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## Budget 2017–18 – Budget Surplus

### Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

Today you have saddled Territorians with a \$1.3bn budget deficit. Over the forward estimates your deficit will create a \$3.35bn black hole for Territorians. Do you have a plan to put the budget back in surplus or should Territorians expect to see more debt slapped on the Manison Mastercard?

### ANSWER

Madam Speaker, let us be very clear about what Budget 2017–18 delivers. This is a budget that responds to the challenging economic times ahead. This is a budget that invests in jobs, children and communities, as well as growing the Northern Territory and making the most of economic development opportunities.

Let us look at the challenges we face in the Northern Territory. We have a slowing economy; the budget figures point that out. Talking to anybody in the community, from business to key industry sectors, we know that the economy and jobs is the area of greatest concern for all Territorians. Our population growth, for the first time in 14 years, is negative.

The way to move forward and to make the most of every opportunity is to invest in jobs and growing the economy.

The other unprecedented matter we are dealing with, as a government, is the \$2bn cut to the GST which had a huge impact on the budget. We are determined to support Territorians through the challenging 12 months ahead. We are investing in jobs, and infrastructure that supports jobs, to open up more economic development opportunities across the Northern Territory. That is a critical component to Budget 2017–18.

This is about looking at those opportunities ahead, because we do see a very bright future ahead, particularly with more private investment coming back into the Northern Territory—to further diversify our economy and make the most of the opportunities ahead.

The Territory has a very bright future. We make no apologies for supporting jobs, investment in infrastructure that will deliver for Territorians today and for the long-term, better housing in the bush, better roads across the Northern Territory, major projects to revitalise Darwin and Alice Springs, investment in Tennant Creek and Katherine ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. With 45 seconds to go, is the Treasurer going to tell Territorians what her plan is to put the budget back in surplus?

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is not a point of order.

**Ms MANISON:** The GST cut was devastating. Our plan to get the budget back on a pathway to balance is to create jobs and grow the economy. This is what we will do. It is important to note that we have had to make some very tough decisions in this budget around revenue and savings measures. Had it not been for that GST cut we would have been on a pathway to return to surplus in 2019–20.

We made those tough decisions for the Territory, but now if you were to return the budget to surplus in 2019–20 it would mean slashing jobs and services, and destroying business confidence and economic growth at a time when we need to grow confidence and keep people in the Northern Territory.

## Budget 2017–18 – Investing in the Future

### Mrs WORDEN to TREASURER

How does Budget 2017–18 invest in our future?

### ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Budget 2017–18 invests in the future of the Northern Territory. It invests in jobs, children and community. It is a budget framed by a challenging set of economic and fiscal circumstances. We are delivering a budget that supports and creates jobs for Territorians. Everybody has concerns about jobs. We are giving them the confidence to know there is a good future ahead and that we are investing in jobs.

The economic outlook is challenging. State final demand will decrease by 2.8% and 5% in 2017–18 and 2018–19. Population growth is the lowest it has been in 14 years at -0.3%, and we have seen the unprecedented \$2bn GST cut. The long-term outlook for the Northern Territory is bright. We have to get through the challenging 12 to 18 months ahead.

When faced with the challenges of a slowing economy, population issues and a GST cut, we could have taken it two ways. We could slash jobs and services, destroy business confidence, drive people out of the Northern Territory and create bigger issues for our economy. But we do not take that approach. We take an approach of investing in jobs and building a better future by investing in the Northern Territory.

We are investing in a better future. We have a record \$1.75bn infrastructure spend. We have the right stimulus to support Territory business and jobs across the Northern Territory, from cities to bush communities. We have ensured we have shown the right internal fiscal discipline as well.

We have made the tough decisions in government to constrain recurrent expenditure so that it now sits at 0.1% over the forecast horizon. We have implemented some tough but sensible and responsible measures around savings and revenue to ensure government is doing its fair share of heavy lifting going forward.

No doubt we will have challenges over this term of government, but we are determined to show the right fiscal discipline to get us through it. We are not walking away from supporting jobs and exciting opportunities. We are investing in the Northern Territory for the future of the Northern Territory.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Territory's Fiscal Position**

#### **Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER**

At the end of this financial year the expected debt is \$3.6bn, blowing out to an infamous \$5.5bn at the end of the forward estimates. That means net debt to revenue will reach an unprecedented 87%. Will you tell Territorians how your budget will now impact the Territory's healthy credit rating?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because it is important. We have huge challenges to our fiscal position going forward due to the GST cuts and a slowing economy and population growth. There is no doubt there are challenges ahead. We have made the decision to invest in jobs and the future of the Northern Territory.

Had we not seen that \$2bn GST cut to the budget we would have been on a pathway to return the budget to balance with a surplus position. We made tough decisions in this budget. The net debt-to-revenue ratio has increased, but I am committed, as Treasurer, to continue to keep pressure on the budget and demonstrate the right fiscal discipline going forward. We are in a similar position to other jurisdictions, such as Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, in that regard.

