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Dan Murphy's

Mr HIGGINS to ACTING CHIEF MINISTER

The Chief Minister has shown himself to be indecisive. This is a government driven by interest groups and donors. He dug his heels in for months over the Home Improvement Scheme, despite overwhelming evidence that it works. He took forever to respond to a crime crisis that saw a 60% increase in break-ins around Darwin and Palmerston. He introduced part-day public holidays that hurt business. After only five months in government, your backbench is already speaking out against leadership. Acting Chief Minister, will your government now show some real leadership and guts, lift the ban on Dan Murphy's, stop playing politics with people's lives and bring a cyclotron to Darwin?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question; he has covered a lot of ground there. This government has covered a hell of a lot of ground since August. This government has hit the ground running and taken decisive action. After listening to and consulting with Territorians, it has developed the most policy we have seen from any opposition to have the honour of being elected to government. We have hit the ground running to deliver for Territorians.

I will address your first point about the Home Improvement Scheme; yes, that is one thing we could have done better. We listened. We have been a good government because we listened. We told you, 'Yes, we got this wrong', and we acted. We put in a bigger and better Home Improvement Scheme to deliver for Territory jobs, tradies and businesses. That is what a responsible government does. It listens.

We have put in great measures that were desperately needed to reverse the huge cuts we saw under the former government in the areas of youth justice and crime. We have felt the impacts of those cuts over the last few months and during school holidays. We have put more resources into youth justice because we know victims deserve more of a voice. We must stop kids from committing crimes in the first place. We are committed to putting the right strategies in place—the evidence-based approach to tackling those issues.

The PET scanner and the cyclotron—we have a Health minister who has been on the phone, working very hard to deliver this project. As a government we are committed to the PET scanner and delivering this project, which is something the previous government failed to do. Even with the CLP government in the Northern Territory and a Liberal Coalition government in Canberra, they failed to deliver that project. It is something we will deliver for Territorians. They will have a fully operational PET scanner working in that hospital next year. We are committed to delivering that project, and we will.

You mentioned Dan Murphy's; we are in conversation with them. We went into the election with a clear policy, the same as the CLP's policy about floor space, because we know the dreadful effects alcohol abuse has in the Northern Territory and that supply is an issue.

We have taken decisive action as a government. We are working hard for the Territory. We will continue working hard each and every day we have the privilege of being in government.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
Dan Murphy's

Mr HIGGINS to ACTING CHIEF MINISTER

Will you now listen to Territorians and lift your ban on Dan Murphy's?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, let us be very clear about this. There is no ban on Dan Murphy's; that is absolutely clear. We went into the election with the same policy as the previous government about floor space, and we are continuing to talk to Dan Murphy's.

People in the Territory are entitled to have a drink and drink responsibly. That is not a problem whatsoever, but if you were to ignore the horrendous alcohol abuse statistics in the Northern Territory and not look at alcohol policy, particularly around the issue of supply, then you would not be a responsible government. We had the same policy as the CLP. We all went into the election with the same policy; however, we are continuing those discussions with Dan Murphy's.

Indigenous Territorians – Government Support

Ms AH KIT to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

How will the government's focus on children, jobs, trust and the bush help close the gap in health, social and economic disadvantage for our first Australians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Karama for her very important question. Today, in this country, we reflect on the horrendous rate of Indigenous disadvantage. Today our federal parliament turns to look at that very issue and the efforts that have been made by governments and communities to address these very real problems.

Governments and oppositions of all persuasions, as well as the Australian public, passionately want to see better outcomes for Indigenous Territorians. There is bipartisan support in wanting to go beyond electoral cycles to see continued, sustained investment in the programs and resources that will support better outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Today the Chief Minister is in Canberra, making sure the Territory is at the table as part of the conversations about what the best programs are, where we need better resources and how we deliver better outcomes for Indigenous Territorians. This is something we all desperately want to see.

There have been well-intentioned governments and oppositions that have gone forward and targeted resources into health, education and housing. We are very proud, as a government, of our \$1.1bn, 10-year housing investment for the bush. This is the biggest investment in bush housing we have ever seen by a Territory government. We are incredibly proud of that investment because we want to make a difference, and we must make a difference.

We must listen to Indigenous Territorians. They must be at the table, driving local decision-making. As a government, it is not about talking at people; it is about listening. For too long government policy has dictated to communities what they should do, and that is not getting the results that we so desperately need. It is about listening to the wisdom of Indigenous Territorians on the ground, what they want and what the future will be for their kids, as well as working with them to get that in place.

