

CONTENTS

Government Policy	141
Parliament – Accountability	142
Parliament – Accountability	143
Independents’ Resources	144
Consultation.....	145
Lambrick Avenue Water Tower	146
Federal Financial Relations	147
Stella Maris.....	149
Health Infrastructure – Remote Communities	149
Warren Park – Consultation	151
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.....	153
School Suspensions	153
Freds Pass Show Funding	153

[Editor's Note: Earlier this day the Leader of Government advised that the Minister for Essential Services would be absent during Question Time.]

Government Policy

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your budget is a Country Liberal budget. Your infrastructure program is a Country Liberal infrastructure program. Your major projects are Country Liberal major projects. Your half-baked, slow-track stimulus projects, which will not create a single job this year, are all yours. Your failure to meet with federal ministers on critical issues like the GST is all yours. When will you start doing the heavy lifting?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because he has given me another opportunity to provide our agenda for this term.

We have a plan. We were elected on a plan to restore trust in government, invest in our kids and create and support jobs in the NT. I thank our team, particularly the Treasurer and the Deputy Chief Minister, for leading that agenda.

We have invested in programs that will create and support jobs. Our home renovation and first home buyers schemes are keeping Territorians here. There are three structured infrastructure pipelines that have brought work into this financial year, making sure they are ready to roll from 1 July. It is a very important series of works. Our Immediate Works Stimulus Package will also create and support jobs in the Territory.

We are getting on with the job. We are doing what it takes to create certainty after four years of uncertainty and chaos. We are consulting broadly across the Territory community and sectors to make sure, from our first budget, we have a shared vision and economic plan for the Northern Territory that will survive political cycles and electoral terms because it comes from the Territory and is for Territorians. We are doing it now and getting the money flowing locally. We are creating certainty.

I was very proud, as Chief Minister, to meet with the Prime Minister to raise the issue of GST in the Northern Territory. I met with Canavan, the Minister for Northern Australia, as I took on the role of developing the north. I am having crucial meetings with Canberra ministers and our Australian counterparts to make sure the Territory is being represented and fought for. We have important issues in the Territory that we must overcome.

The developing the north agenda is crucial to that—the top of WA and Queensland, and the NT. Darwin is the capital of that agenda, right in the middle, the capital of northern Australia. We must have an emphasis on our capital that goes beyond Territory borders—WA, Queensland, Asia—and we have that strong vision. That is what we are doing and will do as a Labor government. We will work with others.

I was very clear when I was elected that we would have a transition plan and would engage with the CLP priorities because we want to get on with the job. That is what we are doing. We will be a responsible government. We will be considerate of taxpayers' investments.

We will make sure taxpayers get a return for the money we are spending. We are making sure there is a clear economic plan for the Northern Territory. That is what we have done and will keep doing for and with Territorians, because that is the kind of government we want to be after four years of chaos, uncertainty, constant Cabinet reshuffles and changes of Chief Minister and leadership. We will provide consistent leadership in the Northern Territory.

NT Thunder

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

AFL NT announced this week that next year NT Thunder will not play a game in Alice Springs. What is the government doing to rectify this issue, as NT Thunder represents the entire Northern Territory and Alice Springs deserves a Thunder game?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Today I have spoken to the CEO of AFL NT, Michael Solomon, and expressed our disappointment at the news we all received in the *NT News* today that NT Thunder will not have a game scheduled in Alice Springs next year.

We believe that NT Thunder is a Territory team and Alice Springs deserves to have games there as well. It is really important for the development of the game, and we want to make sure the team is representative of the Territory. A game in Alice Springs is a very important way it can remain the team for the NT.

As a government we are very proud of our support as a foundation partner for NT Thunder, and we will continue to support the team; however, NT Thunder must remain a Territory team and play a game in Alice Springs. I made this quite clear to AFL NT today.

I am pleased to be able to advise that after my conversation with the CEO of AFL in the Territory that AFL has agreed to reinstate that game and fixture. The AFL and AFL NT are now working hard to lock in an opposition team for the Alice fixture.

We were advised that the federal government did not renew funding for NT Thunder this year, and the AFL NT has advised that it has made it cost prohibitive for NT Thunder to play a game in Alice Springs in 2017. I will be in Sydney next week to meet with my state, territory and federal counterparts, and this is an issue I will raise with our federal counterparts about the commitment to sport and AFL in Central Australia.

We acknowledge that high travel costs have always been a challenge for NT Thunder and other teams, and that attendance at recent games has been disappointing, but we want to make sure the club remains true to its original strategy of being a team that is truly representative of the whole of the NT.

