial lotion over their face and hands as aftercare, in an attempt to clean the spit from their face. The officer's mouth was open at the time, but there

was no blood in the spit, only saliva. Those are a few examples of the circumstances police are facing on an everyday basis. This legislation is designed to fix that.

I will go through some more information briefly. These are the concerns that have been raised by the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council. There is a question about the bill perpetrating the common misunderstanding that HIV can be transmitted through contact with saliva, such as through spitting. As clearly stated in the Australian Society of HIV Medicines' guiding document entitled *Police and Blood-borne Viruses*, which I will refer to as BBV, there are only certain bodily fluids that contain HIV in sufficient concentration to be implicated in an HIV transmission. That is, blood, semen, pre-ejaculation, vaginal fluids and breast milk; saliva is not one of them.

The response to that concern is that testing of a transferor is not simply triggered because an officer has been exposed to bodily fluids during their course of duty. The legislation provides for defined circumstances where an application for testing may be authorised, such as if a person spits, throws or wipes a substance such as blood, spit or faeces on that police officer and it enters their mouth or eyes, or lands on an open wound, notwithstanding that the proposed amendments specify BBV. This is so the police force is open and transparent to the public about the standard testing that will be conducted on a blood sample. It is also consistent with the tests that are currently undertaken on a police officer's sample following exposure. There is provision to include a broader definition of 'infectious diseases' by regulation, which would allow the testing for infectious diseases that are not BBV, but are transmissible by saliva or faeces into the broken skin or mucous membrane of a police officer.

A second area of concern raised by the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council was that if a positive BBV result is returned it cannot establish whether an officer has contracted a BBV. A negative BBV result is also not conclusive as there is a window period for BBV tests of a minimum of three months.

That is correct regarding the testing time, but current protocol for an officer who has suffered a biohazard injury is to seek medical attention for a risk assessment and undergo testing or treatment if warranted. The intent of the legislation is not to change how officers respond to such incidents in the workplace.

There was a question about the HIV testing policy, which states that informed consent is required for HIV testing, except when a legal order is made for testing. Generally taking blood from a person

without their consent involves the criminal offence of assault and civil trespass. That is the question that was raised. The response is that the proposed amendments will introduce a legislative power to test a person for an infectious disease, regardless of consent. If approved, it is required to be served on the transferor to explain the purpose and effect of the approval that use of force may be used to enforce the authorisation, and that failure to comply is an offence. However, it does not absolve the right to ask for consent, and this will form part of the application process when an officer seeks a disease test authorisation.

Another question was about whether individuals who test positive for HIV may potentially be charged under general criminal law for exposure and transmission of HIV. Laws that potentially criminalise people with HIV undermine the suite of national BBV strategies.

My response is that the test results under this new power will not be placed on systems such as PROMIS or be made available to police officers in general. Only a restricted list of authorised persons will have access to the results, such as the transferor, the affected police officer and their respective health practitioners. The results from this process cannot be used for any other purpose than a test for an infectious disease. There are significant penalties following the disclosure of information or use of a blood sample for any other purpose. Under these provisions there is no penalty should a positive result be returned from a transferor.

The final point is in response to a question about there being a greater need for guidelines and procedures to minimise the risk of an officer contracting HIV or other blood-borne viruses following an exposure risk. The Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council provided community-based training on BBVs on a fee-for-service basis. The Northern Territory Police already have vigorous guidelines and procedures in place regarding risk of infectious diseases and minimising exposure in a policing environment.

If the legislation is passed in parliament today, further work will be undertaken with the Department of Health in regard to education on infectious diseases.

I will now respond to questions raised by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, which is concerned that the bill will provide no further protection to police in contracting communicable diseases. The federation is saying it is the police officer's personal protective equipment that helps to reduce and stop contamination.

My response is that the proposed legislation is based on keeping officers' health and welfare in mind. It will support the workplace health and safety of police officers and their welfare following a biohazard injury, allowing earlier identification of potential transmission of such infectious diseases and provision of earlier treatment to be provided, which assists in further reducing the stress and/or anxiety for exposed officers and their partners and families.

The NT Police already have rigorous guidelines and procedures in place regarding risk of infectious diseases and how they better prepare for it. Some questions have been asked about whether police could wear safety masks when they leave the station. I think that is a ridiculous request.

There is a subsequent question regarding putting health professionals under pressure to forcibly take blood for testing, saying this would be an ethical and human rights dilemma, besides possibly putting their registration at risk for unprofessional conduct.

The response is that there is already a provision under the *Police Administration Act*, most notably under section 145, which allows for the taking of a blood sample, known as an intimate procedure, for the purpose of providing evidence relating to an offence punishable by imprisonment.

Even in the *Traffic Act* – a good example is section 29AAG, which requires a blood sample if a police officer:

- (a) ... reasonably believes that the concentration of alcohol in the person's breath or blood is such that the person has committed an offence against this Act; or
- (b) the officer has reasonable cause (whether or not as a result of a positive indication from a saliva test) to suspect the person's body contains a prohibited drug.

Section 147FR(4), under clause 6 of the bill, provides for a medical officer, nurse or qualified person to not be required to take a blood sample as authorised in the disease test authorisation until the practitioner, nurse or qualified person is satisfied that:

- (a) there is no serious risk that serious harm would be caused to the transferor, or another person, by the taking of the sample; and

- (b) *the health of the transferor would not be adversely affected by the taking of the sample.*

Protection from liability is also provided for medical practitioners, nurses or qualified persons under section 148B, which is clause 7 of the bill. It states under 'Protection from liability':

- (1) *A person is not civilly or criminally liable for an act done or omitted to be done by the person in good faith in the exercise of a power or performance of a function under this Act.*

I hope that information provides some solace or a higher level of advice for the Northern Territory AIDS & Hepatitis Council and the nursing federation.

Again, I thank my colleagues for their support of this bill; it is disappointing that the opposition tried to have an each-way bet on it. I think upholding the principles and providing protection to our frontline police officers is of the utmost importance.

Upon successful passage of this bill, and after a reasonable period of trial, I will be seeking to work with other frontline service agencies, most notably those within health, education and fire services, to see whether similar legislation could be provided to give greater levels of protection and comfort to those doctors, nurses, ambulance officers, teachers and fire officers in our communities, who all too often are subjected to such violent acts and behaviour by a very small minority within our community.

To those who say this is unfair and a breach of human rights, I have one very pointed message: if you do not like it, do not spit on police, bite police, pass bodily fluid to police or pass faeces to police. It is abhorrent. Police are out there protecting every citizen in the Northern Territory. To think that police currently have to endure the pain and suffering of waiting three months is outrageous. This legislation fixes it. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr GILES (Police, Fire and Emergency Services) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

BAIL AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 173)

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will explain in detail why the Labor opposition cannot support this bill, and why there is a chorus of opposition to removing the presumption of bail from social justice and legal advocates, including Father Frank Brennan, professor of law at Australian Catholic University and adjunct professor at the ANU College of Law; the Australian Lawyers for Human Rights; Pat Dodson, a former commissioner into Aboriginal deaths in custody; the Law Society of the Northern Territory; legal aid providers like the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service; and a raft of voices of ordinary Territorians.

The Attorney-General's second reading speech summed up the intent of the bill in the opening paragraph, which stated:

The purpose of the Bail Amendment Bill 2016 is to amend the Bail Act to deter property crime in the Territory by adding a presumption against bail for serial offenders. Under the amendments a presumption against bail will extend to persons who are arrested and have been previously convicted of two or more serious property crimes within the preceding two years. Additionally, under the amendments, a serial property offender will be required to enter into a conduct agreement which will include being fitted with an electronic monitoring device in the event that the presumption is rebutted.

He further elaborated in his speech:

... a presumption against bail will extend to persons who are arrested and have been previously convicted of two or more serious property crimes within the preceding two years.

I will return later to the question of what counts as a serious property crime. It has been the subject of many discussions with people in the legal fraternity and beyond.

It is any government's job to protect and keep its citizens safe from harm and to do its utmost to prevent crime and deal appropriately with those who offend, including, where necessary, prison terms and appropriate rehabilitation.

The hard work and grind of a good government is not only to reduce crime and the number of victims, but to also reduce the number of

offenders, as well as those at risk of offending, which will ultimately reduce the number of people in the Territory's prisons and, over time, see more law-abiding citizens. The latter is the really hard work of a government which can demonstrate success by being not only tough on crime, but, more importantly, being smart on crime.

It is about dealing with offending behaviour, endeavouring to get to the bottom of it and addressing the behaviours and circumstances which are part of the reason people offend. Sometimes that is an impossible act, but it is incumbent upon governments to endeavour to try.

The reality is, as evidenced by those incarcerated in the Territory's prisons, the numbers continue to grow in adult and youth detention facilities. The latest statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the ABS, reveal that while the national imprisonment rate in 2013 was 170 prisoners per 100 000 of the adult population, the Northern Territory rate was a staggering 821 per 100 000, with Indigenous people making up 86% of the NT prison population and, of that, 97% of juvenile prisoners are Indigenous.

As the shadow Attorney-General I spoke on behalf of the opposition and gave support to amend the *Bail Act* in December last year, which means electronic monitoring devices can now be used on young people, not only adult offenders.

I wonder why the amendments before us today were not included in the amendments to the *Bail Act* last year. I suspect it has a lot to do with timing and proximity to an election, and the CLP's desire to keep its powder dry until it needed a news headline on what is now the final sitting day, albeit an extra sitting day, of this parliament. It probably also explains the Chief Minister choosing, staggeringly, the highly unconventional means to announce these changes to the *Bail Act* before us via his Facebook page on 17 May.

Wanting to lock more people up, especially young people, is something the Chief Minister was itching to do early on in the Country Liberal Party's term of government. I refer to an article published in *The Australian* on 18 January 2013, titled 'Lock-up Alice youth crime ringleaders' written by Amos Aikman, with the opening paragraph stating:

Northern Territory minister and local MP Adam Giles has called for young ringleaders in Alice Springs with lengthy records to be detained, despite the town having the highest juvenile incarceration rates in the country.

In his Facebook post in May, the Chief Minister said:

We give rogue youth every chance, but they still break into our homes, smash up our cars and cause trouble. They commit crimes, then they get bail, they commit more crimes than they use diversion and it goes on and on ... but we still end up getting our houses broken into and our cars smashed up, and everything else.

Such a ham-fisted, tough-talking approach from the Chief Minister reminds me of his contribution to this House from the opposition benches on 20 October 2010, when he said:

I would love to be the Corrections minister. It is not the portfolio I really aspire to but, if I was the prisons minister, I would build a big concrete hole and put all the bad criminals in there: 'Right, you are in the hole, you are not coming out. Start learning about it.' I might break every United Nations' convention on the rights of the prisoner but, 'Get in the hole'.

It is true that, in the Chief Minister's view of the world, prisoners, including those who are children, let alone those who are Indigenous, have no rights and that adopting an evidence-based approach is immaterial. In the world of the CLP, consulting with the community and stakeholders about an evidence-based approach is as immaterial as it is unimportant.

There were many responses to the Chief Minister's Facebook post, but one struck me, from Cassandra Brown. I know Ms Brown; she is a school teacher in my electorate and a proud Indigenous woman who loves working with Indigenous kids. She gave a well-considered response to the Chief Minister's Facebook post. She said:

Reducing a child's capacity to become criminal must start early. Every teacher needs support in the classroom and every student in that room deserves a class that they can concentrate and get support in.

Invest more into behaviour and learning disorders, support and home schooling or alternate schooling options. Expand ... family and community services so they can better assist parents who need help and hold the right ones accountable when needed, so that our workers aren't drowning under extreme case files and burning out. Same with our NGOs that run youth programs and family support because waiting lists are long and good, trained workers are few.

Subsidise psych and counselling and improve drug rehabilitation programs. Pour

not just money but good planning into as many approaches and solutions as you can because this is a very expensive and heartbreaking epidemic happening, with crime, drugs, suicide and low-level education, and our workforce suffers too.

...

Create options long term for disengaged kids. Stop spending all the money on mopping up the mess and invest in early intervention too.

Her response, for what it is worth, attracted quite a few likes, but, presumably, the Chief Minister's response would be as dismissive of Ms Brown as he is of the opposition's views. I can assure you, Ms Brown is not a member of the Labor Party and she is not a close personal friend, but her comments mirror Territory Labor's early childhood development discussion paper titled 'Changing our Future', which was launched by our leader, the member for Fannie Bay, last August and was welcomed by many stakeholder groups across the Territory for putting children front and centre of government should we be elected.

The views expressed by Ms Brown also mirror our view and of experts in the social justice, early childhood and legal sectors, nationally and internationally. Continuing, as the CLP does, to focus all the attention on dealing with what happens after the crime has been committed, after the horse has bolted, and failing to recognise the importance of investing at the other end of the spectrum to prevent crime, is a no-brainer. That is the hard work this government has not done.

Even worse, upon coming to government the CLP took an axe to the very programs which were in place to support youth and at-risk youth. Cynically, with an election around the corner, the CLP has put money back into those programs and is proudly announcing them, thinking that Territorians had somehow forgotten about the cuts to programs which were working. The removal of those programs can no doubt be correlated to any increase in youth offending.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in your home town of Alice Springs last week on Friday 24 June, in the *Centralian Advocate* was a letter from Blair McFarland from CAYLAS. It called on the Northern Territory government to reinstate a program called the remote area Aboriginal alcohol and other substances strategy grants. All they are seeking is \$140 000 a year. He claims the success of the program for more than 25 years – which was used for various locally designed programs to keep kids happy and out of trouble. That money has been cut by this government; a small amount has been restored, but it does not

make up for the shortfall of what he describes as \$3m per year to youth services in Alice Springs, which has been cut under the CLP government.

I am troubled by what constitutes a serious offence. What if a child, for instance, in Yirrkala, Yuendumu, Ntaria, Barunga or perhaps Wurrumiyanga – communities that members on both sides of this House represent – breaks into a teacher's or nurse's home? I know it happens from time to time, especially during school holidays where there are limited school holiday activities because there has been a reduction in their program funding. Food security in these communities is often a big issue for many families, and children break into houses seeking food because they are hungry. They may break into homes, sheds, vehicles or plant equipment, looking for volatile substances to sniff because it takes the edge off their appetite and helps them to forget how hungry they are. Does this property crime see the presumption of bail removed? Is it regarded as serious?

The Attorney-General knows only too well what the views of the judiciary are, that is, it should be the courts determining who is and is not granted bail based on the vast range of facts and individual circumstances before them. As one lawyer wrote to me, 'To predetermine a range of property and prior history of offending is, quite frankly, an unnecessary interference in the courts' exercise of discretion'. In his Facebook post the Chief Minister said, 'We are trying to do the right thing by youth', but clearly he is not.

Referring to the *Youth Justice Act* – the amendments deviate significantly from the principles enunciated under section 4 of the Northern Territory *Youth Justice Act*, which was legislated specifically to ensure that youth who commit an offence are given appropriate treatment, punishment and rehabilitation considering the vulnerability of juveniles, particularly those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds or with an absence of parental care.

The fundamental principles which the amendments contravene are in section 4:

- c) *a youth should only be kept in custody for an offence (whether on arrest, in remand or under sentence) as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time;*
- d) *a youth must be dealt with in the criminal law system in a manner consistent with his or her age and maturity;*

...

f) a youth who commits an offence should be dealt with in a way that allows him or her to be re-integrated into the community;

...

i) a youth should not be withdrawn unnecessarily from his or her family environment and there should be no unnecessary interruption of a youth's education or employment;

...

m) a decision affecting a youth should, as far as practicable, be made and implemented within a time frame appropriate to the youth's sense of time;

n) punishment of a youth must be designed to give him or her an opportunity to develop a sense of social responsibility and otherwise to develop in beneficial and socially acceptable ways ...

It was those elements of the *Youth Justice Act* that were pointed out to me by a Darwin-based barrister as being in breach of the amendments that are proposed today.

This bill will do more harm than good. It will increase the number of juveniles and adults on remand. Prisoners on remand do not benefit from work or programs. It must be remembered that the number of prisoners on remand is already a staggering three quarters of children in Don Dale and one third of the adult prison population.

Let us be clear, in the Territory's youth justice system 77% of children in detention are on remand, not sentenced for their crimes. The sad reality is a significant number of youth offenders are placed in detention centres on remand because there is nowhere else for them to go. This is a very shameful state of affairs.

The changes this bill will bring about will only add more pressure to the detention system, the most costly part of the system. Having more prison beds does not produce better outcomes. Evidence also shows that if a young person enters the criminal justice system this increases their chances of entering the criminal justice system as an adult. Put simply, this is bad policy.

Let us turn to what others have had to say about removing the presumption of bail for property offences and we will see that it is not only members on this side of the House who regard this as bad policy.

Father Frank Brennan, eminent professor of law and human rights advocate, in a piece published in *The Guardian* on 31 May, described the move as 'cheap politics' and said:

This is one of the more crass instances of a besieged government beating the law and order drum to distract from other issues, including the budget.

Father Brennan went on to make the point:

If a parliament is to take away the ultimate court discretion to weigh up all relevant factors when considering whether to grant bail, this should be done only after the parliament has had the opportunity to consider the evidence (if any) of courts failing to protect the community by exercising their discretion in a wanton fashion in relation to a particular offence, or in relation to a particular class of offenders. The NT Bail Act has always provided a presumption against bail for the most serious offences like murder and grave drug offences.

In summary, he described the bill we are currently debating, and potentially passing, as 'a cheap and nasty, rushed amendment to the *Bail Act*'.

Law Society NT President, Mr Tass Liveris, in a media release on 18 May said the bill, 'Will not fix the problem; it will only make it worse'. The media release goes on to quote Mr Liveris:

'Communities are calling for real action on this issue – everyone including the minister knows that locking kids up does nothing to curb offending – when young people are exposed to the criminal justice system they are much more likely to become adult offenders. And we have more than enough of those' ...

Mr Liveris referred to the Australian Institute of Criminology research that young people diverted from the courts system were less likely to have further involvement in the criminal justice system. Mr Liveris noted the 2011 review of youth justice in the NT that recommended the need for more diversionary programs and increased eligibility for diversion in light of increasing rates of youth crime.

The community has also seen NT Corrections previously being criticised for poor practices in youth incarceration. 'After all these reports we need to ensure that the recommendations have been implemented before we change the law and mandate

that incarceration is part of the solution.
Mr Liveris said.

I turn now to correspondence I received. I know the Attorney-General's office received it as well, and I am assuming other members of this House received it. The letter was from the Australian Lawyers for Human Rights dated, 7 June 2016. With regard to inconsistencies with common law principles, the letter states:

The Northern Territory Bail Act already requires a court or police officer considering the grant of bail to take into account the risk of the alleged offender reoffending. Creating a legislative presumption against bail will remove the courts' ability to consider other factors, including the age of the alleged offender and any needs relating to the person's cultural background, including any ties to extended family or place or any other cultural obligation.

These reforms are not reasonable because they do not allow specialised youth courts to assess the risks of granting bail based on the circumstances of the offence. They instead introduce arbitrary provisions dealing with all crimes in certain categories in the same way, irrespective of the facts of the case. The practical effect will be to make the pre-trial detention of children the norm for certain offences. This is clearly unjust and inconsistent with the presumption of innocence, to which all members of society are entitled.

With regard to the disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the ALHR highlights the complete disregard of the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, and it is not the only one to have raised this point which says that imprisonment should only be utilised as a sanction of last resort. Its letter to me goes on to say:

The Vita Review commissioned by the Northern Territory government last year stated that the juvenile justice system existed in a climate of daily crisis. These proposals will only serve to significantly deepen that crisis.

ALHR reminds you that earlier this year the Northern Territory government stated that it was going to cut Indigenous incarceration rates by an extraordinary 50% by 2030. These measures are totally inconsistent with that target and, worse still, will be counterproductive.

I should also add that I asked a question of the Attorney-General in estimates as to how they would achieve that target and he was unable to answer the question. In regard to costs to the taxpayer and further stress on an already overburdened prison system, the ALHR said:

... spiralling youth incarceration rates will come at a significant cost to the budget and, therefore, the taxpayer.

In the NT, youth detention costs \$350 000 per year or \$87 500 for three months per young person.

We note that the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) has funding for just one Indigenous youth justice worker who works with Aboriginal young people to address the issues that have brought them into contact with the criminal justice system.

Similarly, the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service (CAALAS) has funding for just one youth justice worker to cover all of Central Australia. We would ask that you ...

That is, the government:

... consider how many youth justice workers could be employed for the cost of imprisoning a single young person, being \$350 000 per year? How many early intervention and diversion programs could be funded with the millions of dollars that will be spent arbitrarily remanding the numerous individuals who will be subjected to these measures?

In closing, the Australian Lawyers for Human Rights letter addresses the fact the proposed measures are not evidence based, and states:

The use of detention for juvenile offenders has not been shown to reduce crime rates or rates of reoffending. Locking-up children and adults on remand unnecessarily risks exposing them to the criminal justice system; which, in turn, generally increases their chances of becoming repeat offenders. Research indicates that time in a juvenile justice centre is the most significant factor in increasing the odds of recidivism. For example, research from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has shown that children who are placed in detention are three times more likely to end up back in detention within 12 months than those who get a community-based sentence.

Periods of detention represent missed opportunities to intervene in juveniles' lives with constructive programs. A more responsible and cost-effective approach would be the introduction of proven and effective early intervention and diversion programs and restorative justice approaches.