This government is committed to those plans beyond election cycles. We have a 10-year program for housing. We are investing in early childhood development to ensure we help the kids in the bush get the very best start to life.

Today is a very important day. It is a day when we look at where we are going, what the data is showing and if we are seeing the improvements we all so desperately want to see. We, as representatives in the Territory parliament, must acknowledge that this is an important day and make every effort we can, in the time we have in this Chamber, to make a difference in the lives of Indigenous Territorians.

Jobs – Investment

Mr COLLIINS to TREASURER

How is this government investing in jobs across the Territory, and how is this supporting tradies, small businesses and homeowners in the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for his question. It is an important question. It is about the action this government is taking because we know the economic challenges, and we are hearing from businesses about what they faced in 2016. It was a really tough year and we know there will be challenging conditions in 2017.

The previous government did not get its act together. It failed to plan for where we would see a slowing of our economy. It left us with a debt of about \$900m and a deficit of about \$2.7bn, all whilst selling TIO, leasing the port for 99 years and failing to plan. We are in government, and now it is our responsibility to take action to support jobs and support the Territory through this process.

We have taken decisive action. We have put in stimulus measures to support Territory businesses and jobs. We announced our \$22m Immediate Works Stimulus Package to support community groups, steel manufacturers, public housing, smaller tradies and remote health clinics. We have fast-tracked \$120m worth of infrastructure projects to deliver on vital infrastructure for the Northern Territory, and to honour our election commitments to Territorians—we were just speaking about the multistorey car park.

I acknowledge, as I did earlier, that we should have acted faster on the Home Improvement Scheme. The main thing is that, as a government, we have listened. We took on board the feedback from the business community and tradies, and we acted. We have not just acted, we have also brought it back bigger and better to ensure it delivers the vital stimulus we need to support jobs, businesses and the Northern Territory.

I am also very proud of the changes we have made to first home buyer schemes. We have seen the first home buyer changes for purchasers of established homes flow across the Northern Territory. We have had huge success in Alice Springs—the Member for Araluen was very passionate about this—with 59 first home buyers in the market there, 71 in Palmerston, 120 in Darwin and six in Katherine. These are people who are now staying in the Territory for the long run. We are giving them an opportunity to raise their families in the NT. Most importantly, when we need people to stay in the Northern Territory, we are keeping them here.

This government has taken swift action to ensure we support jobs, the economy and the future of the Northern Territory.

Nelson Electorate – Road and Cycle Path Upgrades

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Your government recently deferred a \$15m much-needed upgrade to the Gunn Point Road, in my electorate. Can you please say how long the upgrade is deferred for, and when the extension to the cycle path to Coolalinga—worth about \$1.5m—will commence? Or is it true that this project has been deferred as well?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his question. Yes, we deferred expenditure for the Gunn Point Road extension. I heard at the last briefing that there was still work to be done there—about another 10 or 15 kilometres of road that was recently sealed, or about to be. I will have to get back to you after Question Time about that.

They were some of the tough decisions we had to make when we came to government. We have to ensure we can deliver on our priorities as a new government, while being fiscally responsible at the same time. We had to look at some projects which could be deferred, and we have done that. If we have the privilege of a second term in government, that will happen in the first year of that term.

That is one project where we had to make a hard decision about if it could wait, and we believe it can. However, if there is a change in situation—every year you look at your capital works budget and go through the process. If there is seen to be a need for it, by all means, we will look at it and make a decision. I expect some continued lobbying from you in the next few years. You are a very effective person when it comes to lobbying, Member for Nelson.

As for the Coolalinga bike path, we are 100% committed to that. The early cost estimates indicate that the project will be in the order of \$1m to \$1.5m. At this point it is anticipated that construction will happen in the second half of this year. Investigations to scope the proposed bike path from Howard Springs to Coolalinga are ongoing at the moment. The path will commence from the back of Whitewood Road to the back of the new subdivision at Coolalinga. Consultation on the scope of the design will be under way in the coming weeks. I will make sure the department sits down with you, Member for Nelson, to get an understanding of your views.

Mr Wood: And make a lot of lycra people happy.