I encourage all members of this Chamber to encourage the community to support our footy players and this really important development group for local footy—support the game and our local players.

We are committed to making sure all sports flourish in Alice Springs. This quick and decisive action made sure we were very clear with AFL NT that the government is committed to making sure this game continues to flourish in Central Australia.

Parliament – Accountability

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

In just three months your government has walked away from its promise to shake up parliament and make it more accountable to the people. Your approach to parliament has been lazy and disrespectful. You voted down an historic motion on alcohol policy reform after stopping every government member from speaking on the motion, bar your Attorney-General. You refused to refer the public holiday legislation to a committee for review, and your refusal to answer two questions in a row is a blatant attempt to avoid accountability. Why have you walked away from your promise to make parliament more accountable?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. It goes to how sometimes there can be parallel universes, with the CLP living in its bubble. It is welcome to it.

We have made significant changes to how parliament runs, starting with Wednesdays. We got rid of the practice of government members asking questions of government ministers—an historic thing for Australia—to make sure we have a clear hour on Wednesdays where we get questions from the opposition and the Independents.

I thank our team for supporting that decision, because our members have questions they want to ask. They made that sacrifice to make sure that on Wednesdays the opposition and Independents can ask an entire hour of questions. We made that important and significant change to the operation of parliament in the Northern Territory. I thank my team for making those changes.

I congratulate the Member for Fong Lim for the work he is doing as chair of the opening up parliament committee. It will have a hearing next Monday on how we can further improve parliament in the Northern Territory. I thank him for that work and I look forward to what comes forward, because we are on a pathway of reforming parliament in the Northern Territory. It is a very good process, and we took a series of reforms

to the election that will be important for consideration. We are going through the committee process to make sure those reforms are consulted on.

Wednesday was a great process, with the abandonment of Dorothy Dixers and giving an hour to the opposition and Independents, who are surprisingly ungrateful for getting an entire hour; maybe they do not have enough questions.

The other change we made was to provide extra time for General Business in this Chamber. We used to have a practice where at the end of Question Time on Wednesdays there would be more time for Government Business. Opposition business would come on at 5:30 pm and, essentially, go through to the news bulletin, so it was pushed out until late in the evening.

We have made sure that on Wednesdays the business of opposition and Independents comes on immediately after Question Time so they have more attention for the issues they think are important, and we have added an extra half-an-hour so they have more time. In only two sittings, the opposition and Independents are getting more questions in this Chamber and more time to debate the issues that are important to them, but what do we get from them in their parallel universe? 'Oh no! The sky is falling in.' More questions and more time for the opposition and Independents since the change of government, but the Henny Pennys on the other side want to complain about it. 'We haven't got enough questions; we haven't got enough issues.'

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Parliament – Accountability

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

My question is to the Chief Minister—two in a row, just for you because it is Thursday. Please explain why you gagged every government member from speaking on the alcohol reform debate and stopped your backbench from speaking on non-government business?

ANSWER

No member of my team has ever been gagged. We speak often to issues in this Chamber, and I have personally spoken to many alcohol debates. We often have conversations in the Chamber about who will speak on what issue, but no member of my team has been gagged. I do not know how they did business in the CLP last term, but clearly they were often gagged and their first reaction is to assume gagging.

We have not gagged any members of our side. I have heard every member of my team repeatedly discuss the issue of alcohol in and outside this Chamber, on the doors and in the communities. Each and every member of my team is a powerful and passionate advocate for alcohol reform in the Territory, and I congratulate them for the work they have done.

They are complaining about whether we spoke to their motion. This is an issue of relevance.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Mid-Year Report

Mr McCONNELL to TREASURER

How does the mid-year report show the government is meeting its election commitments to Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We tabled the mid-year report in this parliament and made sure it came in on Tuesday night so people could ask questions. We are also happy to arrange briefings for any members that would like them.

It is an important document, particularly at this time and where we are at with the change of government. The mid-year report is a requirement under the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act*, where we report where we are at in the middle of the financial year and show that it fits in with the change of government and our machinery of government changes, such as the changes to the departments we have made. It

factors in the election commitments we made to Territorians and looks at the current fiscal situation and the economic indicators across the Northern Territory.

It shows us what we all know: that there are some challenging times ahead. There are some challenging conditions in the economy for the next 12 to 18 months, and many Territorians are feeling that. It shows we have a plan and we can honour our election commitments whilst being fiscally responsible. It also shows we have plans for short-term economic stimulus and to ensure a long-term gain for Territorians. If you look at the mid-year report you will see that the numbers remain fairly unchanged from the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook. It shows we can deliver on our election commitments to Territorians; we can honour them and be fiscally responsible.