I am determined, going forward, to apply ongoing internal discipline and leverage private investment opportunities to grow the economy and make the most of creating and supporting jobs. The best way going forward, to ensure we return the Territory to a better budget position, is to create jobs and grow the economy. That is what Budget 2017–18 is all about.

We will make sure we support Territorians through the challenging 12 to 18 months ahead. We have had to make some hard decisions in Budget 2017–18, but we will continue to work with people across the Northern Territory.

Our economic framework is about to be released. We have our 10-year infrastructure plan also about to be released. We have listened to Territorians through our economic summits and we received great feedback. We are continuing to work with the private sector to leverage opportunities ahead to attract further investment and ensure further growth of the Northern Territory.

We are trying to do this all in a fair way. We have had to make some tough decisions, but they are decisions that we think Territorians can handle. This is in stark contrast to how the previous government went about things. It slashed, burned, put prices through the roof and hurt Territorians. Now is not a time to do that; now we must keep people in the Northern Territory. To lose any more people from the Northern Territory would have a devastating impact going forward, especially at a time when we need to focus on job creation, supporting jobs and supporting the economy.

## **Budget 2017–18 – Jobs**

### **Ms AH KIT to TREASURER**

How does Budget 2017–18 deliver jobs for Territorians?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, Budget 2017–18 is about investing in the future and in jobs. It is about creating and sustaining thousands of Territory jobs when they are needed.

We have delivered our record \$1.75bn infrastructure budget for 2017–18, including \$297m for repairs and maintenance. This will support jobs by ensuring better hospitals, health clinics, schools, roads, community infrastructure, tourism sites and infrastructure in parks. It is about making sure we get work out the door for the important short-term gain of supporting jobs, as well as the long-term gain of having quality infrastructure. Repairs and maintenance hits the ground fast at a time when we most need it, and we need it to support jobs across the Territory.

We have \$640m in housing-related works in this budget, including \$106m, which is part of the \$1.1bn 10-year remote housing investment. We have significant funds through NPARIH and more money through repairs and maintenance. We have \$733m for roads and transport-related infrastructure across the Northern Territory. That is a focused spend that impacts the bush.

We have \$196m in health infrastructure, including \$11m for renal services.

There is \$142m for education, including \$18m for Darwin High School and \$6m for the new preschool in Tennant Creek.

We have \$159m for community safety, including the \$26m Palmerston police station.

There is \$370m in economic infrastructure works, including our contribution towards the shiplift.

We are investing in lifestyle and environment infrastructure, including Warren Park and upgrades to sporting facilities in Alice Springs.

We have looked at how we can support jobs through some of our economic stimulus packages. There is additional money for repairs and maintenance. We have fast-tracked some of our election commitments to make sure we are targeting big tier one projects, making sure we have a capable industry, as well as honouring our election commitments and delivering important infrastructure.

We have the Immediate Works Stimulus Package, which received huge community response.

This is a budget that is all about supporting jobs for Territorians in the short, medium and long term.

## **Budget 2017–18 – Public Sector**

### **Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER**

In 2012 you said:

*There's a ruthless and brutal government attitude towards the public service. We are in danger of losing talented and hard-working people.*

Today's budget shows that your government plans to make savings of over \$760m over the forward estimates by cutting frontline services. Will you come clean and tell Territorians how many nurses, teachers and police officers will now lose their jobs?

### **ANSWER**

I appreciate the question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because we can deal with this untruthful scare campaign up front. We have made the tough but fair decisions when it comes to savings and revenue. They are the tough but fair decisions that Territorians expect of us in order to be responsible

when it comes to the budget. If you had read the budget books, which clearly you have not, we explain in Budget Paper No 2 our approach to savings.

On page 15 in Budget Paper No 2 we talk about the wage parameters, the application of CPI, efficiency dividends, the difficult decisions we have made to constrain government spending to how we will manage it through attrition, and how we will work with the departments and public servants to make sure we keep delivering on the front line.

As I have said in previous sittings, to the public and on many occasions, we are not doing forced redundancies. It does not matter how many times the CLP spreads this scare campaign; we are not doing forced redundancies. We are managing our budget, applying internal discipline, working through attrition—just as we said before the last election as well. We are being consistent to our principles about how we can find savings.

The Treasurer is to be applauded for how we have constrained government spending to historic levels of constraint. We are applying the internal discipline necessary to make sure we stay on top of that recurrent spend and are investing in job-creating infrastructure projects to diversify the Territory economy.