Ms MANISON: And make a lot of lycra people happy; yes, indeed. I will ensure the department gets your views and also the feedback you have received from your constituents about how they believe this should offered. As local members we are the ones that hear first and foremost what is required and often we have

some very good feedback for government agencies on how projects can be delivered in line with community actions. It saves a lot of money on consultancies; let us put it that way.

We are committed to the bike path. It will happen and I will ensure my agency gets in contact with you with regard to that. It enhances people's lifestyle, creates alternative transport and I love seeing people get out there and get fit. It is a very good thing.

Buy Local Scheme

Mr KIRBY to TREASURER

Can the Treasurer please give an update on how the government is supporting local business and creating jobs through the strengthening of the Buy Local scheme?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We have heard a lot about jobs in the last six months, and how we support local jobs has been something people have wanted to see. I was delighted that, in my first week as minister, I sat down with the Chief Minister in the Chamber of Commerce and we moved swiftly to implement the first stage of our Buy Local policy change, which was effectively to make sure we were directing that 30% must be driven through the whole tender of the project, not just the very top layer.

However, I think the previous government started work on that, which was very well intentioned, but it did not go far enough; we took it a step further. We also listened to business because they wanted more changes. We want to see government, which is one of the biggest procurers of services in the Northern Territory—we have a big budget to spend with local business, and we want to see that it actually goes to local business.

None of us like hearing stories of local businesses which have been here for decades, family run businesses that are here for the long run and support Territorians, going for the job and having a multinational, big southerner-type company win the work because they are having a quiet time down south in their jurisdiction. Nobody likes hearing those stories.

We have had to think about what changes we can make to ensure we hear fewer of those stories and maximise our government procurement when it comes to local business. We have made further changes to procurement. The Chief Minister announced some of those changes last week. The second draft of our reforms includes replacing the value for money definition with the value for the Territory definition. This is about investing in local business. We know investing in local jobs and business is value for the long term of the Northern Territory, as well as the short term.

We have also prohibited short listing a tender on price alone, and placed a cap on the maximum weighting on the price of a tender in evaluations to 30%. Sometimes economy is a scale; when you are up against a massive business or someone who is importing a whole head of steel from overseas, it makes it hard for Territory companies to be competitive.

We are looking at what is truly of value to the Northern Territory by investing in local business with a contract. It is something everybody wants to see. We must achieve value for money for government because the budget is tight. We all know that. People want to see good value for money. Price alone is not necessarily the whole picture. Keeping people in jobs in the Northern Territory and supporting Territory business is good value for money.

Don Dale

Mr HIGGINS to ACTING CHIEF MINISTER

The Chief Minister has quoted with pride the number of youth currently being held in detention at Don Dale in an apparent effort to appear tough on crime, despite stating, pre-election, that the centre should be closed as soon as possible and a recommendation to the previous Labor government to rebuild Don Dale. Why is Don Dale still open? What are your plans?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because, yes, youth justice, crime and those correction facilities have been a very hot point of debate across the Northern Territory. We have seen national coverage of this to the point of having a Royal Commission.

We agree that Don Dale, in its current form, is not the right place for incarcerated youth. We have committed \$15m as a start to what should be the development of a new correctional facility for juvenile justice, but we want to ensure we get that investment right. We have taken action to implement new changes through youth justice. We have had to invest the money we saw cut under the previous government, and we have made sure we are investing in diversion programs to stop kids getting into trouble in the first place—for more victim support, a greater voice for victims in this system. That has been sorely missed for too long. They deserve to have a say.

We have the Royal Commission occurring as well. A lot of work has been happening with that commission. We need a new facility to ensure that when a juvenile is incarcerated they are being put in a facility that delivers the right rehabilitation programs, so that when they leave they are better people, are less likely to reoffend and are more likely to follow a pathway in their life that ensures they do not end up in the adult prison.

For too long we have seen continued failure in the youth justice system. What we have seen across successive governments are not the results we want. That is why we are committed to investing in youth justice. We are talking about 52 positions. We are ensuring better conditions. If a youth is on bail, we are ensuring they have the right support to stop them reoffending.

We are ensuring we get to those kids early, and work with them to stop the crime from being committed in the first place. That is what people want to see. The community deserves to feel safe, and that is why we are taking action to deal with the issue of youth justice. We saw too many cuts under the previous government. We need to do more as a government, and we will.