Last week in estimates the Children's Commissioner was asked questions about changes to the *Bail Act*, and her comments cast doubt as to not only how effective they will or will not be, but where government should target its energy. The commissioner said:

We know over restrictive bail legislation has proven not to reduce offending; it does not work. If you use bail alone to try and solve a recidivist offending regime, it will not work, but if you use it in tandem with intensive programs that are targeted at individuals, rather than general programs, it will work. This model is expensive and intensive, but I think there needs to be some thought about that. The long-term savings we could make, if we invest now from, as I said, early childhood before we get to the stage where we are at now.

Commissioner Gwynne went on to say:

If we are dealing with young people and their families, who are coming before police for offending, the child protection system is trying to deal with a number of children who are not being well cared for. You have domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and a range of issues, so our response has to be more holistic.

That has to start with a system where we can better share information to understand the issues that are occurring within a family set. Often, the youth offending is the symptom of the problem and I think we are trying to deal with some matters in a relatively ad hoc way. There has to be a suite of measures that deals with early childhood with a huge focus on education and then focusing on the families and youth, who are at the biggest risk and need the most support. Otherwise our systems, both our child protection system and our youth justice system, will continue to be inundated.

Let me remind the House of the Review of the Northern Territory Youth Justice System undertaken by Jodeen Carney, a former member of the CLP opposition and shadow Attorney-General and, upon retirement from politics, a

staffer on the fifth floor then later the CEO of the Department of Children and Families.

This report was commissioned by then Attorney-General, the member for Karama, produced by Ms Carney in September 2011 – certainly worth reading – and was completely dismissed by the CLP when it came to government, not unlike its complete abandonment of the recommendations of the report into child protection in the Northern Territory, *Growing them strong, together*, which was authored by Dr Howard Bath, Dr Rob Roseby and Professor Muriel Bamblett from Victoria.

After the change of government, when I became the shadow Attorney-General, this report was removed from the website. It took a while to see it put back up there, but clearly this was a report the CLP government was not interested in pursuing. What a great shame it is that the state of affairs for young people in the Territory is what it is. Had some of the recommendations been adopted, as well as those from the *Growing them strong, together* report – I will not read the entire executive summary, but I want to highlight some of the recommendations that were made. It included recommendations to:

- *increase investment in police diversion, including increased eligibility for diversion, and expand diversion programs*
- *increase the number of youth rehabilitation camps*

A recommendation to:

- *expand the family support program and increase capacity of family support centres*

A recommendation to:

- *increase the workforce capacity*

And, importantly, a recommendation to:

- *establish an external monitoring and evaluation process.*

I have not read all of them, but I have plucked out those that I believe are key recommendations.

I will place on the record some of the comments in Jodeen Carney's report, because it is spot on. When it was delivered to our government we accepted it and we were implementing the recommendations. I quote from the executive summary:

Policy development and decision making in the area of youth crime must be evidence

based. There must be a bipartisan approach to youth offending and political leaders must do what is right – not simply what is popular. The political challenge is that some results will take time to measure.

She echoed that theme in the conclusion:

... investing in solutions that reduce offending and reoffending requires political courage. It also requires considerable effort, commitment and resources.

I can already predict the media release the Attorney-General has prepared, slamming those who do not support this bill as being soft on crime. That is all right; I have a thick skin. Presumably Father Frank Brennan, eminent lawyer and human rights activist, is soft on crime and soft on kids. Presumably that is the case for Patrick Dodson, now sitting in the Senate in Canberra, a former commissioner into Aboriginal deaths in custody. Presumably Ms Cassandra Brown, in my electorate, is soft on crime as well. That is all right, we can cop that from the CLP because we know it is wrong.

This bill has all the hallmarks of wanting to score political points in the lead-up to the August election. From what I have just read, those extracts from the executive summary of Jodeen Carney's report into a Review of the Northern Territory Youth Justice System, she warns of that very thing.

The truth is Territory Labor has a strong record of protecting our community from crime, reducing antisocial behaviour and acting responsibly during times of emergency. Territory Labor made it mandatory to report incidents of domestic violence.

It was Territory Labor which introduced the Banned Drinker Register and banned 2500 people from accessing alcohol. In spite of the recommendations of the Coroner, and the outcry from people around the Northern Territory, the CLP government will not reinstate it even though they knew it worked.

The Labor government strengthened precinct bans to remove troublemakers from nightclubs with on-the-spot fines and 12-month bans for people who refuse to leave nightclub precincts when ordered by police. We strengthened the 2 km law with fines for drinking in a public place and causing a nuisance, with three infringements in 12 months placing a person on the Banned Drinker Register.

Labor boosted alcohol rehabilitation services, including in remote areas, only to see the CLP government close down northeast Arnhem Land's

only residential alcohol and other drugs facility – a day facility continues to operate out of temporary premises, almost two years after the CLP closed it – and converted it into a prison.

We removed the defence of intoxication for drug or alcohol misuse for criminal activity. We strengthened laws to recover fines, including enforcement of compensation and restitution orders on behalf of victims, and enforcing interstate court-imposed fines.

We planned and funded the new Darwin Correctional Centre and introduced new sentencing options, including work camps such as the Barkly Work Camp, to support improved rehabilitation and reduce reoffending. We commissioned the first ever review of youth justice, leading to the establishment of diversion units in Katherine and Tennant Creek, increased funding for family responsibility agreements, and supported increased training for youth justice officers.

It was Labor that introduced the SMART Court, which was dealing successfully with what was at the core of offending behaviour for those people who had issues with substance abuse. There was evidence to show that it was working and, importantly, it gave people an opportunity to turn their lives around, and it kept people out of prisons.

The Northern Territory is now the only jurisdiction in the country that no longer has this therapeutic jurisprudence option. This is a great shame, and it is thanks to the arrogant CLP government that abolished this court. We lay that plainly at the feet of the current Attorney-General, who did it in spite of the advice from the former Chief Magistrate at the time, Ms Hannam, who defended the SMART Court as something that was working successfully.

Territory Labor will continue its approach of strengthening laws and using evidence-based approaches to improve community safety in our community. Unlike the CLP, Labor consults, listens and believes in following an evidence-based approach and sitting down with key stakeholders to talk things through.

I refer the Attorney-General and other members of this House to the *Hansard* record of my contribution to last December's debate on the Bail Amendment Bill, which now sees the use of electronic monitoring devices extended to young offenders. We supported the bill, but laid out all the concerns about the fact that unless you support people to address the underlying factors which contribute to their offending, you will never make a difference – homelessness; substance abuse; mental health issues; cognitive learning difficulties; domestic and family violence;

generational impoverishment and disadvantaged backgrounds; and the very high number of young people before the justice system who are also in the child protection system.

I will also remind the Attorney-General and the House of the principles of the Making Justice Work campaign, which is a collective of 20 organisations in the NT committed to making the justice system work to protect the community, which also echoes the sensible recommendations of the Carney review into youth justice. This is what it states:

1. *Stronger measures are needed to prevent crime and deal with its causes.*
2. *Prison is not a solution.*
3. *Young people should be kept out of the criminal justice system where possible.*
4. *We should put offenders to work, not just lock them away.*
5. *We should work with offenders and set them up to succeed, not fail.*

Without the right support mechanisms in place to help young people not reach bail, we will never see a change. We will see more young people locked up in our prisons.

I am interested to hear what other MLAs will have to say on this bill. I am especially interested in hearing from the members for Stuart, Arafura and Arnhem, especially the member for Arnhem, who is in a powerful position today to stand up to this woeful minority CLP government and not give it her vote. Hopefully she is smart enough to recognise that the people who stand to lose the most if this bill goes through are Aboriginal children. I urge the member for Arnhem to stand up and tell the CLP why she cannot support this bill. She had the courage of her convictions to walk out on them over a year ago and she has one last chance to do something good on the last day of this term of government in the 12th Assembly. That is something Aboriginal Territorians would remember her for.

Only one vote from this side of the House that does not cross the floor – that is all it would take for this bill to topple over. No one, least of all the opposition, wants to see Territorians as the victims of crime, but we need to address the root causes of offending behaviour to reduce crime and recidivist offending, and this bill does not do that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support these changes to the *Bail Act*. I have been doorknocking in Durack recently and talking to anyone who comes to their door about the changes to the *Bail Act*. People are incredibly supportive of this reform to the legislation. Everyday mums and dads, people in our community, do not understand why repeat offenders are continuously bailed and left to commit further crimes while on bail.

People in our community do not understand why police have to keep picking up the same people time and time again, bringing them back to the court system where they are bailed again and then released back into our community. I completely support changes to the *Bail Act*, which will reverse the presumption of bail for serial property and vehicle offenders.

People in my community are happy that the presumption will be reversed; they are happy that if a court determines a person is granted bail that person will have to wear an electronic monitoring bracelet. People are happy with that, but a number of people have commented to me, 'Why does it only apply to serial offenders?' When we talk about what qualifies as a serious property or vehicle offence it includes things like:

- stealing – seven to 14 years
- robbery – 14 years maximum
- assault with intent to steal – seven to 14 years
- unlawful entry of buildings – two to 20 years
- armed with intent to enter – seven years maximum
- unlawful use of a motor vehicle – two to seven years
- removal of things from public places – three years maximum
- damage to property – two to 14 years
- driving a motor vehicle, causing death or serious harm – seven to 10 years
- hit and run – seven to 10 years
- dangerous driving pursuit – five years maximum
- severing with intent to steal – three years maximum
- home or business invasion – seven to 10 years.

People are saying to me, 'Why should it only be for serious property offenders? Why can't it be for all property offenders?' People are sick and tired of this very small group of people – police know who they are – who continue to be unconcerned by the laws we have in our community and are damaging people's property and lives, invading people's personal space. Why should this small group of people who have absolute disregard for what is right and for the level of trauma they cause in our community be afforded so many opportunities to reoffend?

That is what this bill is about. The point of it is to target this small group of individuals who have total and utter disregard for the legal system and our community and have continually done the wrong thing over a long period of time. They are known to police and in our community. Why should they be given any more opportunities to repeat their offending spree?

This bill is fantastic and the community welcomes it, but I want to see it go even further in the future. We could look at whether serious property and vehicle offences are the threshold where it is benchmarked. Once this bill, which hopefully passes today, becomes operational we will be able to monitor its impact on our community.

The people who continue to break into cars, steal cars, come onto people's properties and invade and destroy people's lives have no sympathy from me or the people in my electorate. The people I have spoken to in Drysdale in the last month have been very supportive. I believe the people of Drysdale and the Palmerston community will benefit from this level of reform.

We need as many tools in our toolbox to fight crime as we can have. It takes a number of strategies. We have rolled out a number of strategies over the last four years. This strategy will be very effective and will give police the extra support and power they need to ensure these repeat offenders are not being bailed, popping back out on the streets and doing it all again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend this bill to the House. I had some very good community engagement on this bill. I want us to look at the results to see if it makes a dent on recidivism and look at strengthening it going forward.

Mr STYLES (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give a few facts and figures in relation to what is happening in the real world. The Country Liberal government's aim to reduce property and vehicle crime by restricting bail to serial offenders is one of great importance to the community.

Like the member for Drysdale, I have been doorknocking. It is a question I have been asking people at their doors, along with a number of other questions. I ask what their view is on repeat offenders. I concur with the member for Drysdale; people are sick to the back teeth of reoffenders.

We hear stories about a number of families who struggle to influence their children to not go out and break into homes. People want to be the king or queen of their castle but cannot do so because these reoffenders will not follow the rules.

The total crime rate has dropped 12% since the Country Liberal Party was elected to government in 2012. That is a 3.6% reduction per year. The rate of property crime is down by 15% Territory-wide since 2012, a decrease of 19% in Darwin; 14% in Palmerston; 17% in Alice Springs; 16% in Katherine; 8% in Tennant Creek; and 4% in the Northern Territory as a whole.

The Country Liberal government has taken a number of proactive steps to achieve reductions in crime, including the deployment of a specialist police unit, Strike Force Trident, which was created to specifically deal with property crimes. Strike Force Trident has been hugely successful, making 600 arrests and laying about 3000 charges between September 2015 and February 2016.

Despite these efforts, there is still a small group of habitual offenders in our community who have not been dissuaded by the increased police presence on our streets, repeat arrests or even imprisonment.

As a former police officer, I can attest that there are people who do not care; they do not like rules. I have dealt with people who have said straight to my face, 'I don't care what the rules are. I will do whatever I like.' There are a few of them, more than people might believe, and police officers have to deal with them every day.

The member for Nhulunbuy mentioned early intervention. I agree that early intervention is important, but she went on to say that the Country Liberal Party government has failed on every count in relation to juveniles and adults, and crime, and that it has failed right across the board.

She spoke about consultation and listening to the people. She might like to look at the history regarding her predecessor in the seat of Nhulunbuy, Syd Stirling. In 2001, when the CLP lost government, a couple of things happened. The school-based police program was in place from 1985 to 2001; 17 years of what I believe, as do many in the community, was a very successful program.

Mr Terry O'Connell wrote the Real Justice programs, along with another man whose name escapes me, and he travelled the world talking about what the program does. I will not go into the details of Real Justice, but it was a very successful program then, and it is still used globally in relation to dispute resolution in schools, businesses and governments.

While Terry O'Connell was in the Territory he looked very closely at what we did for young people. He then travelled the world and told people that if they wanted to look at the best school-based policing program in the world, they should go to the Northern Territory and look at its school-based policing program. He is a world expert and he said, 'Best program in the world', and I agree with him because I was part of it.

In 2001, when Labor came to government, consultation and listening went out the window. There was no consultation when the then Minister for Education, Syd Stirling, wrote to the Minister for Police, also Syd Stirling, and said, 'I think what you should do is just disband school-based policing. It is not something we need.' No consultation or listening; simply a letter to him, from him, saying to get rid of it. I know that was the case because I saw the letter. An assistant commissioner showed it to me and said, 'This is what the government thinks about school-based policing – "Just get rid of it; it is not needed."'

That was a fantastic early intervention program where we built rapport. I do not have enough time to talk about the rapport you can build with young people that lasts for years. I wonder about the ex-teachers on the other side of this House and the rapport they built with their students. The strength of the bond and the respect between teachers and their students can be for life. The same happens with police officers who work with young people in schools.

After that letter in 2001, the community, which was very supportive of the program, battled for years with the government over the downgrading of the school-based policing program. We now have community engagement officers.

My next mission is to rebuild the school-based policing program so young people can have confidence in the police force from a very early age, being Transition and younger.

The member for Nhulunbuy mentioned certain reports. I heard the word 'evidence-based', which is something we use too. We also base our decisions on evidence.

The issue I worked on for many years, when I was in community policing and eventually running school-based policing programs was

neighbourhood activity centres. The member for Nhulunbuy says, 'You have done nothing in relation to this', but the government has listened to me about programs I have put forward. The neighbourhood activity centre is an early intervention program. It is a whole-of-government and a whole-of-community engagement program that not only targets youths, but also targets seniors, multicultural people, taxpayers, Aboriginal, Russian and Chinese people, people from all walks of life. It does not matter who you are; this program is about engaging everyone. It is about rebuilding the links in our community, which so many people in this Chamber would have had in their communities as a child. That pilot program at Sanderson Middle School is achieving results.

There has been a massive turnaround in antisocial behaviour in the Sanderson area. I have not seen any graffiti for a long time. I was astounded by the level of vandalism at the school. Last year the vandalism bill was about \$200 000 or more. This year, so far, I am informed that it is zero. That is a massive achievement. Not only is there a saving for the taxpayer, but young people are starting to see the school as a focal point for having fun. It is a place they can go to learn after hours, not just during school. There are young people now utilising the facilities such as the bubble soccer. There are lights being installed so they will be able to play football, softball, netball and basketball at night. The community has even built a BMX track. They are some of the things that are happening; it is enormous. It is an early intervention program.

We looked at the situation. In 2001 the Labor Party took government. Some years ago I asked a former minister how many people were in Don Dale when Labor came to power. The answer was six. After all the years the former CLP government spent working on youth issues, such as rehabilitating youth and the rules and regulations of the community, there were six people in Don Dale. I know we have had an increase in population, but the numbers in Don Dale are now greater per head of population than when the CLP left government.

The member for Nhulunbuy talked about proximity to an election. We have been working on these issues for quite some time, and it is only timely that they are implemented now.

Let us look at some of the issues and what we are talking about in the bail amendments. We are not talking about throwing everyone in jail. It is a presumption against bail. Judges can still give bail if they so choose, but there is a requirement to wear a GPS locator. There are a couple of very positive points in what is happening.

The member for Nhulunbuy did not address the fact many of these young people are coerced into joining gangs and roaming the streets at night. There is a lot of peer pressure. If you work with youth in this area you will understand. I spoke to thousands of them over the years I worked in crime prevention and they would tell me they felt pressure to do these things. When you are young, in your early teens, it can be hard to find your way in life.

Young people are sucked into becoming part of it and, once in, they struggle to get out. Now if you are caught and you are a repeat offender, you say to all your friends, 'I can't go with you. I will have to stay home because my bail conditions say I have to stay home and wear this GPS locator.'

If someone goes to little Johnny at 2 am to break into houses and pinch cars, Johnny can say, 'I can't go with you because once I go out of a confined space the police will know where I am and they'll come and find you, and you'll be in trouble'. Suddenly we have a change in attitude of some of the people running these gangs, saying, 'We can't take Johnny, Billy or Harry because they have GPS locators on'.

The other problem not addressed by the member for Nhulunbuy is that some of these young people are leaders in their own right, albeit in a negative way. If they are convicted and then want to go out on bail they can, but they must wear a GPS locator. If they go outside a particular area someone will be alerted and will know where they are. If they are running through someone's back yard at 3 am in a suburb where they do not live, the police will have instructions on where to find them and will take them back into custody.

When the leaders stop the followers stop. This has been proven time and again by Strike Force Trident and other police officers. When you take the leaders out of the equation the followers do different things, not negative or unlawful things; they do things other than breaking into houses and stealing cars. A lot of them do not have the leadership skills to pull the group together again.

I have spoken to parents and, sadly, these days they are often single. A large proportion of them are single mothers. When these young boys hit puberty their mothers try their hardest to influence them, but the kids basically walk out believing they can do whatever they like. Mothers have come to see me, or have rung me, and said, 'My son is doing this and he is running around with this person. They did a break-in here, here and here, and all the stolen property is kept there.' Mothers will come and tell you, if they trust you. That is why school-based policing was great, because you built a rapport with kids, their families and the community.

If you gain their trust, mothers and others will say, 'This is what is going on. Can you please help my son by making sure that he is arrested, that he goes to court and you put him on some sort of home detention order or something so that he is not running with those people.'

The biggest fear is that once these young people are pulled into these gangs, they steal cars and break into homes and steal stuff. They make a bit of cash and, next thing you know, the drug dealers give them some ice and they are on the downward destructive path that many young people find themselves on. If they are not out there in the first place, they are not subjected to peer pressure. The idea is to ensure that you can support mothers if they come to you.

While doorknocking recently I discussed something with a couple of my constituents, and it is something we should all consider in the future. If a young person has become pretty deeply involved and does not know how to extract themselves, they might not have to go to court. They can have a GPS locator voluntarily put on them. Or if they are in a court they can ask to have one put on so they can say to the other kids, 'I can't go with you because I will give away your location and give away the fact that you guys are in a stolen car driving around Darwin'. GPS locators can be tracked at speed, so if they are doing 140 km/h down McMillans Road – normally cars going that speed on that road are driven by someone off their face on drugs, or the car is stolen.

They are the things we can look at. A couple of parents have said to me, 'How can I get a GPS on my child? I try so hard to keep my kid at home, but they just walk out and do whatever they will do, and I find out from other people that they are involved in some pretty serious and heavy stuff.'

Even a repeat offender who has been convicted twice in two years does not have to go into remand. They can still be given bail, unless it is for something really serious and a judge will not give them bail. But if the judge gives them bail, they have to wear a GPS locator; it is not that difficult. They are the types of conditions that are given out now.

A juvenile will go to court and the court will say, 'Right, you are on bail and you are required to stay at home under the supervision of your parents'. The problem is that often parents sign the bit of paper which says that if their son or daughter rushes off they will wear a fine. It is difficult sometimes when parents are trying to do the right thing and have a wayward child. Trying to support those parents is an interesting process to go through. I remember, when I was a school-

based police officer, desperately trying to help some parents who were at their wits' end.

The process will assist parents. Parents sometimes need to make their kids stay home because they are on bail. It might be for a couple of months and they can only go out with their parents at a certain time. They may need to advise authorities where they are going and for how long. The authorities can phone the parents to ask if their son or daughter is still with them and the parents can confirm. That is one of the things that can be done. It helps empower parents to bring their child back under their wing, where they can educate and counsel them, because the child cannot do that.

If kids do chose to go out and run amok, what do we do with them? We grab them and put them in Don Dale. I will credit a correctional officer, sadly deceased, Paul Nuku. Paul started Wildman River, and what a fantastic program that was. I remember raising the issue, while in opposition in 2009, of reopening Wildman River because it was a great program. Talk to anyone who went through it and they will tell you it was a good program. While doorknocking on Saturday afternoon I spoke to someone who ran into trouble in his early teens and learnt his lesson; he went through the Wildman River program. We had a very interesting conversation. He was very grateful to the people who put him back on the straight and narrow. He is now happily married with four kids and doing well in life.

It is about making sure you can give these people a new pathway. In 2009, sadly, over one weekend in between sitting weeks something occurred. I came back in on Tuesday and said, 'What happened to Wildman River?' and I was informed by the then ALP government, 'Oh, sorry, we bulldozed that on the weekend'. I thought, 'What a shame'.

