

The Estimates Committee convened at 8.30 am.

Madam CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for coming back to the 2013 Estimates Committee hearing. Thank you, minister, for agreeing to appear again this morning, and thank you to your departmental staff.

Mr TOLLNER: My pleasure. Were we up to Question 7?

Madam CHAIR: We left last night having completed Output Group 8.0. For the benefit of *Hansard* we will introduce everyone, then we will commence with Output Group 9.0.

On the Estimates Committee we have Gerry McCarthy MLA, member for Barkly and Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Michael Gunner MLA, member for Fannie Bay; me; Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem; Bess Price, member for Stuart; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson.

Minister, would you introduce your staff?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, I have the same people with me as I did yesterday. On my right is Mr Peter Carew, the Chief Executive of the department; on my immediate left is Doug Phillips, the Deputy Chief Executive of the department; next to him is Noelene Biddell, who is Chief Financial Officer of the department.

Madam Chair, I am going to do a search later today. I believe this is an estimates record for me, as a minister, fronting the committee 14 hours yesterday. I am hoping you can keep it going today.

Madam CHAIR: Do not wish too hard.

Mr WOOD: We do have other ministers we can ...

Mr TOLLNER: The pegs just keep trundling it up.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you for that, minister.

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Output 9.1 – Workforce Growth

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 9.0, Employment and Training, Output 9.1, Workforce Growth. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: Minister, when the CLP was first elected it made some early decisions about freezing government spending, increasing power and water prices, and sacking public servants. We now see ...

Mr TOLLNER: You are wrong on that last count.

Mr GUNNER: You have not sacked any public servants?

Mr TOLLNER: Well, we have not made ...

Mr GUNNER: You are still sacking them? Have you not finished yet?

Mr TOLLNER: That is your story.

Mr GUNNER: Unemployment is at 5.1% and 5100 jobs gone. What is your plan to get Territorians who have lost their jobs under your government back into work?

Mr TOLLNER: We still have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country. Unemployment has been increasing slowly over the last 18 months or two years. In August last year, at the time of the election, the unemployment rate in the Northern Territory had risen to 4.1%. That trend continues, but when you talk to anyone in the business community their main concern is finding staff.

Employment opportunities are there for Territorians, and I expect into the future the demand for workers will increase. The Territory government is doing everything it can to ensure adequate training and skills programs because the first people we want to see employed are Territorians and, when all else fails, businesses will look interstate and overseas for workers.

We do have the highest employment rate in Australia, sitting at 75%. The economy is set to grow by 5% next year, and 7% the following year.

I am a little wary of unemployment numbers and the way those statistics are collected but, needless to say, I am not particularly concerned about unemployment in the Northern Territory in the future.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, if the number one interest of business is finding people to work, how is unemployment rising?

Mr TOLLNER: The employment rate has been steadily rising right across Australia for some time, as you know. In a large part we follow national trends, but jobs growth in the Northern Territory is the strongest in the nation and we have the second lowest unemployment rate in the nation, following only the ACT which is another small jurisdiction.

Mr GUNNER: What is the status of the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program?

Mr TOLLNER: Indigenous employment, of course, has been a focus of successive governments over the years and it is, obviously, a major focus for this government. We have talked about developing private industry and private commercial businesses in remote communities. The main driver for those decisions is we want to see more Indigenous people employed.

The Department of Business supports Indigenous workforce participation through a number of policy and program activities. National partnerships which engage the Department of Business are Stronger Futures, remote service delivery, the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program and remote Indigenous housing program. Indigenous participation programs are the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program and local jobs package four-year program. The programs aim to increase the number of people in jobs, enter and stay in employment and progress in their careers, and to support business and industry to access a skilled and available workforce and develop sustainable employment practices. Currently, over 22% of all apprentices and trainees are Indigenous, and the ABS Indigenous labour force participation rates for 2011 are 43.8%. Unfortunately, they are the most recent ABS figures we have. The unemployment rate amongst the Indigenous community is 13.5%.

For some background, the labour force participation refers to people in or actively looking for work. The department collaborates with peak bodies, business, Indigenous and not-for-profit organisations and, of course, the Australian government, to improve employment outcomes and maximise funding. The current funding includes \$1m per year for Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiative Grants Program, recurrent Northern Territory government funding - previously \$1.7m prior to the mini-budget in 2012-13 revisions. The 2013 Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Grants Program submissions are now being finalised. There is \$8m over four years for Stronger Futures, Local Jobs package funded by the Australian government. Grant funding between 2009 and 2013 I will outline: there have been 71 projects; 49 businesses or NGOs have been supported; the average duration of a project is 11 months; the direct employment outcomes – that is jobs - from these programs has been 385; and individuals supported through workforce planning and development has been 1534.

Mr WOOD: Could I ask a question on that area, minister? The 13.5% unemployment rate for Aboriginal people - is that the whole of the Territory?

Mr TOLLNER: That is the whole of the Territory, yes.

Mr WOOD: What is the unemployment rate if you take out the major centres? I believe that reflects the real figures. Do you have any figures that say what the unemployment rate is at Maningrida or Yuendumu?

Mr TOLLNER: I will attempt to get that information for you, member for Nelson. Obviously, we do not have it with us now. The most recent ABS Indigenous labour force figures are for 2011. I am more than happy to get them if you would like me to take that question on notice.

Mr WOOD: Yes, put it on notice, if that is okay.

Question on Notice No 2.12

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, could you please restate your question for the record?

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you supply the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people outside the major centres in the Northern Territory?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, I accept the question.

Madam SPEAKER: That question put by the member for Nelson to the minister is No 2.12.

Mr WOOD: The other question that concerns me relates to SIHIP employment program. I criticised the federal government for releasing figures saying that X percentage of Aboriginal people were employed on that project. However, you have to dig deeper within those statistics. You quoted some statistics for Aboriginal employment. The real proof of the pudding is can you pull out one person who has been employed for that period of time? Is that a percentage of people? How many of those people were employed for, say, 12 months, rather than three months? With SIHIP they said, 'We are employing this many people', and then we asked them, 'Is John Smith still working?' 12 months down the track, and you find, no, he has not; he has left and someone else has taken his place, which meant the benefits of full-time employment were not actually occurring. I do not know if those statistics show a number of people are being employed over a long period, rather than just a series of statistics.

Mr TOLLNER: I understand the point of your question, member for Nelson, and share some of your concerns. Particularly in SIHIP people were employed to meet a quota not necessarily for long-term employment opportunities.

Unfortunately, we cannot provide a breakup of who has been employed long-term and who short-term. We do not carry that level of detail. However, it is something I would like to be aware of myself, as the minister, to see how effective these programs are. Perhaps we can look at instigating something of that nature where we can get a better breakup of figures for future estimates hearings.

I apologise, but we do not have that level of detail, and the department would not be able to dig it up.

Mr WOOD: You have been in both the federal and Territory government. It would be fair to say you would know there is a high unemployment rate outside of the main urban areas, and probably some of the central areas like Tennant Creek.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Do you feel in your position you could promote the concept of getting off welfare? I have heard from many people and it is one of the things I have been saying for years - to perhaps use the councils as the main employment centre. Give them the welfare money and top it up to a reasonable hourly rate and give them enough infrastructure to allow people to have a base start to work instead of what we are doing at the moment, which seems to just create another jobs strategy. If we started off simple with the facilities and the people we already have, we would have a chance of getting something moving.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, and discussions have been taking place for some time with the federal Coalition. I apologise it seems a bit one-sided, but there does not seem to be much movement in this area coming from the federal government. There is every possibility we may see a change of government in the next federal election, so it stands to reason we would talk with the federal opposition. However, there are being developed at the moment different ways of looking at how unemployment benefits are handed out and whether they can be used as an incentive, rather a disincentive, to get people into work.

At the last election we took a very strong agenda to the electorate about developing economic activity in remote Indigenous communities. The government was very fortunate in having a number of people elected to bush seats who share the view that they want to get people into jobs rather than greater levels of welfare. I believe that is a good thing, and the Chief Minister has been personally banging on about economic development in remote communities for a long time.

He has made some announcements in recent weeks about remote communities that want to develop sustainable industries and so on. We, as a government, are prepared to step up to the plate and do everything possible to allow the establishment of private enterprise to take hold.

Many government and council jobs, in some regard, have been done to death over the years and we really need to start focusing on private enterprise and how we get that to take hold in the bush.

Mr WOOD: I agree, but it is not going to be an overnight fix and some communities will not have those economic opportunities. When you say councils have been done to death, you will find much of that are programs - there are all types of programs.

Mr TOLLNER: That is right; you are an old council man.

Mr WOOD: I get into trouble for saying we had a program when Nguiu Shire Council started where all people were employed. Welfare was not available until 1978, but people turned up to the council and there was plenty of work and there still is plenty of work. There is house painting, grass cutting, firewood collecting and fence repairing work. If people have some brains they can find plenty of work in these communities. That gets people into the routine of going to work each day. If people then take private enterprise opportunities when they come along, which creates other jobs in the community, there are people there who have some basic skills that could be utilised. So, the government should not wait for tourism or mining opportunities that may take years to develop; you have to do something on the ground now.

Mr TOLLNER: We are doing something on the ground now. The government, in a many ways, is being led by bush members such as the member for Stuart, the member for Arnhem, and the member for Arafura, all of whom are part of this process. They are strong leaders in the bush and they are working on the ground every single day to promote the message of economic development and Indigenous employment participation. At the end of day, the best welfare is a job.

Mr WOOD: To add to that, we have two big projects, one is INPEX and the other is the abattoir, which we hope will get off the ground. Has the government been working positively to try and create as much Indigenous employment as possible on those two projects? I know it is the Larrakeyah Development Corporation which is doing that work with the abattoir.

Mr TOLLNER: Through our Regional and Remote Workforce Connect NT initiative the Department of Business is working with both of those projects and there is an agreement with both of them. The abattoir project is still up in the air, but we all want to see it come to fruition because they are very interested in dealing with Indigenous Territorians. From a business perspective, businesses are very keen to employ Indigenous people, and our job in government is to marry the two together and try and find appropriate work with appropriate businesses across the Territory.

Mr WOOD: Is the government reaching out to aboriginal people in more remote communities who do not have that opportunity?

MR TOLLNER: Yes. The department is scouring the Territory looking for the right people with the right skills in remote communities.

Member for Nelson, you also talked about working with local governments. Local governments which are in receipt of Indigenous employment grant funding are the Belyuen Community Government Council, Central Desert Shire Council, Roper Gulf Shire Council, East Arnhem Shire Council, West Arnhem Shire Council, and Tiwi Islands Shire Council. They are six local governments the department is actively funding for Indigenous employment outcomes.

Mr WOOD: Whether you agree or disagree the councils are the centre of those regions; they are existing centres within those communities and you have welfare payments coming into to those communities. Could we use them as the centre point for the receipt of those welfare payments topped up to a reasonable hourly rate and fund them to become like an employment agency? People could go to that Council office and they could get you a job. It becomes the employment agency for the region and, even though they might be council jobs, it creates pride in the community and it gives people work - I believe we forget about those things. There is an opportunity there because you have councils with infrastructure and administration that could handle that type of arrangement.

Mr TOLLNER: The points you make are absolutely valid; there is nothing I can disagree with. The best form welfare is a job. The government is absolutely focused on getting Indigenous people into jobs through a range of programs.

Minister Elferink, of course, is running that Sentenced to a Job Program with Corrections, and it is showing early signs of being very successful. That is where inmates are put into private enterprise and they come out of gaol with a full-time job. Part of the mandatory rehabilitation for problem alcoholics is work related. All rehabilitation has to have a work component and we are very interested in rolling that out, or being much more focused on employment as an outcome of the rehabilitation programs. Everywhere we are looking, in almost every facet of government, we are looking to increase Indigenous employment in particular, but also to have employment as an outcome for many of the programs we are trying to run.

Mr WOOD: All right. Thank you.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, last night you talked about getting butchers, bakers and hairdressers into remote communities, and training butchers, bakers and hairdressers.

Mr TOLLNER: Are we training them?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr TOLLNER: I am aware that there is a big effort to train particularly bakers, butchers and hairdressers ...

A member: In the new prison?

Mr WOOD: You forget that with your knocking of the prison minister.

Mr TOLLNER: That is not a qualifying criteria ...

Mr WOOD: But it gives them a skill.

Mr TOLLNER: As I said in my previous answer, we are looking at all avenues ...

Mr WOOD: You have a captive workforce in the prison.

Mr TOLLNER: We are certainly training butchers, bakers and hairdressers. Where would we be without good hair?

Mr GUNNER: What work are you doing at the moment to determine the future skills and employment needs of the Territory?

Mr TOLLNER: The Department of Business is looking across industry to work out where skill shortages are. There is a range of different programs where this occurs within the department, probably the most notable is the skill migration program where the department is actively identifying areas of skill shortages and where we can best focus training needs.

Mr GUNNER: The annual report said you would have an occupation shortage list; do you have that and can you table it?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes. It is not in the room, but I am assured we will have it in one minute flat if you want to wait rather than getting a question on notice. I will ensure it is here in the next couple of minutes or so.

Mr GUNNER: In the meantime, minister, how are you building the capacity of the Territory workforce to get the full benefit of this project?

Mr TOLLNER: There is an enormous number of training programs. We are putting \$106m next year into workforce participation programs and the majority of that is in training and skills based education. In particular, we are putting \$5.76m into building and construction training jobs, \$3.45m into engineering and mining jobs, almost \$1m into transport and storage jobs, and almost \$2.3m into training in the utilities industry programs. All of these programs are part of the large Ichthys program, but we are not particularly worried about the Ichthys program because Ichthys will find its employees by hook or by crook; we saw that with ConocoPhillips where they are quite prepared to come in and well and truly above market rates. The big concern is what happens to businesses that employ local people who are attracted to the big Ichthys project. Our focus, as a department, is on maintaining the skills within those Territory small businesses that might well be having some of their staff poached.

Mr GUNNER: Unemployment is 5.1% and you are investing in training, but why is that not then matched by a fall in the unemployment rate? Why is unemployment going up?

Mr TOLLNER: Nationally, unemployment has been trending up for a long time; we are part of the national economy and things are clearly not on track nationally. Not that I am trying to blame everything on the federal government, but with the uncertain future of the federal government and some of the rash and crazy decisions coming out of the federal government there is, obviously, a corresponding increase in unemployment.

We all remember the days of Paul Keating with 10.5% unemployment rate. This is just the nature, I suppose, of Labor governments around the country.

Mr GUNNER: Territory unemployment is increasing, but it is the federal government's fault?

Mr TOLLNER: Absolutely. We still have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, and we have the highest workforce participation rate in the country. Our economy is set to boom; next year it will go up 5%, the year after it will be at 7%. We will be the fastest growing jurisdiction in the nation. I have no great fears about unemployment rates in the Northern Territory. Our main concern, as a government, is ensuring Territorians share in the wealth of future prospects that are coming to the Territory.

In that regard, we are very keen to ensure that small business gets a good go, so we have things like gearing up local businesses for the Major Projects Task Force which is doing a great deal of work in that area to ensure local business people get a good go at much of the work coming from their end. We have an enormous number of training programs to ensure that Territorians are adequately trained and have the capabilities and capacity to participate in those jobs that will come as part of that strong economic growth.

Mr GUNNER: Surely, minister, you should be concerned about the fact there are 5100 full-time Territorian jobs gone, and as Minister for Employment and Training you should be looking at getting those Territorians into work.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes ...

Mr GUNNER: What you said in your answer was good, but you also said you are not concerned about those blokes or those women being out of work.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, those numbers are not quite right. There has been a corresponding increase in part-time employment. I am loathe to ...

Mr GUNNER: But shifting from full-time to part-time is not good.

Mr TOLLNER: Many people will say that, but the fact is it has been unrecognised by Labor governments for a long time that people do like to have flexibility in their employment conditions. Young mums and the like, like to have part-time work rather than a full-time job. Ultimately, it is horses for courses and people will move into the type of employment that suits them best.

At the moment, it is an employees' market in the Northern Territory; there are more jobs than people to fill them. We have the highest workforce participation rate in the country, and the second-lowest unemployment rate. Whilst there has been a drop in full-time employment there has been a major increase in part-time employment, and I believe that will continue. I would like to see more relaxation in the labour market regulation to allow people even more flexibility to work in circumstances they choose.

Mr GUNNER: That was very well worded, minister, at the end – flexibility. How are you matching your training, then, to the increasing levels of Territorians out of work and looking for work? You are saying there are more jobs available than a person to fill them, yet the unemployment rate is going up. How are you taking those people who are currently out of a job - who have lost their jobs under your government - and getting them trained to take the jobs you say are available in the workforce?

Mr TOLLNER: There is the Territory worker database for a start, which is a direct way of Territorians accessing the department, which does try to match people to jobs in the Territory. Whilst I am at it, I might table both of these documents. I have the Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List as you requested, and the department has gone one step further and provided the Northern Territory Skilled Occupational Priority List information paper. If I table them you might be able to get copies.

Further to that question, there is the database that tries to match people with jobs and from these lists you will see the areas where we have major skill shortages. Employment and training programs are designed around areas where we have major skill shortages, and funding goes to RTOs that provide training in those priority areas. Also, we are looking across all facets of government to ensure people are being trained up and every effort is made to get them into the workforce. That goes from prisons to universities - it does not really matter - we are making every effort to get people into work and Territorians get the first bite of the cherry.

Mr GUNNER: Full-time employment is dropping, and part-time employment is rising. What is the level of apprenticeships in the Territory at the moment?

MR TOLLNER: Good question. In 2012 there were 3010 apprenticeships and traineeships commencements, and 1107 to 14 June 2013. The Northern Territory provides incentives to both employers, apprentices and trainees to encourage more commencements.

Mr GUNNER: To clarify I heard those figures correctly, 30 010 for the year 2012?

MR TOLLNER: A total of 3010 for year 2012. Sorry, this runs on calendar years, so in 2012 there were 3010 apprenticeships. Of course, it runs on a calendar year because that is our school year. As Treasurer, at times I think in financial years. In 2012 there were 3010 apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, and to 14 June 2013 we have 1107.

Mr GUNNER: We are tracking down.

MR TOLLNER: No, we are not tracking down, there is a time lag with apprenticeships and I am informed we are well in front of the game compared to this time last year.

Mr WOOD: Member for Fannie Bay, can I ask a question? How many completions in 2012? This was a favourite question when the government was in opposition ...

MR TOLLNER: I apologise, member for Nelson, I only have figures since 2008. A total of 6674 Territorians have completed an apprenticeship or traineeship since 2008. The Northern Territory's completion rate for apprentices and trainees is currently 52%, which is fairly consistent with other jurisdictions. Improving completion rates for apprentices and trainees is a priority for the Northern Territory and, indeed, all other jurisdictions around the country. Surveys are regularly undertaken by Australian Apprenticeships NT to identify interstate relocation and engagement and other employment as significant contributors to apprenticeship and traineeship cancellations.

Mr WOOD: Is there any shortage in a particular skill for apprentices?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes. As of June 14 this year, 6674 apprentices have completed their training since 2008, and 2149 of them have been in occupations identified on the Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List. That information is contained in the document which has just been tabled.

Mr GUNNER: How many apprentices are currently employed by government?

Mr TOLLNER: That is a question for the minister for DCIS, they would have that information.

Mr GUNNER: Do you fund VET in schools?

Mr TOLLNER: No.

Mr GUNNER: That is in the annual report from last year, but that has been moved somewhere else, has it?

Mr TOLLNER: It has remained with the Department of Education and Children's Services.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask a question of the Chair? Are we doing this section more globally? I do not want to miss out because the question I have is on workforce growth, but we did not divide up the questions.

Mr TOLLNER: It would be dreadful if you missed out; it would be the end of the world for all of us.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I would not be able to sleep if I did not ask you a question.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, we are still on workforce growth.

Mr WOOD: In light of your original instructions, Madam Chair, I was just making sure I have a comeback because I thought we had moved to training.

Madam CHAIR: Questioning finishes if I say 'that concludes consideration of an output'.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Chair, I am not fussed where the questions come from. I know in previous estimates ministers would sit here saying, 'Oh, no, you cannot talk about that, that is not in this output group'. I am much more flexible.

You had a question, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: Yes, I did have a question related to a situation that occurred years ago with ConocoPhillips. What effect has there been on the local workforce because of higher rates of pay paid by INPEX and JKC? For example, I heard yesterday someone had left our local council and taken up a \$100-per-hour job working for JKC. What effect does that situation have on local companies?

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Nelson, in my response to the member for Fannie Bay, I said that local businesses may suffer due to higher wages being paid on the Ichthys project. However, the Business department and government is very focused on supporting local businesses, and our employment and training programs are very much aligned with local, small business to ensure they have people trained and ready to go. The skilled migration scheme is also very focused on small business in the Territory. Rather than saying all of these skilled workers we bring into the Northern Territory are here for a large project, we are saying that large projects can look after themselves. In many ways we are doing everything we can to encourage them to employ Territory people, but there is a strong recognition at this particular time that small business operators in the Territory also require a high level of support to maintain their workforces and keep costs down for Territorians.

Mr WOOD: Do you think that is working? Have you had any feedback from small companies that are losing workers and having difficulty replacing them?

Mr TOLLNER: I have not heard any stories about small Territory businesses having staff poached by large projects. I have no doubt that as large projects grow and start to employ more and more people there will be an element of that, but I have not heard that at this stage. As I have just said, the department is very focused on ensuring there is an available workforce for Territory businesses in particular, and is doing everything it can to train Territorians for Territory jobs.

Mr GUNNER: In 2011-12 there were 4.4m hours of curriculum delivered. What was delivered in 2012-13, and what is your budget for 2013-14?

Mr TOLLNER: Are you asking these questions to be difficult? Can you repeat the question?

Mr GUNNER: In 2011-12, 4.4m hours of curriculum were delivered. How many were delivered in 2012-13, and what is your estimate for 2013-14?

Mr TOLLNER: In 2012-13, 4.1m hours were delivered. There has been a drop because the Productivity Places Program, which is funded through the federal government, is slowly winding down and there has been a corresponding drop in the number of hours produced.

Sorry, I was slightly wrong there, 4.2m hours were delivered in 2012-13, not 4.1m, and we expect it will remain at 4.2m hours in the 2013-14 financial year.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Outputs 9.1 and 9.2.

Mr GUNNER: Gerry, do you have 9.2?

Mr WOOD: We have done that.

Madam CHAIR: Did you wrap up with that?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 9.2 and Output Group 9.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 10.0 – GAMBLING AND LICENSING SERVICES
Output 10.1 - Gambling and Licensing Services

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions.

Mr TOLLNER: I will be stunned if there are any questions on this!

Mr GUNNER: Are you ready to take questions, minister?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, fire away.

Mr GUNNER: The Chief Minister said on *Lateline* last week that three Aboriginal organisations in Alice Springs have breached alcohol licensing requirements. What was the cost of the enforcement exercises taken against these outlets?

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Fannie Bay, there were actually no compliance breaches; the reason being that up to 60% of revenues can be obtained from liquor sales. Those three organisations were not selling in excess of that limit. However, this is an area which may have to be reviewed in the future. Originally when they were put in place, the idea of convenience stores was exactly that – convenience stores ...

Mr GUNNER: And no breaches have been identified?

Mr TOLLNER: No, no breaches have been identified; they are all selling less than 60% ...

Mr GUNNER: No penalties apply? No enforcement action?

Mr TOLLNER: No, no enforcement action. There has been an investigation undertaken through the department, and it has been found that they are not selling in excess of 60% of their turnover as alcohol.

Mr GUNNER: Why did the Chief Minister say they had breached?

Mr TOLLNER: I believe the Chief Minister has legitimate concerns about the level of alcohol being sold from some stores. It is probably in response to some things the federal Indigenous Affairs minister is pushing, like ...

Mr GUNNER: But there is a significant difference between concern and breach.

Mr TOLLNER: There has been an investigation conducted by the department and no breaches have occurred.

Mr GUNNER: Did that investigation happen before or after the Chief Minister said they had breached?

Mr TOLLNER: I would imagine it would have happened after; the department would have looked into it.

Mr GUNNER: When the Chief Minister said they had breached, at that point no investigation had happened to find a breach?

Mr TOLLNER: No, there were no breaches. What the Chief Minister was doing was raising legitimate concerns around the sale of alcohol ...

Mr GUNNER: He said 'breaches', and there is a big difference between concern and breaches.

Mr TOLLNER: He may have mangled a couple of words here and there, but I can tell you right now that the Chief Minister ...

Mr GUNNER: Has he apologised to them for mangling those words? There is a big difference.

Mr TOLLNER: Let us get something straight here. The three particular stores to which the Chief Minister was referring are part or wholly owned by Indigenous organisations ...

Mr GUNNER: Is that a breach?

Mr TOLLNER: ... which are funded ...

Mr GUNNER: That is not a breach.

Mr TOLLNER: No, let me finish. ... which are funded through the federal Indigenous Affairs minister. The federal Indigenous Affairs minister, you may have noticed in the media, is jumping up and down and carrying on about sending assessors into two hotels in Alice Springs. Those hotels are two of the most highly-regulated licensed premises in the country, where responsible services of alcohol laws apply and all that type of thing.

I believe the Chief Minister, quite rightly, is concerned the federal minister is more interested in trying to shut down legitimate businesses which are very highly regulated and have very strong principles when it comes to responsible service of alcohol and then, on the other hand, funding Indigenous organisations which make a large part of their profits through the sale of alcohol. It does seem to me to be quite hypocritical and I believe the Chief Minister, quite rightly, has raised concerns in relation to how those stores operate ...

Mr GUNNER: He did not raise concerns; he said 'breaches'. He said they had 'breached'.

Mr TOLLNER: I believe he might have meant breached a code of morality or something of that nature. I am not going to put words into the Chief Minister's mouth, but there have been checks of all alcohol retailers across the Territory on a regular basis. I am informed these particular stores can raise up to 60% of their revenue through ancillary alcohol sales.

Mr GUNNER: That is not a breach.

Mr TOLLNER: It is not a breach, no, but I ...

Mr GUNNER: Who owns them is not in breach and how much they are selling is not a breach.

Mr TOLLNER: No, that is right.

Mr GUNNER: Where is the breach?

Mr TOLLNER: That is right, and what we might want to talk to Ms Macklin about is ...

Mr GUNNER: You will talk to her about the fact there has been no breach?

Mr TOLLNER: ... why she wants to kick people out of two highly-regulated environments such as the places Sorry, I have a bit more information.

Mr GUNNER: Did you follow up Minister Macklin's concerns about the other bars in Alice Springs that you raised, minister, the ones some people call animal bars?

Mr TOLLNER: Sorry, member for Fannie Bay, I am getting grilled from every direction at the moment. What was your question?

Mr GUNNER: After the Chief Minister said there had been breaches, you undertook an investigation and found no breaches of those three retail outlets?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: After Minister Macklin raised her concerns around the two bars in Alice Springs, did you investigate those concerns?

Mr TOLLNER: Those concerns have been regularly investigated. Almost every day in both those hotels a licensing inspector goes through there. There is regular surveillance of those businesses not just by licensing staff, but also by police in Alice Springs. A quick trip to Alice Springs would have confirmed that to the federal Indigenous Affairs minister. I suggest she is more about playing politics than about trying to address the concerns Territorians have in relation to the responsible service of alcohol.

Mr GUNNER: She said she had concerns. She did not say breaches; she said she had concerns ...

Mr TOLLNER: No, she has written ...

Mr GUNNER: ... and the Chief Minister said there had been breaches without any investigation occurring ...

Mr TOLLNER: ... half a dozen letters about assessors ...

Mr GUNNER: ...about concerns.

Mr TOLLNER: ... in these places Aboriginal people are getting drunk. They are getting drunk in a highly regulated environment where responsible service of alcohol laws applies. The only alternative is you shut those places down and those people go into a highly unregulated environment buying liquor from corner stores and the like, getting drunk in the street and in the Mall, in places where responsible service of alcohol laws do not apply.

To me, it is political machinations and nothing to do with the reality of life in the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister was dead right to draw attention to the service of alcohol in locations other than just hotels. It is ...

Mr GUNNER: How can he be dead right when he says there are breaches when there are no breaches?

Mr TOLLNER: Like I say ...

Mr GUNNER: There is a significant difference between concerns and someone having breached the conditions of their liquor licence.

Mr TOLLNER: We all make a faux pas here and there. The fact is he has raised concerns. Those concerns have been ...

Mr GUNNER: Has he apologised to the outlets?

Mr TOLLNER: I do not know whether he needs to apologise to those outlets. There are concerns in Alice Springs about the amount of liquor on the streets and people drinking in unregulated environments. The Chief Minister has done a very good job in drawing attention to the problems of some liquor sales that happen not just in Alice Springs, but right across the Northern Territory.

As former Minister for Alcohol Policy, I can tell you there is a review going on right now about liquor laws right across the Territory and how we put in place a regime that works to stamp out antisocial behaviour but, at the same time, allowing decent, hardworking, responsible Territorians to enjoy a drink on a hot day.

Mr GUNNER: Their core social value? You raise concerns about people buying liquor from takeaway outlets ...

Mr TOLLNER: I hear the member for Nelson groaning, but the fact is it is not just spin. We have spent a substantial part of this session talking about Indigenous employment opportunities and about growing a three hub economy. Tourism is a big part of that, and you cannot grow tourism in a fascist state where no one is allowed to purchase alcohol - it just does not work. We want to be open, hospitable and provide good entertainment services that encourage people to have a good time while they are in the Northern Territory. To say that prohibition should apply in the Northern Territory is completely wrong. We have start focusing on where the problems actually are ...

Mr WOOD: Who said we had prohibition?

Mr TOLLNER: That seems to be the view of everyone out there ...

Mr WOOD: No, that is your opinion.

Mr TOLLNER: ... who say, 'Oh, well, just turn on the rivers of grog'. No one is talking about turning on the rivers of grog; what we are talking about is trying to normalise the laws that apply in the Northern Territory to bring them into line with the rest of Australia and at the same time we have a strong response for people who do not drink responsibly. I cannot understand what is controversial about that.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, we have concerns about the supply of alcohol and we had some plans in place about controlling that supply. One of those plans was around income management restrictions on problem drinkers. Why have you removed those restrictions over the past 10 months, which has allowed problem drinkers to spend their income on grog?

Mr TOLLNER: It is not our desire to see those income management tools removed.

Mr GUNNER: But you removed them.

Mr TOLLNER: We did not.

Mr GUNNER: You did ...

Mr TOLLNER: The federal government has removed them.

Mr GUNNER: You scrapped the alcohol courts. They came into power in October and you made the decision to not go ahead with them.

Mr TOLLNER: No.

Mr GUNNER: Now you are trying to find a way to bring back income management after you scrapped it.

Mr TOLLNER: No, we scrapped the Banned Drinker Register; the requirement to show ID every time you went to a bottle shop.

Mr GUNNER: You have not actually scrapped it minister, it remains in the act.

Mr TOLLNER: I can tell you now it is gone forever, it is history, defunct.

Mr WOOD: You are joking. It still exists.

Mr GUNNER: There is a bill before the House that gives you the power to remove the Banned Drinker Register, and you have chosen not to do that, so you keeping the Banned Drinker Register viable as an option.

Mr TOLLNER: There are aspects of it, such as the income management side, that we may well exercise.

Mr GUNNER: So, you agree it was a mistake then to scrap the BDR?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay, let the minister answer the question, and do not interrupt.

Mr TOLLNER: We have received messages from the federal government that say unless we bring back the Banned Drinker Register they are not going to play ball on anything. For some reason they do not see the rehabilitation of problem drunks as a health measure, therefore they are saying we cannot use the medi-hotel at the hospital, and if we do not have the Banned Drinker Register in place we cannot put people on income management. What absolute tripe.

We are out there trying to help people and give them another chance. Drying someone out for three months is not a bad outcome in itself, and getting them off the street for three months is not a bad outcome either. It is good for the individual to dry out; it is good for the community to have a break from some of these people who are constantly playing up on our streets. I cannot understand all the negativity around what we are trying to do in this space.

Mr GUNNER: You are agreeing that the decision to scrap income management was a mistake, because you are trying to bring it back.

Mr TOLLNER: We are not scrapping income management; we do not want to see it scrapped.

Mr GUNNER: You had it, it was in place, and now you are trying to find a way ...

Mr TOLLNER: No. What I am telling you is the federal government is not playing ball on income management. We want to maintain income management ...

Mr GUNNER: It was there and in place in the Territory, and now it is not.

Mr TOLLNER: Who operates it? It is not the Northern Territory government. It is ultimately a decision of the federal government whether they play ball, and they clearly are not. They have the view that unless we penalise all Territorians, they are not going to play. We have said we want to target those people who have problems with alcohol, we want to deal with them directly, but the federal government is saying, no, unless you penalise everyone in the Northern Territory by bringing in draconian laws where they have to provide ID to prove they are not a criminal every time they go to the bottle shop.

Mr WOOD: You are an exaggerator.

Mr GUNNER: The Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal allowed for income management. That was a Territory body using Commonwealth power, so the Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal had the power to income manage problem drunks.

Mr TOLLNER: We are not against income management as a part of the strategy to get people back on a normal path.

Mr GUNNER: In scrapping that, which I assume was done because it was a Labor government tribunal, you lost the ability to income management. Now you are trying to get it back. Do you agree it was a mistake to scrap that tribunal?

Mr TOLLNER: We have not scrapped that tribunal. There is a range of things

Mr GUNNER: You have not scrapped the Alcohol and Other Drugs Tribunal?

Mr TOLLNER: At the end of next week you will see all the legislation comes before the parliament in relation to this and you will get an idea of what the government's plans are in relation to that. I do not want to pre-empt that legislation; it is only just over a week until it will be introduced and debated and we can have all this beat-up at that time.

Mr GUNNER: I know you want to bring back income management; I just do not understand why you got rid of it in the first place.

Mr TOLLNER: There are many statisticians everywhere. Anyway, fire away.

Mr GUNNER: How many people were on the Banned Drinker Register in relation to domestic violence at the time it was scrapped?

Mr TOLLNER: We will have to take that one on notice, member for Fannie Bay.

Question on Notice 2.13

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay, will you restate the question for the record?

Mr GUNNER: How many people were on the Banned Drinker Register in relation to domestic violence at the time it was scrapped?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr TOLLNER: Absolutely.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Fannie Bay of the minister is number 2.13.

Mr GUNNER: Since the Banned Drinker Register was scrapped, domestic violence has increased by 24%. Is that one reason? Northern Territory quarterly crime statistics for the June quarter 2012, the last quarter of the BDR, was 977. For the March quarter of 2013 it was 1214, an increase of 237 or 24%.

Mr TOLLNER: I do not have any other information here, but I disagree with that assertion.

Mr GUNNER: You disagree with the Northern Territory crime statistics? Since the Banned Drinker Register was scrapped alcohol-related crime has risen by 17%. Again, that is according to the NT crime statistics.

Mr TOLLNER: That is not true either.

Mr GUNNER: Well, those are the statistics for the March quarter 2013 compared to the June quarter 2012. Is that a reason you are keeping aspects of the Banned Drinker Register viable in legislation and not removing it?

Mr TOLLNER: I am not here to debate crime statistics. That is a question for the Chief Minister or the Attorney-General.

Mr GUNNER: The question was about the Banned Drinker Register.

Mr TOLLNER: I am not aware of the statistics you mentioned, and I dispute them.

Mr GUNNER: Given that the Attorney-General gagged the Northern Territory Police from discussing the effectiveness of the Banned Drinker Register in public, have you applied a similar gag to the Licensing Commissioner or anyone else involved in licensing?

Mr TOLLNER: No, but I prefer to answer most of the questions here today.

Mr GUNNER: Have you received any advice from any Northern Territory government agency, since coming to government, which expresses concern about your decision to scrap the Banned Drinker Register and limit the tools available to effectively manage the impact of problem drinkers in our community?

Mr TOLLNER: Sorry, any advice from?

Mr GUNNER: Any Northern Territory government agency, since coming to government, which expresses concern about your decision to scrap the Banned Drinker Register and limit the tools available to effectively manage the impact of problem drinkers in our community.

Mr TOLLNER: That is a loaded question. No, we have not received any advice like that. I would be stunned if we did given that we went to the election with a commitment to scrap the Banned Drinker Register. That was a key commitment we took to the election campaign and it was known to all and sundry if a County Liberals government was elected, the Banned Drinker Register would be no more. I cannot imagine public servants in any facet of government saying to a minister, 'Oh, by the way, we reckon you got your election campaign wrong.' That was one of the key commitments we gave to the electorate.

Mr GUNNER: So they were not prepared to give you bold and fearless advice, minister?

Mr TOLLNER: Apart from a few people in the opposition I do not believe we have heard any objection to scrapping the Banned Drinker Register.

Mr WOOD: You do not talk to the public. There are many people who think you are ridiculous.

Mr TOLLNER: There are some organisations who clearly ...

Mr WOOD: No, people - even drinkers.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, organisations are made up of people. I have not heard of anyone outside of those, dare I say, left wing circles who wanted to see the retention of the Banned Drinker Register ...

Mr WOOD: Talk about put people in it.

Mr TOLLNER: I cannot imagine why anyone wants to be treated like a criminal every time they go to the bottle shop.

Mr WOOD: You have no idea ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, do not interrupt.

Mr TOLLNER: There are a few killjoys around the place who are into that type of stuff.

Mr WOOD: No, you just exaggerate, and you do it for your own purpose.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson!

Mr GUNNER: Minister, why then were the police gagged, if only left wing people and members of the opposition had concerns?

Mr TOLLNER: I do not believe the Attorney-General is in the business of gagging police. The Attorney-General said every time a tough question is asked by the media he does not want to see some public servant rolled out to try to defend the actions of the government. This was clearly a hallmark of the previous government where ministers were there for good decisions and public servants were there to take all the pain. In that regard, I find it admirable that the Attorney-General sought to look after people in the public service - and good on him.

Mr WOOD: Oh, come on! More spin!

Mr TOLLNER: No, I am quite serious.

Mr WOOD: The police have a view.

Mr TOLLNER: Of course police have a view.

Mr WOOD: Could you tell us what it is?

Mr TOLLNER: I have spoken to numerous police; their corporate view is the measures we are taking will work adequately - and that is a fact.

Mr WOOD: Not the question.

Mr TOLLNER: No, you want to talk about individual police.

Mr WOOD: He is the Assistant Commissioner.

Mr TOLLNER: Individual police that I have spoken to believe it is the best thing ever that we got rid of the Banned Drinker Register and we are bringing in things like alcohol protection orders ...

Mr WOOD: Do not answer the question.

Mr TOLLNER: ... mandatory rehabilitation and the like, and are actually targeting the problem ...

Mr WOOD: Move on, move on.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, stop interrupting.

Mr TOLLNER: I can tell you, police were upset that they would drag people into protective custody ...

Mr WOOD: It was not the question I asked.

Mr TOLLNER: ... time after time, and everywhere they looked there were still drunks on the street because there was no penalty in place at all. That was a feature of the Banned Drinker Register. Some bloke had been picked up 117 times, 114 times issued with a Banning Alcohol and Treatment notice - it never stopped him drinking. The top 60 were responsible for 2500 arrests. It never stopped any of them drinking and it drove police to absolute frustration that they picked people up constantly and saw no result for their efforts.

In our regime we are saying if someone is picked up three times in a two-month period, there will be a consequence. The consequence is they have to start looking out for themselves; they have to check themselves into some rehabilitation program or make efforts to get off the grog. If they do not, they will be put into mandatory rehabilitation, and the state will step up to the plate and take responsibility and try to get those people a second chance at life.

To sit there and argue against that just amazes me; you want to bring back a regime that penalised all Territorians, made them feel like criminals every time they turned up to a bottle shop, and had absolutely no effect whatsoever on drunks on the street.

Why, in your right mind, member for Nelson, could you support such a regime?

Mr WOOD: I just asked you a small question about what the police's view is, and I got the usual diversionary tactic of the minister going off ...

Mr TOLLNER: As I said, the police have had a gutful of ...

Mr WOOD: You have had your chance to answer the question.

Mr TOLLNER: ... picking up drunk after drunk. I have just told you the police's view.

Mr WOOD: You did not, you said 'some police' you spoke to, which is different.

Mr TOLLNER: I told you the police corporate view and about individual police I have spoken to.

Mr WOOD: No, you did not. Minister, I am not against the mandatory rehabilitation, so do not go off the handle as you do - you just generalise. I support the mandatory rehabilitation with some concerns. You just said that the BDR did not work. You opposed it on the day it went through parliament. What statistics did you have on the day it went through parliament to prove it would not work?

Mr TOLLNER: Common sense.

Mr WOOD: In actual fact, you made a decision which was a political decision, before you even gave it a chance to see how it would work in practice.

Mr TOLLNER: Blind Freddy could see it was not going to work. How the hell do you enforce prohibition? It does not work.

Mr WOOD: No, ...

Mr TOLLNER: What you have to do is target the people with the problem – the BDR did not do that. One bloke was arrested 117 times in a 12-month period.

Mr WOOD: You may be right, minister, but you did not know that man was going to be arrested 117 times when it went through parliament. You opposed it then. It was a political decision. You did not give it a chance to operate and find if there were some benefits. We know, anecdotally, from various supermarket owners, that there were changes in problem areas in Darwin. It is not a case that everyone thought it was a draconian measure. I have had drinkers say they did not have a problem with it. There were some problems with it, I am not denying that, but people got used to it and saw some benefits.

We never had a chance to look at it. You condemned it from Day 1 – no statistical proof – you made a political decision. So, is it not a load of garbage to say it did not work?

Mr TOLLNER: No. Let me explain it to you again. The day it was brought into the parliament it came with a price tag. It was part of the Enough is Enough campaign and some \$20m-odd. An amount of 80% of that money was allocated to purchasing machines, setting up a court system, setting up a prosecution system – a range of things. Only about 10% or 15% of the money was allocated to rehabilitation. It was an enormously expensive exercise, and \$2m or \$3m was allocated to rehabilitation. No mandatory rehabilitation was contemplated, and it was never going to be enough to rehabilitate the numbers of people we know have problems with alcohol.

This government has come in and committed serious money to this program. We are in a period of belt tightening at the moment, but one thing we have said is we are putting a ring fence around anything to do with alcohol rehabilitation programs, and we are expanding them. We have allocated \$35m a year for the operation of mandatory rehabilitation programs. That is significant money, an enormous commitment compared to the previous government. We are taking away money wasted on machines and the surveillance of decent, normal, hard-working Territorians and putting it into programs that target the problem drinker. That is the fundamental difference between this government and the previous government, and a fundamental reason why we never supported the Banned Drinker Register.

Mr WOOD: I did not vote on it because I had concerns too, but I said, 'At least give the government a chance'. You did not give the government a chance at all. You are bringing in something that has no proof it will work either. There is no scientific basis as to whether this new mandatory rehabilitation process will work. We hope it will and, using your argument, I would say, 'We think it is a stupid idea. You are going to spend \$85m on a program with no proof it will work'.

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Nelson, the BDR looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, smells like a duck and you are suggesting we had to give it a chance because it might have been a swan.

Mr WOOD: I am suggesting no one has a magic elixir for fixing up the alcohol problems in the Northern Territory. What annoys me with your statements, and the statements by the Chief Minister, is alcohol is, as quoted here:

This is a lifestyle, this is the way we live; it is a core social value.

I have lived in the Territory for 43 years, and that is the wrong message. I have seen the effects of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. This is not just a minority problem, this is a community problem. Of course there are plenty of good drinkers out there that drink well, but if we do not take this on as a community issue, as a whole, you are being blind to the fact alcohol is a major problem in the Northern Territory.

What is the percentage of people in goal because of alcohol related violence? It is huge, and you go crook at people being put in the goal you call the Hilton; you make it a joke when it is a very serious issue. You push to get the vote of the drinker and talk about 'draconian', talk about 'fascism', all these types of things are clichés. The reality is that you are not being serious about the issue; you are just looking at it from a populist point of view.

Mr TOLLNER: Look, get this straight. This was the single biggest election issue we committed to. People with alcohol problems are the single biggest area the government is focused on fixing, and for you to sit here and suggest the government only playing politics ...

Mr WOOD: Well ...

Mr TOLLNER: ... honestly, you are in dream world.

Mr WOOD: No, well, why ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, let the minister finish.

Mr TOLLNER: The fact is we are doing everything we possibly can to deal with drunks on the street, to deal with antisocial behaviour, which it is what Territorians want. They have had a gutful of these stupid laws put in place which penalise everyone and do not do anything at all to address the problems on the street. People are sick of walking past drunks, they are sick of being humbugged, they are sick of the fact tourists cannot drive down the main streets of Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, or anywhere else in the Territory, without seeing problem drunks.

Mr WOOD: But that is a core social value.

Mr TOLLNER: The fact was ...

Mr WOOD: It is a core social value.

Mr TOLLNER: Since when is that a core social value?

Mr WOOD: That is because you ...

Mr TOLLNER: Stop trying to twist the Chief Minister's words.

Mr WOOD: No. Well, that is ...

Mr TOLLNER: You are pathetic and you are a fool.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I remind you of Standing Order 51.

Mr TOLLNER: The fact is this government is absolutely committed to dealing with problem drunks ...

Mr GUNNER: Point of order, Madam Chair!

Mr TOLLNER: ... to dealing with problem drunks on the street, and you can sit there and carry on as much as you like about ...

Mr GUNNER: Point of order, Madam Chair!

Mr TOLLNER: ... it is all politics, and you are above all of that holier than thou stuff ...

Madam CHAIR: Minister, please ...

Mr WOOD: You get upset very quickly ...

Mr TOLLNER: Goodness me, wake up ...

Mr WOOD: ... because you do not like anyone ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson and minister, please.

Mr GUNNER: The minister should withdraw the slurs against the member for Nelson.

Mr TOLLNER: What slur?

Mr WOOD: I am used to it. They throw those slurs around all the time. Minister, I am not saying that there is not a problem. I have said I support the philosophy behind mandatory rehabilitation for the very reasons you are talking about, but there is no more reason to say you will be successful in turning things around than the previous government's attempts, because you did not give them a chance to operate the BDR for more than 12 months.

Mr TOLLNER: What rot.

Mr WOOD: You were opposed to it from day one, and I accept what you are trying to do is a good thing, I accept the reasons behind it, but you did not give their plan a chance ...

Mr TOLLNER: If we do not see results on the streets of Darwin in the first six months after mandatory alcohol rehabilitation comes in I will go he. So, give it a chance ...

Mr WOOD: Well, minister, what ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, you have essentially made a very large, extended statement. Can I bring you to a question, or is this better debated in the House?

Mr WOOD: The question is, what do you expect to come out of mandatory rehabilitation?

Mr TOLLNER: First, I believe it will be a major deterrent for people drinking in public places.

Mr WOOD: That is one, and what is second?

Mr TOLLNER: Second, it will give people who go into mandatory rehabilitation a chance to dry out for three months and start to make some rational decisions about their lifestyle choices.

Mr WOOD: I agree with those two.

Mr TOLLNER: Three: it gives them an opportunity to actually contemplate serious plans to get rehabilitated.

Mr TOLLNER: Four: it gives the family a break for three months. You talk of alcohol related domestic violence as an issue. Five: it gives the community a break. You have to sit there and witness this drunk on the streets ...

Mr WOOD: You had that as number one. That was number one.

Mr TOLLNER: ... every single day. The fact is, we will see good results from this and the first priority is getting drunks off the streets and getting them out of the public eye because the public,, quite frankly, has had a gutful of seeing drunks all over the place.

Mr WOOD: Through you, Madam Chair. I am disappointed because that appears to be your main motivation. I thought the motivation was to, as you said in your second and third points, give people a chance to dry out. Where is the dot point that says we hope this will turn people's lives around and they will give up drinking? That is the basic issue that people have – alcoholism.

Mr TOLLNER: That is what will happen with this program; people will have an opportunity to dry out for three months and turn their lives around.

Mr WOOD: I am happy for the government to run with that program and give it a fair go to see if it does work. My complaint is you are saying your system will work and the former government's system did not. You did not give that a chance – whether you agree with BDR or not, you did not give them enough time to see whether it would work.

Mr TOLLNER: You said yourself it operated ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, I believe this argument would better made in the Chamber.

Mr TOLLNER: You are probably right.

Mr WOOD: No, you will never get an argument in the Chamber, because you cannot go to-and-fro.

Madam CHAIR: Now is not the forum for debate, it is question and answer.

Mr TOLLNER: The fact is it had 12 months to operate. If it was going to show any signs of success it would have in those 12 months. That one individual who was arrested 117 times and issued with a Banning Alcohol and Treatment notice 114 times is testament to the fact that it would not never work. How long does a farce have to go on ...

Mr WOOD: Obviously you did not do the statistics.

Mr TOLLNER: ... before you call it a farce?

Mr GUNNER: Minister, the Assistant Commissioner, Mark Payne, said the Banned Drinker Register was effective in preventing violence. Why do you disagree with the police?

Mr TOLLNER: I am not disagreeing with the police. I agree totally with the police that they have had a gut full of driving around Darwin picking up the same people night after night.

Mr GUNNER: So you agree it was effective at preventing violence?

Mr WOOD: You make the argument to suit your case.

Mr TOLLNER: It is more police resources, more this, and more that. Having them drive around more and more picking up more and more drunks. What does that achieve apart from putting people in a watch-house for a night? Ultimately, there has to be a consequence ...

Mr GUNNER: The police said it prevented violence.

Mr TOLLNER: ... in place for being drunk on the streets on a regular basis.

Mr GUNNER: Apart from not preventing people buying alcohol, how do the proposed alcohol prohibition orders differ from the previous government's banning notices and orders?

Mr TOLLNER: The Banning Alcohol and Treatment notices never prevented anyone from buying or consuming alcohol; it simply meant they could not buy it from a bottle shop. They could walk into a pub and get a drink at a bar, or friends could buy alcohol for them. It never prevented them from getting alcohol.

Mr GUNNER: How does an alcohol prohibition order prevent someone from buying alcohol from a takeaway outlet?

Mr TOLLNER: It does not prevent them from buying it from a takeaway outlet. It prevents them from consuming or carrying alcohol.

Mr GUNNER: So the APOs do not prevent people from buying alcohol?

Mr TOLLNER: It is similar to having a licence to drive. If you do not have a licence to drive it does not prevent you from driving a car, truck, or a school bus, but if you get caught you are in very serious trouble. This gives people ...

Mr WOOD: Let us get a licence to drink.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, it is a licence to drink for people who have committed a serious crime that carries a possible sentence of more than six months gaol. These are people who have committed crimes. It is about trying to prevent people who commit crimes from drinking alcohol.

Mr GUNNER: You just said the alcohol prohibition order does not prohibit you from drinking alcohol.

Mr TOLLNER: It does prohibit you from drinking alcohol.

Mr GUNNER: But not from buying it.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, from buying it, carrying it, and having someone else buy it for you. There can be third party offences if a person knowingly buys alcohol for a person they know has an APO.

Mr GUNNER: How does an alcohol prohibition order stop someone from buying alcohol at a takeaway outlet?

Mr TOLLNER: If they are caught buying alcohol, or they are tested and have alcohol on their breath or have alcohol in their possession, they face a very serious charge of up to six months in gaol or a \$7000 fine.

Mr GUNNER: So, there is nothing stopping someone on an alcohol prohibition order from buying alcohol from a takeaway outlet - you can just walk in and buy the alcohol. How do you think an alcohol prohibition order will stop a problem drunk drinking?

Mr TOLLNER: As soon as the police find the person has purchased alcohol, they are in big trouble.

Mr GUNNER: But you said you do not want police driving around picking up drunks. You said one of the problems with the Banned Drinker Register was it was taxing police resources.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, because what happened when they picked up the drunk they caught drinking again? Absolutely nothing. They were issued with another BAT notice. In this case, they are dragged off to court and charged. They either face a hefty fine or a gaol sentence.

Mr GUNNER: But in the statement the Chief Minister gave to the House he said if you are on an alcohol prohibition order, the first time you breach that order the only punishment is a longer alcohol prohibition order.

Mr TOLLNER: No, that is not true.

Mr GUNNER: That was in the Chief Minister's statement to the House.

Mr TOLLNER: I should say, member for Fannie Bay ...

Ms LEE: Excuse me, minister, can I say something? If you want to look at the BDR from an Aboriginal perspective, I will give you Aboriginal perspective feedback in this House.

With the BDR, people would go to purchase alcohol in the clubs, pubs, little takeaway outlets, whatever, they would purchase it and their names would come up. But, when it came to stopping them from getting alcohol, there are many third parties out there who do supply alcohol in the communities and everywhere - and we all know that - it is common sense.

This new regime will actually help them, it will give them the benefits of trying to stop themselves, so they are solving their own problems - not us trying to be the saviour all the time. You are giving them the responsibility to refuse alcohol from time to time and they have to adjust to that level themselves; we cannot force people to do it. It is for their own wellbeing. So, at the end of the day, whichever regime you believe works, for me, works for my people.

Mrs PRICE: We are the people who keep burying the people who get themselves on alcohol; we do not see any other people there mourning them.

Mr WOOD: There are plenty of other people, who you do not see, that I go to funerals for ...

Mrs PRICE: The ones sleeping in the streets, that is our mob.

Mr WOOD: Just let me finish. Alcohol affects many people, some are more obvious than others.

Mrs PRICE: You are connected to blackfellas, Gerry ...

Ms LEE: Alcohol took my father ...

Madam CHAIR: If I could just call for order. The role of the Estimates Committee is to ask questions of the minister, not to debate issues amongst themselves.

Mr GUNNER: As we have discussed, the proposed amendments to the *Liquor Act*, as part of the introduction of the alcohol mandatory treatment, do not remove the Banned Drinker Register. Are you saving the register so you can, in fact, use it when your alcohol prohibition orders prove to be ineffective?

Mr TOLLNER: No.

Mr GUNNER: But there are certain aspects of the Banned Drinker Register that you want to keep?

Mr TOLLNER: We do not know; we will see what happens.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any further questions on that output?

Mr WOOD: Yes. Minister, there are some communities that have a permanent system in their management plans, the East Arnhem Alcohol Management Plan. In your annual report it said that they had achieved a 34% reduction in poor alcohol consumption. Is the permit system that you are talking about in East Arnhem Alcohol Management Plan not a form of the BDR?

Mr TOLLNER: No. What we have said is we want to see local people come up with local solutions - that is really what an alcohol management plan is. Last week we were at Groote Eylandt and they have managed to almost stamp out problem drunken behaviour everywhere - it is an amazing achievement. They have come up with their own specific local solution. Bearing in mind Groote is a rather unique community - it is an island, for a start - they can put in place measures that are probably not available to a range of other communities.

It does not matter where you look across the Northern Territory, you see places where the regulated consumption of alcohol is working quite well; in other places it is simply out of control. What we have said is we want to put faith in local people, and we have faith in local people to come up with local solutions that meet the needs of their communities. One of the things I have said ...

Mr WOOD: Minister, just to get back to the question. I am not arguing that, in fact, that is a great idea, and that is why you have the East Arnhem Alcohol Management Plan. But, in East Arnhem, if you have a plan that says you can be banned from drinking - that is, a drinker is now banned from drinking and is on a register of people who cannot drink. What is the difference between that and what you are getting rid of under the bigger system?

Mr TOLLNER: The *Liquor Act*, since the dawn of time, has always had the power for a minister to establish an identification system for determining whether individuals are subject to alcohol prohibition. Most establishments can now determine that themselves. For instance, a nightclub on Mitchell Street in Darwin can say, 'Mr Wood, you have been a problem the last three nights, you are not coming into our establishment any more'.

Mr WOOD: You would tell me that if you owned it.

Mr TOLLNER: Those things apply and we encourage businesses and communities to embrace those types of solutions. One thing we have been very consistent about saying is we are not relaxing liquor regulations and laws until we have in place a system that adequately deals with problem drinkers. For remote communities and others who want to establish a social club, a pub, or a restaurant in their community which is able to sell liquor with a meal, we will not allow that to happen until we are certain they have strong responses to people who abuse the privilege to drink alcohol and behave in an irresponsible way.

We are very much about trying to normalise the sale and supply of alcohol across the Territory, but we are not going to do that until we have strong measures in place that deal with problem drunks.

Mr WOOD: Minister, Menzies School of Health Research did a survey on drinking patterns and attitudes. What is the result of that survey, and who paid for it? It is in your annual report.

Mr TOLLNER: Whose annual report?

Mr WOOD: Your annual report.

Mr TOLLNER: What annual report?

Mr WOOD: If you do not know your own annual report it is not my problem.

Mr TOLLNER: Were you around last night? This department has not produced an annual report. Are you talking about this department's annual report or ...

Mr WOOD: If you read the website it says if you want to see the annual report for this section – licensing - you go to the Department of Justice. That is where the annual report is, and you have taken it over, so there is an annual report, minister.

Mr TOLLNER: This is no longer the Department of Justice. This has been a new department since September last year.

Mr WOOD: I recognise that.

Mr TOLLNER: An annual report has not been produced.

Mr GUNNER: However, the section moved over and the people moved over with that section.

Mr TOLLNER: As I thought, it is a program which was run through Justice, funded through the Commonwealth, and is a responsibility that has now been handed to the Department of Health through their Alcohol Policy Unit. Perhaps direct those questions to the Health minister.

Mr WOOD: All right.

The campaign with the BDR, obviously there was money set aside. Did it cost money to close the BDR program down, and what has happened to all the equipment?

Mr TOLLNER: It has not cost anything to close the program down. The equipment is the property of the Commonwealth government and my understanding is it is sitting at licenced premises waiting for collection. I apologise, I misled the committee. The scanners are the property of the Northern Territory government and currently sit in licenced premises, and we have made no move to collect them.

Mr GUNNER: And you have not removed the BDR from the act, so it can start up again tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair, for your patience.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, my apologies in that slight error. The machines were paid for by the Commonwealth, but ownership transferred to the Northern Territory government.

Mr GUNNER: To confirm, the Banned Drinker Register is not being removed from the *Liquor Act* next week, and the machines remain in takeaway outlets. Assistant Commissioner Mark Payne said they were

effective at preventing violence. You could bring back the Banned Drinker Register tomorrow to make alcohol prohibition orders effective.

Mr TOLLNER: No, the BDR is gone forever.

Mr GUNNER: But you will not remove it from the

Mr TOLLNER: History.

Mr GUNNER: You will not remove it from the bill.

Mr TOLLNER: History. It is never coming back. As much as you might hope that in the distant future we will return to that hoary old chestnut, the BDR, I can assure you it is certainly not going to happen with this government.

Mr GUNNER: But you will not remove it from the bill, and you are keeping the machines in takeaway outlets.

Mr TOLLNER: The BDR is gone. We are looking at reviewing all of those alcohol laws. A heads up has been given on all of that.

Mr GUNNER: There is a six month exemption.

Mr TOLLNER: You might want to verbal the Assistant Police Commissioner, but certainly that is ...

Mr GUNNER: I am quoting him. You gagged him.

Mr TOLLNER: ... not what minister Elferink was allowing to happen. The police that I have talked to are very glad that the BDR is gone and they are glad that we are bringing in laws that have some teeth ...

Mr GUNNER: I believe it would be good if you allowed the police to talk on the issue, Deputy Chief Minister.

Mr TOLLNER: Well, question the Police minister on that one.

Mr GUNNER: Minister, you said you would have votes in communities about bringing back full-strength alcohol. Is the budget for that election going to be in your outputs?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, but let me clarify that. We have said that where a community wants to sell full-strength beer - and this is reference to the member for Arafura where they already have a licensed premises on the island, but cannot sell heavy beer. His line is: there are too many of our people on the streets in Darwin, and the reason they are going there is to access full-strength beer.