We are still on a pathway to returning to surplus in 2019–20. That will be a challenging pathway but one that shows our election commitments fit within it.

It shows we have the capacity to continue the infrastructure program of the previous government, which is needed. An irresponsible government would stop that work and put handbrakes on the economy. We are not an irresponsible government. We are honouring our commitment to support jobs and the economy. We are continuing that \$1.7bn infrastructure program this financial year.

We have fast-tracked \$120m worth of our election commitments to ensure that in 2017–18 we have a big pipeline of construction works to support jobs and the Territory. It shows we are continuing to honour our commitments to more police, staff in education and teachers in the classroom. We are not compromising services. We are delivering to Territorians.

Independents' Resources

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

Will the five Independents be getting a Christmas gift from you this year? Three months ago you promised us 'adequate resourcing' to assist us with our parliamentary work. To date, we have had nothing. Chief Minister will you honour your promise to the five Independents in this Chamber and finally adequately resource us?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is not true. We went through a process where I asked the Remuneration Tribunal to provide advice on how I could support the Independents, recognising I thought they deserved some support.

There was an argument about whether I should strip funds from the opposition to support the Independents, which I did not agree with. I provided the opposition with resources. The question then was how to support the Independents. This obviously had the potential to be a political decision. I did not want it to be that way, so I sought independent advice from the Remuneration Tribunal on how to provide the Independents support. The advice came back about providing them support in terms of their parliamentary contributions and having resources dedicated to that basis.

We have exchanged correspondence on this. The Independents have acknowledged that support is there and flowing, so it is incorrect for the Member for Araluen to say there is none. There is correspondence between us saying there is support. It is being done by my department, through the Legislative Assembly, to make sure there is support for the Independents so they can contribute and participate fully in parliament.

I encourage them to contribute fully in parliament. That is why we provided that support and why I sought independent advice from the Remuneration Tribunal. I will not go outside its advice. It can be reviewed in 12 months by the tribunal, but that is how this decision was made and how the resource has flowed. It is incorrect to say the support is not there.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; we have no resources, despite what you are saying. What will you do about it, Chief Minister?

Mr GUNNER: That is not my understanding. I understand that the advice came from the Remuneration Tribunal and the support has flowed to the Independents, from my department to the Legislative Assembly, to provide support to participate in parliament. I am happy to follow that up, but my understanding is that

the cross bench has that support, and we have corresponded on that. I am happy to follow it up if the support is not there, but based on the advice from the independent Remuneration Tribunal there is support for the cross benches.

Consultation

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

In just three months your government has walked away from its promise to consult widely and listen to Territorians. Your Minister for Public Employment did not meet one business before ramming through new public holidays. Your Minister for Tourism and Culture did not meet with one rugby league club before handing \$25m to South Darwin. She could not even name another club. You demonstrated outright arrogance in your total rejection of the pleas of small businesses to reinstate the highly-successful Home Improvement Scheme. Why have you walked away from your promise to listen to Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I just came from a lunchtime experience where I met with about 120 businesspeople to talk about a shared vision for the future of the Northern Territory. We are consulting broadly and widely to make sure that, from our first budget onwards, we have an economic plan for the Northern Territory which is owned and designed by Territorians for Territorians. We are consulting widely and broadly.

On the question of half-days public holidays—it is a very straightforward question about five hours on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. We have talked about it plenty of times in this House. There were 28 days provided for comment on that so people could provide their feedback.

The question on NRL—I am stunned the former minister for Sport keeps coming back to this topic considering how badly he stuffed it up in government. I do not think it was necessarily his fault; other members of his Cabinet were very passionate on the question of rugby league. The minister for Sport at the time, the current Leader of the Opposition, ignored the submission from the NRL, designed for consultation with NRL clubs, asking for the home of rugby league to be at Warren Park and explaining why Richardson Park was a terrible option. The CLP ignored that advice.

We have listened to the NRL, from their submission in 2012 based on full consultation with all NRL clubs. Our submission was supported by NRL NT and NRL nationally. We have done this in full consultation over a lengthy period of time. This is not a new announcement; we have been working on this for a very long time, having the home of rugby league at Warren Park. I find it incredible that the person who stuffed up the consultation, did not listen and ignored the advice from rugby about the best home for rugby league keeps raising this issue. It is extraordinary.

Finally, on the last point, we have been listening to business about what the Territory needs when it comes to the economy, and we took it to the last election. We said we would get the money flowing locally, provide certainty and restore confidence. That is exactly what we have done. We brought in our Buy Local plans, rejigged the infrastructure budget and provided \$22m of immediate stimulus works based on the feedback we had constantly from business. We have been in constant communication with businesses about how we can deliver and provide a return to the taxpayer.