Government Decision-Making

Mr HIGGINS to ACTING CHIEF MINISTER

In January the Member for Stuart told the *Alice Springs News* about his frustration that government decision-making happens on the fifth floor in Darwin, and involvement of backbenchers is minimal. Today the Member for Stuart resigned from the Public Accounts Committee. Why has it taken only six months for rebel backbenchers—‘rebel’ I picked up from this morning’s speech—to turn against your government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I need to be really clear that this is a strong and united team, dedicated to driving good outcomes for the Northern Territory, electorate by electorate. I feel privileged to have wonderful colleagues. They are diverse colleagues across the Northern Territory who are committed to seeing a better Northern Territory going forward. In the last four years of government we saw chaos, division, dysfunction and people walking away. It was a mess.

Over the last six months I have had the privilege of getting to know the Member for Stuart. He is one of the most passionate people I have ever met. He wears his heart on his sleeve, brings his life experiences into this Chamber and is passionately committed to making a difference to the Northern Territory.

We have all been on committees, and we all know how Darwin-based they are. The reams of paper you have to read in preparation—I am privileged in that it only takes me 15 minutes to drive to work. This member’s electorate is the size of some European countries. He has some of the most remotely located constituents in the country. We respect the member’s decision. Other members will take up those committee positions.

Like all new things, there is room for improvement. This is a new government. We are people who listen, work together, communicate with each other and respect one another. We have had conversations about some of the frustrations that were expressed. You listen, work through them and say, ‘How can we communicate better as a team?’ That is exactly what we are doing, which is in stark contrast to how some of these matters were dealt with under the previous government.

This is a strong, united team of Territorians who are in this place for the right reasons. Everybody wants to make a difference. We will work together and have debates and conversations. We will learn from each others' experiences, brought into this Chamber from our electorates. We will listen, take action and do everything in our time in this Chamber to make the Territory a better place.

Youth Crime

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Madam Speaker, every Territorian has the right to feel safe and expect their homes, businesses and properties to be secure. Can you advise the House what measures are in place to tackle the causes of youth crime?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his important question. I thank him and the Member for Drysdale for attending a public meeting regarding some of these issues last week. We sat and really listened to the community. Thank you for sitting up on the stage with us to do that.

To be blunt, we have inherited a system that is not working. The community and experts in the field are telling us what we are doing is not working, and we have a Royal Commission because the previous government pursued policies that do not work. We have listened and we have acted.

We know we have to do better, and if we are going to have a bright future for the Territory then we need to do better than what we are doing today. The Deputy Chief Minister has been very clear in what our plans are going forward. Last week I was so proud to stand beside our Chief Minister and make the announcement about the biggest investment in youth justice in the history of the Northern Territory.

This is not scooching around the edges. This is about long-term money and solutions for problems that have been around a long time because there has not been the courage to act on them. If we can keep people out of the system, we will do better. We need to have a range of responses.

The first thing is that we are doubling our money to the NGO system. The NGOs do this work well; they know their communities, early intervention and how to work with kids on the ground. The more we keep kids busy and engaged in our community, the less likely they are to be committing crimes.

We know that bail is not working. We are getting that message loud and clear not only from the community, but from police and courts. It is astounding to me that we are the only jurisdiction in Australia that does not have a bail accountability program in place for young people. We are fixing that by putting people in place to give judges information to make good decisions about bail, and also ensuring that there are people to support young people, make sure they stay out of trouble and do not reoffend while they are on bail.

We have made an announcement that in Palmerston we are investing in victim conferencing because this is an important part of stopping young people from reoffending. This program will specifically focus on people reoffending. We are listening to the people, giving victims a voice, making those on bail accountable and doing the right things to stop children ending up in Don Dale.

Youth Justice

Mr MILLS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

Last week I met a couple who had suffered a break-in, theft, destruction of property and an encounter with the judicial system. After a pursuit, the two young alleged offenders were caught a short distance from the home they had broken into. They were carrying an item from the robbery. They went to court, and in spite of some compelling evidence, the magistrate ruled in favour of the defence argument in a closed court. The alleged offenders were not charged with the break-in or theft, due to insufficient evidence. The victim could not correctly identify eye colour or the colour of the alleged offender's socks at 3 am.

The outcome was devastating for the couple and demoralising for the police. What was of even greater concern, affecting our community's confidence in our judicial system, was that the victim was only permitted to have his wife come into court; however, the alleged offenders had 19 people from a range of departments and agencies to support them. They were not volunteers; they were paid to be there—parole officers, liaison officers, community workers et cetera.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, your time has expired. What is your question?