The government has said on numerous occasions that we will not be relaxing any restrictions on any communities across the Territory until that community can demonstrate measures are in place for a strong response to alcohol abuse. In that regard they are working to ensure there is a rehabilitation facility on the islands and that all people in the community are focused on the desire to have good alcohol laws before we will even consider relaxing the laws in relation to heavy strength beer.

Mr GUNNER: So, those are the preconditions for the election. The budget for that election is in your output. When will the election occur, and will the Electoral Commissioner run it?

Mr TOLLNER: Sorry, there is a point of difference here. We have said we are not going to do anything until the community can demonstrate they have strong measures in place to deal with problem drunks. I am aware that efforts are being made ...

Mr GUNNER: But you made the promise.

Mr TOLLNER: ... to ensure there are strong measures in place, such as a rehabilitation facility, on the Tiwi Islands. In regard to questions about that rehabilitation facility, they need to go to the Health minister.

Mr GUNNER: I am not asking about that. I am asking about the election, which is in your budget.

Mr TOLLNER: About the election?

Mr GUNNER: The very first question was: does the budget for the election about the return of full-strength alcohol sit within your output. You said, 'yes'. So, I am asking how and when that election will occur.

Mr TOLLNER: The election will only occur after a community can demonstrate they have strong measures in place to deal with problem alcoholics, and they can demonstrate strong community support to bring alcohol onto a community. I am not interested in places that say, 'We have just built a rehabilitation centre, now we want a pub, but 90% of the community are against it'. They need to be able to demonstrate strong community support in one form or another.

Mr GUNNER: Will you allow under 18s to vote?

Mr TOLLNER: No one is suggesting there has to be a vote; there has to be a demonstration of strong community support. I will give you an example. I am very keen to see the re-establishment of the Alcohol Reference Group in Alice Springs - something that has not really happened – because I want to see the Alice Springs Liquor Accord reignited and given some real teeth. To demonstrate community support in that regard, I am very keen to see the people on the Alcohol Reference Group being members selected by, or representative of, people in the community. It has to represent a broad cross-section of community interests in order to demonstrate that strong community support.

We are not necessarily going to have a plebiscite in the community to see who wants it and who does not. We want to see a demonstration of strong community support for a particular initiative.

Mr GUNNER: Initially you said you were bringing it back, then you said there would be election, and now you are saying community support ...

Mr TOLLNER: I do not believe I ever said there was going to be an election ...

Mr GUNNER: That was the response initially.

Mr TOLLNER: I believe I said strong community support has to be demonstrated. I do not believe we ever talked about plebiscites or elections or votes.

Mr GUNNER: You have. In response to the original election promise to bring back full-strength beer to the Tiwi Islands - and I realise the government has changed since then from the Mills to the Giles government and you might have changed your policy approach – you said there would be elections for the return of that alcohol.

Mr TOLLNER: Let me clarify ...

Mr GUNNER: The first question in this chain of questions was: does the budget for that election sit in your output? You said, 'yes'.

Mr TOLLNER: Let me clarify this. The election to have alcohol - I did not believe you were talking about an actual election or plebiscite. There has to be a demonstration of strong community support for a particular measure. Whether that happens through something like an alcohol reference group, which we hope to see set up in Alice Springs, or whether it happens through some type of plebiscite which demonstrates the people of a particular area support a particular measure ...

Mr GUNNER: So, if there is strong community support for a measure, say, through an alcohol reference group, you will bring it in? If an alcohol reference group says to you, 'Minister, we strongly support the Banned Drinker Register', will you bring it back?

Mr TOLLNER: The Banned Drinker Register was part of Territory-based legislation. If they say every hotel has agreed to put in scanning machines because they want to determine who drinks there and who does not, of course we will let them do that.

Mr GUNNER: That is why the Banned Drinker Register remains within the bill?

Mr TOLLNER: That is not exactly the Banned Drinker Register. The Banned Drinker Register was blanket legislation which covered the entire Territory; we are talking about local solutions to local problems.

Mr GUNNER: So the reason you are keeping the Banned Drinker Register in the legislation is because ...

Mr TOLLNER: The Banned Drinker Register is gone! It is history!

Mr GUNNER: It is gone but it remains in the bill. The Assistant Commissioner, Grahame Kelly, said it was one of the best tools the police ever had for combating alcohol abuse and antisocial behaviour in the Northern Territory.

Mr TOLLNER: Stop verballing coppers!

Mr GUNNER: Well, I am not gagging them.

Mr TOLLNER: You are verballing them!

Mr GUNNER: We have advice from various police assistant commissioners about the effectiveness of the Banned Drinker Register in preventing violence and as a tool. It remains in the bill. If an alcohol reference group says it supports this measure, will you bring it back? You said if an alcohol reference group supports bringing back full-strength beer you will do it; so, if an alcohol reference group supports bringing back the Banned Drinker Register, will you do it?

Mr TOLLNER: You are twisting my words. There is a range of conditions prior to a community deciding they want the reintroduction of full-strength beer.

Mr GUNNER: But if they decide that, you will support them?

Mr TOLLNER: If they can first demonstrate they have a strong system of response in place for problem drinkers. That is the first criteria; they have to demonstrate they have a response for problem drinkers. Secondly ...

Mr GUNNER: What if their response to dealing with problem drinkers is the Banned Drinker Register?

Mr TOLLNER: The Banned Drinker Register does not exist so it cannot be a response.

Mr GUNNER: It does exist. It is in the bill; the scanners are still there. Everything about it is still there apart from the gazettal notice which said it could not be used for six months.

Madam CHAIR: I take this opportunity to welcome my colleague, the member for Arafura, who has just replaced the member for Stuart on the Estimates Committee.

Are there any further questions on Output 10.1?

Mr WOOD: 10.1 is?

Madam CHAIR: Output 10.1 is Gambling and Licensing Services.

Mr WOOD: I was going to ask some gambling questions because ...

Mr TOLLNER: Would it be possible to have a five-minute break?

Madam CHAIR: I was going to call a 15-minute break at the end of this output; if there are no further questions on Output 10.1?

Mr TOLLNER: I believe we have finished on alcohol. The member for Nelson wants to go to gambling, which is probably a good time to truncate this and go to gambling when we return.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay, are you ready to move to gambling after a break?

Mr GUNNER: We can move to gambling. We have explored the continuing existence of the Banned Drinker Register, and the ways in which it can come back.

Mr TOLLNER: We are going round and round in circles. You want us to get back to where we started; which is the Banned Drinker Register, but it is not happening, it is gone!

Madam CHAIR: It is 10.15 am, so we will come back at 10.20 am. Thank you everyone.

The committee suspended

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, everyone, for returning after the break. We are still with the Minister for Business and we are exploring the gambling component of Output 10.1.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Chair, I need to clarify a response I gave. I fear I may have misled the committee. Some new information has come to me in relation to the questions the member for Fannie Bay asked about breaches by three liquor outlets in Alice Springs.

The information I have just received is that police have issued breach notices to those outlets. Those notices have not yet come to the department for assessment, which is why we were not in possession of that information. I do apologise. Questions about the nature of the breaches should go to the Police Commissioner.

Mr GUNNER: But you said that after the accusations were made by the Chief Minister you investigated and found no breaches.

Mr TOLLNER: I do apologise. Those stores have been investigated on a number of occasions; there are regular licensing inspectors going through those places. I do apologise if I seemed to mislead the committee. I am clarifying, now, that police have issued breach notices that have not yet been acted on by the department. Questioning in relation to those breaches needs to be directed to the minister for Police.

Mr GUNNER: But your department found no breaches, and your inspectors found no breaches.

Mr TOLLNER: Police issue a breach notice which goes to the Director of Licensing for assessment. That has not yet occurred in this case. I cannot comment on something the department is not aware of, and the issue in relation to the breach notices the police have issued needs to be directed to the minister for Police.

Mr GUNNER: The Chief Minister was aware of the breaches, but your inspectors and the stores were not?

Mr TOLLNER: Police have the power to issue breach notices anywhere they see a breach of laws. That is what they have done, and I cannot comment further on that. I am not aware of the exact nature of the breach.

Mr GUNNER: But the stores were not aware of the breaches. When you issue a breach notice is the store not notified? The store said there was no breach and they have not been issued with a breach notice.

Mr TOLLNER: I apologise, member for Fannie Bay. I cannot comment any further on that. Those questions need to go to the minister for Police.

Madam CHAIR: For the benefit of *Hansard*, we have a change to the membership of the Estimates Committee. I welcome to Kon Vatskalis, member for Casuarina; Michael Gunner, member for Fannie Bay; Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem; Bess Price, member for Stuart; Gerry Wood, member for Nelson; and me. Thank you.

Are there any other questions on that output?

Mr GUNNER: Minister, can you table the advice you received about the breaches that have apparently now been issued?

Mr TOLLNER: No, I cannot table that. I do not have that advice because it has not come to the department, but I am aware the police have taken that action and questions in relation to that need to go to the Police minister.

Mr GUNNER: To what extent do you know? Has your department been told today there were breaches? Did those breaches occur after the Chief Minister's interview?

Mr TOLLNER: I am not aware of the order of things. Those questions need to go to the Chief Minister.

Mr GUNNER: On 13 June the Chief Minister said there has been a breach. On 19 June your department was told about the breach. It does not make any sense minister.

Mr TOLLNER: Those questions need to go to the Police minister.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay, you might have exhausted that line of ...

Mr GUNNER: There has been new information presented since the earlier ...

Mr TOLLNER: I just needed to clarify things. I am now aware that breach notices have been issued by police, which is in a portfolio area outside of my responsibility. I was not aware of that. I have been made aware of that and am now informing you that any questions in relation to that need to go to the minister for Police who has the responsibility for that area of government.

Mr GUNNER: We will ask the Police minister.

Mr TOLLNER: Good idea.

Madam CHAIR: Any further questions on that output? That concludes consideration of Output 10.1

Output 10.2 – Community Benefit Fund

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output 10.2, Community Benefit Fund. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: I am okay.

Mr WOOD: We were going to do gambling, which is not the Community Benefit Fund. Oh, yes, it is both.

Minister, what is the government's response to moves to prohibit, or at least lessen, large sport betting?

Mr TOLLNER: I am led to understand if any jurisdiction in the country brings in a code in relation to that, the Northern Territory licences are required to comply to that code no matter where in Australia that code is set.

Mr WOOD: That is very good, minister, but what are your thoughts on reducing live sport betting? It is an issue that is out there at the moment. What is the Territory government's view on that matter because there certainly has been much public concern.

Mr TOLLNER: This is a policy matter for government. It is probably not appropriate that I share my personal thoughts in this regard. It is more a policy discussion for a future date.

Mr WOOD: The Chief Minister has said that responsible gambling is a lifestyle opportunity. I have nothing against responsible gambling, but do you believe there is reasonable concern that the government is looking at gambling as a lifestyle opportunity? Is it its job to promote gambling? We know gambling is a problem, as you have just read from Menzies School Health ...

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Nelson, these are matters of policy. At this stage, no such policy has been through Cabinet, and I would rather leave those discussions for debate within the parliament.

Mr WOOD: The only problem with debate in parliament is I cannot have a two-on-two with you. In parliament, once my question is asked you can answer it anyway you want ...

Mr TOLLNER: Come on, Gerry, you know my door is always open - even to you.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister ...

Mr TOLLNER: Always has been.

Mr WOOD: ... the public will not be allowed in at the same time ...

Mr TOLLNER: Do you have to have the media trailing you everywhere?

Mr WOOD: No. This is public policy; it is not my policy, it is not your policy we talk about behind closed doors, it is an important issue. I see live sport beamed regularly on television; it is there all the time. As much as I like a bet - if you go to the trivia night on Thursday night you will see me putting a few dollars on the dogs; but that is about it. For me, it is like having a scratchie.

There are people who have problems with gambling, and online sports' betting is something that has only come up in the last few years and it is very prominent on nearly every game of sport you watch now - you will see it come up for the AFL, the Rugby League - and we all sit down if we can and watch those games, and kids do too. It is being promoted actively now. I would have thought the government would have at least addressed their position on it.

Mr TOLLNER: There is an important national debate going on at this point in time in relation to all forms of gambling and, in particular, this form of gambling. It is at the front of the public mind and it is being led by interstate federal politicians. It is a policy matter for government that we are very interested in addressing, but we will be informed by the outcomes of public debate nationally.

Mr WOOD: I hope locally as well, minister.

Mr TOLLNER: And locally, of course.

Mr WOOD: Yes. We are the Territory, as you always tell us.

Mr TOLLNER: Of course, your representations will make a huge difference as well.

Mr WOOD: Thank you.

Mr TOLLNER: I have just been informed there was a bookmaker's forum last week and bookmakers are also very keen to assist in ensuring responsible gambling is a priority rather than laissez-faire open slather.

Mr WOOD: I am not after that; promotion is the problem here. That is what the public is saying. Families are concerned their kids are watching shows and this is being promoted.

I went to the Roosters v Bulldogs match a few months ago and Mr Waterhouse was on the field every time there was a break in the game. I presume that goes straight onto television all the time - promoting, promoting. Minister, I will be looking forward to the government's official policy in relation to this issue.

Yesterday you mentioned pokies. Presently we have a cap on the number of pokies. Is the government considering raising that cap and, if so, why? If so, where are you considering expanding pokies to?

Mr TOLLNER: The government is looking across the board at the issue of gambling - the issue of pokies. At the moment policy is being formulated on that and I expect we will have legislation coming into the parliament in relation to that. But I do not want to pre-empt that debate by discussing it here.

Mr WOOD: You have pre-empted it by saying you are considering raising the cap.

Mr TOLLNER: Absolutely. I have given you a heads up.

Mr WOOD: That is right but, again, pokies have been debated over the last few years quite considerably. There is no doubt we have a problem with the amount of money gambled on pokies. We know in casinos in the Territory a large number of Indigenous people use pokies, taking money out of communities. Before the government decides to go down this path, will it make some form of assessment as to the effect pokies have on our community - and there may have been some studies done - before it makes any decision to raise the cap?

Mr TOLLNER: I have already received representations from a wide range of people. There is a range of interesting views from people who want to see the complete prohibition of gambling - there are obviously some in or community - to other arguments that say if you allow an increase in poker machines in pubs and clubs it will allow them to transform themselves into much more family orientated environments. Where you see more poker machines you tend to see more service of food and the particular establishments spend money on their infrastructure creating a more family focused environment.

I am not suggesting we are going to take one particular side of the argument at this stage. I am keen to hear as much from as many different areas of the community as possible, which is the reason I have said

we are considering changes in these areas to signal to the community we want feedback from community groups and stakeholders.

The government is a long way from making a decision on any of that; however, we are very keen to understand more of community views and get more feedback on how an expanded system might work or, in fact, a decreased system might operate.

Mr WOOD: Minister, this obviously was not mentioned in the election campaign, so it is something that has occurred since then. Have you had lobbying from pubs and clubs, or the Australian Hotels Association, in relation to changing the capping?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: What type of lobbying are they looking at?

Mr TOLLNER: They are looking at expanding the number of machines in the community to generate greater revenue. They advocate there would be a positive change in the type of service that is offered at pubs and clubs because they would not be reliant on bar sales as their sole source of income. It may, in fact, prove to be an effective way of dealing with excessive alcohol consumption because the advice they have is that it would make their establishments more family friendly, and they would work harder to ensure less antisocial behaviour is caused by problem drunks in their establishments. They are one group that has talked to us, and there are other groups who have different views.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I know the lobbyists for more poker machines will put a good case forward in regards to improvements and making it more family friendly, but do you not believe it is really about increasing profits? For example, the Casuarina Sports Club has 45 machines, and its gross profit is \$5.9m – and gross profit here is the amount of money lost on those machines. They are pulling in large amounts of money - the average gross profit per machine in 2011-12 was \$144.78 per day. Cynics would say it is more about how much more money can be made because pokies do make money, we know that.

So, will you have to weigh up whether this has a financial lobby, or is it really about improving the services in a pub?

Mr TOLLNER: I would hope it is about profits; I do not see anything wrong with a business making profits. When a business is making profit they tend to employ people and they upgrade their establishments. I hope businesses are out there actively pursuing profits because if they are not there is something clearly wrong. However, poker machines do not necessarily make a club or pub profitable. I am aware of a number of establishments around the Territory which are looking to sell back machines because they see it as an opportunity to raise revenue by offloading machines in venues where they are hardly used. So, whilst you can use the Casuarina Sports Club as an example, I am sure and I hope that they are out there making a good return.

The view expressed by the AHA and a number of people who want more machines is that if you allow more machines it will allow pubs and clubs to make more profits which they will, in turn, use to invest in their businesses to improve their amenities and make them more family orientated, bistro style businesses which are not overly reliant on liquor sales.

I know it is a somewhat moral question at times, member for Nelson; do you encourage more liquor sales or more gambling? I imagine there are people in the community who do not want to encourage either - but there has to be a recognition that people in those industries are in the business to make money, and that is not necessarily a bad thing.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I am not criticising businesses for making a profit but, in this case, we are not making shoes or motor cars - we are gambling - and if we do not balance that profit against the downside of gambling, there will be problems. If you go to Amity House you will see there are problems, as we know, with excessive gambling.

When will the government be making a decision on the cap?

Mr TOLLNER: There is no timeline in place at the moment. As you are aware, the government has quite a large legislative agenda at the moment. I am in no extraordinary rush to push this through, but certainly within the next 12 months we should expect to see something before the parliament.

Mr WOOD: The one group of licensed venues that does not have a cap, I believe, is the casinos. Is that correct?

Mr TOLLNER: That is correct, yes.

Mr WOOD: Is there any proposal by the government that when the contracts are renewed there will be a cap?

Mr TOLLNER: Again, I do not want to pre-empt any debate. Discussions have not occurred with either of the casinos in relation to this, and I am very reluctant to talk about any plans prior to discussing things with those two casinos.

Mr WOOD: Could you give us an idea when figures for the casino will be released? I spent quite some time yesterday looking for a report and I have information that the report for 2011-12 has not yet been printed.

Mr TOLLNER: Which report are you referring to?

Mr WOOD: There is an annual report which includes lotteries and casino revenue. I gather it is not necessarily something the government has to table, but we are nearly at the end of this financial year and last financial year's report has not come through to show the figures for casinos and lotteries.

Mr TOLLNER: I have just had a confidential document shoved under my nose which says the report for 2011-12 is about to come up to be signed off by me. Obviously, the department is new and that has impacted on things. And the 2012-13 report is nearing completion.

Mr WOOD: Minister, there is money set aside for gambling amelioration. Could you tell us how much money is put into that, and are there any outcomes from the money spent? Can someone say it has been effective?

Mr TOLLNER: This year the Community Benefit Fund will distribute \$2.2m. The Community Benefit Fund has completed one round of gambling amelioration, receiving five applications. Four applications were approved, totalling almost \$820 000. One round of Major Community Grants received 45 applications. Five applications were approved, totalling \$271 000. Two rounds of Small Grants for Small Rural Communities received 173 applications. Of those, 147 applications were approved, totalling \$455 257. Two rounds of Vehicle Gifts and Long Term Loans received 60 applications, of which two gifts and two loans were approved.

Applications for the 2013-14 Gambling Amelioration Grants program closed on 17 May 2013. The Community Benefit Fund Committee met to assess these applications on 13 June in an attempt to notify successful applicants prior to the start of the next financial year. A third round of Small Grants for Small Rural Communities in 2012-13 closed on 24 May 2013. The budget for this round was \$250 000.

The Community Benefit Fund Committee also met to assess these applications on 13 June and recommendations from the meeting are currently being prepared. An \$8000 contribution to Gambling Research Australia through the Department of Justice in Victoria is expected to be the only gambling research expenditure this financial year.

Preliminary discussions have been held regarding new research projects, but nothing will be finalised this financial year. In addition to the Gambling Amelioration Grants I have just noted, \$15 803 will be paid for an online counselling and support program. Administration costs for the Community Benefit Fund are anticipated to be around 10% or \$210 000 for 2012-13.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. You obviously fund the amelioration grants, and this part of our budget estimates is about outcomes. Is there any way one can see whether that money put into amelioration grants is actually having a positive effect?

Mr TOLLNER: As you are probably aware, member for Nelson, that gambling amelioration fund goes to organisations like Amity House. I suspect if you were to question them as to whether they were effective or not in ameliorating or reducing or assisting problem gamblers get over their addictions, they would say they are doing quite a good job. I have been to Amity House and a couple of the other places and they certainly ...

Mr WOOD: Not as a patient or client?

Mr TOLLNER: No!

Mr WOOD: I just thought I would check.

Mr TOLLNER: As an interesting member of the public.

Mr WOOD: Okay, thank you. I would have thought the department because they are funding, as with many things you acquit your funds and you would require, I would have thought, before you get new funding that your programs and things ...

Mr TOLLNER: Absolutely. Very clearly, as the Treasurer, I can tell you I have talked to all Chief Executives of government departments and said we are not just handing out money willy-nilly, we actually expect an assessment of the bang we are getting for our buck in relation to many of these grants programs.

Typical, of all government departments that hand out grants, when the next round of funding comes there is an assessment done as to whether they have expended all the funds of the previous year's funding they were granted; whether they have met the KPIs they said they would meet; and whether the program was delivering in those areas they said they would deliver on. There is an assessment done, and I am very keen for that to continue, of course. In these tight financial times I am encouraging even greater scrutiny in these areas.

Mr WOOD: Minister, in relation to gambling research in last year's annual report Charles Darwin University received \$155 172 to research projects relating to Indigenous gambling and application of other jurisdiction policy frameworks etcetera, and Menzies School of Health received \$40 729 for ongoing Australian Research Councils' linkage research projects into the spatial distribution of gambling harm. Have those projects been completed? Do you know the results of those projects?

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Nelson, we will have to take that question on notice. We will get back to you with some detail on that.

Question on Notice No 2.14

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you please repeat the question?

Mr WOOD: Minister, could you tell us about two projects in relation to gambling research: one was done by Charles Darwin University costing \$155 172, and by the Menzies School of Health Research for \$40 729?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr TOLLNER: Absolutely.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson to the minister is No 2.14.

Mr WOOD: Could I ask a technical question, minister? When you look at this report from the Licensing Commissioner, it has pubs and clubs, and it gives you the number of pokies in pubs and clubs. It is pubs that pay the community benefit levy?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: And it is clubs that do not?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr WOOD: They pay a tax. Both pubs and clubs pay a tax, but the pubs pay extra which is for the community benefit levy?

Mr TOLLNER: That is correct, but in addition clubs have to do is demonstrate the community-based organisations they support.

Mr WOOD: Like Cazalys does for the football club?

Mr TOLLNER: Cazalys has to. All the clubs have to provide additional financial support to a range of different community-based organisations. With pubs, we relieve them of that responsibility and take an additional 10% and deal with it ourselves in government.

Mr WOOD: Is there a set formula for clubs that they must divvy out to sporting groups or the like?

Mr TOLLNER: The rule of thumb is it should line up with pubs that there is the 10% amount. However, much depends on the profitability of the club, so there is some flexibility in that regard.

Mr WOOD: Is it based on the profit? Is that how you work it out?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, absolutely. I was just informed that many of the clubs will do maintenance in kind, such as Tracy Village Social and Sports Club, which will spend money on grounds etcetera. In some regard that does relieve government of the burden of having to do that maintenance itself.

Mr WOOD: Can they give it to themselves? For instance, can Nightcliff Sports Club give it to the Nightcliff sport facility?

Mr TOLLNER: The Nightcliff Sports Club may well support organisations which are members of the Nightcliff Sports Club. That is a legitimate use of those funds.

Mr WOOD: I do not have any other questions, minister.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Chair, I note the time and am prepared to move ahead to WorkSafe.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 10.2 and Output Group 10.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 11.0 – NT WORKSAFE Output 11.1 – NT WorkSafe

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 11.0 NT WorkSafe, Output 11.1 NT WorkSafe. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: Minister I have cut my questions back in WorkSafe. What saving measures have been applied to NT WorkSafe?

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Fannie Bay, thank you for the question. The department has not allocated any specific savings measures for WorkSafe itself, apart from the across department savings mentioned last night. The savings across the department incorporate savings within WorkSafe.

Mr GUNNER: The across department savings include 36 job losses. Were any of those job losses within WorkSafe?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, there was one.

Mr GUNNER: One job loss from WorkSafe?

Mr TOLLNER: That was the Executive Director.

Mr GUNNER: Has there been any new appointments within NT WorkSafe?

Mr TOLLNER: No.

Mr GUNNER: So, you have an acting director?

Mr TOLLNER: The gentleman sitting to my left, Mr Doug Phillips, is the Acting Director of WorkSafe.

Mr GUNNER: You are taking actual responsibilities, Mr Phillips? Are there any new spending measures in NT WorkSafe area?

Mr PHILLIPS: No.

Mr GUNNER: You have shown a great deal of interest in WorkSafe in previous estimates member for Fong Lim, are you applying any reforms or new policies to NT WorkSafe.

Mr TOLLNER: There are a range of policy areas we are working on to reform WorkSafe. National Harmonisation, which is being debated nationally, is one, and there are other areas we are working on.

Mr GUNNER: How are you going to be working with business? Do you have a plan on how you will engage with business around those harmonisation laws and OH&S?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, we have a working group which involves various business representatives, trade union representatives, and other interested members of the community, working on a range of things. The high-risk work permits announcement yesterday is a WorkSafe issue. WorkSafe has worked closely with the Department of Business to ensure licence renewals for forklift operators, scaffolders and crane drivers happen in a timely fashion. Our catchline is that we have gone from '20 days to 20 minutes' where a person can have licences renewed. Assessments will still be required for those people who have never had a licence, but we are streamlining activities and making things much more business and user friendly.

Mr GUNNER: So, 20 days to 20 minutes?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: How does that apply when, without explanation, you refuse a licence to sell fireworks?

Mr TOLLNER: What I talked about then was a high-risk worker permit which has nothing to do with people who sell fireworks. I believe what you are talking about is a matter currently under investigation and, as such, it is not appropriate for me to discuss at this point in time.

Mr GUNNER: So, that licence has not been refused?

Mr TOLLNER: My understanding is that there is a court matter pending, and rather than stick my two bob's worth in, it is probably better to let natural justice take its course. It is a police matter.

Mr GUNNER: Okay.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I have a general question. The *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011* came in at the end of 2011 and when the government was in opposition they opposed it. What is the government's position on the legislation now, and how is it actually working in practice?

Mr TOLLNER: On principle, I believe most people are in favour of harmonised national laws in relation to work health and safety. Australia has become too small a place. Companies will often have a footprint in various jurisdictions and having to deal with a myriad of different work health and safety laws is quite confusing for many of them.

So, the principle of a national harmonised regime is a good one. However, the question is whether it is workable, and that is what is currently being determined around the country. WA and Victoria still have not signed up and the other states that have signed up are questioning the effectiveness of the regime. In the Northern Territory we are in a holding pattern to see what eventuates from that. We are actively consulting with businesses and other representative groups in the community to get feedback from that, but it seems to me to be, nationally, a moving feast at the moment.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. I was interested in your comments there, minister, saying you are talking with industry. I supported this legislation, but I supported it with the backing of people like the Master Builders Northern Territory who are key people in the discussions. I thought those bodies had looked at it and given it the tick, and that is partly the reason I supported it.

Mr TOLLNER: Generally, it is hard to find anyone who does not support the principle of national harmonisation of these laws; Australia is too small a place and laws enacted often have bugs in them and problems. Whilst we support the principle, we want to ensure we also get the legislation right. As I said, two states have opted not to join because of major concerns they have, and some states which have joined are seriously considering whether they should remain there because of concerns they have.

From the Northern Territory perspective, we support the concept of national harmonisation of work health and safety laws, but we are also taking an approach of wait and see what occurs around the rest of

Australia, and consulting with local groups and people to ensure they are happy with the regime we will sign up to.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister. That is all the questions I have, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes Output 11.1 and Output Group 11.0.

I take the opportunity to welcome Ken Vowles, member for Johnston. Michael Gunner MLA has left us, Kon Vatskalis MLA remains, and everything else remains the same.

DEFENCE LIAISON AND DEFENCE INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Defence Liaison and Defence Industry Support. Are there any questions?

Mr VATSKALIS: Minister, Defence plays a significant role in the Territory, both in society and in the business sector. Can you advise if you still have the Defence Support Unit at the department?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: How many people work in this unit?

Mr TOLLNER: Five people.

Mr VATSKALIS: Can you tell us the classifications of the people working there?

Mr TOLLNER: Member for Casuarina, we can take that question on notice or I can commit to answer it in the next five minutes. I will have that information here if you do not want to take it on notice.

Mr VATSKALIS: I am happy to have it in the next five minutes. That is fine with me.

Mr TOLLNER: It will not take long.

Mr VATSKALIS: Do you meet regularly with this unit?

Mr TOLLNER: I meet on occasions with them, yes. I do not have a regularly scheduled meeting, but I certainly have met with them.

Mr VATSKALIS: Of course you are aware of the Defence Industry Network?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: Do you meet with them?

Mr TOLLNER: Yes.

Mr VATSKALIS: How often?

Mr TOLLNER: I do not have scheduled regular meetings, but I have had a long association with Aiden and am more than happy to meet with them at any time they want to meet.

Mr VATSKALIS: Considering that the presence of the defence force in the Territory presents enormous opportunities for businesses, and considering our unemployment situation at the moment, what is your department doing to increase opportunities for business to work with Defence projects?

Mr TOLLNER: There are a few things. First, as I believe I said in my opening remarks, I am keen to increase our exposure and connectedness with the Defence support industries and the like, and we are actively looking to have someone stationed in Canberra. As you know, member for Casuarina, Defence decisions more often than not are made in the halls of the federal parliament and in Defence offices in Canberra. I believe it is very important that we are closely in touch with Canberra in that regard, so there is a process at the moment to see how we might more effectively engage with Defence down there.

There is also a desire to raise the capability and capacity of Darwin's small businesses in relation to Defence contracting needs. As you know, the Defence department does set a very high bar in what they require from industry and the standards they expect.

A couple of things in relation to that. We have, in the past, been quite spoilt in the Northern Territory because of operational requirements of the Defence department and quite often they have lowered the bar in relation to their capacity and capability requirements simply because Darwin has been a staging post for operations with our near neighbours – Timor being the classic example.

However, there is also recognition, I believe, within those Defence support area businesses that they need to lift their game. In that regard, the department is providing support services to those businesses and industries in order to assist them increase their capability and capacity in that area. Additionally, part of the capability and capacity building effort in the Northern Territory has to be about the attraction of businesses to the Territory that have that capability already in existence.

It is a multipronged approach. I agree with you that there is enormous opportunity for Territory businesses in relation to Defence procurement of services and products and we have not really scratched the surface to date on this. With the advent of an American presence in the Territory, as a government we are having a much greater focus on Defence activity in the north of Australia.

Mr VATSKALIS: I agree with you, the decisions for Defence are made in Canberra and the bar is very high. You have now been in government for 10 months; can you tell us if you have appointed anyone in Canberra to liaise on behalf of the Northern Territory?

Mr TOLLNER: No, that is an active investigation which is going on - whether we use an outside consultant who is already stationed in Canberra, or whether we find someone who works directly for the Northern Territory government. Those discussions are still under way. Our desire is to find the best mix for the Territory at the least cost which delivers the most benefit.

Mr VATSKALIS: Have you met the Minister for Defence to advocate for Darwin? We saw the example yesterday when the member for Nelson mentioned about the construction at the Robertson Barracks - a big interstate company; not much involvement here ...

Mr TOLLNER: At this stage I have not met with the Minister for Defence. I have been in this job now since the middle to end of March and, of course, framing a budget and other things has taken a significant amount of time. I can tell you it is a front-of-mind issue for me. Having spent time in the federal parliament I believe, as a federal member, you tend to have a closer engagement with ADF personnel than you do as a Northern Territory politician. That informed me somewhat, I believe, on Defence requirements and how we might be able to assist in attracting more of those Defence industries to the Territory.

Mr VATSKALIS: I agree with you. When I was the Minister for Defence Support every opportunity I had to go to Canberra I met with the Minister for Defence ...

Mr TOLLNER: I agree with you. It is an important thing to do, but at this stage I have had quite a hectic schedule and to get to Canberra and meet the Defence minister has not been possible. However, it is high on my priority list.

In relation to the Defence Support Branch, we have a director employed at the ECO1 level; a Manager of Defence Industry who is an SAO1; a Manager of Defence Industry Projects who is an AO7; a Defence Community Liaison person who is an AO6; and a Project and Administration Support person who is an AO4.

Mr VATSKALIS: You have a manager for industry and one for projects. Can you mention any projects your government is bringing forward with regard to Defence?

Mr TOLLNER: Not at this stage. It was a goal of the previous government too to bring projects forward - that white elephant out there you called the defence industry hub. They tell me there might finally be a customer there after 10 years of waiting.

No, there is nothing we can hang our hat on at this stage, but I am very keen to engage with Defence and to spend some time in Canberra trying to assess what is going on. I had the great pleasure of meeting up with Rear Admiral Thomas, who is in charge of a whole-of-defence area of logistics in Australia. He is a very important man in the scheme of things, as I am sure you appreciate. I managed to have a good hour long

conversation with him in relation to Navy, Army and Air Force logistics in the Territory. They were here for - I do not have the exact name for it - a Defence support conference. There is much interest in the Northern Territory and, from a government perspective, we have a great deal of interest in what those guys are up to. It is not just about industry and business, but also the fact that in the Territory we admire and respect our Defence people and value their contribution. It is not just about business engagement, it is also about appreciating the value they provide to our community.

Mr VATSKALIS: Now we have a build-up of US personnel stationed in Darwin and they spoke to me before the first contingent of 250 arrived. Have you met with the United States Defence Force officials?

Mr TOLLNER: No, I have not. I have had two meetings with them cancelled, which is quite unfortunate. I am very keen to meet up with the US Defence Force officials; they are an important new development in the Northern Territory. There are approximately 200 US marines at the moment, a rifle company which was cycled through the place between April and September last year, and there is a second rotation of around 250 US marines which commenced in late April this year and is pretty similar to the rotation that occurred, as you would be aware, in 2012.

The intent in the coming years is to establish a rotational presence of up to 2500 persons. This will be achieved in a phased manner with a battalion landing team of 1100 personnel proposed for 2014. The Australian government has not yet made any decisions for larger US marine rotations after 2013, but I would expect some announcements to be made in the future.

Mr VATSKALIS: Treasurer, I understand you have been busy with the budget, and you were busy before that trying to get rid of the Chief Minister, but defence support is one of the biggest industries in the Territory and has the potential to provide jobs and business opportunities for small businesses; which we know and your department has probably told you are not doing very well at the moment, and unless you talk to people you will not find out. Many people say to me; 'If you work for INPEX it is okay; if you do not work for INPEX it is really tough out there'.

Do you not believe that some more time meeting with the Minister for Defence, meeting with the local people, encouraging the department to something, appointing someone to Canberra would be beneficial? I know you cannot do all these things yourself, but you have people sitting next to you who can do it and the direction should come from you to do it.

It is no excuse, yes, I know you have not been a minister before but 10 months in government now, and you cannot even pretend the previous government, the Terry Mills government ...

Mr TOLLNER: I cannot comment on what previous ministers have done, but I have been in the job for two-and-half months and I have enormous appreciation for Defence personnel in the Northern Territory. I also understand the significant opportunities that can arise for Territory businesses through defence contracts. However, I also realise some of the significant hurdles we have to overcome in the Northern Territory in order to have the capability and capacity do much of the work that Defence demands.

There are opportunities with the Ichthys gas project because it allows companies to build the capacity for them to meet the requirements of Defence contracts. I do not believe we will ever have any real stand-alone Defence industry businesses established in the Northern Territory because we have outposts of a range of different prime contractors to Defence, but none of them are permanently stationed here and I cannot imagine that will change in the near future. But, clearly, raising the capability and capacity of industry and understanding exactly what Defence are doing in the Northern Territory are two priorities of this government.

I apologise if I have given any impression that I am not interested in Defence, because that is completely wrong. I am more interested in defence than any member of parliament in the Northern Territory because I had a close association with the Defence forces over the years during my time in the federal parliament.

Mr VATSKALIS: Did you have any discussions with the federal government and the US representatives about the defence hub? We know the official line is that the marines based here are going to be able to respond quickly in times of humanitarian crisis and they are going to have equipment and materials stored in Darwin so they can be deployed very quickly. The hub, which was criticised by your party, is in a position to attract the marines and also industries from interstate.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, it was criticised by our government for obvious reasons. First, the former Labor government was going to build or maintain Abraham tanks there. Second, they were going to build

carriages for the railway line there, and then truck trailers were going to be built there. None of these things materialised because there was never going to be a stand-alone defence industry in the Northern Territory. It was an idea the Labor government stole from Denis Burke because you thought it was a good idea. You implemented it but, nothing happened, and 11 years later it is still sitting there as a vacant block of land. However, there are probably opportunities in the future for that block of land as a possible storage facility for the US Marines.

I have not had any discussions with US Marines as yet; I had a couple of appointments which were cancelled, and I have not yet been to Canberra to talk to the Defence minister, but it is a priority area of mine and it is something I am very interested in, and the department is doing a great deal of work in that area.

Mr VATSKALIS: I hope you now find the time to visit Canberra. Hopefully you will not be engaged in another Chief Minister's knifing and you will have the time to do something about it.

Mr TOLLNER: I am sure you hope the exact opposite.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I have a question about that defence industrial land on Thorngate Road. The land has been cleared, so what is proposed for that particular site?

Mr TOLLNER: I have not yet had any discussions with the US Marines or the Australian government.

Mr WOOD: No, sorry. The block of land which is the Defence industrial site which you said was 10 years or 11 years but it was not that long ago, by the way, more like five years to bring it back to real time, but I know it has been sitting there for a long time. A portion of that land has now been cleared. What is that going to be used for? I am fairly sure there was a planning application for something to go there.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, I just advise that the member for Arafura has replaced the member for Arnhem on the panel.

Mr TOLLNER: The Department of Business and the Land Development Corporation have been working with a potential tenant for that area. There has been no agreement reached at this stage as to what will happen, but from what I can gather some land has been cleared. The department has been working at a departmental level with the federal Department of Defence and has also been talking with US Marines about how that land could possibly be utilised in the future, but at the moment it is just speculation and no firm arrangements have been contemplated.

Mr WOOD: As the local member for the barracks, if you are doing an official tour of the US section of the barracks sometime, and you can put up with me, I would also be interested in going with you. I do go there occasionally, but I would love to come with you.

Mr TOLLNER: My great pleasure.

Madam CHAIR: If there are no further questions on Defence Liaison and Defence Industry Support we will conclude consideration of that area. Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

That concludes consideration of outputs relating to the Department of Business.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Chair, I put on my record my thanks to you and your committee for the very diplomatic way you have asked questions of me today; it has been an absolute pleasure being here. I also particularly thank Peter Carew, Doug Phillips and Noelene Biddell for their significant level of support for me today and, of course, the departmental staff who are sitting in the department watching this on a monitor and making sure questions we need a response to in five minutes actually get to you in five minutes. Much appreciated and thank you for your time.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. On behalf of the committee I thank you, minister, for attending today and for the officials who have provided you with advice.

We will now have a five minute break to assist with the transition. We will come back at 11.40 am.

Madam CHAIR: We cannot officially start without a quorum of the Estimates Committee, but I can introduce everyone.

We have Gerry McCarthy, member for Barkly, joining us on the panel; Delia Lawrie, member for Karama; me; Bess Price, member for Stuart, will be replacing the member for Arafura so we have a quorum, but at the moment the member for Arafura is still with us; we have Terry Mills, member for Blain; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson.

CHIEF MINISTER GILES' PORTFOLIOS

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL

Madam CHAIR: I welcome you, Chief Minister, and invite you to introduce the officers accompanying you.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have with me Frank McGuinness, the Auditor-General.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, I will invite you to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes, and then call for questions relating to the statement, and after that you can also read any answers to written questions you might have received.

The committee will then consider any whole-of-government budget and fiscal strategy related questions before moving on to output specific questions and, finally, non-output specific budget related questions. I will invite the shadow ministers to ask their questions first, followed by the independent member, and then other committee members. Finally, other participating members may address electorate issues. The committee has agreed that other members may join in the line of questioning pursued by a shadow minister rather than waiting for the end of the shadows' questioning on the output. Chief Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement regarding the Auditor-General's office?

Mr GILES: No, I do not.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any written answers to questions?

Mr GILES: I am happy to go through each written answer, or open straight up to the Auditor-General to answer questions, which I believe is the most sensible way to do business.

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely.

OUTPUT GROUP 1.0 – AUDITS AND REVIEWS

Output 1.1 - Audits and Reviews

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the appropriation bill 2013-14 as that relates to the Auditor-General's office.

Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, Madam Chair. Chief Minister I want to thank you for allowing opposition and the Independent member to question the Auditor-General as per the convention of our parliament. I understand that initially the Leader of Government Business had indicated we could not have access and I wrote to you, as Leader of the Opposition, requesting access to statutory offices. Chief Minister, I thank you for availing us with this opportunity; it is important and I acknowledge that you stepped up and provided us with access.

Auditor-General, my first question to you is probably one that you get every year, it is one of the standards, but; do you feel you are adequately resourced in terms of your critical role as Auditor-General?

Mr McGUINNESS: The short answer to that is yes. Our financial position this year is quite good. At 30 June I will be sitting on about \$140 000 in cash plus debtors of about \$280 000. That gives us a good platform to start the 2013-14 year. I have already commenced discussions with Treasury about 2014-15, which will affect my successor more than me. It is just to ensure the office stays on a sound financial platform. As things stand, I am adequately resourced.

Ms LAWRIE: Auditor-General, do you believe you are adequately resourced to be able to initiate, from time to time, the audits across government that you undertake?

Mr McGUINNESS: Could you be more specific?

Ms LAWRIE: Sometimes issues are raised. I know you did an audit, for example, looking at the prison financial arrangements - those extra audits. Are you resourced enough to undertake those additional audits?

Mr McGUINNESS: I believe so because we have managed to fit those in within the budget. To give us more flexibility in this area, one of my senior staff retired last year and I have replaced him with a gem of a woman who has formal training in auditing, plus several years' experience in government. She understands the nature of government and auditing and she is working in an area where she will concentrate on performance audits.

My second principle auditor will then deal with all the financial and statutory audits. In some ways that has increased the office's capacity with no additional monetary outlay.

Ms LAWRIE: That is a great outcome. Auditor-General, yesterday the Treasurer said the former government was in breach of the FITA. Do you agree with that statement?

Mr GILES: I do not believe this is a place in this room for personal opinions. You can ask questions in relation to the Auditor-General's functions and his roles, particularly in a budgetary capacity, but this is not a place for personal opinions and answers.

Ms LAWRIE: It is not really a personal opinion; it is a professional opinion because he audits the books of the government, so the Auditor-General audits the finances of the government. He audits the budget and he is the only person in the Northern Territory in the professional position to give an accurate view of that.

Mr GILES: If you are requesting that an audit be undertaken of your financial capabilities as Treasurer and whether or not you breached an act, I am more than happy to ask the Auditor-General to look at that. But this is a process about budget estimates; it is not about personal or professional legal opinions being provided.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Chief Minister is quite right. You cannot ask the Auditor-General for his opinion, legal advice, or anything of that nature.

Ms LAWRIE: It is interesting that you are gagging the Auditor-General. That is very disappointing given your Treasurer is making allegations that the former government was in breach of the FITA. The only person, professionally, who has a view on the audits and the financial accounting and accuracy thereof across the budgets ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, breaching Standing Order 112 does not amount to gagging a public servant.

Ms LAWRIE: It is gagging. These types of questions are asked and statutory officers can give their professional view.

Mr GILES: Given your performance as Treasurer I am not surprised you are trying to hide behind the Auditor-General for your previous financial performance.

Ms LAWRIE: How can I be hiding behind the Auditor-General when I am asking him for his view?

Mr GILES: If you are interested in looking at an investigation into your performance in relation to that legislation I am more than happy to take up that challenge.

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely. If you want to make a reference to the Auditor-General, go for it. Allegations were made by your Treasurer, and you, that the former government breached the FITA; they are absolutely baseless. If you want to do that reference to the Auditor-General, that would be fantastic.

Mr GILES: I encourage the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Chair, to ask questions of the Auditor-General who has been, as you mentioned, invited here openly and transparently to take any questions you may put to him in relation to his role ...

Ms LAWRIE: Only the ones that you will allow me to ask, though.

Mr GILES: ... particularly in relation to the budget estimates.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, you understand the Standing Orders as well as anyone. Please direct appropriate questions to the Auditor-General.

Ms LAWRIE: I am, and you are choosing to gag whichever ones you want, Chief Minister. I will proceed with my questioning.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, we will not have that type of imputation. The Auditor-General is waiting for you to ask a meaningful question relating to the budget, for the benefit of Territorians. Please proceed with your questioning.

Ms LAWRIE: I believe Territorians would not mind hearing from the Auditor-General; however, the Chief Minister is going to do a reference; that is a great thing.

Auditor-General, in your role you audit the budgets of the government. Have you found any inaccuracies?

Mr McGUINNESS: To clarify things, member for Karama, we do not audit the budget, we audit the actuals.

Ms LAWRIE: The actuals, the outcomes?

Mr McGUINNESS: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you found any inaccuracies?

Mr McGUINNESS: You always find errors. Part of the job is then to try to get those errors corrected and dealt with as we move towards finalising the audit. But, most of those are technical errors, so ...

Ms LAWRIE: An example of a technical error.

Mr McGUINNESS: It can be the way in which assets have been valued, things have been measured or not measured, expenses recorded or not recorded - that type of thing. Over the course of an audit, if we use the audit of the Treasurer's Financial Statements as an example, at the start those errors can sum up to some millions. Part of the job is then to get agencies to correct them as we go forward to try and avoid issuing qualified audit opinions on the grounds of inaccurate data. We really try to get agencies to do their job as we proceed.

Mr GILES: A good example of that, if I can just add, is some of the challenges we face around looking at the valuation of assets, particularly through the Asset Management System. You may recall the Asset Management System is an IT program brought in by the previous government which has cost more than \$30m to date, and is anticipated to cost at least another \$30m or \$40m. We still do not know if we will get the level of product that was originally designed to be purchased.

The Auditor-General has had a good look at the AMS and, looking at some of those asset depreciation models and the valuations, it is a significant concern which really reflects the true value of the Auditor-General and the way he can look at some of these programs. It is just embarrassing to see the AMS, but we will get to that, I presume, in the Minister for Infrastructure's portfolio.

Ms LAWRIE: I note that prior to a Labor government there was only a cash outcome, so there was no understanding of the value of assets and what that was doing to the government books. It is a really good thing that you are now actually taking into account the value of assets and the impact depreciation has. But, it took a Labor government in the Territory to deliver that level of accounting practices and standards ...

Mr GILES: It took a Labor government in the Territory to stuff it up, and we still do not know the true value of some of those assets. But, we will fix your mess, thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms LAWRIE: Auditor-General, the government is repeatedly stating that the financial situation in the Northern Territory is in dire crisis. Do you agree?

Mr GILES: I will just jump in again. I am not going to gag Frank; Frank can answer this. But, we come again to the point where personal opinions are not what are requested here. It is about the statement of the books and the performance and the function of the Auditor-General.

Mr McGUINNESS: Thank you, Chief Minister. One thing I want to point out, member for Karama, under the *Audit Act* I cannot comment on policy. What I can say is that the nett debt position deteriorated quite

sharply from where it was quite reasonable to now where it is much worse than it was. That is partly because of the global financial crisis and the decline in GST revenues which have certainly affected the revenue side and the government's accounts. Then there has been heavy capital spending, as well, which was financed by borrowing. So, it is probably not as sound as it was, say, four or five years ago.

Ms LAWRIE: Pre-GFC?

Mr MCGUINESS: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay. From your audit into the prison, can you provide a brief verbal summary of review into the procurement and the funding arrangements for that Darwin Correctional Facility under construction?

Mr MCGUINESS: The arrangement is what is known as a PPP or Public Private Partnership. It is another form of borrowing where the government will get the private sector to finance the construction and the debt is then repaid over the life of an arrangement through ...

Ms LAWRIE: And this life of the prison, what period was that?

Mr MCGUINESS: You are looking at around 30 years. The repayment can be described in a number of ways - access fee, facilitation fee – whatever. It really is just a repayment of principal and interest over the life of the arrangement.

What the government, or the public sector, then gets is a prison leaving the private sector to carry some of the financing risk. But, one of the benefits of these arrangements is you are shifting some of the construction risk from the public to the private sector which is, in many ways, better placed to manage that effectively.

Ms LAWRIE: You looked at other PPP versus the public sector comparison? You looked at those figures and reviewed that?

Mr MCGUINESS: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Was the PPP better value versus the public sector comparator?

Mr MCGUINESS: The public sector comparator suggested the PPP arrangement was going to offer a slightly better outcome than if the government had done it itself. The differences were not great, but the gap was large enough to suggest the PPP should be the path they go down.

Ms LAWRIE: The government is on the record as saying the prison will cost \$1.8bn to construct. Is that the case, is that accurate?

Mr MCGUINESS: No, it is a lesser figure. You are looking at around \$495m to build it, but then you have a string of payments. Over the life of the facility it will be about \$1.6bn, which is both the repayment of the debt but, also built into that figure, are payments for maintenance of the facility. As you may be aware, the consortium is required to maintain it to an acceptable standard so when it is handed back to government it is not inheriting a worn-out prison rather one that is well-maintained.

Ms LAWRIE: Your audit reports into that make the advantages within a PPP quite clear compared to the traditional model of government construction and maintenance.

Mr MCGUINESS: Yes. That is one of the advantages; you can deal with these things at the outset. It is always a risk in the public sector that assets are built and maintenance suffers because there are other priorities which creep in. In this case, the need of systematic maintenance over the life of the facility has been factored in. That is also reflected in what will be paid by the public sector to the consortium over 30 years.

Ms LAWRIE: An example of the difficulties for government with maintenance is the existing Berrimah prison.

Mr MCGUINESS: The problem there is you have to deal with the capital works budget each year and it is a question of how maintenance on Berrimah fares against other projects, all of which are competing for a finite pool of funds.

Ms LAWRIE: Fixing up a prison versus fixing up a hospital?

Mr McGUINNESS: One might excite the electorate in a different way.

Ms LAWRIE: Auditor-General, the government has said the project blew out from \$300m to \$1.8bn. Do you believe this is a correct statement?

Mr McGUINNESS: It is really a question of which set of figures people are looking at. The \$1.8bn is a nominal stream of cash over the life of the arrangement. Whereas the other way to look at it is: what is the construction cost - which is around \$495m - and how does that translate into a repayment stream over 30 years. In some ways it is like buying a house using a mortgage; it may cost you \$500 000 to buy the house but you have to pay \$1.5m over the life of the mortgage.

Mr GILES: The difference there is there are other costs that do not come with a mortgage. There are additional costs in building that prison that have not been calculated into these sums which help contribute to the \$1.8bn figure we are talking about. I am sure the Minister for Infrastructure and the minister for Corrections will add value to those comments.

Ms LAWRIE: Minister, I will take you up on the suggestion the project cost of the correctional precinct is the sum total of all payments to the SeNTinel consortium over the next 30 years, given that includes the provision of services such as repairs and maintenance, is that not a bit misleading?

Mr GILES: Absolutely not. The Minister for Infrastructure and the minister for Corrections will answer questions about the additional costs attributed to the construction of the prison that are outside the purview of the report done by the Auditor-General.

Ms LAWRIE: It is interesting that the Auditor-General has done the report. I know, Auditor-General, you appeared before the Public Accounts Committee in relation to the prison cost. Have you found anything of concern to you or the taxpayer? I know you have said, quite appropriately, ongoing oversight of the project needs to be very strong.

Mr McGUINNESS: To me, that is a real concern – it is a risk. This is a project which has to be managed over 30 years. On the other side, the consortium has a strong economic interest to make sure they manage it tightly; they are going to receive their revenue from that. My concern was management could go through several generations of public servants and as each one moves over and is supplanted by another we need to ensure the knowledge is not lost.

Ms LAWRIE: Keeping their eye on the ball through the succession of changes of staff within agencies?

Mr McGUINNESS: And it is to ensure the public sector is not paying anything more than it has to, and it is one of the problems of the PPP that you can have an asymmetric relationship between a very knowledgeable and experienced third party versus a government department that might be a novice in the field.

Ms LAWRIE: For the sake of the public, are there any recommendations around that oversight, Auditor-General? What are they focused on?

Mr McGUINNESS: It really requires a very good contract manager who has a thorough knowledge of the contract and what is required of the counterparty, and the government, because a failing on the part of government can lead to penalties. At the same time, we want to ensure the counterparty delivers everything they are required to. For example, there are refinancing arrangements where decisions need to be made about whether the government will take a lower interest rate or a cash benefit, depending on how interest rates move. So, it requires someone who understands what they are required to manage and has a thorough knowledge of the contractual arrangement, and an ability to work constructively with the counterparty.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you made recommendations of where that position sits, whether it is Corrections or Treasury?

Mr McGUINNESS: No, I have not, because I believe that is a decision for the government of the day. The logical approach, I suggest, would be Corrections given they have responsibility for the operations of the facility but, then, sitting in the background, would be Treasury with a very strong vested interest.

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely. Is the project development and tender process for the Darwin Correctional Centre appropriate and transparent?

Mr McGUINNESS: I have found no fault there; I thought it was quite good bearing in mind Infrastructure Australia takes a very close interest in these things, as well. From my perspective, the whole process was in accord with Infrastructure Australia requirements.

To give you some idea of Infrastructure Australia's keen interests, some comments were made about a project in South Australia recently, a water filtration plant, where Infrastructure Australia took the view that the benefits were not sufficient to justify the costs, but the government there decided to proceed anyway and attracted some caustic comment a few weeks ago.

Ms LAWRIE: So, in layman's terms, the Darwin Correctional Centre has passed the scrutiny of our Territory Auditor-General, and passed the scrutiny of Infrastructure Australia?

Mr McGUINNESS: I believe so. Clearly, the government was confronted with a decision that it needed a prison ...

Ms LAWRIE: Needed additional beds?

Mr McGUINNESS: Well, yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Went through the process of is it a prison, is it an extension, etcetera?

Mr McGUINNESS: Yes. Then it was a question of which way would the government go. Would it construct it itself with direct borrowing, or would it get the private sector to build it using private sector funds, but then the public sector repaying the loan over some defined period?

Mr WOOD: May I ask a question?

Ms LAWRIE: Just on the prison?

Mr WOOD: Yes, that is all. Good morning, Auditor-General, I think it is morning, no, it is afternoon.

Mr McGUINNESS: Good afternoon then, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the prison, do you believe there was adequate investigation into where a prison could be sited, and whether there was an actual need for a new prison and all options were looked at before the decision was made?

I come from a biased point of view, but it seems sometimes people have made statements who have not been involved in those discussions.

Mr McGUINNESS: If I pick up one of your points: was a new prison required? Clearly, the existing prison was reaching capacity. Under the existing sentencing arrangements there were going to be some problems. So the short answer is, yes, you either expand the existing prison, which I believe was not viewed as feasible, or you construct a new one.

The siting of the prison led to some delays in commencement of the project because, as you may be aware, a number of sites were examined before finally settling on Howard Peninsula. I prefer not to make a comment on whether that site is superior to others.

Mr WOOD: I was asking if you believe there was adequate investigation. In other words, there was a serious consultation period to find out where the prison would be best sited, and if we needed a new prison.

Mr McGUINNESS: We did not look into that in detail. Very early in the piece it was clear that quite a bit of work had been done around potential sites and there was resistance from various quarters.

Mr GILES: Do you know anyone who might have resisted?

Mr WOOD: Any time someone puts a prison anywhere within about 50km of someone else there will be protests. The point is, there had to be a site.

Mr McGUINNESS: Yes, and Howard Peninsula was selected. My view was, is it a physically suitable site? The decision was made and they proceeded. What I was most interested in was the arrangement for the design or the tendering process for the selection of consortia, and I believe that was quite thorough. Moving on from that was the financing arrangements and how that was to be managed.

Ms LAWRIE: Auditor-General, the October 2012 *Auditor-General's Report* provides an assessment of the Darwin health grants to NGOs for the delivery of primary health services. Do grants to NGOs represent good value for money in delivering primary health services in the Territory?

Mr McGUINNESS: In some ways it is probably one of the more effective ways; if you look at some of these NGOs you have a very committed workforce which is probably modestly paid. The problem with that audit, as you may have gathered, is that we started out looking at the way health services were being delivered using NGOs, then I had to turn the audit through 90 degrees because there was a grants management system being developed, and I suddenly realised this was an IT project which was going off the rails.

The interesting thing there was the lead contractor was the same firm that was the lead contractor for the AMS. Things were not proceeding well, and I had to refocus the audit to concentrate on the grants management system, and then step back. Once they got the grants management system into place, and it was over time and over budget, then it is an area I would like to have another look at.

Ms LAWRIE: It certainly would be good. It has certainly been a necessary system.

Mr McGUINNESS: Yes. It is just unfortunate that the lead contractor, for a range of reasons, had not performed as well as you might have expected. It was subcontracted to a firm interstate and we had two firms talking at cross purposes. One talking about a system development lifecycle, and the other one was speaking in the language of prototyping. It was not until well into the life of the project they suddenly realised they were not communicating; they were talking about different things. So the project had to be pulled back, stabilised, redirected and moved forward.

Ms LAWRIE: When do you anticipate looking at that again?

Mr McGUINNESS: At this stage, it will not be until the second half of 2013.

Ms LAWRIE: All right, thank you, Auditor-General, that is it for me.

Mr WOOD: I am just doing my maths, so I might be wrong here, minister. Auditor-General, when you take out your 1% efficiency dividend do you go backwards or forwards?

Mr McGUINNESS: In appropriation we probably go backwards a little; however, you will notice that I am now raising more through recovering of audit costs.

Mr WOOD: This is a question I asked the Legislative Assembly. Are you allowed to retain any money you make?

Mr McGUINNESS: It becomes an annual negotiation with Treasury, as you could imagine.

Mr GILES: Which are always the toughest negotiations.

Mr McGUINNESS: Yes, Treasury hates to see pools of idle money sitting there. But, some years ago, the office's budget was under quite a deal of stress so, with the approval of the then Treasurer and Chief Minister, I began to recover the costs I incurred in doing audits for entities that sit outside the public account. You will note this year that our estimated recoveries have gone up somewhat and that is sufficient to offset the effects of the efficiency dividend.

The efficiency dividend has been a bone of contention between Treasury and me for some years.

Mr GILES: I am sure you are not the only agency to have those challenges.

Mr McGUINNESS: I am not, and their stony hearts are unmoved.

Mr WOOD: I also raised a question when the Opposition Leader asked if you have enough funding. It appears as though if you do the 1% dividend you actually go backwards. But, you say you are happy and you have enough revenue to offset that.

Mr McGuinness: This year, we are finishing this financial year in what is quite a good financial position, both cash and we also got rid of debtors coming out of the recoveries. So, we will start 2013-14 quite nicely.

As I mentioned to the member for Karama earlier, I am talking to Treasury about 2014-15.

Mr Wood: Auditor-General, you do financial audits. Do you also do risk audits and waste audits and things like that?

Mr McGuinness: We have not done that to a large extent partly due to resources. But, as I mentioned earlier, with the retirement of one of my people who has a very strong financial and statutory audit background, and replacement with someone who has an interest in performance audits, we are now able to devote more attention to performance management system audits which can embrace questions of value for money at risk.

Mr Wood: With the government looking at efficiency changes to save money, are you able to look at the effect of some of those cutbacks. I do not use the word 'cutback' as a necessarily negative term but, obviously, the government is looking at reducing waste ...