That was the message I had when I meet with the 120 business people at lunch yesterday, making sure we are responding directly to the needs of the Northern Territory, based on the advice we are getting from the people of the Northern Territory, because we are listening. That has shaped our entire agenda. It is what we took to the election campaign, and it delivered 18 members of this Chamber—us listening and you not listening to them.

Election Promises

Mr COLLINS to CHIEF MINISTER

How is the government fulfilling its promise to deliver open and accountable government which restores the trust of Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Fong Lim for the question; it is a very important one. We are delivering an open and accountable government because that is what Territorians need and have needed for the last four years. Territorians deserve to know that their government puts the public interests first and not those of a chosen few. It is the right thing to do.

Building trust and cohesion is crucial to successfully tackling our economic and social challenges, and it is the smart thing to do. I said constantly going into the last election that we have to do things differently, together and better; we will do that.

The behaviour of the previous CLP government, across the entire four years of its term, took the trust in the Northern Territory Government and parliament to an all-time low. The members in this Chamber—all four of them—need to take responsibility for the actions over the four years which drove trust in the Territory government and this Chamber to an all-time low—the broken promises, the outsourcing of government decisions to unelected committees, the infighting, the chaos, the dysfunction and putting their interests ahead of the public interest.

We have to do better. We are under no illusions as to the size of the task in front of us in rebuilding that trust, which is why we clearly outlined our plans, going into the last election, about how we can restore trust. We were very clear about what we think needs to be done in the Northern Territory to restore trust in the Territory government and the Territory parliament. We are delivering on those promises.

The cost of ministerial travel is now being published before the travel takes place. We are saying why we are going, where we are going and how much it costs. We are responding to the direct complaints of Territorians about the behaviour of the previous CLP government. We have implemented a moratorium on fracking, which we promised at the election. Environmental management plans are now being published to increase transparency around operations. We are honouring our election commitments.

The Attorney-General laid out our detailed plans to create an independent commission against corruption in the Northern Territory, which became a fever pitched demand from Territorians in response to the behaviour of the CLP during the last term. We will have an independent commission and mature mechanisms in the Northern Territory. We will have an inquiry into political donations, a practical look at how donations work in the NT to inform practical reform of donations.

My colleague, the Member for Fong Lim, is chair of the parliamentary committee charged with opening up parliament to the people, ably supported by many members of this Assembly, and I thank him for that work. We will continue working and consulting with the community on creating an ICAC, reforming donation laws and opening parliament to the people. That is what we will do. It is what we promised Territorians we would do and we are honouring our promises.

Lambrick Avenue Water Tower

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for ESSENTIAL SERVICES, answered by Ms FYLES

It is my understanding that the company building the new water tower at the top of Lambrick Avenue has run into some difficulties. What is the present state of affairs with the company? Why did Power and Water change the design from a concrete tank to a steel tank? Why was a Victorian company selected to build the tank instead of a Northern Territory company? Did Power and Water do due diligence and check to see what the price of a steel tank should cost before it accepted the Victorian companies offer? Were there any other bids, and will Power and Water make sure subcontractors who have not been paid are paid in full?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I understand the member has had a briefing from the responsible minister's office, but I have been provided with further detail for the House.

The Palmerston south elevated water tank is under construction—the Zuccoli water tower. Once it is completed it will be the Southern Hemisphere's largest water tower. It will secure the water supply for the growing population around the southern suburbs of Palmerston and the adjoining rural areas. The construction is a steel stem bowl and it is being built by Brag Engineering.

Originally the tender was for an elevated water tank design, proposing a fully concrete bowl and a steel stem, and a concrete stem design alternative was put forward. During the tender process the winning tenderer offered an alternative design option that comprised a fully-welded steel bowl and stem. The alternative steel water tank from this engineering company presented significant benefits over the concrete options. These benefits relate to both the constructability of the water tank as well as the price.

The project is significantly complete: 93%. Approximately 30% of the contracted works has gone to local suppliers and subcontractors. Work is continuing on the tank and it will be completed in the near future.

I understand you have these questions and the minister's office has briefed you on them. From the information I have before me today we can see the tank is well and truly on its way to completion. If you have further specific questions I am sure the minister would be happy to answer them, or I could take them on notice today.