There is so much more that could be said about this, but I will simply reiterate a couple of points. One is that offenders do not have to remain in remand; they can go out on bail but will probably have to wear a bracelet.

Something that struck me about the member for Nhulunbuy's contribution to this debate is that it was not until her last sentence that she used the word 'victim'. She said victim once, and then sat down.

I know from doorknocking and talking to people in the community, and the business community, there is major concern that these people are in a revolving-door situation, and we need to stop it.

On that note, I ask the members opposite to think about some of what has been said in this debate.

People are sick and tired of the number of people not giving a damn about victims' rights.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this bill to the Chamber. I also thank Mr Styles for his comments; he is a member of parliament from the northern suburbs and frequently experiences, first hand, the hardship of constituents telling him of their disdain at the levels of repeat youth crime in communities within the northern suburbs.

It was a few years ago now that the member for Karama, when she was a minister in the then Labor government, called Karama a 'war zone'. Much has improved since then, but youth repeat offending has not improved enough.

The member for Drysdale, a good local member from Palmerston, and the member for Brennan see similar situations where constituents continue to talk about repeat property crime happening in their electorates.

As a member from Alice Springs I know only too well the issue of repeat offenders, not the people who make the wrong decision the first time and are given an opportunity, but these repeat serial offenders who commit crimes, particularly those who break into our homes while we are at work and our kids are at home after school. They smash our cars up at night, cause crime and disrespect our community. I had had a gutful of these incidents a long time ago.

Picking up the newspaper to see that young offenders have walked down a street and smashed 50 windscreens, and repeat offenders have broken into 10 houses – I meet people who work in the police force on Operation Trident. They have told me on several occasions that they have busted their guts to pick up offenders who are breaking into homes, only to see the courts let them out and the same kids are picked up the next day. It is outrageous. That is why I worked so hard with the Attorney-General to bring this amendment to the Chamber.

I spoke about many things in my time as a would-be politician, then as a politician and now as Chief Minister. This is the number one issue, by order of priority, that annoys people – property crime, the reoffending rate and the inability of courts to lock people up who do the wrong thing.

I talk a lot about economics in the Northern Territory, the unemployment rate and the labour force participation rate. The Northern Territory has the highest workforce participation rate in the country and the lowest level of unemployment. More people work here per capita than anywhere

else in the country. It is outrageous that we are working our backsides off while young mongrels are breaking into our houses.

We brought this amendment bill forward so reoffenders will not have the opportunity of bail unless they wear an electronic tag. What does Labor say? Labor opposes it. Of everything I have done on social media, this has been the number one issue. People have had a gutful. We stand back and listen to the self-righteous left members who say, 'Oh, you can't do that to poor young kids'. No one wants to see a young kid locked up. I do not think anyone does, but keep breaking into our houses and you are behind bars.

There is a carrot-and-stick approach in our community. We all want to give people an opportunity in life, whether it is for lifestyle, a job, or to be anyone you want to be. That is at the heart of the Liberal philosophy; be yourself, be an individual, be who you want to be. How do you do that when there are mongrels breaking in? You can be all you want to be, but do not harm others, your neighbours or your local community.

Here we are, only 10 or so weeks from a Territory election, and Labor is being soft on crime, not supporting a bail amendment bill that will provide a higher level of protection for citizens and community members of the Northern Territory. It is outrageous.

If you live in Palmerston, Alice Springs or Katherine – I have just been reading about the property break-ins in Tennant Creek – or you live in Casuarina, Parap, Fannie Bay or Karama, you know what it is like to see property crime continue. Yes, property crime has come down; it has come down about 15% since we came to government. Assault and homicide levels have come down, but repeat offenders, those mongrels, keep breaking into our homes while the hard-working people of the Northern Territory are doing the right thing. It is outrageous. For Labor to oppose it now is appalling and a misread of the community of the Northern Territory.

In the lead-up to the Territory election with Labor not supporting such a divisive issue like this, I do not know if we can pass this legislation. I think the right thing to do would be to adjourn debate on this legislation. There is a Territory election coming and if Labor is that opposed to it maybe we should take it to the voters to see what they think. Maybe we will let the voters decide on this. The Country Liberals are standing up for locking up repeat offenders who break into our homes, smash up our cars and assault our kids and partners on the streets of the Northern Territory. Let us take it to the election and see what the people have to say.

Madam Speaker, in this regard, I move to adjourn this legislative debate, in order to take it to the Northern Territory election and let the voters decide what they want to see occur.

Madam SPEAKER: You cannot. A new member has to seek to adjourn it.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, I have just been advised that you have also spoken to it, so someone else needs to move to adjourn it.

Mr CHANDLER (Education): Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 13	Noes 12
Mr Barrett	Ms Anderson
Mr Chandler	Ms Fyles
Mr Conlan	Mr Gunner
Mr Elferink	Mrs Lambley
Mrs Finocchiaro	Ms Lawrie
Mr Giles	Mr McCarthy
Mr Higgins	Ms Manison
Mr Kurrupuwu	Ms Moss
Ms Lee	Ms Purick
Mrs Price	Mr Vowles
Mr Styles	Ms Walker
Mr Tollner	Mr Wood
Mr Westra van Holthe	

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

PAROLE AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 176)

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward and the department officials who kindly provided the opposition with a briefing last week, or the week before. It seems we have spent many days here.

If you read the minister's press release, 'No body, no parole', you would have thought this was dramatic legislation being introduced to parliament, but looking at the detail of this legislation, it simply adds another aspect to the 2004 sentencing and parole legislation, which is already in the House. There are already three matters that parole boards must consider before releasing someone on parole. This bill adds a fourth, requiring police to provide a report about information on the body of a victim.

Obviously the Labor opposition would welcome anything that helps victims of crime and their families. This legislation is quite interesting. One of the first questions that came to my mind was if someone committed a crime, for example, throwing a body into one of our crocodile-infested rivers or offshore, what are the chances of that body being recovered? 'No body, no parole' implies some people would be unable to receive parole, even if they admit guilt.

The detail in the bill allows police to provide a report to parole boards showing evidence that the person is remorseful for the crime and that they are providing information on where the body might be, for example, coming forward with the information that they threw it offshore. Sometimes people change their plea, or they might be up front and plead guilty, or it might take someone 10, 15 or 20 years in prison to decide to disclose that they did commit the crime and say where the body potentially is, but natural elements may mean the body will never be located.

Once the opposition was fully briefed on that detail by department officials we felt much more comfortable with the legislation. It adds a fourth element for parole boards to consider. I think South Australia is the only state that has passed this legislation to date. Other states are looking at it and it has been through private member's bills.

The opposition now feels comfortable with the legislation and the way the department has drafted it. There were some other amendments, such as rewording, to ensure the current legislation is up to date and in simple terms.

We feel comfortable with the process. The department went into a lot of detail during the briefing, explaining that the Police Commissioner would go through all the information, such as the transcript and the sentencing remarks. A lot of detail was provided on what this bill intends to do. Obviously, it will try to help families of victims reach some kind of closure.

This legislation will, I understand, be used extremely rarely. There is one person currently being held that it may apply to. It is not something that will come up often, but it adds a fourth element to help try to bring closure to victims of crime, particularly family members who have been through an awful lot and still do not have the final closure they need.

Madam Speaker, the opposition supports this bill. I have indicated that to the ...

Mr Elferink: I am you sure you do. You realise what happened with the last vote.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, I pick up on the interjections opposite. Yes, we welcome this bill. It is a very straightforward and short piece of legislation, thus the reflection of that in my speech today.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, maybe someone will adjourn this. I would not want parliament completely closed down on the last day of sittings before an election.

I support this bill, which I think is quite sensible. As unfortunately happens sometimes when the government issues media releases and the media picks it up – they announced this as a no body, no parole bill, which it is not. As the member for Nightcliff said, if that was the case then each body that was thrown overboard, or disappeared in a crocodile infested river or had been left in the middle of the desert – the people who committed those crimes would never get off. That is not what this bill is about. As the minister said in the second reading speech:

The bill amends the Parole Act to include provisions that preclude the granting of parole for prisoners convicted of murder unless the parole board is satisfied the prisoner has cooperated satisfactorily in the investigation of the offence to identify the location or last known location of the remains of the victim.

That is quite sensible. I gather we only have one person in our prison which that could affect. I think we all know who that is.

It is a sensible amendment which recognises the sorrow and pain that relatives of the victim may be suffering and will continue to suffer to the end of their lives, not knowing their loved one's final resting place. If this amendment to the *Parole Act* can give some closure to relations and friends of a victim, I think it is a good thing.

What happened a minute ago was an insult to this parliament. I am here to debate this issue, the *Parole Act*, and a number of other acts. I have spent a considerable amount of time going through some of these bills. For this House to be used in this political way is a disgrace. I had a different point of view and I wanted to hear what the Chief Minister had to say. That is why I did not get up. The debate on the previous issue was an extremely important one. It was not only about bracelets, or about judges not giving bail. It dealt with a serious subject that concerned me for many years. I heard the minister talk about Wildman River. Everyone in this parliament knows that I was totally opposed to Wildman River being closed down, but I am not allowed to talk about that.

People go crook in this parliament about gagging debate. Sometimes there might be a good reason to gag debate, for example, if people carry on for five hours about nothing, but we have been gagged. I have been gagged purely for party political purposes. It has nothing to do with the dignity of this House.

This House has simply been used for party political purposes. I think it stinks. Whether you agree with me or not is irrelevant. To block off debate on a very important issue and take it to an election, where I know what will happen – anyone who has a different opinion will be persecuted for being soft on crime.

It is a shame; I came here to contribute a mature perspective on a serious issue which affects people in the suburbs regarding property and vehicle crime. I came to provide an alternative point of view which might achieve the same goal but also save kids from going down a continual path of crime. But I am not allowed to in this parliament because that side gagged the debate.

It is a disgrace. I do not care. I am not worried about any more legislation this afternoon because if they can use this House for party political purposes, why should I bother being part of this farce? I rest my case. Whether I come back or not, we will see, but it is not a good look.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I am astonished. For the first time I genuinely and deeply disagree with the member for Nelson. One, if you are surprised about politics in a parliament then I think you are in the wrong place; two, surely there is no greater democratic institution than a general election.

Mr Wood: Not blatant party politics.

Mr ELFERINK: Take it to the polls, member for Nelson. Let us take it to the polls and ask the people. How often have I heard ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, address your comments through the Chair.

Mr ELFERINK: Madam Speaker, how often have I heard the member for Nelson say, 'Take it to the people?' But the moment you do, he whinges.

What an absolute disgrace. He does not have the courage to take this simple issue to the people. Member for Nelson, you are a hypocrite in this instance and I am deeply disappointed. However, that is the last debate and I am glad that is going to the people. Let the people decide what they ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, can I just clarify, it is your summation of this bill now?

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, Madam Speaker. I will get to it in a second, but I do have to address the member for Nelson's issues. Let the people decide. That is the question here. If the member for Nelson is worried about the people deciding whether or not bail should be extended to multiple offenders – whatever his position is. I do not know what his position is; I know what the Labor Party's position is. No, you should not support people declared to be repeat offenders.

Having made that observation, the legislation we are debating now deals with no body, no parole. It still errs on the side of being rational. If it is not possible to recover a body because it has been destroyed, that is, thrown into a volcano or a crocodile-infested river, or irradiated by huge amounts of radioactive material to the point where it is jelly, we do not expect someone to say, 'Here are the constituent bits of that body; molecules can be found here, there and everywhere else.' That is not what we are arguing for.

What we are arguing for, and I have always argued for in the House and in the public domain, is the notion of contrition. If a person who has been convicted of a murder is in the custodial environment, as a community we expect that person to show contrition. The courts ask for it, as do we, the public and most institutions. If a person refuses to show contrition by not revealing where they put the body, they exclude themselves from being considered for parole. If they want compassion, we want to see contrition. It is that simple; there is nothing too hard about it.

There may be circumstances where a person has disposed of a body and cannot remember where they put it. They may have buried it. The stock example is Coober Pedy, where the scuttlebutt is that if you throw someone down a mineshaft you will never recover the body. Whether that is true or not, I do not know.

Perhaps, as is the case of Bradley John Murdoch, the body has been disposed of somewhere where in 20 years he may not be able to point to where the body is. The fact is he must try. He must come forward and say, 'Yes, I will try to show you where the remains of Peter Falconio are'. I remind members, this legislation is not specifically targeted at Bradley John Murdoch, but he is the prime example of who it would affect in the NT.

If, subsequently, another murderer is in a similar circumstance, refusing to admit to the homicide in spite of the evidence beyond reasonable doubt to the contrary, and is convicted but still refuses to say where the body is, I am comfortable with the notion of this legislation. It is self-evident that a person seeking compassion from the community should show contrition in the world they live in for the crimes they have committed.

For example, Bradley John Murdoch has not shown the required contrition because he has not, as far as I am aware, admitted the offence. If he goes to the Parole Board, in spite of the weight of proof beyond reasonable doubt that he has been convicted of the homicide of Peter Falconio, then I believe the court, and I trust it to get it right. Therefore I say, 'Bradley John Murdoch, if you want parole show us where the body is, or anyone else like you. And if you want parole and the compassion of the community to be extended to you then you have to show contrition.'

Contrition is simply a notion where you say that you accept responsibility and culpability for the actions you have taken. As I said, this is not specifically targeted at Mr Murdoch, but he certainly qualifies at this point.

I thank honourable members for their sensible approach. I am also thankful for the support I have received from many Territorians, and the department staff members who I often forget to thank for the hours of work they put in.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr ELFERINK (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.

**TERRORISM (EMERGENCY POWERS)
AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 175)**

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, this will be a short speech. The Chief Minister's speech was less than a page. This is a straightforward one.

Last sittings the CLP sought urgency for all eight bills. This is a bill which stacks up for urgency in its own right. If the government had sought urgency for this bill alone it would obviously have been supported because there is an expiry date of 28 June which needs to be considered, and we need an extension. That is what other states and territories have done, which the Chief Minister acknowledged in his speech, to extend the sunset provision of Part 2B of the act for the preventative detention and prohibitive contact orders.

Obviously we support this. We are happy to support it. It is a straightforward bill. The Chief Minister's speech was straightforward on the day.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice) (by leave): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Chief Minister, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**FIREARMS AND WEAPONS CONTROL
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 171)**

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, we support this bill, which proposes a few basic changes to the act. The extension of firearm licences from one or three years to five years, or from five years to 10 years; exemptions for law enforcement officers for possession and co-location of ammunition and firearms provides more clarity in the legislation, which we think was sensible; and renaming aspects of the department.

We think this is straightforward and we are happy to support it. Again, the speech from the Chief Minister was straightforward and brief.

Madam Speaker, we support the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr ELFERINK (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.

**TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT BILL
(Serial 172)**

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill on the last parliamentary sitting day of the 12th Assembly.

I will start by thanking the Department of Business and the public officials who provided me a briefing on the bill. It was great to visit your offices and an honour to meet you. It was good to share in the learnings about this legislation, which plans on taking our training sector forward and improving training outcomes for Territorians.

Interestingly, in the briefing with the department I discussed the challenge for bush members to obtain briefings at the big end of town, and how the CLP government has been incognisant of that fact. I will share a conversation about utilising videoconferencing technology and, again, reiterate to the House that the videoconferencing technology in the Barkly electorate office was

taken away when the CLP came to power in 2012. That seems to be a bit of a coincidence. In the age of innovation and technology, maybe the government would consider replacing technology in the regional and remote electorate offices to facilitate good briefings and consultations.

The bill repeals and replaces the *Northern Territory Employment and Training Act*. The purpose of the bill is to introduce a new training and skills development act, ensuring the Northern Territory has contemporary legislation under which to govern and manage the NT vocational education and training sector, a very important sector for the future of the Northern Territory and our young people.

Public officials reported that the bill supports training and skills development that is responsive to NT industry needs, targeting individual and employer requests and upskilling requirements, in addition to fully-accredited certificate training courses.

I acknowledge the innovation in this legislation. In my experiences in the field, as an educator, and while in opposition, travelling the Northern Territory and talking to stakeholders, it has become very apparent that industry and training providers have been looking for flexibility. In some respects this is revisiting a system that I remember from a number of decades ago.

The innovation in the bill is to be commended. The Labor opposition supports it, and is very aware that the industry sector acknowledges the flexibility for industry, being able to call upon specific and important training and upskilling as well as full accreditation and formal training.

I was informed that the consultation and review commenced in 2014, incorporating 100 industry, business and training organisations sharing consensus that the NT needed a new act that better aligns with industry needs, reflects the national quality framework, encompasses significant changes to the federal act and responds to NT industry needs for flexibility.

It was good to share in an extensive and comprehensive consultation period, something that has been seriously lacking in the CLP's legislative agenda in the House. Today, the memorable last sitting day of the 12th Assembly, a cheap political point-scoring exercise completely gagged any debate and passage of pending legislation. It is incredible; there seems to be no end to the CLP's mischief in this space.

Minister, I give credit where credit is due and there was a good consultation period, which reflects good legislation, and comprehensive stakeholder and industry engagement. The Territory is looking

forward to the passage of this legislation. The learnings you go through are interesting. The public officials advised me that the new act, in name and nature, removes employment from the title and the narrative. That reflects a Commonwealth responsibility for employment and a Northern Territory response to flexible and targeted urban, regional and remote training.

It was a good opportunity, being in the room with experts and discussing the regional and remote aspects of training. I was advised about the training advisory boards and the essence of this legislation to commence the new Northern Territory training commission, which will sit within the act. That is a new way of doing business in the Territory and, I hope, a new way of improving outcomes.

In estimates we explored the decline in numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships across the Territory, quite alarming numbers in the last year of the CLP government. A trend has been set over the CLP's time in governance. Completion rates were also down.

It was a good, frank discussion and turned into a clear policy alternative where the minister was definitely focused on 2021. That is his target; we will see lots of jobs in 2021. The opposition was able to debate that the CLP government had missed very important policy levers regarding the critical middle section of the economy. Repairs and maintenance, minor new works and smaller capital works programs feed the construction sector and provide sustainable projects where the middle-level businesses take on apprentices and trainees. The system works; things go to plan, apprentices and trainees complete their indenture and that provides a new skilled workforce for the Northern Territory.

It is a clear difference and I think, on the last day of sittings for the 12th Assembly, the CLP government needs to reflect that it has missed some significant policy settings along the way in its first term of government. We are all in this business to learn so let us hope the CLP members learn and take on lessons as well. There has been a mad scramble in the last days of the CLP government with what is, essentially, an economic stimulus plan. It follows the response we saw to the global financial crisis in the federal and Northern Territory spheres.

I was privileged to be a minister in the House at that time, and I remember the abuse and contempt thrown at us by the CLP members in opposition. It is interesting to see the tail is wagging the dog and they have started to wise up. They have now entered into what is a fiscal stimulus policy; however, an enormous amount of Territory businesses have suffered in the last four

years. We have seen a significant population decrease. We are looking over that four-year period at declining numbers of apprenticeship enrolments and completions.

These are important lessons. I look forward to the new training commission addressing some of these challenges. Therefore the opposition supports this legislation.

In regard to the industry advisory councils, the public officials briefed me to say they will continue; however, there has been a compression. It was said at estimates that some were voluntary in regard to collapsing into larger bodies.

The Territory Labor opposition is very much about listening and consultation. We have seen a very clear difference over the last four years in the approach to governance. We will support those industry advisory councils as we feel that level of advocacy is important.

It is about enhancing this new legislation. We support it and will take it on board. If judged worthy to form the next NT government, we will revisit the area of industry advisory councils and promote advocacy. If judged worthy, a future NT Labor government will listen, consult and take on board advocacy from experts in the industry.

It is interesting to learn that the new act establishes an internal review process and incorporates the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal in those processes. I think that is good legislation; it seems to fit well for the way forward. It was also good to be briefed on federal regulation and the ability for this legislation to incorporate emerging national issues such as registered training organisations offering controversial incentives for training signup. It is good to see that the NT has those matters in hand; the Commonwealth also has a firm hand on those matters. This legislation will ensure that anything emerging in this area will be adopted and addressed.

I was advised that the passage of the bill includes a number of consequential amendments representing administrative changes not requiring a consideration in detail stage. The opposition takes this on good faith. I have been advised that budget appropriation supporting the new act will be sourced from existing Department of Business resources.

It was a good briefing; I thank the public officials and the minister for the opportunity. I look forward to resurgence in information and communications technology for the bush and a government that supports it, a pragmatic example being video conferencing facilities in regional and remote electorate offices.

It was a great opportunity to explore very distinct policy differences in the estimates process. I am sure that, as the Chief Minister reiterated, these will be clearly communicated to the constituency in the upcoming Northern Territory general election in August.

Mr STYLES (Employment and Training):

Madam Speaker, I often agree with some things the member for Barkly says. I agreed with him on a number of things just then in relation to consultation and other matters he raised.

Regarding apprenticeships, member for Barkly, you would hopefully note that there is a national downward trend in apprenticeships. We are no different to other parts of the country. What is important is that we have a plan to create jobs through agriculture, horticulture, the gas industry and ensuring that when INPEX finishes any apprentices there are able to transfer into the onshore gas industry, from which, as Deloitte said, billions of dollars and 6300 jobs will flow. It is important to ensure we have apprenticeships. The Giles government has a plan to ensure that occurs.