Mr Giles: To pay back Labor debt.

Mr Wood: Are you able to say, 'I will have a look at that and see whether it was justified'? Or does it have a deleterious effect on the department's operations?

Mr McGuinness: It is the second bit. I am very conscious that my act does not permit me to comment on policy, therefore I have to be careful not to say, 'That was a silly decision'. What I can do is examine the consequences of that decision and ask, 'Is it working?'

Mr Wood: All right. Auditor-General, the government is looking at introducing an alcohol mandatory rehabilitation program. Would it be within your area to look at the performance of that program over a period of time to see if it meets its goals?

Mr McGuinness: Yes, because it can be done as part of a performance management system audit. You may be surprised – or not surprised - to find a note that it is on my list of possible audits. This is still in a state of flux and, to come in and do an audit at the moment would be effectively, as I said, a critique of government policy.

What I need to do is wait until the policy is bedded down and there is actually a program in place. Once a program is in place, we can then ask the question, 'What are you trying to achieve and what is the costing?' Then have a look at that.

Mr Wood: Were you ever requested to look at the Banned Drinker Register to see whether it performed as people hoped it would?

Mr McGuinness: I never received a request and we had some other priorities, so it never got onto the audit plan.

Mr Wood: Technically, you could have done that?

Mr McGuinness: I could have looked at the program to ask, 'Is it achieving its objectives?'

Mr Wood: It is a bit late now.

In the case of the Power and Water Corporation, which will obviously come up again for discussion, and this might be too broad a question: you have done audits on Power and Water?

Mr McGuinness: Yes.

Mr Wood: Are you able to give us a summary on where you believe Power and Water is at the present time?

Mr McGuinness: Its financial position is not good, partly because Power and Water was the unfortunate victim for a number of years of what I call benign neglect.

Mr Wood: I raised that issue yesterday.

Mr McGuinness: The failure of the Casuarina substation was a symptom of a much wider problem. There has been a very heavy capital program which has required Power and Water to borrow from T Corp which, in turn, has borrowed in the markets. General government debt has gone up as it has loaned the money to Power and Water. Power and Water's own financial position now has gone backwards a little in the last few years but, technically, it is probably in a better position than it was a few years ago.

My next report to the Assembly will deal with their asset management system which, in some ways, mirrors the experience of the asset management system which has already been dealt with by the PAC. Its initial estimated cost was around \$20m, and the final cost was \$50m.

Mr Wood: Did they use the same contractor or company?

Mr McGuinness: No. As we move toward the end of the financial year we are encountering a number of issues which, from my perspective, are a little worrying. Perhaps with a Herculean effort they will get them sorted before 30 June 2013.

Mr Giles: The issue is, member for Nelson, we have inherited an asset management system through Power and Water which is running similarly to the asset management system running through the Department of Infrastructure. These are legacy issues we have to deal with and are trying to fix.

I pick up on the Auditor-General's comments about \$50m. We are now increasing that up to \$70m and we are not sure if that will be enough to fix it - not that it will fix it - whether or not we can achieve sufficient outcomes to get it to operate. We are in the same boat with the Power and Water asset management system.

Mr Wood: I agree it is a major concern. Auditor-General, I separate the running of Power and Water, of which the government is obviously trying to improve the efficiency, but does it make it worse for a company which for years did not do much about repairs and maintenance, and that type of thing, then all this debt came within a relatively short period of time? If the debt had been spread out for 10 or 15 years - a new power station here, a new generator there, and five years later upgraded or bought another one - would spreading the debt over a longer period have less effect than a big lump sum of debt, as appears to have happened?

Mr McGuinness: It can smooth the pain because if you take on debt, ultimately, you have to recover it through charges. If that debt is taken on in a steady and progressive way it enables tariffs to rise in annual moderate steps to ensure you can recover your costs. What has happened with Power and Water, of course, in the last seven years it has taken on a great deal of debt and it is only now that tariffs are catching up, and there is probably still some way to go there.

Mr Wood: A final question on Power and Water: would you be looking at the implications of the first tariff, the second tariff, and the issues in relation to billing?

Mr McGuinness: We have had a brief look at individual accounts and I am happy that individual accounts are okay. On the Power and Water website there is a residential tariff adjustment calculator where people can put in their usage details and it will calculate what their bill should be, and they can compare that with their actual account. However, it is throwing up some interesting issues this year as we try to verify or confirm total revenue. In past years we have often been able to use a linear regression model to confirm or double check revenue figures on a gross basis, but this year, because of the movement in tariffs we cannot use that; the time series are broken. So, we are looking at total power generated, used internally, sent out less power losses, and we compare that with what has been billed. So, you can imagine now the time series has shifted it is a little more difficult for us.

Mr Wood: You do a report on Power and Water every year, would that be picked in any report?

Mr McGuinness: Yes!

Mr Wood: All right, thank you.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 1.0. Are there any non-output specific budget-related questions?

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Auditor-General for attending today and the committee will now move on to consider the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Mr GILES: I also thank Mr McGuinness very much for coming along.

NORTHERN TERRITORY ELECTORAL COMMISSION

OUTPUT GROUP 2.1 – ELECTORAL SERVICES

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister we are now considering the Northern Territory Electoral Commission and I invite you to introduce the official accompanying you and if you wish to make an opening statement.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to welcome Bill Shephard, the NT Electoral Commissioner, to the table. I will not be making any opening statements, and as previously I will not go through all the questions; I do not believe the questions were completely relevant to the Electoral Commission, or the Auditor-General, or the Ombudsman. I will follow the same process as before. I am happy for questions to be undertaken straightaway.

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates and proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Northern Territory Electoral Commission. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Chief Minister, for making the Electoral Commissioner available to the Estimates Committee. In terms of electoral services, obviously you had a pretty busy year last year, and my questions relate to that.

During the August 2012 Northern Territory election in Nyirripi, in the seat of Stuart, Electoral Commission staff was suspended during the course of mobile voting. Can you please provide a copy of the report you conducted into this matter, what action you have taken, and any policy or procedural changes you have made as a result of the incident?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The Nyirripi incident it is subject to a police enquiry and we have not done any reporting on the matter. We have cooperated with the police in their enquiry and we provided all information they required from us. My understanding is that an enquiry has not been concluded, but when it is we will include that in our reporting.

Ms LAWRIE: So, you suspended staff? What prompted the suspension of the electoral commission staff at Nyirripi?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Again, I need to be careful about what I say, I hope you appreciate that. I would not necessarily call it a suspension of staff, it was a strategic decision taken to deal with the issue at hand. Basically, there was a personality clash between members of the team. It came to light because we had the opportunity to speak to them after the Nyirripi polling. It was not a result of any complaint that was made, although there was a complaint made which made us make some inquiries with the staff. The nature of the complaint had nothing to do with the suspension of the staff at hand, it was to do with the personality clash and the fact that I, as Electoral Commissioner, have a responsibility to ensure mobile polling is conducted appropriately.

What is important about that is that I am told of any incident that may be worthwhile reporting. In that case we had a personality clash and we had someone who did not really report that there was issues of complaint, whether they were allegations or otherwise.

At that point in time, bearing in mind that team had to go out for more than a week and its ultimate destination was Yuendumu, which was also identified as a possible problem spot, I decided we should reconstitute the team, not sit in judgment of anyone, and not take sides. That was the best course of action.

I stress that it was not a result, per se, of the complaint that was made at the time.

Ms LAWRIE: Why would a police inquiry prevent you from undertaking your own internal inquiry, Commissioner?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I am not saying we did not make some inquiries internally. Three officers were on the mobile team and we asked them questions about that. As I said, the team was reconstituted, it was in the cut and thrust of an election campaign, and that was seen to be the appropriate action at the time. We had a complaint from the ALP, as you are aware, and I made it clear to the ALP what I was doing. At that point in time there was no objection to what I was doing. The complaint resurfaced again after the election, and once we had started counting. Again, we were in the cut and thrust of a counting procedure, and it was put to me in terms that I should not be declaring the poll. I did not believe that was appropriate, and I said so. There are other mechanisms in place if people believe they have grounds to dispute a return.

At that stage we continued the count and declared people elected. It became the prerogative of others to lodge a disputed return. At that point in time the complaint did not come directly to me as a formal complaint; it went directly to the police.

The Police Commissioner indicated he would make an investigation. At that point in time that seemed to be appropriate, given that was where the complaint was lodged, and the ALP had said it preferred the Police Commissioner to investigate it. Many wheels were spinning at the time.

Even if a complaint had been lodged with me, complaints of that nature, which related to serious offences, would not really be investigated by me; I would usually refer them to the police.

I have run the last three Legislative Assembly elections. A complaint has gone to the police on each occasion – it is nothing new. The only thing that differed in this case was the formal complaint did not come to me on this occasion; it went directly to the police.

Ms LAWRIE: Post the incident and the police investigation commencing - the counts and the busy period is over - have you not conducted any inquiries into the complaints raised through the August 2012 election?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Naturally, we do assess everything that has gone on there. As you will appreciate, complaints are not new in an election environment, and most complaints are generated not so much by a problem with the process or even any shortcoming that we might have delivered, but because of the adversarial conduct of parties and candidates, and a great deal of history and bad chemistry exists out there in the cut and thrust of a campaign.

We take that all on board and, in my time as Electoral Commissioner, I have put forward some very detailed reports. I believe you will find, considering the resources of our department - it is a very small resource compared to my colleagues interstate - that we have put out very detailed reports and have not shirked any issues. We have used that report to actually identify, not only shortcomings in our own department or things we can improve on, but also the need for legislative change.

We will be doing a detailed report. The election reports themselves take some time to compile. The usual time frame is over a year, and the reason for that is because they are usually quite detailed.

The election itself incorporates non-voter's process, and many things happen after the event including police inquiries and things of that nature. We will certainly be addressing all those things in due course.

Ms LAWRIE: What happened at Yuendumu? I understand there was advice that the polling was going to occur at a certain place and time, and then there was advice that it was not, and then polling did occur. Are you able to shed any light on Yuendumu for me?

Mr SHEPHEARD: What happened at Yuendumu was, as people were aware, there were many issues at Yuendumu ...

Ms LAWRIE: Social unrest, would you say?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Social unrest would be a good way to describe it. Again, we acted at all times in response to police advice. It was recommended to us that we set up polling in two areas, which we did. Apparently, some disruption occurred during the course of the day, and one of the sites was actually moved - which is our prerogative - to a safer site. However, with many things happening at that election misreporting occurred quite frequently, and there were many things going on.

I say misreporting in the sense that there were suggestions the place was actually closed down, which it was not, it was just relocated. The reports I had on that, subsequent to the event, was that, yes, people still did come and vote at those locations later. There were no reports later that people were disenfranchised in any way, it was more of a response to the advice of the police and an issue for our polling officials.

I spoke to the mobile team leader after the event and, even though we did relocate, he suggested he would have been quite happy to have stayed there. He did not feel at all that they were in an unsafe position but, again, he acted on the advice of the police.

Ms LAWRIE: Commissioner, you have been provided with seven statutory declarations in relation to allegations that a member of your staff inside the Wadeye booth was directing people how to vote. Can you provide a copy of a report you conducted in this matter, and outline any action you have taken in relation to these allegations?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Those statutory declarations were provided to me as a copy. They were provided to the police and the police initiated an inquiry on that; so it would not have been prudent of me, particularly with the Nyirripi one because it was not raised with the police at the time it occurred. We obviously did make a few inquiries about what happened, and obtained some information on that.

Similarly, by the time those declarations were made – and I should point out those declarations were made well and truly after polling day - one of the critical elements of the representations made to me after polling day and during the course of counting was these things had occurred. As I said there was no hard evidence or no suggestion of anything at that stage and, regardless of some of the things we were discussing, anyone would need to have that information available rather than anecdotal information. By the time those statutory declarations were presumably put together, it was well and truly a police inquiry at that stage.

Of my own volition I contacted the Police Commissioner, and the person conducting the inquiry, to say there were things they may well want to see in regard to their investigation. I made available returns from the mobile team leaders, information from surveys we conducted of mobile team leaders in regard to general practice that we normally do in a post mortem of an election, in regard to some of the issues raised. I also provided them with all contacts and phone numbers of any person likely to be a witness.

We co-operated in every way on our own initiative. However, it is important to point out those statutory declarations were presented well and truly after the event.

Ms LAWRIE: Three weeks after is my understanding. Is that about right?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Could be right; and they were presented to the Police Commissioner for my information, is my recollection.

Ms LAWRIE: In the statutory declarations from Wadeye and Nyirripi the substance and direction of the complaint is that the Northern Territory Electoral Commission had paid translators inside the booth – and for people who do not have your knowledge of mobile polling - because English is a second language. So, on polling day for mobile polling you have NT Electoral Commission paid translators to assist with queries regarding polling inside the booth.

The allegations in the statutory declarations are those NTEC paid translators were advising people where to direct their votes, and they stated the names and the voting order of CLP candidates.

Mr GILES: This is nothing new to election processes. Labor has been making this allegation for many years. It seems you ...

Ms LAWRIE: There have never being allegations like this before.

Mr GILES: ... you are very intent on going back over past issues. You seem to forget the fact, or have not recognised the fact, that you did not win most seats and you are keen to keep going over old ground. If anyone wants to ask questions about the conduct of people in election campaigns in remote locations Labor should be looking at the way it does business. These allegations have being levelled at you for a long period of time without formal inquiries, investigations or complaints lodged.

The concerns many have witnessed over the years about the conduct of some Labor officials making statements that people's land will be stolen, their kids will be removed, they will be kicked out of their

houses if they do not vote Labor. The tricks used with language, the bribery with alcohol and all those allegations have been out there for many years. It is very interesting to see you complaining about two polling booths from a Territory election last year. You do not seem to be able to get over the fact that you did not win those seats.

This it is not about shooting the messenger, and I am not saying you are exactly doing this, but it is about you getting the message that you were not listening to people in the bush and they changed their vote. If anyone needs a review of practices out in the bush it is the Labor Party, who conducted these immoral exercises with voting for a very long period of time.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I do not want to take sides on this in anyway ...

Ms LAWRIE: Commissioner, can you answer my question?

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Commissioner is ...

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, I wanted to add I have being running elections in the Northern Territory since 1980 and it may well be true that this is the first time we have had formal complaints.

Ms LAWRIE: About paid staff inside the booths?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, it may well be. But I can say the fact of people taking one view of what is happening and someone else taking another view has been a consistent one.

Ms LAWRIE: Commissioner, can I just say that outside the booth ...

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition leader, you cannot interrupt. Opposition leader, do not interrupt the member.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I am talking about inside the booth, but there are plenty outside too, as you well know. However, in terms of interpreting, people sometimes get the impression that someone is telling them 'how' to vote rather than directing how to complete their ballot correctly. I am not taking sides on this and that is why the Police Commissioner is the right person to be looking into it.

In my three decades of conducting polls in the Northern Territory, I can say those issues have been raised time and time again. Perhaps they have not made their way to a formal complaint with statutory declarations, this first time it has been formalised, but it has always been an issue which is raised. In terms of the follow-up by people, I am not sure why, but it tends to drop off once the election is declared. However, there are avenues where people can use to pursue complaints, and I have no problem with the Police Commissioner doing it. I believe the ALP application to the Police Commissioner actually stated that they did not believe the Electoral Commission was the appropriate body to do it.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not talking about the police investigation. My question was specifically about the allegations around the NTEC paid interpreters: the systemic issue, the procedural issues and the process issues. To me, that is your purview, how the employees of the NTEC are appointed; how they operate in their job, how you follow-up any irregularities or complaints or concerns. You said you were compiling a report, and that is the nature of my questioning. Appropriately, the Police Commissioner will do an investigation, which is why, I daresay, the ALP took their formal complaints to the police. However, I am more interested in the NTEC.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Well, I will try to answer that question.

Ms LAWRIE: Were the specific complaints about Wadeye and Nyirripi similar in nature? That is, do they relate to claims that an NTEC translator, or interpreter, directed people to vote for the CLP and directed how to vote?

Mr GILES: Normally Labor is in control of all of that, but they lost control of that one.

Ms LAWRIE: As the Commissioner, what process would you want to follow to ensure you have as much control as possible when it comes to the appointment of NTEC staff and translators? Who is responsible for that in the lead-up to the election? How would you forensically review a post-election with the report you are going to do? Finally, what processes would you want to have in place to protect the strength of that arrangement?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I have to say one thing: in my earlier response I was talking about people who were acting in previous years, because they have been acting as interpreters within the polling place. I was not talking about people who have, necessarily, come along and acted as a friend or someone assisting someone to vote.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not talking about a friend or assistant.

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, I know you are not, and that is why I believe I need to make it clear that those allegations in past ...

Ms LAWRIE: They are frequent are they not?

Mr SHEPHEARD: They are frequent, and they are NTEC officials because they are on the payroll; they are recruited by us. In relation to your question, the whole task of recruiting Indigenous interpreters has been a real challenge over a long time. Sometimes it is very difficult to recruit people who are available for an extended period of time. In practice, we make efforts to try to recruit people; we have lists of people and we provide those to mobile team leaders. We try to maintain records in that regard. The problem is when we get to these places, even if you have made arrangements the day before, the people do not show up.

The obvious answer is to try to have people on your mobile teams who are not like that, but we have had a great deal of trouble with that in the past. We have gone to the interpreter service here in the past and tried to engage people to be part of a team, and those people have not shown up. When that occurs it throws a whole chain of things out, because a mobile team does not go to just one location; it goes to a series of locations. They need to perform as a team and they need to be available, and we need ensure training is conducted with those people, if we can.

In trying to address this very challenging situation, we have worked with councils and we try to do as much vetting as we can. There are two things I will mention about our mobile team leaders. One, is we make it clear to them that it is always a potential risk at these places where you have to recruit people on the spot that they are vetted as much as they can be in the circumstances. We do not want to get to a situation where we are not appointing anyone because we fear something like this ...

Ms LAWRIE: They are there on the spot, yes. And you have to look for conflict of interest, I would have thought?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, they are on the spot and people want to vote, and I would suggest it is far better that some official we have vetted in some way is assisting rather than someone else. Given that set of circumstances, we charge them with the responsibility of vetting.

This is sometimes not as strictly applied as I would like, but we do stress in training that the preferred model of assisting someone to vote is that the mobile team leader completes the ballot paper and you use the interpreter as an interpreter. That point is clearly made to those people who go out there and, generally speaking, that does occur.

As you and most people around this table would know, when you go to a mobile polling location you are usually confronted with a mass of people who all come altogether and you have to try to administer a polling location in the context of parties doing their best to persuade people to vote for them. There are many things going on and, perhaps, at times the mobile team does not strictly do what we suggest to them.

I should add, however, that our recommendation and the point we stress in terms of our preferred model, is it is not illegal to have someone helping someone else.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that is right, it is the preferred model; it is not a ...

Mr SHEPHEARD: Nor is it illegal to have someone we appoint there to help them either and we found that, in practice, that is a better thing to do. That is something we are stressing and we will continue to do so.

In terms of the compilation of names, we are running many elections at local government level and are making contacts in that way. We try to build up a pool of people we can appoint at any given major election. The difficulty is, again, we have to do so many things on the spot. We have to vet on the spot. We have to ask the right questions and ensure we are vigilant in that regard. There are problems because people are related to candidates, especially at local government level. So we use those practices we have

in place at local government level where they are even more helpful, in some respects, with relationships, and not so much in the sense of a political party.

In that last election, though, with the engagement of interpreters - shall we say - on location, one of the key things was the interpreter service provided people for certain locations. I was approached very late in the process by the interpreter service ...

Ms LAWRIE: The interpreter service approached you?

Mr SHEPHEARD: They approached me, that is correct.

Ms LAWRIE: Offering assistance in providing interpreters?

Mr SHEPHEARD: That is correct.

Ms LAWRIE: Who from the interpreter service approached you?

Mr SHEPHEARD: It was Bob Kendrick, I believe, initially. He was in charge of that area. It was initially raised in terms of: we believe we could be of service here. Everyone knows it is an issue.

Ms LAWRIE: That was a different process to previous elections where they said, 'We believe we can help out here, let us talk to the Electoral Commission'?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No. This possibly happened before, but it has not happened for a while. Certainly, for this election it did. My response to that was I have had experience with the AIS - I am not here to bag the AIS - I said we had issues I mentioned before; that we put all our eggs in one basket if we go down that track and someone does not show up. Experience in the past has been that it has been unreliable in places - can I say that? I said I was very cautious, particularly at that point in time. I have to say, as you pointed out before, we had a very busy year in 2012, and there were many things on the go, particularly ...

Ms LAWRIE: Local government elections?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Exactly. And ...

Ms LAWRIE: There was the potential for a Constitutional Convention election?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, they were all swirling around. The electoral environment seems to be one of quite a deal of uncertainty - can I say that? And it does impact on a small agency like us. With a very specialised agency, I cannot ...

Ms LAWRIE: You have limited numbers of staff.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes. The point is - and I do not want to make the Auditor-General's job sound any easier, because I am sure it is not - I cannot engage accountants off the street to help me, to support me.

Getting back to the case in question, I could probably say they were very keen to be involved. They said I should not place too much stock on past experiences, and that their services had been improved substantially, and they would thoroughly recommend it would be the right step to engage them.

They also said they would be prepared - and this is just an economical thing, and it would not be the thing I actually turn on - to provide these at no charge.

Ms LAWRIE: Waive the fee?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Waive the fee.

Ms LAWRIE: Attractive.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Faced with that, I took a cautious approach. I did not want to put all our eggs in one basket; I was conscious of the failings of the past on mobile teams. I put it to them that I would feel comfortable with their concept because we were having eight to six pollings - this is another move we made - in a number of major communities on the Saturday. So, I put it to them that I was happy and felt comfortable if we put that in their hands because I felt that ...

Ms LAWRIE: So, the static polling booths were a new element?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The static polling booth, yes, because it went 8 am to 6 pm on a Saturday. Based on the concept that one of the problems with mobile polling is you are invariably trying to hit a moving target. One strategy to address that would be any major centre, be it Wadeye, Maningrida, or any sizable place, if you had polling from 8 am to 6 pm someone has to be somewhere. That was the strategy and from my point of view, given the cost of the offer and given the ...

Ms LAWRIE: Logistics.

Mr McGUINNESS: ... a range of considerations, that we would be prepared to do that for those places only, not the mobiles themselves. That is how we progressed that. I was pretty late in the stage ...

Ms LAWRIE: How late in the stage, Commissioner? Was it months before, weeks before?

Mr McGUINNESS: Weeks, probably. Not months. The initial thing may have been raised a few months ...

Ms LAWRIE: An initial sounding out?

Mr McGUINNESS: Yes, an initial sounding out with the initial reaction I gave but, yes, probably a few weeks before the actual poll. The mobile polling, as you know, starts a couple of weeks before polling day, so when we say weeks before, it was a few weeks before that.

Madam CHAIR: Commissioner, I will interrupt you there. It is now just past 1 pm, so we will break for lunch and we will return at 2 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister and Commissioner for returning after the lunch break. We will now continue with agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies in relation to the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

Ms LAWRIE: My focus is on how we have a robust system with the normal tests of integrity and fairness in relation to the interpreters and, appreciating you have tried many ways over the years to build your own book of interpreters and, at different times, tapped into other services; and you provided that advice just weeks prior to the August election. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service of the NT government, through Rod Kendrick, who headed it, approached you and said, 'Free service, use this'. You decided to go with the new static booths. There were eight static booths?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I cannot recall. That could be correct. A couple more, I believe.

Ms LAWRIE: I guess what I am concerned about is the vetting process which you know, as Electoral Commissioner, is so crucially important. If it is processed more at arm's length, how do we keep scrutiny over the vetting process? For example, the Wadeye booth - Phyllis Mitchell was the Aboriginal Interpreter Service Manager for Wadeye responsible for hiring interpreters at the Wadeye booth, yet her husband was the CLP member for Millner, and now works very closely on the fifth floor of government. So, the issue of conflict of interest, vetting, and trying to have an arm's length relationship from people who are party political and active - I have a real concern about what occurred at Wadeye, and those concerns are spelled out in statutory declarations.

Do you have any knowledge of that arrangement whereby Phyllis Mitchell, the Aboriginal interpreter Service Manager at Wadeye, was in charge of selecting interpreters at Wadeye?

Mr SHEPHEARD: In respect of Phyllis Mitchell, I do not have in-depth knowledge of how that was arranged. You asked when that discussion occurred and we set things in concrete. Rod Kendrick and I had a discussion about this well before that; I cannot recall when because we had the local government election earlier in the year. So this did not necessarily emerge just prior to the Legislative Assembly election.

In regard to the AIS, we took a cautious approach because I had expressed those things to Bob Hendrick before, and in relation to outcomes for that election, in many respects it was a pretty good outcome.

We appointed about 20-odd, off the top of my head. I stand to be corrected, but we had a couple of no-shows and a couple that came in a bit late, but that was pretty good. We did surveys of mobile team leaders and OICs of polling places afterwards and even though their responses were mixed in what they preferred, local assistance or AIS, there was a pretty positive response to that.

In terms of the recruitment of those people, where it was outsourced, if you like, we did take steps between ourselves and AIS to ensure everyone was fully acquainted with the prerequisites of recruitment, and it was clearly outlined that the important thing from our agency's perspective is the people who are appointed are not seen to be politically active or perceived to be, because it could involve a relative or some close connection, and that type of thing. So, it is not just about being politically active, it is about the perception of political activity.

In regard to that issue, the AIS was quite diligent by working with us to put together a training program for their people. Of course, they recruited them on location in Maningrida, or wherever, so they did the downstream training, but our people running the polling place also did their vetting. In terms of their own instruction, two people working for them were involved in part of the instruction to people recruited as interpreters, and they were there to assist and take instructions from the OIC.

Moving forward, the NTEC has to learn lessons from everything we do, but I certainly agree this was a positive step in the right direction, even though people have raised some complaints which are still subject to an enquiry. Our post-election survey indicated there was mixed feelings about whether local assistants were preferable and whether recruiting on the ground was preferable to involving the AIS, or whatever.

In terms of other models, it is interesting to note that the AEC will be rolling out an entirely different model. They have gone into partnership with the former Centrelink, because they have a partnership with them to maintain the role, and they are recruiting their staff to operate as part of the mobile polling team. Therefore, we are constantly monitoring to find ways and means of how we can improve the process, but it is a very challenging issue ...

Ms LAWRIE: Commissioner, you had no knowledge that in outsourcing to the AIS that the AIS manager at Wadeye, Phyllis Mitchell, was hiring the interpreters for the Wadeye booth? Phyllis Mitchell, who is the wife of the former County Liberal Party member for Millner, and a close friend of the County Liberal Party candidate at the time, Gary Higgins. Did you have any knowledge of that?

Mr SHEPHEARD: At the time I, personally, did not have any knowledge of that, and her role was erased on polling day in the polling place, but she was never on the list. It was raised in terms of who was to be engaged and, of course, she was not on the list at all ...

Ms LAWRIE: But she hired and trained the interpreters ...

Mr SHEPHEARD: I came understand that later on. Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: So the person who hired and trained the interpreters at Wadeye was also the wife of the former Country Liberal Party for Millner, and the close friend of Gary Higgins, the candidate for the Wadeye booth.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I came to understand that to be the case after the event.

Mr GILES: It should be kept in mind that we do not judge people based on a range of characteristics, including political membership. We do not know, and I am sure no one in government knows, who is a member of what party, and I am sure there are plenty of people employed who have been members of the Labor Party; there is no vetting process around political preference.

If you have a significant concern about this issue and you believe there needs to be changes or reviews to the electoral act, I am happy to have a chat with you about that, because I understand the concerns you have. But there is no process for singling people out because they may have some association with someone in their family, or a friend, who may have a political, or even a previous political position.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Could I also just add to that ...

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, It is curious you say that, because I have just heard the Electoral Commissioner say, and I believe quite appropriately so, that when it comes to the operation of elections and

the employment of people in polling booths in positions that are important and sensitive, when it comes to that the Electoral Commission does have a process for vetting which does take into account the perception of the relationship between the potential employee and candidates.

For you to say that party political membership or association with a political party should not be taken into account for the employment of a person by the Northern Territory Electoral Commission to undertake their duties in a Northern Territory election, goes completely counter to what we just heard the independent Electoral Commissioner say. To anyone looking at it fairly, having listened to the Electoral Commissioner, what he said to me sounded completely appropriate in terms of having a vetting process which includes perceptions in that process.

Clearly, there are serious issues with Phyllis Mitchell, the wife of the former CLP member for Millner and close friends with the CLP candidate for Daly, Gary Higgins, having the Aboriginal Interpreter Service Manager role at Wadeye and being in charge of appointing the interpreters at Wadeye and training them on what they can and cannot do in the context of an election. We have seven statutory declarations from people who understand language, who speak language say that the NTEC interpreters at the Wadeye booth were saying, and I quote:

Vote 1 for Gary Higgins.

That is a very serious situation ...

Mr GILES: You should look in your own back yard, Leader of the Opposition, because this happens with Labor all the time. ...

Ms LAWRIE: Of course, the Electoral Commission should ensure it has all the processes it can to make sure there is no conflict of interest inside the booth ...

Mr GILES: ... this is a key Labor tactic; it is what Labor does relentlessly and has happened for years. Labor has made sure it has continued to get into the middle of election booths, it continues to breach electoral rules, it continues to mislead people, particularly in a moral position ...

Ms LAWRIE: Show me a single statutory declaration, Chief Minister. Show me a single formal investigation.

Mr GILES: ... bribing, cajoling and convincing Aboriginal people to vote a particular way ...

Ms LAWRIE: Rubbish!

Mr GILES: ... saying things such as, 'You will lose your land if you vote for these people. Your children will be taken away. You will be kicked out of your home' ...

Ms LAWRIE: If you want this to turn into simply ...

Mr GILES: ... bribing people with alcohol. This is the Labor strategy ...

Ms LAWRIE: Bribing people with alcohol? Your party promised people on the Tiwi Islands, 'Vote for us and you will get full strength grog back' ...

Mr GILES: ... these are the people who, for years and years, have followed this process.

Madam Chair, I ask that I have the floor.

Ms LAWRIE: Your party in Nguui, I have heard, were handing out \$50 notes ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... one-hundred-and-fifty at Nguui ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, Standing Order 51, no interruption of a member.

Mr GILES: I was saying, Madam Chair, these are Labor tactics that have been operating for years, and during the last election ...

Ms LAWRIE: That is absolutely rubbish.

Mr GILES: During the last election campaign you were still running around using these tactics, and you will use them again this federal election. We all know that. Just because the Country Liberal Party ...

Ms LAWRIE: You sit there and you make it up because you are as guilty as sin.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, please do not interrupt the member.

Mr GILES: You carry on like you have clean hands and have never been involved in any grubby tactics from the Labor Party point of view ...

Ms LAWRIE: Absolutely clean.

Mr GILES: ... and have never done anything. I can tell you from being at bush elections and my colleagues here have seen this happen for years and years, what Labor does out there, and Labor will do it again this election.

Ms LAWRIE: Rubbish.

Mr GILES: I will put this offer again. If you seriously want to see how elections are run in the bush, I am more than happy to look at it and try to clean up the system; find if it has been operating in the past, or not, as the case may be. Everyone in the bush knows how this really operates whether there are statutory declarations full of complaints, police investigations, or anything. I am more than happy to lead a change in this area because I believe people have a democratic right to have a proper vote. If you want to assist in democracy and cleaning up the process, let us work together to make it happen.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, I would appreciate a review like that, but would you consider in that review something similar to South Australia where people cannot come within 1km or 500 metres of a polling booth? That area is free of people who are handing out how to vote cards - it is a politically free zone.

Some of the issues have been raised, not only today but in parliament that if we had an area around the polling booth that was free of political argy bargy I believe the public would prefer it instead of having to walk through a great mass of posters and how-to-vote cards with people arguing and all of that sort of thing. Some people say that is the colour of the election, but I believe many people would prefer not to be hassled as they go to vote.

Mr GILES: Before I answer your question, member for Nelson, do you agree there have been allegations, innuendo and hearsay for a long period of time about the comments I just made?

Mr WOOD: I agree. I have been around for a long time.

Mr GILES: I am happy to have a chat with you to work out how we can try to clean up some of these processes, particularly as they occur in remote locations.

Mr WOOD: And in general, because it does occur in suburban ...

Mr GILES: Let us try to do it as a two-stage approach, and start with remote areas as the first part, then we look from there on.

Mr WOOD: The reason I also raised it for suburban areas is because what concerned me was the polling booth at Kormilda where three members of the CLP, two of them members of parliament - one federal, one Territory - as people walked in they pulled out my election how-to-vote cards and said to the people, 'If you vote for that man, you vote for Labor'.

You might say that is freedom of expression, but I am saying if you were able to instigate this politically free zone where we were free of those things people would be a lot happier, and the voting system would be much fairer.

Mr GILES: Sorry, no one said anything for the last 15 minutes; my microphone was off.

I am more than happy to put this to the party room, and we will consider having a look at this.

Mr WOOD: Okay, a review would be good.

Madam CHAIR: I have not introduced the committee for the purpose of *Hansard*. I apologise. We have Gerry McCarthy, member for Barkly; Delia Lawrie, member for Karama; Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem; Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu, member for Arafura; Gerry Wood, member for Nelson, and me.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, on that invitation; when you put a series of electoral reforms to your party room, I will be more than happy to meet with you and sit down and discuss any electoral reforms. What I have raised this morning, I have clearly drawn a distinction between behaviour inside the booth and outside the booth.

Major political parties will take issue with each other all the time, every election, with behaviour outside the booth. You have just heard the Independent member for Nelson take issue with behaviour of the CLP outside the booth. I do not believe anyone involved in electioneering is overly thrilled with either party's behaviour outside the booth. I had to draw attention to a weird model the CLP had outside my booth ...

Mr GILES: A weird model, can you describe it, member for Karama?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I am happy to sit there with that.

Mr GILES: I have not seen it, so I do not know what you are talking about.

Ms LAWRIE: Regardless, I know allegations fly thick and fast - and I made that clear in my comments to the Electoral Commissioner ...

Mr GILES: And you are making them here today about a person who is not able to defend themselves on the floor.

Ms LAWRIE: I will draw the distinction between unsubstantiated allegations outside the booth between the major political parties and, indeed, the Independent, and behaviour inside the booth - that is allegations of behaviour by NT Electoral Commission staff - in this case translators who were trained by Phyllis Mitchell, the wife of a former CLP member for parliament in the Territory, who also happens to be very close friends with Gary Higgins, the CLP candidate for Daly, at the Wadeye booth.

There is a big distinction between inside the booth and the protections and the vetting we need to put in place and have integrity around to ensure every Territorian who walks inside a booth can vote without being directed how to vote by a paid member of the Northern Territory Electoral Commission.

They are the allegations and they are the subject of the investigation by the police. There are seven statutory declarations from Wadeye. One from ...

Mr GILES: This is a watershed moment for the Northern Territory, Madam Chair. Aside from the fact we have unsubstantiated allegations while there is an investigation under way about a lady who is not here to defend herself, anyone who knows how elections operate in remote areas in the Northern Territory knows it is not good enough.

Anyone outside of the Northern Territory who thinks Northern Territory remote elections operate the same way as they might in the inner city Sydney or Melbourne would need to see it to believe it.

What we have here today is an opportunity to put together an investigative model and an alternative approach in working with my party room, with the Leader of the Opposition's party room, and with the Independent member for Nelson - him and his chickens - to work out how we can make improvements in remote polling in the Northern Territory.

This will not be an easy process, or a short process, but it is an opportunity for us to move ahead to try to clean up the act of democracy, particularly in remote areas of the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD: Opposition Leader, can I just ask the Electoral Commissioner a question on your concern? My understanding is you cannot work in a polling booth without filling out a form, is that correct? In that form, if you have any connection with a political party you do not even get a look in the door, is that correct?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, that is normal practice. Bearing in mind everything that has been said here, there are mechanisms we put in place - the OIC of the polling place would not just rely on the IAS to train these people. They would reinforce and vet themselves on hand.

Mr WOOD: Would the people in those polling booths have had to fill out a form and sign it?

Mr SHEPHEARD: They should have filled out a form.

Mr WOOD: But did they ? We should have a copy of the form from everyone who worked in those things.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I believe on this occasion a form was not filled out, but the vetting was done verbally.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but that is not the rules, is it?

Mr SHEPHEARD: There is no rule associated with it per se, but that is normal practice, yes.

Mr WOOD: Then that is part of our investigation.

Ms LAWRIE: Normal practice was not followed.

Mr WOOD: I could never be in a polling booth because I am connected with government.

Ms LAWRIE: Unless you are a scrutineer.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Scrutineers have to be appointed. Ordinarily ...

Ms LAWRIE: We are talking about the employed staff, and there is a distinction.

Mr WOOD: The people who sign your name off and the people who check to ensure you put the ballot in the right box, and all that.

Mr GILES: I believe we have reached a point of clarity for the purposes of this.

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: The member for Barkly has several questions as well.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I would like to say a couple of things. We do have that vetting process - even what happened in August - people in charge of the booth would not rely on the AIS, they would reinforce the message to make their own enquiries as to whether a person is suitable in terms of that issue.

Ms LAWRIE: I would have thought that would be the subject of an investigation by you and the report you are doing into the election in regard to the allegations raised about Wadey, Commissioner. I thought you would cross and double cross check what was and was not followed in procedures and the OIC.

Mr SHEPHEARD: What I am saying is the mechanism was not totally reliant on IAS to train the people; that is the point I am trying to make. In fact, we still had our people doing that vetting on the ground, and we still had them doing training on the ground. The other thing is, if there were any objections raised in the polling place - we provided them all with satellite phones and that type of thing - they were charged with the responsibility of ringing us and we would resolve any issues like that.

The point I am trying to make is we do not just rely on outsourcing to someone and that is it. In many respects those mechanisms put in place are no different to what we do when we go out to a smaller location with no IAS. We are still doing the same things we would do in a smaller location.

Ms LEE: Commissioner, federal senators are allowed to walk into the voting booths and watch the whole process. Are they allowed to support the scrutineering?

Mr SHEPHEARD: A scrutineer can. We do not see much of it in urban areas because people who are working for candidates are usually outside handing out how-to-vote material and see that as more productive. However, they can have people in the polling place. In remote locations that is often not the

case. In fact, people like to have people inside the booths and you see that more often than not. That is the reason we possibly do get issues, because people see things in different ways.

The other thing is, probably in the remote setting scrutineers will perceive themselves as having more of a role. Because we have a higher level of assisted voters coming in, if a person wanting assistance comes into the polling booth they can present themselves with a friend who can help them fill out their ballot paper. If that is the case, they just go to the polling screen and vote and no one observes that.

Also, if somebody comes in requiring assistance they can ask the polling official to help. When a polling official assists a person to vote, scrutineers can watch what they are doing. This is another element. The system allows for people to go – it is not so much arguing it is not a secret vote when I need assistance and ask a polling official to help me. The polling official is filling it in and an interpreter could be present because they are needed. That is three people, and I could also have a person from each party observing. That is often the case, and has been the subject of complaints along the lines the Leader of the Opposition mentioned earlier. This is why I do not like to take sides, but this has been happening for a long time. People have been observing the practice of people marking a ballot paper, dealing in language, and assisting. This did not just happen in this election. This has been happening for as long as I can remember. The genesis of those are not so much a formal complaint, but have come from scrutineers who have the capacity to witness what is happening and have different points of view. One of the problems is it often comes down to, 'Do people understand what is happening?' When you try to explain to someone how to fill out a ballot as opposed to, 'Fill it out this way', sometimes it is difficult to discern the difference. This is where much of the trouble starts. That does not mean there are not issues to be explored. This has been a long-standing issue and the answer would be to employ full-time electoral officials, but that it is very difficult to achieve and people have been trying to do it for a long time.

Ms LEE: Obviously there is no policy for senators to not be involved in the NT elections?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, the only thing is candidates themselves have the limit of the parameters of the polling place and cannot be closely involved, but their wife could be. A senator would be in a federal seat and not involved in an NT election. In fact ...

Ms LEE: No, is a senator allowed to be involved during the election, either through scrutineering or being the observer and handing out how to vote cards?

Mr SHEPHEARD: They can do that if it is a Legislative Assembly election because it is not their election. Even the wife of a candidate can do those things in an election. What is unique in the Northern Territory -and sometimes has led to complaints - is members of parliament are at the polling booth with the candidates.

In the forthcoming federal election there will be about 60 000 people in Solomon and 60 000 in Lingiari. When you go to your local booth it is unlikely you will see the candidates, but in the recent Wanguri by-election all the candidates and prominent people were there. That is the unique factor. We not only see the faces of politicians and party members within their own jurisdiction, but also senators and anyone else someone wants to fly in to help. That is why, as the member for Nelson mentioned, at elections people have to run the gauntlet. I have had some unbelievable experiences at by-elections because the parties have thrown all their resources at it. For example, at the Wanguri by-election I had to get people to take down their signs because they were told not to put them up until all the children had left the school.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, the timing at schools has been a big issue.

Mr SHEPHEARD: An election in the Northern Territory is so intense; everybody is pushing the envelope as far as they can. When you take an election into a remote setting and inject a high Indigenous component also dealing with language issues, it is very complex and difficult to manage. When we talk about people who vote at federal elections, a few votes here and there probably will not make a difference, but it makes a hell of a difference when you have 4000 or 5000 people on the roll. That is why votes are so intensely sought and why the chemistry is what it is. That is why you need to do the best you can within that context.

We have had some valuable moves in legislation. We have moved to fixed elections which allows people more right to vote, in a sense, because we can be more prepared for it and people know it is happening. We are still dealing with a 19-day election period, which is no problem in a fixed election. Things are changing and we are seeing an increased intensity in those elections because with fixed polling the politicians' parties are out there well and truly before the balloon goes up. We are having those issues ...

Ms LAWRIE: Commissioner, in relation to ...

Madam CHAIR: Sorry, Opposition Leader, you do not have the call.

If you have finished your comments, Commissioner, I have given extreme latitude on relevance to what we are talking about. It should be the 2013-14 budget.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I am getting used to it.

Madam CHAIR: I note it is 2.30 pm. We have spent half an hour talking about how elections in the Northern Territory have been since time immemorial. I have allowed latitude with the naming of people and all types things. Your latitude has now expired. We should move right along.

Ms LAWRIE: I have indicated the member for Barkly has some questions.

Madam CHAIR: As long as they are not on this same repetitive line of irrelevant questioning, member for Barkly, then go for it.

Mr McCARTHY: Commissioner, do staff of the NT Electoral Commission undergo cross-cultural awareness training?

Mr SHEPHEARD: They have in the past; I do not believe we have provided any recently. We have a very small core group – I am talking about permanent staff – who have been running elections and involved in local government elections and fieldwork so they have picked up quite a bit. I believe it is an initiative of this government to ensure we have a focus on cross-cultural training, and we will probably look at that as well, especially for new staff. We have a few new staff and will be looking at that because about 30% of voters are Indigenous. We have already spent a great deal of time outlining the difficulties in providing a service in that area.

Mr McCARTHY: From memory, was Aboriginal cultural awareness part of the cross-cultural training in the NT Electoral Commission?

Mr SHEPHEARD: It probably happened a long time ago, to be honest. It would have been some form of cross-cultural training as we know it in the broad range of cross-cultural training.

Mr McCARTHY: The public sector has experienced advantages from using that as a strategy, and I can quote from teachers, for instance, over decades. It is a good strategy.

I will go to the staff I have met over three decades doing mobile polling in remote areas who have come from south. Some I have met a second time around. They always provide anecdotes about their visit to the Territory to do mobile polling in remote Aboriginal communities. Do they undergo any cross-cultural awareness training?

Mr GILES: Before you jump in there, Commissioner, can I ask for a ruling, Chair, if this is in relation to the budget and the bill we are here to debate?

Ms LAWRIE: It is in relation to the operation ...

Mr GILES: I am keen to ensure we are debating estimates in relation to legislation rather than policy points. It might be a good question, but I do not know if it is suitable for estimates.

Madam CHAIR: Yes. I was about to say, member for Barkly, I believe all these issues will be picked up by the review.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, if I can be allowed to continue, it is about appropriation and the budget estimates ...

Madam CHAIR: Your question is whether or not cultural training happened for people from interstate who assisted on the campaign. That should be a yes or no answer, Commissioner.

Ms LAWRIE: Gaggling?

Madam CHAIR: No, I am bringing us to the point ...

Ms LAWRIE interjecting.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, I do not need your assistance to run this. If you would like to sit here I suggest you take that up with your colleagues.

Commissioner, would you answer the member for Barkly's question?

Mr GILES: I will jump in there. It is in relation to whether or not there was cross-cultural funding in the current budget or in the budget for 2013-14.

Mr SHEPHEARD: We have put, as one of our highlights, \$50 000 for an electoral-specific development program of permanent key casual staff. Especially with our experience of 2012, and the initiative of the current government to make all agencies focus on this a bit more, it will become part of that most certainly for new people.

If I could quickly say, we get people from interstate - experienced electoral practitioners. It is a balance of many things. We spend time with them trying to give them an insight into how they deal with the issues of providing a process in the field. It is always a balance because you need independent people who are good, strong electoral practitioners to deal with the matters they face.

We have people coming back to us saying it is like a war zone out there. There are plenty of stories going around which have been going around for over 30 years. Cross-cultural training by all means. When we undertake training with anybody who comes from outside, we have a sharp focus on the cultural aspects that will affect them in their service delivery - and not the broader one because they come for a limited time, but for our permanent staff it is incumbent upon us to ensure everybody has suitable training in that regard.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Commissioner. The Chief Minister has alluded to the fact budget appropriation will now be targeted at cross-cultural awareness training. I will go to another areas of training ...

Mr GILES: I did not say that, member for Barkly. I said we are here to debate estimates, which is about legislation which is about the budget bill. All questions will be about that, and only answered on that. We will not be answering policy questions ...

Ms LAWRIE: We always talk policy.

Mr GILES: We will not be answering policy questions unless it is relevant to the bill. We will not be getting into hypotheticals, imputations, or any other example of questions. We will not be answering that unless it is in relation to the bill. That is all I am saying.

Ms LAWRIE: On that point, Chief Minister, the budget appropriation talks about the KPIs and the operation of each of the statutory positions.

Mr GILES: I am making it clear how things will be operating with my answers. Under my portfolios I will not be debating issues about policy and will not be answering policy questions. If it is in relation to the bill ...

Ms LAWRIE: Every minister does.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair!

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader!

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, can I make a request? I have come here in good faith to answer questions in relation to this bill. I do not expect to be interrupted by the most irrelevant politician in Australia. If we can have questions in relation to estimates in the bill, I am happy to undertake answering those, and I am happy to offer my advisors, staff, or commissioners to answer those questions. If they are not in relation to the estimates and the legislation we are here to debate, we will not be taking them.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Madam Chair! In relation to the Chief Minister's spirit of goodwill, I ask him to withdraw that slur on the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms LAWRIE: You talk about people withdrawing stuff all the time, Madam Chair. If you show a little balance that would be great but, if not, so be it.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, I was about to ask the Chief Minister to withdraw but you were mumbling so I was waiting for you to finish. Chief Minister, you would please withdraw.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I am happy to withdraw.

Ms LAWRIE: I do not believe I was mumbling. I was pointing out ...

Madam CHAIR: I want to draw everyone's attention to Standing Order 112, and that there are very long statements being made as opposed to questions. Member for Barkly, if you have succinct questions to ask, which is what is mandated by the standing orders, please direct them to the Commissioner.

Mr McCARTHY: Commissioner, is orientation training conducted for electoral staff who come from the south and go into remote areas?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, we have extensive – well, extensive in bringing somebody up here. We usually train our mobile people for almost a day - it could be more - where we go through the processes, some of the issues they will face out there, and that type of thing. We also get them all in as a team. It is not just the OICs, it is everybody.

The advent of the fixed election, in theory, should give more preparation time for an election. Unfortunately, as mentioned before, 2012 did not quite work out that way. We had the local government election in March, the Constitutional Convention statehood election floating around and changes were coming and going in that regard. Much legislation was being run through the parliament in late 2011.

Next time we will try to recruit more local people with suitable skills because there is reliance in the electoral field to fall back on people who have done it before. We can have some improvement in that regard. We are also dealing with an ageing population in the people we are using so I am also conscious of that.

With a fixed election people can plan for things, and perhaps people we would not have been able to target before, nor tap into, can take two weeks off work and that type of thing. People who might be more acquainted with some of the issues we have been discussing, and some of the challenges of dealing with Indigenous and the remote context - dealing with an approach, as an accountant might have, dotting 'i's and crossing 't's – all those types of things. With a fixed election we can do that. We tried to roll out, amongst everything else we are doing, a small band of 12 people. We tried to do some training and did it this time. We did some training well before people went out or even went into the polling booth.

In other words, because we knew when the election date was we could have some training. We will take an attrition rate so when they come back - we will do it in two lots rather than get them all over in a week, give them all this stuff and out they go.

There have been moves along those lines. However, it has been a very challenging environment with a very small agency resource. The concepts are there, the initiatives are there, and we will certainly benefit from the experience of our first fixed election.

Many things occurred in late 2011 which robbed the Electoral Commission of planning time. When 2016 comes around I am hopeful, and would expect, some of those ideas and things we just dipped our toe in the water about will come to fruition and we will improve in so many different aspects of electoral practice in this jurisdiction.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Commissioner, orienteering in respect to training is very important.

In the 2012 election an electoral mobile team set up in the wrong location. In our part of the world we would call it bushed. They set up at the station at Neutral Junction when they were supposed to set up at the community of Tara. Nobody complained, we rolled with the punches and it ended up okay. However, that was where a team made up from people outside the Territory was bushed. They ended up in the wrong location, set up in the wrong location, and local people had to advise them they were in the wrong location.

So, cross-cultural awareness, orienteering, and orientation are all good.

Madam CHAIR: Is this a statement, member for Barkly? I cannot hear a question.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I refer to Budget Paper No 3, Strategic Issues for 2014, page 17 ...

Madam CHIAR: That is the first budget item I have heard.

Mr McCARTHY: ... evaluating and expanding the electoral education program. I go back in my involvement with mobile polling long before these members were born and we had electoral education. Teams went around delivering electoral education. Commissioner, you probably remember them.

Mr SHEPHEARD: I was one of them in 1980.

Mr McCARTHY: That is when I started my political activity in the Northern Territory. It is interesting to hear the Chief Minister slur people like myself who got Aboriginal people to exercise their right to vote. When I became politically active in the Northern Territory, Commissioner, the vast majority of Aboriginal people in the Barkly were not voting. We can go into the reasons why, but that is not for this forum. In assisting Aboriginal people to vote, we had electoral education teams. It was really sad to lose them because you can look at the review, Chief Minister, about regulating everything – I would like to be part of that review – rather than look at regulating look at education and awareness because that approach worked in the Barkly. I know the Chief Minister is disappointed to see me because he mentioned in the House the ‘cat is back’ ...

Mr GILES: Tongue in cheek.

Mr McCARTHY: You were serious, Chief Minister.

Madam CHAIR: Is the question coming, member for Barkly?

Mr McCARTHY: We have a very powerful tool to educate people. It is the reason I am sitting here today, and something that is mentioned in the budget paper. Commissioner, I would like your comment on that and re-establishing the education team in the Northern Territory.

Mr SHEPHEARD: The education field workers you speak of were federal, not NT public servants.

Mr McCARTHY: That is right.

Mr SHEPHEARD: It was program expenditure by the Australian Electoral Commission.

Mr McCARTHY: We were all Commonwealth public servants in those days.

Mr SHEPHEARD: It operated from the very late 1970s though to the late 1990s and then was suspended. It has started again and has been going for about three or four years. There are about five people in the Northern Territory and I presume they have a sharp education focus, particularly targeting Indigenous people. In the past, prior to having a Commission, the Electoral Office did not have much involvement with education at all. Since the creation of the Electoral Commission we are heavily involved with the Parliamentary Education Services, but it is mainly focused on schools in the urban areas. We are putting between 3500 and 4000 people a year through an in-house training program on three levels of governance and basics about voting.

For a small resourced office we are doing a fair bit, but we would like to expand that into community groups and a whole range of other target areas. We will try to do that if we have the benefit of less big elections on the horizon.

Mr McCARTHY: In maximising efficiencies, does the Northern Territory Electoral Commission have any multimedia products? Do you have a DVD or education tools which can be operated in the bush?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The Australian Electoral Commission has a few things in that line but they have a Commonwealth focus. We are not hesitant to use their resources or anything from another state. We put forward our own presentation, which has been very good and well-received but just talks about the three levels of government, how to vote, and is supplemented with a mock election.

The next area we want to develop is the remote areas. No one can come to town all the time, but we can do things through the Internet. We can look at downstream training, providing packaging and using websites far more productively than we do now. That would be the next phase of where we go with elections within our resources.

Mr McCARTHY: Are you familiar with the static boards that have a recording?

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes.

Mr McCARTHY: Can that be run in Aboriginal languages?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We trialled one of those. We were the first ones to trial talking boards in one of our elections. It received a mixed reaction. We have dabbled with all those things. In the end, it is about getting bang for your buck. We will try to keep ticking away at what is perceived as an area which needs help.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, you seem to have many good ideas to assist the Electoral Commission. They might be better placed in the Chief Minister's review, which the opposition is involved in. I am conscious you are asking the Commissioner more about whether he agrees if it is a good idea or whether it has happened before as opposed to whether it is allocated in the budget. You can either streamline your line of questioning or provide your ideas during the review period.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, do you want me to finish? Is that what you are saying?

Madam CHAIR: No, if you have a question for the Commissioner such as, 'In the 2013 budget have you allocated money for cross-cultural training', then ask it. If you have ideas about billboards and things like that, they may be better placed in the review conversation.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you for that advice, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: You are always kind enough in the Chamber to give me plenty of yours. I thought it would only be the right thing to give you some back.

Ms LAWRIE: That was his last question anyway, Madam Chair. Thanks for the lecture.

Madam CHAIR: That is great, thank you. The committee will now proceed ...

Mr WOOD: Excuse me.

Madam CHAIR: Sorry, member for Nelson, in all of the excitement I nearly forgot about you. Please heed my earlier comments.

Mr WOOD: Excitement might not be the word. Most of my questions relate to the budget. In relation to mobile polling booths at Robertson Barracks, Mr Shepheard, that is the first time it has been done for a long time. Will you evaluate whether it was a success or not? Having been there I do not believe it worked because you had every other electorate there as well. When you are doing your evaluation do you look at the operation of mobile polling booths? This is probably rare because it is about the Darwin metropolitan area.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes. Anything we perceive as deserving analysis will be in the report we produce. The other thing about Robertson Barracks is we have had many representations about having polling there, and everything else. If we do it people are unhappy and if we do not they are unhappy.

Mr WOOD: You had every electorate there, and the queue was probably close to 100 m.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes, I understand the situation. There are other aspects, as you are well aware. Our potential to go onto the barracks is dependent upon support from the authorities and that is not always forthcoming. It depends on the circumstances.

Mr WOOD: Why is there such a low turnout at Legislative Assembly elections? Have you done an analysis?

Mr SHEPHEARD: One of the problems with turnout figures is everybody works a turnout figure on people on the roll compared to people who vote. What makes that not so instructive is the raw turnout figure is highly dependent - there are a number of issues, but a really big one is the quality of the roll.

Mr WOOD: What would be the lowest percentage turnout in the last election in a Northern Territory electorate?

Mr SHEPHEARD: If you went back on historical records you would find there is almost a flat line from the 1980s of about 80%. We dipped at the 2008 event.

Mr WOOD: No, the last election.

Mr SHEPHEARD: At the 2008 event it dipped to about 75%, and then went up to 77%. One of the key reasons, which the Australian Electoral Commission has been saying for a long time, is a deteriorating roll. There are 1.4 million people not on the roll - 10% of the eligible population. It is estimated 20% are not on the roll in the Northern Territory. When you consider that is just people who are not on the roll, people who are on the roll incorrectly would blow that out further.

Mr WOOD: Did any electorates have a turnout of less than 60%?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I would have to take that one up. It would be down there.

Mr WOOD: Have you looked at the reasons why it is so low?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We always ask that but, invariably, the quality of the roll comes up as the big issue.

Mr WOOD: In what sense?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We generally find the lower turnouts are in remote areas.

Mr WOOD: Is that because people do not turn up?

Mr SHEPHEARD: No, anecdotally that is not the case. What is continually being reported is everybody who is there is voting, in general terms, which points to a quality of the roll issue. Historically, it has not varied a lot over a long period of time.

Mr WOOD: Did you not spend time about two years ago going into communities to get people on the roll? Was there a big move?

Mr SHEPHEARD: There has been a big move every election. As I said, the AEC has been funded with millions of dollars to do it over the last few years with their remote Indigenous education project, which is involved with that type of thing.

We had a project ourselves because of the quality of the roll before our two major elections in 2012. We recognised there would be a big dip.

Mr WOOD: I need to get this clear. I do not have the figures in front of me but some of those percentages are quite low. If 60% of the people on the roll have voted, and an election might be a 50:50 election, one party gets in by 51% to 49%. That means they have won the election with just over 30% of the total people enrolled.

I am not saying that makes the election invalid. However, a relevantly small proportion of people on the roll have voted. Do you believe there needs to be a big effort to lift those very low seats up to at least - the average is probably 77%, including those below 60%. The democratic process is not going to work; you might as well have voluntary voting at that rate.

Mr SHEPHEARD: What I suggest, member for Nelson, is you will always be supported by me trying to get people to vote and get those percentages up. However, you have to realise the actual percentages are not so instructive sometimes, and the remote roll is much worse than the urban role. And ...

Mr WOOD: You know the problems I have with Robertson Barracks.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Yes. It is probably relevant to say the problem with the quality of the roll - one of the reasons it has deteriorated so much over the last few years is because the methodology to update the roll was to send letters. The AEC would send letters to people and they continued getting a very poor response.

They are now moving to a new model where people will be automatically enrolled in response to information received from reliable departments and sources. Letters will be sent to people which allow them to opt out if it is wrong.

It only commenced this year, and we will have a watching brief on it. The reflex is to suggest it must improve the roll because it was targeting people in the younger age group who are very hard to get to enrol because they are getting driver's licences and those things.

However, on the flip side, it will be interesting to monitor. This is probably a role for our commission because, in a sense, we cannot control the roll. Anyone who is a Commonwealth elector is a Territory elector is a local government elector. If the Commonwealth keeps someone on the roll, they are on our rolls as well.

Mr GILES: All you have done is highlight a problem, member for Nelson, and that is something we are looking at.

Mr WOOD: What was the turnout in the last municipal elections? What average percentage did you have?

Mr GILES: Before you answer that, Commissioner, is the information available publically?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The information is available publically. We have turnout figures on our website and it will all be aggregated and in our report which will be ...

Mr WOOD: Obviously, most questions we have ...

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, you have just asked for information which is publicly available. I cannot see how it is related to the budget.

Mr WOOD: The issue of the budget being accrual accounting based is when you look at the outcomes - you spend much money on the Electoral Commission and, if people are not turning up to vote, it is my job to find out why and what could be done to improve it. This is what the Electoral Commission does.

Mr GILES: That is right, but it is not the questioning of how you can make improvements to the electoral system through the budget process. That is to identify how money is and has been spent not asking questions about voter turnout when it is publically available on the NT website.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, that is not correct. The reason we have estimates is to look at input, output and outcome. You put umpteen million dollars into the Electoral Commission. Out of that comes a vote at an election, and the outcome is not many people voted. It is my job at the Estimates Committee to find out the failings in the electoral system when we have spent millions and people do not vote? That is the basis of an accrual accounting budget, and that is what this Estimates Committee is about.