Mr MILLS: The funding you are providing to fix this broken system, will it support the victims of crime and not the offenders?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is difficult without the member being able to fully explain his question. I am unsure of the specific circumstance he is talking about, and it would be inappropriate for me to comment on that case.

The Minister for Territory Families just answered a question on youth. We know we inherited a youth detention system that was in crisis. That is pretty obvious as we have a Royal Commission occurring in that space. We have a dysfunctional system that clearly is not working because there have been funding cuts by previous governments which have not taken a long-term approach. This government is committed to listening and putting in place measures that will see long-term generational change in the Northern Territory.

We need young people to understand the consequences of their behaviour. It is unacceptable to talk about incidents where people have had a crime committed against them. This government is investing in our youth justice system and we have a minister who is working very hard in that space. We are awaiting an interim report from the Royal Commission, which will come in March.

We have made some strong commitments regarding this. We need to invest in non-government organisations. We also need to invest in these issues long before they happen. This is why we have a clear plan around early investment in our families from the moment children are born, and before that. When women are pregnant we need to work with them for health outcomes.

There is evidence that we know within the first 1000 days of a child's life where they will head, what pathway they will go down. We need to make sure we provide health support early in a child's life, and then we need to engage them with the education system. The Member for Blain is a big supporter of that; he is a former school principal and he believes in that principle. We need to make it happen. We need to engage and invest in young people so that we are not dealing with these acute-end problems.

At the same time we must acknowledge that those longer-term plans will take time to put in place, and it will take many years for some of our young people to grow up with that change. We certainly need to address the issues here and now, and I believe the Minister for Territory Families is doing this with youth support. In terms of our court system and police, we need to ensure we have a well-funded police force and that it has the numbers.

The member highlighted what he felt were a number of supports that were in the court system, and that the victims were not allowed the opportunity to attend court. I would be happy to provide a briefing for the minister regarding what other protocols are within court cases, so we can perhaps have a little more clarity.

We have a long journey ahead of us. We have a youth detention system in crisis. We need to work on our youth justice system. It is something this government is committed to doing.

Victims of Crime

Mrs WORDEN to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

How is the government ensuring victims of crime come first and their voices are heard in the justice system?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Sanderson for her question. It is an important question because we have heard loud and clear from each of our own communities that people have not felt heard throughout the system. This has become increasingly frustrating to the people of the Northern Territory. One of the reasons we have focused our investment on victim conferencing is we know it is an effective system that works for the young person at the centre of the conference, and works for the victim.

In this process a young person who has committed a crime comes face to face with the person they have committed the crime against. This is about accountability and making sure people really understand the consequences of their crime. It is all too easy to talk about \$5000 of damage to a window or something in a business, but it is different to hear the person who owns that business explain the impact it has on them, their family, their employees and the wider community. This is really about how we will help children take accountability for their actions. If you do not understand the consequences of what you have done, you cannot take responsibility for it.

The other reason we have invested in this method is because it has proven results in other parts of Australia. Jesuit Social Services have been proven providers in other parts of Australia. They have been working in the Territory for a couple of years, so we know they will be a strong provider, particularly in Palmerston.

The research shows that the young people who go through this process have an 80% reduction in offending, which is extraordinary. More importantly, the victims who have gone through this process have talked about the impact it has had on them. It makes them feel safer, more secure and it gives them a better understanding. These are positive outcomes for the whole community.

This gives us the opportunity to ensure community service orders are more meaningful, so there is a direct link between the crime and the child taking responsibility for their behaviour. If you smash a window at a local football club then you will support the volunteers who have been working hard to get that football club up and running—direct consequence. We need to clearly see those supports. Our youth outreach workforce will support young people to follow through on that. This will ensure a clear link between the crime and the outcome of people taking accountability.

This is about being tough on children. This is not an easy option—I want to be clear—to sit there and face the person you have committed a crime against.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

School Truancy Laws

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Are families being double punished by being fined under NT school truancy laws and having their Centrelink support stopped under federal school attendance laws?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, attendance is critical and vital for our children if they are to make improvements in the long term. When we talk about some of the issues we are faced with today, such as youth crime—we all know a child who attends school to gain literacy and numeracy skills, and is engaged in schooling, gets onto a pathway of further education and training.