In relation to the ITAC, there was extensive consultation and I am grateful that you acknowledged that. This is consistent with the national partnership agreement. These arrangements were put in place when the federal and Northern Territory Labor governments were in power in April 2012. It is something that was started to get consistency across the country and the CLP government has continued along in that vein. There are many things in relation to time lines, but I will move on.

I thank all the members for their contributions. The challenge facing the Northern Territory vocational education and training sector, now and into the future, is the ability to respond effectively to the dynamic and changing economic conditions driven by many factors, including national training reforms, the *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*, the government's economic development strategy and the growth of the international training market. These drivers present enormous opportunities for Territorians and Territory industries, employers and training providers to reap the potential benefits.

The Northern Territory vocational education and training system has served Territorians well over the years. However, with fast-emerging national, international and local priorities we have to rethink how we can best be placed to take advantage of these opportunities. Skills and formal qualifications are required to participate in the modern workplace to innovate and contribute to our social, economic, cultural and environmental

development in a manner that balances competing interests.

The bill before the Assembly today is to establish a new act for the vocational education and training sector in the Northern Territory. The proposals put forward will better target the public resources being invested in the vocational education and training system and assist Territorians to take up the job opportunities being created in northern Australia. The Training and Skills Development Act will ensure the Territory has modern and contemporary legislation under which to govern and manage the Territory's VET sector, providing a platform to achieve maximum return on public investment in VET.

The bill provides for greater emphasis on training and skills development in the Northern Territory. Significant changes have been made when compared to the current legislation to enable provision of nationally-recognised VET that meets the present and future needs of the government, industry and the community, and supports employment and economic growth.

The new act establishes the Northern Territory training commission, a statutory body that reports to and is directly accountable to the minister for its functions and accountabilities provided under the new act. The act recognises industry as a key client of the NT VET system and through the Northern Territory training commission will provide for greater participation by industry in setting the strategic directions for VET in the Territory.

The commission will be composed of nine members from industry and business, and employers. The goal is to seek the best industry knowledge on the Northern Territory training commission to make recommendations to government on the best way to ensure the skills needs of industry are met, and to proactively respond to the needs and expectations of business and industry.

Prescribed in the new act is the Northern Territory training commission's responsibility for the development of a VET investment framework and an annual Northern Territory VET investment plan to guide the investment of public funds for training delivery. The investment framework and investment plan will provide greater transparency of skills and funding priorities for training providers, the general public and the business community.

The Northern Territory training commission will provide high-level strategic advice to the minister, and will submit its approved VET investment framework and annual investment plan to the minister. The Commonwealth government has established a similar framework through the

Australian Industry and Skills Committee to enable government to be more responsive to the needs of industry. The Northern Territory training commission will be supported by the Department of Business.

In relation to apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements, the current act includes national apprenticeship and general training arrangements that have been the subject of significant national reforms since 2009, including ongoing action on inter-jurisdictional harmonisation of apprenticeship arrangements.

The Department of Business is the regulator of apprenticeship and traineeship agreements and arrangements in the NT. The functions under the act may be delegated to another organisation.

The basic system of apprenticeships and traineeships is not changing and, to this end, the majority of existing provisions for apprenticeships and traineeships are relevant for the new act. As such, provisions of the old act are being carried over and updated to bring them into line with the agreed national arrangements.

The new act will strengthen the regulatory framework to better protect apprentices and trainees, and will provide for a more streamlined approach to apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements for employers. These changes will better support the Department of Business in performing its regulatory function.

Employers, apprentices and trainees can take comfort that the new act strengthens the apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements in the Northern Territory, including providing greater protection for apprentices and trainees who are our future skilled workforce.

A new provision has been included to clarify the difference between apprenticeships, which are generally trades, and traineeships, which are generally non-trades, to make it clear that the new act applies to traineeships as well as apprenticeships, and to make the differences clearer to employers, apprentices, trainees and the community.

New provisions enable the prohibiting of employers should they contravene the legislation. Powers of entering and enforcement provisions have been maintained and modernised in-line with current practices in the framing of offences and setting of appropriate levels of penalty.

In relation to the internal review and the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, it is consistent with the government's broader red tape initiatives to improve access to fair and transparent review processes. The independent

NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal has been established. As such, there is no longer a need for separate appeals and review tribunals under the new act.

New provisions have been developed to allow for an affected party to apply for an internal review of decisions made by delegates of the chief executive officer. This will ensure that parties affected by decisions made in relation to a range of apprenticeship and traineeship matters that are reviewable have an avenue to request a review of a decision.

The objective is to provide access to an internal review mechanism that is fair and transparent for the chief executive officer to review specific, reviewable decisions. This will allow the Department of Business to gain visibility of an issue and proactively address it. This will not preclude a person affected by a decision from applying to the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of a reviewable decision in certain circumstances, and then NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal processes will apply.

On the national training scene, the underpinning principles of the act encourage the development of a strong training provider market and facilitate growth and development in the VET sector. This new act will broadly reflect national training arrangements and high-level principles, for example, transparency, access and equity. This will reflect objectives that lead to the sustainable training market capable of delivering quality training across the Northern Territory.

The matters of indemnity, confidentiality, disclosure of interest and the making of regulations have been updated to reflect current government practices. There are consequential amendments proposed in the bill along with some minor updates. The provisions modernise the language used in the current act but do not change the policy or legal effect of those provisions. Savings and transitional provisions to retain actions and decisions made under the repealed act are contained in the new act.

The history of the development of this bill is interesting; it has been going on for some years, but the NT VET system has grown, matured and evolved over the years. The added pressures on the VET market of ongoing skill shortages, limited and decreasing sources of funding and the ageing population mean that changes are needed in the way the system operates to produce a greater number of highly-skilled people to contribute to the future economic and social development of the Northern Territory.

The *Northern Territory Employment and Training Act* has been in force since 2004 and has not

been substantially reviewed since its inception. Only minor amendments have been made to the current act in recent years, primarily due to changes in other legislation that required the current act to be updated accordingly. The current act uses inconsistent language and contains outdated provisions. It does not accurately reflect a contemporary VET environment and lacks the flexibility to respond to the dynamic and ongoing changes in the national and local VET systems.

The new act provides greater breadth to allow for changing priorities and to manage complex elements of the VET system. A new act represents an opportunity to establish a strong legislative base to support changes to the Territory VET sector and meet the nature of training, workforce and skills development into the future.

The bill repeals and replaces the *Northern Territory Employment and Training Act*. As I said earlier, consultation has been occurring for years. The review of the *Northern Territory Employment and Training Act* began in July 2014 with the release of a discussion paper. The interim Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority advisory board was established outside the current act, to oversee the review of the act and provide advice on VET matters to the Minister for Employment and Training. Consultation sessions with key VET sector stakeholders, including industry, were conducted across the NT.

The stakeholders agreed that the current act needed to be updated to reflect contemporary practices to incorporate agreed national apprenticeship arrangements, and strengthen industry engagement and interactions within the VET system. Those directly consulted were key clients of the VET sector, private businesses, industry associations, training providers, students and relevant state, territory and local government representatives. Specifically, 95 people from 34 employers; 12 peak industry associations; the union; 22 private and public training providers; and 11 other stakeholders participated in the conversation, including 12 written responses forwarded by interested organisations.

Responses from the consultations guided the proposed changes and the drafting of the new bill. The policy positions for a new act were agreed to by the Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority advisory board. As a result of consultations, it was determined a new act would be more appropriate to achieve the review objectives, noting that parts of the current act were still relevant. The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice were consulted and actively involved in the development of the bill.

Regarding the implementation of the bill, the government is pleased to advise that the communications objectives aim to highlight the key changes and new provisions, including strengthened industry participation in VET. It aims to inform training providers, employers and all VET sector stakeholders of the new act.

Media opportunities exist at various points during implementation to announce the changes. In conjunction with red tape reduction, a number of apprenticeship and traineeship provisions have been revised to improve the contractual arrangements between employers and apprentices, and trainees and trainee providers, to improve the administrative efficiencies of apprenticeship and traineeship processes.

The legislation allows for the suspension and termination of training contracts by mutual consent on application by both parties. A separate appeal and review tribunal will no longer exist. The new act will institute a more efficient and transparent internal review process for reviewable decisions. New provisions enable affected parties to apply to the NT Civil and Administrative Tribunal for a review of reviewable decisions.

Some of the questions that people have raised include, when is it expected to commence? This act will commence from 1 July 2016. Why did we not amend the current act? It has already been amended many times and is now disjointed with parts missing, and it has no flow. Why is there no regional representation on the commission? The commission membership is based on industry knowledge and will have a greater focus on industry experiences and capabilities with less focus on organisational, sectoral and regional representation. This is intended to allow for greater and broader industry participation that will best serve the prevailing economic conditions, government priorities and other factors which may influence the VET sector.

Why did we not simply establish an NT training commission and create another layer of bureaucracy? The establishment of the commission will provide industry with greater involvement in the strategic direction for VET in the NT. How will members apply to join the commission? Industry and employers will be invited to nominate to be on the commission through an open and transparent process.

What is the VET investment framework? The VET investment framework will reflect government's focus on training and skills development to meet the needs of industry, and will include skills modelling. The VET investment framework will guide the Department of Business's decision-making regarding the investment of public funding in vocational education and training, which will

result in the development and publication of an annual investment plan to inform stakeholders of government's VET investment priorities.

The annual investment plan is new; why is it needed? It is needed because making an investment plan publicly available means greater information on government investment in training and in which areas it will be readily accessible by training providers, industry and individuals. It will also provide greater transparency on government priorities for training in the Northern Territory.

The question needs to be asked: will employees, apprentices and trainees be impacted by the new legislation? No, not really. The majority of rules for apprenticeships and traineeships remain unchanged, although apprentices and trainees will have a greater level of protection under the new act.

The old act enabled the Territory to regulate and register training providers to operate here; why is this not in the new act? Again, the Northern Territory has not regulated training providers since 2011, when the responsibility was taken over nationally. Training providers in the NT are now regulated and registered by a national regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority.

I have outlined a number of the changes that have occurred as a result of the extensive consultation with industry, trades and advisory councils, and this seems to meet all the requests of the industries, employers and other stakeholders I mentioned.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr STYLES (Employment and Training) (by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

PLANNING AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 178)

Continued from 25 May 2016.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, before anyone gets too excited, I will say that not only do I not support this bill, but the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory does not support this bill. My local and brand-new council, Litchfield Council, does not support this bill either.

I know I will be criticised, but it is my right to disagree with this legislation. There are other people in the community who have strong objections to this piece of legislation, who I have no influence over. They have made their decision

because they also disagree with what the minister is trying to put forward.

I have no idea where this legislation has come from; it seems to have come out of the blue. It does not seem to have any general support except from the government. It is a piece of legislation that is not needed. There is no urgency for this. If there was some need for this change I would have thought the minister would have put out a paper outlining the reasons he wants this change and what the benefit to planning in the Northern Territory would be.

We have a Development Consent Authority, which has several divisions across the Northern Territory and a number of members. The areas covered by the divisions of the Development Consent Authority reflect municipalities in the Northern Territory. The Development Consent Authority is currently designed to have a couple of local members. There are local Development Consent Authority members for the Litchfield area, and for Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Batchelor has one occasionally, and when Coomalie sits it sometimes has one too. This allows the Development Consent Authority to hear the opinions of local people when making its decisions.

The Development Consent Authority does not only make development decisions. It is also the advisory body to the minister on rezoning applications, and that is what this debate is about. It is about the minister wanting to remove the powers of the Development Consent Authority in hearing those matters on his behalf and moving them over to the Planning Commission. I do not believe it is a necessary change; it is a retrograde change.

The minister will say that because the Planning Commission looks after strategic planning, its role should be the body which listens to matters regarding rezoning and advises the minister on which way those submissions should go.

The difference is that presently there are five people on the Development Consent Authority who listen to the submissions of people who either support or oppose the rezoning application. Under these changes there will be one person, who, in the case of Litchfield, will not be a local. It will be a person who lives in Darwin. I have seen the makeup of the Planning Commission; there is no one on it who relates very much to the Litchfield area. I think that has been reflected in some of the decisions it has made in recent times.

The Development Consent Authority can do one of two things. It can hear the application and then simply send the recording of that meeting to the minister. Obviously, he will not read the whole

thing but an abridged form, and he or she can make their mind up from that. Or, as has happened before, the Development Consent Authority can give its opinion in relation to what it has heard. It is up to the minister to decide whether they accept that or not. You can see there is at least an opportunity for local people to put forward their view on rezoning applications, which they will not have if you hand this power over to the Planning Commission.

You have to ask what is wrong with the present system. I do not see anything wrong. The Planning Commission can do a strategic plan, well why are you involving it in something it does not need to be involved in? The DCA has an excellent chairperson in Denis Burke, as well as people the government has appointed and locals who are capable of understanding the NT Planning Scheme. That is why they are there.

Why would you want to destroy something that is working? For the life of me, I cannot see why this is an advantageous change to the *Planning Act*. Reading the second reading speech, there is nothing that stands out as a reason to change the system. I see no urgency in it and wonder why, on the last sitting day of parliament before an election, you would bother changing it. I do not know what the Labor members think, but they might say, 'If we get in, bingo! It is gone.' I am not sure why it has come up.

I would expect pieces of legislation coming through at this time to have some urgency. The minister talked about the ability of the Planning Commission to be consultative. We have had this debate a number of times, minister. Do not take my word for it – you do not take it anyway – but there was a meeting held by the DCA and my understanding is you said only Denis Burke could attend. That meeting was held at 6 pm last Friday, or possibly the week before, at the Howard Springs Hall. Over 100 people turned up.

It was not my meeting; I did not organise it. It was open to anyone who wanted to go. The majority of people who attended do not agree that the consultation process was adequate. They are not saying the Planning Commission did not turn up at shopping centres, or did not meet so many people. The quantity might be correct, but the quality of the consultation was not up to standard. That was not me saying that; other people said it.

There was no consultation about the peri-urban areas south of Humpty Doo. The Planning Commission did not consult with people in that area, except at a shopping centre meeting at the Humpty Doo supermarket. Heaps of people who live below the Arnhem Highway were not asked what they thought. They are major changes to the

way the Litchfield area is being developed that were imposed by the Planning Commission.

I do not know why the minister has put that in this debate, because we know what the Planning Commission's job is. Whether we agree on if they have consulted well is not relevant to this debate. The debate is about changing the DCA body by taking away its power to hear applications and giving that power to the Planning Commission.

You would think, with the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory saying it does not support this, that the government would look at it and think, 'Maybe this is not the right way to go'. If it is only Gerry Wood saying, 'I do not think this is the right way to go', I understand that the minister would say, 'You are off with fairies; I ignore what you say so go jump in the lake.'

I am not the only person discussing this issue. This issue is about local government, local people in their community, and wondering what the Chair of the DCA thinks in relation to this change. It is taking away the bit of power or representation that local people have in decision-making processes relating to rezoning applications in their local area. They do not have any power; they only have a bit of an opportunity to have a say. Whether the minister agrees with what is being said is entirely up to the minister and it always has been. Sometimes people agree with the minister, but sometimes they do not. You have to accept that under the law the minister is the one who approves rezoning.

Minister, I do not believe you have put forward a convincing case to the NT Local Government Association. I was speaking to Maree Bredhauer from the Litchfield Council and she said their council does not support it. Why would the government push this forward when there are independent people opposing it? What is the benefit of doing this? It seems there is no benefit. It is like putting a new brand on a motorcar; it still goes from A to B, but I do not like the colour or the name, so I will change it. The end result is the same, but the problem is that one car has some local content and the other car is fully imported.

It is a Darwin-centric version of planning, which is something many of us, especially in the rural area, have not liked, where governments have imposed their will. The minister lived in the rural area; he knows what it is like. He is probably the only one who knows a little about what it is like because I do not think, generally speaking, the planning system we have today understands what rural is about.

When I watched the equestrian showjumping yesterday, the dressage on Saturday, the polocrosse at Freds Pass, the cricket at Howard

Reserve, the Swampdogs playing their last home game at Freds Pass, and when I see people at the markets, or people with a few horses or cows on their property and others with Land for Wildlife signs on their property, I see people who I do not think the government recognises. That is why many of the changes that are occurring are not supported.

This change, for many of us, is another hole in the wall – we had Pink Floyd on the weekend – chipping away ...

Mr Tollner: It was a brick in the wall, mate.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but in this case it is another hole in the wall because it is coming down slowly.

Mr Styles: Is it the Palmerston hospital or something?

Mr WOOD: The member for Sanderson said, 'another Palmerston hospital', when I mentioned the word 'hole'. I did not say hole in the ground; I said hole in the wall.

Mr Styles: We filled them all up with concrete.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I know. To return to the matter before us, this is why people are concerned about what is happening. All I can say to the minister is that I know he does not like my viewpoints on many things, and he rubbishes me; I can accept that, but the Local Government Association of the NT and the Litchfield Council, which I have no influence over, said they do not support this legislation. Please tell us who supports this legislation besides the Planning Commission? Who, beside your own party, supports it? Can you show us a survey of people in business and developers who say this is a fantastic idea? 'I have consulted with them all.' I am not sure the people on the ground who are affected by these things have been consulted.

Madam Speaker, I cannot support this bill. It is a waste of time. The minister, I am sure, will give me his view of the world and what he thinks of Gerry Wood's version of things. That is fine; I am over that. After seeing what has happened today, I am over a lot of things. Minister, if you want to adjourn something, adjourn this until you have consulted and taken this to a committee and asked people what they think. Unfortunately that has not happened, and the minister is ignoring the voices of the local councils at his peril.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I too encourage the minister to adjourn this debate, as we saw earlier today. This is something the opposition does not support, and I do not believe the community supports it.

Planning is so important in our communities; it is the heart of our communities.

Mr Tollner: You should not constantly undermine the commission then. That is nuts.

Ms FYLES: It is interesting to hear that the minister has an opinion already, but he will have his turn to speak and answer some of the key questions raised with me over the past few weeks.

This bill took the community and those involved in planning by surprise. The planning process is so important for our community because it is the structure of our communities – where we locate services and higher-density of living, and where we allow rural living to take place. It is what describes our communities. To make these significant changes to our planning system in the dying days of a government is not appropriate.

Our planning process allows for community input, something I have been involved in as a local member. Currently we are notified that there may be a rezoning request, and it allows for the community to be involved in that process. It allows local government to be involved in that process. The member for Nelson made an interesting point that this legislation changes the focus of that to be potentially Darwin-centric. That is something we need to make sure we protect, because although this parliament is located in Darwin, this act is for more than Darwin; it is for the whole Northern Territory.

Here we are on an extra sitting day. Parliament was recalled because we have to see eight pieces of legislation pass today, yet we had instances earlier in the year of no legislation being before the House. We have seen one piece of legislation adjourned, which was surprising in itself, but we have a bill before the House that has not been properly consulted on with the community.

The Local Government Association does not support it, nor do the Independent members of this House, the opposition members or the community. As soon as this legislation was introduced, community organisations were contacting me, as shadow Planning minister, to express their concern and ask me to stop it.

Minister, you need to stop and listen. There is no basis for this; it has come out of the blue. We have not seen a discussion paper, so I ask why this legislation is suddenly being rushed before the House, when we have only had 30-odd days to look into it. What is wrong with our current system? This legislation appears to be sneaky and it raises questions.

As I said, good planning is vital for the development of our community. It needs to be

consultative and consistent for the developers and the community to find that balance.

Fundamentally, the proposed amendments take away from the role of the Development Consent Authority and transfer its key functions to the Planning Commission. This bill is not in the public's interest and is a direct attack on public involvement and community consultation on important planning issues, which is very important. This government has no credibility on planning issues. There is no trust.

There has been no integrity on planning issues. We saw that with the Planning minister acknowledging that money opens his door. That gives the community no confidence whatsoever.

Mr TOLLNER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I found that to be an offensive comment and I ask that the member withdraws it.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, I was simply quoting from the member himself. He made the comments in the media.

Mr Tollner: No, you were not. Pardon me. That was an offensive comment and I ask you to withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, you do not just jump up and down. Member for Nightcliff, if the member has found the comments offensive then please withdraw them.

Ms FYLES: I withdraw and I will rephrase. The Minister for Lands and Planning gave comment that money opens his door.

Mr TOLLNER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! That is not true and I find it offensive.

Madam SPEAKER: What is your standing order, member for Fong Lim?

Mr TOLLNER: Standing Order 31. I ask her to withdraw that offensive comment.

Madam SPEAKER: Sit down. Member for Nightcliff, if the member finds comments that you make in this Chamber offensive then you need to withdraw them.

Ms FYLES: I withdraw.

What I was getting at is that the community has no trust in this government. They have no trust in this minister to do the right thing by the community and put the community's interests first. It is no surprise that just eight weeks before the NT general election the Assembly is being asked to rush through these amendments without proper

consultation with the community. That is so important on this issue.

Let us look at the profound implications of the bill. Section 9 of the *Planning Act* has the contents of the Planning Scheme, and these provisions are very significant because of their potential impact on lifestyle, the amenity of suburbs and communities, and the range of issues that flow on from that. These include traffic volume and flow, dwelling heights, the makeup of the community, environmental values, community facilities and economic infrastructure. The content of the Planning Scheme is important, especially when considered in the context of these amendments the minister wants to rush through these sittings.