Mr GILES: I understand the basis of budgeting and accrual accounting, member for Nelson. I also understand the purpose of this is to find out where we are spending the money and where we have spent our money. If there is an issue about policy, how to rectify things, or issues or concerns you have, there are mechanisms in place such as asking questions in parliament, bringing it up during debate, bringing it up at committee ...

Ms LAWRIE: Page 17, Strategic Issues, says evaluating services.

Mr GILES: There are ways in which you can bring these up. Talking about voter turnout or publicly available information ...

Ms LAWRIE: It is on page 17, Chief Minister, evaluating services.

Mr GILES: ... should be areas where you look at it.

Mr WOOD: It is here.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, do you feel your question was answered? I thought the Commissioner answered it.

Mr WOOD: The budget says 77% turn out for a Legislative Assembly election. However, the issue I am dealing with is the Electoral Commission also runs local government elections as part of its budget. I am asking the Electoral Commissioner what is the percentage turnout there. We have a percentage turnout for Territory elections. If we are getting such poor turnout how are we going to turn it around? We spent \$5m last year. Value for money means more people vote; that is where you see it.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, if the Commissioner does not have an answer for local government perhaps that could be taken on notice.

Mr WOOD: If he could give me a general answer. Is the average voter turnout for local government fairly low?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The turnout for the local government election, as with the LA election, was slightly improved on last performances. In regard to the local government election, I stand to be corrected, but I believe it was around the 70-odd mark.

Mr WOOD: The other issue of concern is the number of council by-elections. This year how many council by-elections have we had and what was the reason for so many?

Mr SHEPHEARD: I am not sure of the number, but since 2008 we have been running, on average, one a month.

Mr GILES: That is partly because of the poor design of the *Local Government Act* as it impacts on shire councils. I am happy to continue the answer, member for Nelson. The review the minister for Local Government is undertaking will look at how that can be improved so the Electoral Commission is not continually running by-elections.

Mr WOOD: I am unsure that is the reason.

Electoral Commissioner, what feedback do you have as to why people are resigning from local government?

Mr GILES: Is this in relation to the budget, member for Nelson? I cannot see a budget line item about this.

Mr WOOD: Yes, of course there is.

Mr GILES: You have asked for the personal opinion of the Electoral Commissioner as to why people are resigning.

Mr WOOD: No, no.

Mr GILES: They were your words. I cannot understand how that comes into the budget.

Mr WOOD: I have to ask the Electoral Commissioner a question, and the question relates to the reason we are having so many council by-elections. That is a scientific question. Are they leaving because they have left town, they are sick of working for the council, or they have changed their job. What ...

Mr SHEPHEARD: I could not answer that because I am only an administrator. It is probably more for LGANT or something like that.

Mr GILES: It is a question for Local Government.

Mr SHEPHEARD: Department of Local Government.

Mr WOOD: My questions in relation to polling booths and mobile polling booths have been covered. Electoral Commissioner, you moved in late 2011? What cost was involved in that move?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The initial appropriation was \$700 000, but it was a bit more by the time we settled in. It was in that vicinity.

Mr WOOD: Is there a budget allocation anywhere for that?

Mr SHEPHEARD: We have been there for some time.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but we have to deal with the previous annual report which is the only one – because annual reports do not come out until after the budget, we have to deal with previous one.

Mr SHEPHEARD: We moved some years ago.

Mr GILES: It was in the previous annual report.

Ms LAWRIE: The 2011-12 appropriation.

Mr WOOD: This is 29 October 2012, the last annual report, and you wrote:

The year also saw the office shift to new premises late in 2011 at short notice at a time when election preparations were running high.

If you had to shift to new premises, what was the cost of shifting?

Mr SHEPHEARD: The appropriation was \$700 000 and by the time we settled in - we had to set up at one end of the building while more work was going on at the other end. By the time it totalled it was probably another couple of hundred thousand. I am doing it off the top of my head. I can take that on notice if you wish.

Question on Notice 3.1

Mr WOOD: Electoral Commissioner, could you provide the cost of the move from your previous premises to the new premises in late 2011?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Nelson of the Chief Minister in relation to the Northern Territory Electoral Commission is number 3.1.

Mr WOOD: I would like to thank the minister for bringing forward the idea of a review. It is good. However, the Estimates Committee allows us to find out what government policy is on some of these issues.

Mr GILES: Thank you very much for your point, member for Nelson. This is about the budget. I will not be answering policy questions.

Madam CHAIR: I will clarify Standing Order 112: questions should not ask ministers to announce new policy of the government, but may seek an explanation regarding the policy of the government and its application.

Mr WOOD: That is right.

Ms LAWRIE: An explanation.

Mr WOOD: You just said it, existing policies.

Madam CHAIR: You called it new policy.

Mr WOOD: I did not ask for new policies; I asked about the existing stuff. It is written there.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have any further questions?

Mr WOOD: No, thank you.

OUTPUT GROUP 2.0 – ELECTORAL SERVICES **Output 2.1 – Electoral Services**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 2.0 - Electoral Services, Output 2.1 - Electoral Services. Questions regarding NT Electoral Commission responsibilities which fall under Chapter 8 of the *Local Government Act* will be answered by the Minister for Local Government on Wednesday, 26 June.

This concludes consideration of Output Group 2.0.

Non-Output Specific Budget-Related Questions

Madam CHAIR: Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

Ms LAWRIE: No. I want to thank the Commissioner for his attendance.

Mr GILES: I believe they were all non-output related.

Ms LAWRIE: To be fair, what we usually do for the statutory offices is group them up at the outset. That is the normal practice.

Mr GILES: That is why I will answer any question as long as it is relevant to the estimates. Thank you very much, Bill Shephard, for coming along.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions?

Mr WOOD: Non-specific questions, no.

Madam CHAIR: On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Electoral Commissioner for attending today.

OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE

Madam CHAIR: We will now consider the Ombudsman's Office.

Chief Minister, I invite you to introduce the official accompanying you and, if you wish, to make an opening statement regarding the Ombudsman's Office.

Mr GILES: I will not make an opening statement. I would like to welcome Peter, and invite any questions from members of the PAC or visitors to Peter.

Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Questions

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Ombudsman's Office.

Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes. Chief Minister, thanks for availing us of the opportunity to question the Ombudsman. Ombudsman, congratulations on your appointment to the position. I note you have made yourself available to meet with me as Leader of the Opposition, and I thank you for that. My first question goes to the financial capacity of your office.

Inflation is forecast at 3.9% yet your budget is only increasing by about 1% - \$27 000. In real terms, you are facing a cut. Do you have any concerns about your financial capacity to undertake the tasks?

Mr SHOYER: Over a number of years the real capacity of the Ombudsman's Office has been reduced gradually. At the same time, in 2011-12 we had a 25% increase in the number of approaches. I have only been in the office for a number of months, but I have looked at the position and believe the staff of the office have been performing well. At the moment we are getting a level of support which allows us to perform effectively. There is no doubt we have to carefully prioritise the work we do to ensure we deal with the most important issues. For the moment we are resourced at an appropriate level and, accordingly, I did not seek any additional funding in this year's budget.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you foresee a squeeze coming in following budget rounds?

Mr SHOYER: If there are further reductions or increases which are not in line with the CPI then that may well be the case. That will depend very much on not only the number of complaints, but the other initiatives we are looking at pursuing.

Ms LAWRIE: In the last year have you seen any shift in the nature of the complaints the Ombudsman's Office is receiving?

Mr SHOYER: It varies slightly every year. There are a number of priorities which I have identified for this year, overall, in the number of complaints. The biggest subjects of complaint are Police and Corrections. They continue to be the two major areas where there are complaints. Otherwise, Housing probably comes in at third. Generally speaking no, it follows roughly the same pattern.

Ms LAWRIE: Are you confident the outcomes or recommendations made by your office are being acted upon? You said the bulk of your complaints are about Police, Corrections and Housing. Obviously you make recommendations. Are you confident about the way they are followed up?

Mr SHOYER: Certainly. We have published two reports this financial year. I followed those up with the CEOs of departments. We have also asked for regular reports. Recently we asked for an update to those so I can publish them in my annual report and we can keep track of that. That is something I will be doing regularly. It is a matter for government as to how it responds, but I want how government responds to be put on record.

Ms LAWRIE: Is this a new system you have instituted coming into the office as the new Ombudsman?

Mr SHOYER: Yes, it is.

Ms LAWRIE: It is commendable; it is a great thing. It gives us a chance to see in the annual report how the follow-up is occurring. Have you completed or do you have planned any own motion investigations?

Mr SHOYER: I do not have any own motion investigations under way at the moment. I want to focus not just on specific complaints, but look at assisting various government organisations improve their administrative systems. I am working with a variety of departments and agencies to further - rather than under an official own motion process - work with them to improve their systems, although that does not stop me from pursuing an own motion investigation if the need should arise.

Ms LAWRIE: How many agencies do you have that level of interaction with at the moment?

Mr SHOYER: There are four I am working with fairly closely to improve their systems and functions: Police, Power and Water, Corrections and Housing, and also Housing in relation to improving their systems and functions.

Ms LAWRIE: I guess you would have copped an influx of Power and Water with the tariff adjustments? That would have been an unusual ...

Mr GILES: Took you a while to get there, Leader of the Opposition. You have been fishing a bit.

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is a genuine question, Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: Sure it is.

Ms LAWRIE: It is what estimates is about - having this questioning.

Mr SHOYER: We have had a small increase in the number of Power and Water complaints. Generally speaking, we have tried to work with them, and they have quite a good complaints inquiries system in place already. We have tried to work with them to ensure people are contacting them to start with. It has not been a huge number, but there has been a small increase.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you for that.

Mr WOOD: Ombudsman, by the time you reach a 1% efficiency dividend are you behind the eight-ball from last year?

Mr SHOYER: As I indicated previously, we can manage. There is no doubt we have to prioritise carefully so we have to pick our cases and the work we are doing. Certainly, the indications at the moment are we can manage on the level of funding we receive.

Mr WOOD: Do you receive any income at all, as the Auditor-General receives some income?

Mr SHOYER: No, all our services are free.

Mr WOOD: You mentioned you are not doing any work of your own volition?

Mr SHOYER: Sorry, I should clarify that. We have an arrangement with the Commonwealth Ombudsman whereby they rent a small amount of office space. That has been effective in the past. It has been continued for this financial year; it may or may not continue for the next financial year. Otherwise, we do not receive anything.

Mr WOOD: Does that rent equal the 1% efficiency dividend?

Mr SHOYER: It would be slightly less than 1%. It was about \$17 000 last year, but that is ongoing and in previous years we have been able to regain that from Treasury to assist us.

Mr WOOD: They allow you to retain it?

Mr SHOYER: They have in the past, yes.

Mr WOOD: Over the last 12 months has there been an increase in complaints from government agencies, police and councils?

Mr SHOYER: As I noted, there was an increase in 2011-12 to just over 2500 complaints. That is roughly what we are forecasting this year. It may be slightly less than that on current indications, but it is around the 2500 mark, whereas the average for the eight years prior to that was about 2000. It is a significant number.

That includes approaches we refer on to other agencies; for example, Consumer Affairs or it may be something we refer on to the Commonwealth Ombudsman, or on even to the Telecommunications Ombudsman, or some other outside body.

Mr WOOD: Police complaints have been going down. Are they still going down?

Mr SHOYER: The numbers are generally at about the same level as they were last year.

Mr WOOD: Do you have any particular agencies in local government councils that have the most complaints?

Mr GILES: Outside Police and Housing?

Mr WOOD: Yes, are there any particular government agencies which tend to attract the most complaints?

Mr SHOYER: Yes, Corrections, and Housing has a number. Within local government they are usually very small numbers. It is to be expected Darwin City Council has a few because it has a large number of people in its municipal area. There is no trend outside what you would expect from a normal view of the local government agencies.

Mr WOOD: In relation to Housing and the NT government taking over responsibility for remote housing and a concern by the Ombudsman - it is in this report - in relation to the Ombudsman's ability to investigate complaints because of the bigger workload, has there been any significant increase in the funding - you said there is not, but when I wrote the question I did not know - to enable the Ombudsman to do his job in relation to the increased number of complaints, especially from remote communities?

How will you handle extra complaints, as you just said you get complaints from Housing? Now the NT government is taking over remote housing there will be more complaints. Will you have enough funding to cover those complaints?

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, the Ombudsman said the target this year was for 2500 and for next year it will be slightly lower. That question has probably already been answered.

Mr WOOD: The question was is there enough money in the budget? I do not know if the Ombudsman was taking this matter into account when he answered.

Mr SHOYER: We have received a number of complaints in relation to remote housing. It is clearly a new area government is getting more involved in and is developing systems at the moment. We have been working closely with them to work through those issues. To date, yes, they are within my earlier comments - I believe we can cope with those increased numbers.

Mr WOOD: Will you look at it next year?

Mr SHOYER: At any stage where we feel we need additional resources I will be going to the Chief Minister to explain that to him.

Mr WOOD: In relation to the Pelly Road/Lorikeet Court subdivision, a report went from the previous Ombudsman to the government with a series of recommendations. Do you follow-up to see if those recommendations have being completed?

Mr SHOYER: Yes, on a number of occasions I have met with two separate CEOs from Lands, Planning and the Environment to follow-up on those issues. As I indicated previously, I have asked the department to provide responses to each of those recommendations so I can include them in my annual report.

Mr WOOD: Somewhere in the budget, for those who are worried - it might be in the previous annual report - you had a percentage of how many cases are handled within certain time frames. In the case of Pelly Road/Lorikeet Court, do you have an indication of how long that matter took from start to finish?

Mr SHOYER: I do not, but it was very lengthy. It commenced well before my time and I know negotiations with the owners took a considerable length of time, but I am not sure exactly when they started.

Mr WOOD: The annual report mentions the Ombudsman conducted an investigation into shire morgues. This issue was raised in some reports about local government not so long back, and I am trying to think who did it. Anyway, there was an investigation of shire morgues under a review called Morgue Management on Remote Communities in the Northern Territory. The report was completed last year and handed to the Minister on 26 March and tabled on 3 May 2012. Could you give us an idea of the recommendations in that report and whether those recommendations have been completed by the government?

Mr SHOYER: Without going through the recommendations in detail because they are in the annual report, one of the chief recommendations was a government agency take responsibility for the overall coordination of a response. That has been nominated as the department of Regional Development. We have been in touch with them in relation to it. I have asked them for an update for publication in my annual report. I do not have a recent update in relation to that, but perhaps you could ask the minister for Regional Development about progress on that issue.

Mr WOOD: Bob Beadman reported on it and raised it as an important issue.

Now we have a Children's Commissioner, a Health Community Complaints Commissioner and the Ombudsman, how do you work together? Do you get together occasionally so you do not cross over one another's path and have duplication?

Mr SHOYER: I meet on a regular basis with all those Commissioners, including the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures. We also have twice yearly meetings of a group of Commissioners and me. We get together and talk about particular issues and also exchange information on our individual cases to ensure we are not duplicating our efforts or that the best placed person can deal with those individual cases. We are also in the course of negotiating a memorandum of understanding with the Children's Commissioner. Assuming that is done in the near future, I will work with the Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner to achieve the same outcome.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 3.0 – OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE

Output 3.1 – Ombudsman for the Northern Territory

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 3.0 – Ombudsman’s Office, Output 3.1 – Ombudsman for the Northern Territory. Are there any questions?

Mr WOOD: I have covered them all.

Ms LAWRIE: I have covered them.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output Group 3. Are there any other non-output specific budget-related questions?

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank the Ombudsman for attending today.

We will take a 10 minute break and resume at 3.35 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you everyone. For the benefit of Hansard, we have Ken Vowles, member for Johnston; Delia Lawrie, member for Karama; me, Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson.

DEPARTMENT OF THE CHIEF MINISTER

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, please introduce the officials accompanying you and, if you wish, make an opening statement regarding The Department of the Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I introduce Mr Gary Barnes, Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister to my right, and Ms Jodie Kirkman, Deputy of the Department of the Chief Minister to my left.

The Department of the Chief Minister is an essential strategic coordinating arm of the Territory government supporting the economic and social development of the Territory, as well as providing leadership across the public sector and supporting the business of government.

I acknowledge each and every member of the department for their professionalism and hard work in what has been a busy period since this government was elected. I will be taking questions on the following outputs of the Department of the Chief Minister: Policy Advice and Coordination, Social Policy Coordination, Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition, Legislation Production, and Government Services and Support to the Administrator.

Questions on the Alice Springs Transformation Plan will be taken by minister Conlan. Any specific questions of the Offices of Multicultural Affairs, Youth, and Seniors will be answered by minister Styles.

Strategic issues for agency from Budget Paper No 3 include:

- engaging in emerging issues through the Council of Australian Governments, Council for the Australian Federation, and other national frameworks to ensure optimal outcomes across all policy areas
- developing Territory security arrangements aligned with national frameworks and strengthening coordinated whole-of-government emergency planning and response procedures
- establishing an economic development panel and unit to prepare the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy to provide a framework within which decisions can be made to grow the Territory’s economy
- developing and leading new arrangements for cross-agency coordination in the key areas of economic development, infrastructure planning and community safety

- coordinating and facilitating the due diligence process to deliver the gas to Gove project, including the construction of new, and the augmentation of existing, infrastructure
- with the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment and the Department of Treasury and Finance, introducing and implementing Chief Executive and agency performance measures principally in relation to agencies' contribution to the whole-of-government initiatives and the delivery of efficient and effective services
- facilitating the efficient use of resources for the executive arm of government.

In relation to economic development, broadening the Territory's economic base is a key priority for my government. To this end, an expert advisory panel has been appointed to support an Economic Development Subcommittee of Cabinet. The expert advisory committee will provide strategic advice to the subcommittee and work with DCM to develop the Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy. The panel consists of member with expertise in macroeconomics, leveraging investment and industry engagement. The immediate priorities are identifying options for expansion of port facilities, and the development of Darwin as a gas hub.

Additional funding of \$0.4m for two years has been provided to DCM to support the panel and establish a new Economic Development Unit within DCM. The unit will assist the panel and subcommittee in the development and implementation of strategies that will promote the Territory's economic development.

In relation to the marketing communications bureau, consistent with the government's commitment to be financially responsible - unlike the previous government - the new marketing communications structure will commence by 1 July this year. The structure includes 73 positions across government, with 22 of those in a Communications and Marketing Bureau to be established in DCM.

The Communication Marketing Bureau will support greater coordination and efficiency for communication and marketing activities while still allowing agencies to provide core communication activities, either for their own agency or in a hub and spoke arrangement. The new structure is expected to achieve an estimated saving around \$4 million a year. In relation to Foodbank NT, the Northern Territory government is providing Foodbank NT with \$400 000 in 2013-14 and \$0.16m in 2014-15 and 2015-16 to support the continued operation of food rescue services.

Foodbank NT receives, sorts, stores, and at times delivers, donated food for subsequent distribution to at least 95 registered organisations, such as St Vincent De Paul, Mission Australia and the Salvation Army. Donated food is then utilised where organisations prepare low-cost, healthy meals, all for the distribution of food parcels. During 2010-11 Foodbank NT managed to distribute nearly 118 tonnes of food, equalling 157 191 meals, based on an average of 750 gm a meal at an average cost of \$0.38¢ per meal. Reference is the Northern Territory Foodbank 18 January 2013. Before Foodbank NT commenced operations, large quantities of the food they now handle used to be wasted, dumped or ended up in landfill.

The Foodbank Australia network also has a proven track record of providing food release services to communities affected by natural disasters. Foodbank NT activities will provide direct, immediate and measurable support to Territory communities affected by a natural disaster by their food release services. Emergency feeding has been identified as a critical priority in Northern Territory government emergency management planning.

In relation to the Alice Springs Transformation Plan, DCM coordinates and monitors the Alice Springs Transformation Plan and implementation plan, part of the national partnership agreement on Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

Since its inception, the ASTP has addressed homelessness by coordinating and monitoring the provision of services and programs to reduce homelessness and overcrowding in Alice Springs, particularly in town camps. It enhances such report services through the provision of funding to increase access to a range of social services for Indigenous residents and visitors, and improved housing standards by monitoring the construction of new dwellings, housing and existing dwellings and refurbishment and town camps.

The regeneration work of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan, undertaken in partnership with the Australian government and the Northern Territory government, has led to positive changes in the lives of individuals and families living in town camps and, more broadly, Alice Springs.

The transformation plan is being incorporated into the Stronger Futures national partnership. The new implementation plan will continue to support the work undertaken to date with initiatives to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal residents and visitors to Alice Springs, particularly to live strong, independent lives where communities, families and children are safe and healthy. The 2013 combined funding of \$12.6m will be spent under the ASTP and Stronger Futures inter-governmental arrangements.

DCM plays a pivotal role in working with the Commonwealth government in regard to national reform agendas. The two care agreements currently being considered are the NDIS - National Disability Insurance Scheme - and NERA - National Education Reform Agreement. In regard to NDIS, the Territory agreed to host a launch site in the Barkly region to commence in July 2014. We have now signed up to the full NDIS scheme to be in place by 2018-19, more than two federal elections away. This will result in Territorians with disabilities having access to improved services and choices. In regard to the NERA, the Territory has until 30 June 2013 to consider the implications of the agreement and determine if the outcome meets the Territory's needs, which it does not at the moment.

At this time, the agreement has the potential to significantly worsen by over \$0.5bn during the transition phase, the Territory's financial position. Despite the Territory spending significantly more on each student's education compared to other jurisdictions, we will, however, continue to work with the Commonwealth to ensure we achieve the right outcomes for Territorians. Thank you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any questions on the opening statement?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, Terry Mills had announced, earlier in the day you knifed him, he was about to sign contracts to bring forward work for Territory businesses. The day after you knifed Terry Mills, you said you would go to Japan immediately. Over three months later why have you not gone to Japan?

Mr GILES: Thank you very much to the lovely lady who asked that question, Leader of the Opposition. It is interesting taking questions from you, the only person in Labor who cannot seem to manage more than one vote for the leadership. I have been in consultation with INPEX on a number of occasions, and with the Japanese Consul interstate. We are preparing for a trip to Japan some time in the future.

Ms LAWRIE: You went to Singapore. You flew seven of your colleagues to Kununurra for a concert. Your Deputy Chief Minister chartered his own private jet to China. Yes, you tried to stop him, but you did not. Why did you not go to Japan immediately, as you committed to?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, this question in no way relates to my opening statement.

Ms LAWRIE: It is absolutely material. The Chief Minister changed with the knifing whilst in Japan and your first commitment to the Territory public, standing on the steps after being sworn in as Chief Minister was, 'I will go to Japan immediately.'

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I reiterate what I just said. There was no reference to overseas travel in the opening statement. A question not in relation to the opening statement should be ruled out of order and asked in the right output group.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, stop using phraseology which makes inferences or imputations. Please direct questions to the Chief Minister which relate to issues raised in his statement, otherwise you can raise questions at a more appropriate point.

Ms LAWRIE: This whole statement goes to the fact he is the Chief Minister and what his responsibilities are. Surely he has a responsibility to stick to his commitments to the public of the Territory. The first commitment he gave, after sworn in as Chief Minister, after knifing the previous Chief Minister, was he would immediately travel to Japan. They are your words, Chief Minister. Can you explain why you have not gone immediately?

Mr GILES: I go back to my point, Madam Chair.

Madam CHAIR: I rule the question from the Opposition Leader is not relevant to the statement.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, did you conduct any analysis of the impact of your decision to sabotage that trade mission to Japan by the Chief Minister in regard to job losses?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, that is not relevant to the statement.

Ms LAWRIE: Why would it not be relevant to the statement? Within the Department of the Chief Minister you cover the relationship between the Northern Territory government and the business partners we have. It is a major project. It certainly falls within the purview. That is why the Chief Minister of the day was on a trade mission to Japan so it is very pertinent.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I ask that you make another ruling. I can play games here all day, or ...

Ms LAWRIE: Or you can answer some questions.

Mr GILES: ... I can be interjected, interrupted on a continual basis. We are here to debate estimates and the budget process. That is the formal arrangement. If you want to allow the Leader of the Opposition to grandstand, I am happy to grandstand. I am happy to put on all performances and all acts, or we can get down to the business of doing good governance for the Northern Territory in a democratic way.

These questions are not in line with the statement. I will ask you to make rulings and we can get on with the job.

Ms LAWRIE: I refer you to written question 9.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I have asked you a question.

Madam CHAIR: Written question?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, written question 9 ...

Mr GILES: We are not up to written questions

Ms LAWRIE: ... details on staff movements and payouts.

Madam CHAIR: We are asking questions ...

Ms LAWRIE: Will you answer it now or answer it then?

Madam CHAIR: ... relating to the statement only, Opposition Leader. If you have any questions directly relating to that, otherwise we can move on to the Chief Minister reading written answers to questions.

Ms LAWRIE: I will ask under written question 9 in a few minutes time if you do not want to answer it now, Chief Minister.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, would you like to ask any questions on the opening statement?

Chief Minister, would you like to read the questions and your written answers?

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Question 1:

Details on progress of all CLP election commitments, including all commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media releases and announcements, 100 day plan, costings and savings documents, media advertisements and other printed material.

In the context of budget estimates, this answer focuses on funded election commitments for which the Department of the Chief Minister has implementation responsibility. There are no election commitments for which the Department of the Chief Minister has implementation responsibility which have required 2012 mini-budget or 2013-14 budget funding. All commitments are funded from within existing resources.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, in your answer to written question 1, the reality is you have already broken 100 promises in just nine months. Where is delivery of the promise to cut the cost of living? What has happened? How have you cut the cost of living for Territorians?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, we have started cutting the cost of living by ensuring we have an increased supply of housing. We are already seeing increased development, increased bedroom numbers, increased units and houses. This is starting to put downward pressure on the cost of housing, which is the main contributor to the cost of living. For the Leader of the Opposition to ask such ridiculous questions - she would know the failures of the previous government in ensuring there was adequate supply to meet demand pressures in the Northern Territory, particularly in the Top End, were the main drivers of cost of living pressures.

We have made substantial inroads into reducing the cost of living pressures. I find it ironic that this Leader of the Opposition likes to lead with her chin and ask questions when she was so poor at ensuring the cost of living pressures were not in the position they are. Look at the price of petrol under her government! Look at the cost of housing under her government! These things impact on families. For her to lead with her chin I find quite surprising.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you say you have cut the cost of living. Can you explain why, under the CLP government, the CPI – inflation - and the cost of living impact on families has gone from 2.1% to 3.9%? How is that a reduction in the cost of living for Territorians? How have you achieved anything to reduce the cost of living for Territorians when the CPI has gone from 2.1% to 3.9% under the CLP?

Mr GILES: Your question relates to the CPI. It should have been put to the Treasurer yesterday.

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is the cost of living ...

Mr GILES: You are asking a question about the CPI; that is a question for the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: You say you have reduced the cost of living by removing housing pressure. I have not seen any CLP housing land release in Darwin and Palmerston. You are relying on land being released under the Labor government funding. There is no new housing in Darwin and Palmerston, and no new land release in Darwin and Palmerston under a CLP funded initiative. It is nonsense to point to land release or housing initiatives because you have not delivered anything other than what was on the program for Darwin and Palmerston and funded by Labor.

You said you have reduced the cost of living, yet it has gone from 2.1% to 3.9%?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, CPI questions should have been put to the Treasurer, and I understand they were.

Ms LAWRIE: You are saying you have ...

Mr GILES: Hang on a second, Leader of the Opposition ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... nothing to do with responsibility ...

Mr GILES: ... I have provided a point of clarification to the Chair ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... for the cost of living for Territorians ...

Mr GILES: ... this question should have been put to the Treasurer; it was put to the Treasurer, and that is the output area it goes to.

Ms LAWRIE: As Chief Minister you have nothing to do with ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Chief Minister has made a valid point. The Treasurer was very kind yesterday and gave a great deal of latitude in the scope of questioning. The question was ...

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Chair, the Chief Minister said responsibility for the delivery of election commitments sat within the coordination of the Department of the Chief Minister. We heard yesterday, before the Estimates Committee, the Cabinet Office has a consolidated list of election commitments. The first election commitment was to cut the cost of living. It is certainly under the purview ...

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, the question about the cost of living has been answered. We have already raised the issue of housing, and the question about the CPI should be answered by the Treasurer. If the Leader of the Opposition does not understand how estimates works from an opposition point of view, I suggest she learns really quickly.

Ms LAWRIE: Can you point to any housing initiative ...

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I ask you to make a ruling on this ...

Madam CHAIR: The Chief Minister said he has answered the question. Are there any other questions on the first written question?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, indeed. I have the call, unless it is the cost of living.

Mr WOOD: The Chief Minister blamed the previous government for petrol prices. How is a Northern Territory government of any persuasion going to lower petrol prices?

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, we are currently investigating what we can do in that regard. Some work will be done in the near future on what we can do in this area. There are some very good examples of price disparity with similar locations - from different areas of the Northern Territory and different areas in Australia - and we are looking at ways to work in that area. We have not made an announcement, but we are working on what we can do.

Mr WOOD: I will be very interested to see how you break a duopoly.

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, we know there are significant concerns. There are many allegations and much innuendo about petrol pricing. It is important for us to put in place mechanisms to look at that. That will be happening in the near future.

Mr WOOD: I will be interested to see that.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, in your election commitment you said you would cut crime by 10% each year, yet violent crime is up 17% since the election; alcohol-related crime ...

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, this question has been put to the Police minister ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... is up 17%, domestic violence assaults are up 20% ...

Madam CHAIR: That is correct, Opposition Leader. You were also told that by the Minister for Business this morning.

Ms LAWRIE: It is an election commitment that sits in the portfolio ...

Madam CHAIR: It sits in the portfolio of the responsible minister, which is what the Treasurer explained yesterday.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you said you would immediately remove drunks from our streets, but not one drunk has been removed. Thousands of drunks have been free to drink as much as they want. How have you met this commitment?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, this is a question for the Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you committed to deliver job security and employment opportunities to focus on job creation and job preservation. Four thousand one hundred full-time jobs have gone since the CLP was elected, and we have the highest unemployment rate in the Territory in six years. How have you delivered on this commitment?

Mr GILES: That is a question for the minister for Employment, and should be asked in the appropriate output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you promised no frontline worker would be sacked, no public servants would be sacked - teachers, nursing positions, child protection workers cut, many more frontline public workers gone, 600 public servants have lost their job. How have you delivered on this commitment?

Mr GILES: That number is completely incorrect. I ask you to direct those questions to the minister for Public Employment in the appropriate output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you committed to providing secure employment for our teachers yet 130 teachers are being sacked from our high schools and middle schools.

Mr GILES: I suggest you put that question to the Minister for Education in the appropriate output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you committed to building the Palmerston Hospital. That has been put on hold and funding has been handed back to Canberra.

Mr GILES: No, that is a lie; funding has not been put on hold. We made an announcement in the budget that we are identifying a suitable site, reinstating the scoping study, developing a master plan, and identifying funding mechanisms to move forward in that area. We are fully committed to the Palmerston Hospital. The money has not been handed back. I suggest you put any further questions in relation to Palmerston Hospital to the Minister for Health.

Ms LAWRIE: The funding to construct the hospital is on hold. You are not proceeding with construction of the hospital ...

Mr GILES: I have answered the question, and you should put any questions in relation to health and hospitals to the Minister for Health.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you said you would maintain Royal Darwin Hospital as the main hospital, but then said 'Actually, we are looking at building a new hospital elsewhere'. You have not accepted funding from the Commonwealth to build the new children's wing and, in fact, handed that funding back to the Commonwealth.

Mr GILES: Leader of the Opposition, I know it is very hard for you to learn, but portfolio specific questions have to go to portfolio specific ministers in the appropriate output areas. Instead of wasting the time you have available, put your questions in the correct output areas.

You can play as many games as you want, grandstand in front of the media, no one listens to you. Your voice is just 'whine, whine, whine' all the time. If you want answers to these questions ask them in the right output area.

Ms LAWRIE: You are the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and your government was elected, I daresay, partly on the back of election commitments you made to the public. You are responsible for the delivery of election commitments. That was made clear yesterday in the session with your Deputy Chief Minister when he was asked who centrally coordinates the delivery of election commitments of your government. He responded it was the Department of the Chief Minister, and the list was centrally held in the Cabinet Office. Are you contradicting your Deputy and saying you have nothing to do with delivery of election commitments to Territorians?

Mr GILES: This is not a question relevant to the first question.

Ms LAWRIE: It is very relevant to written question No 1, which is what we are on. Which is:

Details on progress of all CLP election commitments, including all commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians in the CLP election policy documents ...

On behalf of Territorians I am reminding you what you promised ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could I stop you for a minute to let you know about the rearrangement of the committee? We have Ken Vowles; Delia Lawrie, Leader of the Opposition; me, Larisa Lee, taking over the Chair; Bess Price, member for Stuart; Francis Kurrupuwu, member for Arafura; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson. Thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, it is pertinent to written question No 1, which is what we are on. I am asking you again; is it true, as we were advised yesterday by the Deputy Chief Minister, that the Chief Minister's Department -the Cabinet Office - has the consolidated list of election commitments?

Mr GILES: Is that your question? You have been messing around for a while. I do not know where you are going.

Ms LAWRIE: No, that was the question.

Mr GILES: You would not understand this because you did not make the heights of Chief Minister, as much as you wanted it. You dearly sought it but could only get your own vote. The Chief Minister's department has an overall coordination role to put many different things together. However, as in any other Westminster system, we have ministers responsible for different portfolio areas. Those ministers are responsible to answer questions, particularly in the output groups as they align with the budget. I suggest any questions you have relating to the output areas you ask of the portfolio ministers in those time frames.

Ms LAWRIE: You have an overall coordination role and the question was: does the consolidated list of election commitments by the CLP sit in the Cabinet Office, as we were advised yesterday by the Deputy Chief Minister? Is that true?

Mr GILES: That is correct.

Ms LAWRIE: You are the minister responsible for the Cabinet Office? You are the Chief Minister; they sit in your department?

Mr GILES: You are correct on that. Anyone who says you do not know what is going on - clearly you have that one right.

Ms LAWRIE: Therefore, Chief Minister, you are ultimately responsible for oversight of the delivery of election commitments made by your party in the August 2012 election?

Mr GILES: That is correct. Someone get this woman a gold star. You are on fire.

Ms LAWRIE: You are taking some responsibility. You are responsible, so I am questioning you, Chief Minister, as the responsible ...

Mr GILES: Not very well, I might say.

Ms LAWRIE: ... for the election commitments and their progress. Do you know anything about being open and accountable, given that police and the public service has been gagged ...

Mr GILES: Is that your question? Yes, we are being open and accountable. We are in the estimates process answering questions on the budget. That is open and accountable.

Ms LAWRIE: You have an MLA, the member for Arnhem, who has being in hiding from the media.

Mr GILES: That is not quite true.

Ms LAWRIE: Is that open and accountable?

Mr GILES: Perhaps Madam Deputy Chair might be able to answer that for you. I do not believe Madam Deputy Chair is hiding at all; she is sitting on camera right now in the estimates process.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you make yourself available?

Mr GILES: The questions are coming to me. We are open, accountable and transparent. That is right and answers your question.

Ms LAWRIE: Will the member for Arnhem be made available to the media today?

Mr GILES: Anybody can talk to the media whenever they like, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms LAWRIE: Is that confirmation you will ensure the member for Arnhem is available to talk to the media today?

Mr GILES: You are the gag girl, not me. Anyone outside politics can talk to the media any time they want, but I cannot see how this is relevant to the first question.

Ms LAWRIE: It is an election commitment to be open and accountable.

Mr GILES: That is why we are at estimates. That is about openness, transparency and accountability, and answering any relevant questions. I am looking forward to getting to the member for Nelson, possibly the member for Johnston, because I am sure they have proper questions I will look forward to answering because we have a good message to sell in turbulent times. We have a \$5.5bn debt and are trying to clean up your mess around a whole range of areas across all portfolios. I look forward to talking to the members for Nelson and Johnston who will add value, I hope, to this process. At present, you are just wasting time.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, the election commitment to reduce the cost of housing, as opposed to the broader commitment to reduce the cost of living - the cost of housing has increased 8% in Darwin over the last year, three times the national rate, and public housing rents are being increased by your government. How does that meet the commitment to reduce the cost of housing?

Mr GILES: You said over the last year; twelve months ago you were still in government, albeit as a very poor performing Treasurer. Since coming into office we have put frameworks in place - got our Planning Commission operating and our Real Housing for Growth strategy. The Minister for Housing has done a range of things in that area. The Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment has opened up land to build more housing to ensure supply meets demand. We have some amazing initiatives and I can already see a reduction in housing prices, which is making it more affordable for people to buy or rent. These are very good outcomes and you will see substantial opportunities in that area into the future. Any further questions you have in relation to housing you should put to the Minister for Housing in the appropriate output group.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, there was a commitment made to reduce the cost of business by slashing red tape. Businesses are being crippled by increased costs, including the power and water utility costs they have been hit with. Business confidence in the Northern Territory government has plummeted by 39%. How are you delivering on that commitment?

Mr GILES: It is important to understand for us to reduce green tape and red tape we have to put in place mechanisms to remove the over-bureaucratic regulatory burden we have seen over the last 11 years of your former government. It will take time because you created such a mess. We are on the back of a \$5.5bn debt you, as the worst performing Treasurer in the Northern Territory, created. We have a range of balls in the air we are juggling to ensure we get the best outcomes for Territorians. No thanks to you, it is going to take some time. Any questions you have around reducing the regulatory burden for business, particularly around red tape, are appropriately put to the Minister for Business in the appropriate output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, there was a commitment to provide \$5200 per outstation dwelling. Has anyone received any funding under that commitment?

Mr GILES: You will find, Leader of the Opposition, that commitment was not going directly to any individual. Although you like to play this game and make up falsehoods - people are handing out cheques and money willy-nilly, a silly game you like to play in the bush where the Labor Party lies to people - the \$5200 is going to organisations. The Minister for Regional Development has already made this policy announcement and any questions you want to ask about funding for homelands and outstations please put to the appropriate minister.

However, a significant issue in the Northern Territory for a long period under your failed government was the dislocation of remote populations having insufficient housing in remote areas and having to drift into larger urban centres to receive better services, whether that is education, university, health, employment or otherwise, and also to ensure they have the appropriate level of housing.

As an opposition we promised - and have committed to in government and are delivering - to provide greater levels of investment and asset sustainability and creation of housing and additional bedrooms, particularly in homelands and outstations, so people do not have to move from out bush into town. We recognise their cultural connections to land, language, law and culture, and that people can live in the bush and have a sustainable lifestyle. That is what we are doing through the regional development framework. Any questions in relation to the \$5200 or outstations and homelands should be put to the Minister for Regional Development, who is doing a fantastic job.

Ms LAWRIE: She speaks fondly of you too, Chief Minister. She referred to you as a 'little boy'.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could you stop using offensive words otherwise I am going to put you on a warning and that is going to be the last time. If you are going to direct questions to the Chief

Minister direct them, and keep grubby words off the table. This is estimates. You have to talk to him about estimates, then talk to him about the budget, and everything else that comes under the Chief Minister's portfolio. Other than that, leave personal attacks and political issues aside. Leave it for debating when we are in the House next week.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you heard the personal attacks thrown at me, Madam Chair?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do not question me. Leave it for the House next Thursday.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, can I add a comment? Sticks and stones - say what you like. We know you are a very grubby member for Karama and the way ...

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Deputy Chair! Come on!

Mr GILES: I withdraw it. You are right. She can call me a 'little boy', member for Nelson. Leader of the Opposition, I have been waiting ...

Mr WOOD: No, I am not saying that.

Ms LAWRIE: I did not. The member for Namatjira called you that.

Mr GILES: Let us say I have been waiting to have - Madam Deputy Chair, could I have the call?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Chief Minister, can you also withdraw the statement you made towards her.

Mr GILES: I have already withdrawn it.

Member for Karama, I am keen to have a blue with you. You are the most irrelevant, unimpressive, politician in Australia. There is a challenge with the Prime Minister at the moment, but you give it your level best, you really give it ...

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Deputy Chair, will you pull him up on it?

Mr GILES: I have not said anything derogatory.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes you have. The whole statement was derogatory.

Mr GILES: No, you try – the knifing of people, little boy, all this type of stuff. You have given the Territory a \$5.5bn debt ...

Ms LAWRIE: \$5.1bn under you.

Mr GILES: ... you had a deficit sitting out above \$1.4bn ...

Ms LAWRIE: Increase debt by \$1bn under you.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Deputy Chair! You previously mentioned questions being to the budget – succinct etcetera. We are having a ball by ball argument here.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I was trying to keep it at that. It has heated up. It started with the opposition and now the Chief Minister is doing it. Please keep it to the point.

Mr GILES: I am answering the question I was asked, Madam Deputy Chair. Could I have the call without being rudely interrupted?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: You can have the call without being interrupted.

Mr GILES: Thank you, I appreciate that. We have come in, in the face of a fiscal crisis left to us by the former Treasurer, the worst Treasurer the Territory has ever seen, and are trying to deal with a mountain of issues: cost of living pressures, insufficient housing, gaols at 131% occupancy, Indigenous incarceration at 90%, recidivism rates at 70% ...

Ms LAWRIE: Going up under you.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, I asked not to be interrupted. If we want to play fair we play fair. Impoliteness should not be ...

Ms LAWRIE: Arrogant.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, can you please withdraw that?

Ms LAWRIE: I withdraw arrogant.

Mr GILES: We have a range of issues: insufficient road funding, poor quality of roads, lack of housing, the worst NAPLAN results in the country, remote education for Indigenous kids performing badly, a one trick economy with a fantastic investment from INPEX but no other sustainability for the long-term. We have to fix a range of things, develop frameworks, and drive a complete reform agenda.

You do not want to ask what we are doing. You want to play the man not the ball. I challenge you to lift your game. I have challenged you before -ask proper questions and have a proper debate about what we are doing. Ask us about the range of policy areas as they relate to the budget and we will be able to help drive reform. You can debate us on these issues. You come with your grubby politics, get down in the gutter, as we know you always do - the heart of Labor left, in the gutter. That is where you are; that is where you are starting now. Congratulations. We did not expect anything different. We will expect it for the rest of today ...

Ms LAWRIE: Is he finished?

Mr GILES: I challenge you to ask a proper question in relation to question No 1.

Mr VOWLES: A point of order, Madam Deputy Chair! That was a statement by the Chief Minister. Can we get back to the questions, please?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I gave him the floor to speak. If you can get back to the questions ...

Mr VOWLES: He was replying to a question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes.

Mr VOWLES: That was not a reply to a question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: He asked for the floor to speak, so I gave him the floor. It was not a question.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, will you table, under the commitment to be open and accountable, all the contracts the CLP signed with remote communities in the election campaign? They were signed by the former Chief Minister, the member for Blain, on behalf of the CLP. Will you table all of the community contracts that contained election commitments for those remote communities?

Mr GILES: Yes, I am happy to.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you have them available or is that a commitment to take on notice.

Mr GILES: I do not carry them around in my back pocket. I have never signed one of them, but I am happy to find them and give them to you at a later date.

Ms LAWRIE: Is that a question on notice?

Mr GILES: No, I will find them and give them to you.

Ms LAWRIE: I would rather it be a question on notice.

Mr GILES: Put it on notice.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, there is a question on notice. I am not sure of the number, but it is about whether ...

Question on Notice 3.2

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Karama, could you please restate the question for the record.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, will you provide all the community contracts signed by the member for Blain as election commitments in the 2012 election campaign?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: I am happy to accept the question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama of the minister has been allocated number 3.2.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, in the Borroloola contract, for example - we have raised this example before so it is an easy one to use; it does not really come with many surprises - there is a commitment for a government business centre and other significant commitments. Will you implement everything in the contract as committed to, or was your announcement that remote communities will be given major project status and you will move heaven and earth to deliver all the economic infrastructure needed if they give up their native title in their CBD areas - did you put a new caveat on those commitments that they have to give up their native title in their CBD areas in the remote towns ...

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: ... to get that full implementation or is there no caveat and they will be met?

Mr GILES: There is no caveat.

Ms LAWRIE: Those community contracts - signed election commitments will be delivered and met?

Mr GILES: You will have to ask questions about the time lines and what is occurring in those contracts to the appropriate minister in their output areas.

Ms LAWRIE: For specific updates, but you signed on to that commitment?

Mr GILES: You will have to ask each individual minister about the timing of the implementation of those commitments.

Ms LAWRIE: The sealing of the Port Keats Road to Wadeye ...

Mr GILES: If you were any good as a Treasurer you would probably understand a little of this. When you do roadwork, particularly in regional and remote areas, it is a joint partnership between the Territory and Australian government. As you would have seen in the handing down of the most recent federal budget, the Northern Territory had stripped about \$1.1bn worth of road funding we were expecting to receive. What we received for the first five-year period over the nation building program were substantial amounts of money. What we sought from the federal government working partnership was not there. That makes it very challenging for us to deliver on our regional roads initiatives.

When Anthony Albanese talks about roads for the Northern Territory, and in the federal budget put out by Wayne Swan there is not much money at all - barely any money for the Northern Territory – it sends a sure sign the federal government is not interested in supporting us. When we want to roll out initiatives, it is very hard to do it on our own. We are a small jurisdiction with a very small budgetary base to work from. With the federal Labor government reducing GST contributions by \$121m-odd, there is a challenge for us to deliver on some things. We continue to push things uphill to get outcomes in this area.

The former Labor Chief Minister found it difficult to implement all his local implementation plans - the LIPs. These LIPs were rolled out everywhere and barely any of those implementation models were put into practice. With all good intentions, you have to ensure you have the money and put it in place at the right time.

It is our intent to build the regions and some of the larger communities to ensure they have the infrastructure, the economic development, and prosperity we want people to receive.

Ms LAWRIE: The election commitments contained in the community contracts - have you a dollar figure on what they amount to? Have you sought advice?

Mr GILES: I am happy to table those election contracts signed by the former Chief Minister. I do not have a copy of them and have not gone through them. That is why I suggested it is important you talk to individual ministers in their line agencies about individual funding agreements, individual funding initiatives and implementation plans as it relates to the output areas around specific initiatives. For example, the business centre you are talking about at Borrooloola should be put to the Minister for Business.

Ms LAWRIE: Are the community contract commitments itemised in the consolidated list of election commitments sitting in the Cabinet Office?

Mr GILES: We do not go into what occurs in Cabinet.

Ms LAWRIE: Right. You have the consolidated list. You will not tell me whether or not the community contract election commitments are on the consolidated election commitment list ...

Mr GILES: We do not talk about what goes on in Cabinet.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not asking you to talk about Cabinet; I am asking you ...

Mr GILES: You are asking about something in Cabinet.

Ms LAWRIE: I am asking you, in being open and accountable, to confirm whether the contracts are contained on the consolidated election commitment list or if they are somewhere separate?

Mr GILES: That would be a Cabinet document, and I would not be at liberty to tell you what is on a Cabinet document. As a former member of Cabinet, and minister within Cabinet, you would understand you cannot disclose the items and details of confidential documents held within Cabinet.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, in the previous government, the Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, in being open and accountable around election commitments, had a consolidated list of election commitments and tabled them in parliament, then provided updates to parliament of his election commitments. Would you be doing the same?

Mr GILES: No. We will govern the way we see fit. We made commitments to support Territorians by reducing the cost of living, increase the level of housing, build an economy not based on just one industrial opportunity, and ensure we provide positive responses to everyone in the Northern Territory, not just Labor favourites. We have a range of things we want to do. We will govern, and that is the job we are doing.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, why would you not provide an update to the Territory public on the progress of your election commitments – which is a vehicle of parliament?

Mr GILES: There has been media releases issued about what we have delivered on. We have delivered on all bar three or four election commitments.

Ms LAWRIE: You have delivered on all bar three or four of your election commitments?

Mr GILES: A statement put out a while ago about ...

Ms LAWRIE: We have gone through about 10 and you had not delivered on a single one. You have 100 broken ones at the moment.

Mr GILES: A statement was put out some time ago by the former Chief Minister in regard to our performance in relation to election commitments, and in relation to your 100-day plan in particular. We have been working tirelessly to make improvements in the Northern Territory. Look at the work of the Tourist Commission, as an example of an election commitment, and what the Tourist Commission has been doing to build tourism as a base to support economic growth, something you let go for the last 11 years of your government. There is a range of things we have been doing in relation to election commitments. Things have been performing very well and we will continue to go forward. If you want to do a search to find out what we promised and what has been delivered, go ahead and spend your time doing that. I am interested in policy debate to support the growth of the Northern Territory and, in particular, improvement in social services.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, we have a list of your election commitments ...

Mr GILES: You do not need me to find one then, member for Karama? You are very tricky.

Ms LAWRIE: ... which were provided to Treasury in the lead-up to the 2012 election. That was part of the FITA process where major parties were asked if they wanted to submit their election commitments and costings to Treasury and an analysis be made public. Chief Minister, none of the community contracts were contained in those costings submitted to Treasury - not one. There is no public consolidated list. The contracts seem to be sitting outside it. They have, therefore, been described by me as unfunded because they were not in the costings submitted to Treasury. Can you explain why they were not?

Mr GILES: Can you explain why you did not do anything in the areas when these contracts were signed? Why do we need to go to Borrooloola to provide strategic approaches to improving serviceability? Why do we have to go there with an economic approach because you never did it in the previous government? You had 11 years to make changes in Wadeye and Maningrida ...

Ms LAWRIE: You are unaware of the new subdivisions in Borrooloola?

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, I ask you to again hold the floor when it is my turn to speak. We are going to Borrooloola, Maningrida, Wadeye, the Tiwi Islands, Yuendumu and places that desperately need some form of economic development opportunity and the provision of services and infrastructure. We have four years to try to deliver some of this before the next election comes up. Put up your alternative approach at that point in time - in the next four years.

At present, there is a long agenda for us. If we did not have \$5.5bn worth of debt you left as a legacy, we could roll out that money at a much earlier stage. We have to manage different things and different priorities, and it makes it much harder when the federal government, through the roads funding in particular, decides not to give us funding for nation building other than to put in \$70m. They talk about Tiger Brennan Drive, which does not come into effect for three years, but grandstand saying they are doing things when our money will be doing the work this financial year with tenders out at the moment to do Dinah Beach Road to Woolner Road. We are out there doing the job.

You had 11 years to do something at Borrooloola and did nothing. You messed up SIHIP.

Ms LAWRIE: Did you not notice the new subdivision at Borrooloola? The new sewerage works?

Chief Minister, why will you not say why the election commitments in the bush contained in the community contracts were not in the election commitments submitted to Treasury for costing? Why will you not answer that?

Mr GILES: Ask the Treasurer. You are asking a question about Treasury. Ask the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: I asked the Treasurer and he referred me to you as the Chief Minister. He said the election commitments ...

Mr GILES: You obviously did not ask well enough because you are asking a question about Treasury. It should go to the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: I asked the Treasurer yesterday and he made it very clear that election commitments fall under the responsibility of the Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: It is unfortunate you did not ask the question appropriately. If you want to ask a question about Treasury and Treasury modelling or analysis, ask the Treasurer in the right output group.

Ms LAWRIE: I did not ask for an economic analysis. I asked why the election commitments contained within the community contracts with remote communities were not submitted to Treasury as part of the costings. The Treasurer told me to ask you, the Chief Minister, and his reasoning was election commitments fall under your responsibility. They are coordinated under the Chief Minister. They were contracts signed by the Chief Minister. Granted the Chief Minister has changed, but you have accepted you will honour those contracts.

Mr GILES: If you have a question for Treasury put it to the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: It is a question for you, Chief Minister. Why were they not part of the costings submitted to Treasury?

Mr GILES: If you have a question for Treasury about Treasury, ask the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: No! I specifically asked the Treasury today.

Mr GILES: I have heard your question a thousand times, member for Karama. Deputy Chair, I ask you to adjudicate on this. We are going around in circles. A question has been put by the member for Karama in relation to things being submitted to the Treasury. It is clearly a question for the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: He referred it to you.

Mr GILES: You did not ask the question properly.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, if the question is not going anywhere, and if the Chief Minister has directed you to the Treasurer, perhaps it should be directed to the Treasurer. Could you continue to the next question?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, the election commitments and whether or not you have a consolidated list, and whether or not the remote election commitments sit on the consolidated list, you will not provide it to us or disclose whether it is an entire consolidated list, is that right?. Do you believe it is important, as Chief Minister, to get costings against all of the commitments and understand what the financial liability of that would be?

Mr GILES: We will determine how we govern on an internal basis. We make detailed analysis about a range of different issues - how we can best prioritise investment and spending of our money, and we will continue to do that.

Ms LAWRIE: At this stage you would not be able to provide any advice on what they would cost?

Mr GILES: I am not going to provide any advice about hypotheticals. I am unaware of what you are specifically talking about.

Ms LAWRIE: Election commitments are not hypothetical, they are in writing. They are provided by the CLP in the campaign, albeit through a variety of sources, but they are not hypothetical. They are commitments provided by the CLP in writing. Could you provide advice on what they total?

Mr GILES: We will take a question on notice about it.

Ms LAWRIE: Including the remote community ones.

Question on Notice No 3.3

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could you please restate the question for Hansard.

Ms LAWRIE: Please provide advice on what the election commitments made by the CLP in the August 2012 election totalled, including the commitments made in the remote community contracts?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: I will take the question and refer it to individual ministers to provide their analysis and refer that back to the Treasurer. He will be able to provide the response.

Ms LAWRIE: Happy with that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama of the Minister has been allocated number 3.3.

Ms LAWRIE: I am pretty well done on written Question 1.

Mr GILES: I should point out, Madam Deputy Chair, I do not propose to sit here until all hours of the morning then come back tomorrow just for the sake of you playing games at estimates. I propose to answer questions relating to the budget and scrutiny of the budget, but not for the pursuit of games. If we want good policy analysis and budget analysis we have to have good questions.

I know it is hard coming into opposition for the first time. From my point of view it is not about games, it is about getting the right answers to the right questions.

Question 2:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between CLP election commitments and the decisions and policies of government since 26 August 2012.

The answer is to refer to response to Question 1.

Ms LAWRIE: I have a discrepancy question, Chief Minister, about the promise made that all ministerial travel details would be published on a website. Where on the Internet are details of you taking seven colleagues to a concert in Western Australia?

Mr GILES: I do not accept the premise of the question. There was no case where I took any of my colleagues to a concert so that should be ruled incorrect.

Ms LAWRIE: The Kimberley Moon Experience.

Mr GILES: In relation to the publication of ministerial travel, that will be done. It has not been done yet but will be done at a later date.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you have an indication of when you will get that website up and happening?

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: A week?

Mr GILES: No

Ms LAWRIE: Do you intend to do it soon?

Mr GILES: It will be done when it reaches the highest priority and we consider it necessary to put it in place. At this point it is important to ensure we deliver a budget, we go through an estimates process, we concentrate on repaying Labor's \$5.5bn debt and fixing Labor's mistakes such as ensuring we have an adequate supply of housing, we treat people with chronic alcohol issues, we protect women who are victims of domestic violence, we have a reduction in the number of inmates in prison, we have a strong economy for our future rather than a one industry economy, and that we have a future in the Northern Territory.

The publication of ministerial travel on a website is not as high a priority as addressing the issues and concerns of women who are being continually beaten as a result of alcohol dependency of some individuals in our community. That is a higher priority than focusing on publication of that information.

We are open and transparent and I am happy to provide anyone the information, but the website has not been developed. I do not have a date it will be developed, but it will happen.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you provide on the Internet the details of your Deputy Chief Minister's private jet travel to China?

Mr GILES: I believe the Treasurer answered that question yesterday.

Ms LAWRIE: Would that on the Internet when that website is developed?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you been on the private jet your Deputy Chief Minister travelled on?

Mr GILES: I do not believe this fits in with Question 2.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, are these questions relevant to ...

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, they are.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I do not believe it is. The questions says:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between CLP election commitments and the decisions and policies of the government since 26 August 2012.

It is not talking about ...

Ms LAWRIE: Within the election commitment was 'open and accountable' ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: ... a plane or anything else. We can move on with the questions and can you please refer to questions that have to be answered.

Ms LAWRIE: Sure, but I want to point out an election commitment to be open and accountable exists. The election commitment to put details of travel on the Internet exists. Chief Minister, I will ask you again, have you been on the private jet your Deputy Chief Minister travelled on?

Mr GILES: This is not a relevant to Question 2.

Ms LAWRIE: Did you travel on the private jet with Gina Rinehart?

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, this is not relevant to Question 2.

Ms LAWRIE: Did you travel on the private jet, with Gina Rinehart, to attend a CLP fundraiser in Darwin?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, please go to the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: The next question is ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: You are repeating the question. Could you please go to the next question? It is irrelevant.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you not recall it?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: That was brought up yesterday in relation to Treasury. The boat has gone. You have jumped the ship. You should have brought it up yesterday. You asked the Treasurer and he answered you. It is not relevant to the Chief Minister. Opposition Leader, could we please move to the next question? You are holding the line up. You have asked the same question five times. Could we please move to the next question?

Ms LAWRIE: To be clear, Chief Minister, I am asking about your travel not the Deputy Chief Minister's. There is a distinction. I am asking about your travel as Chief Minister.

Chief Minister, have you travelled on the private jet? Have you travelled on the private jet with Gina Rinehart? Did you travel on the private jet with Gina Rinehart to attend a CLP fundraiser in Darwin?

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, I am happy to answer any travel-related questions in the travel-related section.

Ms LAWRIE: Why will you not answer it now?

Mr GILES: You follow a process. Your question says:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between CLP election commitments and the decisions and policies ...

It does not ask, 'Whose plane did you travel on?'

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Do you have any more questions?

Ms LAWRIE: I will ask that under travel because he is refusing to answer it now.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Could you leave it until he gets to travel?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you load the details of your Tourism minister's two-week trip across Europe onto the Internet?

Mr GILES: All ministerial travel will be made public in an open and transparent way.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay, and so ...

Mr GILES: You are able to ask the minister for Tourism about his travel when you question him.

Ms LAWRIE: When the site is operating, will all travel since you came to government be on the Internet?

Mr GILES: To repeat an answer you clearly did not hear, yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Excellent, thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Next question.

Mr GILES: Question 3:

Progress on all commitments and policy announcements made within government press releases and media statements made since 26 August 2012.

In relation to the Chief Minister's department, which media releases are you referring to?

Ms LAWRIE: All media releases you have issued, as Chief Minister, this year.

Mr GILES: All the ones I have issued as Chief Minister?

Ms LAWRIE: Also those issued by your predecessor, because we have had two Chief Ministers under the CLP.

Mr GILES: You have indicated you want information in that area. I can give you a couple of answers, like the establishment of the Northern Territory Economic Development Advisory Panel: \$400 000 for 2013-14 and 2014-15. The Economic Development Advisory Panel was established and met in early May. The unit is established within DCM. We have Doug McTaggart, Ian Smith, and Paul Henderson who, as you may recall, is a former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. All those people are providing a valuable contribution to the panel and we believe will provide a substantial level of information and support to help grow the Northern Territory.

Many people asked questions about the appointment of Paul Henderson. I thought he would provide valuable contribution, and he has. However, should you seek to leave parliament in the future I will not be calling you, former Treasurer, because of the way you managed the Northern Territory economy. I would never come to you for financial or industrial advice in any circumstance.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Any questions?

Ms LAWRIE: No.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Next one.

Mr GILES: Question 4:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between commitment and policy announcements made within government press releases and the actual implementation of government policy and funding decisions.

Refer to Question 3.

Question 5:

Progress and all commitments, targets and information contained within the December 2012 mini-budget.

Refer to Question 3.

Question 6:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between details, data and policy contained within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2013 budget.

Refer to response to Question 3.

Question 7:

Progress on the implementation of all signed written contracts with Territory communities.

We have already discussed that.