Federal Financial Relations

Mr KIRBY to TREASURER

Can you explain how you will be fighting for the Territory when you go to Canberra tomorrow to attend the Council on Federal Financial Relations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Port Darwin for his question. Later this evening I will be on a plane to Canberra to meet with the Commonwealth, state and territory Treasurers at CFFR, as they like to call it. My message to the other Treasurers can be summed up in three words: horizontal fiscal equalisation.

The Territory is a very strong supporter of the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation. We know it underpins the fair distribution of GST revenue across this nation. It is an important principle because it means Australians get fair access to the services they deserve. Why should someone in Yuendumu or Angurugu miss out on health and education services? It is such an important principle in this country and an important funding model.

I thank the Opposition Leader and the Deputy Opposition Leader for their continued bipartisan support of this principle, and for lobbying their mates in Canberra. Well done and thank you. It is good that we have a strong, bipartisan Territory approach to ensuring we get our fair share of the GST. There is no doubt that there is one other jurisdiction that would like to see that changed. The risks to the Territory, if that was to occur, would be great. The GST fairly recognises the challenges and conditions we face in the NT, and it is a fair way of distributing the GST. We will do everything we can to ensure we protect the fair and equitable distribution of GST revenue. We will put it on the table that we are completely opposed to a change in the GST relativity floor.

We will discuss other important issues, though. National partnership agreements, for example, have a huge impact in the NT. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is a clear example of one that has a huge impact here. There will also be more discussion on personal tax reform and so forth. There will be a wide range of discussions on the table. We will make sure we put the case forward and protect our fair share of the GST, because it is vital to the NT. We will ensure we go to Canberra and fight for every dollar we deserve.

Alice Springs – Vibrant CBD Plans

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

The whole of Alice Springs is ecstatic about the decision you made on the floor of this Chamber a few weeks ago to take personal responsibility for a vibrant Alice Springs CBD. You said, 'Alice Springs does not need an assistant minister for a vibrant Alice Springs CBD; you have me, the Chief Minister.' Can you update the people of Alice Springs on what progress has been made?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I said at the time, I am very happy to work with the council, the mayor and the Members for Araluen and Braithling on these issues. It requires working together to achieve outcomes; that

is what I have committed to. I am visiting Alice Springs for two days, on Friday and Saturday. I will talk about this on my visit there.

Let us get this clear; it is about working together. A burden falls upon the Member for Araluen as well about how we work together. I received her letter indicating what she sees as a priority for Alice Springs. I welcome that. We agree on the majority of it. I am happy to work with the Member for Araluen and the mayor, but it takes coordination.

In Darwin we have a master plan for the CBD. I have been briefed on the Katherine master plan by the mayor for Katherine. I have said to the mayor of Alice Springs, Damien Ryan, who I have a lot of time for, that we need to see something similar for Alice Springs.

I will not make the mistake the CLP made last term of imposing my opinions, visions or views on the people of Alice Springs. It has to come from the people, with the people, and we must work together on that shared vision. I have already had these conversations with the mayor of Alice Springs about how we can work together on a vibrant CBD and other issues in Alice Springs. We have to work together on those.

There was a question yesterday or the day before from the Member for Araluen where I spoke about some things we are doing, through the Department of the Chief Minister, responding to safety concerns in Alice Springs around lights, CCTV and other activities. We have a constant program of what we can do to work with the people of Alice Springs on issues of concern to them. I will work with the mayor, local members and Centralians on how we can work together on those issues. We are listening.

Yesterday we had an example of that with the Minister for Health making a very positive commitment on palliative care, listening and responding to the people of Alice Springs and their concerns, and making sure services are responsive to the needs of the people of Alice Springs.

The palliative care will be a dedicated resource, not a shared resource with general rehab. That did not make sense. We have listened to the people of Alice Springs and responded to the issue. That is the approach I will take. I look forward to seeing a vision from council and the people of Alice on how they want us to best work with them in the CBD. I am open to it and willing to work with them. I am confident we can do this. We have seen it happening in other places in the Territory. It can and will happen in Alice Springs as well.

Water Management

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

I represent the Arnhem electorate, where some communities are very concerned with water licences and water management. How is the government delivering on its election commitment to restore integrity and transparency in water management and water allocation processes?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arnhem for her very important question. She is right; many people in the community, right across the Territory, are concerned about water policy and want to see a return to an evidence-based way of creating policy. Water is such an important part of our natural environment and our livelihoods. Sustainable water use was such an important part of the platform we took to the Territory election.

As I have said on a number of occasions, as the Territory grows there is more pressure on our precious water resources. We want to make sure we are sustainably using our available water resources to ensure the ongoing health of our rivers and waterways so people, in future, have access to the water they need when they need it. An important part of the commitment we made to Territorians was about restoring integrity and transparency to a range of areas and, importantly, to water policy. The former government lost a lot of the trust of Territorians in regard to water licences.