I have pointed out numerous times that we had sittings earlier this year where no legislation was before the House. All of a sudden it appears the minister had a thought bubble and needs to rush legislation through that will provide significant changes for landholders, families, businesses and the community in general. We need to take time; we need to slow down and look at what this means. We need transparency and community consultation. That should be at the forefront of any proposed changes to the Planning Scheme, and it cannot be done in a month.

Some local government groups and councils were barely provided with any consultation – we are talking 48 hours – and I think it was only because they had to be notified. I question the minister's genuine engagement; it was lacking.

Section 16 of the *Planning Act* sets out the procedures and processes for establishing or changing a zone, and for granting or varying an exceptional development permit. The community has a reasonable expectation that transparency and proper consultation are fundamental in these processes to protect the public interest, but transparency and listening to the community's views are something we do not see from the CLP government, which sold TIO and privatised our port without proper community consultation.

What the amendments set out to achieve is significant. Clause 6 of the bill removes the definition of 'prescribed functions' and 'reporting body'; clause 7 of the bill repeals the provision that the reporting body will be a division of the DCA; clauses 8 to 11 generally replace reference to the reporting body with 'the commission'.

Significant functions will transfer from a division of the DCA to the Planning Commission, and these include receipt of submissions on proposals; undertaking consultation on proposals at the direction of the minister; conduct of hearings on proposals; and reporting to the minister on the issues raised in submissions during consultations.

Not only have these important functions been transferred from the DCA to the Planning Commission, the minister's second reading speech confirms that only one member of the Planning Commission is required to conduct hearings.

I quote, from the minister's speech, the justification for this provision:

The amendment to section 22 provides that hearings held in respect of submissions only require the Chairperson, or another member of the Commission authorised by the Chairperson, to conduct them. It would be unnecessarily onerous and costly to convene a meeting of the Commission for the purpose of such a hearing. The logical involvement of the independent commission provided for in this bill will contribute to community confidence and strategic town planning issues and policies.

It is incredible that the justification for eliminating local government and community representation on the reporting body and replacing them with one person from the Planning Commission is that it is onerous and costly. This is from a government we have seen waste money on political advertising and ministerial travel. In fact, for the minister to say it is costly and onerous shows that he does not understand planning, and it shows his complete incompetence in the expectation the community has of this ministerial portfolio.

Today the parliament was recalled so we can pass an important bill and then it was simply adjourned. Surely these cannot be the real reasons for the amendments? The other extraordinary assertion in the minister's second reading speech is:

The logical involvement of the independent commission provided for in this bill will contribute to community confidence in strategic town planning issues and policies.

This statement is totally at odds with the widespread community dissatisfaction and anger with this arrogant government's approach to planning. Is the minister so out of touch that he is unaware of the public concern, or does he simply not care? Issues such as spot rezoning and rural planning, and the developments at Bayview and the Gardens – the government is so out of touch with planning.

Madam Speaker, I believe that is one of the reasons you left the government. You had to FOI your own side to receive information around planning issues. I think that highlights the fact this government simply does not understand. It is arrogant, has contempt for our community and

does not care about planning issues in the way the community expects it to.

I cannot help but question the timing of this bill. Why is the minister so determined to rush these amendments through parliament? The Minister for Lands and Planning's team does not trust that he will be back after the August election. The community does not have the trust in the minister, yet he is trying to ram this through.

There is widespread interest in planning; you have seen it in your electorate and I see it in my electorate. Minister, why not take the time to consult properly with legitimate stakeholders, hear their views and improve the content of the bill? Numerous people have contacted me.

Minister, you cannot say you have not been contacted by people with genuine concerns asking questions. If you have, you have shut yourself in the white house, as people sometimes refer to Parliament House. If you were genuinely engaged with the community you would hear those concerns. I, as the shadow minister, and the Independent member for Nelson spoke today – all my colleagues could give you examples of people who have spoken to them about this bill and planning issues in general.

Other amendments in this bill relate to section 5 of the *Planning Act* and regulation 3A of the Planning Regulations. These provisions relate to infrastructure owned by Indigenous Essential Services Pty Ltd and the validity of leases over Aboriginal land for government owned infrastructure.

It is important to point out that the opposition does not have objections to these amendments, but we have strong concerns about the bill. One of the groups that has contacted me, the community action group called the Planning Action Network, has raised a number of concerns about the bill. I have already spoken about some of them, as has the Independent member for Nelson, regarding local government concerns about the way these bills are being pushed through parliament without taking the time for consultation.

There are questions about exceptional development permit applications, individual specific area rezoning, concurrent development applications which cover rezoning and development, and application of relevant local knowledge to the decisions. These are some of the questions.

PLan has strong concerns and I will read a couple of those points now. It has concerns about the presentation of the proposed *Planning Act* amendment; PLan feels it is inadequate and superficial. There has been no lead-up time, too

much haste, lack of explanations and consultation, and no drafts have been issued to the community. Instead it has been a rushed secret within a select group, with no public consultation and no exhibition period. Some councils were given the mandatory two days' notice, but no proper consultation with the local government sector. We still have not been given the genuine reasons for the introduction of these changes, which very much concerns PLan.

The defined role of the Planning Commission is long-term strategic planning, yet this is shifting that, which is an important point that PLan picked up on. We believe this bill has been rushed; it has not been genuinely consulted on with the community. PLan has urged everyone to not pass this bill and to take it to the community and consult around the proposed changes.

As I have highlighted, the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory does not support this bill. Independent and opposition members do not support it. Community organisations do not support it, nor does the community.

Each sittings we have a number of bills; some cause the community to contact you, some do not. This one has caused a number of members of the community to speak up and contact me at the markets, in the community or by emailing me. They are expressing their strong concern. I urge the minister to stop and listen. There is no need, in the dying days of a government, for such fundamental changes to our planning system. What is the reason for these changes? Is there some agenda they are not sharing with the community?

It raises questions. It appears sneaky. Good planning is the basis for our community. It is important that we have well-planned, well-thought-out suburbs and cities where the community can be involved in planning. We do not feel that these changes allow for that, therefore we oppose the bill before the House today.

Mr TOLLNER (Lands and Planning): Madam Speaker, that relatively long speech from the member for Nightcliff, saying there is a myriad of questions – she has asked two questions. I listened; I tried to pick up on the myriad of questions. What is wrong with the current system and why would you change this now?

I was the opposition Lands and Planning spokesman. I consulted widely about planning and the role of the DCA. It quickly became apparent, after speaking to a range of groups, that there was a lot of unease about the system that was in place prior to the last election. People were saying there had to be a greater focus put on

planning. Fundamentally, that is where we were coming from when we started with the policy we took to the last election.

That policy included the view that development had overtaken the planning process, that is, the DCA was run off its feet. There was no real body that worked specifically on town planning or lands planning. As a result, no effort was put into that. The DCA was constantly reacting to spot rezoning, spot subdivisions and the like. Clearly we had to create a focus on the planning that goes on in our community.

We put together a policy that fundamentally said we wanted to recreate the Planning Commission to focus specifically on planning matters. It would be in charge of developing detailed town plans and would be a proactive consulting body, that is, rather than sitting around and waiting for someone to put in a rezoning application or the like, the Planning Commission would be on the front foot, actively working to engage the community and work out its desires.

We took a document to the last election. It was called the Greater Darwin Regional Land Use Plan; it outlined some preliminary work that we did in opposition, and created the Planning Commission. Part of the role of the Planning Commission is to look at rezoning and the like because that is a fundamental principle of the planning process. You do not leave it to the development consent stage to subdivide or rezone; they are matters for the Planning Commission. The view always was that we would set up a Planning Commission to develop detailed town plans and the like.

If someone wants a development and has to rezone, they would go through the Planning Commission to do the rezoning. Once the development happened they would go to the Development Consent Authority because it is there to consent to development proposals, not necessarily rezoning or subdivision.

You asked why we are doing it now. It is because we made an election commitment and we believe in election commitments. I know that is hard for members on the other side to believe; it is certainly hard for the member for Nelson, who does not believe in election commitments. I recall the weight the member for Nelson put in when making his commitments.

I remember the member for Nelson making election commitments that he would oppose any move to put in place speed limits. In fact, he even chastised us when we were in opposition because we said we were supporting his campaign for open speed limits and we adopted his car sticker.

The member for Nelson does not put a lot of faith in election commitments. He made a commitment to oppose any move of the prison from Berrimah, which he never really stood by because he supported the prison being put in his electorate. He was opposed to a workers' camp in his electorate. That was another commitment; he said he would not allow thousands of people to move into the rural area, but, lo and behold, look what we have, a 4000-man workers camp no more than 1 km from his office in the rural area.

I understand that the members for Nelson and Nightcliff do not put much weight on an election commitment; for them it does not matter. On this side of the House, when we make a commitment we go through with it. Why now? We have been discussing this for four years. We had it in the election campaign. I guarantee if Labor wins the election it will have a mandate for this or that.

We believe in election commitments and we make a point of honouring them. The member for Nelson asked why we cannot leave it at the DCA. I think he likes the DCA; he has them bluffed. The DCA has probably spent more time with the member for Nelson than with any member of the public. The people there have an ear for the member for Nelson and he obviously likes them.

The member for Nightcliff talks about these major changes occurring, but it is a change to the reporting body. It simply provides advice to the minister. Everybody is saying it is a huge change, but it is not. We are just saying that the Planning Commissioner can provide the advice to the minister, as opposed to the DCA providing the advice to the minister. The minister will still make the decision. That is where the rubber hits the road; these are not big changes at all.

The other thing that has been overlooked by the members for Nightcliff and Nelson is that this bill contains arrangements which will see IES, Indigenous Essential Services ...

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 32: I raised that in my speech and said we supported that element.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not a point of order, member for Nightcliff. Sit down; you are on a warning. I will have no hesitation in removing you from the Chamber; in fact, it would give me great pleasure. Your commentary throughout this debate is insanely annoying. Please pipe down or you can cool off for an hour.

Mr TOLLNER: I thank the member for Nightcliff for letting me know her position. I am glad she is supporting this bill. I understand there is an aspect of it that she does not support, but in the main, she will be supporting it. I hope she does,

otherwise Indigenous Essential Services may well be acting illegally on all their locations on Aboriginal land across the Territory.

That is probably another reason government wants to expedite this, because we do not like occupying illegal sites. There is nothing controversial whatsoever, despite the hysterical screams from the opposition and the member for Nelson. This is simply a change of the reporting body from the DCA to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is working hard to develop plans; rezoning is a matter of planning and, as such, should be handled by the Planning Commission.

I commend the bill to the House.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 12

Noes 10

Mr Barrett
Mr Chandler
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Kurrupuwu
Ms Lee
Mrs Price
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Ms Lawrie
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Ms Purick
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker
Mr Wood

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TOLLNER (Lands and Planning) (by leave):

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TABLED PAPERS

Travel Report – Member for Blain

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table a report from the member for Blain relating to basic allowance expenditure under clause 6 of the RTD, submitted in the form of his academic transcript, dated 23 June 2016.

Anti-Corruption, Integrity and Misconduct Commission Inquiry Report

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to table the final report of the Anti-Corruption Integrity and Misconduct Commission Inquiry.

On 26 August 2015 this Legislative Assembly passed a resolution supporting the establishment of an anti-corruption integrity and misconduct

commission. Hon Brian Martin AO QC, the former Chief Justice of the Northern Territory Supreme Court, was subsequently appointed by the Administrator under the *Inquiries Act* to inquire into and report on how such a commission could be established in the Northern Territory.

Commissioner Martin has completed his inquiry and, as required by the act, handed his report to the Administrator on 27 May 2015. As the responsible minister for the *Inquiries Act*, I am required to table the report today. As members will see, this is a lengthy and comprehensive report. My government looks forward to considering the findings and the recommendations.

I thank Commissioner Martin for his work on this inquiry.

Power and Water Corporation Annual Report 2014-15

Mr TOLLNER: (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I table the Power and Water Corporation's Annual Report 2014-15.

Members interjecting.

Mr TOLLNER: There are cheers of joy from all in this place. The completion of the Power and Water Corporation's Annual Report 2014-15 was delayed, as most people know, due to the significant issues which arose during the audit process. A final report was not provided to the Department of Treasury and Finance until last week, on 24 June.

The Auditor-General audited PWC's 2014-15 financial statements and has provided a qualified audit opinion. Overall the Power and Water Corporation's 2014-15 actual financial performance was generally below expectation. The return on assets of 3.8% is 4.2 percentage points below the SCI target of 7%. This primarily reflects PWC's poor operating performance.

It is no surprise that Power and Water is in such a dreadful state of affairs. From the 1980s until 30 June 2014, PWC operated as a vertically and horizontally integrated multi-utilities business – a monopoly. In theory the single company model offers economies of scale and scope; however, in reality, the single company model adopted by PWC, combined with its lack of financial and operational transparency, independent price setting and an outdated regulatory environment, led to sub-optimal operational and financial outcomes, and inefficient pricing.

The Labor opposition would have us believe all was well at the Power and Water Corporation under its watch. It would have us believe that the

Power and Water Corporation's ills are a direct result of structural separation. Nothing could be further from the truth; for 10 years it was simply easier for Labor to look the other way and pretend everything was working well. When you take an active role and shine a light on issues such as that, you can truly highlight the shortfalls.

Turning to the findings of the Auditor-General, the basis of the Auditor-General's opinion includes property, plant and equipment. A number of material issues were found with the revaluation of assets that occurred in 2014-15. The Auditor-General also found that PWC's fixed asset register contained numerous errors.

Intangible assets – the Auditor-General was unable to obtain sufficient evidence to support the impairment charge estimated by PWC associated with its banked gas.

Provision for onerous gas contracts – the Auditor-General was unable to obtain sufficient evidence to value the economic costs of the two gas contracts held by PWC, that is, the gas purchase contract and the gas transportation agreement.

Income tax expenses and related tax balances – the Auditor-General was unable to determine whether any adjustment to the tax liabilities is necessary, as the above issues have the potential to impact PWC's tax liabilities.

I turn my attention to the provision of the onerous gas contracts. While Power and Water was a vertically and horizontally integrated utility, a monopoly, the issue was hidden from sight. It is only with the transparency and accountability brought about by structural separation that this issue has seen the light of day. I remind the Chamber that Power and Water's long-term gas and haulage supply contracts were entered into under Labor members' watch, so they are feeling the heat as the light is shone on their past shoddy deals.

Clearly Labor took its eye off the ball and purchased far too much gas. Maybe while Labor members were thinking about the aspirational amount of gas they should purchase, they stumbled with the real-world contractual term 'take or pay', which has real-world implications. While the Auditor-General's examination of Power and Water's 2014-15 annual financial statements identified significant issues in relation to its management of asset and financial information, the board also identified a range of governance and operating underperformance matters that need to be addressed.

The current board committed to addressing these shortfalls and improving PWC's financial transparency. To that end they tabled, at the

Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee, the PWC Board's Strategic Directions 2016-2020, which details how the corporation's management will implement the corporate strategy to achieve the objectives and goals set by the board.

This is a positive approach which should result in improved corporate and financial reporting outcomes in the Power and Water Corporation's future annual reports. I fully support the strategic direction the board has set its path on and I intend to complement that document with a strategic direction from government which will outline further structural separations and a way forward with the utilities market.

Like the government, the PWC has a plan and we are acting on it. The government has implemented a targeted strategy for Territory utilities since 2012, when we embarked on a substantial reform program for the electricity industry to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the sector and improve outcomes for Territory electricity consumers.

The Giles government has a plan in the form of the Northern Territory utilities strategy, which incorporates significant electricity reforms that are currently under way, and expands this government's commitment to improve electricity, water and sewerage services. These reforms include further structural reform of the Power and Water Corporation; electricity industry reform; water and sewerage industries reform; Indigenous Essential Services reform; and government owned corporations governance reform.

The reforms seek to deliver government's objective of safe, reliable and least-cost utility services for all Territorians through improving the delivery of utility services throughout the Territory, increasing the efficiency of the Territory's utility market, including the Territory's government owned corporations, and enhancing the prospects for competition in the regulated utilities sector where appropriate.

I table a copy of the strategy for the Northern Territory utilities, which will be available in the next 24 hours on the department of Treasury's website.

I thank the hard-working staff at the Power and Water Corporation, with a special mention to Power and Water networks in relation to their improved duration for reliability of uninterrupted supply to customers in 2014-15 in all the distribution network performance targets.

Committee Stage Amendments to Fuel Price Disclosure Bill 2016 (Serial 153)

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I said earlier today that I would table a copy of the proposed committee stage amendments to the Fuel Price Disclosure Bill 2016 (Serial 153) for public consumption, with a view to considering community consultation post-election to endeavour to keep fuel prices lower.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

Public Accounts Committee Report – Public Private Partnership Arrangements for the Darwin Correctional Precinct – consideration adjourned.

Public Accounts Committee Report into Structural Separation of Power and Water Corporation – consideration adjourned.

Northern Territory's Energy Future Committee Key Challenges and Opportunities Issues Paper – consideration adjourned.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's August 2015 Report to the Legislative Assembly – consideration adjourned.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's February 2016 Report to the Legislative Assembly – consideration adjourned.

Standing Orders Committee Report to the Assembly March 2016 – Motion to Adopt Recommendations – consideration adjourned.

Committee of Members' Interests Report to the Assembly March 2016 – Motion to Adopt Recommendations – consideration adjourned.

Public Accounts Committee Report on Repairs and Maintenance on Town Camps – consideration adjourned.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's June 2016 Report to the Legislative Assembly – consideration adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr BARRETT (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, today I rise to give my final address to parliament, and I seek leave to table two documents I will be referring to.

Leave granted.

Mr BARRETT: Well my short time in parliament has been an interesting experience. I have

enjoyed serving my community in many ways and will continue to do so until the next election. I have learnt a whole lot and have seen some inspirational things and some horrible things. I have worked harder than I have ever worked before in any role and made many sacrifices along the way. Mostly, my family life has suffered from the role taking much of my life over.

Recently, and very regrettably, I had a consensual adult relationship with another person. That affair ended, and for my part I am very much struggling with what I have done on a personal level, because it was everything I always hoped I would never be. The relationship certainly brought out the worst in me and I did things that I never thought I would.

The actions of myself and the other party affected primarily two people – my wife and the partner of the other party. For my part, I have had to address my failings in this affair and then seek the forgiveness of my wife, and then put processes in place to build a stronger marriage. Having gone through the hardest part of that process, my wife and I were in a place where we were moving on.

And so I continue to be an effective local member and an effective minister. I am very proud of the work that I have been a small part of because I know there are many Territorians who benefited from the effort. I am very proud of the constructive work this government has done balancing competing objectives to do what is genuinely in the interests of all Territorians.

I will step out the process of how this private matter came to public light.

In July 2015 the other party to this affair joins the Palmerston Branch of the CLP.

January 2016 – we meet and discuss issues in the community where she offers to help me with my social media leading into the election.

Through February and March the relationship becomes an affair.

19 March – the affair ends, both parties agreeing to move on separately, and I begin the process of improving myself to never repeat this and amending with my wife.

In late April constituents are reporting that Hale is spreading a rumour, and I report it to the party. It is recorded in the minutes of 4 May.

1 May – the other person in the affair resigns from the party.

21 May, only 6 days later, she appears in a group on Damien Hale's Facebook page in public

support of him and his campaign, and that is the first document I have tabled.

3 June – I receive a call. The media is chasing me after a member of parliament called a party member asking if I had sent inappropriate messages to her.

The other party to the affair also appears in a group on Hale's Facebook again in June.

10 June at 10.53 am, a member of parliament canvasses a CLP member and not only suggests that I have sent inappropriate messages to women (plural) but asks if I had approached her in a similar way. This is the second document I have tabled.

10 June, into the evening – *NT News* representatives present a range of allegations for me to comment on with very limited time to mount any sort of defence. Despite my claims that this was a consensual adult relationship, they gave neither the time nor the space to allow me to produce the evidence supporting my claim.

By the time the evidence is retrieved that counters all claims other than that I had a consensual adult relationship, the damage is well and truly done. I have had to resign the ministry and announce that I will not contest the next election. Members of this House accused me in various media of all manner of evil in this time when I was at my lowest, really putting the boot in. I will remember you and the words you uttered. I would not have done that to you.

A couple of media outlets, in their rush to produce scandal and publicly humiliate me for a private indiscretion, have, I believe, dealt with me in a brutal manner. Other media looked more thoroughly and gave a more balanced overview. They went so far as to ask the Leader of the Opposition if it was a conspiracy, and he delivers the most unconvincing answer of no that I can ever recall.

This ties members of this House, certain media outlets and Damian Hale to this effort to take my private issue and turn it into public humiliation and destruction of my career. These players sought to bring this private matter to public attention with devastating effect, for all their own selfish ambition. There was no quarter given, nor regard for my privacy or that of my family.

Politics is a dirty game and I firmly believe that my political enemies could not fault me in my work in the community and so, in order to bring me down, resorted to this base attack. Having said that, I have stood down from the ministry, announced I will not run again and now I will resign from the party tomorrow because I believe in what they do,

and I am aware that my private failings should not impact their public work any further.

Also, my wife and I have decided to do what is in the best interests of our family and deal with our private issues in private. I would like to publicly acknowledge my wife and my extended family for their forgiveness and support, the humbling support from my electorate and many supportive friends and church members. Also, to members of the CLP who believed in me and were strong for me when I could not be, you have my gratitude.

People of the Northern Territory will have a choice between the CLP, who are trying to build a better Territory, and opponents who seem to only have a talent in destruction and offer private attacks as a substitute for vision and mission.