Getting kids to school is vital and is one of the key initiatives for this government and the federal government. Senator Nigel Scullion has been adamant about that, and has put considerable amounts of funding into the Remote School Attendance Strategy, as well as the School Engagement Strategy. So the federal government knows that kids need to go to school, and particularly Indigenous students in our remote areas need to go to school. This government, and the previous government, know that kids must go to school. It is a priority.

Member for Nhulunbuy, this would not be an issue if parents sent their kids to school. If a child is not attending school—and some of these initiatives were under the previous government, and I have been very happy to continue to support every child going to school every day because there are no silver bullets. Kids must go to school. There are a number of measures in place if children are not attending school. The first measure is about a positive AIW, and the school community working together to get the child to school. It is about case managing that child, having conversations with families—parents and grandparents—to get that child to school.

Schools work very hard to provide positive things. There are incentives for a child to go to school such as going on footy trips at the end of the year, getting access to additional technology and other positive things that schools use to get kids to attend. If they are not attending school, it is a last resort to fine a parent; that measure is only done as a last resort. Hopefully there are very few times when a parent is fined. The

quarantining of welfare, and the finding of things where the federal government and the Northern Territory Government work together—those things are last resorts, and the way for a parent to avoid that is to get their child to school. I am firm and adamant about that. Every child needs to go to school every day in the Northern Territory.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Stephen Hatton

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of a previous Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Stephen Hatton. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Education Standards

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for EDUCATION

How is the government ensuring teachers and students get the support they need to lift education standards in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Katherine for her question. I know she is very passionate about education. Like all of us in this Chamber, she understands how vital education is. We talk about research on youth crime—if we can get kids to school and on a pathway of education, traineeships and jobs then they will not be committing crime. Nobody wants to have a criminal record because it jeopardises their chances of employment. Education is the key.

One of the positives about the people in this government is our ability to work together. I have been working very closely with the Minister for Territory Families on addressing the issue of youth crime and the attendance of Territory students.

This government is backing Territory students and teachers by investing an additional \$124m into schools across the Territory over the next four years. This year, as part of this package, we have started to roll out the additional \$20m into school bank accounts. We will determine the exact amount to go into those bank accounts through the census data in week eight. That data will provide us with information about how many students are in the schools, how many are Indigenous, how many have special needs—all the details we need to be able to allocate funding on a needs basis.

The funds will be distributed to schools through the student needs-based funding model, which will ensure a fair and transparent distribution of those funds. I have been talking quite loudly about Senator Birmingham and calling on the federal government to look at a needs-based funding model for schools. I need to make sure, and I am determined to make sure, that we have—as well as we can in the Northern Territory with the funding we have—a needs-based funding model. Then it can be clear and transparent. It will not be open to criticism that I am choosing to give more funding to urban secondary schools or to special schools because there will be a fair and equitable model that is based on the needs of the students. The funding will go to where the greatest needs are.

With the \$20m, we are putting \$100 into funding for all students. We will increase funding to preschools, transition years, middle years and senior years, as well as to schools where there is a higher proportion of Indigenous students and students with special needs. The schools will decide how that funding is spent. If they want additional teachers, youth workers or counsellors in their schools, they will be able to make those decisions. I am looking forward, as I am sure you all are, to being able to see additional funds hitting the mark in Territory schools.

Police – Task Force Sonoma

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ACTING CHIEF MINISTER referred to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

The Chief Minister recently announced the establishment of Territory-wide Task Force Sonoma, which will comprise 12 on-the-beat officers and six detectives to combat youth crime across the Territory. When will this task force be fully staffed and operational, and how will it immediately help residents of Palmerston, who last September faced an enormous 127% jump in house break-ins compared to the same month one year ago?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, with regard to questions on police, in the Chief Minister's absence the Attorney-General will answer those questions.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. She asked for some specific information which I do not have in front of me, but I will undertake to provide that to her. I will also offer to provide a briefing on the great work of the NT Police. We all acknowledge that our police officers on the front line make tough decisions. It is a hard job and we need to acknowledge the hard work they do on behalf of our community.

The cuts we saw from the CLP—or the lack of resources in regard to the commitment of 120 additional police officers, something we did not see fulfilled. Since coming to government the Chief Minister, as the minister for Police, has been particularly passionate. He has been on the beat with officers, working with the Police Association to make sure we fully understand the needs of the police force.

The police training academy is training a huge number of police trainees so that we can boost the number of officers. The training courses are at capacity. Task Force Sonoma is focusing on the issues regarding youth. The task force is composed of 18 officers to work specifically on youth justice issues with families.