Question 8:

Details on staff movements and all costs resulting from all Administrative Arrangements changes since 26 August 2012.

Details on staff movements will be addressed by the Office of the Commissioner for the Public Employment. The Department of the Chief Minister incurred a cost of \$2000 resulting from Administrative Arrangements changes. This relates to the transfer of the Office of Women's Policy and the Office of Youth Affairs.

Ms LAWRIE: The Public Employment section of estimates will deal with the costs associated with dismissal of CEOs?

Mr GILES: It will deal with all employment matters.

Question 9:

Details on staff movements and payouts and all costs including ministerial office relocation costs resulting from portfolio reshuffles since 26 August 2012.

Staff movements are being answered from a whole-of-government perspective by the Minister for Public Employment.

Total costs for ministerial office relocations are: change of government costs \$26 639, which includes cleaning of \$2045, removalists of \$9272, and the portfolio reshuffle component of \$4224.

That initial amount I quoted of \$26 639 was the global figure, including those other ones, and was also in relation to the change from a Labor government to a Country Liberals government, and includes an amount of \$15 232 for cleaning of bins. This is mainly for clearing shredded paperwork in the changeover period between Labor and the Country Liberal Party.

Question 10:

Details and costs on all government advertising and communications since 26 August 2012.

All Department of the Chief Minister's marketing costs are broken down by the various mediums used depending on requirements. I will read out a full list of marketing materials produced for 2013 shortly.

Expenditure for 2012-13 includes the secureNT campaign to support the Territory community to be prepared for cyclones, bushfires and other emergency situations. This campaign is jointly funded by the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments. The Northern Territory government's contribution from 26 August 2012 to 31 March 2013 was \$73 000.

The Northern Territory was promoted nationally and internationally through trade exhibitions and contributions.

There has been a significant reduction in the amount of money spent on advertising and communication expenses from the previous financial year and I will go through those. This is the Department of the Chief Minister Advertising and Communication expenses, and it has my private workings on this so I cannot table it. In regard to advertising ...

Ms LAWRIE: We are happy with a clean copy.

Mr GILES: I do not have a clean copy.

Ms LAWRIE: Do any of your officials have a clean copy?

Mr GILES: No they do not, I am sorry. I will read it out.

Advertising, including newspapers, radio, television, magazine journals, online, and outdoor banners, for 2012-13 was \$299 000. This compares to the full 2011-12 financial year of \$778 000 under a Labor government. Marketing, including displays, events and exhibitions, brochures, leaflets, promotional merchandise, multimedia including DVDs and CDs, newsletters, market research, photography, editorials, consultation and planning, market websites and media monitoring, for the period 26 August to 31 March 2013 was \$228 000 under the current government. For the previous Labor government in the 2011-12 financial year it was \$1.277m.

When you add up advertising and marketing, the Country Liberals government has spent, for the 2012-13 financial year to the end of March, \$526 000. The Labor government for the full financial year -12 months as opposed to nine months - was \$2.055m. It is nine months versus 12 months, but it is important to note the \$526 000 includes the whole financial year, but when you look at between 26 August – I might clarify that - the \$526 000, the \$299 000, and the \$228 000 were projected figures for the financial year.

I will go back one step. Between 1 July and 26 August 2012, the previous Labor government spent \$155 000 on advertising and marketing in nearly two-months ...

Ms LAWRIE: Would it help to table a clean copy?

Mr GILES: In the period from 26 August to 31 March, the Country Liberal government spent \$372 000. In the seven month period we spent \$370 000, and in the two month period you spent \$155 000. In the previous financial year, which I will go back to, you spent \$778 000 on advertising and \$1.277m on marketing, or \$2.055m on advertising and communications expenses. It is projected this financial year to be a spend of \$526 000, as opposed to last financial year, which was \$2.055m.

I am unsure why you would ask that question because, clearly, you will be four times over our projection. We are spending 25% of what the former government spent.

Ms LAWRIE: Excellent.

Mr GILES: I am happy to table this document.

Ms LAWRIE: Fantastic. I thought it had your private markings on it. That is great.

On that answer, while you are tabling the document, Chief Minister, you say you are projected to spend \$526 000? I note you have an official with a clean copy, despite your previous answer. Seriously! I did not believe I would have to remind you, but I saw an official hand over a copy of a document you said they did not have. I will remind you what I have reminded your colleagues.

Mr GILES: I do not need reminding by you about how things work.

Ms LAWRIE: You know false or misleading evidence may constitute contempt of the Assembly.

Chief Minister, you said you project to spend \$526 000 this financial year. Is that your benchmark? Is that what you will commit to ongoing as an upper limit? Let us round it up to \$550 000, or round it down to \$525 000. Is that what you will cap as expenditure in this area recurrent from now until 2016?

Mr GILES: I said we spent \$372 000 between 26 August and 31 March. We anticipate for this financial year that expenditure will be \$526 000. We will continue to be fiscally responsible. We will not put the Territory in a debt burden like you did. When we came into government, there was \$5.5bn worth of debt. We will continue to take financial measures to cut as much spending as we can, but ensure we are able to do our job. I commit that, in line with your previous financial year of \$2m a year just from DCM for advertising and marketing, we will not spend above that in the financial year plus CPI. We are looking at 25% of that right now.

Ms LAWRIE: You are saying in the future you will spend up to \$2m plus CPI year on year. You will be well and truly above \$2m!

Mr GILES: We will never spend more than what Labor did, plus CPI.

Ms LAWRIE: You are lauding you have fiscal parameters around that item of spending and how fantastic you are, but you will spend up to it.

Mr GILES: You spent \$2m in one financial year, out of DCM, on advertising and marketing ...

Ms LAWRIE: That will increase the DCM budget by \$8m.

Mr GILES: ... including \$214 000 on consultation and planning and \$459 000 on brochures and leaflets. How much will we spend this financial year? Our projection is \$23 000. You spent \$459 000 on brochures and leaflets!

Ms LAWRIE: Is communications review cost contained within that amount?

Mr GILES: Ask the question in the right section.

Ms LAWRIE: It is pertinent to that.

Mr GILES: It is not in this section. You have a process to follow; follow the process.

Ms LAWRIE: Is the communications review separate to that amount? I do not have the tabled list. I could look as soon as I receive it, or you can answer now. Is the cost of the communications review contained within that tabled document?

Mr GILES: We will get to the communications review when we reach that question.

Ms LAWRIE: Is the answer no.

Mr GILES: I am happy to give you the information but we will follow the process.

Ms LAWRIE: Answer the question, Chief Minister, is the communications review contained in the costs?

Mr GILES: Have you finished with Question 10, member for Karama?

Ms LAWRIE: Question 10, is that cost contained within there?

Mr GILES: Are you finished with the ...

Ms LAWRIE: Chair, can I wait for the tabled item? Thank you. For the public record, the communication review cost is not contained in the Department of the Chief Minister advertising communications expenses. That was not too difficult.

Mr GILES: Question 11:

Full details on all government advertising in breach of The Public Information Act as identified by the Auditor General since August 26 2012.

The response is being prepared by the Auditor-General's Office.

Question 12:

Full breakdown of all ministerial office expenditure since 26 August 2012.

I have some notes on this one too. It will be a challenge.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you table them?

Mr GILES: No, I will not table my notes.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you table a copy your officials will have in their folders?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Leader of the Opposition, could we hear the Chief Minister out? He has to read from his notes first then you can question them. Is that okay?

Ms LAWRIE: As an explanation - this is not being cute at all - these tables were normally tabled in previous estimates. What I am asking is normal.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: If they are personal notes and he chooses not to do it, that is it.

Ms LAWRIE: His officials have clean copies.

Mr GILES: For a breakdown of ministerial office expenditure: total employee expenses are \$5.7m, essential expenses are \$698 000, travel expenses \$929 000, consultant fees \$77 000, entertainment and hospitality \$36 000, marketing and promotion \$95 000, document production \$26 000, and other purchase of goods and services \$238 000. Total operational expenses are \$2.1m. Total expenditure for 26 August 2012 to March 2013 is \$7.8m. That is seven months.

For the financial year 2011-12, where we spent \$5.7m on employee expenses, the Labor government spent \$11.249m on employee expenses. On operational expenses, the Country Liberals, in seven months, spent \$2.1m and the Labor government spent \$4.65m for that 12-month period. The total operational expenditure for the Country Liberals government in a seven month period from 26 August 2012 to 31 March 2013 is \$7.823m. The total for Labor over the 12-month period is \$15.9m.

Clearly, Labor has spent more and we have cut costs in our own back yard to ensure we are an efficient, leaner, meaner government.

Ms LAWRIE: In the interests of open and accountable transparency and the normal process of estimates, where those tables have been tabled in the past, Chief Minister, I again ask you to table them. If you are not comfortable tabling your copy with handwritten notes, would you at take it as a question on notice or see if your officials have a clean copy of the table? It is normal practice to table it.

Mr GILES: Yes, I am happy to table it.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Chief Minister.

Question 13:

A full list of all forced redundancies across all agencies including an explanation for each redundancy or why it was necessary to breach the CLP's election commitment that no public servant would be sacked.

A response is being prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Question 14:

A full list of all personnel who have left the Northern Territory Public Sector and then returned since 26 August 2012 including payout and settlement details.

A response is being prepared by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment.

Question 15:

Details on all government tenders, contracts and grants awarded or granted since 26 August 2012 ...

There is a community grants program that is not specifically allocated. It has no application process and is at the Chief Minister's discretion.

If you are talking about government tenders, I believe you went through some of that with the Minister for Business yesterday. Every minister will have tenders in their own areas. If they have a capital works program or business they are conducting they will go to public tender. You should ask that question of them. Each minister is preparing a response, and also in regard to grants and contracts.

Ms LAWRIE: What about those that fall under the Department of the Chief Minister? For example, the tender for the communications and media review.

Mr GILES: I will seek some advice on that. Yes I have all that. What would you like to know?

Ms LAWRIE: Can you table the list ...

Mr GILES: No, what would you like to know?

Ms LAWRIE: Written Question 15, which you have had for a month, Chief Minister, asks for details ...

Mr GILES: Are you asking about the review of the marketing communications secretariat?

Ms LAWRIE: Is that the only tender, contract, or grant you have awarded out of the department?

Mr GILES: That contract went to First Class ...

Ms LAWRIE: Answer the first question first! Is that the only ...

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you have a list before you of all the tenders, contracts, and grants the Department of the Chief Minister has awarded since ...

Mr GILES: If you ask about a specific tender I am happy to give you details.

Ms LAWRIE: I am asking for details of all of them. You have had this question for a month.

Mr GILES: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Why will you not provide it?

Mr GILES: I will answer anything you like. You have asked a question about the review of marketing.

Ms LAWRIE: All of them.

Mr GILES: I am happy to tell you First Class (NT) Pty Ltd was awarded a contract of \$26 400 to review marketing communications secretariats. I can read out more if you like.

Ms LAWRIE: All the details.

Mr GILES: There was a consultancy for research services for two months awarded to Francine Thomson for \$20 625.

Ms LAWRIE: I missed the amount for media and communications.

Mr GILES: \$26 400.

There was a review of NT Government Fleet requirements of \$22 000.

Ms LAWRIE: To whom?

Mr GILES: To Fleet Management NT. Because Fleet Management is a separate business, we pay them separately.

Ms LAWRIE: That is why it is normally tabled, Chief Minister. Could you table it?

Mr GILES: No, I am happy to read through it.

Ms LAWRIE: Are you refusing to table it, Chief Minister?

Mr GILES: I am happy to read all the information.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Chief Minister has stated he is happy to read through it.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you table it after you read it?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: If you could let the Chief Minister read through it, then you can ask questions to it.

Mr GILES: A tender for provision of workshops with Islamic youth in the Northern Territory went to Charles Darwin University for \$35 000. There was a tender for the provision of support and maintenance services for the Cabinet SharePoint application to Simient Pty Ltd for \$15 620.

The Multicultural Affairs sponsorship program, round 1, was 35 applications for \$778 480; round 2, 13 applications for \$30 700. The round 1 approved applications were some of the commitments made by the former Labor government that we had to fulfil - and we fulfilled them.

Harmony Day, there were 48 applications for a total of \$34 630. Cultural and Linguistic grants - two grants for \$8900. A grant for Quick Response for seven approved applications for \$8600. Multicultural community facilities grants - six applications for \$244 000.

I have been advised some of those I have been reading out are for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and for Young Territorians. He can give more of a breakdown. I was reading through the whole of DCM, which include some for minister Styles.

Tender for design and build of the 2013 NTG show display for Fusion Displays and Graphic Pty Ltd, \$28 250.20.

There is consultancy for strategic consultation advice on supply of gas to Gove to Dr Edward Keith Campbell of \$103 854.

There is tender for the provision of online search facility to a company called Captivate for \$20 086.

There is tender for the supply, delivery and installation of 500 bollards of recycled black plastic material to identified sites across 15 Alice Springs town camps by a company called Bullant Building for \$53 760.

That is tenders and contracts. The other ones I have, including some of the ones I read out, are under minister Styles, who will have other ones.

Hang on a second, sorry. I have some more of mine.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I thought so. A few I know about are missing.

Mr GILES: Community Support grants between \$0 and \$10 000 - 36 approved grants for \$140 478.99; \$10 001 to \$50 000 - 12 applications for \$308 217.58; \$50 001 to \$100 000 - 3 grants for \$201 000; and for \$100 000-plus there have been two approved applications for \$350 000. That is the exhaustive list.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, given they were requested under Written Question 15 which you have had for a month:

Details on all government tenders, contracts and grants awarded or granted since 26 August ...

and you have itemised the Department of the Chief Minister list which captured Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Young ...

Mr GILES: Six of them are in the wrong area.

Ms LAWRIE: ... where would the details of the contract for the Renewable Management Board be?

Mr GILES: Is that a specific question or is it a briefing?

Ms KIRKMAN: No, it is just a briefing.

Mr GILES: Do you want to wait for the output area?

Ms LAWRIE: No, a point of clarification. The Renewable Management Board would have been contracts?

Mr GILES: It was done under Certificate of Exemption.

Ms LAWRIE: Could you provide details on the contracts under the Certificate of Exemption?

Mr GILES: it is not supposed to be in this area of questioning, but I am happy to break the rules on this occasion, member for Karama, and provide that to you.

Following the change of government, it was very important for the new Northern Territory Country Liberals government to understand how bad the fiscal position of the Northern Territory was. There had been rumours the financial position was in a diabolical state and we thought it was imperative to take on board some experts to have a good analytical look at it, keeping in the back of our minds there was \$5.5bn looming debt left to us by the former Treasurer, the member for Karama. It was in a very poor fiscal state and we put these people on to identify the exact position, look at what legacy items there were, what the financial position was, what the interests payments were, and where we could look at options to provide fiscal responses.

We identified things such as 90 child protection staff with no funding to pay their salaries. This is where the former Treasurer was borrowing money to pay child protection staff. We had animal welfare officers put on in response to the Mataranka Cattle debacle of the former government without any money allocated to their salaries. The former Treasurer and her government were borrowing money to pay debts. We had to work out exactly where the legacy items were. There was a plethora of legacy items, so the Renewal Management Board was established on 4 September 2012, contracted for a period of six months, and ceased on 3 March 2013.

The role of the RMB was to review the Territory's financial position. It comprised the Chair, Dr Neil Conn, two deputy Chairs, Mr Ken Clarke and Mr John Gardner, and support advice from Barry Coulter and the Secretary to Cabinet, Mr Col Fuller. The members were procured as consultants under Certificate of Exemption, section 5 of the *Procurement Act*. The certificate was signed by the minister for Procurement and exempts the contracts from all procurement requirements. Ancillary support benefits included in all contracts were for rental payments for furnished accommodation, provision of a Northern Territory government vehicle, business class airfares and relocation expenses. The total cost was \$1.1m.

Ms LAWRIE: Does that cost include wages and the cost of rental?

Mr GILES: I will go through the whole thing for you.

Ms LAWRIE: Thorough breakdowns, that is excellent. Thanks.

Mr GILES: A breakdown of costs is as follows: accommodation \$114 192; airfares and travel disbursements \$41 665; RMB provision for service fee \$769 996; external consultant Northern Territory Fleet \$34 684; office expenditure disbursements \$25 962; relocation expenditure \$21 555; salaries for NTPS employees \$100 715; and vehicle expenditure \$29 385. The budget was received for 2012-2013 through Treasurer's Advance of \$1.1m, and there are no further budget implications from here on.

Ms LAWRIE: What was the weekly cost of accommodation for members of the Renewal Management Board?

Mr GILES: I do not have the weekly cost with me but I can take it on notice.

Ms LAWRIE: They were accommodated?

Mr GILES: I do not have that information. I will have it take it on notice.

Ms LAWRIE: The location of the accommodation?

Mr GILES: I do not have any further information.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, would you like to restate the question.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, can I make a point of clarification? I do not have any further information on the RMB. If you have a number of questions you might want to put them all on notice.

Ms LAWRIE: I will step through that and you can ...

Mr GILES: If the member for Karama can read the questions out we can come back to them.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: She has to read them onto the record for Hansard.

Question on Notice No 3.4

Ms LAWRIE: Your government commissioned the Renewal Management Board to audit the Territory finances. Can you provide the exact amount each RMB member was paid, including accommodation, hospitality and expenses, which hotel or apartment they were accommodated at, and the cost of that on a weekly basis? Were they provided with Northern Territory Fleet vehicles? If so, for what period, what was the make and model of the vehicle, and what was the mileage used? Were the vehicles available to just themselves, or to other members of their family?

Mr GILES: Will happily table those questions on notice, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the questions?

Mr GILES: Happy to take the questions on notice.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: You accept the questions?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama has been allocated number 3.4.

Ms LAWRIE: The Renewal Management Board is \$1.1m of expenditure in six months. We have received the progress report, and there was a commitment by the previous Chief Minister to deliver the final report in March this year and release it publicly. Will you provide that final report?

Mr GILES: No, the final report is in Cabinet. We will wait until Cabinet decides whether it should be released or not.

Ms LAWRIE: The former Chief Minister made a public commitment to release the final report, and seemed very comfortable with that, but you seem reticent to release the final report. What has gone wrong?

Mr GILES: I do not have significant concerns whether it is released or not, but it is a Cabinet decision. If you want to ask a question about the former Chief Minister, ask the former Chief Minister. Cabinet has not approved it to be released, so it will not be released.

Ms LAWRIE: The commitment the former Chief Minister made, as a Chief Minister ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, I remind you, under Standing Order 62, to stop using offensive or unbecoming words to insult or interrogate the Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: Ask her to withdraw.

Ms LAWRIE: Withdraw what? What was offensive?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: You keep referring to the former Chief Minister.

Ms LAWRIE: He is the former Chief Minister!

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Comments were made in the past, I understand that, but if you could refer to the current Chief Minister instead of the former Chief Minister in your question.

Ms LAWRIE: It is not offensive to say 'former Chief Minister'.

Mr GILES: We should get on with the questions, member for Karama.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: You have been doing it all day. You are using it as a political tactic.

Ms LAWRIE: What?

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair.

Ms LAWRIE: Really?

Mr GILES: Can I ask that the member for Karama ask her next question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you get on with the question and stop referring to the former Chief Minister. He is the current Chief Minister. Direct your questions to the Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. The terms of reference directed this report be given to Cabinet; it is still with Cabinet. Cabinet will decide when it should be released. The work of the people on the Renewal Management Board provided a sound basis for a new government coming in, identifying the level of waste and the financial discrepancies the previous Labor government, particularly you as former Treasurer, left us in and the level of debt burden. I have already mentioned the legacy items we had to fund. We did not just come in with that debt and huge deficit of \$1.4bn as projected, we had legacy items on top of that which we had to look at - \$100m plus. There were enormous amounts of funding commitments we had to make. We were not only seeking to provide saving measures to reduce the deficit, to reduce the debt, we had to provide saving measures to cover the cost of the legacy items you did not allocate resources to. You borrowed money on the credit card to pay people's salaries.

That was the challenge. It is important to note expenditure on the RMB was a valuable exercise which provided us with insight about our financial position. It looked at the financial modelling around the Marine Supply Base and the hidden costs around the failed Asset Management System, about which you had many conversations in Cabinet. It showed the extent of the initial modelling, which was around \$12.9m, from memory. It is now out above \$30m and is expected to go way beyond \$70m. The RMB identified exactly where the waste was.

When you look at the amount of expenditure on this to find your cost blowouts for us to fix - another thing we have to fix as a new government coming in – it was a worthwhile exercise. I look forward to the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, what date did Cabinet receive the final report?

Mr GILES: I will take that on notice. The RMB finished on 3 March 2013, so I anticipate around 3 March.

Question on Notice No 3.5

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Karama, you have a question on notice.

Ms LAWRIE: What date did Cabinet receive the final report of the Renewal Management Board?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: Yes, it is a great question. I am happy to talk more about Labor debt legacies.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Karama of the minister has been allocated number 3.5.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister in the progress report the Renewal Management Board said Police will require an additional \$48m in repairs and maintenance. Why was that not contained in the budget you just handed down?

Mr GILES: I suggest you ask the minister for Police in the right output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Why was the \$35m extra for child protection, which your management board said was critical, not in the budget?

Mr GILES: I suggest you ask the minister for Child Protection that question in the right output area.

Ms LAWRIE: The Renewal Management Board's progress report said asset sale options are available to reduce debt and will be explored as part of the continuing review of the process post budget. Can you table that review of the asset sales?

Mr GILES: What review?

Ms LAWRIE: The review the Renewal Management Board said should occur. Has it occurred?

Mr GILES: There has been no review of asset sales.

Ms LAWRIE: You did not implement that recommendation of the progress report?

Mr GILES: There has been no review of asset sales.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, do you rule out selling or leasing the port?

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, we should get back to the questions. This question is ...

Ms LAWRIE: It is in the Renewal Management Board report. We are talking about the report you paid \$1.1m for.

Mr GILES: With all due respect, member for Karama, you asked a question which was out of order in the process. I said I would give you the answer. We should go back to the order of questions. When we get to some of those other questions, we will get to them.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you want me to ask these questions in policy ...

Mr GILES: Once we finish the Written Questions you can ask them under the right outcome area.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: When it comes to the correct Written Question.

Mr GILES: Question 16:

Details on the procurement processes undertaken and the employment contracts for the employment within the Northern Territory public sector since 26 August 2012 of all former CLP and Liberal party candidates and members of parliament at Territory or federal level.

The response will be provided by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. However, CLP or Liberal Party membership is not a prerequisite for employment in any position in the Northern Territory public service, unlike under the former Labor government where people had to be a member of a union.

Question 17:

Full details and costs of all ministerial travel including accommodation, hospitality and flight details including flight travel class since 26 August 2012.

Total travel, including accommodation and hospitality costs, from 26 August 2012 to 31 March 2013 was \$535 758: \$60 822 for accommodation; \$334 897 for airfares; \$133 933 for travel allowance; and \$6107 for hospitality. The number of business class airfares is 40; the number of economy class airfares is 113; and the number of mixed class airfares is eight. I have some breakdown of that, but before I provide it say I know where opposition wants to go with this. They want to start attacking the current government for how much it costs us to do business, particularly considering there are four ministers living in Alice Springs and one in Katherine. Clearly, there will be an additional cost in us doing business.

There is a standard entitlement set by the tribunal for the class of travel people can use, and of TA and types of TA people receive. It is quite clear that being from Alice Springs I will have higher levels of travel expenses for flights and TA. I know this is where you are going. You are setting it up for next year and for the election so you can say, 'This is how much money is being spent'. It is also going to be an issue for my colleagues, ministers Conlan, Westra van Holthe, Anderson and Lambley, because we are all regional government ministers.

The exciting opportunity from having ministers from all over the Northern Territory, including the northern suburbs, Darwin and Palmerston, is that we provide a level of governance which reflects the whole of the Northern Territory as opposed to the former government, which did not provide that. We contribute to the best interests of the whole of the Northern Territory. I want to put on the record that while parliament is situated in Darwin, you have ministers from outside Darwin and it is a cost of doing business which is set by an independent tribunal. It is not set by individual ministers.

It will be very difficult for us to keep those costs down because we need to be in Darwin, as we are now. I have had a flight and travel allowance paid so I can be here. If we were not here we would not be able to do our business. I understand the point you are trying to get to saying, 'Oh, what a waste of money!' I will go through the costs of individual ministers.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you table it after you have read it?

Mr GILES: I will table what I think is necessary when I think it is necessary.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, not being cute about this, but this is basic information.

Mr GILES: I am answering your question, member for Karama. You do not need to interrupt again.

Between 26 August 2012 and 31 March 2013, Chief Minister Giles has spent \$3373 on airfares and travel allowance of \$4023, totalling \$7396, with zero dollars for accommodation and zero dollars for hospitality expenses. Minister Giles spent \$677 on accommodation, \$17 907 on airfares, \$35 541 on travel allowance, hospitality of \$53 - total cost of \$54 178.

I can go through the totals of each individual minister without going through accommodation, airfares, travel allowance and hospitality: minister Tollner, \$16 280; minister Elferink, \$32 347; minister Lambley, \$54 240; minister Chandler, \$38 607; minister Westra van Holthe, \$97 249; minister Anderson, \$55 995; minister Conlan, \$102 677; minister Styles, \$2261; Hon Terry Mills, \$67 200; and Hon Lia Finocchiaro, \$1247. That is the total.

I explained costs were higher for members outside of Darwin. It is important when you look at the previous financial year - the previous government: the former Chief Minister at \$83 114; minister Burns, \$42 212 - and you do not mind if I use people's surnames as a minister?

Ms LAWRIE: No, not at all.

Mr GILES: Previous minister Vatskalis, \$68 091, which is pretty high for a Darwin-based minister; Minister Lawrie, \$42 586; Minister Knight, \$76 606; Minister Malarndirri McCarthy, \$78 422; minister Gerry McCarthy, \$51 352; and former minister Hampton, \$128 080.

Quite clearly, you can see minister Hampton, who was based in Alice Springs, at around \$130 000, is a direct reflection of how much it costs to do business when you are not based in Darwin, as opposed to other ministers who are based in Darwin, who were of a lesser amount.

That should provide clarity ...

Ms LAWRIE: Can you table that please, Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: If you go to ministerial officers, the total spent by Labor has been \$1.7m over a 12-month period. The total spent by the CLP over a seven-month period is \$930 000. On a per-monthly basis, Labor was spending \$141 000 and the Country Liberal Party was spending \$132 000. That is the total cost. You will see they are all my workings.

Ms LAWRIE: I am sure, therefore, you would be happy to table that information.

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: Why not, Chief Minister?

Mr GILES: Because they are my workings. I do the calculations.

Ms LAWRIE: Then give me the clean copy your officials have. This is basic level information that is tabled at estimates.

Mr GILES: For the purposes of those who report on this, it is important people understand the tribunal sets accommodation rates in a range of different ways. There is an option of travel accommodation per night, which is where the minister or the member receives \$447 per night. It the minister's responsibility to pay all travel costs, accommodation, incidentals, meals, and all the other expenses.

Option 2 is \$195 per night. That is where the accommodation is owned by the minister, or they hold a formal lease, with at least one month of the lease remaining - \$195 with no incidentals. Options 3 is \$149 if you have a choice of accommodation over one or two, such as staying with family and friends. Option 4 is if the department pays for the commercial accommodation, which I often find more expensive, particularly \$500 or \$600 a night as is often the case in Darwin with the accommodation crisis left to us by the former Labor government. You receive a rate of \$162 per night for incidentals.

That is the independent tribunal component. That provides sufficient information about travel.

Ms LAWRIE: You have had Written Question 17 for a month, Chief Minister. Will you provide ...

Mr GILES: That is how I managed to provide such succinct information.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, will you provide that information and table it?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Chief Minister, will you table the document.

Ms LAWRIE: It is provided at every estimates, Chief Minister. This is basic information for estimates that is always tabled - has been tabled for decades. I am not asking you to table something not tabled previously.

Mr GILES: No, I will provide the information. I am happy for you to read off *Hansard*.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, why will you not table it?

Mr GILES: Because they are my working documents and I do not want to table them.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you provide ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Chief Minister has said he will not table the documentation. You can read it from *Hansard*. We can we move on to the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you provide Written Question 17?

Mr GILES: I have already answered Question 17?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, but we are asking for a written version of it. You can have it as a question on notice and provide it by 11 July.

Mr GILES: I will take it on notice to provide you the Written Question. I will not be providing the written answer.

Ms LAWRIE: Excellent. If you do not want to table the handwritten notes, that is fine.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you restate the question for the record?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, please provide Written Question 17 as a written document.

Mr GILES: Sorry?

Ms LAWRIE: Please provide Written Question 17 as a tabled written document.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr WOOD: I presume you are asking for the answer.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, the answer, sorry.

Mr WOOD: You are going to get the question.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you provide the answer? Sorry, I did not think they were going to be that ...

Mr GILES: You asked for the written question. I am happy to give you the written question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Could the Opposition Leader restate the question for the record.

Ms LAWRIE: For the record, will you provide the answer to Written Question 17 as a written document?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept?

Mr GILES: No, the information is in the *Hansard* and I expect her to get it from the *Hansard*. We have provided that.

Ms Lawrie: What are you hiding?

Mr GILES: I am not hiding anything. I have read out all the information.

Ms LAWRIE: No, you have not read out all the information. You have not provided a breakdown of the details requested in the question. You have not provided the hospitality, flight details or the flight travel class. These were all contained within the question.

Mr GILES: Accommodation for minister Tollner \$3610 and airfares \$12 670. For minister Elferink accommodation was \$3845 and airfares \$28 003. That included five business class airfares and four economy class airfares. For minister Tollner, it was one business and six economy. For minister Lambley, 22 economy class airfares. As you know, between Alice Springs and Darwin there is only economy class. Minister Chandler had four business and five economy. Minister Van Holthe had four business and 20 economy, accommodation of \$30 284, airfares of \$42 454 and travel allowance ...

Ms LAWRIE: Is this domestic or international?

Mr GILES: ... minister Anderson, \$669 for accommodation, \$36 323 for airfares and \$19 000 for travel allowance. Minister Conlan had \$22 803 for accommodation, \$67 879 for airfares and \$11 994 for travel and accommodation. That included 20 business class airfares and two economy. There is a whole range of different things here.

Ms LAWRIE: I would like to see it. That is the point. You have had this question for a month, Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: Tell us exactly what is the question is and I will answer it.

Ms LAWRIE: I want full details and costs of all ministerial travel including accommodation, hospitality, flight details, including flight travel costs for the Chief Minister and all ministers.

Mr GILES: Who in particular? I have given you mine.

Ms LAWRIE: No, you have not.

Mr GILES: Yes, I did.

Ms LAWRIE: I cannot see it.

Mr GILES: In mine I had zero accommodation.

Ms LAWRIE: No accommodation?

Mr GILES: As Chief Minister, zero accommodation.

Ms LAWRIE: You used the RTD?

Mr GILES: I take the travel allowance option rather than have the department pay.

Ms LAWRIE: Right.

Mr GILES: Airfares are \$3373 and travel allowance of \$4023, totalling \$7396. As a minister I had \$677 in accommodation costs, \$17 907 in airfares and \$35 543 in travel allowance, totalling \$54 125 plus \$53 hospitality. All 20 of my flights were economy, no business.

Ms LAWRIE: Does that include the private jet you took from Alice Springs to Darwin with Gina Reinhart? Is that on there?

Mr GILES: There is no private jet on here for Adam Giles as minister or Chief Minister.

Ms LAWRIE: Did you travel on a private jet with Gina Reinhart?

Mr GILES: I travelled on a private jet with Gina Reinhart for the purpose of having a meeting at no expense to government.

Ms LAWRIE: Who covered the cost?

Mr GILES: Gina Reinhart.

Ms LAWRIE: You travelled on a private jet at the cost of Gina Reinhart. Was it the same private jet the Deputy Chief Minister has travelled on?

Mr GILES: I do not know what private jet the Deputy Chief Minister travelled on, but I know Gina Reinhart ...

Ms LAWRIE: Let us take ...

Mr GILES: Hang on, you have asked a question, listen to the answer.

Ms LAWRIE: Sure.

Mr GILES: Gina Reinhart asked to meet with me and happened to be travelling between Alice Springs and Darwin at the same time I was. That would have been a cost to the taxpayer. Instead, it cost the taxpayer nothing for that flight.

Ms LAWRIE: Was that the jet fitted out for the Queen of Jordan, owned by the Paspaley family and currently leased by John 'Foxy' Robinson?

Mr GILES: I understand the plane I travelled on, at no expense to government, is owned by a company in Perth.

Ms LAWRIE: It was not the luxury jet fitted out for the Queen of Jordan, owned by the Paspaley family and currently leased by John 'Foxy' Robinson?

Mr GILES: I understand it was not fitted out for a Queen, not fitted out for the Queen of Karama, the Queen, or anyone. It was a corporate jet on hire from someone in Perth. It really is none of my business because it cost me nothing. I had a private meeting for two hours on a plane talking with a business leader of Australia about business matters and the future of the Northern Territory and it cost the Northern Territory ...

Ms LAWRIE: What was the value of that flight on a private jet?

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, is there any value to this question?

Ms LAWRIE: It is very pertinent.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: It seems to be rolling in a ball over and over again.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair ...

Ms LAWRIE: What was the value?

Mr GILES: ... you are right. There is no value in a flight you do not pay for.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will move to the next question or I will take a five minute break.

Ms LAWRIE: Is your family provided with charters to visit you in Darwin, or separate to you?

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: On no occasion have they been provided with a charter to Darwin?

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay.

Mr GILES: Thank you for trying to attack my family. I really appreciate that, member for Karama. You are going down the personal angle once again.

Ms LAWRIE: You referred to the RTD.

Mr GILES: They have never had a charter to Darwin. Next question!

Ms LAWRIE: You referred to the RTD which, as you know, because I cannot see the lead-up ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader! Could we leave the personal attacks out.

Ms LAWRIE: Chair, I am going to respond to that.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I am now going to

Ms LAWRIE: I have the right to respond to that allegation.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: ...take a 10 minute break.

Ms LAWRIE: It was not a personal attack.

Mr GILES: Of course it was.

Ms LAWRIE: He did not provide the list and the breakdown.

Mr GILES: Of course it was.

Ms LAWRIE: If he provided it I could see if he called upon the RTD, where members of parliament have the right to take their spouses and dependents ...

Mr GILES: You are in the gutter again.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, under Standing Order 69 ...

Ms LAWRIE: Table it!

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: ... interruption of a member. Opposition Leader, you have asked him to table documentation and read out the documentation of every minister, not his family. I heard what you said ...

Ms LAWRIE: You referred to the RTD, which has the provision for dependents and spouses to travel with members.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes, you referred to that. You asked in regard to the RTD.

Ms LAWRIE: You will not table the document so I have to ask.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, you are on warning. If you speak to me like that one more time I will send you out. This is my warning. One more time!

We will 10 minutes now. I will give you 10 minutes to think about this. Thank you.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair.

Ms LAWRIE: I will do an FOI on that. So much for accountable and open.

The committee suspended.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.5

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, in relation to the last question on notice, I now have a clean copy so I am able to table it.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Chief Minister.

Answer to Written Question

Mr GILES: I am finding another tabled paper for you on grants and contracts. I read it out, but I am happy to table it for you. Full details and costs - that has Youth and Multicultural Affairs in there as well.

Mr GILES: Question 18:

Full details, costs and invitation lists for all ministerial hospitality since 26 August 2012.

This includes events hosted by Protocol and events hosted by ministerial officers.

The Department of the Chief Minister's Protocol Unit coordinate ministerial functions. There have been 46 functions since 26 August 2012 at a cost of \$164 017. There were 664 Northern Territory public service attendees and 5164 non-NTPS attendees at these functions.'

I am happy to table this document, too, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr GILES: Between 26 August 2012 and 31 March 2013, seven months, a combination of ministers spent \$164 017, including \$1101 by myself, as Chief Minister. There were hosted visits of \$1222. Also, minister Tollner \$18 701, minister Westra van Holthe \$6385, minister Lambley \$8165, minister Elferink \$2920, minister Conlan \$9043, and the member for Blain, when Chief Minister, of \$116 481.

A list will be tabled describing former ministers Henderson, Lawrie, Vatskalis, McCarthy, Hampton, Burns and hosted visits.

In the two months between 1 July and 26 August 2012, the former Labor government spent \$99 817. In seven months, the current government spent \$164 000. In less than a two-month period, the former Labor government spent \$54 000 or thereabouts each month. In seven months, the Country Liberals spent \$164 000. I am happy to table that. It has some of my writings on it.

Question 19 is the same question.

Ms LAWRIE: No, Question 18 was about ministerial hospitality. Question 19 is public service hospitality.

Mr GILES: Do I need to read that out?

Mr BARNES: You do not have to. It just gives a comparison from last time.

Mr GILES: Where I have explained how much was spent for the - I do not have the tabled paper - for question 19 it was \$164 017 for seven months for the Country Liberals. In the previous financial year of 2011-2012, actual expenditure by the former Labor government was \$490 000 compared to \$164 000 for seven months. Quite clearly, Labor likes to spend money more than the Country Liberals.

Question 19:

Full details, costs and invitation lists for all public service hospitality provided since 26 August 2012'

Total hospitality costs incurred by DCM for that period were \$80 848.

Question 20:

Full details and costs of all interstate or international public service travel including accommodation, hospitality and flight details including flight travel class since 26 August 2012

Total travel to 31 March 2013 is \$142 107, including accommodation of \$35 446, airfares of \$91 994, travel allowance of \$14 668, nil hospitality, business class airfares of \$9000 and economy class of \$63 000.

There is a complete breakdown including Parliamentary Counsel, Strategic Communications, HR, Multicultural Affairs, and the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. I am happy to table that.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you.

Mr GILES: Question 21:

A breakdown of all water and other natural asset allocation granted by the Northern Territory government since 26 August 2012 broken down by those granted to CLP members and others.

A response is being prepared by the Department of Land Resource Management. I will be keen to see it because it will be a clear sign of how the Northern Territory government is open for business and keen to support people in business development, particularly in regional and remote areas.

Question 22:

Details on all policy items, strategies, actual, estimates, budgets, forecasts, agency outputs and funding decisions contained within the May 2013 budget.

Specific answers will be addressed at the estimates hearing process. This is a clear example of how dumb the questions from the opposition are becoming.

Question 23:

Details on all financial and economic data contained within operating statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements, in the May 2013 budget.

Specific answers will be addressed in the estimates hearing process, and I encourage you to read your budget papers for those answers.

Question 24:

Full details including impact statements and implementation plans on all agency savings identified within the December 2012 mini-budget and May 2013 budget.

Specific questions will be answered through output areas by ministers.

Question 25:

Details on all information and data contained within the fiscal strategy, updated fiscal outlook, risks to the updated financial projections, expenses and capital investment, intergovernmental revenue and Territory taxes and royalties.

The Treasurer will respond to that question. Read Budget Paper No 2.

Question 26:

Full details on all information and data contained within the capital works program and estimated capital expenditure across all government agencies and corporations.

Specific answer will be addressed in the estimates process. I encourage you read Budget Paper No 4 and speak to the Minister for Infrastructure.

Question 27:

Full details of all revenue measures including new taxes and tax increases including levies and charges. Details to include risk impact statements, community and industry consultation plans, economic modelling and revenue projections.

I encourage you to read the budget papers and speak to the Treasurer and individual ministers.

Question 28:

Full details on the operational impacts across all government entities as a result of all government decisions and policies.

Specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process. Ask the right questions in the right areas.

Question 29:

Full details on the operational impacts across all government entities as a result of government's savings measures.

Specific questions will be addressed in the estimates hearing process.

Question 30:

Details of the operational impacts across non-government agencies as a result of all government funding, decision and policies.

All non-government agencies are external to the budget. This should be put to the non-government sector.

Question 31:

Full details on the impacts across all government entities as a result of all increases in government and government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August 2012.

Any impacts have been managed from within existing resources.

Question 32:

Full details on all information and data contained within the two most recent reports on government services.

Reports to the public are available. I suggest you do some research and find them. Any further questions will be addressed through this estimates hearing process.

Question 33:

Full details on all information and data contained within all annual reports produced by government entities across the last two financial years.

I suggest you read the financial reports.

Question 34:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report produced by a statutory authority of the Northern Territory government within the last five years, and full details on any and all actions of all government entities in response to the report or related to the report.

The data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate. Specific questions are invited and will be addressed through the estimates hearing process, through the appropriate minister and the appropriate output areas.

Question 35:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report commissioned by the Northern Territory government and produced within the last five years, and full details on any and all actions of all government entities in response to the report or related to the report.

Data requests are too broad in scope and too expensive to collate. Specific questions are invited and will be addressed through the estimates process. Address your questions to the minister in the appropriate output areas.

Question 36:

Full details on all information, data and forecasts contained within reports produced in the last two years in relation to the Northern Territory from Deloitte, Access Economics, CommSec, Sensis, Australian Property Monitors, Housing Industry Association, Property Council, Master Builders Association and ANZ, including the response from government entities to these reports.

The data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate. Specific questions are invited and will be provided through the estimates process. Many of those questions should have been asked of Treasury yesterday.

Question 37:

Full details and all information and data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in relation to the Northern Territory in the last two years, including the response of government entities to these reports.

Check the ABS website.

Question 38:

Details on all reports and data published on Northern Territory government websites.

The data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to collate. Specific questions are invited and will be addressed through the estimates process through appropriate ministers under the relevant output areas.

Question 2.1:

Full details of all NT Fleet vehicles provided for all staff employed in ministerial offices, including periods of use, fuel costs and mileage since 26 August 2012.

The number of vehicles allocated to ministerial offices at 26 August 2012 was 43. The number of vehicles allocated to ministerial offices at 31 March 2013 was 26. Total fuel cost for vehicles since 26 August 2012 was \$21 996.25.

Under the previous Labor government there were 43 cars in ministerial offices. There are now 26. Clearly, the new Country Liberals government is intent on ensuring we run a cost efficient government. We look at reducing expenses and seek to pay down Labor debt and reduce our deficit. I would have encouraged the previous Treasurer, the member for Karama to pay more attention to that to ensure we were not in the fiscal position we are.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, the cars located in the car park in the basement for the members for Araluen and Arnhem appear to be fleet vehicles. Are they fleet vehicles?

Mr GILES: I do not know about the member for Arnhem's vehicle. I understand that is ...

Ms LAWRIE: Sorry, I meant Stuart. That is my mistake.

Mr GILES: I do not know whose car is in the member for Stuart's car park, but both the member for Araluen and I have pool cars.

Ms LAWRIE: Where do they come from?

Mr GILES: We both have pool cars excess to NT Fleet which had the option of being sold. They are allocated to ministerial offices but we have them as pool cars as well so they can be utilised by me or minister Lambley, rather than hiring a car and putting more costs on the Territory government. Under the tribunal entitlement, and the way the Legislative Assembly works, when I am in Darwin I have the option of hiring a car as well as utilising the white cars. That is too expensive for government and is not an efficient use of resources. Where a ministerial office has a car, I encourage that to be a pool car so I can use one if I need to. It is the same for minister Lambley and is an effort to reduce costs.

Ms LAWRIE: They are always parked there are not they? They are not really pool cars; they are cars for your use. You have a car for your use and minister Lambley has one for hers.

Mr GILES: No, these cars are allocated to officers within our ministerial offices. Should minister Lambley or I choose to use the cars for our purposes we will. The alternative is to use a hire car as required. That is too much of a cost burden for Territory taxpayers and the utilisation of that car is insufficient. A staffer in my office has an entitlement to a car as part of her package, but that car remains a pool car so I can use it when I want.

Ms LAWRIE: Under which policy does that exist? There is no provision under the RTD so how could that arrangement occur?

Mr GILES: When Labor was in government there were 43 cars provided throughout ministerial offices and many Labor staffers had cars. As at 31 March 2013, there were 26 cars allocated to ministerial offices. That is a huge reduction to what the former Labor government had - a significant reduction of 17 vehicles. Of those 26 vehicles, two vehicles - one is a pool car for minister Lambley's office and one is a pool car for my office, which is an entitlement to an officer. However, we ensure we have access to use that car when we need to as opposed to hiring an additional car.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I understand the answer you provided previously. The Speaker advised staff cannot park in car parks allocated to members of parliament. How, then, does that arrangement work?

Mr GILES: I allow my staff member to park in my parking spot because it is a pool car and, when I need to use it, I access it.

Ms LAWRIE: The Speaker said that is okay? She has indicated that is not okay. For example ...

Mr GILES: It is my parking spot, and if I choose to put a car in my parking spot it is acceptable.

Ms LAWRIE: We have had a request knocked back. We, obviously, like yourself ...

Mr GILES: I am not aware of your request, but I can use that car when I need to.

Ms LAWRIE: We have members of parliament who are based outside Darwin so a member of parliament car park spot is available. Yet, the Speaker advised the use of that spot is not ...

Mr GILES: I am happy to chat with the Speaker to see if there can be any flexibility in that arrangement.

Ms LAWRIE: Excellent.

Mr GILES: I use this car as I need to.

Ms LAWRIE: If it is happening for you, I am going well ...

Mr GILES: I use the pool car as I need to. I used a hire car on a frequent basis, but more and more I was driving it less and less and it was becoming an unnecessary cost to the taxpayer. The Country Liberals government is more fiscally responsible than Labor. That is why you had 43 cars in ministerial offices and we have 26 as at 31 March.

Ms LAWRIE: Obviously, I do not agree with that comment.

Mr GILES: You are the person who left us with \$5.5bn worth of debt.

Ms LAWRIE: Why are you not using the ministerial cars instead of a pool car?

Mr GILES: Ministerial cars are used, but there are times when I do not deem it necessary or appropriate to use a ministerial car. If one of my staff has access to a car through their role, I see it as an opportunity for me to use that pool car - going to the shop to buy toiletries or whatever I might need to do. It is not appropriate for ministerial cars to be driving us around to do that; it is a waste of government resources.

Question 2.2:

Full details of all mobile phones (including iPhones, iPads and another smartphone and android devices) costs including data access charge and Cabcharge costs for all staff employed in ministerial offices since 26 August 2012.

Mobile costs from 26 August 2012 to 31 March 2013: mobile telephone charges \$72 621, mobile equipment \$9843 and Cabcharge costs of \$15 188.

This is against the previous government's expenditure for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012, where mobile telephone charges by the former Labor government that financial year were \$236 793, mobile equipment \$31 694, and Cabcharge costs of \$42 112. Quite clearly, with a cost comparison, the seven months for the Country Liberals is nowhere near the same cost comparison to a full year by the former Labor government which spent \$267 000 on mobile telephone charges and mobile equipment. Some might see why that is because they had so many staff working on the fifth floor.

Question 5.1:

Full details on the current status of all major projects and projects seeking major status.

Fifteen projects currently have major project status. The reason for the question was just clarifying the process of TNG Ltd which came on a couple of months ago. I have a copy of all major projects. I cannot table that information because it is commercial-in-confidence. I can read through the names of ...

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, please.

Mr GILES: You can understand why they are commercial-in-confidence: Proponent: ConocoPhillips; INPEX and INPEX - two INPEX; Shell GDF Suez; Sherwin Iron; Western Desert Resources; Minemakers; Arafura Resources; the Ord River Scheme; GPT - General Property Trust; ASCo in relation to the Marine Supply Base; Pacific Aluminium; ENI; Vista Gold; and TNG. They will all be on *Hansard*. I cannot go into much more information around those but if you wanted to ask what the project was, I could probably give you a two word answer.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that would be great.

Mr GILES: Any one in particular?

Ms LAWRIE: The whole list because they are all listed as major projects.

Mr GILES: I have read them out in order, so I will do the project in order and you can match them up. They are: Darwin LNG expansion; Ichthys LNG; Blaydin Point expansion; Prelude floating LNG; GDF Suez LNG; Roper River iron ore project; Roper River iron ore project; Wonarah Phosphate; Nolans Rare Earth project; The Ord; Casuarina Square expansion; the Marine Supply Base; Katherine to Gove pipeline and Mt Todd. The other one was TNG and they will all match up.

Ms LAWRIE: The latest one, yes.

Mr GILES: Call it Titanium Vanadium.

Question 8.3:

Full details on the current offer to the Northern Territory government from the Commonwealth government in relation to the Gonski review.

I am happy to give you some information on that if you want.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, sure.

Mr GILES: Are you interested in Gonski?

Ms LAWRIE: You know I am interested in additional resources. Did you see the advertisement in the newspaper today by the Australian Education Union?

Mr GILES: By your union buddies.

Ms LAWRIE: They are very interested in Gonski.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, if I may, I will take the floor and answer this question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: The Gonski report concluded that for Australia to have a schooling system ranking amongst the best in the world in quality and equity, it must improve school performance and ensure equity in resourcing. This would require a strengthening of the current national schooling reforms through funding reform and through the prioritisation of support for its lowest performing students. The centrepiece of the Gonski report was a recommendation to implement a new school funding framework, the Schooling Resource Standard or SRS. The SRS provides a base level of funding of \$9271 for each primary student and \$12 193 for each secondary student, with loadings for disadvantaged students including students with low socioeconomic status, Indigenous students, students with low English fluency, and students with a disability. Loadings will also be based on school size and location.

It is worth noting the 2013 report on government services shows the Territory's education expenditure per student in 2010-11 was \$15 649, higher than in other jurisdictions. In regard to funding implementations according to the Commonwealth, on 14 April 2013 the Prime Minister announced an investment of \$14.5bn over a six-year period from 2014 to 2019 as part of the national school funding reforms. Under the funding offer the Commonwealth will fund 65% of the additional cost, or \$9.4bn, with the states and territories to fund the remaining 35%, or \$5.1bn. The Territory's offer indicates schools would receive an additional \$300m in funding between 2014 and 2019. Of this amount, \$193m will be provided by the Commonwealth and \$107m will be funded by the Territory - the funding implications. However, the Commonwealth model assumes a base level of school funding which does not reflect the Territory's current budget estimates over the six-year period. This can be understood to be the SRS.

For example, the Commonwealth has estimated the Territory's education expenditure in 2019 will be \$152m higher than the Territory has estimated for that year. Using the Commonwealth estimates over a six-year transition period, the Territory would be required to provide an additional \$592m in direct school education funding compared with budget estimates. The Commonwealth, in comparison, will provide an additional \$193m over the same period. This means that for every additional \$1 the Territory government spends on school education, the Commonwealth will provide 0.33¢. This additional cost to the Northern Territory is completely unacceptable, especially when taking into account the fact when my government came into power it inherited a projected debt of \$5.5bn thanks to the former Labor Treasurer, the member for Karama. That is the highest level of debt to revenue ratio of all states and territories and is unsustainable. If we had not taken action, our debt level would have continued to increase every day.

That is why my government announced a number of expenditure and revenue savings measures in the 2012 mini-budget aimed at eliminating the Territory's fiscal deficit for the non-financial public sector. This includes savings measures across all government agencies. These saving measures were entirely reasonable and targeted at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Prior to these measures, the Territory had far more generous student teacher ratios than any other jurisdiction. The savings measures have, among other things, brought these ratios more into line with other jurisdictions, but remain extremely generous. We will work hard to improve outcomes for Territory students, and we noticed some of our students start from a long way back.

Other jurisdictions have demonstrated they are able to improve educational outcomes without increasing resources. Given the Territory already funds education at a higher cost per student than any other jurisdiction, it is reasonable to look at ways to improve our outcomes, not simply throw more dollars at the existing system. This was part of the basis of the mini-budget savings. However, the Commonwealth is implying the Territory has manufactured these savings in order to receive additional funding from the Commonwealth. This is not only untrue, but insulting. All jurisdictions have had to undertake savings measures. However, because the Territory's savings occurred prior to the Commonwealth funding offer being made, we are being accused of doing something underhanded. Other jurisdictions have not been penalised in the same way. Notwithstanding the Commonwealth's views, accepting the Commonwealth's offer would result in these savings measures being completely overridden with additional funding the Territory government would be required to provide to the Department of Education and Children's Services.

The task of eliminating the Territory's fiscal deficit has been made all the more difficult by the decrease in the Territory's GST revenue. This has significantly weakened the Territory's fiscal position, and will result in an ongoing \$100m worth of GST revenue being redistributed away from the Territory -a double whammy. In this context, the Territory is unable to fund the amount required under the Commonwealth's model as it is substantially more than has been announced by the Commonwealth. In addition, all Territory government funding will be new money and immediately add to nett debt - the Labor way of borrowing once again - whereas the majority of Commonwealth funding is a redirection of existing funds. This will not worsen the Commonwealth's budget position because they are taking it out of other budgetary areas such as university and student scholarships -death or Siberia.

Although signing up to the Commonwealth's offer will result in increased funding for the Territory's schools and its education system, there will be significant financial impacts on the Territory through the additional expenditure requirements as well as an associated reduction in the Territory's GST revenue. However, in addition to the costs to the Territory of signing up, the Commonwealth is also threatening to penalise those jurisdictions which do not sign up. If the Territory does not sign the Commonwealth's offer, it will be deemed to be a non-participant.

The Commonwealth has advised the following conditions will apply to non-participants:

- they will not receive additional funding from the Commonwealth
- their existing education-related national partnerships will be allowed to lapse at the current expiry dates and will not be renegotiated or rolled into recurrent funding
- the Commonwealth funding contribution to non-participants will be capped at their current national school-specific purpose payment funding levels.
- the Commonwealth will seek to change the calculation of the average government school recurrent costs indexation method so the increased financial effort of those states that have not signed up the Commonwealth's offer does not result in financial gain to non-participants, and

- the Treasurer will direct the Commonwealth Grants Commission, the CGC, to treat non-participants as though they were participating for the purpose of calculating GST distribution.

This would mean the loss of GST revenue for non-participation. The options for jurisdictions have been described by me and others as 'death or Siberia'. They are a no win situation and neither option is satisfactory.

The Prime Minister has publicly stated on a number of occasions that no school will be worse off under the funding reforms. This is clearly not the case, and completely misleading. The Commonwealth model shows 61 of the Territory's schools may receive less funding than they may otherwise have received if they were to stay under the current funding arrangement.

These schools are spread across the Territory and comprise Darwin, urban, regional, rural, Central Australia and remote schools. These schools make up 41% of the total Territory government school population or 16 250 and include: Acacia Hill School, Adelaide River School, Alawa Primary School, and Anula Primary School, set to lose \$188 954.44 under the Gonski model. Alawa Primary School would lose \$146 471.02. Bees Creek Primary School and Berry Springs Primary School will lose money. Casuarina Senior College would lose \$109 627.27. Darwin High School, under the Gonski model proposed by the Prime Minister, would lose \$301 390.16. The Don Dale Education Unit, Douglas Daly School and Driver Primary School will lose money. Dundee Beach School and Durack Primary School will lose money. Gray Primary School, Henbury School, Howard Springs Primary School - I am sure the member for Nelson is keen on Howard Springs Primary School - will lose \$88 633.25. Humpty Doo Primary School - Jingili Primary School in the northern suburbs will lose \$91 939.40. Karama Primary School, member for Karama, your school, will lose \$26 510.30 under Gonski. Larrakeyah Primary School will lose \$57 000 plus some change. Ludmilla Primary School will lose \$125 000. Surely, Ludmilla Primary School needs that \$125 948.11. Malak Primary School will lose \$108 463.70. Middle Point School, Millner Primary School - Moil Primary School will lose \$158 946.34. Nakara Primary School will lose \$90 880. Namarluk School - Nightcliff Primary School will lose \$80 632.55, and Nightcliff Middle School will lose \$78 810.89. The Open Education Centre will lose \$123 805. Palmerston Senior College is set to lose \$255 187.24.

What a kick in the guts by Prime Minister Julia Gillard over her Gonski reforms. Parap Primary School - Rosebery Middle School will lose \$79 555.49. Sanderson Middle School - I know the Minister for Infrastructure, the member for Sanderson, will be concerned his school will lose \$155 302.02 under the Gonski reforms. Stuart Park Primary School, Taminmin College - I am not sure who the local member for Taminmin College is, although I can probably guess - will lose \$336 978.82.

Mr WOOD: Technically it is Kezia's, but the three local members regard it as their school.

Mr GILES: That is right. I will reaffirm that, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: We are also concerned about you taking teachers away.

Mr GILES: Perhaps you do not care about \$336 978.82.

Mr WOOD: I do. I did not ask you any questions so how do you know ...

Mr GILES: Wagaman Primary School - Wanguri Primary School \$36 329. I wonder what the member for Wanguri thinks about that. Woodroffe Primary School, \$109 000 plus change; Wulagi Primary School. We get outside the greater Darwin area - I will not go through the whole list, but I will go through a few more. Alice Springs School of the Air, \$116 000-plus. I am sure you will be worried about Alyangula School losing \$65 273.96, member for Arnhem. It will lose under Gonski. Batchelor School; Bradshaw Primary School, for the member for Araluen, \$119 017.35; Central Australian Middle School, Centralian Senior College, \$73 504.05; Clyde Fenton Primary School; Gillen Primary School; Katherine School of the Air, \$71 486 less for providing education to all those children on cattle stations or in remote locations. Katherine South Primary School - the member for Katherine, the minister for Primary Industry, will have concerns about that. Mataranka will lose money under Gonski, and I am sure the member for Stuart will be concerned about that. Nhulunbuy Primary School; Nhulunbuy High School will lose \$65 366.57. I am sure the member for Nhulunbuy, who used to be a parliamentary speaker for education, would be concerned about that. Peppimenarti School; Ross Park Primary School; Saddadeen and, member for Stuart, Willowra School will lose money under Gonski. They are talking about providing better education for remote Indigenous students and Willowra School will lose money - Woolanang; Yirrkala; Yulara. I left schools out of this list, but clearly this is not a good model for the Northern Territory. Some might get more, but you cannot penalise some schools and play one off against the other.

The reduction in funding for these schools under the model totals more than \$4m in 2014 alone. This does not include the years up to 2019. Given the Territory already spends more per student than any other jurisdiction, why would the Northern Territory agree to a funding arrangement which appears to penalise the Territory for its significant investment in its schooling system and reduces the funding these schools will receive?

This is further illustrated by the fact that, under the Gonski model, 91% of all the additional Australian government funding proposed goes to Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. These jurisdictions all spend less per student than the Northern Territory. Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales are getting 91% of the funding and they already spend less per student than the Northern Territory. Less! It does not reward the good performers; it rewards the ones who do not spend as much.

Another concern is that under the current arrangement, the Northern Territory has the flexibility to determine how best to spend funds for Northern Territory schools. However, the arrangement being proposed by the Australian government will result in the Northern Territory losing flexibility in regard to how we deliver education to Territory students. We will be locked into delivering educational services as directed by Canberra. What sort of a cooperative model of federalism is this?

The Northern Territory sets its agenda. The Northern Territory drives education for Territory students not Canberra, not bureaucratic approaches. We have the most flexible system of schooling in Australia in the way our schools operate. We want that to continue. We do not want increased reporting back to Canberra all the time, and Canberra running education out of an office block in Barton or anywhere else. We run our schools. We are happy to work with the federal government but we set how schools operate. We provide the most per-student funding in the nation and shall continue to do so.

Negotiations are continuing, although it has been difficult to progress negotiations with the Australian government with the funding changing at least three times in the last three months. Additionally, all iterations of this changing model have overly prescriptive accountability measures on what the Northern Territory should be paying attention to, when they are only adding a pittance in additional funding. Time and time again, the Australian government has demonstrated they do not understand our context. In fact, most bureaucrats who have penned the plan have never set foot in a remote Indigenous community.