It has been one of the greatest honours of my life serving the people of the Northern Territory. Best moment ever, helping a person in a whole lot of trouble get into housing and making that small family's life better. Worst moment, getting sworn at by an idiot in a CFMEU shirt in front of my children. I will always love the Territory and will still serve the people in small kindnesses as opportunity presents because it is who I really am.

Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was tossing up in my mind whether I would give an adjournment speech tonight. I was having dinner with a very old friend of mine last night and he asked, 'What are you going to say in your valedictory?' I said, 'Mate, I did not have any thoughts on giving a valedictory'. He says, 'Aww, mate. You can't slink out the back door with your tail between your legs; you have to stand up and reflect on a few things from your long political career.' I have given it some thought and maybe I should say a few words.

My life has been blessed by the people in it. I have probably been the most fortunate person this parliament has ever seen. As I said at a dinner not so long ago, I am not the smartest bloke around, without a doubt. Every success I have ever had is due to the people around me.

When I started in politics, in 2001, the first person I employed was Roger Steele. People said to me at the time, 'Get yourself some young staff, people with plenty of vitality and plenty of get up and go. That can really make you zing.' I remember thinking, 'The last thing I need is a lot of young people egging me on'. It is far better to have an old wise-head in the room to hold me back and temper me, and Roger Steele is a fantastic man in that regard. He is very well liked right across the community. I do not think politics matters when it comes to Roger; he is liked by everyone. He has this unbelievable, uncanny ability to remember

names and faces. I do not think he has ever forgotten someone. That was an extraordinary skill to have in my possession as a young politician with a bloke like him beside me.

The next person I employed was a fellow called Paul Cowdy; some people here may remember him. He originally worked for Michael Somare in Papua New Guinea to establish independence and self-government there. He had been working with Somare for almost a decade when he got called back to Darwin by the first Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, to work on his staff.

Mr Everingham made the decision that Paul Cowdy would be a handy bloke to have since he knew something about ushering in self-government, and he wanted him on his staff. Paul's father was the first psychiatrist in Darwin. The Cowdy Ward is named after him. Paul had a unique ability to understand Territory politics at its deepest. He had an incredible political mind and was one of the great speechwriters of our time. At his funeral in 2007, Prime Minister Howard said in the eulogy that Paul was one of the best speechwriters he had ever come across in his period in politics. I agree with that sentiment; there was none better when it came to putting together beautiful words.

I owe a lot to Paul Cowdy because he put me in contact with a range of people who were dedicated to the conservative Country Liberal cause. He worked for every Chief Minister in the NT right up to when he worked for me in 2001.

Since then I have been blessed with numerous people – too many to talk about – every one of them bringing unique skills to the job. I have always prided myself on ensuring I have the best people around me. I have been blessed in that regard and it has paid dividends.

Without a doubt, as a federal member I was very fortunate to be able to deliver things like the oncology unit and Tiger Brennan Drive. I will get heckles of derision from the other side, but the fact is neither of those two projects were on the federal government agenda until I was in the job. Aply assisted by the people I just mentioned, I was able to lobby for those things and see them become a reality.

My heart warms every time I drive down Tiger Brennan Drive. Seeing all the road works I have been involved in from the start makes me feel proud. Similarly, in Health I was very fortunate to be involved in the establishment of the oncology unit in Darwin and the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre. That fantastic national initiative, in so many ways, put the Territory on the health map. It is something we should all be proud of. The people at the critical care and

trauma centre do a fantastic job. They should be congratulated for the work they do. It has been an absolute honour to be involved in it.

I remember, in opposition, watching new members make speeches with their families around them. I had just finished a six-year stint in federal parliament and I remember feeling incredibly sad, thinking, 'How the hell am I going to operate in this place?' I watched as all the new members were so proud – they had their families here – and I felt gutted. I had been in one of the best governments, with John Howard, Peter Costello, Alexander Downer, Philip Ruddock and Tony Abbott, all of whom became very close friends of mine. To find myself in the Territory's 25-seat parliament, I almost ran out of the Chamber and started crying, thinking, 'God, how appalling'. I have to admit, it took me a good six to 12 months to overcome it.

The penny dropped one day; I cannot say exactly when it was, but it dawned on me that this is a completely different place, with completely different roles and responsibilities. We should never feel ashamed of being in this place. We should be more than proud to be elected as a Member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly; it does extraordinarily valuable work and is a valuable institution. You cannot compare it to the Australian parliament. Whilst we share politics, the two institutions are fundamentally different and they stand apart. Our forefathers who developed the Australian Constitution recognised that there was to be no real crossover between the roles of the federal parliament and the state and territory governments.

Having served in both Houses, probably the most exciting place to serve is in a state or territory government. You can easily get lost in the clouds in the federal parliament with big issues in relation to Defence, taxation, social security, foreign affairs and what is happening in the world, but the real meat is in state and territory governments, where you deal with things like roads, hospitals and schools, things you can feel and touch. That brings an enormous sense of satisfaction that you cannot get in the federal parliament.

There are things the Territory can learn about federal parliament. It has an incredibly robust committee system, which you would expect in a large parliament with many members. However, in a small parliament the committee system cannot work particularly well because you do not have the number of people in the system to make it work well.

Similarly, the Parliamentary Library in the federal parliament is a massive research centre with people sitting on the edge of their chairs, praying for a politician to ask them a question so they can

do some research. The NT Parliamentary Library has some wonderful people, but if you ask them for some research material they may be able to tell you if the book is in. We do not have experts in the field sitting down and doing research papers for us.

The other thing I found incredibly different was when I started my induction in the federal parliament – numerous federal parliamentarians spoke to us, and each of them said, 'If you ever get the opportunity, get on a plane. Get out of the place, have a look around, see the world and experience how other cultures and people operate.' Sadly, in the Northern Territory that is not the case.

I have been to a number of CPA meetings. People say there is a trip to Africa or the UK coming up. Everybody puts their heads down and looks at the floor, hoping not to be picked. It is a sad indictment, but the media's focus on politicians' entitlements tends to devalue these things. We have an opportunity to strengthen our committee systems so people can develop a deep understanding of issues that are important to Territorians.

Similarly, we could probably do more to provide research and support to members of parliament so they can get more detailed information. I find it bizarre when people like the member for Nelson say, 'Structural separation – has that occurred anywhere else and can you tell me where it happened'. You think, 'Mate, have you ever been out of Humpty Doo, Howard Springs or wherever it is you live?' It is unlikely.

Every time someone gets on an aeroplane the media seems to take great joy in publicly humiliating them for wasting taxpayers' dollars. That is a sad indictment of what this place has become. More effort should go into promoting this institution and support for parliamentarians. There are some things we can learn from.

What a wonderful honour it has been to deal with parliamentarians at the federal and Territory level. In the main – I would say 95% – the vast majority of people here are wonderful to deal with. I am mainly thinking about the opposition in Canberra and the Northern Territory.

Often we seem to fight and argue, which is the Australian way. It is what we do best in this country. It is what makes our institutions great. We are prepared to pull on the gloves, box on and have a decent argument. What many people do not see is that we put politics and ideology to one side, and many of us get on very well. I look over the Chamber at my friend, the member for Barkly. At times I laugh internally at some of the things he says – I love his turn of phrase – but he is a

decent bloke and a good person. I would not encourage anyone in Barkly to vote for him. I think he will lead the Territory astray, but he is an almighty great bloke and a good fellow to sit down and have a yarn with.

Similarly, the lady sitting over there – I have had a lot of fun in discussions with my babe, Lynne Walker, from Nhulunbuy. She is often great company outside of the parliament but, I have to say, she is a dreadful person in Question Time. She throws all sorts of smears and barbs at me all of the time, but when we are out of this place we tend to get on quite well.

It has been a delight working with my Country Liberal Party colleagues. The party has given me so much over the years; it has been my backbone of support. I originally ran as an Independent in the seat of Nelson, as many people know, but I made the decision thereafter to get serious about a political future and joined the Country Liberal Party. I was a bit concerned that I would be chewed up and spat out, but one of the best decisions of my life was to join this party. It has been incredibly good to me, and has given me opportunities that most people can only dream of.

To know that I have delivered four budgets, and that we have reformed the health sector, structurally separated the Power and Water Corporation and created the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund – I do not want to sound bigheaded, but these are incredible achievements which I feel proud to have been a part of. All of them have relied not so much on me, but the people around me. People all over the Territory and all over the country – I have been incredibly blessed by having them support me.

I have always taken the view that I do not want to be the smartest person in the room; I want to be the dumbest. I want to make sure all the people around me, providing me advice, know a hell of a lot more about the topics I am dealing in than I do. It is easy to sit there and massage views one way or the other, but that deep understanding and knowledge is something I will never have, and I have been blessed by the people around me who have it.

I should mention the people in my office. I know it is a bit rude, but the current crop – I have had a number of different portfolios and duties. Tim Dixon has supported me very well over the last few years.

My economic adviser, Tony Musumeci, who people on the other side know, wears his heart on his sleeve. He is not a political character by any means, but he puts his heart and soul into his job

and he has a brain like the universe. He is a great bloke to have on board.

Gary Swanson and Racheal Curtain, my Lands advisers, have been magnificent. Gary has been a great mate of mine for a few years. He has run the department of Lands and Planning in years gone by and has a very good insight into those matters. I am blessed by them being on board. Similarly, my support staff, Julie Stabernack – who also worked for the member for Grotorex – has been an absolute delight as a PA. Megan Giles, Marnie Hobson and others have all done a magnificent job.

I am very fortunate to have a good friend called Deane Russell. I made a speech the other night where, for some reason, I had a blank and missed his name, but the guy has been a tower of strength. He supported me well throughout my time in the federal parliament. He used to run all media in the Howard government and was in charge of all the media advisers. He has worked in Liberal politics since 1974 and is what you would call an old stager. He is a good political thinker and quite a mastermind, as well as a damn good friend and a great bloke. It has been wonderful working with him.

Last, and by no means least, my wife and children have endured all sorts of pain and humiliation while their husband and father was a politician. I am pretty loose with my words at times and do not mind a good stoush or a bit of controversy.

I read a book once called *The 48 Laws of Power*, and I think law number seven said, 'Wherever there is scandal be somewhere near it, preferably in the middle of it. Never be scared of it.' I took that rule to heart. I have never been afraid of a bit of scandal or controversy; I have often revelled in it, but the last year has worn pretty hard on me. I have taken blows in areas I was never prepared for. The humiliating attack about the gay slur comment hurt me. As I have said, my mother is in one of those relationships. I have never seen myself as being homophobic. I admit, I am not hanging out at the Sydney Mardi Gras or going to Throb on Friday nights, but ...

Mr Giles: That is true.

Mr TOLLNER: It is true. I do not hang out at those kinds of joints, but I have never considered myself to be someone with an axe to grind in that area. I was humiliated by the behaviour of some of our colleagues and the media. I suppose you roll with the punches.

I have had a great time; I have enjoyed everyone's company here. It has been a fabulous experience and I am very keen to do nothing in the near future. I will bow out for the next six

months at least, maybe 12 months. I will disappear from public life completely. I have no desire to be a political commentator or stick my nose in with future governments. The first thing to do is to get politics out of my system. As everyone here knows, once you have a political life you do not think about much else. It takes over and controls your life every waking moment, and most sleeping moments. You dream about it and wake up in the middle of the night with ideas; it never stops.

I read an article from the CEO of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, John Brogden. He was asked, what is the difference between politics and business? His response was, 'In business you have time. In politics you never stop.' There are issues that constantly arise. You cannot focus on anything for more than five minutes before you are on to the next thing. You sometimes get your weekends back and you can focus on specific issues, whereas the political game is chaotic and every day has a different issue.

I am very much looking forward to cleansing myself of politics. I might park next to a creek – maybe not in the Barkly electorate, but maybe in the member for Arnhem's electorate or somewhere like that – and try to murder a few swine or catch a couple of fish, but try to get politics out of my system.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me to go a bit past my 10 minutes, but I wanted to say those things. As that fellow said last night, 'You do not want to slink out of there with your tail between your legs'. That is what got me. I do not want to slink out of anywhere, not that I am hoping to go out with great fanfare either. Slinking away is not my style.

Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I make my very last speech in this House, nearly 20 years after I made my first speech.

I confess, having seen some of the footage when I announced my retirement, the young man who appeared in those clips and bits of footage is not the overweight older man you see before you today. Nevertheless, I believe my time in this House has been useful. I want to believe I have made a contribution to the people of the Northern Territory.

I was thinking long and hard, like the member for Fong Lim, about what to say tonight, so I looked at my maiden speech, which touched on a lot of things that affected the seat of Macdonnell, as it was at the time. One of the comments I made in my maiden speech was about the nature of the land councils and how they had, effectively, retarded the growth of land possessed by Aboriginal people.

To this day I remain convinced that has not changed. Whilst I see improvements, especially in places like the Tiwi Islands – and I wholesomely congratulate the aggression of the Tiwi Islanders in the development of the land they own – it is not universally reflected across the Northern Territory. It is still a great tragedy that poverty remains a problem amongst some of what should be, on paper, the wealthiest people in the world. The land they own is the equivalent of one twelfth of a continent. Yet it cannot sustain them in the way it has done for 40 000 years.

That is a lamentation, and I call for the federal government to revisit the structure of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* so it can become, as Mr Viner, who put out a pamphlet reassuring Territorians about land rights, said, the wellspring of economic growth that was intended at the time.

I will not dwell on that. I want to also talk about the media, which, in this country and generally speaking, is substantially broken. In pursuit of a story, they have forgotten to reflect upon themselves. Nobody is the check and balance on the media beyond *Media Watch* on Monday nights on the ABC. If the media was scrutinised in the way we are scrutinised – I think they should ask themselves some tough questions since they are the conduit between what happens in this place, the ministry and the public mind. When you see decisions made, such as the case in Lebanon by the Channel Nine *60 Minutes* crew – the handbrakes have gone. The reflection is no longer there; it is all about chasing the story at any cost. The cost is often not paid by the people who are reporting; it is paid by those being reported on.

We, as members of parliament, court the media. In opposition we court the media to create tragedy, and as a government we court the media to report on the things we do well. It creates a certain invulnerability in the media's mind. That does not necessarily make what they do, in all instances, correct. I will not dwell excessively on the media. I could give you a one-hour thesis, with blow-by-blow examples, of what I think is wrong there.

I thank all my parliamentary colleagues and the parliamentary staff who have assisted me year-in and year-out. Ian McNeill was a shining light for many years, and Michael Tatham is now the Clerk.

I thank Linda Coulter, my long-serving electorate officer in the seat of Port Darwin; Linda Heidstra, my personal assistant; Carol Carr, who has worked in the office more recently; Jana Tumuls, my chief of staff; and my previous chief of staff, Stephen Dunham. I also thank Jan Gibbett and Monique Gale, who was my health advisor.

I thank Patrick Moran, who has joined me in more recent times, as well as Cheryl Schmidt and the inimitable and indomitable Craig Jones, all of whom have served me stridently. I know Craig to be a man of infinite charity. Many people would be very surprised at that if you knew Craig Jones. I thank the DLOs who have come and gone, and my current two DLOs, Jo Murray and Henrik Hartmann. I also acknowledge my current and former media staff, Dimitra Grehl and Danielle Lede.

I hope I have not missed anybody. I am going through a mental map of my office. I thank all of them.

I also wish to place on the record my thanks to my wife who, in spite of everything, has put up with the shortcomings of her husband and the pain that is inevitably inflicted on a family. One of the great privileges of being a member of parliament is when you are under attack – whether you are justifiably under attack or otherwise, the people who do not get to defend themselves are the wives and children of members of parliament. And the husbands, I suppose. There are times when you get home to find your spouse, wife, husband or children raging against the injustices that have been perpetrated, and they have to suffer that in absolute silence.

I do not want to dwell on that too much; I want to dwell on something else. A message for my children, who are in the gallery – hello Eleanor and Gwenevere – and my darling wife, Dee, who is dressed up in a Coca Cola T-shirt specifically for the occasion. I want to dwell on a couple of things from my personal journey. There is little secret about my personal life, particularly what happened to me as a kid. What happened to me as a kid, profoundly affected me.

I recall, when I was being raped as a child, that, on one occasion, the fellow who was doing all of this decided to take me to the local beat and share the wealth, as he referred to it. When I was a police officer, many years later, I would go to that beat and raid it almost regularly in the hope of rescuing any other child who was in a place like that, but I suspect I was looking to rescue myself.

My history with alcohol and other drugs, especially alcohol, is also on the record. Shortly after the election it will be 30 years since I last took a drug or had an alcoholic drink. That is because I am scared witless of it because of the damage it did.

I reflect on these things for no other reason than the fact I have always reflected on them in a public way. I want to demonstrate that you can still live a wonderful, positive, constructive, contributing life, and that you can touch those experiences, as awful as they may be, and use them to lift yourself up and become so much more

than you may have otherwise been. I have always been open about this, not because I am proud of it, nor am I ashamed of it. It just is.

If my kids look at the history at some point in the next 20 years and read their dad's speeches, should they be bored enough to do such a thing, this is the one I want them to remember. At the end of it, I do not want my children to ever become victims, but should they undergo some trauma or trial in life, which they invariably will, whatever that trauma or trial in life is, do not become a victim. Be more than you could possibly imagine you can be. Be happy and passionate. Love your life and be engaged.

Too many people in the modern world allow themselves to become victims, so they demand apologies of governments, the Catholic church and God knows what else. The moment you say to another person, 'I cannot be happy or complete until you apologise', you have given away your ability to be happy and handed it to a third party.

Fight the things that need to be fought and seek justice where needed, but do not ever allow yourself to place your happiness into the hands of a third party, especially if that third party is reluctant to give you whatever you seek. Redemption is found within.

Last, I will simply say to whomever is listening, especially my children, be responsible. Whatever you do in life – and you will screw up; I guarantee it – whether it is good or bad, be responsible. Embrace your responsibility and your duty to yourself, your mum and dad, your family and the people you live around. Live your life with passion and love, and throw yourself into it completely.

I turn 51 this year, shortly after the election. It is time for me to reinvent myself. I see myself working for the next 20 to 25 years. If I wait another five years, by standing for the seat of Port Darwin again, I make it all the more difficult to reinvent myself.

Many people ask me what I will do. I have a couple of irons in the fire. The space program looks like it will not be as immediately apparent as I wanted it to be.

Mr Giles: You want to be an astronaut?

Mr ELFERINK: I wanted to run the Territory side of it, but that is ancient history.

I have a couple of irons in the fire, but I will spend time with my wife and kids, who deserve more of my attention. I will be selfish because I will enjoy their company that little bit more as well.

To my colleagues in this parliament, thank you, good bye and good luck.

Mr CONLAN (Greatorex): Madam Speaker, I was not going to say anything today. I was going to disappear quietly, but I think it is appropriate to say something. It is probably one of the most important speeches, but it will not be as long as the member for Fong Lim's or as deeply personal as the member for Port Darwin's.

My speech is about farewells. What a decade it has been. I never thought I would end up here, and I am sure many others feel the same. It has been a tremendous experience and it has changed my life completely.

I have seen and done things in this job that I would never have imagined doing or seeing. There have been some dark days, a few own goals, a couple of hatchet jobs and a few carve ups. As hard as that is, I think you cannot take it too personally in this House. It is all part of modern politics.

Regrettably, politics has generally become nasty, especially in the NT – personal and nasty. Playing the person rather than the policy seems to have become the norm. I have seen a massive, significant change over the last five years in the way we present ourselves to each other. The open season style of debate has become more prevalent than ever. It is unfortunate and counterproductive. The levels people will sink to, to score a point or win a seat are simply extraordinary.

I hope that can change in time. If we can treat each other with a bit more respect in this place – and I am guilty of it. I am a sinner; I am guilty as charged of this in the past. But I have seen what it has done to other people and me, and I do not think it is worth it.

The member for Port Darwin touched on the Territory media. Rather than sift through those I would not break bread with if it was the last meal on earth, I want to highlight some of the considered and thoughtful journalists who have attempted to put the facts on the table and provide as much context as possible. This includes Alyssa Betts, Jane Bardon, Katrina Bolton, Sara Everingham, Glenn Morrison, Barry Nicholls, Gary Wasserman, Sally Brooks, Rohan and Alex Barwick, and Stewart Brash. They are journalists who care more about the story and their profession than the Watergate factor. They want to get it right, and I thank them for their fair and balanced reporting during my time as an MLA.

I have had an interesting relationship with the party over the years – good days and bad days. I thank it for its support over the last nine or so

years. It is a proud Territory organisation made up of people who deeply care about the Territory's future, and I wish them all the very best.

Jodeen Carney took a leap of faith with me in 2007 to join the parliamentary ranks of the Country Liberals, along with her team of James Lantry, Greg Charter, Dee Davies and Jane McAllister. It was a pretty small operation in those days. I thank them for their support and help. The two other MLAs at the time – we were an opposition made up of just four – were Fay Miller and Terry Mills. Thank you for taking me under your wings.

To my current colleagues, it has been a pleasure working with you all in opposition and in the transition to government. What a time that was! In 2008 we got so close, and then in 2012 we finally did it. It has been a terrific ride and I wish you guys the very best in this election and beyond.

To my colleagues opposite, best wishes in your pursuits. Despite the personal argy-bargy in this place, I believe you all have the Northern Territory's best interests at heart. Some of us are better at this job than others. Some of us work harder than others. Some of us are more cut out for politics than others. I believe all of us in this place are here to advance the best interests of the Northern Territory. I wish you all the very best in the upcoming election and whatever you choose to do beyond that. More power to you all.