Sound water policy makes for smart economic and environmental policy. We are actively involving communities and stakeholders in water management and water allocation decisions by re-establishing water advisory committees and implementing open and transparent water planning processes. The water advisory committees are a crucial component of government's focus on transparency around water policy, and they are integral to our sustainable water use policy. It is unfortunate that they were left to languish under the former government.

Since forming the Labor government we have appointed members to the following water advisory committees: Tindall Mataranka — Daly Waters; Katherine; Rapid Creek; and Ti Tree. I am very pleased to have appointed members to the Alice Springs Water Advisory Committee this week. Each committee will have its own challenges. I am pleased to have met with a number of representatives on those committees. I look forward to working with them to develop effective, fair and robust water allocation plans and policies for their regions. A consultative, science-based approach is the way forward for water policy in the Territory and to restoring Territorians' trust in government to sensibly allocate water. We saw a lot of poor decision-making by the former government in this area. I am very pleased this is now progressing.

Stella Maris

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

The matter of Stella Maris was raised in the House yesterday by the cross bench. The Member for Barkly remains traumatised over the saga. On the eve of the NT election in 2012 the Northern Territory's ruling Labor government offered unions NT a 10-year, rent-free lease of the Stella Maris building and site. Four years on a decision by the majority of the full bench of the NT Court of Appeal determined that Ms Lawrie had been afforded procedural fairness in the Stella Maris Inquiry. The court also dismissed the challenge of the cost decision by Justice Southwood. Can you please advise whether the former Leader of the Opposition has been pursued for her costs and if not, why not?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is not something I have considered or that has come across my desk. I am happy to take it on notice and provide some advice.

I have been paying attention to investing in kids, restoring trust and creating and supporting jobs in the Territory. I have not been thinking about the Stella Maris incident or the court case. It has not been occupying my time. It is fascinating to see what occupies the time of the opposition and Independents—issues crucial to the day-to-day lives of Territorians. I am happy to take it on notice and get back to them. It is just not something that occupies my time.

Health Infrastructure – Remote Communities

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for HEALTH

How is the government investing in health infrastructure in remote communities? How will this investment support local economies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. He is particularly passionate about representing his remote electorate, being a former health worker.

This government is committed to investing in our remote clinics. We are embarking on a significant additional project and program of work to improve the essential infrastructure in our remote health centres. Not only will this work benefit those living in remote areas who need access to health services through local community clinics, it will also provide an opportunity to stimulate the economy and create jobs in communities for local people.

I am pleased to update the House on the government's program of \$2m worth of repairs and maintenance for over 20 remote health clinics. This is an additional fund we have fast-tracked to deliver projects across the Northern Territory. We have a wonderful team of staff, dedicated remote area nurses, doctors, support staff and Aboriginal Health Workers in our clinics and communities doing a really tough job.

This government is committed to providing additional resources to help deliver critical upgrades. The \$2m package will include upgraded air conditioning, shaded waiting areas, door seals and concrete paths for hearing booths across the electorates of Barkly, Namatjira, Arnhem, Arafura and Stuart. It will also include paving at the external entrances of the Willowra Health Centre, disability access to the (inaudible) health centre, relocation of a renal demountable from Ngukurr to Minyerri, upgrades to the Milingimbi dental clinic, improved access and an extension to the Ramingining ambulance bay, and installation of backup generators at remote health clinics in Ali Curung, Canteen Creek, Elliot, Epenarra and Lake Nash.

It will provide for the establishment of a specialised waste disposal room at the Gapuwiyak health centre and will enclose the ambulance bay. It will provide for modification of the chronic disease consultation room at the Gunbalanya Health Centre, which I visited a couple of weeks ago with my colleague, the assistant minister. It will provide for the upgrade of the driveway and installation of shade at the Ti Tree Health Centre, construction of a new toilet block and a covered walkway at Timber Creek, construction of a storage facility at Kings Canyon and Lake Nash, upgrades to the Ali Curung health centre, and upgrades to the driveway at the Six Mile Health Centre along with external upgrades at the Harts Range health centre.

This is part of the governments significant projects brought forward and fast-tracked for this financial year, not only to provide support to the local economy by spreading government contracts across industries and across the Northern Territory to help stimulate the local economy, but to deliver benefits to the many Territorians living in remote areas who need to access vital healthcare in our clinics. It is something we are proud to deliver, and I thank my colleagues for their input and advice on this.