Notwithstanding those concerns, this government continues to negotiate with the Commonwealth in good faith to ensure the Territory, its schools and students, receive the best deal possible. However, agreement will not be reached unless the Commonwealth recognises the right starting point for the Department of Education and Children Services' budget. The Chief Executive of my department is trying to continue discussions with his counterpart in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. I understand further discussion of the Commonwealth's offer is scheduled for later this afternoon.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Chief Minister, for raising that response to the written question. I note the figures you provided do not include the national plan for Indigenous students in the Territory, or the funding loadings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in small, remote schools. To extrapolate on that, the location loading ...

Mr Giles interjecting.

Ms LAWRIE: I am happy to finish with this, if you want me to.

Mr Giles interjecting.

Ms LAWRIE: I have not seen your breakdown.

Mr GILES: They do.

Ms LAWRIE: I do not believe you and am happy for you to provide and table a breakdown per school on where the location loading applies at \$921m for NT students. That will benefit some 41 000 students across 190 schools - a sizeable loading. There is \$160m for NT students benefiting some 25 000 students across 162 schools, which is 85% of all the schools, and a further \$1bn for Indigenous students in the Territory benefiting some 16 800 students in 187 schools. If you want to provide a detailed breakdown analysis that would be fantastic and welcome.

Further to that ...

Mr GILES: Hang on, could I answer that question first?

Ms LAWRIE: You had a long period to provide your response, so it is only reasonable to allow me ...

Mr GILES: You just asked another question; I was trying to help you.

Ms LAWRIE: ... to provide my response to your answer with the questions I had for you.

I do not know if you saw the advertisement in the *NT News* today ...

Mr GILES: Yes, it is completely wrong, and you are just grandstanding holding it up.

Ms LAWRIE: I will read it out to you. It says 'Mr Giles ...

Mr GILES: No, hang on, hang on. If you want a serious answer to your question ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... by slashing the NT education budget ...

Mr GILES: No, no. Read out an ad for a political purpose, but if you want to have a serious answer to your question ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... you are destroying our future. Our children' ...

Mr GILES: ... I am happy to give you a serious answer to your question.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Could the Opposition Leader finish her statement?

Ms LAWRIE: It reads:

Mr Giles, by slashing the NT's education budget you are destroying our future. Our children deserve better. 10% cut in education in 2012. Over 120 teachers cut in 2013. A further 10% cut in 2014, and many more teachers lost to the system. \$51m stolen from education. Larger class sizes, restricted subject choice, little individual attention for students who desperately need it, fewer subject specialists, worst results for students in middle and senior schools. Enough is enough. Protect our children, restore funding.

It goes on to encourage people to write to their local MLA.

You say here are the cuts under Gonski which, until I see a specific detailed loading breakdown across all schools, ...

Mr GILES: You have not had a briefing.

Ms LAWRIE: ... I do not believe you.

Mr GILES: Did you come for a briefing? Have you asked for any information? No, you read an education union ad from the paper.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you are ignoring the cuts you are making, through your decisions, to the education system in the Northern Territory. They are real. The formula change that occurred in the mini-budget has seen us lose teachers across our remote, regional and urban schools. I will give you an example: 4.5 teachers are going, at the end of this semester, from Casuarina Senior College because of the cuts you made under the formula.

This is not even the cut associated to the reduction in the student teacher ratio. These are real. Casuarina Senior College does not offer legal studies because of your cuts. It does not offer IT, yet it sits in the heart of a large population mass delivering senior education to our students. What future do we have when you are taking an axe this large to our education system and turning your back on an additional \$200m - not cuts, not a loss - tied to national partnerships that have billions in loadings to Indigenous students.

You have been a disaster for education and it is real. It is happening in our classrooms today. Talk to the teachers and listen to what they are saying. You might want to describe the Australian Education Union as 'your union Labor mates', but they are real and represent teachers who we rely on to deliver education to

our children. It is happening in remote schools where we are losing teachers, and it is happening to support staff providing curriculum and professional development support to teachers ...

Mr GILES: Is there a question, Madam Deputy Chair?

Ms LAWRIE: ... so why do you pretend that ...

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is this a question or a statement?

Ms LAWRIE: Why do you pretend the Commonwealth is being unreasonable in education delivery to the Territory when it has new money on the table while you are taking an axe to the Education department and to the kids in our schools?

Mr GILES: Thank you very much for that, member for Karama. Let me answer your questions.

First, it is not new money; it is taking money from universities and scholarships. It is cuts, particularly to university funding.

Second, in your initial diatribe you asked questions in relation to the Prime Minister's media release. You have not done any more research other than a media release and an advertisement in a paper by the AEU. Your statements are completely wrong as every one of those figures is included in the assessment. When you talk about the staff/teacher changes, your government signed up to staff/teacher ratios of 27:1. Not one of our staff/teacher ratios gets anywhere near 27:1. You talk about people not being happy. Teachers are very happy, and we are investing in early childhood schools more than ever before.

When you talk about the union, it signed up for a productivity component that would see 80% of teachers' time spent in the classroom. This was signed up to and facilitated by your government. Currently, 60% of teachers' time is spent in the classroom. The teacher ratio signed by your government would be 27:1 and we are at 22:1. We are not even at 27:1.

Ms LAWRIE: You are taking teachers out and pretending you are not.

Ms GILES: I encourage you to get your information right. I am more than happy to provide a briefing. I have not received a letter asking for any information on the Gonski proposal or the current situation. There has been no request ...

Ms LAWRIE: The Education shadow has certainly been pursuing it.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could you please cease interjecting while the Chief Minister is trying to answer your questions.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Negotiations have been undertaken through my office as Chief Minister. There has not been one request for a briefing on the Gonski offer or the current level of funding and how it works. That is why, when you read out the Prime Minister's press release as you just did and quote some of those figures, you are completely wrong because they are all included in our assessments. For anyone to ...

Ms LAWRIE: Provide a breakdown.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Opposition Leader!

Mr GILES: ... say 41% of Territory schools should lose money, which is what you are saying ...

Ms LAWRIE: They are not losing?

Mr GILES: They will lose money, there is no doubt about it.

Ms LAWRIE: You are being cute in your description ...

Mr GILES: The other component ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... because it is the growth factor is going forward.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Can you let the Chief Minister finish his statement please, Opposition Leader.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: I am not going to ask you again.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I would fully support eviction for an hour because I want to get on with this.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask a question?

Mr GILES: Yes. Can I finish and I will come to you, member for Nelson? This is a serious issue. Yes, we have increased the student/teacher ratios for some sectors and reduced it for early childhood education because we want more focus on early childhood. The former government signed up to a ratio of 27:1. That is fact, and I have the agreement if you want me to table it. Plus, the union also negotiated to have a productivity or participation rate of 80% teachers in the classroom. It is currently only sitting at about 60%. The financial component spoken about in the Prime Minister's media release yesterday is included in our model and 41% of all schools will lose money.

The final point, member for Nelson, is this money is back-ended in 2019. We have a federal election this year. We will have a federal election in 2016, and again in 2019. The bulk of this money comes in three federal elections' time. We do not know who the Prime Minister will be on 14 September - Tony Abbott or Julie Gillard. We do not know who the Prime Minister will be tomorrow - Kevin Rudd or Julia Gillard - and Kevin Rudd might throw this model out.

It would be stupid for us ...

Ms LAWRIE: New South Wales signed up.

Mr GILES: ... irresponsible to sign up to this model. I will give you my assessment of why New South Wales signed up. Where the NT funds this much per student ratio - I am using hand signals, which does not help Hansard - where the NT government funds at X, New South Wales is funding at X minus 2 per student ratio. They provide their contribution to get closer to the NT level and the federal money comes on top of it. We are already way above and the model rewards the states that do not provide the same financial contribution to average cost per student ratio where we do. WA will not sign up because they provide higher levels per other jurisdictions.

Mr WOOD: Do not take this in an aggressive way, but I do not know much about Gonski. I have not read all the report. There is much there and I am not from an education background. I am concerned about what you said. If that is true, there are schools in my electorate, especially Taminmin - I will debate the reduction in teacher numbers another time ...

Mr GILES: With the Education minister.

Mr WOOD: ... I do not want to cloud this at the moment, but I express concern, especially about the school losing teachers. Your CEO knows how hard the school has been working to improve itself. You have figures in relation to Gonski. When you came back the first time - I am not trying to verbal you - after receiving information about Gonski you made a more or less political statement that Julia Gillard is doing this because of a forthcoming election. The first thing I felt was ...

Mr GILES: She is.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but the impression I then get is, 'I am using this as part of the election debate rather than dealing with it without politics'. Who did this analysis?

Mr GILES: This has been done through the Chief Minister's department, in consultation with the Education department and Treasury.

Mr WOOD: I am not knocking any of those good people, but because there is an element of politics in this debate, especially at this time of year - I am not saying the members ...

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Member for Nelson, is this question coming to an end because it is now 6.30 pm?

Mr WOOD: Is it possible for the Auditor-General to report on what you have done? I can see politics – Treasury has known me for a long time, but there is an element of politics and I do not understand how you came up with this. The Auditor-General is your independent umpire. Is it possible to ask the Auditor-General to look at what you have done to see if those figures are correct?

Mr GILES: I appreciate the sentiment of the question; however, that is an insult to Treasury and Education officials. They spent much time going over this. I will provide you a full briefing and all the documentation to show how we reached that. With all due respect, member for Nelson, it is an insult to say you believe it is political. The politics of this is ...

Mr WOOD: You made the statement when you got off the plane.

Mr GILES: The politics is trying to make education an election issue. All you hear is they are putting in 100, 'Why won't Adam sign up?' It is not about that; it is a bad model. However, I appreciate the politics.

Mr WOOD: You added the flavour of politics.

Mr GILES: I am happy to give you a briefing.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Is that the end of your questions?

Mr WOOD: No, but I will continue when we come back.

Mr GILES: Madam Deputy Chair, I am happy to have a full briefing with you, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I am not trying to insult staff either. I know some of them.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: We will break for dinner and resume at 7 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam DEPUTY CHAIR: Thank you, everyone. For the benefit of Hansard, we have Ken Vowles, member for Johnston; Delia Lawrie, member for Karama; me; Bess Price, member for Stuart; Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu, member for Arafura; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson. The Chief Minister is here with Jodie Kirkman and Gary Barnes.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, would you not send these figures to the Auditor-General?

Mr GILES: No, there would be no time. The Prime Minister has set a deadline of 30 June and the Auditor-General takes a while to investigate and report. It is not warranted, given we have good officials working in DCM, Treasury and Education who have provided the analysis. The other component that people are not aware of, but should be, is these figures were provided by the Commonwealth.

Mr WOOD: The analysis has come from within the ...

Mr GILES: The analysis was provided to us by the Commonwealth and we re-analysed it to ensure it was right.

Mr WOOD: But the re-analysis came from within the Department of Education and the Treasury?

Mr GILES: The figures I read out are from the Commonwealth.

Mr WOOD: The amount of money lost from schools?

Mr GILES: It was from the Commonwealth.

Mr WOOD: Are you able to table a cleaner version of that because there is much information? I would not mind ...

Mr GILES: I am happy to e-mail you a statement of ...

Mr WOOD: A list of schools.

Mr GILES: ... what I said - changed some words. The *Hansard* is probably the best place to get it from because I changed a bit of what I read out. I can give you ...

Mr WOOD: What about the list of schools?

Mr GILES: Yes, I can give you that.

Mr WOOD: Is that a complete list?

Mr GILES: I will give it to you later.

Mr WOOD: Okay.

Madam CHAIR: Do you need that on notice?

Mr GILES: No, I have to find it.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you provide it to both?

Mr GILES: I did not know anyone else wanted it, but yes.

Ms LAWRIE: I asked for it as well. I asked, during the debate, for a written list of the school funding you were speaking about. .

Mr GILES: Member for Karama, I am happy to provide the member for Nelson with the list of schools.

Ms LAWRIE: I will get it off you, Gerry. It is all good.

Mr GILES: I note you are relying on an advertisement from the Australian Education Union as the basis for your solid defence of Gonski. I would be keen to see, by the end of the week, who the Prime Minister might be and what model of education and funding they propose.

Ms LAWRIE: Gerry, I will get it off you, mate.

Mr WOOD: I have made my point about the Auditor-General, so we will not harp on that.

You have not mentioned independent schools. Will they be affected? I saw a headline saying they would be better off under the Gonski report, is that correct?

Mr GILES: They will be affected, but we are not sure of the exact extent to each school because we have not been provided that information. When you arrange a time for a briefing, we can do some more analysis if we have time to find out more.

Mr WOOD: I will need some recovery time after estimates but, yes, I would be happy to receive a briefing. Also, if I could get some background - what you were talking about - before I went to the briefing, it would make much more sense. That is all the questions I have on Gonski at the present time.

Mr GILES: I think we are in whole-of-government now.

Mr WOOD: Have we gone through all the written questions?

Ms LAWRIE: The written questions.

Madam CHAIR: Yes.

Mr WOOD: I have whole-of-government, do you?

Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Questions

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Department of the Chief Minister. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes.

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Madam SPEAKER: Go for it.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, could you provide us with full details of the impacts across all government entities within your agency as a result of all increases in government and government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August?

Mr GILES: They are all absorbed from within.

Ms LAWRIE: I am not asking if additional expenditure is required or an additional allocation to the agency, I am asking for details of the impacts.

Mr GILES: The impact for Chief Minister's is \$14 000, but for any other agency you will have to ask the responsible minister.

Ms LAWRIE: Would that be NT House?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Did you have a site in Alice Springs? Is it still Greatorex?

Mr GILES: That includes everything. It is an estimate.

Ms LAWRIE: It is an estimate across all DCM sites?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, that is the answer I was seeking. Can you provide full details on the procurement processes undertaken, and the contracts for any employment within your agency since 26 August of former CLP and Liberal Party candidates, and former CLP and Liberal Party members of parliament at Territory or federal level?

Mr GILES: I would not know who is a CLP member - current or previous - or who are the previous or current ...

Ms LAWRIE: Candidates, I am saying, not members ...

Mr GILES: I do not know all the candidates ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... of the party.

Mr GILES: ... or otherwise. People are employed – I believe you are talking about the Chief Minister's department - based on merit and I do not get involved in the employment of anybody. I do not have any information about that.

The Chief Executive, Mr Barnes, has responsibility for all employment and is under no direction to employ people based on political bias. He is under full direction to employ people based on capability.

Ms LAWRIE: You will not provide us with details of the 13 former CLP candidates and members of parliament you have on the payroll?

Mr GILES: Are you talking about ministerial offices or the Chief Minister's department?

Ms LAWRIE: Ministerial offices covered by the Department of Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: I asked if you were talking about the Chief Minister's department or ministerial offices.

Ms LAWRIE: The ministerial offices are covered by the Department of Chief Minister, so it is captured within that.

Mr GILES: What is your question?

Ms LAWRIE: Could you provide full details on the procurement processes undertaken and the employment contracts?

Mr GILES: In regard to individual ministers and their offices, you would have to ask the individual ministers the processes.

Ms LAWRIE: They come under DCM.

Mr GILES: For anyone working for me, everybody is appointed based on merit not political allegiance or otherwise. I would not know who is a CLP member, who is a Labor member, whether they are a member of a union or the Greens, or whether they have been previous candidates.

Ms LAWRIE: We can provide you with that list if you want.

Mr GILES: Clearly, if you have a fuller understanding, it is more important to you who is a previous candidate or a CLP member than to me. I want people who can do the job.

Ms LAWRIE: No, you are trying to obfuscate. You know exactly who in your office is a former member of parliament: Stephen Dunham, Tim Baldwin, Jodeen Carney - what are their contracts?

Mr GILES: I am not going to tell you how much each individual is paid.

Ms LAWRIE: It is at taxpayers' expense.

Mr GILES: How much is Adele Young paid?

Ms LAWRIE: In the past, the amount staff have been paid has been divulged.

Mr GILES: All right, make an inquiry, send me a letter. If you want to know what people's salary rates are I am happy to tell you. I am not going to name individual staff members. I do not know who and who have not been candidates. It has no bearing to people's employment. We put people on who we believe have merit, are capable of doing the job, and I have confidence in those people being able to do the job. This is nothing more than muckraking. If you want to undertake an analysis of your previous officers and who you had working for you - your previous failed candidates, your current candidates, your union ...

Ms LAWRIE: You are the one being a hypocrite.

Mr GILES: Not at all, I am quite open and transparent. I have full confidence everyone who works for me can do the job.

Ms LAWRIE: The fact in opposition you asked these questions does not make you feel like a hypocrite?

Mr GILES: I never asked a question about anyone working in your office, ever. Have I ever asked a question, member for Karama? You have made allegations and you need to justify them. There is no proof to your allegations.

Ms LAWRIE: You never had the opportunity to because you were behind your mate Dave, in his ambitions to knife Terry.

Mr GILES: Here you go, straight to personal attacks again. Good on you, member for Karama, straight to the gutter every time.

Ms LAWRIE: You were never Leader of the Opposition to sit at the estimates and ask questions. That is why you personally did not ask them, the CLP did.

Mr GILES: I try not to get in the gutter, clearly you do.

Ms LAWRIE: Are you saying the member for Blain was in the gutter when he asked questions?

Mr GILES: Next question. There is no point answering this question, it is a waste of time.

Ms LAWRIE: Can you provide details of costs of all government advertising, marketing and communications since 26 August 2012 undertaken by the Department of the Chief Minister ...

Mr GILES: I have already answered this in written questions.

Ms LAWRIE: ... including production costs?

Mr GILES: We have answered this in the written questions and have tabled the expenses.

Ms LAWRIE: Are production costs contained in there?

Mr GILES: Yes, they are, they are tabled. There are production costs and all details. Next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Can you provide a full list of all the forced redundancies across your agency, the Department of the Chief Minister, including an explanation of why in each case it was necessary to breach the CLP's election commitment that no public servant would be sacked?

Mr GILES: There are no forced redundancies.

Ms LAWRIE: No sackings?

Mr GILES: No forced redundancies.

Mr WOOD: Contracts not renewed?

Mr GILES: For permanent public servants, there were no forced redundancies at all.

Ms LAWRIE: The reduction of executive contractors?

Mr GILES: I will ask Gary Barnes to answer that on the process itself.

Mr BARNES: A restructuring process was undertaken in the Department of the Chief Minister which resulted in a reduced number of executive contract officers being required. A closed merit process was undertaken to resolve which of the executive contract officers moved into the permanent structure. That process was conducted in conjunction with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment following accepted HR/IR practice for contracted officers. Some of the people not successful in that process chose to become redundant.

Ms LAWRIE: How many?

Mr BARNES: My understanding is there were two in that process

Mr GILES: It is important to add that as at March 2012, for Pay 20, all staffing numbers for DCM and ministerial opposition - there we 269.36 staff, including ministerial and non-ministerial staff. As at March 2013, there were 198 31 staff. There is a difference of 71 staff. Many of those are in relation to ministerial offices. That is a clear sign the new Country Liberals government is trying to be fiscally responsible in the way we manage things, doing more with less, seeking to pay back Labor debt and having less operational expenses.

Mr WOOD: What happened to the 71?

Mr GILES: Many of those were Labor staffers who are no longer working there after the change of government.

Mr WOOD: How many were Labor staffers?

Mr GILES: Ministerial staff went from 96.13 in Pay 20 in March 2012 to 57.4 in Pay 7 in September 2012.

Mr WOOD: Forty-nine ministerial staff lost their jobs, is that what you are saying?

Mr GILES: They went out with the change of government.

Mr WOOD: You said 71 was the difference between the previous government and what you have now. That leaves 32 people.

Mr GILES: Many of those were transferred out of the department. Major Projects Administration had four, Major Projects had six. Asian Relations, which has gone to the Department of Business, had two. Trade Development, Strategic Projects Implementation Office, NT Major Events Company, which had 12.6, Darwin Waterfront Corporation, which have 5.5, Energy Policy, Corporate Support and Office of Women's Policy, and Trade Development had 5.4. There were Administrative Orders transfers where people went to different sections.

Mr WOOD: Does that add up to 30 or 32? Two resigned, which leaves you with 30. Have 30 people been redeployed?

Mr GILES: It adds up to many more.

Mr BARNES: Member for Nelson, it is important to understand we are probably looking at two discrete sets of employees. What the Chief Minister was talking about relates to staff employed in ministerial offices. That staff number in March last year, under the previous government, was 96.13 FTE, as the Chief Minister articulated. The vast majority of those staff left the employ of the government and came off the Department of the Chief Minister's books as the government changed. They have moved into a variety of other employment; some back into the public service. As at the same pay period, there are now approximately 79 FTE. That is, on average, 18% less staff based in government that DCM is paying for.

With regard to people in my department that are non-ministerial and non-government staff, there was, obviously, a change at the time when government came in around where functions might sit. A number of functions came to the Chief Minister's department, but a number of functions left. The Office of Women's Policy, Major Projects, and Asian Engagement and Trade left and went to the Department of Business.

Mr WOOD: Is Asian Engagement still with you?

Mr GILES: I am still the minister, but it is with the Department of Business.

Mr BARNES: It is in the Department of Business, and the Chief Minister remains the minister.

Peter Carew is the Chief Executive responsible for functions out of the Department of Business. We have had ...

Mr WOOD: This is slightly off subject, but I need to clarify it. On our chart for questions, the bottom line is in blue, Asian Engagement & Trade. It says agency business, but it says outputs in blue are the responsibility of the Chief Minister but in another minister's agency. Can we ask the Chief Minister about Asian Engagement?

Mr GILES: Except you ask the Minister for Business ...

Mr BARNES: When you get to that output area, Peter Carew, the Chief Executive, will support the Chief Minister.

Mr WOOD: I was a bit worried because I know it is impossible to go backwards.

Mr BARNES: I wanted to make the point we had about 270 FTE in the department. Now we have about 200 FTE. Largely, that is a result of people moving out of Department of the Chief Minister functions and being placed in other agencies.

Mr GILES: Also the reduction in ministerial staff.

Mr BARNES: There is also a reduction in ministerial staff.

Ms LAWRIE: Is there a component of that drop from 270 FTE to 200 FTE which is not a result of restructure - moving to other agencies - or the ministerial, Leader of the Opposition staff component?

Mr BARNES: On an apples-for-apples-basis, given groups are moving in and out, we are probably less than 10 down on where we were. We currently have six vacancies we are in the process of filling. From

1 July, with the government's changes around the introduction of a centralised communication and marketing bureau, there will be some people who come off the books of other agencies and into the Department of the Chief Minister. As functions change, there is a corresponding change in staffing numbers.

Mr GILES: The key message from this is, apart from two executive officers who chose to take redundancy, the biggest change is we are employing less staff to run ministers' offices.

Ms LAWRIE: How many staff does - and we have gone through this - the department have as both FTEs and in actual numbers of staff; what are their classification or levels; what was the rate of staff separation at each level; and how many positions are vacant?

Mr GILES: We have to take that on notice.

Question on Notice 3.6

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, can you restate the question clearly for the record?

Ms LAWRIE: How many staff does the department have as FTEs and in actual numbers of staff? What are their classifications or levels; what was the rate of staff separation at each level; how many positions are vacant? Please also provide full details on where each current vacancy exists.

Mr GILES: We have to take that on notice.

We could provide everything right now, except for the turnover, which will take a long time to calculate.

Ms LAWRIE: Provide what you can. It is not unusual to provide answers in parts.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the Chief Minister has been allocated number 3.6.

Question on Notice 3.7

Ms LAWRIE: How long, in total days, have permanent positions been vacant in the department since 26 August 2012?

Mr GILES: We will take it on notice.

Madam CHAIR: That is reasonably clear. Obviously you accept, Chief Minister? That question has been allocated number 3.7.

Ms LAWRIE: In relation to each current vacancy - it goes to the six you are recruiting - can you provide details on the status of the current recruitment endeavours?

Mr GILES: They have all been advertised, member for Karama. Two have closed and are undergoing assessment.

Ms LAWRIE: How many staff are currently employed on temporary contracts?

Mr GILES: We will take that on notice.

Question on Notice 3.8

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could you please clearly restate the question?

Ms LAWRIE: How many staff are currently employed on temporary contracts?

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the Chief Minister is number 3.8.

Ms LAWRIE: As at today, how many workers are currently on workers compensation, at what level, and is there an expected return date?

Mr GILES: There is one person, who is an AO4, and we are not sure of the return to work date.

Ms LAWRIE: Since 26 August 2012, how many staff are or were on sick leave, including stress leave or extended leave, but excluding recreation leave, for longer than three weeks, at what level, and for what reason? Are there any still on extended leave?

Mr GILES: Member for Karama, there are two people, both on sick leave.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, in the Parliament House telephone directory distributed, I am advised today there are 90 staff in the ministerial offices. How does that correspond with the advice that there are 79 FTEs.

Mr GILES: I will have to look at the list and count it.

Ms LAWRIE: I table it. This is as at 19 June ...

Mr GILES: As of March, there are 78.9 FTEs. I am not sure what the 90 is, but I am happy to do some reconciliation at a later date. There might be people on part-time, as has just been explained to me. I will have to see who is and is not on part-time, not understanding the intricacies of each person's office and what their work arrangements are.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you want me to table the telephone list?

Mr GILES: I might grab it when I go upstairs and have a look myself.

Ms LAWRIE: Sweet. Will that be an answer on notice?

Mr GILES: Maybe I could ring you and let you know.

Ms LAWRIE: No, it is probably simpler than that. I am asking for advice as to why there is a discrepancy between the 79 FTE and the 90 staff in the ministerial offices listed?

Mr GILES: We will take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.9

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could you please clearly restate the question.

Ms LAWRIE: Can the Chief Minister please advise why there is a discrepancy between the 79 FTEs in ministerial offices as advised in the previous answer, and the 90 staff in ministerial offices as detailed in the Parliament House telephone directory as at 19 June - today.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. The Chief Minister accepts the question. The question asked by the Opposition Leader to the Chief Minister is number 3.9.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you for your patience. Hansard appreciates it when we ...

Ms LAWRIE: That is fine, that is normal.

Mr GILES: That is normal; there is nothing different. The only difference this year is the interjections are allowed where, previously, they have not been.

Mr WOOD: I have been around longer than you.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any more questions?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, how many graduates or apprentices have joined your agency since 26 August?

Mr GILES: We have one graduate working and two apprentices, one of them being the Leader of the Opposition ...

Ms LAWRIE: That has to be one of the more bizarre things you have said.

Mr GILES: You are on our books and we think you are still learning.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay. You know what I have said: I enjoy learning every single day of my life and I encourage every person to embrace learning. We can always learn.

Mr GILES: Perhaps the Prime Minister could learn about her Gonski proposal, improve it, and not penalise 41% of schools in the Northern Territory.

Ms LAWRIE: You are clearly so close - such a fondness has been struck between you, you could give her that advice.

Mr GILES: Good to see you wearing blue today, member for Karama. I understand the Prime Minister is very fond of blue ties.

Ms LAWRIE: I wear blue a lot. You are wearing a blue tie, Chief Minister. I am glad you are taking her advice.

Mr GILES: Kevin wears a blue tie as well ...

Mr WOOD: No, that is not blue. That looks like something out of Port Adelaide.

Mr GILES: Kevin wears a blue tie. It will be interesting to see if Kevin is wearing a blue tie by the end of the week, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: I am glad you are taking the Prime Minister's advice to wear a blue tie.

Mr GILES: Perhaps Kevin has a better deal for the Territory than the current Prime Minister.

Mr WOOD: The Treasurer had dark blue on today.

Ms LAWRIE: Light blue. I will move on to a question.

Madam CHAIR: Relevance!

Mr GILES: A bit of light-hearted entertainment is always good.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, how many credit cards are currently issued to departmental staff?

Mr GILES: Twenty-eight.

Ms LAWRIE: How many vehicles does the department have? What type of vehicles are they? What positions are they held against? With that, what are the levels of those positions?

Mr GILES: Are you asking for ministerial offices or for DCM?

Ms LAWRIE: That includes the Department of the Chief Minister, which includes ministerial offices.

Mr GILES: I have already answered ministerial offices today, but I am happy to do the department. There are 38 departmental cars, 24 of which are four-cylinder, 10 six cylinders, and four are hybrids. The ECOs have 25, SAOs have two. The administrator has one. There are six VIP drivers. There are two ex-renewal management board and two for Government House. The Leader of the Opposition has two cars, one ECO and one SAO. The Australia Day Council has one car.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, on the Parliament House telephone directory, Norman Fry, Don Fuller, and Phil Mitchell all have the same extension number, 86500, the same as yours.

Mr GILES: I am glad you have told me my phone number, member for Karama. I was not aware of what it was. I am happy to know.

Ms LAWRIE: Why is that, and what do they do?

Mr GILES: Quite often when people give out their phone numbers, they use the switch number. I am sure that is why my number is the 500 number, or whatever you declared it to be.

Ms LAWRIE: They do not have their own phone with an extension?

Mr GILES: I do not know. You have the phone list in front of you. If they have a number which goes straight to the switchboard, perhaps they get calls put through to them.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, but they only have the switch number - 86500.

Mr GILES: Maybe that is an allocation with a phone list and that is how it goes. Mine goes the same way, clearly.

I know when there are telephone calls for Norman Fry they do not ring on the telephone in my office.

Ms LAWRIE: What do they do? What are their positions

Mr GILES: I do not have their official titles. I will take that on notice.

Mr WOOD: Friends of the family.

Question on Notice No 3.10

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, will you please clearly restate the question.

Ms LAWRIE: Please provide the official titles for Norman Fry, Don Fuller, and Phil Mitchell.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: I accept the question.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the Chief Minister is number 3.10.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, could you provide full details and costs in your agency as a result of each change to the Administrative Arrangements since 26 August, including relocation and rebranding costs.

Mr GILES: We have already answered that as a written question.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you? I did not see it tabled.

Mr GILES: Yes, I provided information. It was done.

Ms LAWRIE: My apologies, I missed that one.

How many complaints have been made in the department in relation to workplace bullying and harassment since 26 August?

Mr GILES: Are you talking about the department, ministerial offices, or the Leader of the Opposition's office?

Ms LAWRIE: None in my office.

Mr GILES: I understand there have been a few.

Ms LAWRIE: Really?

Mr GILES: In DCM there have been none.

Ms LAWRIE: Could you detail them for me, please?

Mr GILES: Yes, we are all complaining about you.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay.

Mr GILES: There were none in DCM.

Mr VOWLES: None in her office either.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Member for Johnston

Mr GILES: You are backing the wrong horse, Ken.

Mr WOOD: Can we jump to five?

Ms LAWRIE: I am on whole-of-government questions and have about three left.

Mr GILES: I would put my vote behind the member for Wanguri if I was you, member for Johnston. You have a future there. You do not have a future with the member for Karama. Think carefully about that.

Mr VOWLES: I will take advice from you, too, Adam.

Mr GILES: It sounds like you are backing the one who got us into this fiscal position. Anyway, next question.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister. Thank you Opposition Leader.

Ms LAWRIE: I look forward to you complaining about how long it is all taking later this evening.

Chief Minister, in relation to the communications media review, you have advised how much it cost. How many media and comms people have cut across government, and how many have received forced redundancies?

Mr GILES: I am not sure whether this was already put in place. There are no forced redundancies.

Ms LAWRIE: None have lost their job?

Mr GILES: No one has lost their job.

Ms LAWRIE: Hang on a second, that is not true.

Mr GILES: There are 12 redeployees, but nobody has lost their job.

Ms LAWRIE: What happens to a redeployee when their contract expires? Say someone's contract is through to 30 June and they are on the redeployee list, what happens to them?

Mr GILES: We are pretty sure we are dealing with permanent staff, long term ...

Ms LAWRIE: No executive contracts affected by the review?

Mr GILES: I will ask Gary Barnes to answer the question about one, but the intent has been natural attrition will get us to a certain level, and there will be some redeployments.

Mr BARNES: There is one person who was at Police and has been on maternity leave. That is my understanding. Sorry, my apologies. There is one person, and they are replacing a person on maternity leave. When you replace an executive contract officer you have to terminate your permanent employment to move into a contract. For the purpose of that person's ongoing tenure within the public service, we

worked with the union and made a determination that they should be treated as a permanent officer so they were not disadvantaged in the process.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you for that advice.

Mr GILES: It is important to note the revised restructure is expected to save an estimated \$4m through centralised coordination of the marketing approach.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I look forward to seeing, in a couple of years' time, where that is. We have all seen marketing communications centralised and decentralised, centralised and decentralised over the years.

Mr GILES: We do our best to save money, as opposed to Labor and yourself as Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: I look forward to seeing where it all ends up in a couple of years' time. That is the end of my whole of agency questions, thanks.

Mr WOOD: Minister, my question was Gonski

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, can I table an amended document? There was an issue with minister Conlan's travel details and the class of airfare he took. It was around the wrong way, so I seek to table an updated copy of that. There is only one small change. I saw that earlier and I was wondering myself, to be honest.

Ms LAWRIE: It was a reverse to yours, which is unusual. It was 20 business class and 2 domestic, from memory.

Mr GILES: Most of mine are economy.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, that is what I am saying. His were the reverse to yours so I thought it unusual. Thank you for the amendment.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.10

Mr GILES: I have an answer to a question. I do not have the question on notice number, but Phil Mitchell, Don Fuller and Norman Fry's job titles are Community Engagement Officers.

Madam CHAIR: That is the answer to question 3.10.

Mr WOOD: Minister, this section of the budget deals with COAG issues, so I will ask one.

Mr GILES: Whole-of-government?

Ms LAWRIE: Whole of agency.

Mr WOOD: Whole of agency.

Madam CHAIR: Agency-related whole-of-government.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, tell me if I am in the wrong place, but I think we are in four.

Ms LAWRIE: No, we have not made it to four yet.

Mr WOOD: Have we not?

Madam CHAIR: No, we are getting there.

Mr WOOD: I need time to ask a few questions. On COAG issues, Gonski would have been one, so we have gone down that path. Did you deal with Cash for Containers? Did you negotiate that at a COAG meeting?

Mr GILES: I have been involved in the rescue of the debacle. I have some information here. I will read out a response I have, and might add a few bits here and there.

Mr WOOD: Yes, okay.

Mr GILES: 'Following the successful challenge by the beverage industry in the federal court to the Northern Territory government's container deposit legislation, the Territory government has undertaken the following steps to maintain the operation of the container deposit scheme: first, we are pursuing the expeditious grant of a permanent exemption for the container deposit legislation from operation of *Mutual Recognition Act*. Second, the NT government is continuing support of the CDL scheme through provision of funding pending expedited implementation of a permanent exemption. The cost is about \$1m a month. Questions concerning more precise details around the level of expenditure should be directed to minister Chandler.

We have made substantial progress towards securing a permanent exemption. The agreement of all state Premiers and the ACT Chief Minister to support a permanent exemption has been obtained. The COAG Regulation Impact Statement has been completed. The Commonwealth Office of Best Practice Regulation endorsed the RIS decision on 16 April 2013. While in Canberra for the 19 April 2013 COAG meeting, I hand-delivered correspondence to the Prime Minister seeking her agreement to a permanent exemption and for the Commonwealth government to commence a formal approval process required under the MRA to implement to exemption by way of an expedited process agreed between our respective departments.

A proposed regulation drafted by the Commonwealth, in consultation with the NT, to amend the MRA to exempt the NT's container deposit legislation was provided to all jurisdictions by me on 6 June 2013 to commence the formal endorsement process. Signifying endorsement under the MRA, each state and territory must publish a notice in its official *Gazette* under the hand of the state governor or territory equivalent endorsing the terms of the proposed legislation. Once all states and territories have formally notified their endorsement, the proposed regulation can be submitted to the Federal Executive Council to be made.

The processing time is now largely out of the hands of the Northern Territory government. Nevertheless, we have sought the goodwill and cooperation of all parties to complete the exemption process before the Commonwealth government goes into caretaker mode on 12 August 2013.'

That should answer some of your questions, member for Nelson. It is important to remember what I said before about the mess we are cleaning up from the previous Labor government. This is just another slice of the mess we are trying to clean up. It is costing us \$1m a month to subsidise this program. If we do not get to the position where the exemptions can be made before 12 August 2013, I cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel for the container deposit scheme. If we get to 12 August 2013, or if we get to a point where the writs are issued for a federal election that may be the end of the scheme.

Mr WOOD: Before we take that drastic step ...

Mr GILES: It is not deliberately drastic, but it will take forever and subsidising \$12m a year for this scheme, cleaning up another Labor legacy mess, is unsustainable for the Territory.

Mr WOOD: Have the states gazetted those notices yet?

Mr GILES: They are all in the process and we are working cooperatively. We want it to happen and are doing everything we can. We are thankful to all the states and territories. Tassie took a while to come in.

Mr WOOD: In regard to a gazettal notice?

Mr GILES: That has not happened yet. It has all been prepared and we anticipate it will happen. Once that happens we will, hopefully, have the formal endorsement by the feds, but if it is not done by the issue of the writs there is a serious long-term problem for this scheme in the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD: If the Liberals win the next election, forgetting whether you are keeping it or not, do they support the principle of what you are doing?

Mr GILES: It is not about the political party in the federal sphere. If there is a return of the current federal government there may be a speedier process. If there is a change of government, even a change of Prime

Minister later this week to Kevin Rudd from Julia, it changes priorities and there may be challenges in advancing this as quickly as we hope to before the issuing of the writs.

Mr WOOD: Do not jump the gun too quickly. Regardless of whether it does or does not go through, there may be alternatives such as for the time being suspended because, basically, it is suspended at the moment.

Mr GILES: However, it is costing us \$1m a month.

Mr WOOD: I am not saying you fund it. I understand it is costing and I do not like that idea either. I am saying do not close off all your options because we have started something good for the Territory. If it means it has to be mothballed for a while, so be it, but I would not like to hear the government, after all the work, regardless of the problems with it before - enough people who support it. Can we not save that decision until we need to make it?

Mr GILES: I am giving a clear indication, as I have done previously and spoken about it, there is broad support for this scheme from a political perspective ...

Mr WOOD: Especially if you mean Alice Springs.

Mr GILES: ... but the financial contribution - particularly in light of cleaning up Labor mess. If Labor had the right model and dealt with the *Mutual Recognition Act* - I have gone through the stuff the previous minister did not do to make this work.

Ms LAWRIE: Rubbish!

Mr GILES: I have been through it all from previous minister Hampton, who did not do his job ...

Ms LAWRIE: You are spinning on a top. No, we followed the legislative process ...

Mr GILES: He did not do his job.

Ms LAWRIE: ... we followed the COAG process.

Mr GILES: We are now in a position of \$1m a year ...

Ms LAWRIE: We were in the transition phase when government changed.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, cease interrupting the Chief Minister.

Ms LAWRIE: He is misleading.

Mr GILES: Are you finished?

Madam CHAIR: You cannot accuse the Chief Minister of misleading the parliament unless ...

Mr GILES: Without a substantive motion, so I ask you to withdraw.

Ms LAWRIE: I withdraw, but you know you are wrong.

Mr GILES: Minister Hampton completely messed up this process. As you know, Gerry, I am making my political point, we are trying to fix it and it is costing us \$1m a month. If it is not fixed up by the issuing of the writs there will be trouble ahead for this scheme.

You have just asked if it can be postponed until a later date. We are not going to rush in to stop the scheme, but we are not going to keep funding at \$1m a month.

Mr WOOD: You will work hard to try to get it through before ...

Mr GILES: Yes, and we are working tirelessly to make that happen.

Mr WOOD: It has taken so long to get there; I hope you do not make a decision like that.

Mr GILES: The *Mutual Recognition Act* and the exemptions are much work behind the scenes.

Mr WOOD: I do not want those three big companies to win because they have not treated us well at all, regardless of whether you think the previous government did not do it. This would not have occurred if it had not been challenged. They did not need to challenge but decided to because they do not want this to be national.

I go on to another COAG issue. Where are we with growth towns and SIHIP? It was a constant discussion point for the previous government, previous opposition, and the Council of Territory Cooperation. Is this an ongoing COAG issue - growth towns and SIHIP? It is not SIHIP anymore, it has another name.

Mr GILES: The Minister for Housing can talk about SIHIP, but I will give you a small overview. We will be announcing a broad-ranging review of SIHIP in the near future and appointing someone to conduct a review and a full financial analysis of all expenditure: where the money went; how much went onto things such as each individual item for repairs and maintenance; how much each house has cost; how much we spent on flights, meal allowances, accommodation and TA; how much went to project management; and how much went to profit. We will have a full understanding of the outcomes ...

Mr WOOD: Who is funding that review?

Mr GILES: That will be funded by the Department of Housing.

Mr WOOD: How will you get that information? We could not get it?

Mr GILES: The Department of Housing has that information, but you will be able to discuss that with the Minister for Housing. However, up until the point when the terms of reference are released and it is announced, you cannot go into a whole lot of detail. That is a broad overview on SIHIP for you.

It is now in the dying days of a bad previous Labor government which was fiscally irresponsibility. They changed the name SIHIP to NPARIH - National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing - trying to get away from the SIHIP model because everyone knows how bad Labor was there ...

Mr WOOD: Infrastructure also came out of that.

Mr GILES: Now it is in a position where the majority of work is being done by panel contracting through the Department of Infrastructure. Ask the Minister for Housing about NPARIH or Labor's bad SIHIP - call it what you want - and then ask the Minister for Infrastructure about the implementation works, particularly around the panel contracts of how that is working, where it is at, and what the outcomes are.

The transition process from the really bad SIHIP model into this panel contractor model where we reward Indigenous employees and local Territory companies nowadays was a difficult transition process to manage the outcomes and separate it because nobody knew where the money was. It was all hidden by previous Labor ministers and the previous Labor Treasurer, so we were not quite up to speed where things were. They will be the right people to answer those questions ...

Ms LAWRIE: I have to pick up on that comment because it is ridiculous and wrong.

Mr GILES: The member for Nelson has the floor, Madam Chair, rather than just having people scream over the top.

Ms LAWRIE: I was the minister at the time, I remember saying to Mal Brough not to go down that model he wanted, which was the SIHIP model ...

Mr GILES: We have seen the agreement you signed.

Ms LAWRIE: ... I said, 'Go through the Department of Construction and Infrastructure' ...

Mr GILES: We saw the agreement your former minister signed. This is not about debate, Madam Chair ...

Ms LAWRIE: ... and he said, 'No, the money is only on the table if you follow the Queensland alliance model' ...

Mr GILES: ... this is about asking questions on estimates.

Ms LAWRIE: Your mate, Mal Brough put the model in ...

Mr GILES: What we should do is make sure we have ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader!

Ms LAWRIE: ... and you call it a failed Labor model.

Mr GILES: ... the Opposition Leader ...

Ms LAWRIE: It was Mal Brough.

Mr GILES: ... stop interjecting.

Ms LAWRIE: Rewriting history.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, this is not the forum for making statements. Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: I note the original concept of the alliance model was from the Howard government's time.

Mr GILES: I am very happy, member for Nelson, to bring the agreement out again which was suggested by the minister at the time, who was Minister Vatskalis.

Mr WOOD: No. All I am saying is the Council of Territory Cooperation did not support the process, but the original concept came out of the John Howard days. That was where it first started and the documentation was there and was taken over by the new Labor government.

Mr GILES: I will have someone from my office rush down a copy of the MOU that was signed by the Labor government.

In relation to growth towns, this is a policy question rather than a program question. I am happy to give a small indication.

Mr WOOD: Do you want me to ask it in policy advice then?

Mr GILES: We can ask about how much money has been spent on policy advice and what we are working on in policy advice, but you were asking about growth towns. If you want to know specifically about growth towns ask the Minister for Regional Development. She will answer questions about growth towns and I am sure she will indicate we are supporting all Territory communities and Northern Territorians rather than just a select few.

Mr WOOD: Are you saying the government still supports the concept of growth towns?

Mr GILES: We support the concept of all Territorians, not the concept of town camps.

Mr WOOD: You do not support both the Commonwealth and the Territory growth towns?

Mr GILES: We support the concept of all Territorians.

Mr WOOD: I am not arguing that. I am just saying ...

Mr GILES: You are asking whether or not we support 15 individual locations. I am saying we support all communities. There are 73 prescribed communities, 1000 discrete communities in the Northern Territory plus our urban and rural remote towns. We support everybody, not just the 15 locations.

Mr WOOD: I am not disputing that and do not think it is a bad thing. However, the concept of growth towns carried with it certain implications, and the plan was for them to develop as ordinary towns.

Ms LAWRIE: A service centre.

Mr WOOD: Yes, a service centre; that was the concept. I am not saying you should not treat people out in the bush equally, but there was a reason those growth towns existed.

Mr GILES: We will continue to make strategic investments in areas of importance to the Northern Territory, but it is not only about picking 15 winners.

Mr WOOD: I did not agree with some of the 15, but that is not the issue.

Chief Minister, why did you abolish the department of Indigenous Advancement?

Mr GILES: I am not really sure this is a budget estimates question, but I am happy to give you ...

Mr WOOD: I suppose I am working under policy because it will change the policy.

Mr GILES: Because 30% of the Territory population is Indigenous, so many of our agencies work for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians and some of them are more focused on Indigenous than non-Indigenous issues. The government holds the position that every Territorian is important and we do not want people to be categorised or separated because of race. We want - and I understand the argument about women's policy, which will be ...

Mr WOOD: How do you know that it is coming up?

Mr GILES: Of course it is your next question. Silly questions always come ...

Mr WOOD: They are not silly questions.

Mr GILES: We need to make sure all our agencies are focused on Indigenous affairs, not just one. Before getting involved in politics I had a lot to do with Indigenous affairs, and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs would be lambasted with everything to do with black people. The problem is, all of a sudden, that minister becomes a government in themselves because they are looking after Indigenous health, Indigenous housing, Indigenous lands, Indigenous roads, Indigenous everything, and, through osmosis, it takes a lot of responsibilities and roles from other ministers. I believe, particularly in the Northern Territory, it is important because it is part of who we are as a society, part of who we are as a culture within the Territory; it is just business for us. From a federal perspective, looking at a national Indigenous population of about 2.6%, it is more of a minority group and more from a strategic policy coordination with individual jurisdiction point of view. In the Territory, I want to make sure every minister, through their program and policy objectives, focuses on everybody not just some people, leaving one minister stuck with looking after one population of people.

Mr WOOD: I can understand that, Chief Minister. I suppose where I find the difficulty is there are so many things throughout the budget that relate to Aboriginal people.

Mr GILES: How good is that? That is what we want.

Mr WOOD: There are specific - not funding for Aboriginal people for health or education – grants for that and specific grants for housing. That is not saying that money should not exist, but it is categorised already. It does not come in as education money. You spend it where it is. There will be money for disadvantaged people out in the bush.

Mr GILES: A lot of this is because when it comes from the federal government it is specifically categorised as Indigenous money for whatever program it might be. That is part of the federal government changing its role. Over time you will see things change in that regard. My previous experience shows you have to treat everyone the same.

Mr WOOD: Why then, for instance, is outstation housing not run by Minister Chandler?

Mr GILES: Because it is historical through the national partnership agreement - that was originally going through the Department of Regional Development. It has continued that way for historical reasons. There is nothing different. It is also because outstations homelands money is particularly focused on regional and remote areas.

Mr WOOD: Which are 99.9% Aboriginal by their very nature. Outstations are.

Mr GILES: Yes, they are. From a regional perspective, that is where it has always been and where it will stay.

Mr WOOD: It seems to me to be an anomaly when you are talking about housing. All housing is with the minister.

Mr GILES: I understand your argument, but that is where it has been. For the structure of the national partnership agreements and how it works in different areas, it has to be the strategic fit there.

Mr WOOD: You have answered my question. If you scrap Indigenous Affairs, based on the same argument why not scrap the Women's Policy department?

Mr GILES: I am open to ideas and suggestions. Do you want the Women's Policy area scrapped?

Mr WOOD: Well, for the same reason you are having Indigenous Advancement scrapped.

Mr GILES: I am asking you, do you want it scrapped?

Mr WOOD: For the same reason I agree with Indigenous Advancement being scrapped I agree Women's Policy should be scrapped.

Women are found in the urban areas, they are found all over the place. They are a percentage of the population.

Mr GILES: Did you just say women are found all over the place?

Mr WOOD: You know what I mean.

I am saying the argument you are using about Aboriginal people, who make up about 30% to 35% of the population - you say they should be part of the broad ...

Mr GILES: I understand your argument, member for Nelson, but I think women are as equal a part of society as men. There are certain areas where we need to have a strong focus on providing a leg-up, or a supportive environment around key different issues. From the Indigenous side of things, there is a 'them and us' culture, and I think that needs to be divided - there needs to be a lot of change in lots of areas. I think that is where the two differences are.

Mr WOOD: If you had replaced the first part of that sentence with the word Aboriginal I would not have known any difference. I have made my point.

Mr GILES: I take the point that you want to get rid of Women's Policy.

Mr WOOD: Yes, and you will spin that.

Mr GILES: No, I will not. We will not talk about it again.

Mr WOOD: I have been around long enough. Your good old Treasurer is good at this. You will say something then take it out of context. You know the context was what is good for the goose is good for the gander. If you scrap Aboriginal Advancement then you really should scrap Women's Policy. That is what I am saying. If you take that section out by itself you are doing truth a disservice.

I will move on. No, I will wait until you get to Social Policy.

Madam CHAIR: That is all the questions for Agency and Whole-of-Government.

OUTPUT 4.0 – POLICY ADVICE AND PUBLIC SECTOR COORDINATION **Output 4.1 – Policy Advice and Coordination**

Madam CHAIR: We now move to Output Group 4.0, Policy Advice and Public Sector Coordination, Output 4.1 Policy Advice and Coordination. Are there any questions?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, Major Projects was moved from the Department of the Chief Minister to Business and then back again. Can you outline the reasons for this and the impact of these decisions?

Mr GILES: What was the question?

Ms LAWRIE: Major Projects was moved from the Department of the Chief Minister to Business then moved back to the Department of the Chief Minister. Can you outline the reasons for the moves and the impact of these decisions?

Mr GILES: I ask Gary Barnes to answer the question.

Mr BARNES: Member for Karama, the responsibility for major projects is spread across two departments: the Department of Business and the Department of the Chief Minister.

Ms LAWRIE: Who is that ...

Mr BARNES: I am happy to talk to you about the split up of this. When a major project comes to the subcommittee of Cabinet, if it requires a very high level of initial engagement to make sure, in that initial gestation period, it receives the right level of support then some of those very big projects are directed to the Chief Minister. INPEX, in a previous iteration, would have been a project like that.

In the usual course of events the project goes to the Department of Business, which is responsible for the implementation phase. It works with other agencies to make sure that implementation occurs. The Department of the Chief Minister works with Peter Carew from the Department of Business. We meet on a monthly basis and produce a report on major projects status for the subcommittee of Cabinet on a regular basis. The Department of the Chief Minister has a role up-front for a select group of major projects. We still have an ongoing role with INPEX, for example. We have a monitoring role on how those other 14 major projects are happening, but that part is led by the Department of Business.

Ms LAWRIE: So you have separate structures. You have a structure in the Department of Business and a structure in the Department of the Chief Minister. The structure in the Department of Business reporting to Peter Carew would report directly to the Chief Minister as the minister for Major Projects?

Mr BARNES: Yes.

Ms LAWRIE: How many people do you have in Major Projects? Is it a unit or division of DCM? How many people are in the unit, division or section of the Department of Business?

Mr BARNES: There are four in Major Projects administration and six in Major Projects.

Ms LAWRIE: Major Projects administration is a DCM arm and Major Projects is a Department of Business arm?

Mr BARNES: At the end of March there were approximately 10 people in Major Projects in part administration. They are based in the Department of Business. We have people within our new economic development policy arm of the department who have an input regularly around major projects. Our economic development group within DCM currently has four staff who do a range of things, including monitoring major projects and the governance surrounding very significant major projects.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you. Chief Minister, will you rule out selling Darwin port?

Mr GILES: We do not rule anything in or out but we do not anticipate selling Darwin port. We are not looking at it; we have not done a study on it. There is no intent to do it, but we do not give a definitive answer. There has been no desire to sell the port.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you rule out leasing the port?

Mr GILES: No, we will not rule out leasing the port. We will look at what options we can work towards to provide opportunities around improving capacity and productivity at the Darwin port facility.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you had any discussions in regard to leasing the port?

Mr GILES: We have not been involved in any discussions with any interested stakeholders looking to identify terms about any particular lease at all.

Ms LAWRIE: Have you done any preparatory work within government in what a lease of the port model would look like?

Mr GILES: Not at this stage. We are doing up some concept plans at the moment around what could be undertaken to improve capacity and capability of a port. In looking at what we could do for leasing, that has not occurred.

Ms LAWRIE: What are the plans in terms of ...

Mr GILES: I am not saying we may not look at that into the future, but we are not planning on looking at sale.

Ms LAWRIE: The capacity plans, what would they be?

Mr GILES: We are still waiting to see. Our intent is to look at what we could do about increasing the quay line at the port, increasing the hard stand area, how we could upgrade the crane, how we could get improvements in the loading and unloading facilities for bulk goods and what we can do to increase the number of reefer points to possibly support the abattoir if that gets going. There is a whole range of things we have asked someone to look at so we can see what some of our requirements might be and an expanded future, particularly if we have increased business as we expect in the Top End. Also, to look at whether we need a second point, particularly for bulk goods and what that might look like in the initial concept design.

Ms LAWRIE: Is this work taking into account the existing port master plan and building on it or completely separate to it?

Mr GILES: We have our economic development panel of Ian Smith, Doug McTaggart and Paul Henderson who have had a look at some of these things. They think there needs to be a whole lot more work done on some of those plans. They are now looking at what other possibilities are out there at the moment.

The strategy for the port was not forward looking enough in that master plan and there are more options. There are many more growth opportunities for both import and export. We need to get a better model, or improved model, around port design, capability, and capacity.

Ms LAWRIE: Would that include port pricing?

Mr GILES: No, they will not be looking at port pricing. The port has a look at the pricing stuff itself. It might come up at a late date, but there is no one deliberately looking at that.

There have recently been some changes to port pricing. Off the top of my head - you should be asking these questions in the port output area, as you know - there has been a reduction in containerage rates by 55%, and there has been a slight increase to two of the bulk exporters on a per tonnage basis. I do not have those figures off the top of my head. There have already been a couple of changes.

As you would know, when you put in the Marine Supply Base you put in certain conditions around the pricing structure of rig tender work to get them off the main quay line onto the Marine Supply Base. I am sure conversations around those areas may be public in a period of time.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you rule out selling down equity in the Marine Supply Base?

Mr GILES: You have to ask those questions of the Minister for Infrastructure or the minister for the port. We are completely out of area on Chief Minister's.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay. Do you rule out selling the Government Printing Office?

Mr GILES: You would have to ask those questions to the minister for DCIS.

Ms LAWRIE: What about ruling out the sale of Power and Water?

Mr GILES: You have to ask those questions of the shareholding minister for Power and Water,.

Ms LAWRIE: He said it is a policy of your government not to sell Power and Water, but you are the Chief Minister and you are saying you do not know that is the policy.

Mr GILES: He accurately reflects the policy of government, but you will have to ask any questions about Power and Water of the shareholding minister of Power and Water.

Ms LAWRIE: The sale of assets within Power and Water, is it on the agenda? Weddell Power Station, for example, has been mentioned publicly in terms of consideration ...

Mr GILES: By the Electrical Trades Union on a radio station. I suggest you put your questions to the shareholding minister for Power and Water.

Ms LAWRIE: The shareholding minister for Power and Water has not confirmed he will appear before the Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee.

Mr GILES: I will take that up separately, but I am here to answer questions on DCM.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you think the shareholding minister should appear before the Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee?

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Chief Minister has answered the question. Please move on with your next question.

Ms LAWRIE: You do not want to answer it?

Madam CHAIR: The Chief Minister is able to answer in whatever way he sees fit. He has answered the variations to your question several times.

Ms LAWRIE: They are legitimate public issues ...

Madam CHAIR: Ports are coming up. GOC is coming up on the last day. You had a chance to speak to the shareholding minister yesterday ...

Ms LAWRIE: All past Chief Ministers have been asked because it is policy coordination ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, do not argue with me! Please ask the Chief Minister the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: This is the policy coordination area of government and broad issues of government policy are regularly directed to the Chief Minister.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, have you answered the Opposition Leader's question?

Madam CHAIR: I am not answering it because she needs to ask in the right output group, which is in the shareholding minister for Power and Water's area.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, please ask your next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, the CLP promised all Cabinet submissions would include a cost of living analysis component. Has that occurred?

Mr GILES: I do not go into details of Cabinet submissions, paperwork, deliberations or outcomes of decisions.

Ms LAWRIE: Your department is in charge of the Cabinet Office and Cabinet process, has that occurred?

Mr GILES: We do not talk about Cabinet papers.

Ms LAWRIE: It is a public election commitment and I am asking whether or not it has been met.

Mr GILES: You will have to wait 30 years to find that out, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: You are being absurd.

Mr GILES: Everyone knows, and you know, you are just playing games once again, being silly, and trying to prove to the world you are irrelevant. I will answer it now. Cabinet documents are to stay within Cabinet and the decision and deliberations do not come out ...

Ms LAWRIE: I am not asking for a decision or deliberation; I am asking whether a cost of living analysis component sits on the government papers.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, can you please instruct the rude member for Karama not to interrupt when people are talking?

There are Cabinet processes and we do not talk about Cabinet processes - what happens in our documents - simple.

Ms LAWRIE: The CLP made a public election commitment to include a cost of living analysis component in all Cabinet submissions but you will not tell the public whether you are meeting that?

Mr GILES: We seek to fulfil all our election commitments.

Ms LAWRIE: How would anyone know, unless they wait 30 years, according to your previous answer?

Mr GILES: People will find out when they have an opportunity to see the Cabinet documents. You know how Cabinet works and I know how it works.

Ms LAWRIE: We are not asking to see a Cabinet submission ...

Mr GILES: You never distributed your Cabinet documents to prove whether you had cost of living impact statements. We will not produce Cabinet documents to show that or otherwise, and I will not tell you how we do our Cabinet documents. They are confidential; that is how it works under the Westminster system.

Ms LAWRIE: No one is asking for a copy of a Cabinet document. We are asking for confirmation of whether or not you are meeting that election commitment.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I ask you to rule on this deliberate debate which is going nowhere. It is going in circles. We are not answering the question.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, when you feel you have answered the question or otherwise we can move on to the next question.

Mr GILES: I have answered it. I am not going to talk about Cabinet documents.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader.

Ms LAWRIE: Absurd.

Chief Minister, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' labour force figures show there are 4100 fewer full-time jobs than in October last year. That is the period the CLP has been in government. We know at least 600 of those are public servants you sacked after promising you would not sack any. How do you explain the other 3500?

Mr GILES: That question is completely incorrect. You should have asked that of the minister for Business and Employment.

Ms LAWRIE: We did ask the minister for Business and Employment and he did his best not to answer. Chief Minister, you would be aware that you went in with a clear commitment that no jobs would be lost and no public servants would be sacked. You have sacked public servants. In addition, we have seen 3500 other jobs shed since your policies have been enacted in the Northern Territory – the policies you coordinate as the Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: When you put out a budget forecast which shows, under a Labor government in the future, there will be a \$5.5bn debt and a \$1.4bn deficit that starts to erode business and community confidence. It gets people wondering whether they should stay in the Territory with a bad Labor government, with bad fiscal integrity and fiscal management. That is what erodes business confidence. I go back to the point that this is part of the business outputs and you should have asked the Business minister. Do not waste my time with those questions. You need to ask your questions in the right output areas. I have come prepared with my outputs; ask questions in the output areas. If you have it wrong I am happy to direct you where you should go. Clearly, this one is wrong.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you do not want to identify where your policies have impacted on dramatic job losses in the Northern Territory; 4100 job losses in the Northern Territory – dramatic. Unemployment rising to 5.1% under your watch, Chief Minister, yet you just do not want to identify where your policy impacts are occurring.