My first Department of the Legislative Assembly staff member was the late Brian Cook. Some of you would remember Brian. He came to Alice Springs armed with a couple of Tupperware containers full of coffee, sugar and tea, and he said, 'Here you go; this will get you started.' He handed me the keys to the office and the car and said, 'Off you go. You're on your own.' He passed away not long after. He was a tremendous staff member of the Legislative Assembly. To everyone from then on, including the current crop of DLA staff, thank you for your support.

My constituents – I would not be here without them. They elected me with a thumping majority in three elections. They supported me and backed me in the 2007, 2008 and 2012 elections. Thank you to all in the seat of Greatorex.

I thank my office staff – Karen Berry, Jo Hansen and Frances Hardy. It has been an interesting time for them over the last twelve months or so, working for a retiring member who does not have a seat to defend. It is not an average day for them. They have been packing up an office for the last few months. I thank them for all their support. I also thank my ministerial staff.

To both Chief Ministers – Adam Giles and Terry Mills – thank you for the opportunities you have provided to me. I will never forget that.

To my family – since starting in this job I got married and had two children, and I have been away for nearly half of my son's life. He is seven, and I have been away for probably three-and-a-half years of that. Each year I stand here and thank my family for their continued support. I reiterate that today, but this time I am coming home for good. Frankly, I cannot wait. I am ready to go. I have what done I can. I am not really sad about leaving. I am somewhat sentimental about it – I apologise for the tautology. I have had enough and I am ready to go. I want to use my experience as an MLA to pursue other opportunities that will benefit the Northern Territory.

I am a little sad, however, that Greatorex will cease to be a Northern Territory electorate. Tony Greatorex was a great Territory pioneer, and his name and legacy have served this parliament very well. I take comfort that the Greatorex name is still prominent in many parts of the Territory, including Central Australia.

And so I sign off for the last time as a member for parliament, as the member for Greatorex. I am very proud of my achievements in opposition, particularly as shadow Health minister. We did some great work. As Tourism minister in the early days, and as Sports minister, I think we set the scene rolling, particularly in Tourism. The Chief Minister has grabbed that ball and run with it, and we are now looking at one of the best tourism setups we have ever had.

It has been an honour and a pleasure to serve the people of the Northern Territory in such a way. Thank you and goodnight.

Mr CHANDLER (Brennan): Madam Speaker ...

Mr Tollner: I hope this isn't a valedictory speech.

Mr CHANDLER: No, there is a lot of work to do yet.

I want to use tonight to reflect on my electorate of Brennan and pay tribute to some members of our team who are leaving us for good. It is a sad day for the Country Liberals and for Territorians. It makes you reflect on what it is like to be a politician. The member for Port Darwin eloquently stated that your life is in other people's hands, and the way life is represented through the media today makes it difficult.

I recall a story from last week. Obviously we are looking for good people to stand as politicians in the lead-up to any election. I was speaking to a

young lady who is a prominent business person around town. She was reflecting on a couple of people in parliament. Her words were, 'Is that as good as we've got?' I asked if someone of her talent and ability would ever consider running in politics, and she said, 'You have to be joking. Why would you want to put yourself up to that kind of scrutiny?' She talked about how she could probably out-earn a politician without the scrutiny required.

I want to reflect a bit on something the member for Greatorex said. We find ourselves defending what we do in a time when we should not have to. Do not get me wrong; I am open to fair criticism. The reality in this job is that you expend public monies to perform your duties, but you know you have achieved great things for the Territory in the meetings you attend and the agreements you sign – the long-term benefits that flow from meeting business people, departmental staff and other jurisdictions' ministers.

The week before last I had the opportunity to sit down with the president of another country in his parlour, talking about the northern Territory. The benefits that could flow from that meeting are immeasurable. It is not a fair criticism that the media often prey on politicians of all persuasions when it comes to travel. We have to get through it because of the benefits that flow.

To John, thank you very much for your guidance over the years. Nathan is another great example of someone with so much talent, who has openly admitted to making a mistake. Who in this place can say they have never made a mistake in life or that they have gotten to where they are today without falling down and getting back up again? I do not think any one of us can say they are without sin. We make mistakes all the time and we learn from them; we get up and move again.

Thank you, Dave – another mentor, someone who has taught me a great deal about politics. Thank you, Matt – we will hear the dulcet tones of Matt Conlan, I am sure, over the airwaves, for years to come. You have been a great friend and support.

I now want to reflect on how far the great suburb of Palmerston has come over the last three-and-a-half years, since the CLP government came to power. I spent four years in opposition and, while we were close in 2008, a part of me thanked God we did not actually win government because I was new to the game. I took that four years in opposition very seriously and used it as a solid apprenticeship for government.

On entering government in 2012 we inherited some issues, not to mention that the budget situation was in dire straits – projected debt, deficits and a public service culture that aligned

with the Labor way of doing things. We had to deal with a tough budget situation and a new vision that we wanted to impart. Without trying to play politics, after nearly 12 years in government Labor lost its way towards the end through not providing enough leadership in our departments and not driving them to do everything they are capable of doing.

We have a philosophy that governments should facilitate business, better Territorian's lives and advance the Northern Territory. It is not getting in the way of things; it is facilitating things. Government cannot and should not be everything, but it should do all it can to be – in its truer sense – a public service.

In the last few years we have seen great changes in Palmerston; it is amazing. We came to government when land release had all but stopped. That is because the price of land had pushed to around \$300 000 in Bellamack for a standard housing block. Today that place is thriving not only in public infrastructure, but also in the private sector.

The new Gateway Shopping Centre has been years in the making. In my time as Minister for Lands and Planning, I worked for hundreds of hours to assist the development getting off the ground because not only is there work for the builders on a site like that, but the hundreds, if not thousands, of workers who will be involved in the shopping centre once it sees its full potential. That is in three or four stages over the next few years. There could be 2000 or 3000 workers – jobs that do not exist today, which will exist when the shopping centre opens. That is a massive difference to the city of Palmerston.

There are other shopping centres, such as the new Woolworths at Bakewell. Woolworths owned that block for 16 years but never saw a day when Palmerston would be thriving. It is different today because Palmerston is thriving. A number of years ago it was committed to – I was Minister for Lands and Planning at the time – and that shopping centre is now open. It has gone from being a thought bubble for well over a decade to, in a few short years, going through the planning stages, being supported by this government and finally opening. Again, that creates hundreds of jobs not only in its construction, but also now it is open.

The Palmerston Regional Hospital is being realised. There is a lot of politics in this space, but we can argue that in its 12 years in government Labor did not build a hospital in Palmerston. That hospital is coming out of the ground today. In fact, the second level is being poured as we speak. It is not a dream anymore; it is being constructed. The construction of that hospital will provide

hundreds of jobs over the years through the construction and when it opens.

Rydgges Palmerston is another investment by a local developer, with \$50m worth of private hotel investment in Palmerston. It is fantastic that the government is investing in Palmerston, but what excites me even more is that the private sector is as well. Why? Because they have confidence in Palmerston – the place is thriving. We have introduced \$57m worth of roads infrastructure simply because the place is growing.

Zuccoli is an amazing suburb coming out of the ground. It will be an amazing suburb and it is interesting watching it develop. Just over 30-odd years ago Palmerston was simply a water tower and a Coles supermarket along with a few public houses. To see it grow to what it is today is an amazing feat; it has gone through subsequent governments.

I take this opportunity to thank all my current staff in each of my portfolios, as well as my electorate officers over the years and the staff who have worked for me from each of those departments. I have had a few portfolios. Today they are Education, Transport, Infrastructure, Veterans Support and Essential Services. I have had Lands and Planning; Housing; Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Business; and Asian Engagement and Trade.

I could not do what I do without the staff in my office upstairs. As Dave said earlier, surround yourself with good people and good results occur. Thank you to everybody. I look forward to a long career in this House, working with everyone here.

Mrs PRICE (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I seek to give my adjournment address to the House in my first language, Warlpiri. In accordance with Standing Order 23A, I will give my address in English first, and I will table a written English version before speaking in Warlpiri.

I am proud to be speaking Warlpiri in parliament today and addressing my people in the only language they fully understand. I want to say a sincere thank you to all the constituents in my electorate in Mataranka; Beswick; Barunga; Manyallaluk; Werenbun; Pine Creek; Kybrook Farm; Douglas Daly; Sturt Plateau; Timber Creek; Bulla; Amanbidji; Aileron; Pigeon Hole; Top Springs; Kalkarindji; Daguragu; Lajamanu; Ti Tree; Willowra; Nyirripi; Yuendumu; Katherine; Pmara Jutunta; Nturiya; Six Mile; Mulga Bore; Wilora; Yuelamu; Yarralin; Emerald Springs; and Laramba.

I appreciate and greatly value all the support you have given me as your local member. As a traditional owner of a beautiful part of my

electorate, I feel very privileged to be able to represent all the people of Stuart. I am also proud to have represented people right across the Territory as a minister for several important portfolios in the Giles government. I am particularly proud to have served the Aboriginal people of the Territory, as well as giving them a voice.

It has been a pleasure to serve in the 12th Assembly as the Minister for Local Government and Community Services; Housing; Parks and Wildlife; Men's Policy; Women's Policy; and Statehood. I am very proud of the achievements we have made, and there have been many highlights.

I thank my departmental staff for their dedication and hard work, especially Chief Executives Mike Chiodo, Leah Clifford, Andrew Bridges and Ben Scambary. I thank my electorate office staff: Karen in Alice Springs; Rosemary and Jodi in Katherine; and Colin Lillie, my community liaison officer. They are always there to help me and are always by my side.

I also thank John Jansen in the northern part of my electorate, whose time and experience I greatly appreciate. I look forward to working with him as we head to the election. Thank you to my ministerial staff – Heidi, Kate, Chloe, Sam, Nathan and Michael – and departmental liaison staff, Jan and George.

I thank all the Legies, Clerks and everybody else who helps us. You all do a wonderful job. Also, thank you to our security and drivers.

Thank you to my Cabinet colleagues and the parliamentary wing for all your support. I offer my best wishes to the members retiring this term.

I thank my family for all their support this year. My family is very large and extended, and it would be impossible to name them all today. However, I especially thank my husband, Dave Price; my daughter, Jacinta; my grandchildren, Leiland, Ethan, Declan and Kincaid; and my younger brother, Charles. My success this year could not have been achieved without all of you beside me.

Finally, I send my best wishes to all Territorians, especially the people of Stuart.

[The member spoke in Warlpiri.]

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I am 20 months into my term and 60 days out from the general election. It has been a very interesting time, a complete whirlwind.

I start by acknowledging the members of the House who gave their retirement speeches. Other

members of the House are giving reflection speeches in the hopes of re-election after 27 August, and I hope to continue representing my community.

The political landscape will look quite different without the likes of Dave Tollner and John Elferink. I acknowledge their retirement and the contributions they have made.

I have been the member for Casuarina since 21 October 2014. I still pinch myself about it every day. I am so grateful and privileged to be in the position I am in, mostly because we all get the opportunity to hear the most incredible stories and the perspectives of the people in our electorates. To be able to represent them is a huge honour every day.

Casuarina is exceptionally close to my heart. It is where our first family home is, which we rented for a very long time before going through what my parents called 'austerity fortnights'. We ate a lot of spaghetti bolognese and things that could be frozen while we saved long and hard to purchase the family home in Nakara.

I had my first job after school at Darrell Lea, the chocolate shop in Casuarina Square, where I ate a diverse diet of chocolate orange balls, peanut brittle and lots of delicious things. It was an amazing experience in customer service and I got to know the products very well.

I started my degree at Charles Darwin University, also in my electorate. Many of my big life decisions have been made on beach walks at Casuarina Coastal Reserve with the important people in my life – my parents, my brother and my partner, Jake – including the decision to purchase our first home, buy a cat and call it Munchkin, and the very important decision to go into politics and recontest in the next election.

There is so much to say. The Royal Darwin Hospital, the university, the largest shopping centre and the Casuarina Coastal Reserve are all in the electorate of Casuarina, where I represent the people of Alawa, Tiwi, Lyons, Brinkin and Nakara. My biggest thanks go to the constituents for their support and for being open with their perspectives, opinions, concerns and issues over the period of the last 20 months, and for allowing me to represent them here. It is appreciated. It is such a diverse, welcoming community which is very interested in and passionate about issues like health and education. We have many nurses and doctors who work at the local hospital, as well as a beautiful community of seniors. It is a diverse community.

I want to reflect a little on my 20 months in this House. One of the first issues I was involved in

was the fight against the sale of TIO by the CLP government. The mobilisation of Territorians during that time was nothing short of incredible. It was a real community reaction and mobilisation. It gives me great pride that I was part of the fight against that sale, as I know many of my Labor colleagues and the Independents were. The sale of public assets, and what that means for the Northern Territory, is still an issue that resonates through my community.

I shout out to my local schools. I have many: Nakara Primary School; Alawa Primary School; Namarluk Primary School; Dripstone Middle School; and the hospital school. They are under the leadership of Britany Roestenburg, Sandy Cartwright, Lorraine Hodgson, Peter Swan and Tania Nicholls. It is a privilege to be involved in those schools, provide support to events and get to know the parent, student and teacher bodies over the last 20 months. I hope I get the opportunity to continue doing that.

The last week, supporting the NAIDOC breakfast at Alawa Primary School and seeing *The Children of Happytown* – the performance at Namarluk, where every student was involved, plus Laddie the dog – reminded me of how beautiful the community is and how much community support there is for our local schools and teachers.

Royal Darwin Hospital has been very topical. I raised the parking issue over a long period of time. We are pleased there is a commitment to a multistorey carpark. That must happen. I thank my colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, for helping to continue to raise that issue and keep it on the agenda. It is high on the agenda for some of my constituents who are impacted by the implications of the hospital parking on a daily basis.

I thank the Landcare Group, an incredible group of local volunteers who give up so much time to work on two of the blocks at Casuarina Coastal Reserve – the beach block and the moth block. It has come so far in the 20 months I have been the local member, and the group has been working on these blocks for much longer than that. I recently had one of the best opportunities I have ever had, which was to go with volunteers and work with the rangers to do the controlled burn off in the Casuarina Coastal Reserve. I developed an appreciation of what our rangers do every day to keep our reserves beautiful in their ecological value – the fire, weed and erosion management. It is important that we maintain and preserve our reserves. It is important for us to maintain and upgrade the car parks, roads and picnic facilities, but it is equally as important to talk about the erosion, fire and weed management within our parks and reserves, and make sure we put the right resources into that.

I was recently very proud to sit behind the Leader of the Opposition while he outlined Territory Labor's plan for the Territory. The plan puts Territory children at the centre and gets to the guts of doing some work up front. We need to work with families early if we want to truly grasp the issues in the Northern Territory and give our kids the best start in life. I am proud of that.

We want to restore integrity to government. The report tabled today from the Anti-Corruption Integrity and Misconduct Commission Inquiry will be incredibly important to a future government in the Northern Territory. We have a plan for jobs for the future of the Northern Territory.

I was also incredibly proud to work on our innovation plan, which a future government needs to be on the ball with. We do not talk too much about it in the Northern Territory – supporting innovation hubs and backing our own in a strategic way. I was very proud to be involved in that, and I hope I get the opportunity to continue driving that in a Territory Labor government after August 2016.

I thank the people who have worked as my electorate officers – I really appreciate your advice and support, day to day – and those in the Leader of the Oppositions office. To my Territory Labor colleagues, every day I am proud to be a member of the Territory Labor team as your colleague. I thank you very much for the support and encouragement you have provided me over the last 20 months.

To everybody in this Chamber, it has been interesting. It has been a steep learning curve and I have learnt from each one of you in one way or another, so I thank you very much for that.

To my family, my friends and Jake, this is an incredibly interesting and wild journey, and I thank you so much for your unconditional love and for being on that journey with me. Hopefully I have the opportunity to continue to represent the people of Casuarina come 28 August.

Mr STYLES (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak about a long-term Territory resident who has made an outstanding voluntary contribution within our community for others to enjoy the music of ensembles and orchestras.

Mary Wheaton, nee Hawke, has been a viola player in orchestras and ensembles for more than 50 years. For 40 of those years, while she has lived in Darwin, she has been involved in performances throughout the Territory and interstate. Mainly self-funded and self-taught through her attendance at several state and national music camps, as well as attending summer schools at university, her keenness in

playing viola and ensuring others enjoy this type of music is equally as enthusiastic now as it was half a century ago.

She has performed in every state and territory in Australia, as well as having undertaken a European tour with the Canberra Youth Orchestra. While travelling through the Top End of Australia, on her around Australia trip in September 1974, she felt a connection with this part of the country and thought, 'I wouldn't mind living here'. The thought became a reality a few months after Cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in December 1974. Mary was offered a temporary work transfer to Darwin, accepting a permanent position within two weeks of her arrival.

Having been born in a remote regional area of New South Wales and loving the outdoor lifestyle, Mary was not bothered by the conditions endured in those early months in Darwin. There were power cuts and food shortages post-Cyclone Tracy. Playing music with others plus enabling community members to enjoy a range of music helped immensely with the Darwin community enduring the early hardships that people found themselves experiencing.

Singing, dancing and playing music was her lifestyle in the Top End, while working at the Commonwealth public service as officer in charge of the Territory's plant and workshop finances. For others in Darwin, the devastation post-Cyclone Tracy had a visual impact on them. For Mary it was an aural impact. The sound of the land was pervading silence. No birds, no chirping, no sounds from insects and no leaves rustling in the wind. In Mary's belief it is the music of life that enlivens the spirit, such as singing in the rain or whistling at work.

In Darwin during the post-Cyclone Tracy period, Mary gathered with other musicians and played different types of music for the people living in the Top End to enjoy. When there were enough string players, the Darwin string orchestra was formed and grew to become the Darwin chamber orchestra before becoming Darwin Symphony Orchestra, or the DSO.

After a decade of making do, they played music whatever the conditions, even when the rain was noisy and insects were clambering around them. The happiness given to others was a joy for Mary.

While raising a family with three children, who also joined in with her music making, she was still able to contribute to an abundance of performances with the DSO, taking its music to the people of the Territory. The different types of music Mary and the playing members shared with audiences included chamber music, youth music training, theatre company music and wedding music.

Included with Mary's music roles over this period was 30 years with the Darwin Chorale, as well as secular and sacred music performances, and with the pit orchestras for musicals. The adventures she had from her performances over the decades varied. Comical mishaps, broken instruments and sickness occurred. On the day her mother died, just a few hours before the closing night of a musical production, Mary still played her part in providing music for others.

Mary believes that her voluntary contribution to the community over 50 years of playing music, that giving freely her expertise and time, enhanced the spirit of the community. She believes the connection between players and audiences listening to the music benefits and strengthens the wider community.

Mary, to this day, 50 years after she first started playing the viola, still lets the community enjoy her music, especially her expertise and volunteering contributions. She loves bringing joy to others through her music. The Greek word 'symphony' means 'sounding together'. Mary's musical focus has contributed greatly to our community, especially involving 50 years of playing viola in ensembles and symphony orchestras throughout Australia.

We who live in Darwin and enjoy listening to the Darwin Symphony Orchestra are very fortunate to have been able to enjoy the fantastic contribution Mary Wheaton has made over all these years since moving to Darwin post-Cyclone Tracy, in early 1975. We thank her sincerely.

At the end of this 12th Assembly of parliament, I sincerely thank my constituents who had the faith to put me here for the past two terms. In the upcoming election I will ask them to allow me to continue my community work, representing them in this House.

I thank the Department of Business, especially Chief Executive Michael Tennant and Deputy CE Andrew Cowan, for the ongoing fantastic work and support that they provide to me and all my staff.

The Department of Corporate and Information Services Chief Executive, Kathleen Robinson, and Deputy CEO, Chris Hosking – to you and your team, and in regard to all the awards you have won for achievements in the community, what a fantastic effort.

To the officers in the Department of the Chief Minister's Social Policy Unit, Multicultural Affairs and Seniors – Deputy Chief Executive, Rachel Bacon; Executive Director, Salli Cohen; Manager of Community Engagement, Siobhan Okely – thank you very much for what you have contributed to those important portfolios.

I thank the Department of Chief Minister's Strategic Defence Support Group for all it has done – the General Manager of Strategic Defence Liaison, Stephen Mencshelyi; the Director of Strategic Defence Support, Peter Sims; the Manager of Defence Industry Development, Graham Tribe – and the Commissioner for Public Employment, Craig Allen, and his team. Thank you very much for all you have done.

To the principals of the schools in the Sanderson electorate – these are the hubs of our community and deserve to be supported. To Sanderson Middle School's Liz Veel, I personally thank you for what you have done in assisting Paul Wyatt in bringing 15 years of my life's work into being, that is, the Neighbourhood Activity Centres. What we have is obviously a winning formula; it is going like a house on fire and it looks like everyone will want one very soon. Keep up the good work and thanks for all the effort you have put into it.

I thank Anula Primary School's Kerry Hudson; Wagaman Primary School's Michele Cody, who is currently on leave and starts again in the upcoming semester; the acting principal at Wagaman, Carol Putica; and Wulagi Primary School's Susan Kilgour. Susan, what you have done in relation to public private school is a great initiative and is working well. Thanks for your commitment to the Sanderson Alliance and what you have achieved in that space.

To the members of the Country Liberal Party's North Darwin Branch, President Tory Mencshelyi, and Chair Gary Haslett, thank you very much for your support in the upcoming election.