We have heard comments from the Minister for Territory Families regarding youth conferencing and making sure we have all kinds of support. That is one of the differences between this and the previous government; we are working together. This sits in my portfolio as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, and in the portfolios of the Minister for Territory Families and the Chief Minister, who is also the Police minister. It also sits in the portfolios of Education and Health. All these factors add up. We are working together to address these issues and provide the appropriate support.

The Minister for Territory Families has spoken about bringing the NGOs into the system. We need to recognise the strengths of each of our agencies so we can deliver results for Territorians, who expect to feel safe in their communities. I will undertake to gather this specific information and bring it back.

Housing – Repairs and Upgrades

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

How is the urban public housing repairs and upgrades program supporting Territory businesses to create jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The question really goes to the point of stimulating the Northern Territory economy, which was left in quite a mess by the previous regime. We are looking at significant debt, deficit and a huge loss of population across our borders. It is good to see the Chief Minister totally focused on stimulating the economy in these very early days of the Labor government.

I am pleased to announce the \$5m for repairs and upgrades to public housing as part of the stimulus strategy. For members in this House it is great to know that, as of late yesterday, 148 businesses have registered across the Northern Territory. Forty-four requests for quotes have been issued, and works under this program have commenced in Casuarina and Palmerston, and will soon follow in other areas.

This is part of the \$22m Immediate Works Stimulus Package, but it is nice to know that \$5m is immediately going to repairs and upgrades of public housing of some of the most vulnerable Territorians. It is another part of the Territory government stimulus of \$120m for infrastructure that has been brought forward.

We will share that stimulus across all electorates across urban and regional areas. Let us focus on this immediate injection of funds into our local economy that will be fast-tracking infrastructure funding and supporting our middle level trades sector.

The \$5m repairs and maintenance is for stimulating the local economy across the Northern Territory in terms of urban public housing. It is helping those middle section construction businesses, our tradies. The funds are very targeted; we are seriously looking at roofs, kitchens, bathrooms, fencing and those items that will stimulate the trade sector and business supply sectors.

It is also a good way to try to address wait times and turnaround in public housing, which will get more houses back on track. It cuts across a lot of areas. In the time I have left, I encourage those tradies who have not registered to get online, ring 8999 7969 or visit the Department of Housing and Community Development website to get details.

Last week I encouraged one of the local tradies who came into the office to go to the Department of Housing and Community Development to get on board with this in terms of the stimulus opportunities, and the great outcomes for public housing tenants across the Northern Territory.

Crime in Alice Springs

Mrs LAMBLEY to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

One thing you have not done particularly well since you have come to government is plan for a summer of crime in Alice Springs. It is inevitable; it happens every year. At the moment we have up to 100 kids roaming the streets of Alice Springs at night, causing havoc. We have crime at a record high for some years. There is a real problem, and I know there are other problems throughout the Northern Territory. I was in Palmerston yesterday; they are experiencing something similar.

We need to know what your strategy is for dealing with the short-term problems of lawlessness, crime and antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs. We need some leadership from your government.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, yes, I think traditionally across the Northern Territory we see a peak in crime that correlates with school holidays. In Alice Springs that has always been a particularly historic issue, and we need a comprehensive response and plan to deal with it. Police have taken action and gone out there. We have seen the Task Force Sonoma looking at youth issues Territory-wide. We have seen Strike Force Winx in Alice Springs provide strategic focus on preventing and policing youth crime, including property and repeat offending.

Another part of our commitment—this is more long-term—is making sure we address the issue of police numbers. We are looking at an extra 120 police. We hear loud and clear those concerns of the Alice Springs community regarding these matters. Police have taken swift action to get more resources where they are needed. We are seeing greater efforts targeted at property and youth crime with the 18 dedicated youth crime police. Some of those—I believe six of them—will be in Alice Springs. That is quite a significant investment, as well as the investments we heard about from the Minister for Territory Families and the extra efforts we are putting into youth justice.

Let us look at how we got into this position in the first place. Why do we have so many disengaged youth who are committing crimes, which they should not be doing because Territorians deserve to feel safe and do not deserve to put up with crime and antisocial behaviour. They should not have to put up with it. In the previous government we saw significant cuts to the area of youth diversion and rehabilitation programs. We saw cuts from the previous government to youth street outreach services and the Aboriginal Congress' youth service in Alice Springs. We saw these cuts.