The only way we can deliver this agenda for Territorians this term—to put them first, to deliver services, to deliver infrastructure projects that create jobs—is by working with public servants. We have over 20 000 highly talented, highly-skilled and passionate public servants who are working for Territorians. I thank them for the work they have done in helping to prepare this budget, as well as the work they do to look after Territorians, whether it is in schools, in hospitals, out on the beat as police officers or firefighters responding to fires. We are looking after our public servants.

We are applying tight financial parameters to our departments to constrain spending. We are applying internal discipline. We will be managing numbers through attrition, just like we promised before the election. There are no surprises here. We will be a tough but fair government that applies the important internal discipline necessary to stick to these budget numbers.

Budget Paper No 2 also shows that having this tough but fair approach would have kept us on the path of surplus if it had not been for the GST cuts, which have been devastating. Budget Paper No 2 takes you through exactly that.

We have been tough but fair, and we value our public service.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Regional Development and Jobs**

#### **Ms NELSON to TREASURER**

How does Budget 2017–18 support regional development and jobs across the Territory?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Katherine for her question. She is a very strong advocate for her region, to say the very least.

Budget 2017–18 is all about supporting jobs across the Northern Territory. In Katherine, for example, we are looking at some fantastic investments that will help boost tourism, such as \$10m over the next four years for Nitmiluk National Park. We are looking to boost experiences there.

We have \$8m for a new fire station, which will free up capacity for police in Katherine.

One project that is an exciting part of the budget is the \$10m for the Mapping the Future program. It is all about identifying future productive land across the Northern Territory to increase agribusiness opportunities. It is great for bush communities and the regions.

We are looking at investing \$300 000 to upgrade schools. We are looking at how to unlock land, such as looking for potential redevelopment at the Katherine sports club. Looking at Tennant Creek, for example, there is \$37.5m for beef roads, including the Tableland Highway and the Barkly Stock Route.

We are also looking at \$14.3m for bush housing under the National Partnership Agreement in the Barkly. There is \$6.5m for the new preschool at Tennant Creek, and we are looking at having entrance statements coming into the town to further boost tourism.

Central Australia is a fabulous part of the world. We love Alice Springs and Central Australia. There is \$20m to revitalise the CBD. We will build the national Indigenous iconic art gallery in Alice Springs. We have further upgrades to the hospital there. We will see \$6m for a new women's shelter. There is over \$6m to improve sporting facilities across Alice Springs. There will be the Alcoota megafauna fossil exhibition in the Alice Springs CBD, which is an amazing tourism opportunity. We have roads funding across Central Australia to create better transport and infrastructure for people.

For Palmerston and the rural area there is investment continuing in the Palmerston regional hospital, \$26m for the police station and \$9m for Zuccoli schools to ensure the shared facilities are up and running. We are looking at retirement village opportunities for seniors in the rural area. I am sure the Member for Nelson will welcome the opportunity for people to continue to live in the rural area. Hopefully that all stacks up.

We are investing across the Northern Territory. This is all about jobs and creating economic development opportunities.

### **Budget 2017-18 – Debt**

#### **Mrs LAMBLEY to TREASURER**

Under your budget, debt will rise to \$5.5bn in 2021. The interest on that debt will be over \$1m per day. You can find this in Budget Paper No 2 on pages 110 to 111. Can you explain to the 245 000 people of the Northern Territory why clocking up \$5.5bn of debt and paying over \$1m in interest repayments per day is a good thing, and how it is a hallmark of a responsible government?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I have been very clear about the challenges we faced in this budget and how we determined our spending priorities. The things we are faced with in this budget are a slowing economy, people deeply concerned about jobs and the future of the Northern Territory, and an unprecedented \$2bn cut to the GST.

We could have taken the approach of slashing services and jobs, and pushing people out of the Northern Territory at a time when we need to keep them here. We could have looked at strategies such as putting power prices up by 30% and water prices up by 40%. We could have looked at 25% increases in sewerage. We could have cut first home owner incentives to get people into their homes. I am sure this sounds familiar.

There are different ways in which you can approach this situation. We have taken an approach of investing in jobs and growing the economy. We will ensure we display fiscal discipline going forward in this term of government. This budget shows we have made hard decisions. We have done heavy lifting around savings and revenue measures. We have done this in a responsible way that does not send the Territory backwards.

I had a long media conference at lunch in which I stated that going forward, as Treasurer, my priority will be looking at the pathway towards balance. We will do everything we can to pay down debt over this term of government.

Right now, with these challenges, we have a choice to slash jobs and services, drive people out of the Northern Territory, destroy business confidence and send the Territory backwards; or we can invest in the future of the Northern Territory. That is the decision we have made because people are deeply concerned about jobs. People believe in a bright future for the Northern Territory. This is an investment that will do that.

We have demonstrated in this budget that we have made tough decisions. We will be here for Territorians during the tough 12 to 18 months ahead to support jobs, keep people here, give them a future to be optimistic about and grow the Northern Territory. We will not send the Territory backwards. That is not the responsible thing to do or what this government will do. We will support Territorians through this period and this change.