Freds Pass Show Society Funding

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

What level of funding is being provided to the Freds Pass Show society for 2017? Is the level of funding being decreased given the woodchoppers and others do not know if they will be funded next year? Is there any question that the show society will not be funded at the same level as previous years, and do you know what has happened to the review of show funding?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for the question. I am trying to make sure I get the most up-to-date information for you. I do not have it yet but I am getting it now and will endeavour to get it to you by the end of Question Time.

Screen Industry

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

I am sorry about this, Minister for Tourism and Culture, but it is two in a row for you from this side. The Country Liberals set up a ministerial advisory council for the screen industry. We understood the importance of this industry in creating jobs and boosting the economy. The MAC recommended \$9m of funding to Screen Territory over three years, and the Country Liberals committed to that. Why do Labor's election costings only show \$6.75m through to 2020? Why are you shortchanging the screen industry? Have you met with Screen Territory about this and if so, when?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I agree that this is an incredibly important industry in the Northern Territory. We have some amazing talent in our screen and television industry. I have been fortunate to meet with many of them already to talk about things like the recommendations they put forward in their MAC report.

I have read the MAC report and there are some very good recommendations in it, and we have made the commitment to work with them to ensure they are implemented. There is an industry reference group that met for the first time only a few weeks ago to speak about progressing some of the recommendations. That work is very much in train.

We made a commitment to Screen Territory, as did the former government, and we are fully committed to making sure we follow through on those commitments to make sure the recommendations are implemented and we can start to see more great programs in the Territory's screen industry. There was a range of recommendations made as part of the MAC report, from grants programs to investment in enterprise when it comes to the screen industry, some really solid recommendations that we support.

It is a great time for the industry's growth. It does an enormous amount of work in promoting the Territory through its work, which we all need to acknowledge. The screen industry in the Territory has an underpinning and vital role across many portfolios, whether it is promoting the Territory's natural beauty, our stories and local talent or creating things like health messages. It works across all those areas. We need to collaborate and make sure we are investing in that ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I was asking about the \$9m and your commitment for \$6.75m. Will you give them the \$9m or leave it at \$6.75m?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I was saying, I believe this is incredibly important. We have made a commitment to Screen Territory and we are committed to delivering on it. We will make sure we implement the recommendations of the MAC, which is what the former government and this government committed to. I look forward to working with them over the next few years on the implementation of those recommendations.

Netball Facility – Marrara

Ms WORDEN to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

What is the government's plan to deliver a state-of-the-art netball stadium at Marrara, and how will it support the economy and create jobs for locals?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Sanderson for the question. The Member for Sanderson is very passionate about netball. She is very well known in netball circles in the Territory, as is the Treasurer. They are very well entrenched in this.

With over 3000 participants, this is a sport that is growing in the Territory. It is a high-participation sport, and it has incredibly high participation by women, which we all need to encourage. I look forward to working to champion that cause with my colleagues.

I was delighted to recently announce that we are fast-tracking the construction of a world-class netball facility in the sporting home of Marrara, another election commitment. It will support the growth of this great game in the Territory and provide a much-needed infrastructure boost and local jobs.

How great would it be if we could have a new member of the Diamonds who was grown in the Territory? It is great that we are working towards sporting facilities that will allow our local netballers to train in facilities that are just as good as any facilities down south so they are not disadvantaged when they compete nationally.

The clubs are really excited about this. It is not just a game for many in the NT, like the Member Sanderson. It is way of life. Hopefully she can give me some shooting tips before I have to go out in front of a camera again because that was horrendous.

A member: We all have different strengths.

Ms MOSS: We do all have different strengths, and mine is not shooting a netball.

It is a wonderful participation sport for everyone. I had good fun. But we have some incredibly talented young netballers in the Territory. They deserve a state-of-the-art facility—a development pathway. I am proud government is fast-tracking the investment of \$10m for this important facility.

Warren Park Rugby League Facility – Consultation

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

It is beginning to feel like a Wednesday, but I can ask more than one question in a row. This week you have constantly said that in relation to Warren Park you have been speaking to the NRL and that the peak body, not the government, has been speaking to the rugby league clubs. Other than South Darwin, you have been unable to name one club that has been consulted.

Why have you made an announcement based on a 2012 proposal that did not involve consultation with the clubs? Given the NRL will meet with rugby league presidents on this matter for the first time on 8 December—that is another week—what are you doing other than supporting one club and building an office for two or three rugby league officials?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. This is about the fourth time we have been asked a question on Warren Park this week. We are very happy you are as excited about this announcement as we are, Leader of the Opposition, and that you are so interested in it.