Mr GILES: Do you know why no one takes you seriously anymore, member for Karama?

Ms LAWRIE: So you are not going to answer it?

Mr GILES: Hang on, I am answering the question, Madam Chair. People do not take you seriously because you always have to be in the gutter. You are always asking questions that are not contributing to debate. The member for Nelson asked questions about growth towns. I gave him a serious answer about where we are heading with it. He asked the question about the *Mutual Recognition Act* and CDL. I answered the question. You are asking silly things and you wonder why you are polling so badly, why people find you irrelevant, why you are unfavourable to the electorate. Start being relevant. No one here is listening to you. How can anyone listen to you? Be relevant in the debate. You are asking questions that are not relevant to the topic. If you want to ask questions, I have briefs on a whole range of things. You could ask serious questions about program expenditure or policy the Chief Minister's department is working on but you want to play silly. Become relevant in life and be an Opposition Leader, otherwise step aside and let someone else from your team who is prepared to contribute to debate in this parliament lead.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, there is nothing more important in providing for your family than to have a paid livelihood. Under your watch, your policy, your settings, your disastrous failure - there are 4100 Territorians without a job under the Country Liberal Party.

Mr GILES: You cannot even get your radiogram right. You have to practice your radiogram. Write it down and read it out really strong.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, please!

Ms LAWRIE: You do not care. Your only focus is on having a personal crack at the Leader of the Opposition. That is where you go when you do not have an answer ...

Mr GILES: I am giving you advice.

Ms LAWRIE: When you do not have a clue, which is patently obvious.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, is there a question coming?

Mr GILES: I will give you some real advice.

Ms LAWRIE: I do not need your advice because you knife your colleagues. You knifed Terry Mills as the Chief Minister and you would not even answer that question ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader that is enough. Standing Order 51: no interruption of a member. Please stick to the script.

Ms LAWRIE: If you want to talk about employment, talk about your idea around the three-hub economy and how you could measure success if you do not know where the job losses are coming from in the private sector.

Mr GILES: Now it is my turn. Going back to your last comment, you have gone straight to the gutter again. I will go back to my point. On your phone is an icon which is a recording device. I suggest you record what you say, play it back and hear how irrelevant and silly you sound, and you can understand what the community hears. We have Gerry sitting here somewhere. People listen to what he says and, as much as I disagree with a lot of it, people listen to him. No one listens to you. I will be honest, people do not.

Ms LAWRIE: You say, and that is your thing and you can stick to it.

Madam CHAIR: Let us move on to the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: If you say your policy is a key policy of your government and you will grow a three-hub economy, how can you measure your success if you do not know where those private sector job losses are?

Mr GILES: Employment is in Business. Madam Chair, let us move on to the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, page 5 of the Budget Overview shows you have increased taxes on employers from \$176m to \$200m. That is a 13% tax increase on business. You have the mantra that taxes on businesses are taxes on jobs. Meanwhile, your taxes on jobs are up to \$24m and jobs are down by 4100. Why are you increasing taxes while cutting jobs?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I do not accept the purpose of the question. No one is cutting jobs. Taxes on employers have gone up because more people are in employment, which defeats the purpose of the previous tirade of silly questions. Also, this is a matter for the Treasurer, and I would encourage the Opposition Leader to ask the Treasurer those questions.

Ms LAWRIE: As Chief Minister, do you have carriage of your three-hub policy commitment?

Mr GILES: We have broad economic strategy policy, but individual ministers look after tourism, education, mining, resources and so on.

Ms LAWRIE: Within your broad coverage – the first hub, mining, are you aware the Minerals Council has said your mining taxes contained in this budget mean you are closed for business? Are you aware of those public comments?

Mr GILES: Put the mining questions to the mining minister in the mining output areas.

Ms LAWRIE: As Chief Minister, did you hear those public comments.

Mr GILES: Put the mining questions to the mining minister in the mining output areas.

Member for Nelson, we will get to you soon with some serious questions. Perhaps the member for Johnston has some real questions.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you have cloth ears to what the Minerals Council has to say?

Mr GILES: Now I am cloth ears! Names again, good on you, member for Karama, you are more and more irrelevant every minute this estimates process continues. The sooner the member for Wanguri puts her hand up the better the debate in the Chamber will be.

Member for Johnston, change your vote, you are backing the wrong horse.

Ms LAWRIE: You will not acknowledge the Minerals Council described your government as being closed for business?

Mr GILES: We will not acknowledge your question.

Ms LAWRIE: Can you talk about any consultation process you undertook with that industry?

Mr GILES: That is a question for the mining minister. Next question.

Ms LAWRIE: What about business confidence? You raised it in a previous answer saying under your watch business confidence has plunged by 39%. Do you think this is why 4100 jobs have been lost? You previously made a link to confidence and jobs.

Mr GILES: Up until 14 March people were not aware of your fiscally irresponsible \$5.5bn debt. When people were made aware of that they started to lose confidence. It is now returning because they understand there is hope and vision for the future of the Northern Territory. Houses are being built, there are solutions for education, we are fixing the gaol system and trying to treat people who are chronically addicted to alcohol. Once again, you are in the wrong output area. Ask the question of the right minister in the right output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you meet with the Chamber of Commerce regularly?

Mr GILES: The Minister for Business meets with the Chamber of Commerce on a regular basis, as I would expect, as that is a key area he needs to focus on and one of his key stakeholders.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you meet with the Business Council regularly?

Mr GILES: This is another question for the Minister for Business.

Madam Chair, I know what the opposition is trying to do. They want to keep us here as long as possible and play some silly game. Ask some serious questions and we will sit here all night; play silly games and I will keep referring to the appropriate minister and the appropriate output area and you can continue to be completely irrelevant in politics in the Northern Territory. It is your choice.

Ms LAWRIE: You say you have broad responsibility for the economic development, yet you are identifying that as Chief Minister you are not meeting with the Business Council or the Chamber of Commerce, two key industry peaks, regularly.

Mr GILES: You are misleading this committee. I did not say that and you should put your questions to the Minister for Business.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you meet with them regularly or not?

Mr GILES: Can I apologise to the members for Nelson, Arafura, Johnston and Stuart for the inability to get past pathetic questions and go to real debate.

Ms LAWRIE: As Chief Minister do you meet with those industry peaks?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, these are questions about the Business portfolio. They should go to the Business minister.

Ms LAWRIE: No, I am asking you, as Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, if you meet regularly with the industry ...

Mr GILES: What line item is this in the output areas of the Chief Minister's Department?

Ms LAWRIE: Policy Coordination under economic development.

Mr GILES: No, it is not.

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, it is. Anyone trying to coordinate economic development policy, as Chief Minister, ought to be meeting on a regular basis with these industry peaks. Are you doing that?

Mr GILES: Ask your questions to the Business minister. Why not ask, 'How did you go with your meeting with the Chamber of Commerce when you explained your vision for the Northern Territory? How excited were they that there is finally a plan for the future?' There is a question for you. I will even write them for you instead of this glib nonsense you are asking. Keep going and looking like a fool.

Madam Chair, any questions that are irrelevant to the Chief Minister's department should be ruled out of order.

Ms LAWRIE: These are policy coordination questions.

Mr GILES: Yes, but they relate to other people's portfolios.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, if a question is not in your portfolio you can state that and we move on to the next question.

Ms LAWRIE: In Budget Book No 2 page 9 you are forecasting the increase in the cost of living will double – inflation from 2% up to 3.9%. Why are you forecasting inflation will double given Territorians are already feeling the pain of your policy decisions? Why are you further increasing that pain?

Mr GILES: I do not accept the premise of the question. Questions around inflation should have been put to the Treasurer yesterday. Next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Do you admit that a high inflation figure is proof that the cost of living has not been cut?

Mr GILES: Questions around inflation and cost of living in regard to CPI and so forth should have been put to the Treasurer yesterday. Next question.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, the latest Australian Bureau of Statistic figures show retail trade is down in the Territory whilst it is up across the nation. How many jobs has this cost?

Mr GILES: You should ask the Treasurer and the Minister for Business those questions.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you have increased the cost of living, growing at twice the rate it was. Do you think that has any link to why retail trade might be so slow?

Mr GILES: I do not accept the premise of the question. I would not be surprised if it was misleading, but I encourage you to put that question to the Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, road safety policy requires a great deal of central policy coordination across several agencies. You promised to scrap speed limits. You have omitted you are sitting on a report in relation to that ...

Mr GILES: This is a question in relation to Transport. I suggest you put that to the Transport minister in the right appropriation area.

Ms LAWRIE: As a coordinating agency, you would see feedback and reports from other agencies ...

Mr GILES: No coordination in relation to road safety goes through the Chief Minister's department.

Ms LAWRIE: There is no coordination for road safety?

Mr GILES: No.

Ms LAWRIE: That you see?

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the Chief Minister has answered that question.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, I note you decided to increase the budget for your policy advice from \$7m to \$12m. Is there any other output across government that has had such a dramatic increase?

Mr GILES: No, because that money is for remote Indigenous housing. It comes to us through the partnership arrangements.

Ms LAWRIE: Will you answer questions around remote Indigenous housing, or is that for ...

Mr GILES: No, that will be for the Minister for Housing. I am happy to tell you why there is an increase in money. That is a transition process that comes through the Chief Minister's department for the national partnership agreements. Any questions in relation to how the Indigenous housing program operates, whether that is under the failed Labor SIHIP or the renewed model, ought to go ...

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Mal Brough for that legacy.

Mr GILES: ... to the Minister for Housing.

Ms LAWRIE: The Chief Minister ...

Mr GILES: Also, it came through when the former failed Labor government was there, under the former failed Labor Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: Gary, you were not around in the days we were having the conversation with Mal Brough, but there are other people in the room who can remember ...

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, I ask that you speak much more respectfully to the Chief Executive of the department.

Mr GILES: She is a very disrespectful person.

Madam CHAIR: Do not address him directly; you have to go through the appropriate minister.

Ms LAWRIE: There are a few of us in the room who were around in those days, and we know Mal Brough put down the requirement of, 'You take the alliance model or you don't get the SIHIP funding'.

Mr GILES: Is this commentary adding any value to this debate at the moment?

Madam CHAIR: Please come to your question, Opposition Leader.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, in terms of Blue Mud Bay, you promised no fishing permits. Why did you break that commitment? You promised to keep Territorians fully informed of any negotiations ...

Mr GILES: We have a question. Ladies and gentleman, come back to the television!

Ms LAWRIE: You did not on the Finniss River ...

Mr GILES: You can turn it up, we will get an answer. The drawl is quietening down.

Ms LAWRIE: You left it to the Northern Land Council to announce agreement had been reached to close sections of the river.

Mr GILES: What is the question? That ended on a statement.

Ms LAWRIE: Why did you promise no fishing permits? Why did you break your commitment? We know you promised to keep Territorians fully informed of negotiations. Why ...

Mr GILES: Why did you promise no fishing permits? Fishing permits were introduced when you were in government?

Ms LAWRIE: ... did you not keep that promise on the Finniss River? Why did you leave it up to the NLC to announce it?

Mr GILES: Why did you promise no fishing permits while you were in government then introduce fishing permits? Double edged sword this one, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: You asked questions last year of the previous Chief Minister, and I am asking it this year of you because you have broken all your commitments, Chief Minister - all of them. You promised no fishing permits, you have broken that commitment. You promised to keep Territorians fully informed of negotiations, you broke that ...

Mr GILES: I am happy to read out an answer if the drawl can just be quiet for a minute, Madam Chair.

On July 2008, the High Court of Australia handed down its decision on Blue Mud Bay. The High Court found the *Fisheries Act* is valid in tidal waters over Aboriginal land, but that a permit under the Aboriginal Land Act is required to enter or remain on those waters.

Interim arrangements are in place to allow commercial and recreational fishers to enter waters overlying Aboriginal land while the negotiations are continuing. The Northern Land Council has extended interim arrangements until 31 December 2013, and I thank the chairman for his recent agreement to do that.

This is apart from the small section of the tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land in the upper Finniss River region, and the areas where agreements have already been reached.

Traditional owners responsible for tidal waters approximately 13.5 km upstream from the mouth of the Finniss River decided not to provide access for recreational and commercial fishers, including fishing tour operators. While the government respects the decision made by traditional owners, it remains open to further discussions to reach an agreement for access to these waters.

The Anindilyakwa Land Council has extended the interim arrangements while good faith negotiations are continuing.

The Tiwi Land Council has not extended the interim arrangements since May 2010 with commercial fishers, including fishing tour operators required to enter into negotiated agreements with the TLC and recreational fishers required to obtain a fishing permit.

On 19 October 2012 the TLC announced the northern parts of Melville and Bathurst Islands were closed to Tiwi recreational permit holders and access is limited to the single land-based fishing tour operators. Government is keen to accommodate the desires of TLC to establish successful fishing lodges on the islands to provide appropriate access to the waters. This Country Liberals government supports Aboriginal people and wants to see economic development, business growth and employment opportunities. Government is also keen to ensure recreational fishers and fishing tour operators are able to access the waters surrounding the Tiwi Islands, especially those convenient to Darwin. An in-principle agreement has now been reached with TLC which provides permit free access to the southern and eastern regions of the island, including the Apsley Strait and closed areas on north Melville Island and west Bathurst Island to protect commercial land based Tiwi fishing lodges.

Some detail in relation to TLC in-principle agreement is still to be resolved. It is recommended the in-principle agreement with the TLC is confidentially negotiated with government behind closed doors and all stakeholders are advised appropriately before any further announcements are made. We are currently in consultation around revised proposals with traditional owners and expect some announcements in the near future on those matters.

Four agreements have been reached with traditional owners for the following areas including the Daly River, Daly River mouth to Cape Ford, McArthur River, Sir Edward Pellew group of islands and the tidal waters in the mini-Merganella region between Kakadu and Cobourg National Parks. The scheme is for 20 years to provide access for recreational fishers and other water users without individual permits and access through agreements for commercial fishers, including fishing tour operators. A range of agreements have been made to date.

The remaining areas requiring agreement with NLC jurisdictions are Arnhem Land, Banyala and Limmen towns river region. There is a full load of work to be done. We approach these negotiations in good faith. It has been a difficult time for both the former Labor government and the current government in achieving the outcomes we want. We all want permit free access and, at the end of the day, it a good result.

Ms LAWRIE: Given at the end you acknowledge negotiations are a difficult process, why did you promise permit free?

Mr GILES: Why did we what?

Ms LAWRIE: Why did you, knowing the stance of the land councils on permits, promise permit free?

Mr GILES: Because we want permit free access to fishing, and that is why we are in negotiations ...

Ms LAWRIE: You want it ...

Mr GILES: Hang on, you asked a question, you get an answer! Do not be rude, you are continually rude, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: You knew you would not get it but promised it anyway, is that right?

Mr GILES: Off you go again. You cannot be quiet.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, give the Chief Minister a chance to answer the question.

Mr GILES: This is a fishing question; I suggest you put it to the minister for Fisheries in his relevant output area.

Ms LAWRIE: Is that similar to when you visited the Tiwi Islands and promised to return grog, knowing you could not deliver on that promise? Is that the same type of promise? You made promises knowing you could not deliver them.

Mr GILES: Straight to the gutter again. I never promised grog in the Tiwi Islands. I suggest you ask that question of the Alcohol Policy minister.

Ms LAWRIE: That ends the Policy Advice output. We have Social Policy up next.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of output No 4.1.

Output 4.2 – Social Policy Coordination

Madam CHAIR: We will now consider output No 4.2, Social Policy Coordination. Whilst the Chief Minister is responsible for Social Policy Coordination as a whole, Multicultural Affairs and Senior and Young Territorians are a subset of Social Policy Coordination and questions relating to such will be answered by Minister Styles on Wednesday 26 June 2013. Are there any questions?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, have you undertaken any social analysis on the impact of your cost of living decisions?

Mr GILES: We are always ascertaining important elements of social implications around decisions made by government and proposed by government. Some of the most significant concerns we have been dealing with, particularly in relation to social impact, are how we can afford to live within our means while seeking to pay back the \$5.5bn Labor debt and reducing the deficit from the anticipated \$1.4bn left to us by a very bad former Labor Treasurer and, at the same time, addressing some of the legacy matters hidden away, such as 90 unfunded DCF staff, child protection staff, 11 unfunded animal welfare officers and the unfunded commitments for ongoing operational requirements for the medi-hotel. The list is as long as your arm. Some of the social impacts are always analysed, particularly when we have to be fiscally responsible rather than fiscally irresponsible, like the former Labor Treasurer.

Ms LAWRIE: Putting aside your mantra, if you are ever capable of doing that - your political rhetoric and mantra we just heard - have you undertaken any social analysis of the impact of your cost of living decisions?

Mr GILES: We have not made any cost of living decisions. We have provided good governance for the Northern Territory and got us back on a financial footing that will work to repay Labor debt within a six-year time frame of getting us back to a fiscal imbalance before we can start addressing the issue of the great, big debt burden you left us.

Ms LAWRIE: The families struggling to pay power bills, no analysis of that?

Mr GILES: We always take into account the positives and negatives of the decisions we make, but we are also mindful of this bad picture in the rear view mirror of a really bad performing former Labor Treasurer, who has left us in a difficult fiscal position and we are trying to rectify the situation.

Getting the balance right between reducing the deficit, working towards getting a fiscal balance and starting to pay back Labor debt, at the same time ensuring we continue to deliver services, social services, also while continuing to look for future economic opportunities while stimulating the local economy at the same time is always a challenge. It would be a whole lot easier if we were not left with such a debt burden by a former bad Labor Treasurer, who left us with a \$5.5bn debt.

Ms LAWRIE: More political mantra from you, but Chief Minister, what about the social impact ...

Mr GILES: It is all honest; there is nothing dishonest about that. That is completely right. You do not like that answer because it talks about how bad you were.

Ms LAWRIE: No, that is not right; it is just your ridiculous mantra. Wrap yourself in a cloak of that and continue to do so, which does not do you a whole lot of good. In terms of the social impact of decisions to cut, for example, non-government organisations which support our most needy, cuts to the tune of about \$4.8m, did you look at the social impact of that?

Mr GILES: We analyse all decisions we make, particularly in light of trying to reduce the budget deficit and repay the \$5.5bn worth of Labor debt, particularly when we are trying to get towards that fiscal imbalance to get to a position where we can start paying back that debt. Tough decisions have to be made in a tough fiscal environment. You left us in that tough fiscal environment to balance and try to get everything right.

Ms LAWRIE: In short, you did not.

Mr GILES: This is just another one of the piles of trouble you left us.

Ms LAWRIE: In short, you did not.

Chief Minister, alcohol, as we know, has a huge social cost, some \$642m a year in economic cost. There are several agencies responsible for different aspects of alcohol policy, and the Department of the Chief Minister coordinates across the agencies. Given the social impact and cost of alcohol, why would your government promise, as you did in the election run up, to bring back full strength beer to remote communities?

Mr GILES: Anything regarding alcohol policies should be directed towards the alcohol policy minister.

Ms LAWRIE: I take it you will not answer any questions in relation to your decision to scrap the Banned Drinkers Register, Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: Sorry, I did not hear. I switch off a bit when I hear that drawl. Ask it again, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: You will not answer questions in relation to the scrapping of the Banned Drinker Register?

Mr GILES: You should be asking questions around alcohol policy to the Alcohol Policy minister. You should be asking questions about alcohol rehabilitation to the Alcohol Rehabilitation minister. Questions about sports should be asked to the Sports minister. Questions about fisheries should be asked to the Fisheries minister. Questions about multicultural affairs should be asked of the Multicultural minister. You can go on and on, but you get the drift?

Ms LAWRIE: On social policy, earlier this year the Attorney-General, in an article in *The Australian*, said:

The chief magistrate continues to comment on social policy which remains the domain of policy makers. If the chief magistrate wishes to influence policies she has the opportunity to stand for parliament.

Do you agree that in the output of Social Policy Coordination the only people who should have any say are politicians?

Mr GILES: If you are referring to the Attorney-General you should ask him the question. I believe he is up next.

Ms LAWRIE: In the non-government sector which, as I said, provides a range of social policy services across government, can you provide the total amount of funding across government for non-government organisation for this year's budget compared to last year?

Mr GILES: Yes, we can do that. We will take it on notice.

Question on Notice 3.11

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, could you please restate the question for the record?

Ms LAWRIE: Can you provide, across government, the total amount of funding for the non-government organisation in this year's budget compared to last year's?

Mr GILES: I am happy to take the question; however, we will need an extension of time to deliver because that is a whole lot of work.

Ms LAWRIE: End of July?

Mr GILES: That should be okay.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the Opposition Leader of the Chief Minister will be question 3.11.

Ms LAWRIE: In other social policy areas, you have raised your concerns about domestic violence. Domestic violence has increased 24% since the Banned Drinker Register was scrapped. How do you feel about that Chief Minister?

Mr GILES: Alcohol dependency and chronic alcohol abuse are significant issues in the Northern Territory and something that was not touched over the last 11 years. A number of supply and prohibition measures were put in place that clearly have not worked, as you will see when the Police minister appears and you

ask questions about incidents regarding alcohol. You will get a clear indication of how they have continued to trend up over the last five years. You just have to look at child protection notifications, which were up by 35% to 10 000 this financial year, with 4000 of those substantiated. The number of children in care has gone from 150 in 2001 to 800 this financial year. Two-and-a-half-thousand women were beaten up by drunken men. It is a significant issue which needs addressing. Fortunately, we have a government in the Northern Territory that is committed to addressing these issues rather than turn a blind eye and play political games to manipulate people to stay at the bottom end of society and not have the appropriate assistance they desire.

Any questions in relation to those topics should be put to the appropriate minister.

Ms LAWRIE: Yet, under your watch, domestic violence has increased by 24%.

Mr GILES: No, it has not.

Ms LAWRIE: That is what the crime statistics show.

Mr GILES: No, it has not.

Ms LAWRIE: The latest crime statistics show domestic violence has increased by 24% since you scrapped the Banned Drinker Register.

Mr GILES: I am happy to have that discussion when we get to the Police portfolio.

Ms LAWRIE: My next question will be in Output 5.1.

Mr GILES: You did not ask questions about gas to Gove. No wonder the member for Nhulunbuy did not ask a question for you.

Ms LAWRIE: I had an update on that from the federal minister, who was in town recently.

Mr WOOD: I have a question for the minister for Resources and Mining.

Mr GILES: You met Gary Gray, well done.

Ms LAWRIE: I do not need to ask you.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, I heard you say we should direct questions about alcohol policy to - I am not sure who because there are a number of people. Health, Police, the Treasurer and the Department of Business all have some say. You must have an alcohol policy that you, as the government, have put forward to the public as your response to the difficulties with alcohol. Who puts that policy together? Is it the Chief Minister's department, Cabinet, or what? Where is that policy written?

Mr GILES: The Alcohol Policy minister has full carriage of alcohol policy. Whatever he does he takes to Cabinet for discussion, but he has full carriage.

Mr WOOD: So who is the alcohol minister?

Mr GILES: Mr Tollner. You asked questions of him today about it.

Mr WOOD: That is true, but he only has part of it. The Minister for Health has Alcohol Rehabilitation. The Minister for Business has a section of it in regard to licensing, and the Police Commissioner has people who carry out the law in relation to the abuse of alcohol.

Mr GILES: You mean police officers.

Mr WOOD: That is right, but I am saying there are three ministers - Health, Treasurer and ...

Mr GILES: Mr Tollner writes the policy framework. He has the carriage for the whole fabric, including the Licensing Commissioner, licensing inspectors, breaches of the *Liquor Act* by those outlets in Alice Springs that were debated today. He is in control of all of that from a policy position.

Minister Lambley is in control of and responsible for the rehabilitation component. Only those two ministers are involved. From the Police minister's point of view, the Police Commissioner oversees the law and adherence to.

Mr WOOD: You, as Chief Minister, speak about alcohol as the Chief Minister. I thought you would be the lead person in that broader picture which includes Health, Police, licensing and law. You do not accept that is your job?

Mr GILES: No ...

Mr WOOD: I am trying to work within the budget ...

Mr GILES: I will answer your question. The way that ...

Ms LAWRIE: You will go on *Lateline*.

Mr GILES: Hang on a second; we have a drawl from over here somewhere. Was that an interjection?

Ms LAWRIE: Yes, I said you will go on *Lateline*, but you will not answer questions in estimates on it.

Mr GILES: The way it works, member for Nelson, is I am promoting a Cabinet and government where everyone has the ability to talk on their portfolios. It is not a government about Adam Giles; it is a government about the government. I want ministers to be fully responsible. That relates to your previous question about an Indigenous advancement minister. Everyone is responsible for their area.

There are times when, as Chief Minister, I have to talk on certain things and cover portfolio areas. I go to a minister and ask for a briefing and so forth. We do not have any functionality within Chief Minister's that looks after alcohol policy at all.

Minister Tollner is completely responsible for the policy component and minister Lambley for the rehabilitation. We come together as Cabinet and as a parliamentary wing to discuss these issues, but they are the people who have the output areas for funding line items through the appropriation, the budget and estimates and so forth, to ask those questions of.

Mr WOOD: All right, minister. I will have to ask these questions ...

Mr GILES: Anything I gave you I do not have briefs on because I do not have staff in the department who work in this area.

Mr WOOD: I will ask you a question as Chief Minister because these comments, to me, were ill thought-out when you made them. I have an ABC News media item dated Friday 24 May with a headline, 'Grog Culture Defended as Core Social Value':

Chief Minister Adam Giles has defended the Northern Territory drinking culture as a 'core social value'.

I understand you said that at the Australian Hotels Association dinner. If you were talking to me one-on-one I could understand that; I know what you are talking about to some extent. I might not agree with you.

Do you not think in the broader context – and that is what I was trying to get through to the Minister for Business today – there is a problem with alcohol in the Northern Territory. That does not mean everyone has a problem, but it costs us a lot of money and there is a lot of promotion of alcohol. We do not need to promote it because the AHA will promote it, VB will promote it at the cricket, Coopers will promote it at the V8s. It does not need promotion.

There are parts of our society which will see that as an endorsement alcohol is some sort of intrinsic part of our community which, unfortunately for some people, is so intrinsic we have huge numbers of people in gaol, car accidents, domestic violence, people in hospital, and people dying.

Would you accept that was an ill thought-out comment?

Mr GILES: No.

Mr WOOD: Why not?

Mr GILES: Do you think me making the statement which used the reference 'core social value' would put out the commentary that in the Northern Territory we like to knock off work at night and have a beer, a glass of wine or a glass of port? That is part of our lifestyle. Do you think my comments have made anyone drink more? Do you think I stood up for people in the Northern Territory who are responsible consumers of alcohol? Do you think I sent a message to those people who are the biggest agitators for prohibition, who are the people who like to knock off work and have a beer or a glass of wine?

I heard your debate today about gambling – not all, but I heard most of it. Forgive me if I paraphrase, but you made commentary about how occasionally you like to go down to the local club, I think you said, and put a couple of dollars in a machine and have a flutter. Then I heard you say how bad pokies were. I am paraphrasing, but I heard you say how bad they were. You cannot have a bob each way. You can say for people who have fundamental issues with gambling – we tell people to gamble responsibly – but people who have fundamental issues with alcohol – we tell people to drink responsibly, drink in moderation, do not drink and drive, all those things; we try to help people with those problems. However, for people who are responsible and who can manage themselves, we cannot take away their right to responsible for themselves. We help people with dependency issues.

In regard to alcohol in particular, there is a section of our society, the hard core drinkers, who have a problem and we are intent on helping those people. You do not do it by prohibition for a range of reasons. You get to the core of the issue. The alcohol rehabilitation component is about getting off grog for three months and trying to rehabilitate.

I do not expect to have a rehabilitation success rate of much higher than 5%. However, I expect to have people off grog for at least three months and to start getting the cognitive function in their brain to a point where they can start making decisions. In regard to core social values, people who follow the rights of the person to be helped in regard to rehabilitation demonise every single person who likes to knock off work and have a beer. It is a part of who we are in the Territory. We are not saying drink 24 beers; we are saying when you knock off work tonight, as I will, have a beer or a glass of wine. You should not be ashamed to say you want to have a beer. That is part of what the Territory is and we should never forget that. We always talk about the lifestyle in the Northern Territory - this is what we do. We like to have a beer after work. We are not saying get blind and do the wrong thing, but stand up for the little person who does not do the wrong thing and help the people who have challenges in life. That is what we are trying to do.

Ms LAWRIE: Every expert says your plans will fail. Peak Aboriginal organisations in the NT say you are wrong and should stop. You will not listen to any of them, you are too arrogant.

Mr GILES: I will pick up on the interjection. Do you know what they said about your plans over the last 11 years? You did not even have one. You let the gaol population reach 130%. We are now at a point where 2500 women ...

Ms LAWRIE: The AMA, AMSANT, NAAJA ...

Mr GILES: ... will be beaten this year ...

Madam CHAIR: Order! The member for Nelson has the call.

Ms LAWRIE: ...all supported the Enough Is Enough alcohol policy.

Madam CHAIR: Opposition Leader, the member for Nelson has the call.

Mr WOOD: I would like to finish my line of questioning. Your answer went a little sideways. I find it annoying you, and the Minister for Business - as soon as I speak prohibition comes in. I have never mentioned prohibition.

Mr GILES: What is your point then?

Mr WOOD: Sometimes you do not seem to understand you are the leader of the Northern Territory. Your words may make sense as you are talking to me, but they do not always make sense to other people. I will give you an example, advertising for grog is very subtle and there are parts of our society that see the macho look, the back of the car full of XXXX, the manly look about drinking grog. Look at the latest VB - sweat pouring off. That is all about image. That does not need promoting and people will see what you

said - I do not have a problem with people having a coldie after work. I go to the pub on Thursday night to talk to people. I have no problem with that, but you do not seem to understand.

You might say this is ridiculous. I have lived in the Territory for 43 years and seen the bad example of non-Aboriginal people being taken up as a legitimate lifestyle for other people. In other words, as the leader you do not need to give drinking any ticks at all. The AHA, the pubs, the companies, every time you go to the footy - they do not need you to say it is a core social value. It is in front of you at the football or at the V8s.

I am worried this core social value will be taken out of context. In light of the issues we are talking about - BDR, mandatory alcohol rehabilitation, domestic violence, drink-driving, people dying from alcoholism, all those things, we do not need a Chief Minister saying that. It does not mean he should not drink; I am not saying that. I believe it was inappropriate when we have important issues, and I would love to see a bipartisan approach to this - there was none.

Mr GILES: You were the kingmaker for a while. Without being smart, you could have done some things in this area if you wanted to.

Mr WOOD: Excuse me.

Mr GILES: Seriously, that is a fair point.

Mr WOOD: No. In parliament I asked for a bipartisan approach on alcohol.

Mr GILES: What do you propose, Gerry?

Mr WOOD: I supported mandatory alcohol rehabilitation. My differences with the government at the moment - and I am still working through it - are I believe it has to be done correctly. It has to be done with compassion for the person and to allow the public some peace and quiet. I dealt with some of the businesses in this town about two years ago. They rang me asking what was happening in town. Look at the Uniting Church minister who left because of people humbugging. I support it if done the right way, and for the right reasons. I will not continue tonight because this is not the time to do it.

I have supported that and have said with some of these important social issues there is room for both the opposition and the government to work together. Unfortunately, we sit here fighting like cats and dogs while people struggle with a problem that has been the scourge of the Northern Territory for a long time. I do not want to hear about kingmakers. We should not be picking on one another. We should be trying to work together.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, are you coming to a question?

Mr WOOD: Yes. Sorry, the minister led me up the garden path referring to the kingmaker. It was an inappropriate statement. The minister disagrees with me, and if we do not agree we do not agree.

Madam CHAIR: Agree to disagree. Are there any other questions?

Mr WOOD: I have another social policy one but it is for seniors. I presume it will go to the minister for seniors.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 4.2.

Output 4.3 – Alice Springs Transformation Plan

Madam CHAIR: Questions for Output 4.3, Alice Springs Transformation Plan, regarding stimulus funding and housing works on town camps will be answered by the Minister for Housing on Tuesday 25 June under Output 1.2 – Remote Public Housing.

Questions regarding social support spending will be answered by the Minister for Central Australia under Output 7.1 on Tuesday 25 June.

That concludes consideration of Output Group 4.0.

OUTPUT GROUP 5.0 – GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SUPPORT Output 5.1 – Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition

Madam CHAIR: We now move to Output Group 5.0, Government Business Support, Output 5.1, Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition. Are there any questions?

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Chair, many of my questions have been answered in answers to written questions.

Chief Minister, can you outline the current policy in relation to the use of personal private jets by ministers?

Mr GILES: The use of what?

Ms LAWRIE: Personal private jets by ministers. Do you have a policy?

Mr GILES: There is no policy except try to find the cheapest and most direct route to get to your destination.

Ms LAWRIE: Does this comply with your standard procurement practice? Do you get comparative quotes?

Mr GILES: There are always quotes and analysis and either one done for certain points.

Ms LAWRIE: If travel on a personal private jet is more expensive than what you can get by travelling on other available flights that is a breach of your policy?

Mr GILES: What was the question?

Ms LAWRIE: My question was what is your policy? You said it has to be the cheapest option.

Mr GILES: The cheapest. You have to be sensible in these things so you have the cheapest and most direct route which meets the needs of the travel you are undertaking. You do not want a route that will save \$500 by spending 48 hours in transit. You have to go on the most direct route to be able to do business.

You are leading down the path of Minister Tollner travelling on a private jet, which was cheaper than commercial travel and much faster with less transit time. He achieved fantastic outcomes in economic progress for the Northern Territory, fully supported by myself to make sure we get business happening.

It was the same as when I went to East Timor on more of a friendship visit, but also Jakarta and Singapore to sell the virtues of the Northern Territory and the investment opportunities in trying to create jobs into the future. You have to spend money to make business for the Northern Territory. We try to do it as efficiently means as possible, but also keeping in mind if we do not get to these destinations we do not have an opportunity to sell the virtues and make sure we have a sustainable future for the Territory.

Everyone is aware we have this fantastic opportunity and development around INPEX, but we need to ensure we have other projects in the pipeline and a diversified economy which not only looks at oil and gas but actively promotes and supports it, and also looks tourism and cultural reinvestment and how we get investment into the regions to restabilise communities. Part of ensuring we get that investment is travelling intrastate, interstate and internationally. The connectivity we have undertaken, and being able to sell the virtues and opportunities of the Territory, is a firm investment model to take forward.

Madam CHAIR: I am sorry to interrupt, but it has been several hours since we last had a break. It might be an appropriate time to have a 10-minute break.

Ms LAWRIE: I only have about three questions to complete the Chief Minister's section.

Mr GILES: No, we will take a break.

Ms LAWRIE: I can write more questions in the break so that is good.

Madam CHAIR: We will resume at 9.10 pm.

The committee suspended.

Madam CHAIR: We are back after the break. We are joined by Michael Gunner, member for Fannie Bay; Delia Lawrie, member for Karama; me; Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem; Bess Price, member for Stuart; and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson. We are at Output 5.1. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, you spoke about the savings you are trying to achieve in the services sector. Do you believe a \$14 000 spend in seven months on a fuel card bill is reasonable?

Mr GILES: I am not sure exactly what you are talking about, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: The \$14 000 expenditure on fuel in just seven months. Do you believe that is reasonable?

Mr GILES: It depends what it has been used for. I presume you are referring to the member for Arnhem. The member for Arnhem works tirelessly in her electorate. I am not privy to any fuel bill, but I know when you have a very large electorate you have to spend a lot of time travelling around it.

We have put a very large workload on our backbench and our Cabinet ministers, and have required them to come to Darwin on frequent occasions for a whole range of different reasons, mainly forming policy settings of government. There has also been a huge requirement for many new members to learn the procedures of government and also attend parliamentary meetings. Much travel is required in that frame.

Members who do not have the option of being able to drive to Darwin to facilitate or conduct their business have the opportunity to fly. The member for Arnhem drives on those occasions. I can understand why the member for Arnhem's fuel bill would be higher than my fuel bill, for example.

Madam CHAIR: I will interject. Standing Order 112: Questions should not ask ministers for an expression of opinion. That question fell within the purview of the Speaker's office, which was addressed on Tuesday.

Ms LAWRIE: My other questions fall outside that category, so I will move on to the other outputs when Gerry is finished.

Mr WOOD: Output which?

Madam CHAIR: Output 5.1, Support to Ministers and Leader of the Opposition.

Mr WOOD: Minister, I will take this on the chin but I have to ask it. Do you think Independents should get some administrative support from the Chief Minister's department?

Mr GILES: Everyone should have the support deemed suitable under the RTD and the way we conduct our business. I have always taken a very open and transparent approach to you as much as I like to cajole you, in a political sense, from time to time. I know you take it in your stride, but I would like to think we have a fairly open and transparent relationship to do business.

I was sincere when I offered you a briefing on Gonski or anything else. I would not say we go above and beyond for you as an Independent. We offer the same to opposition. I know you have a wide range of interests and, as the only Independent, it is challenging. I like to think I provide the opportunity for an open book approach when you require it.

I am always as responsive as I can be, particularly with electorate issues as they come up from time to time. I do not think there is the necessity for additional admin staff, but I would like to think we make sure all options are available to you in an open and transparent way.

Mr WOOD: To remind you, I wrote requesting even half a staff member, but I will take it as it comes. If you do not agree, you do not agree. I hoped to get one, not just for me but for Independents in general. I hope there are a few more in the future. What worries me is I have not received a response.

Mr GILES: I will look into it. I am sure I sent you that answer, but I will look into it.

Mr WOOD: A letter went via a few people a long time ago. Just to clarify, because I had nothing really to say - would or would not be allowed someone. I do not recall any letter coming back, so I thought I would raise it again.

Mr GILES: I will look into it. I thought I sent something a while ago, but I will check it out.

Mr WOOD: Tell me if this in the right output, it is a bit difficult. The hospitality tent at the V8s - could you say how much it costs to run that hospitality tent. I know the hospitality tent has been there for years, but considering the government is talking about cutting costs and increasing electricity tariffs is it right to run a government hospitality tent?

Mr GILES: When I took over the role of Chief Minister these processes were already under way. I have said we will review some of our expenses in regard to hospitality. I do not have a full breakdown of costs for the V8s. I believe it will be some time before I get a full cost breakdown as bills come in and so forth.

It is important that we ensure we have a strong ruler run over our expenses and any options put up in hospitality - both my government or the previous Labor government - are for the benefit of the Northern Territory. I know not all constituents access that, but the opportunities around networking and facilitating greater economic opportunities in the Territory are a key option.

A number of people were talking about business development and the creation of jobs, and that is the mantra of the new Country Liberals government and where we want to head. We will continue to provide networking opportunities to facilitate business development, but will also run a ruler over these things to ensure we get the best bang for the investment we put in.

Mr WOOD: Thanks, minister. I enjoyed the V8s with my grandsons on Sunday. I do not get the opportunity very often, but it was nice.

Mr GILES: I can tell you tourism is a very important economic driver in the Territory and one we want to continue with. The work by minister Conlan, particularly with the engagement of Michael Bridges, chairperson of the Tourism Commission, and also the members of that board, has really helped facilitate re-engagement of the tourism industry.

We have new airlines coming to the Territory. New deals have been done with some football clubs that support long-term entertainment value for the Territory and also attract visitors. During the course of events on the weekend, I had the opportunity to talk with the heads of the V8 corporation about future investment by the Territory government. You will note in the budget we have set aside money for next year and the year after for track resurfacing and redesigning ...

Mr WOOD: I saw your interview with Phil four times. Yes, I took note. I could not help it.

Mr GILES: We were also looking at what else is required. One of my firm beliefs is we have to invest in tourism infrastructure. At the track a number of infrastructure upgrades are required. We are still not 100% certain what they are, but they include options to look at tunnels and bridges, building of fences, possibly more grandstands, and closing in the corporate area over the pits to allow for other options outside motor racing opportunities.

With those potential investments into the future - there is a lot of analysis to be done - if we provide more infrastructure investment - the lifecycle of those investments in infrastructure and how we seek to advance our V8 agreement until 2018 to align better with the infrastructure investment. That will be a core investment strategy for the tourism and motorsports industries and it will support the Territory lifestyle.

Other conversations we had, including at the track on the day, were about how we can attract people to develop five-star or less hotels in Darwin CBD to support a greater level of hotel accommodation and the occupancies that can come with that, and then start to not only attract people around the V8 and tourism sectors, but the Darwin Cup and many more of the business facilitation models I, and my Cabinet, want to run.

There is a whole range of areas we want to invest in. As I reflected before in regard to the travel questions, it is about us connecting the right people so we can get those business opportunities in the Territory.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is all the questions I have.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 5.1.

Output 5.2 – Legislation Production

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider Output Group 5.2, Legislation Production. Are there any questions?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, your government has decided not to brief the opposition, despite requests, on your alcohol laws until three days before it is debated. However, your Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation has said she will consider any amendments from the opposition, which would require them being provided to her prior to the debate. Do you believe it is reasonable for Parliamentary Counsel to be given a day or so to draft potential amendments to that legislation?

Mr GILES: I am not sure of the premise of your question, member for Karama.

Ms LAWRIE: It is about legislation production and it goes to Parliamentary Counsel and its capacity to draft potentially highly complex amendments to the alcohol rehabilitation legislation given the short time frame we have been squeezed into. It would take us a day, at least, to consider any potential amendments, really two days, which would leave a day, if that, for Parliamentary Counsel to draft amendments. How, in the legislation production process will that occur?

Mr GILES: In legislation production, there is a large agenda for officers to design and implement our strategic government direction, our policy, and which way we want to head. The alcohol rehabilitation legislative framework is a complex one which attacks, through its implementation, the core concerns we have about people who have chronic alcohol abuse issues.

It is not just with this legislation but all legislation. Those officers working on development of legislation, amendments, drafting and otherwise spend a large amount of time to-ing and fro-ing between departments and ministers about the appropriate design of the legislation, often right up until it is debated in parliament. It is a challenging environment for those officers to work in, and we continue to work with members of parliament and members of the community around consultation, debate of legislation, particularly in the second reading speech stage up to the committee stage.

I appreciate it is a heavy workload for those officers, but we are a government which is firm on addressing some of our core social and economic responsibilities, and we have put in place a strong legislative framework to ensure we rebuild the Northern Territory from the position we received it following the outcome of the election in August last year.

Ms LAWRIE: Why would you not provide a briefing for the opposition earlier on such complex legislation? I am aware the Independent member was availed of a briefing earlier than just three days prior. He has already been briefed by the government. Why, despite many requests, would you not provide the same opportunity to opposition, which would give us an opportunity to consider any proposed amendments, which would then give Parliamentary Counsel an opportunity to draft? It has occurred in a time frame that precludes drafting.

Mr GILES: I am not aware of any communication or correspondence you have had with the Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation. Briefings are available to all and sundry, from a member of parliament's point of view. I am happy to have a conversation with the minister and ask you be given the opportunity to get that briefing to understand any of the issues, questions, or concerns you may have.

Ms LAWRIE: The issue was opposition. The shadow minister responsible sought the briefing in a period further out from the debate than just three days prior.

Mr GILES: I am not aware of the communications and processes engaged in. I am also not aware of the minister's diary and the travel demands she has. I am happy to have a chat with the minister and see whether or not she can provide you with a briefing.

Ms LAWRIE: I have a question on Output 5.3.

Mr WOOD: Just a clarification, the briefing I had was pre-amendments.

Ms LAWRIE: Okay, so you need ...

Mr WOOD: I only know from the radio interview with the minister what, possibly, the amendments are. Minister, I suggested this should have gone to a select committee. I am not being silly about it, we went to a Public Accounts Committee association - two of us went a couple of months ago - in the NSW parliament.

Queensland, which has a unicameral system like ours, basically sends all its legislation to committees. That may be good or bad, but it makes sense. As you said, this is very serious and complex legislation with many ramifications for the government in expenditure and making sure that whatever happens is done right.

There was an opportunity for the government to set up a select committee, maybe for three months, to look at the legislation. Perhaps we would not be where we are now, which is introducing legislation on Friday week after long sessions in estimates with a lot of amendments to very complex legislation. Common sense suggests that does not look like a good way to deal with complex legislation.

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, since taking over the role of Chief Minister there have been a number of outstanding issues I believe, as government, we needed to progress in a speedy time frame. I have charged the Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation to drive this reform agenda on alcohol rehabilitation as quickly as possible. That is why there is some sensitivity around this legislation.

In a broader context, I give you my opinion on these matters in relation to legislation and the operations of parliament. We need to reform our committee process. You mentioned you have looked at other jurisdictions. Some of the jurisdictions here and overseas I have looked at, and the way the committee structures operates, provides a greater level of opportunity for scrutiny and debate of legislation around issues and different components within the legislation, and also provides a greater opportunity for community consultation. I believe this is an opportunity and an avenue we can explore to improve the process.

It is not the highest priority on the agenda at the moment, but we are doing a number of things to set the economic framework for the future of the Northern Territory. It is firmly planted in my mind and something I would like to see fixed. It is not something we have discussed in Cabinet or with the parliamentary wing, but we need to look at other ways of improving the parliamentary process, particularly in the unicameral system. There is a whole range of models we can look at, and I am happy to have a coffee with you one day to start looking at the process. It is not just about saying, 'Here is a model, let's do it'. It is about saying, 'How do we consider what alternative models are available and what opportunities there are to build upon what we do or change what we do to have a better committee structure process?' That can include adopting other processes, including hybrid models, or inventing something new.

For example, in the British parliament there are mechanisms where business people can sit on committees in some form. I have put much thought into how that could work, how we can improve things, and there are many opportunities. I would like to talk to my colleagues to see what their thoughts are and, perhaps with their endorsement, have a coffee with you to hear your thoughts.

Mr WOOD: That would be good, minister. I appreciate we have to think a little outside the square.

Mr GILES: You and I have talked about this before.

Mr WOOD: I met the lady on the parliamentary accounts committee - the secretary from the Queensland government. The idea of a committee looking at every piece of legislation was brought in by Labor and picked up by the Liberal government - the LNP. I would love to see how that works.

The other issue you raised about bringing other people in - the South Australian Cabinet, for some time, had a bishop, a gold miner, and a few other people who also came to Cabinet to bring in other aspects that might be useful for Cabinet decisions. If we could improve the process I would be part of it. I would also be happy to have an iced coffee with you.

Mr GILES: It is not going to happen straightaway, but it is something we need to do. It is not top priority. Another component of that is how our parliament - this is just the musings of Adam Giles - lets legislation sit for 30 days and then passes it straightaway rather than allow some time for consultation, which would fit in with the committee process. We are a new government and want to get things happening. We can appreciate we will not get things done fast, but there are opportunities where we can have a debate.

Mr WOOD: Also, committees looking at legislation can sometimes bring parliamentarians from both sides together. Committees do not always work as things do on the parliamentary floor; they often work together.

Mr GILES: Do you believe the slanging does not go on?

Mr WOOD: No, that was discussed at our association. People seem to work together much better on a committee. I would not mind visiting the Queensland parliament.

Mr GILES: If a CPA trip to London comes up, spend time looking at their parliamentary committee process. I recommend that.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 5.2.

Output 5.3 – Government Services and Support to the Administrator

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now consider output 5.3, Government Services and Support to the Administrator. Are there any questions?

Ms LAWRIE: Chief Minister, I note there has been an increase in the budget in Services and Support to the Administrator. What is that increase to cover? I appreciate there have been additional expenses given under the CLP you have had four new Cabinets sworn in within six months, but what is the breakdown of those increases?

Mr GILES: I will seek some advice on that question, Leader of the Opposition. More money has been allocated to repairs and maintenance on Government House – an additional \$300 000.

Ms LAWRIE: R&M?

Mr GILES: Yes, regular things that needed a bit more of an injection. Different things get to the cycle where more investment needs to take place. It is important we have a Government House that is up to scratch.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: No questions, but the gardens are beautiful.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 5.3 and Output Group 5.0. I note questions regarding Output Group 6.0, Parliamentary Services, were answered by Madam Speaker yesterday morning. Are there any non-output specific budget related questions?

Ms LAWRIE: No, I want to thank the representatives from the Department of Chief Minister for their support in answering questions today. I am sure the Chief Minister will enjoy the next marathon with even more output groups.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of all output groups related to the Department of the Chief Minister.

On behalf of the committee I thank officers from the Department of the Chief Minister for attending today.

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now move on to the outputs relating to the Northern Territory Police Fire & Emergency Services.

NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION

Madam CHAIR: I welcome you Chief Minister, this time as Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and I invite you to introduce the officials accompanying you.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome, Commissioner John McRoberts; Audrey Ko, Executive Director of Corporate Services; and Rose Hallett, Director of Finance. I welcome all to the big table.

Northern Territory Police Fire and Emergency Services is a tri-service comprising the Northern Territory Police Force, the NT Fire and Rescue Service and the NT Emergency Service. The Commissioner of Police exercises Chief Executive Officer authority over all three entities. The mission of the agency is keeping people safe.

Madam Chair, Budget 2013-14 provides operational funding of over \$394m to the NTPFES to keep people safe. This is an increase of \$22.5m over the final 2012-13 budget, and an increase of \$51.5m since this government was elected to office. In addition, the NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services has a budget of almost \$22m for the purchase of capital equipment, and over \$22.5m of new funding for capital works in 2012-13.

A key initiative of my government is funding 120 additional police positions over its first term. Twenty of these positions have already been created in Alice Springs, and a further 63 are scheduled for 2013-14. These increases are additional to the funding provided for additional staffing support to the NT Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre in Darwin, and at the Alice Springs Police Station to enable front counter availability for members of the public on a 24/7 basis.

All agencies have been required to make saving measures to help bring the budget back to surplus and the NT Fire and Emergency Services is no exception. It has a target of almost \$12m in 2013-14. The NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services has identified a number of areas where savings can sensibly be made without impacting on operational frontline response. In fact, the value of the saving measures is more than offset by the funding provided for the underfunded legacy items of key support functions, including repairs and maintenance funding for its ageing Police, Fire and Emergency Services infrastructure assets, and the recurrent costs of key information communication and technology systems.

With these few words, I am pleased to take questions from the committee on behalf of this agency, and look forward to going straight to written questions unless you have questions from the statement.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. For the benefit of *Hansard*, I will introduce the committee. We have Delia Lawrie, member for Karama; Michael Gunner, member for Fannie Bay; me; Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem; Bess Price, member for Stuart, and Gerry Wood, member for Nelson. Are there any questions on the Chief Minister's statement?

Mr GUNNER: At the end, Chief Minister, you mentioned the R&M money that had gone into the budget. The Renewal Management Board recommended \$48m. How much did you put into repairs and maintenance in this budget?

Mr GILES: At the time of the Renewal Management Board review the difference between R&M funding of \$7.9m and maintenance liability of \$19.9m was a \$12m shortfall per annum rounded, totalling \$48m over the forward estimates.

The current Northern Territory government is seeking to address this legacy through increased allocation of \$1.6m in 2012-13, \$3.5m in 2013-14, \$2.2m in 2014-15, \$1.1m in 2015-16 and \$1.1m in 2016-17, totalling \$9.5m additional funding over the forward estimates period.

Mr GUNNER: How does \$9.5m get to \$48m?

Mr GILES: The agency was given some additional funding to assist maintenance issues. The ageing assets have also been rectified and modernised through the annual minor works and R&M programs.

Mr GUNNER: Where do you think you will get the \$39m from?

Mr GILES: There is the significant issue of being able to identify all the funding required to do all the works listed, particularly through the RMB. This is a legacy issue we have inherited, as I am sure you have heard me speak of before, member for Fannie Bay. There is only a certain amount of finite resources we can draw upon when trying to reduce the budget deficit in a desire to move towards fiscal balance to start paying off Labor debt. We have to make choices about priorities and where we are investing.

We have made contributions to R&M. We are committed to get more police on the streets through our 120 additional police officers, making our police force more open and accessible by investing in the call centre, ensuring we have the Alice Springs Police Station open 24/7; and investing in nurses in watch houses. There is a range of investments we have made. We have particularly sought to ensure the general public has greater access to police, and we have greater police responsiveness as we seek to reach our goal of reducing crime by 10% over our first term.

Mr GUNNER: The Renewal Management Board was paid to provide advice on how to prioritise the framing of this budget. They advised that the \$48m was a priority but you are saying it is not, is that right?

Mr GILES: We are saying while there is a priority identified through the RMB, we cannot just grab that money straight out of thin air; we have to prioritise how we spend our money wisely.

One of the other things the RMB identified was legacy issues around such things as the Asset Management System, and how the Asset Management System will cost us well in excess of \$70m on our initial assessments. If we did not have to spend that money on the AMS system it could go straight into R&M with

Police, for example, and would ensure we have better functioning assets. However, we are stuck with a position where we have to put money into a failed legacy item - Labor's AMS system - as opposed to putting money into R&M. These are challenges we face in government. We have to get our frameworks and policy settings right, and prioritise how we make those investments. These are the choices we have made for investment in this regard.

Mr GUNNER: How did you then, out of the \$48m in R&M the Renewable Management Board prioritised, work out what \$39m does not happen and what \$9m does? Instead of sifting through that and saying this \$9m is a bigger priority than that \$39m, how did you work that out? What has been prioritised?

Mr GILES: Clearly, we take advice off police as to how we should invest and that comes through Budget Cabinet submissions. Much of that information is also based on asset scheduling of the repair and maintenance and upgrade requirements we can get on individual items for all assets across government, whether that be schools, roads, power poles or police stations. We can identify what the priority issues are through that scheduling, and that partly forms a basis of how we come up with those work schedules that we put forward, and how that funding has been stipulated in the budget process.

Mr GUNNER: Can you advise what \$39m worth of R&M is not happening but might happen if you can find the money later? What is it you are not doing that if you get a chance you might do it down the track? What have you said in this budget you will not do?

Mr GILES: I will refer to the Police Commissioner in a second to answer that question, but the important point is let us look at the work we are doing which would not have occurred under the previous Labor government. I will hand over to the Police Commissioner to provide some further detailed advice on that.

Madam CHAIR: Commissioner, before you start I acknowledge Gerry McCarthy, member for Barkly, has just replaced Delia Lawrie, member for Karama.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you and good evening, Madam Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

The decision on how we prioritise the funding available is part of executive management of the agency and in consultation with the Department of Infrastructure as to what is possible. We prioritise expenditure based on things critical to the efficient operation of Police, Fire, and Emergency Services, and provide our people with the best possible working conditions.

It is a case of Corporate Services monitoring our capital assets on a continual basis and discussing those issues with the minister and, if approval is needed, we will go to tender and carry out the work.

Mr GUNNER: Is it possible to get a breakdown of that table? Chief Minister, I am referring to the interim report of the Renewable Management Board. Did the final report of the Renewable Management Board make any other recommendations around police R&M or any other police issue?

Mr GILES: As you know member for Fannie Bay, the final report is held in Cabinet and has not been released and will not be at this stage. I am happy for you to, outside the committee process, approach me and seek a briefing. It is probably best to seek a briefing from the Minister for Infrastructure about the report requirements in relation to Police, Fire, and Emergency Services.

Mr GUNNER: I could get a briefing on the final report of the Renewable Management Board?

Mr GILES: No, for what the repairs and maintenance backlog is for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Mr GUNNER: You do not know what the \$9m and \$39m is for?

Mr GILES: The Department of Infrastructure runs a report that looks at all the facilities owned and operated by Police, Fire, and Emergency Services. They will be able to tell you the priority items, secondary items, and least priority in investing in repairs and maintenance infrastructure.

Mr GUNNER: I thought, as Police minister, you would have been interested in that.

Mr GILES: Yes, we are, but the report is coordinated by the Department of Infrastructure. That is how it works for every asset under the NT government. Every asset has a schedule facilitated by the Department of Infrastructure ...

Mr GUNNER: That is right, but ...

Mr GILES: ... called the BAMS report - the Building Asset Management System - and they facilitate it.

Mr GUNNER: That is right but, as a line item, minister you do not have any interest in the order of prioritisation?

Mr GILES: Is that a statement or a question?

Mr GUNNER: That is a question. Do you have any?

Mr GILES: Absolutely, but we do not look at it every day; it changes on a monthly basis.

Mr GUNNER: Not every day, just for the budget?

Mr GILES: Budget Cabinet was determined a while ago, but if you want a more up-to-date figure I suggest you talk to the Minister for Infrastructure.

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate that offer, minister. I have a few more questions about where things fit before we get to written questions.

Questions relating to the O'Sullivan review into police resourcing, will you take that as whole-of-agency or at Output 8? Where would I ask questions around the O'Sullivan review into police resourcing? Is that something you will talk to during the written questions?

Mr GILES: It would be good to talk about that - I do not mind either way. We will do it at Output 8.

Mr GUNNER: Whole-of-agency; make it neat.

Mr GILES: I said Output 8.

Mr GUNNER: Sorry.

Mr GILES: You suggested 8; we will do it at Output 8.

Mr GUNNER: No problems. Questions relating to the CLP government policy of civilianising police positions - asked and answered as whole-of-agency except for Police Prosecutions and Diversions, which should be Output 8.3?

Mr GILES: You could probably do that in 8. Hang on a second.

Mr GUNNER: That would be 8.3, I assume - civilianisation of police prosecutions. Yes, that is prosecutions. There are two elements; that is the second element. The first element was general civilianisation of police positions. Would that be whole-of-agency or Output 8?

Mr GILES: We can do it at Output 8.

Mr GUNNER: Written questions, please, minister.

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, do you have any questions?

Mr WOOD: I have a question about funding for police and the fire brigade in Humpty Doo. Because it is split, should I wait and ask half the question in police, and the other half in fire and emergency services?

Mr GILES: Why not ask in whole-of-government after written questions? Makes it easy for you.

Mr WOOD: That will do, thank you.

Mr GILES: Question 1:

Detail and progress of all CLP announcements, including all commitments and policy announcements made to Territorians in CLP election policy documents, summary snapshots, media

releases and announcements, 100-day plan costings and savings documents, media advertisements and other printed material.

Answer:

Having 120 new police in place on the street is in progress. Recruitment of the additional 120 police has been extended to be fiscally responsible and work within the capacity of the Police college. This election commitment is to be completed by June 2016. Twenty positions have been created in Alice Springs and, to date, 14 of these positions have been filled, with the balance to be filled by the end of June 2013. Sixty-three positions are to be recruited and filled in 2013-14, 70 positions to be recruited in 2014-15, and 20 positions to be recruited and filled in 2015-16. I might get a bit more on that.

Squad 118 had its graduation on 3 May 2013. Squad 120 commenced training on 7 February 2013, and graduates on 6 September 2013 with 30 expected graduates - and 27 in the previous one. Squad 122 commenced on 27 June 2013, and the expected date of graduation is 31 January 2014. Squad 123 commences on 19 September 2013, with 30 expected to graduate on 25 April 2014. The Accelerated Constable Squad, which is Squad 121, commenced on 8 April 2013 and they graduate tomorrow. I am supposed to attend that graduation.

Mr GUNNER: What time?

Mr GILES: 12 noon.

The number expected to graduate tomorrow is 34, and the ACPO Squad, Squad 19, is expected to graduate on 16 August 2013 with five. They will help fill the position, but also fill people who moved on from the police force.

Mr GUNNER: How many will end up replacing attrition numbers?

Mr GILES: It depends what the attrition rate is at that point in time. We have made a commitment that there are 63 positions to be recruited and filled to a certain point, but we have to balance attrition at the same time. Attrition is coming down.

CCTV cameras and monitoring support in progress. The initial intention was to set up call centres in Katherine and Alice Springs, however, centralising the functions in the JESCC in Darwin was seen as the best option for efficiency and optimising resources, particularly given it is very difficult at the moment to recruit people to those positions in Alice Springs and Katherine because of concerns around the unemployment rate and housing issues.