Here we are, a few years down the track, when those youths should have had those programs working with them to get on a better path, but instead we are seeing the consequences of those cuts. Now we are at a point in which we are swiftly taking action to put in place the resources that are needed for youth diversion and crime issues. I commend the police for the efforts they have made.

Tenders – Weightings Used to Assess

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Could you please describe the weightings in categories and percentages used by your department when assessing tenderers, and could you please say if that template must also be used by subcontractors when they are tendering? Could you also clearly state the definition of 'local'?

ANSWER

We will be more than happy to give you a full briefing through government agencies regarding the weightings and where they are placed. We have made changes and we have ensured they flow through the entire tenders. When we first came to office we took immediate action to increase the local content weighting to 30% across procurement, which went into place on 1 September.

I will go over the local content assessment criteria and some of the elements they will be looking at to ensure that it looks at local content. To determine local content they will look at matters such as employment; upskilling staff, such as looking at apprentices and formal and informal training; local industry participation, including looking at what contractors are used as part of the supply chain, which is an important factor; local industry development initiatives; Indigenous development initiatives; and regional development initiatives. These are some of the factors they look at in content assessment.

It is also important to look at what defines a Territory enterprise in the Northern Territory. It is an enterprise that operates in the NT with significant permanent presence and employs Territorians. To be a Territory enterprise, they must satisfy all three elements of that definition. That is also very important.

Last week the Chief Minister announced changes to the value for money component and the complexity that is sometimes there when we want the best value for money for government, so government can deliver more services and infrastructure and the key things it wants to do. Is just looking at a dollar figure really the best value for money? It is about looking at the weighting of it. That was a key component of this. As the minister, I have received very strong feedback about that change to the assessment of tenders, placing a cap on the maximum weighting on the price and tender evaluations to 30%.

Replacing the value for money definition with a value for the Territory definition is another part of ensuring we are not shortlisting tenders on price alone, as we know that can wipe some local businesses out straight away. We are looking at better processes for working with local businesses on procurement.

I will get you the full briefing. I expect that this applies to subcontracting as well.

Health – Remote Clinics Works Stimulus Package

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for HEALTH

How is the remote clinics works stimulus package creating jobs in the bush?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Member for Arafura, who was a passionate health worker before he came into parliament, and who is driving the concerns of his electorate in regard to health.

In regard to the government's stimulus packages, we want to make sure we deliver packages that benefit the community with improved infrastructure, while driving local businesses and trying to get our economy back on track. The government is investing in jobs across the Northern Territory.

Our key strategy in health is a stimulus package targeted at \$2m for programs for remote health centres minor new works. This funding is in addition to the established funding provided by the Department of Health at the last budget for its works program. These building works will improve health facilities, benefit Territorians, benefit the economy and create jobs in communities for local people.

The \$2m package is delivering more than 30 projects across the electorates of Stuart, Barkly, Nhulunbuy, Arafura, Arnhem and Namatjira for more than 20 health centres. This strategy is part of our \$120m that we fast-tracked for infrastructure stimulus, benefiting our communities and our remote clinics.

We have a number of projects, such as backup generators in Ali Curung, Epenarra and Lake Nash; paving external entrances at Willowra Health Centre; the relocation of the renal demountable from Ngukurr to Minyerri; improving the ambulance bay at Ramingining Health Centre; modifying the chronic disease consult room at Gunbalanya Health Centre, which I visited a couple of months ago with the Member for Arafura; and constructing a new toilet block and covered concrete walkway at the Timber Creek Health Centre.

Those are just some of the projects this money will drive. Not only are we helping to strengthen the local economy, we are making sure we improve our health centres. We are bituminising the driveways at the Ti Tree and Six Mile health centres.

We are ensuring there are temporary hearing booth assessments. Those upgrades are being rolled out at 15 locations across the regions. Sadly, that issue affects many Territorians. The locations for these hearing booth upgrades include Ali Curung, Ampilatwatja, Angurugu, Epenarra, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Lajamanu, Lake Nash, Maningrida, Nguiu, Papunya, Santa Teresa, Ti Tree and Yuendumu. Not only are we improving our health structure, but we are also helping roll out these projects whilst boosting the economy.

We have hard-working staff. They work tirelessly and I acknowledge their work. As a government we are driving forward projects that will benefit the economy and deliver improved health services across the Northern Territory.

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