To my Sanderson electorate officer, Vanessa McCall – my right arm – you do a great job, which is evident in the way people treat you and the respect and warmth they show for everything you do for our community. Jan Sporn, our part-time, relief electorate officer, is such a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. All of us should spend a little more time seeking out that wisdom.

My very good friend, John Moyle, who turned 97 recently, is a volunteer who has raised thousands of dollars for charities by collecting outside my office. John is recovering from melioidosis. John is apparently the oldest bloke in the world to survive melioidosis. The Menzies School of Health Research is treating him as a living laboratory to find out how to beat it. So many people half his age die from this debilitating disease. I do not know how you have done it, John, but you have kicked it and you are winning the battle. Good on you, and we hope to see you back soon, raising money for charity as you have done for many, many years.

In my ministerial parliamentary office, Gary Shipway is my senior adviser and chief of staff. Thanks, Gary, for everything you have done. You have been in this game for a long time, and your knowledge and understanding of how it all works is phenomenal.

Suzanne Turnbull does a fantastic job – I do not know where we would be without people like Suzanne – along with Marita and Rod McGrath. They are my three ministerial advisers. Rebecca Barr is what I believe to be the number one communications adviser in this place. Rebecca, you are amazing and a champion and machine the way you punch out all that stuff. Megan Hughes is ministerial assistant and personal assistant. Megan stepped up like no one has ever done before to do both roles. Sally Parmenter, who is currently on leave, thanks for coming in. Francesca Pandolfo, our liaison officer, thank you. Thanks also to Dannielle Novak, and Melanie Griffith, who is giving us a hand as a PA.

A special thank you goes to my fan club, which consists of my daughter Kristy and her husband, Rika; Adam and his wife, Cassie; Damien and his wife, Maree; my grandchildren, Telicia, Dakota, Emily, Elissa, Chloe, Madison and Hayley. Thank you for your ongoing support. You have heard other people speak in this House, and you know it can be really tough without the support of your family.

I have saved the best for last. The most important person in this is my wife, Linda. I thank you for everything you have done for me. I would not be here without your support, and I could not do what I do in the community without your fantastic support.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, let me start with you and your wonderful staff of the Legislative Assembly. You do a great job; it is an incredibly dynamic one.

I appreciate what the Speaker does outside of this place. I have said many times, the highly professional outfit that supports you in this workplace makes it a privilege to be here.

I have been a teacher-in-charge, a senior teacher and a principal. I know what it is like to lead and deliver a professional workplace. This place never changes; it is always highly professional and supportive. All the elements of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory's role – it delivers.

I also make special mention of the committees. I have served on a number of committees over the last four years. I will make a special mention of the Northern Territory's energy future committee. I thanked the member for Daly, who is the chair of

that committee, the other night at a function. That is one committee I have learnt a lot from, which is what this job is all about. There has been considerable and significant learning, very enjoyable and informative travel, and a wealth of research which has underpinned my ability to relay that back to the wonderful Territory Labor opposition and thoroughly debate our policy developments.

Kaye Henderson and the staff in the Parliamentary Library Service are an outfit I do not spend enough time with, but every time I have called on their support they have been excellent. When researching the outback, the frontier and Indigenous issues, linking them to very challenging economic development issues, they have been superb. I think they enjoy it and that they have taken a personal interest in some of the research topics. It is a crew I would like to hang out with a bit more. Who knows what will happen. If all goes to plan I will be formally requesting services. If it does not I might be hanging out in the state library a bit. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be part of this place.

I must mention, once again, the great people of Barkly, who I have spent more than half my life with. We are ticking over 38 years together now. I will be asking for your support again because I have some serious unfinished business. To the great people of Barkly, thank you for your support. I look forward to the opportunity of completing another term, should you deem me worthy in the 13th Assembly.

I think the 12th Assembly of the Northern Territory will go down, for many reasons, as a very interesting time. Media or no media, public scrutiny or no public scrutiny, the tales will be told. At the end of the day, the take-home message is we are responsible for ourselves. We can do things, but it is about how we do them. We need to fess up and be honest. If we are called out for something that it is not entirely right then we should cop it sweet. That resonating message will be told in Territory media yarns and on more formal occasions for many years to come.

I had my first conference with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association under the Territory opposition's new travel policy. I was the guinea pig going overseas, so we wrote it up and put it to the public. The public assessed it and there were no complaints. It provided a dynamic opportunity and I recommend it to all parliamentarians. A quick anecdote – sharing a carriage on a steam train with elected community members from the Maldives, the Cayman Islands, Bermuda, the Seychelles and the Cook Islands, debating climate change and sea levels rising, is a great memory and learning experience for any member of parliament. It was a wonderful experience and I

recommend it to all our parliamentarians. Look at where it can benefit your professional development, that of the constituency you represent, and this Legislative Assembly.

I will make special mention of the Barkly sub-branch of the ALP, which has swelled in numbers. An amazing array of people have joined and supported Labor in the Barkly and, consequently, supported me. I am very humbled by that. I have run my own race for all my life, but having this groundswell of support – and the political machine that has engaged under the banner of ensuring the Territory is governed under Labor values in the future – is very humbling. You guys are flying the flag, standing up, debating, lobbying and campaigning for our cause. You are supporting me as the member and as a candidate in the election. Thank you all; it is a truly humbling experience and I wish everyone all the best.

The family has grown with the new nephews, nieces and grandchildren, but we have lost elders along the way. The McCarthy family, as a clan, has united nationally. I think we are getting tighter than ever. It is great to be a member of the clan and be advised by such family diversity. We are a great mob in debate and we have always been great together in gatherings. The politics and values of our society feature in many debates, and I am very humbled to take advice. It comes freely and frankly. If you can get it from family, you are on the right track.

My wife, Dawn McCarthy, and my immediate family – thank you. You call a spade a spade. You call it for what it is, and if there is any time anyone needs to fess up and cop it sweet for their failings or misgivings, you make sure it is heard. Good on you. That is the way it should be.

It is an interesting time. I am throwing my hat in the ring and hope to be judged worthy because I have serious unfinished business representing the constituency of Barkly and the rural and remote area, as well as being part of the bigger picture of governance in the Northern Territory. My ambition is to do that with an incredible collective of likeminded people.

The Labor opposition has worked hard. We have had some significant challenges, but we have presented clear policy alternatives. We put ourselves forward as an alternative government of the Northern Territory. We have had experience in government, served diligently in opposition and are ready to go around again.

It is not only the parliamentary colleagues who I share the Caucus with – as well as policy development and debates – but all the candidates. I take my hat off to the candidates who have put their hand up, because they are putting

themselves out there for a significant life challenge. I am amazed at the diversity of people who are standing for Labor, who want to represent Labor values and take control of the Northern Territory with good governance, accountability, trust and integrity - the environment, jobs, Indigenous issues, regional and remote areas, housing and equity. They are an incredible crew and I wish everybody the best of luck.

It is a wild ride, but stick with it because, if we end up together on the head of the mace, we will be able to deliver. You have to be inside that tent, which is place I want to be again, for some serious unfinished business.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and farewell everybody. I hope to see you soon, but, whatever may come, you will always find me rattling around the Barkly or the Territory somewhere.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member for Barkly's last adjournment for this Assembly. I am sure there will be plenty more. But watch out for the Independents; you never know what might happen in the 13th Assembly. If you have a crystal ball, let me know.

I also want to say a few words about my electorate of Nelson. It is a very diverse electorate. People think it is rural. It is rural to some extent, but it is also industrial, Defence, environmental and pastoral – I have one cattle station in my electorate – and mining. Most of Darwin is built on materials such as sand and gravel that come out of the Howard Springs area.

It is a diverse area with Aboriginal communities – 15 Mile and Knuckey Lagoon. There are some great people there, but unfortunately there are some issues which are unresolved. We have to keep working towards trying to make life better for the people who live there.

I need to make sure I thank my crew. It is not very big – when I listen to the ministers thank the number of people they thank. I thank Kim, who is my EO. She has worked tirelessly, and she has been through all the ups and downs. I do not know how she stands my confusion because I am not the most organised person. I am a disorganised organised person, if you know what I mean. I know where some things are, but she is able to withstand all that. Kim has had some problems in her life recently, and I hope they go away soon. At the same time, she has supported me and worked hard, and I appreciate the hard work and care she has provided in my electorate office.

Helen has been my part-time research officer. She has not done it before and she is learning. When she first saw a piece of legislation, she did

not know what it was. It has been a learning curve for her and she is working her way through the process of understanding the strange matters that come before us in this House.

Kerry is the new person helping me out, the part-time person we are allowed to have for a few hours a week. Kerry used to be the manager of the Humpty Doo golf club and she is giving me a hand at the moment. She is learning the ins and outs of running an electorate office, and I appreciate her hard work.

I am sure, when we get back this week, we will be trying to clean up boxes of papers we do not need anymore. I am sure they will be shredded and taken to the people who are growing flowers because they love our shredded paper. They use it to pack up flowers for the community.

I must thank my fellow members of parliament. We lose four of them today. No more heehaws from the member for Fong Lim and no more puff pieces from the member for Greatorex. I appreciate that Nathan has had a difficult time. We all have difficult times in life. No judgment on you, Nathan. The member for Port Darwin reminded me that he is still the member for Port Darwin today. Regardless, he is a hard-working minister and always has been. It does not mean I agree with everything he says, but he is one of the outstanding members of this parliament.

To all the residents in my electorate, thank you for your support. Sometimes people ask you what you have done for your electorate. The best thing, for me, is helping people in the electorate. I have heard about it in the last week or so, those little things such as helping somebody with a government department or helping somebody understand what an issue entails. They have sometimes been told something and you can set them straight. Many of those little things are just as important, and sometimes more important than the bigger issues we face in this job.

To all the schools and school councils – I forget how many we have. The member for Goyder knows there are plenty. In my electorate there is Good Shepherd Lutheran College; Howard Springs; Girraween; Humpty Doo; St Francis of Assisi; Taminmin College; Sattler Christian College; and Bees Creek Primary School. I am sorry I cannot get to all your school council meetings. There are only so many days in the week, and only so many school council meetings, and sometimes parliament gets in the way. I know you all do a great job.

The new Litchfield Council – it is great to see how well it is going. I appreciate the hard work it puts in to bring the council back to what it was. It is standing up for people in the rural area. From

time to time I may not agree with its new policies, but that is fair enough. I am still a rate payer. I should be allowed to object to things if I do not agree with them. It is great to see the Litchfield Council up and running.

There is an enormous number of sporting clubs in my electorate. At Freds Pass there is polocrosse, equestrian, dressage, show jumping, archery, rugby league, rugby union, Aussie rules, cricket, soccer – what else? I cannot remember them all but it is a fantastic place. Have I forgotten ...

Ms Purick: Archery.

Mr WOOD: Archery, yes. I think I might have said that at the beginning. A high number of people use that facility.

There are other little groups – the mahjong ladies pop in every Thursday and play it in my office. The rural garden club is fantastic; it has been going for years and years. Humpty Doo Fibrecraft Guild is a magnificent mob. They sit there and do all sorts of things. Recently they have been making cardigans, where you put them over your shoulders and put your hands through the sleeves, for people in Darwin hospital who find it cold with the air conditioning. They have also made cushions for people who have lost a breast from a breast cancer operation. The guild has been crocheting and knitting every week – all of that terminology I cannot remember. They enjoy a cup of tea and a chat, but they also do things for people and are a fantastic group.

Cookie and Annie are a couple of people who come into my office. Sometimes they like to talk for a long time, and sometimes they get the hint I cannot talk, but I always give them a bit of my time. There are people in the community who are lonely and need to come and have a chat. I appreciate that, and we try to make sure we give them time because it is an important part of what we do.

To all the fires – I had Howard Springs and now I have Koolpinyah Volunteer Fire Brigade as well. They do a great job. This is a hard time of year, battling fires that should not have been lit. They do their best to make sure there are strategic burns and that our properties are protected.

I will stand at the next election. Some people have asked me, and I have told them you need some older people in this business, not just young people. I am happy to put my hand up again, but it will be entirely up to the electorate if they wish for me to be their local member or someone new. That is what democracy is about. I will do my best to convince them I have the energy and enthusiasm to still be a good local member. I might look old and have a bit of tummy I need to

get rid of, but I feel young. That is the way I think you need to be. Do not let yourself get too old.

I thank all the Legislative Assembly staff. I will not name them all, but they all do a great job. When I need advice, I get advice. It is good to have people who look like me, such as Russell, who has the same hairstyle. It is fantastic. Michael Tatham is similar. We will have to start up a little club. Kaye Henderson, Liisa and the library crew do a fantastic job as well.

As people want to advertise, the areas I will stand up for in my electorate include proper governance. I think governance has slipped in the last few years. Rural planning is important for people, and water is a major issue that we will need to address. We need to get over the problems now to work our way through this year, and then set up some processes to take us into the future.

I must thank my family, Trish and Tony, who help me. Trish does my accounts for me, which I can never work out. All my family – my grandchildren; my daughters; my dog, Max, who will be wondering where I have been. My lovely wife, Imelda, does not care about politics too much. She knows I am in here somewhere, but I know she will be there when I get home. She has persevered with me. She needs a Victoria Cross. I thank her very much, and I love her very much.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, in the final sitting day of the 12th Assembly of the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly, I want to place my thanks on the record to all the people who have helped and supported me in the last three-and-a-half years in my role as the member for Wanguri.

The honour and privilege of being elected as a representative for the electorate of Wanguri on 16 February 2013 was one of the most humbling experiences of my life. After three-and-a-half years in the job I can honestly say I have given it my all. I have never taken for granted the responsibility of being the local member representing Leanyer, Lyons, Muirhead and Wanguri, and the opportunity I have to make a positive difference in the lives of my constituents.

I have heard other members speak about the parts of the job they have enjoyed the most and gained the most fulfilment from, that is, when you can help people who are in tough situation or are not sure how to navigate through an issue. When you make a positive difference in their life, whether that is helping them with a housing issue, helping them get assistance when they are sick, getting a new local speed sign in the street – sometimes it comes down to giving people advice on how to navigate the complex systems of government in today's world.

I have found it incredibly enjoyable to be able to help people on that level. It can be a lot of work, but it is such a privilege to have the opportunity to represent the community I grew up in, which I am now raising my family in. It is a part of the Territory that I absolutely love.

The greatest privilege of my time in the job is, no doubt, the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people – the time they take to share a bit of their life with you, give you some insight into their lives and share their views on what they feel will make the community a better place. Doorknocking and catching up with people is such an enjoyable activity. That is often the case now – I have been around long enough to knock all those doors a few times. Meeting the people who are new to the electorate – doorknocking is so much fun.

In my role as the member for Wanguri I have also been fortunate to have some incredible people by my side, supporting me. They are my electorate officers, Jennifer Djerrkura and Chris Grace, who have made a great contribution to the electorate of Wanguri. They work incredibly hard, are passionate about their jobs and love the community they work for, and I am so lucky to have two people of such highly-professional calibre and experience working alongside me. The community absolutely loves them; they are brilliant at their job and I cannot thank them enough for their tireless dedication to the Wanguri electorate and their frank and fearless advice to me at all times. Jenny and Gracey, you have been my rocks. Thank you so much for everything.

Opposition is a tough slog; there are fewer resources and bodies to do the work. I thank the staff in the Leader of the Opposition's office. We have some amazing people working in the office, with deep connections to the Northern Territory, who love this place. They make their contributions to the Northern Territory through the very important work they do in advising us, doing the research and getting right into it. They are a fantastic team and we are so lucky to have them.

Being based at the Hibiscus office – it is the best place to be in the Wanguri electorate. It is the community hub of the electorate. Everybody goes to Woollies to shop; there is some great food and service there. Some fantastic people work at the shopping centre, such as the cleaners, Gabby and Lawrie; Laura, the centre manager; Robyn and the ladies at the newsagency; Tanya at Hibiscus Health and Beauty Centre; Trace, Jess and the girls at Lime Hair; Fernando and Melissa at Lenard's; Charlie at the checkout at Woollies, who I always say thank you to as he is a fabulous guy; Derek and the Elders team; Joe at Brumby's; Lim and the team at Hibiscus Chemmart; George and Gary at Q Framing, who are also the fabulous

musicians who come to my senior's lunches and Christmas parties to entertain the crowd; Joan and Christina at Strawberry Fields, who are wonderful women and we are so lucky to have them; Tracy next door at the pet store; Matthew and the team at the Chinese shop; Paul and Sarah at Dolly's Bar; and I could not forget Nelson, Rampel, Ajay, Vincent and the team at Nelson's Seafood, especially Rampel and Ajay, who keep me full of coffee and are incredibly hard workers.

In the Wanguri electorate we are also fortunate to have some of the best schools in Darwin. Our children have access to some fabulous government and non-government schools, including Leanyer; Wanguri; Holy Spirit; Good Shepherd Lutheran College and the St Andrew Lutheran campus; and Henbury School. I thank the principals and school council chairs for their commitment to the community. We are so lucky to have such great choice when it comes to schooling options for our children.

We also have many churches in my electorate. Our churches open their doors to the community and are there to support the community in many ways. I find they are full of so many wonderful people. The International Buddhist Centre, Audrey Ko, the committee and the monks are wonderful and they open their community a few times a year to share food on the international food night.

The Holy Spirit Church and St Martin de Porres – I always say a big thank you to Fr Dan, who we see often. He is as lovely fellow.

The Dreambuilders Church has started a yearly community event and is now in its third year. Pastor Sherwyn Bremner has done a great job opening up the church and putting something back into the community. He is a wonderful fellow.

Pastor Geoff Kuchel from the Lutheran church supports the kids at the St Andrew campus and is very passionate about making a difference in the community.

I had the good fortune to break the fast with the Imam and Dr Khalid Khan at the Islamic centre on Saturday night. They share their faith with me, the community and their surrounding neighbours. The mosque is a wonderful place and does a wonderful job opening its doors to the community for people to learn more about the Islamic faith.

The Uniting church does a particularly lovely thing, opening the church every week to host a playgroup for mums, dads, grandparents, aunties and uncles to enjoy. It is a very popular playgroup.

There are other wonderful people who put work into the community. I have to thank the Leanyer and Tambling Terrace seniors' village residents, who are great fun. Investa and Defence Housing Australia have a big job in Muirhead, but it is a beautiful suburb and is coming along nicely. It is great to work with them.

The Breezes Muirhead Residents' Association is a new group which is hosting some fantastic free community events for the residents at Muirhead. It is a family-friendly, wonderful place and those at the association are making the suburb better every day.

The staff at the Tracy Village Social and Sports Club – we often have functions there and it is a great place to be, especially on a Sunday night when you cannot be bothered cooking dinner and your house is a mess. You can go there and get a good feed, and the kids can run around and have a good time. It works out well for everyone. The regulars also come in to have a chat. As the member for Nelson said, sometimes you meet some lonely people, but you also meet some people who are pretty out there and have had some interesting experiences throughout their life. It is good for them to share those experiences with you. We have some very interesting regulars and I always enjoy seeing them.

The Murraya Children's Centre – we are so lucky to have one of the best childcare centres in Darwin. Our early childhood educators do a fabulous job with the kids, supporting families in the community. I especially want to thank Charonie, Reisha, Jeddy, Emma, Kendall, Tara and all the other ladies, especially those who work in the toddlers' room. They do such a great job.

I also thank my family, my supporters and the party members. I have some wonderful friends and supporters who have been with me since my preselection. They support me in a range of ways, such as letterboxing, coming to my functions, dropping by the office for a chat or just being there to give words of encouragement. They are great and I thank them for all their support.

I thank my wonderful family for their love and support, and for letting me do this job. They know I love being the member for Wanguri. I could not do this job and give it the time and attention it needs without their commitment and support. I thank my brother, Luke, and his fiancée, Tatiana; the in-laws, being the McNeills and the Herramans; and my mum and dad, who do a great deal of babysitting, clothes washing, lawn mowing and cooking, and provide endless help and support for Scott, Aiden and me. We cannot thank you enough. My husband, Scott, and my lovely boy, Aiden, make every day so happy.

Thanks for your love and for backing me every step of the way.

Lastly, to the staff of the Legislative Assembly, thank you for all your work and advice. To my colleagues here, good luck to those retiring from public life and to those standing again on 27 August. To all my parliamentary colleagues, especially those on this side on the House, thank you for all your work. It is great being part of this Labor team. I hope to do more work together as we all strive to make the Territory a better place.

Madam Speaker, had you told me that I would see all the things I have seen in the last three-and-a-half years as a member of this parliament, I would have said you were off your rocker and that no government could be this bad. It has been a bizarre term of government with some strange twists, turns, scandals and chaos that not many would have predicted or thought possible. Whatever the outcome on 27 August at the election, I hope we see a much different style of government in the 13th Assembly.

I wish all the best to everyone. My thanks again to the people of the Wanguri electorate for the honour of representing them, and I hope I get the opportunity to represent you again come 27 August.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker can I break the standing orders?

Madam SPEAKER: Sure.

Mr WOOD: I forgot to announce that I wanted to give this gift to the member for Port Darwin. It came from the Rural Potters Association. They must have discovered it somewhere in the bottom of a trunk because it needs a bit of painting. It symbolises the member for Port Darwin.

He might be happy to put this on a shelf somewhere. It is a judge – he likes the word ‘judge’ – with a big stick, with which he wants to enforce law and order. It is suitable to give to the member for Port Darwin on this, his last day in this parliament.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you. If you leave it on the member's desk I am sure he will be most appreciative of your generous gift.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.