As I have said on multiple occasions, yes, we have been speaking to NRL NT, which is more than the former government did with its plans for the home of NRL NT. There is a really important point to be made. We spoke about the submission that was made in 2012 and was resubmitted to the Public Accounts Committee. The Members for Nelson and Nightcliff are members of that committee.

Four years ago there was a submission, and I think you need to check your facts about whether or not people were consulted and discussed that proposal. They said very clearly four years ago that Warren Park would be the right home for rugby league. What are we doing now? We are fast-tracking a \$25m facility at Warren Park.

The Leader of the Opposition is asking what we are doing now around NRL NT. We are delivering on the commitment we made to NRL to find it a home. Of course we will involve the stakeholder who owns the land. We are not the former government; we do not believe in taking school grounds off schools and making an announcement in the media without speaking to the peak body. It is best practice to talk to the peak bodies, which represent all the clubs in the Northern Territory.

I appreciate the ongoing interest from the Leader of the Opposition. We will deliver a home for NRL for the Territory which can support the growth of this important sport, and we will provide jobs for Territorians while we do it.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to keep talking about it because it was a really positive announcement. It will provide stimulus and an opportunity for us to grow this important sport in the Territory. It finally gives rugby league a home. The former government tried—we have been talking about Warren Park for well over a year. The NRL has been talking about it for four years. We have been talking to the peak body and we are very excited about it. I look forward to keeping you informed, Leader of the Opposition. I am sure you will continue to talk about this important development that will provide jobs for Territorians.

Education – Gonski Funding Reforms

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Recently there has been a great deal of public debate about school funding and the future of the Gonski funding reforms. Can you tell members what you are doing to ensure the Northern Territory gets the best funding deal for our students.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, firstly, thank you for your Christmas wishes earlier today. I also thank the Member for Brennan for the question. He knows how important great schools are to the Territory's future.

I care about Territory children and know how important it is to have quality teachers in every one of our classrooms so students can access the right support services, wherever they may be, and for them to be engaged in their learning. This costs money, especially in the Territory, where we have unique challenges, such as geographical isolation, and higher proportions of disadvantaged students. There are also higher proportions of students living in poverty and students with English as a second language.

The best way to meet these needs is to have appropriate levels of funding in the education system, and to ensure that funding is allocated equitably on the basis of student need. On 16 December I will be the Chair of the COAG Education Council, the ministerial council on education. A key topic of discussion will be the future of federal funding arrangements for schools—a vital meeting. Many people refer to these arrangements as the Gonski model.

I will advocate the Northern Territory's case for needs-based funding in negotiations with the federal government and my ministerial colleagues from other states. The current proposal from the Turnbull government will reduce funding to the Territory, a loss of almost \$30m in funding for NT schools over the

next three years. I will argue strongly against any funding reductions to the NT and make a case for increased funding levels on the basis of the higher cost to deliver education in our context.

Unlike the CLP, which used the extra \$272.5m it received in federal funding to achieve saving targets, I and this Labor government commit that any additional school funding from the Australian Government will go directly to supporting Territory students. Every dollar from the federal government for education will hit the ground for education.

The previous CLP government, through its cuts to education and other services, hurt the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students in the Territory. At a time when most other states and territories were increasing funding to schools, the CLP took money out of education, drastically reducing the number of teachers in our classrooms and staff providing important support to our schools and students. This left many schools struggling to provide the support needed to ensure all children have a quality education.

This Labor government recognises that investing in education is the key to a strong and cohesive community, and is reinvesting in our schools. We have listened to parents, educators and the community, and we have a plan to better support education and work towards having an exceptional leader in every school and an outstanding teacher in every classroom.

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

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS School Suspensions

Ms LAWLER (Education): Madam Speaker, in response to a question asked by the Member for Blain, pursuant to the *Education Act*, students who are suspended are not permitted to attend school. They are the responsibility of their parents and carers.

All schools are required to provide suspended students with appropriate course work during the period of suspension. On a negotiated case-by-case basis suspended students who have been referred to alternative education programs, including positive learning centres, may continue to access and attend those services during their period of suspension.

The Department of Education has provided data for suspensions in Semester 1 of 2016. I will table that for the Member for Blain.

Freds Pass Show Funding

Ms MOSS (Tourism and Culture): Madam Speaker, I have a response for the Member for Nelson from Question Time.

My understanding is that no show across the Territory receives recurrent operational funding. The Freds Pass Show has received ad hoc funding as part of a two-year project to improve governance and financial viability. As part of that there was some capital funding and some funding that was allowed to be used for operational purposes. I am happy to keep talking to you about the issue, Member for Nelson.