The future is bright and we will get there.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Crime Prevention**

**Mr SIEVERS to CHIEF MINISTER**

How does Budget 2017–18 invest in our police force and the state-of-the-art tools they need to fight and prevent crime? How will this keep our communities safer?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, we want Territorians to be safe at home and at work, and this budget delivers for Territorians and their important needs. We will deliver a substantial investment to reduce crime. We will support Police, Fire and Emergency Services and the workers who do those valuable things for the Territory. We will strengthen community safety and we will protect Territorians.

Territorians should feel safe at home and at work, and we will be delivering on the broken CLP promise of 120 extra police for the front line. You can clearly see in the budget books the money for the recruitment plan over the next four years and how we will provide that certainty and confidence to police. It is an important step to restoring the trust that was broken under the CLP, in which they could not honour their basic election promises to Territorians. People demand to feel safe at home and at work. They have that right and they were failed by the CLP.

There is \$5m allocated towards that very important promise to provide certainty and confidence for extra police numbers. The four-year recruitment plan restores the trust that was broken between the government and the people under the CLP last term.

We also have to make sure police have the capabilities to do their jobs. We are investing in modern technology so police have the tools to do their jobs. The PROMIS system is over 18 years old and was around before iPads, iPhones or any of those devices. It is very old in IT years. We will be replacing that. There is money in this budget towards a new system that supports police to better do their jobs on the frontline. We have already seen through the trials, through things like SceneDoc and WinScribe, that police can save incredible hours during a shift. They can deal with crime quicker if properly supported with the right tools. We will be able to support that with the new IT system.

We are expanding the CCTV network. We are providing the police with more eyes across the Northern Territory. We are doing that in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs to make sure we are providing support to police.

We are fast-tracking the police station in Palmerston. We are now also fast-tracking stage two so police have a better resource in Palmerston, delivered by us. The CLP never did this for the people of Palmerston. We will be delivering for the people of Palmerston.

Katherine has \$8m for a fire station which, again, was never done by the CLP. We will be delivering for the fire officers there. We had full consultation with Police, Fire and Emergency Services on what was the best way to support them. They came forward with the \$8m fire station.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, your time has expired.

### **Budget 2017–18 – GST Revenue**

**Mr WOOD to TREASURER**

On page 18 of Budget Paper No 2 there is a table headed 'Revenue'. It shows the GST estimate of Budget 2016–17 at \$3.1bn. For this financial year GST will be \$2.9bn, a decrease of \$274m. Next year it is estimated there will be an increase on the \$2.9bn figure of \$121m, and on the next year an increase of \$120m, and by 2020–21 the GST will be up \$152m which will be higher than it was in 2016–17.

Compared to the 2016–17 figure over four years, the GST will be down \$302m, not including CPI. Is the figure sprouted in the budget of losing \$2bn of GST a political figure based on your department's forecast when the true figures of whether we receive more or less GST should be based on an actual or a more understandable comparison of one year's GST to the next?

## **ANSWER**

I have to wholeheartedly disagree with you, Member for Nelson. You work off forecasts in budgets and you work off the projections of what you see and what you estimate coming through. As we know, Treasury is usually very conservative in their estimates going forward, particularly regarding matters pertaining to the GST.

We are going off the forecast. This was revenue we expected to be coming into the Northern Territory. One thing everybody agrees on is the fact that this has a devastating impact on the Territory's fiscal position. We know the money for GST revenue—the way it is currently forecast is that it will not come back until at least 2020–21.

Member for Nelson, it is a \$2bn cut. It is devastating for the Territory's budget position. We are doing everything we can to work through this matter with the Commonwealth government. The Commonwealth government has released a review into HFE through the Productivity Commission.

I see this, in one sense, as an opportunity to make sure we avoid being in this situation again, and that we avoid having a cut of this magnitude to the GST ever again. Do not kid yourself; there are also some risks because we also know the other jurisdictions will be trying to take our fair share of the GST. We must do everything we can to combat that. The whole principle of HFE is to ensure all Australians have a right to access good services. At the moment, that is under threat. That is something we must protect.

This \$2bn cut to the GST has been devastating on the Territory's position going forward. We will not see GST returning to the levels of what they are now until after 2020–21 if the forecast stays that way. I am optimistic that we will grow jobs locally, grow the economy and grow private investment in the Territory. We have a brighter future ahead.

This HFE review presents—there is an opportunity to avoid this situation happening again. The CGC calculation is a very complex one, but we must do everything we can to ensure we do not end up in this position again. Make no mistake, there are big southern jurisdictions trying to take more of our GST money, and we cannot let that happen.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Health**

#### **Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for HEALTH**

This government's priority is to invest in our future by investing in children and creating and supporting jobs. How will Budget 2017–18 deliver healthier outcomes for Territorians in town and in the bush?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, this government is committed to the people of the Northern Territory. We are committed to providing health services across a vast region. The Northern Territory Government provides a huge budget to Health, and that has grown in this budget from \$1.52bn last year, with an additional \$50m for \$1.57bn for health services in the Northern Territory.

We are making the decision to invest in our future, focus on children and create opportunities for a healthier Northern Territory. We acknowledge that we are going through a challenging economic time, and we are being responsible. We must deliver health services to Territorians.

Territorians have the right to feel safe in their homes, communities and work places. Budget 2017–18 is delivering the Banned Drinker Register. It is also providing not only the roll-out of the BDR across the Northern Territory—unlike the patchwork approach we have from those opposite where they target certain areas but leave other areas very vulnerable. The BDR is a simple measure Territory-wide.

We will also provide clinical support for those struggling with an addiction to alcohol. In Darwin you will find 40 clinical assessment beds co-located with the Sobering Up Shelter.

**Members** interjecting.

It is interesting to hear those opposite being so vocal, yet they were nowhere to be seen when the Palmerston hospital debacle was happening under their government. The CLP failed to plan and build the



Palmerston hospital. I am proud to be part of a government and a team that has gotten it back on track. We will deliver the Palmerston hospital in the first half of next year.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Order!

**Ms FYLES:** It is interesting, Madam Speaker. I pick up on the interjections from those opposite. They say we have been in government for two minutes and we think we have delivered that.

When we deliver the Palmerston public hospital next year, not only will we have planned for the clinical services it will provide, but we will have planned for the support there. I am pleased that in Budget 2017–18 we will deliver \$2.5m for a rehabilitation pool. It was always planned that Palmerston hospital would provide rehabilitation services, but those opposite failed to deliver. They were too busy digging holes and filling them back in.

Budget 2017–18 also provides for the Northern Territory Government's commitment towards the \$18m PET scanner and cyclotron at Royal Darwin Hospital.

There is extensive progress on programs in the bush, such as the expansion of renal services to ensure we support vulnerable Territorians; the Nurse-Family Partnership Program, which is an initiative to support those in their early days of life to give them the best long-term benefits; housing accommodation support—the list goes on.

There are many highlights for health within the budget. This government is committed to supporting our hard-working frontline health workers in providing resources to keep Territorians safe and healthy.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, your time has expired.

### **Budget 2017–18 – GST Cuts**

**Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER**

Your government continues to mislead Territorians by blaming the federal government for a fictitious \$2bn cut in GST, when, in fact, the independent Northern Territory Grants Commission determined a \$269m reduction in 2017–18. Why is your government deliberately misleading Territorians by telling them your \$1.3bn budget deficit is due to this fictitious GST cut rather than your government's out-of-control spending?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, Territorians have in front of them two different approaches to the economic challenges that confront us.

The CLP's plan is to slash services, massively raise revenue and not spend money on infrastructure that creates jobs for the Northern Territory. Its plan for when you are in a hole is to simply dig deeper, and screw over and hurt Territorians. I do not subscribe to the CLP policy of hurting Territorians.

We are in a difficult time, a challenging economic time. Many businesses said 2016 was the worst year they ever had, and 2017 is similarly challenging. It was not a surprise that we would have challenging times. The Ichthys construction phase wind-down was public, but instead of planning for it the CLP spent the last four years fighting over personal egos—chaos. A reshuffle occurred every three months; that is what we saw under the CLP. Personal squabbling—they were too concerned about themselves and not worrying about Territorians. That was their plan for the Territory economy.

We see the challenges facing Territorians. We asked what we could do, as a government, to constrain our spending—which we have done by 0.1%—while, at the same time, investing in job-creating infrastructure against a plan we developed in consultation with the private sector to make sure we unlock their investment.

That budget delivers an investment in the things that broaden and diversify the Territory economy. We have done that despite the \$2bn slug from the GST cuts.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Why does the Chief Minister continue to ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** What point of order number?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 110 ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Too late. Sit down. Chief Minister, you have the call.

**Mr GUNNER:** Territorians come first for us. As tough as our budget situation is, Territorians are doing it tougher.

Look at Budget Paper No 2, page 19, and you can see where we were meant to get the money under the GST, and now we are not. Those exact figures, which the Member for Nelson is claiming we should use, we did use; that is the point. Those estimates were in the PEFO and they were higher; that is the blue line. Following the Member for Nelson's advice, use those numbers and you get the blue line. We now have new numbers which are the red line. That is the \$2bn cut.

It is not my fault you cannot read the budget books, but we got a \$2bn slug on the GST. Despite that, we keep putting Territorians first because we recognise they are doing it tough. Unlike the CLP, we will not turn our back on them. We will not cut the services they need in order to stay here. We will not cut the infrastructure budget to create the jobs they need. We will do what it takes to look after Territorians during these challenging times.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Budget 2017–18 – GST Cuts**

**Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER**

I do not believe in your rhetoric but if you truly believe the federal politicians, as you and your Treasurer have been claiming are responsible for the carve up of the GST payments, have you spoken to your federal Labor boss, Bill Shorten, or demanded an increase in GST payments to the Territory if he gets elected?

**ANSWER**

I have spoken to the Prime Minister, the guy in charge. That is who I have spoken with. If Bill gets elected I will be more than happy to talk with him about it. Malcolm Turnbull is the current Prime Minister of this country and is delivering a budget. That is who I have been speaking with. That is the plan we have, to talk to the people in charge.

I have written to him and formally spoken with him. I have explained the economic circumstances confronting the Northern Territory, the challenges we have and the fact that we will work with them on the policy priorities they have, which are developing the north, the Defence White Paper, Closing the Gap and the City Deals.

These are the policy priorities they have. We will be there with them as co-investors who are genuinely working together for a better Northern Territory. That is what I have had conversations about with the Prime Minister, the person in charge at the moment.

#### **Budget 2017–18 – Remote Housing**

**Mr COSTA to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

How is Budget 2017–18 delivering remote housing to grow strong and healthy communities?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it is a proud day today because every member of the Michael Gunner Labor government has fulfilled their election commitment to Indigenous Territorians for the next 10 years. I acknowledge and thank the Treasurer, who made that official today. Over the next 10 years, beyond electoral cycles, with bipartisan support, Indigenous Territorians will experience an improvement in living conditions which support all the elements of education, health, attending school and social justice.

To quantify that across the 10-year plan into remote housing investment we are looking at \$500m for the construction of new remote public housing, the HomeBuild NT package; \$200m to construct new government employee housing in remote communities, including housing for local employees; \$200m to build additional living areas in existing housing under the Room to Breathe program; and \$200m for repairs and maintenance to better look after houses.

The most important part of this announcement is about jobs. It is exactly what the Chief Minister and Treasurer are advising the Territory. It is about jobs. There will be new jobs. There will be Indigenous Territorians participating in every layer of the housing sector.

ALPA flew to Ramingining today to start the early works in the new Room to Breathe program. That was the \$10m the Chief Minister and the Treasurer brought forward to get this going. ALPA left today; it anticipates 12 new jobs for 12 young people from Ramingining, working on seven houses identified with significant housing stress. It will look at improvisation, new innovation and improved living areas. It is using and engaging local people.

This is just part of the great Labor story today. Members in this House should celebrate.

This is also about the challenges with serviced land. The previous administration left us with a significant backlog in terms of serviced land. I acknowledge the Treasurer and the Labor government budget today. Budget 2017–18 delivers an additional \$44.5m for land servicing costs in remote communities to support this record program, a failing of the previous CLP government. Well done, Labor; I look forward to being part of this delivery.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Renal Health System**

#### **Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HEALTH**

The government has promised \$11.1m over 10 years for the new renal centre in Darwin and two new renal ready rooms in remote communities. Where will the renal ready rooms be built, and why has the government not opted for regional renal centres that would lower patient travel expenses, lower economic disadvantages to patients and, generally, lower the burden on the system? Is this Darwin-centric model of renal health use sustainable?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, Budget 2017–18 will be delivering services for critical health infrastructure around renal services, not only in urban centres in Darwin, with the new renal unit to be rebuilt on the site in Nightcliff—I have been to the renal unit a couple of times. I was there last week. It is a very outdated building that was not purpose-built.

I think it was built as a community care baby centre, and when you enter that space there is a lack of privacy. It is very dysfunctional for staff and patients alike. The hard-working staff do a fabulous job—and I would like to pay tribute to them—in sometimes very trying conditions. We need to provide for a building which currently has 28 chairs, as well as the outreach unit where people who have done training can give themselves their own dialysis.

This government is committed to funding a new \$9.7m purpose-built facility in Nightcliff. It is very important that we acknowledge the location in Nightcliff/Coconut Grove. It is close to transport and housing support for those who have to travel to Darwin to receive treatment. It is something I was very proud to be a part of, to provide that service for Territorians who need that vital life-saving treatment multiple times a week—but also to our very hard-working staff there.

As the member mentioned, \$1.4m has been allocated to establish two renal ready rooms to increase access to dialysis in remote communities. The member touched on it in his question, highlighting that if people can receive treatment in community they do not have to travel, and there are perhaps additional housing costs if they have to come into town for an extended period.

We have an evidence-based approach for a 10-year renal strategy for the Northern Territory. We will look at where those locations should be and where they will best serve the community. We want to provide more health services across the Northern Territory so Territorians can stay close to home and family.

When you have been diagnosed with an illness and require ongoing medical treatment, you wish to be close to home and family and, perhaps, keep working. We want to provide health care in communities across the Northern Territory. We are committed to providing those services. We are also committed to transitioning what are currently government community clinics to community-led control over our four years of government.

We are very pleased to announce the \$9.7m for the Nightcliff renal unit and \$1.4m to establish two renal ready rooms in remote communities in the Northern Territory.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Education**

#### **Ms UIBO to MINISTER for EDUCATION**

How will Budget 2017–18 support young people to get a great education in the Northern Territory?

#### **ANSWER**

I, like the member for Barkly, am very proud to be part of a government that is delivering on our election commitments in my portfolio. I am also well aware that after the dollars we need to follow with hard work. Our agencies have a lot of hard work ahead of them. I am very proud to be delivering on our election commitments.

Budget 2017-18 reflects the Northern Territory Government's commitment to investing in children and, particularly, in education and schools. This is a very wise investment. This government recognises that quality education is the key to the Territory's social and economic prosperity. Budget 2017–18 provides \$1.1bn to be invested in education, including \$141.7m for improving infrastructure across government and non-government schools.

The Department of Education's operating budget for 2017–18 is \$999.3m. Key features of the 2017–18 budget are \$489m for the 2017 school resourcing budget; \$233.4m in operational and capital subsidies for non-government schools across the Territory, including \$174.2m in Commonwealth funding; \$34.1m for the repairs and maintenance programs for government schools, including an additional \$1m for repairs and maintenance to homeland centres—the Member for Nhulunbuy will be pleased to know that \$1m includes the Yirrkala homelands to use for upgrades on some homelands that are over 30 years old—and \$17.6m minor new works programs for government schools, including round one of the Building Better Schools project and small infrastructure projects to improve and upgrade education facilities.

All of these things are also about jobs. Budget 2017–18 is about community, jobs and children. We are focusing on children but also on jobs with these upgrades.

An additional \$2.7m is new money being provided for building better schools in the non-government sector. There is \$7.1m to continue the Back to School Payment Scheme. That was an original Labor government initiative in 2008 or 2009. We are continuing to support the back to school voucher. There is \$2m for the Healthy Life Creative Life, which supports schools in Katherine and Barkly. I look forward to providing more details on that wonderful program.

Another thing I am very proud of is the strategic areas we have put funding into in the capital works area. There is \$6m for the Ludmilla master plan. We need to ensure we continue to develop and revitalise some of the older schools in the Territory, including Darwin High School.

I am very proud to be a minister in a Labor government that is delivering on its election commitments.

### **Museum – Cost Benefit**

#### **Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER**

Last week you announced \$50m for a museum at the old hospital site. Will you now table any cost benefit analysis, business case or research conducted to support this decision to outlay \$50m?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader has a different approach to museums than I do. I see them as cultural institutions. I have made that clear when this question has been asked at press conferences.

Where is the return in the investment? Where is the business case? For me, this is about investing in Darwin, the capital of northern Australia. It is about investing in our place in the region and the plan we have for the vibrant CBD.

This museum is a cultural institution. We know that museums have a commercial return if they are done right and genuinely. We have seen that in places like Mona. But that is not the point of building it. There are jobs created in its construction and in its operations. It builds onto the case for a tourist to stay here longer, which is very important, or to attract tourists here in the first place.

We will be genuine in how we build this. We have done it in full consultation through the economic summits. It is perhaps the greatest consultation anyone has ever conducted in the Northern Territory outside of elections or referendums. We had full consultation through the economic summits about ideas they thought were important to develop and invest in Darwin. It has come out of that clear plan.

This is a cultural institution. It will be an investment on valuable public land at the old hospital site. One thing that was priceless was the joy and the tears of the Stolen Generation when they heard we are properly acknowledging them on that site. I know they are grateful for the fact they have a government that listens to them and places the right value on our historical and cultural treasures.

Our legacy and our history will be captured at this site. It is important we do this right and genuinely. We recognise that in doing it right and genuinely there will be interest from tourists and others in this place. That is why we will take our time to get it right. We will finally be using that vacant space at the old hospital site, the old university. I went to university there briefly. I lived on that site briefly. I do not want to age myself.

This is important public land that will be treated with the respect it deserves, and it is part of our broader plan for Darwin as the capital of northern Australia. It ties in with our plans to finish off the great State Square project.

If the Leader of the Opposition was the Chief Minister under a previous CLP government, this Parliament House would never have been built. Many people believe it saved the Territory economy a few decades ago. We are doing the right thing by Territorians.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Primary Industry and Resources**

#### **Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES**

Primary industries and resources are key economic drivers and job creators for the Territory. How is Budget 2017–18 supporting the creation and maintenance of jobs in these all-important industries?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today, on such a fantastic day for Territorians. I thank the Treasurer for her budget.

Jobs are important to Territorians, especially in the mining and primary industry sectors. I will begin by speaking about how this government and its initiatives in this budget are supporting and creating jobs in the Northern Territory for all Territorians.

I will speak about recreational fishing infrastructure and our \$50m commitment to it. We fast-tracked \$6m in 2016–17 to create investment and look after businesses. In Budget 2017–18 we are investing in fishing infrastructure. What does that mean? It means \$1m to upgrade the Corroboree Billabong road; \$450 000 to seal the Middle Arm car park ramp; \$550 000 to provide toilets at Dinah Beach boat ramp; \$250 000 to provide CCTV cameras at the Dinah Beach boat ramp; \$550 000 to upgrade Channel Island boat ramp and car park; and \$970 000 to upgrade Shady Camp boat ramp, which the previous government underfunded. Once again, we will do the job right, and we will put the right amount of money there.

Speaking about things never completed—the \$1.5m for the Dundee car park boat ramp is another issue we will fix and get right. We have committed \$1.3m to develop Aboriginal commercial fishing and aquaculture capacity, and to operate Aboriginal marine training programs in Nhulunbuy.

The last year was a very good one for the NT pastoral industry, with rising worldwide demand for beef and cattle prices. This government is supporting it through the Treasurer and Chief Minister by strengthening investment into this sector.

There is \$800 000 for studies on grazing management strategies; \$400 000 to continue research and improve fertility within the Brahman cattle breed; and \$400 000 to continue the evaluation of intensive cropping production systems.

We are focusing on Katherine as an inland port and agricultural hub with \$400 000 for major agribusiness projects and \$5.95m for creating opportunities for resource exploration in the mining sector. We will make Tennant Creek the mining services hub of the Northern Territory under my learned colleague, the Member for Barkly. We will maintain and create new investment in the Northern Territory by attracting private investment and exploration with a key driver in supporting growing the primary industry and resources sector.

This budget is about investing in Territorians, children, the future and jobs.

### **Budget 2017–18 – Rural Area Funding**

#### **Mr WOOD to TREASURER**

Someone on the fifth floor has been sending out heaps of media releases today which are headed, 'Investing in this, investing in that'. But, after reading through the budget, I do not see much investment in the rural area. Why has there been no consideration in the budget to funding Freds Pass Reserve, an area that does not get anywhere near as much as it should? If the government is serious about making sure kids stay on the straight and narrow, it should invest in Freds Pass Reserve on an annual basis.

There is nothing in the budget about the swimming pool that was promised by the previous Labor government. There is nothing about a permanent intersection at Coolalinga for a safer crossing at the Stuart Highway, just days before Coolalinga Central, one of the biggest shopping centres in the Territory, will open.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, there are some very exciting things happening with the development of the rural area over the weekend. There is great investment and confidence in the future of the rural area and the Northern Territory. There are many projects in this budget that will benefit the rural area, such as investment to upgrade roadworks around the new shopping centre.

We have the repairs and maintenance budget, which is increasing by almost \$70m to a record amount of \$297m. I am more than happy to sit down with you, Member for Nelson, to talk about some of the priorities in the rural area.

Freds Pass is a magnificent part of Darwin. It is great for sport, socialisation and bringing the community together. It services not only the rural area but the broader Darwin community really well. People love coming to the rural area for a visit, and to experience the unique lifestyle there. That is what Freds Pass supports. It is a special place.

I am happy to have conversations with you about where you see priorities for investment. I am supportive of Freds Pass and what it delivers to the broader rural area. We will see significant investment in the rural area. We are continuing work on the bike path, for example. I know you have been passionate about it and have been pursuing it for years

**Mr Wood:** That was the last government's promise.

**Ms MANISON:** I know. We are continuing those types of projects and that work.

As I have heard you call across the Chamber in this sittings, you see the Palmerston Regional Hospital servicing the rural area as well.

**Mr Wood:** And the Palmerston police station.

**Ms MANISON:** And the Palmerston police station will help the area too.

Our investment in schools—we are looking to see what private investment we can attract to develop a retirement village in the rural area. If people have spent their life in the rural area and want to retire there and get the right accommodation, then I think it is a magnificent opportunity for them to do that. It will be a special project. I hope we can make that stacks up and get it delivered.

We are investing in jobs and infrastructure across the Territory. A lot of this work will directly benefit people in the rural area. I am happy to talk with you specifically about Freds Pass because it is a magnificent part of the rural area and the greater Darwin region.

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

#### **Budget 2017–18 – Health**

While I am on my feet I want to make a correction. In my excitement in talking about delivering the Palmerston hospital, and now a rehabilitation pool for that hospital, I may have given a few agency staff a heart attack when I said it would be delivered in 2017–18; I meant 2018–19.

I am excited about delivering the Palmerston hospital with a rehabilitation pool, especially having listened to all the advocates in this sector.