Mr GUNNER: That was the police advice when you made the promise. Do you accept now that the police were right from the start?

Mr GILES: Let me keep reading the answers.

Mr GILES: Tenders are currently being sought for extension of the CCTV network in the Katherine central business district. The increase in staffing levels for the JESCC and Alice Springs station shopfront counter is related to this election commitment. Twenty additional call-taker positions have been created for the JESCC, six additional positions have been created to allow Alice Springs police station shopfront counter to open on a 24/7 basis and conceptual design for the JESCC extension is in the preliminary stage of development.

The Safe Streets audit is in progress. The government has committed to undertaking a Safe Streets audit with the aim of ensuring the community feel safe through reduction of actual or perceived risk of victimisation. The audit was commenced on schedule on 9 April 2013 following the necessary procurement steps and remains on target to be finalised by the end of October 2013. The audit will examine and report on the safety status of the NT urban communities of Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs to inform crime prevention strategies to ensure a safe Territory. NT police have engaged Charles Darwin University to undertake the audit. The Australian Institute of Criminology has also been engaged, through CDU, to undertake the data analysis component of the audit.

The Safe Streets audit commenced on schedule on 9 April 2013 following the necessary procurement steps, and it remains on target to be finalised by the end of October 2013. A steering committee comprising representatives from the NT Police, CDU and the NT government has been established to meet on a

monthly basis to oversee and monitor progress to ensure time frames are met. The terms of reference take a strong crime prevention and public order focus, assessing community education awareness and involvement across all levels of government, non-government agencies and community groups.

The audit will involve general research as well as engagement of stakeholders through workshops. The project is currently in the data collection analysis and literature review stage. The project includes an analysis of three years' of police data to consider hot spot patterns and their dynamics. The literature review will consider topics such as perception versus actual crime, and models for dealing with crime hot spots. This stage will be followed by community stakeholder consultations.

Mr GUNNER: Chief Minister, I have a couple of questions to the Safe Street audit.

The election promise was it would be done within 100 days. Why was the decision made to have it done by October 2013 and by CDU?

Mr GILES: We had to go through a process of tendering and procurement requirements and we had to make sure we had the people with the expertise.

Mr GUNNER: Initially it was to be done by police so it would not need to be tendered out.

Mr GILES: It is not being done by police internally. We have gone external ...

Mr GUNNER: That was my question: why was the decision made to not do it internally by police, which was the election promise?

Mr GILES: We wanted to get an arm's length perspective - to look in from the outside rather than the inside.

Mr GUNNER: Police remain on the panel involved in the CDU work?

Mr GILES: Yes, to help with the steering committee and the facilitation role.

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, before you continue, I acknowledge Bess Price, member for Stuart, has left and is replaced by Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu, member for Arafura.

Mr GILES: Cut crime in the NT by 10% in the first term of government. The NT police continue to focus on reducing crime, which is one of the three components of its strategic direction of operational excellence. Figures for the month of April 2013 indicate a significant reduction in the number of offences in all major offence groups compared to the previous months. From 1 July 2012 to 30 April 2013, total offences against property were 8% lower compared to the same period in 2011-12. The reduction is seen across all three police commands.

In the Darwin metropolitan command, total offences against property were 12.3% lower than the previous year. Unlawful entry and burglary offences were 3.4% than the same period in 2011-12. Theft and related offences were 8.6% lower. Property and environmental pollution offences, which I will continue to refer to as property damage, were 12%. Total offences against the person were slightly higher, at 3.1%, than for the same period in 2011-12; however, the number of offences against the person in April 2013 was 14.3% fewer than in March 2013. Acts intended to cause injury, across the NT, were slightly higher than the previous year to date at 2.9%, although they were lower in both the Darwin metropolitan and northern commands by 0.1% and 1.5% respectively.

NT police will continue to focus on reducing crime and on intelligence-led operations to target recidivist offenders and reduce their offending.

Mr GUNNER: You read a number of statistics and some are up and some down. The election promise was crime would be reduced by 10%. What is the one statistic we will use to measure that? Which statistic are you using to measure the 10% reduction in crime? There are so many crime stats, which one are you setting your Police Commissioner, and the whole of government in a sense, that will measure whether crime is down 10% or not?

Mr GILES: That is a very good question. I only took the Chief Minister's role on 14 March 2013 so we are still seeking to determine what that will be. I do not want it to be set for political expediency to make it look good when we know something will come down, but we need to work out a way. We have not done that yet but we will. We have been busy focusing on getting things happening. We have to work out where that

starting point will be. That is not to say our eyes are not on the ball. Our eye is on reducing crime but we have not said, 'Where does it start?' You are right. There are statistics everywhere and it would be easy to use a statistic that is politically favourable to us, but we are about ensuring we reduce crime by 10% over the first term. I am happy, when we decide what it will be, to let you know what it is. Reducing crime by 10% is not about playing games with statistics.

Mr GUNNER: Crime is so general, I guess, that is where the question comes in. When the promise was made, did the leader at the time use statistics? Do you have any background work to use?

Mr GILES: Having not been the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services at that point in time, my focus was on different portfolio areas. I am now casting my mind to these points. The reducing crime component is about unlawful entry, domestic violence, assaults and public order.

Mr GUNNER: So you will ...

Mr GILES: We need to find a point in time for those.

Mr GUNNER: A point in time, and then you will group those and work out a percentage?

Mr GILES: We will work it out from there. It is probably better if we treat them individually. That way we have a greater focus on all three areas rather than a correlation of all three.

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr GILES: There is more work to do on where that point starts. We could have started from September last year and said, 'We have achieved it today because it is down by 14.3% on the number of offences against a person'. There are easy ways to play the game. It is about ensuring we reduce crime by 10% over the term of our government. That is what is important.

I move to the Night Safe Strategy ...

Mr GUNNER: I have one final question first. When that policy document was drafted by the then opposition, now government, some work must have been done by the then opposition on how it would define a crime.

Mr GILES: I am sure there was, and we have discussed that many times. Exactly where that point starts – I have not gone into the depths to find that point. We will do that.

The Night Safe Strategy: this election commitment detailed a Night Safe Strategy for children to be run by a newly-established unit that looks after the school-based constable scheme. Each of the operational commands within the Northern Territory Police Force is responsible for their respective youth engagement police officers, or YEPOs, formerly known as school-based constables. The current structure continues to deliver operational effectiveness, and they have not been incorporated into a single unit.

However, from 1 July 2013, the Public Safety Division will incorporate the Community and Youth Engagement Section and will be responsible for force-wide coordination of crime prevention, community engagement and public safety-related activities. The coordination and policy direction of the YEPOs, who will remain stationed at their current location, will be undertaken by the Public Safety Division under the leadership of a superintendent.

The Night Safe Strategy proposes that it is unacceptable for children to be roaming the streets late at night unsupervised. Our present police officers have no powers to convey them home against their wishes. This was highlighted in a recent decision by Her Honour Sue Oliver SM in *Mosel v DT*. In her decision, Her Honour suggested legislative amendment was required to deal with such matters.

The Northern Territory Police Force supported a recent Cabinet submission which proposes to amend the legislation to provide police relevant powers to achieve the election commitment.

Night patrols to be made a priority: night time patrols by Northern Territory police are resourced rostered every day from every command station. Night time patrols include rostered response patrols, Operation City Safe patrols, and special operation patrols that are conducted to address specific issues; that is, bail compliance and targeted intelligence-driven operations.

The recruitment of additional police over the next three years will enable the rostering of increased patrols with a commensurate increase in police patrols at night.

Review of Fisheries Police Unit resource and equipment: the NT Police work within the existing budget and reviews resource requirements on an ongoing basis. Specific operations can be augmented through the Tasking Coordination Group process.

Clean up suburban parks by being tough on crime and supporting local councils in progress. There has been ongoing proactive policing of suburban parks using daily intelligence information to target ever-changing hot spots: The Northern Territory Police has a strong partnership with local councils in urban, regional and remote NT. In addition to the work of frontline police, several short-term and longer-term permanent strategies have been utilised by police in the NT targeting antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related crime, especially in parks and other areas.

The following strategies have been implemented across the Northern Territory: inter-agency tasking coordination group; problem-solve local issues and enhance community safety outcomes for local residents; identified hot spots, including the identification of camps received a targeted police response; targeted routine operations concentrate on public place antisocial behaviour hot spots; and associated *Liquor Act* enforcement.

In Alice Springs, the temporary Beat locations are utilised to reduce the amount of alcohol available for consumption, and the ability to respond in parks, public places, and other restricted locations. Mounted police patrols, motorcycle and bicycle patrols occur on a regular basis. Operations targeting specific public areas are regularly conducted. Police operate in partnership with stakeholders to focus on identified public areas of concern. The CCTV network is used to reduce crime. The East Arnhem takeaway alcohol permit system is now in its fourth year of operation.

Current figures demonstrate that due to the above proactive policing activities, liquor infringement notices issued for the financial year to 30 April 2013 in the Darwin metropolitan community are 429% higher than the same time last year. From 1 July 2012 to 30 April 2013 there have been 1049 banning notices issued by police, with 197 issued during April 2013. From 1 July 2012 to 1 April 2013, antisocial incidents are down 2.3% overall compared to the same period last year. Darwin Metropolitan Command reports a reduction in antisocial incidents of 7.1% on the previous year level. Increased breath testing ...

Mr GUNNER: Sorry, back to the election promise about safe, clean parks. That all sounds good around the targeted hot spot policing. Many of us, as local members, would have received briefings at different times from either the Police Commissioner or officer in charge in their local area on how to deal with hot spots. Everything you said was good, but it sounds similar to activities the police have been doing for some time. How, practically, is that different to what has been occurring in previous years? The mounted police, the motor bikes etcetera are all really good, but I am unsure how that is different to what has been occurring in the past. Could I have some practical advice about the change?

Mr GILES: The change is we have more police on the beat now and more resources in the JESCC, which means we are able to respond to phone calls better and respond on the ground better. There are more targeted police operations in particular hot spots at different times which means when an area becomes a hot spot, police have the resources and capabilities to target that. That is why you will see some reduction in the criminal statistics showing things are improving and on the up, but they will take time.

Mr GUNNER: The majority of additional police going through the college - some have gone to Alice, but how many additional police are on the street? I understand part of that 120 are coming through the college system.

Mr GILES: A number of police who have come through were not part of the 120. Some were federal and some were to fill vacancies in the NT force. Without going into specific numbers, we have been able to fill vacancies to allow police to manage their operational resource requirements that were more difficult to deal with without the addition of police from the new squads.

Mr GUNNER: For example, on a Saturday night in Darwin there are now more patrol cars on the street than this time last year?

Mr GILES: I will have to ask the Commissioner to answer the operational requirements. I will not talk about the operational matters of police.

Mr GUNNER: That is fine.

Mr GILES: Commissioner.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you. The main issue for us is to ensure there is community confidence in what the police are doing day-in day-out. We have placed a great deal of focus, through our Operational Excellence strategy, on reducing crime through customer service and professionalism. They are the three pillars we expect police officers in the Northern Territory to operate alongside. From the front end to the back end it is about receiving calls, about gathering intelligence, about ensuring our officers understand when they report for duty each day there is a purpose to the duties they perform. It is about doing what we can to reduce crime and ensure law abiding citizens can go about their daily lives enjoying the amenity they should.

We have focused, through the Territory Tasking and Coordination Group (TCG), all possible resources to the front line. The key for us is to, through highly visible policing, ensure we address those people who choose to break the law. We attempt, through proactive strategies, to reduce the potential for people to break the law and come into conflict with the criminal justice system. Most importantly, we want to give Territorians confidence that police are out there doing the job they expect of us.

Everything we do is focused on the front line, including what we now call our 10 Days at the Front Line policy which requires every police officer capable of being operational, regardless of whether you are the Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner or any other rank, to spend at least 10 days - 10 shifts per year on the front line understanding what our troops are dealing with, getting a feel for the business at the coalface, and keeping in touch with the daily issues we are confronted with. It is also a very good demonstration of leadership for our frontline troops, and good for everybody to see police officers of all ranks out there doing things.

We focus assets such as our horses - the mounted section - we have invested in motor bikes for places like Alice Springs so we are more highly visible, and believe this suite of initiatives is having the desired effect.

Mr GUNNER: You mentioned you are able to free up police resources for the front line. Has the majority of that come from the 10-day policy or have you have been able to free up police from other positions to do that frontline work?

Commissioner McROBERTS: As the Chief Minister explained, a significant component of the additional staff has been through the establishment of the metropolitan patrol group: 94 additional officers who are in a position to respond to incidents which might occur at an immigration detention centre but, when not required there - I am pleased to say they are not often required - because we have invested in some officers to embed into the immigration detention centres as liaison officers between those detained in centres so they understand the legal process in Australia. Those assets are able to be used and are highly visible and highly focused on responding to hot spots so we can, hopefully, address antisocial behaviour and criminal activity. Most importantly, people continually tell me they are pleased to see police on the street.

Mr GUNNER: Are those 94 the ones paid by the Commonwealth and doing some detention centre work?

Commissioner McROBERTS: Yes.

Mr GILES: An example is tomorrow's graduation - 12 police will go directly to Darwin. This helps.

Mr GUNNER: Will that be in addition to the 94 Commonwealth-funded positions?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: That is reflected in the budget with additional funding in the Commonwealth appropriation. So far the Commonwealth has paid for those 94 police into the metropolitan police division and they are doing the highly visible policing work?

Commissioner McROBERTS: The metropolitan patrol group.

Mr GUNNER: Sorry, the metropolitan patrol group. Thank you.

Commissioner McROBERTS: It is a marvellous achievement by all officers, who are not typically frontline engaged, that they have committed so willingly to the 10 Days on the Front Line policy. All our

commissioned officers, for example, spend 10 shifts a year doing things like working at the V8s, working at the super bikes or working at the Darwin Cup. That is about ensuring our frontline officers are well supported, well led, well mentored and well supervised.

Mr GUNNER: That is an excellent initiative. How often would TRG and Fisheries police be put into the JESCC?

Mr GILES: They would not go in there. Commissioned officers are spending 10 days a year doing things like random foot patrols, targeting hot spots or working at places like the V8s.

Commissioner, you jump on the motorbike and do patrols from time to time. It is about ensuring police provide that additional capacity in one aspect but, second, they understand what is happening on the ground. That is additional resourcing, plus we have extra staff, plus when the 94 are not required - the portion of the 94 for the metro command – they have an opportunity to provide additional resources.

Mr WOOD: Do they go on fishing patrols?

Mr GUNNER: The Fisheries police do a very good job. No, the question was around how the JESCC worked and whether TRG or Fisheries police were ever used in the JESCC.

Commissioner McROBERTS: I have certainly never heard of the TRG – the TRG are a highly specialised, highly trained, highly dedicated group of police officers who are available to deal with critical incidents, search and rescue operations. Their focus is on that type of work. However, they are also used on a regular basis to support frontline policing activities. On Friday and Saturday night in the Darwin CBD, for example, they may well be tasked with supporting police activity in those areas. From time to time we will despatch them anywhere in the Northern Territory we need additional staff. That is the nature of our business; we put people where the need is greatest.

Mr GUNNER: I was not having a crack at you, Commissioner.

Commissioner McROBERTS: I did not interpret it that way.

Mr GILES: Maybe the fisheries police could work in the JESCC and when a barramundi calls saying he is trapped in the bull bar of a four-wheel drive he could receive assistance. I will move on.

Increasing the breath testing program - I will not read all of this word for word, member for Fannie Bay. There was a target of 150 000 breath tests in 2013-14 and we reached 156 850 as at 13 June 2013. That will continue to increase as the rest of the financial year rolls on.

The Assistant Police Commissioner will be based in Alice Springs. Mr Jamie Chalker was appointed in December 2012 and commenced duty on 29 January 2013.

Strengthening and prioritising school-based police officers is in progress. I spoke about the youth engagement police officers before; that is continuing. From 1 July 2013 it is proposed that a new public safety division be established within the NT Police Force. The Public Safety Division will incorporate the community and youth engagement section and will be responsible for the force-wide coordination of crime and prevention community engagement public safety related activities.

Introduce mandatory drug testing of suspects arrested for assaults: the legislation was passed by parliament on 28 November 2012 and received assent on 6 December 2012. Ministerial approval provided for deferral of commencement until August 2013. A Cabinet submission is being prepared to discuss potential cost implications and other operational matters that may affect the laboratory analysis of samples to allow for the laying of charges. Potential issues have been identified with the availability of lab analysis services in the NT and associated costs to outsource these services interstate. This is being considered as part of a Cabinet submission with alternative options to be explored if available. That is question one.

Mr GUNNER: Perhaps I missed you saying it, but the \$1m upgrade for Nightcliff Police Station 24/7?

Mr GILES: The \$1m upgrade for Nightcliff Police Station 24/7 is not included in the budget. Are you asking why it is it not? We have changed our priorities on how we will invest in policing in Nightcliff. The Police Commissioner will be able to provide an update on operational servicing in that area. Part of putting more officers into the JESCC and more officers on the beat means we can provide a better policing service in that area. Commissioner, you might want to talk about the operational components around Nightcliff.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Nightcliff has a police shopfront which is open during the week to provide nearby residents and business people with access to police services at a front counter facility. Patrols are typically from Casuarina Police Station, and we have quarantined a regular patrol that is dedicated to Nightcliff. When a task is to be despatched anywhere in the Darwin metropolitan area, it is done so on a priority basis. The more police stations you have, the less staff you have to be highly visible on the road. My recommendation was, for the time being, we focus on a maximum number of staff in vans or other utilities, or on foot, responding to calls from members of the public. The facility we have at Nightcliff is sufficient for our needs for the time being.

Mr GUNNER: I can understand the argument of a cop on foot or behind a wheel as opposed to behind a desk, Chief Minister, but what is the logic behind Nightcliff Police Station not going 24/7 while the Alice Springs station is? If it is that logic, which I think the Commissioner explained quite well ...

Mr GILES: You will be well aware, member for Fannie Bay, that crime in Alice Springs is much larger than in Nightcliff. It is a much bigger population and the need to be able to service the community of Alice Springs in all hours of the night is an important service requirement; where the ability to service people from Casuarina to Nightcliff is a lot easier than from Alice Springs. That represents significant challenges.

Mr GUNNER: Is it not better to have an officer behind a wheel?

Mr GILES: Sorry?

Mr GUNNER: Is it not better to have a police officer behind a wheel?

Mr GILES: We are not looking at having police officers behind the front counter in Alice Springs 24/7 where we can utilise auxiliaries to provide that service. The funding was specifically designed for auxiliaries to provide that front counter service.

We have difficulties recruiting to those positions, which is the same issue around the call centre in Alice Springs. We are committed to that but cannot find staff at the moment. It is not suitable, and may not be suitable until a time when there are more people in Alice Springs who have an opportunity to take up those jobs. We know the level of crime in Alice Springs is significant, and the number of people who needed access to the police station on a 24/7 basis was a significant challenge.

Mr GUNNER: That is a good answer, Police minister. I can understand the logic that if you are using a police auxiliary in Alice Springs to free up that police officer that makes Alice Springs Police Station function 24/7. Why does that logic not apply to the Nightcliff Police Station and an auxiliary instead of a police officer?

Mr GILES: We have to work out how we prioritise our investment. As the Police Commissioner explained, through operational measures there is a dedicated unit which is servicing Nightcliff. It is better to put our resources into that unit to service Nightcliff than additional auxiliaries in that frame.

As you know, there is only so much money in the bucket; it is how we best utilise that money. Police Beats are very good political solutions. They provide an opportunity for the general public to go into those offices. However, it ties up a whole lot of resources that could be better put into additional cars, additional motorbikes, additional dog patrols or additional officers. It is not just about the personnel you have behind the counter. For example, if we have a police officer behind the counter - what is the cost of a police officer?

Commissioner McRoberts: \$228 000 a year.

Mr GILES: It is \$228 000 a year. Then, if you have two, you are looking at \$460 000. You also have the lease of the space, the fit-out, the communications structure - there is an array of different investments that could be made. In some ways they provide political solutions, but not the best resourcing solutions for effective policing. It is about getting the balance right.

In Nightcliff that shopfront provides reassurance to Nightcliff residents that they can go in there. However, we also have the balance of operational servicing for the residents of Nightcliff with a dedicated patrol group servicing the residents. If we were to put that money into Nightcliff it would have further drained operational requirements in other areas, particularly around Darwin. In all areas of Darwin I want to ensure we get adequate policing and servicing. That is why we have come to this model. I know it was previously

promised, but this is the way. Advice has been provided to me that it is the best way to provide policing services to people at Nightcliff.

Mr GUNNER: I was asking those questions because it was an election promise.

Mr GILES: No, I understand. We looked at it but, with the cost of running it compared to how much money we could put into dedicated patrolling, it was much more effective to have dedicated patrolling for Nightcliff.

Mr GUNNER: It might come under a different portfolio, minister, but vehicle confiscation for repeat drink-drivers?

Mr GILES: That is under Transport.

Mr GUNNER: Okay.

Mr GILES: It is still a work in progress; the legislation has not been written.

Mr GUNNER: Okay. We are on question number two.

Mr GILES: The answer to question number two is refer the response provided in question number one.

Question 3:

Progress on all commitments and policy announcements made within government press release and media statement since 26 August 2012.

Some of my answers are fairly large so I will ad lib. If you want more detail I will read it word for word.

Mr GUNNER: Would you table it?

Mr GILES: No. Yuendumu Police Station - the Commonwealth originally provided funding for that. The Commonwealth, under Stronger Futures, originally provided money for Imanpa. However, the popular of Imanpa decreased from 250 to 80. There are issues at the Yuendumu Police Station which require significant upgrade. There are more police resources going out there to work with the local community and surrounding area. We asked the Commonwealth government if the money could go to Yuendumu. The Commonwealth government was fully supportive, which is why we have moved the money to Yuendumu and the announcement was made.

Convert Humpty Doo ...

Mr GUNNER: I was suggesting, minister, if it is lengthy - I am not trying to play games - you can table it.

Mr GILES: No, I have a heap of notes on all my documents. I have written on it and would rather not table it. I do not know what is in these books until I look at them.

The mini-budget announcement to convert Humpty Doo Fire Station to volunteer status caused significant community concern and Cabinet rescinded the savings measure decision at March budget Cabinet.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, the decision was rescinded and discussions at the meeting with the then Chief Minister revolved around possible changes to Berrimah Fire Brigade. A comment was made that Berrimah could operate in daylight hours, allowing Humpty Doo to operate. I gather Berrimah operates 24 hours a day so where did the funds come from to keep the Humpty Doo Fire Station open?

Mr GILES: We managed to provide the necessary resources to ensure they continue. I imagine you were very happy with that outcome.

Mr WOOD: I am, along with many other people. Hopefully, there may be expansion with an ambulance considering the amount of traffic on our roads out there. Yes, thank you.

Mr GILES: Did you get a chance to look through Berrimah station?

Mr WOOD: No, unfortunately it was when we had a busy legislative period in parliament. I want to go.

Mr GILES: You should have a look.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, minister, and thank you to the previous Chief Minister and the Commissioner for keeping the Humpty Doo Fire Station open.

Mr GILES: Cabinet rescinded the savings measure decision in the March budget. We also rescinded the savings measure around the decision to decommission Palmerston Fire Station rescue tender in the March budget Cabinet. It was the first budget Cabinet I ran and there were some good outcomes.

Mr GUNNER: Good, sensible decisions.

Mr GILES: Question 4:

Explanations on all variations and discrepancies between commitment ...

Refer to responses provided in written questions one and four.

Question 5:

Progress on all commitments, targets and information contained within the December 2012 mini-budget.

There was \$2.5m to commence recruitment to meet the government's commitment to provide 120 additional police officers. We have answered that. There was \$300 000 in 2012-13 to conduct the Safe Streets audit. We have provided an answer to that. There was \$500 000 for closed circuit television cameras in Katherine. Tenders are currently being sought for the extension of the CCTV network in the CBD district and there is a procurement process under way. There was \$5.7m ongoing from 2012-13 for public housing expenses. This money is being distributed across NT Police for increased police housing lease costs over the years. There is \$3.88m in 2012-13 for key information communication technology systems. This money has been distributed across NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services for increased systems costs over the years. In 2012-13 there is new capital works around the Katherine Police and Fire Station air conditioning of \$2m. Milikapiti police facilities and overnight accommodation receives \$900 000. Do you want details on that? Do you want more technical stuff?

Mr GUNNER: Without seeing it, I do not know.

Mr GILES: The remote infrastructure program office has finalised negotiations with the Commonwealth after an agreement was reached on a 10 x10-year land lease. The Department of Infrastructure advertised a construction tender on 16 May for a four-week period, with a contract scheduled to be awarded by the 9 July. The construction program will take 22 weeks and scheduled completion by December 2013.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, you mentioned leases. Is there any way one can find out how much police pay for leases on Aboriginal land? Could I ask that question and get an answer at another time?

Mr GILES: We will take that question of notice.

Question on Notice No 3.12

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, could you please restate the question for the record?

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, could you provide the cost of leases, the number of leases, and where those leases are on Aboriginal land?

Madam CHAIR: The minister accepts the question. For the purposes of *Hansard*, that is question No 3.12.

Mr GILES: We are doing some work on the Peter McAulay TRG centre equipment and storage shed.

Mr GUNNER: The gym?

Mr GILES: No not the gym, the equipment and storage shed. Money was provided by the Commonwealth and support provided through the NT government. The contract was awarded, on 7 December, to a local

company to design and construct a five bay storage shed at the Peter McAulay Centre. Construction commenced on 30 January and will be completed later this month.

Mr GUNNER: A question out of curiosity. It is good the TRG has that. I was at the TRG a couple of years ago and they had constructed their own gym out the back. They were competing with other squads for access to the gym. I was wondering if there has been any investment in the gym there.

Mr GILES: I do not know, but the best gyms are made out of spare tyres and bricks.

Mr GUNNER: That was literally the gym they had.

Mr GILES: We are about to build a brand new one.

Mr GUNNER: It was just curiosity; I misheard you.

Mr WOOD: While you are on the Peter McAulay Centre, the new building at the back - the two storey building near the accommodation area - how much did that cost to complete and was it completed within budget?

Mr GILES: We will take that on notice. It was specially funded.

Question on Notice No 3.13

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you please clearly restate the question for the record?

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, could you provide the cost of building the two storey visiting officers' quarters at the Peter McAulay Centre, whether it was finished on time and within budget, and did the Northern Territory government make any financial contribution to the building?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of *Hansard*, I allocate that question No 3.13.

Mr GILES: The other thing included here is the police overnight facilities at Mount Liebig, Areyonga and Robertson River. We are still negotiating a lease before we can build those facilities and the importance of securing land tenure, as you would understand, is paramount. Once we secure land tenure we can start the work on the overnight facilities.

Question 6:

Explanations on all variances and discrepancies between details, data and policy contained within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2013 budget.

We have answered that already.

Question seven is to be answered by the Department of Local Government and Minister for Regional Development.

Question 8:

Details of staff movements and all costs resulting from all Administrative Arrangement changes since 26 August 2012.

There have been nil.

Question 9:

Details on staff movements and payouts and all costs, including ministerial office relocation costs resulting from portfolio reshuffles since 26 August 2012.

That is not applicable. To be answered by the Office of the Chief Minister, and I answered previously.

Question 10:

Details and costs of all government advertising and communications since 26 August 2012.

I will answer that in a moment. I will answer question 11 first.

Question 11:

Full details on all government advertising in breach of the Public Information Act as identified by the Auditor-General since 26 August 2012.

That question will be answered by the Department of the Chief Minister.

I am happy to table Question 10. The reason I had to do nine and 11 first is because the page is double-sided. Are you happy to have that tabled?

Mr GUNNER: Yes, happy to have that tabled.

Mr GILES: Do you want me to talk about it?

Mr GUNNER: I do not have the written question in front of me.

Mr GILES: The written question is about advertising and communications. The total cost was \$437 000, most of which was for advertising Australia-wide to recruit police. There was some advertising in magazines, journals, newspapers and on radio, and there was a small amount on marketing which included the show circuit. I am happy to table that.

Question 12 asked for a breakdown of ministerial office expenditure, which is not applicable to the Department of the Chief Minister.

Question 13:

A full list of all forced redundancies across all agencies ...

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment will answer that on behalf of whole-of-government, and there were nil for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Question 14:

A full list of all personnel who have left the Northern Territory Public Sector and then returned since 26 August 2012, including payout and settlement details.

The OCPE will answer on behalf of whole-of-government. One casual AO4 employee ceased in December and recommenced on a casual contract in March. As a casual employee they were not entitled to any payment on cessation.

Question 15:

Details on all government tenders, contracts and grants awarded or granted since 26 August 2012, including whether the recipient is a member of the Country Liberal Party ...

We have no idea which of those awarded tenders or contracts are to members of the Country Liberal Party or otherwise. There is a full and transparent process in how contracts are awarded. You can get that from the tender website. I have no idea who is a member and who is not. There may be some, there may not be.

If you have a question on any specific tender I am happy to answer it?

Mr GUNNER: Not at the moment.

Question 16:

Details on the procurement processes undertaken and the employment contracts for the employment within the Northern Territory Public Sector since 26 August 2012 of all former CLP and Liberal Party candidates ...

Not applicable. We do not have any former CLP candidates. We have former Labor candidate working for us. The bloke who said in the *NT News*, 'How good are the sick leave arrangements for police. You can take unlimited sick leave, keep getting paid, and run for Labor as a preselected candidate.' I forgot about that. We should have put that in the answer. Details on all former or current Labor candidates in the Northern Territory who took unlimited sick leave while campaigning and bragged about it in the newspaper. That would have been a good answer. I did not think about that one.

Question 17:

Full details and costs of all ministerial travel including accommodation, hospitality and flight ...

That was provided by the Department of the Chief Minister.

Question 18 was about hospitality and an answer was provided by the Department of the Chief Minister.

Question 19:

Full details, costs and invitation lists for all public service hospitality provided since 26 August 2012.

There was a total cost of \$1837.60. There was \$182 for a working dinner with the Chair of Crime Stoppers Australia to plan the strategic direction for Crime Stoppers in the Northern Territory, a medal and award ceremony in Darwin; dinner with the facilitator of a leadership forum for \$212; and \$501.60 for meeting and dinner with the Commonwealth government Department of Immigration Citizenship representatives; and \$123 for a meeting and dinner with senior counsel assisting with an inquest.

Are you all right with that?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr GILES:

Question 20:

Full details and costs of all interstate or international public service travel including accommodation, hospitality and flight details, including flight travel class since 26 August 2012.

As much of the travel undertaken by police is operational in nature, specific details are not provided. The Commissioner of Police, Chief Executive Officers of Fire and Emergency Services and the Deputy Commissioner of Police are the only members of staff who travel business class at times, depending on the purpose and nature of the travel.

Official travel: there were five international flights for \$5733.66. Where did you go? Bali? That is pretty cheap for five international trips. I am advised much of the travel undertaken is paid by other people, particularly some of the incidentals, so that helps.

Mr GUNNER: Other people being the organisation?

Mr GILES: Yes, on invitation. There were 237 interstate flights for \$299 162.77. We paid for some of that amount, and some of it includes accommodation. It is not just flights, it includes accommodation as well, and other people have contributed to the cost.

There were 41 interstate trips on the basis of a workers compensation claim as people have to go interstate for specialist treatment - \$55 931.45; there were four international trips for \$17 054.31; and 42 interstate trips for people who were retiring or were flown up for recruitment purposes.

Question 21 is about allocation of water licences where the CLP is trying to drive the Northern Territory economy. That is not applicable and will be answered by Lands, Planning and the Environment.

Question 22 goes over old ground about policy item strategies, actual estimates and budget forecasts. That was answered between questions one to six.

Question 23:

Details on all financial and economic data contained within the operating statements, balance sheets, cash flow statements in the May 2013 budget.

That is contained within Budget Paper No 3, which I find to be an interesting question.

Question 24:

Full details including impact statements and implementation plans on all agency savings identified within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2013 budget.

Administrative efficiencies relate to initiatives delivering savings through more efficient use of existing administrative resources, rationalisation of administrative tasks, focus on core functions and reducing expenditure on discretionary spending such as advertising, furniture, and travel expenditure - that is \$1.033m.

Program efficiencies and rationalisation relate to initiatives delivering savings through more efficient use of existing program resources and program rationalisation - that was \$10.806m.

Whole-of-government savings relate to initiatives that drive savings across all government agencies such as vehicle procurement and communications functions - that is \$138 000.

Question 25:

Details on all information and data contained within the fiscal strategy, updated fiscal outlook ...

That is in Budget Paper No 2.

Question 26 is about the capital works program. That is detailed in Budget Paper No 4.

Question 27 is in relation to full details on revenue measures including taxes, and tax increases and levies. Police are increasing some fees and charges, in particular fees under the *Firearms Act*, fees charged under the Weapons Control Regulations which is - the category deals with purchase of prohibited weapons and body armour.

There is a small number of approvals there, so that will be minimal. Charges under the Police Administration Fees Regulations - we have moved that from 120 to 140 revenue units which, as a revenue unit, equates to \$149 in 2013-14, still among the lowest in the country. It is estimated the change in those fees will add additional revenue of \$250 000 per annum based on current expenditure and the forward estimates.

Question 28:

Full details of the operational impacts ... as a result of all government decisions and policies.

NTPFES will implement any decisions. If you have questions you should ask them.

Question 29:

Full details on the operational impacts across all government entities as a result of all government savings measures.

We have already spoken about government savings measures. I am happy to answer any specific question through the government process.

There is a question about non-government organisations which is not applicable to the police.

There is a question about the impact across government entities as a result of increases by government corporations, prices, charges and tariffs. Any fluctuation in the costs of goods and services will be managed as part of the financial management process. The report on government services is available on the Productivity Commission's website.

Question 34:

Full details on all information and data contained within all annual reports produced by a statutory authority ...

That is a no response.

Question 35:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report commissioned by the Northern Territory government and produced within the last five years ...

That is a very broad scope and any questions should go through the estimates hearing process.

The next one is about data and forecasting information contained within a plethora of reports. That is another broad question. If there is anything in any of those organisation reports that is facilitated through this budget process you should ask a question in estimates.

The next one is about the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Department of Attorney-General and Justice is the agency responsible for crime statistics. Anything to do with crime statistics and data should be asked of the Attorney-General. We do not provide specific briefings as the agency on ABS data, and the Attorney-General is the best person to provide crime statistic data.

Question 1.1 from Speaker's list of questions:

Full details on all payments and entitlements provided to members of the Legislative Assembly under the Remuneration Tribunal Determination, including travel and fuel card entitlements since 26 August 2012.

That is to be answered by the Legislative Assembly.

Question 1.2 of questions for Speaker:

Full details of all NT Fleet vehicles provided to members of the Legislative Assembly, including period of use, fuel costs and mileage since 26 August 2012.

That is to be answered by the Legislative Assembly.

Question 2.1 of questions for Chief Minister:

Full details of all NT Fleet vehicles provided to all staff employed in ministerial offices, including periods of use, fuel costs and mileage since 26 August 2012.

That should be provided by the Office of the Chief Minister and was last estimates.

I am ensuring you are still awake, member for Nelson. It is about now you start to nod off - about question 40.

Mr WOOD: I am totally enthralled by you reading the answers.

Mr GILES: I am making sure. I am trying to be as quick as I can.

Question 2.2 of questions for Chief Minister:

Full details of all mobile phones ... for ministerial offices ...

That will be answered by the Department of the Chief Minister.

Question 38:

Details on all reports and data published on Northern Territory government websites.

It is quite foreseeable you might jump onto those websites and find the information you require, given the number of pages.

Question 6.1 of questions for Minister for Health:

Details on all recorded hospital data.

That is to be answered by the Department of Health.

Question 6.2 of questions for Minister for Health:

Full details on alcohol-related admissions, presentations, and separation of all hospital emergency departments.

To be answered by the Department of Health.

There is another one about performance outcomes of hospitals, health clinics and health services. Those questions will be answered by Health.

Question 5.1 of questions for Minister for Economic Development and Major Projects:

Full details on the current status of all current major projects ...

That will be provided by the Department of the Chief Minister.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.13

Mr GILES: The federal government committed \$3.6m to construct new accommodation units at the Peter McAulay Centre to improve the capacity to deliver training programs predominantly for remote officers undertaking in-service training in Darwin. It was completed on 30 June 2012 by Sunbuild on time and under budget.

Mr WOOD: Was there any Northern Territory funding for that project?

Mr GILES: It was fully funded by the federal government.

Mr WOOD: Okay.

Mr GILES: What time do we have a break?

Madam CHAIR: I was going to have one at 10 pm, but I thought ...

Mr GILES: The next answer will take me a fair bit ...

Madam CHAIR: I was going to have one at 11 pm, but if you want a break now we can.

Mr GILES: The next one will take some time talking about.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like a 15-minute break?

Mr GILES: This is the last question. No, it is the second last. I will answer Question 37, which is about statehood, which is not applicable.

Question 46:

This about road safety reports in the last 10 years. There is a stack of reports: Road Safety Taskforce reports for 2006, Territory Information Paper to Inform the Strategy 2011; Safer Road Use - a Territory

Imperative; Transient Traffic Casualties in the Northern Territory; Darwin Region Heavy Vehicle Taskforce Report; Road Safety Action Plan; Action Plan Traffic and Specialist Services Command; Road Safety Statistics Report, which I will go through, and that is it.

This question should be answered by the Department of Transport, but I will provide the information so I can run through some data for you, if you want, or do you want for me to do it in Transport?

Mr GUNNER: The shadow minister for Transport will be doing that. There is obviously a road safety division in Police as well, so ...

Mr GILES: Well, you asked for the reports. I have given you the names of the reports.

Mr GUNNER: There is some back and forth we can do around that if you like. I would like a break, but I have a whole series of questions on the Road Safety Services section so we can do it then.

Mr GILES: The output groups?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr GILES: We will do it now. I was going to use some statistical data about some analysis we have done.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy for you to do that, minister if you want to.

Madam CHAIR: Are you saying, member for Fannie Bay, that if the Chief Minister keeps going it will provoke you to go into your line of questioning?

Mr GUNNER: He wants to go for a break and he has a whole series of data there. We will do it later.

Madam CHAIR: It is up to you, Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: We will do it later.

Madam CHAIR: Would you like a 15-minute break?

Mr GUNNER: We will do it when you come back from the break, Chief Minister.

Mr GILES: No, we will go straight into outputs. When we get to road safety we will do it there.

Madam SPEAKER: We will resume at 11.10 pm

The committee suspended

Madam CHAIR: The committee composition remains the same and we are hearing from the Chief Minister with written responses to questions.

Mr GILES: I can provide an update on an answer given before. I am sure this will be much to the delight of the member for Fannie Bay. You will be happy to know, member for Fannie Bay, water police and the TRG occasionally rotate through the call centre. Particularly, they do operational work at the JESCC, but with their core content ...

Mr GUNNER: When would they be used there?

Mr GILES: ... knowledge, any issues pertaining to water police activities or TRG enables them to provide an efficient delivery of service on the phone as well. They are rotated through there on an as required basis to ensure everyone has a go and resources are balanced as required.

Mr GUNNER: Is that to ensure there are enough people to answer phones?

Mr GILES: Also everyone gets a go. Are we up to all output areas now?

Agency-Related Whole-of-Government Questions

Madam CHAIR: Yes. The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. Are there any agency-related whole-of-government questions of the budget and fiscal strategies?

Mr GUNNER: What savings measures have been applied to Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services?

Mr GILES: Member for Fannie Bay, that question was answered in a written question.

Mr GUNNER: There are serious saving measures in this budget. Page 88 of the O'Sullivan review says the budget savings target of \$23m recurrent is concerning and the nett impact would largely negate any additional funding allocated for police positions or civilianisation. Do you agree with O'Sullivan that the savings target for police will make it difficult and will negate the additional funding they receive?

Mr GILES: You will find, when you balance the savings target combined with the increased expenditure, police are much better off financially. It has allowed us to provide a more efficient way to do business but ensures we get resourcing investments at the right levels.

Mr GUNNER: The point is the additional money you give them is then taken away. With one hand you are giving and with the other you are taking away and it is essentially negated.

Mr GILES: We are moving efficiencies in one arm and improving productivity and serviceability by providing additional resource investment in another area, including providing additional police. Even though the numbers might negate themselves from the fiscal equation point of view, it is about the way business is being conducted ensuring you get more police on the beat, which I think we all want.

Mr GUNNER: O'Sullivan specifically says the additional money is lost in savings and that is contradictory.

Mr GILES: Only where you are saving money and putting more money in different areas. You might save in one area but spend in another area, and the area we are spending money is in frontline policing.

Mr GUNNER: If you put \$27m in and take \$23m out, how do you get extra police?

Mr GILES: No, it is just how you manage your budget. I think we both agree on what we are saying. It might come to an equilibrium although it is more, but you are saving in one area and spending in another. You could move it a bit and top it up, but we have put in place measures to get efficiencies in some areas and are directing money into other areas, including those police squads that we spoke about.

Mr GUNNER: What new spending is there in Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services?

Mr GILES: There is money for front counter staff, more desk staff, extra police services and CCTV. They are the things that add up to new commitment.

Mr GUNNER: How many staff does Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services have as both FTEs and actual numbers of staff?

Mr GILES: 2061.

Mr GUNNER: What are their classifications and what was the rate of staff separation of each level?

Mr GILES: Do we have the classification of each level?

Mr GUNNER: Do you want to table that?

Mr GILES: No, just let me find the page first. I will be able to read from a different piece but I do not have that information. Can you repeat the question?

Mr GUNNER: What are their classifications or levels and what was the rate of staff separation at each level?

Mr GILES: I will read it out for you. There are 40 constables and above. On average, about four a month on my assessment reading across the calendar. ACPOs - four left, one in April, one in November, one in December and one in January. There were 10 auxiliaries.

Mr GUNNER: That is just separations. The question included of the 2061, what are there classifications or levels and what was the staff separation.

Mr GILES: We will take that question on notice, Madam Chair.

Question on Notice 3.14

Madam CHAIR: For the purposes of *Hansard*, could you please restate your question?

Mr GUNNER: What are the classifications or levels of staff NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services has and what was the rate of staff separation at each level?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: The question asked by the member for Fannie Bay of the minister is question 3.14.

Mr GUNNER: How many positions are vacant? Please provide full details on where each current vacancy exists?

Mr GILES: Can you be more specific?

Mr GUNNER: This is whole-of-agency. Normally during whole-of-agency we ask questions about all staff.

Mr GILES: Are you talking commissioned officer, auxiliaries, firefighters ...

Mr GUNNER: All staff. It is quite common during whole-of-agency to take questions about all the staff in the agency.

Mr GILES: I appreciate that.

Mr GUNNER: Most people cannot break staff down by - there might be a difference ...

Mr GILES: I appreciate that, but in Police, Fire and Emergency Services it is very complex because there is a range of different things and people are attributed differently. The 94 federal officers are counted differently and everyone is a different person in a different position. For the Northern Territory Emergency Services there are none, Fire has 14 and Police will be over strength tomorrow; there will be more than the number allocated. It is probably important ...

Mr GUNNER: Who gets the bonus two?

Mr GILES: Alice Springs I am told. It was just whispered in my ear. Did you want information on the number of people on sick leave or long-term leave? Are you about to ask those questions?

Mr GUNNER: No. Where are the 14 Fire vacancies?

Mr GILES: Alice Springs and Darwin.

Mr GUNNER: I have scratched out a series of questions, Police minister, because of the time.

Mr GILES: Can we add additional information there? Currently, we are recruiting 15 firefighters.

Mr GUNNER: You will have plus one, who will go to Alice?

Mr GILES: Of course, Michael. I have no idea. When we recruit - sometimes the number you recruit may not be the number that graduates.

Mr GUNNER: We wish them all the best and hope they all graduate.

How many NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services staff are employed on temporary contracts?

Mr GILES: There are 104 people currently employed on temporary contracts, including executives.

Mr GUNNER: Is that easy to break down?

Mr GILES: Go to the next one and we will come back to that if you like.

Mr GUNNER: How many vehicles does NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services have, and what type of vehicles are they?

Mr GILES: This will take ages. We have quad bikes, motorbikes, boats, and the Bearcat. We will come back to that. We are preparing two answers now.

Mr GUNNER: Where those cars are held against a position ...

Mr GILES: One moment - we have six buses, three forklifts, 32 motorcycles, 154 sedans, 145 heavy four-wheels drives, 115 light four-wheel drives, 48 SUVs, 71 two-wheel drive utes and vans, 58 trucks and 15 other, which includes tractors, mowers, golf buggies, etcetera, plus, of course, one Bearcat.

You had a question about temporary contracts. Did you want to know the levels? Was that the question?

Mr GUNNER: I asked if it was easy to break down.

Mr GILES: I can tell you apprentice - one; AO2 - nine; AO3 - 27; AO4 - seven; AO5 - four; AO6 - five; AO7 - four; SAO1 - zero; SAO2 - one; ECO1 - seven; ECO2 - three; ECO3 - one; ECO4 - one; P2 - one; P3 - eight; SP1 - one; PH2 - one; PH3 - one; T2 - two; Chief Pilot - one; Senior Pilot - four, which totals 89, and 15 police.

Mr GUNNER: Thank you. Where vehicles are held against a position, what position are they held against, and what are the levels of those positions?

Mr GILES: Are you talking about home garaging?

Mr GUNNER: Basically.

Mr GILES: Superintendents, ECO1s, and some other officers, for operational requirements, take them home for safe garaging.

Mr GUNNER: That makes sense, particularly remote, I imagine.

Mr GILES: A range of different areas. Fifty-nine vehicles are home garaged, 57 of those are employee entitlement, and two are on call as a requirement to be able to return to work.

Mr GUNNER: How many staff in the agency are currently employed within human resources and communication and media?

Mr GILES: I think I have that here somewhere. I will get some information on that for you, member for Fannie Bay. If you want to go to the next question I will flick back, if you do not mind.

Mr GUNNER: A sub-question to that will be is that the same post-review - the communications review?

Mr GILES: We will get that information.

Mr GUNNER: How many Aboriginal Community Police Officer positions exist in the Northern Territory Police as at 1 June 2013?

Mr GILES: Eighty-four.

Mr GUNNER: Are those filled positions or ...

Mr GILES: That is ACPO establishment positions. Some are challenging to fill and we have attempted to fill them on numerous occasions and have not been able to.

Mr GUNNER: That is how many you are budgeted to employ, how many are filled?

Mr GILES: The actual is 60. Part of the conversation about what to do about vacant ACPO positions that cannot be filled - some of the conversation is lined up in the Sullivan review. A number of ACPO positions cannot be filled because we cannot get anyone to fill those jobs. When you want to provide that service, but there is resistance to change about the ACPO position, it is a challenging argument to have because you want to get people in those jobs who can do them. Whether or not they are ACPOs or someone else, it is a challenge we have to undertake as minister for Police and Commissioner for Police.

Mr GUNNER: Would one of those options be civilianising the ACPO position?

Mr GILES: There is a range of options - whether it is civilianising an auxiliary; there are a range of ways to do it. You would think civilianising might be an option, but some people are against that because everyone wants to see an ACPO - an Aboriginal Community Police Officer. Where you cannot find somebody to do the job - the challenge we have at the moment is those positions are not filled.

Where a vacancy comes up because, as I said before, four people left in the last six months I think it was, those positions should, quite rightly, have greater opportunity to be filled. There will always be challenges in some communities to fill those positions. I do not want to see - there has been an option to say, 'Let's cancel those jobs if we can't fill them'. We will keep them, but we will work out other ways to change the position or whatever we have to do to make sure we still provide services.

Mr GUNNER: Will the Police Association be part of that conversation?

Mr GILES: Yes. Hang on one second. Human Resource Management has 34 staff. Media was nine now it is eight. Police media is not widely affected by the communication marketing review. Four agencies are not particularly affected.

Mr GUNNER: I made the fairly safe assumption that the Police Media Unit would be required for day to day operational activity, but also Emergency Services.

Mr GILES: There are four agencies and Police is one.

Mr GUNNER: How many people who identify themselves as Indigenous have joined NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services since 26 August 2012 and at what level?

Mr GILES: It is not a requirement for people to identify as Indigenous so there is insufficient reporting on the matter. We are intent on getting as many Indigenous employees as we can, but we do not believe we should force people to provide their Indigeneity. The reporting numbers can be incorrect, but we believe there are more than 100 personnel within the police force.

Ms LEE: Is it not a requirement in Queensland to provide Aboriginality to join the police force? Is it not the same in the Territory?

Mr GILES: What was the question, member for Arnhem?

Ms LEE: In Queensland, or anywhere else, to join the police force you have to provide proof of Aboriginality in regard to ...

Mr GILES: If you are Aboriginal?

Ms LEE: If you are Aboriginal - from an Aboriginal organisation. You have to provide proof that you are Aboriginal. Do we not have the same here?

Mr GILES: Yes, I know what you mean. We do not have that in the Northern Territory and I do not believe it is mandated interstate. However, people might like to see that. My experience interstate is it has not been mandated.

Ms LEE: Is there cross-cultural training for police officers going out into communities?

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I will ask the Police Commissioner to explain the cross-cultural training.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, there is a very comprehensive package we are quite proud of which involves a number of well-respected Indigenous folk who assist us in providing training to our officers so they are best-equipped to understand cultural sensitivities when posted to remote communities.

Ms LEE: Thank you.

Mr GILES: You better give him one soon or he will fall asleep, member for Fannie Bay.

Mr GUNNER: Can you please provide a breakdown of staffing for Police, Fire and Emergency Services which includes the overall number of civilian employment with the tri-forces as at 1 June 2013? For example, we have the numbers for 30 June 2012: NTPF was 1417; NTFRS was 267; NTES was 19; civilian employment for the tri-service was 391, a total of 2094. Civilian roles, as a percentage of total employment, were 18%. Can you give us those as at 1 June 2013?

Mr GILES: I am unsure if it is 1 June. I believe our reporting characteristic is 30 April. Normally for estimates it is 31 March, but I believe we have it for 30 April, member for Fannie Bay. For Police it is 1485. You also want ...

Mr GUNNER: NTFRS.

Mr GILES: Yes, NTFRS is 233, 18 in NTES, and 345 civilians.

Mr GUNNER: I can work the percentage out later. Is NTFRS correct? It has gone from 267 to 233, is that correct? Was it 233 for NTFRS?

Ms KO: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: Okay.

Mr GILES: I am not sure what your old figure was, member for Fannie Bay.

Mr GUNNER: It was 267.

Mr GILES: That cannot be correct because the establishment is 233, there are 14 vacancies, and the establishment has not changed.

Mr GUNNER: That is from the annual report. Do you have the 30 June 2012 figures?

Mr GILES: Perhaps it is fire auxiliaries. They have an extra 40 or 45.

Mr GUNNER: That would make sense.

Mr GILES: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: In budgeting, you have recruit squads coming through - do you have projections for where you want to be in 2014 with those positions?

Mr GILES: We want to ensure we continue our establishment and add the extra 120 police. The lower the number of separations will increase our numbers. I said we wanted to increase - of the 120 - an extra 63 in the next financial year is our target. The lower the number of separations will obviously help those numbers. We have the lowest separation rate in six years. Apparently, people are very happy with the new Police Commissioner and the new Police minister.

Member for Fannie Bay, for want of information - these things are not always constant, but to give you an update of where things are at, from the 2006-07 financial years up to where we are now, separation rates for constables and above have gone from 6.3% to 9%, to 5.5% to 5%, to 5.9% to 4%, and it is now down to 3.78%.

Mr GUNNER: That is an improvement in attrition.

Mr GILES: That is a good thing from a government point of view not a political point of view. We have the lowest separation rate in six years. Any number of factors could affect that, but it is a good number.

Mr GUNNER: You clearly have a very professional relationship with the Police Commissioner. There have been two incidents, one where the Attorney-General prevented a police officer from speaking, and the other was when the Police Commissioner was asked to leave a meeting by the minister for Local Government. Have you provided any advice to either minister, or NT Police, about how conduct can be improved in the future or the right protocols to prevent what have been two awkward situations?

Mr GILES: No. I was not at that press conference. I saw the outcome on Sky News at Sydney airport that Friday evening. I have had a chat to minister Elferink. He likes to have full knowledge of what is occurring in different portfolio areas, and at a press conference he likes to provide answers. It is not about gagging people, it is about taking responsibility as a minister to provide those answers.

I sat here today with the Ombudsman, the Attorney-General and the Electoral Commissioner. I could have tried to answer many of the questions but chose to let them answer in the interest of showing there is no gagging. Being open and frank, minister Elferink wanted to provide some of the answers. I believe we have to provide a level of protection - not gagging - to staff within government being asked highly political questions. It is not always right for staff to have to field a political question and put themselves in an awkward position. We, as politicians, make the policy and we have to be accountable for those policies.

While I was not at the press conference, my interpretation of what I have seen and heard is minister Elferink was trying to be accountable for the government's position. It was portrayed John Elferink was trying to gag police representatives but I do not believe that was the case.

People are able to speak openly. I am happy for the Commissioner, or any staff, to talk freely. I have responsibility, as the minister and Chief Minister, to answer every question I can so I will seek to do that. Where I believe you will get better information by me handing over, I will do that and there is no direction.

I was not at the meeting in Alice Springs but understand there were circumstances at that meeting which I was not completely privy to, but there were a number of times minister Anderson thought it was in the best interest of government representation at the meeting for the Commissioner not to be there and the events occurred. People are free to speak their mind, particularly in senior positions, but where the opportunity presents itself we need to be accountable as ministers to provide answers as we need to.

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate the protocol you employ and the better example you set. Those are my questions to whole-of-government.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, could tell us the opinion of the police on the BDR?

Madam CHAIR: The Chief Minister does not have to answer that. He should not be asked for an expression of opinion.

Mr WOOD: No, this is where I find it difficult. You can have policies, such as in health, and ask if a policy meant less people ended up in hospital. I am asking if the Banned Drinker Register policy meant there were fewer people causing problems. I am asking a question which is not political. There was a policy in action, and the government has commented many times that it did not work. The government opposed this legislation when it was introduced into parliament and there were no statistics. When they say it did not work, that is making a statistical analysis after the event because they had already decided they did not want it. It was in operation for 12 months; it should have been in place for three years to get real statistical information about whether it was useful or not.

It is a legitimate question to ask the police. During the 12 month operation, was it of some benefit in tackling part of the problem? It is fair to say the BDR, on its own, was not the be-all and end-all. There were two other factors: the SMART courts and the alcohol tribunals. It needed other things, and it needed to be tweaked. It was not tweaked, except for some legislation about secondary supply. We should be able to ask the police, as a department, if it had an effect. It is the same as if I asked, 'Has the police bicycle unit had any benefit in Nightcliff?'

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, answers to those questions are very subjective. I will go through a few things in a moment and explain why. With more than 2000 staff employed throughout the agency in different rank and files, there will be many different opinions. During my recent visit to the Alice Springs watch house I had a chance to talk to staff – since removal of the Banned Drinker Register there was not

one person in the watch house. The comments I received from staff, without identifying any officers, was removal of the Banned Drinker Register has made things much better. This was before we announced alcohol protection orders. I discussed that concept and the police said it would be a great thing. I am not saying this for my political gain; I am giving you the feedback I received.

The view of mandatory rehabilitation, from Alice Springs police station, is it is needed to help get people off the street and off the grog for a three-month period. I said earlier I do not anticipate alcohol rehabilitation will have a success rate greater than 5%, but it will give people an opportunity to clear their minds with appropriate medical treatment. I will not go into the detail of that policy.

In the Top End there was the Banned Drinker Register. When you go south of Darwin, in the regional and remote areas, a range of alcohol measures are in place. In Alice Springs there have been supply restrictions, type of grog restrictions, Banned Drinker Register, \$100 limit and the licence system. There has been a range of measures for many years and the situation gets worse. There has been a 35% increase in the number of domestic violence incidents as a result of alcohol in the last five years. That went up exceptionally during the Banned Drinker Register.

Incarceration rates - I am talking from an Alice Springs local member perspective - went through the roof during that time with the number of people done for break and enter on property, particularly around stealing alcohol. When I said it is subjective, there is a whole range of indicative measures you can put together to understand things are getting worse and, every time a new measure comes in, there is a cause and effect basis.

When the long necks of beer were banned people substituted what they were buying. When the issue came in - I am trying to think what moved everyone to Bundaberg Rum. I think it was when you could not buy fortified wine products until 6 pm - people moved to Bundaberg Rum then transferred to VB. It goes around in circles.

I have always run the argument that when Opal fuel came in - which was a really good outcome with a quick success rate - there have been no longitudinal studies about where the sniffers went. Most people who were sniffing had a chronic substance abuse issue. When Opal fuel comes in they do not stop, they generally transition to another substance. We do not know if those people went from sniffing to grog and that is what has increased the grog rates.

There has not been a lot of mapping around that data. What has happened to the sniffers is a significant issue. I am not a supporter of prohibition; I believe if you ban grog people will substitute product and we could be in a worse position with that product being much more detrimental to society.

I have some statistics here. The crime stats will come from the Attorney-General ...

Mr WOOD: If the Attorney-General is doing crime stats, do the crime stats in the back of the annual report match because that was an issue some years ago? Do they match?

Mr GILES: Yes, the intent is they match up.

I will go to May because that is closer. I have March data here, but I will go to May. This data is a comparison from 1 July to 31 May for the 2011-12 financial year and the 2012-13 financial year.

In the Darwin watch house – when people are picked up for protective custody, picked up drunk, harm themselves, or harm others they are put in the watch house, generally at night - there has been a reduction. I will not play with these figures; I will be open and honest. There has been a reduction. In 2011-12, 7670 people were in the Darwin metro command watch house. In this financial year - this is at 31 May and I would like to see the last three months, not because that is the time I have been Chief Minister, but I think it is coming down.

In the 2012-13 period there is 6482. That is a 15.49% reduction in people going to the watch house.

Mr WOOD: Is that 7600 for 12 months?

Mr GILES: That 7670 is for seven months. It is the two seven-month periods in those financial years.

Mr WOOD: Can I ask a question?

Mr GILES: It is comparing apples with apples for the monthly periods.

Mr WOOD: Do you have the sobering-up shelter figures?

Mr GILES: Yes, I do.

Mr WOOD: For the same period?

Mr GILES: That has gone down from 3568 to 3453. I am not as confident with sobering-up shelter figures. That is not to say these are not the numbers that were dropped off, but there is nothing to say people have to stay in a sobering-up shelter. Police can drop them off and they can walk out in five seconds. The same person is then picked up again.

Some sobering-up shelter people could end up back in the watch house, or they could end up in the sobering-up shelter five times a night. When you are dropped off, you are not restrained physically, not contained within the premises; you are free to go. The Alice Springs sobering-up shelter numbers have gone from 6218 to 8258. There is a substantial increase in the numbers but, anecdotally, people go in and out repeatedly during the night. Those statistics are different. The watch house in the southern command has gone from 5786 to 2783, which is a reduction of 51.9%. Fewer people are going into the watch house.

There is a difference of 3000 less people in the watch house but an increase of 2000 in the sobering-up shelter. There are repeat offenders in the sobering-up shelter. The more we put in the more repeat. This is where it becomes subjective in how you analyse the data.

Mr GUNNER: What you were saying about subjective - we had an independent look at police resourcing and O'Sullivan said nine months after the introduction of the Banned Drinker Register antisocial behaviour statistics in Darwin were down 25%, and nine months after the introduction of the Banned Drinker Register protective custody instances in Casuarina were down by 43%. That was O'Sullivan's look at the Banned Drinker Register - an independent look using police data.

Mr WOOD: Minister, my issue with the BDR, whether it was good or bad, is we did not give it, statistically, enough time. The statistics I did at high school was about trends, and to get a trend in one year - for some reason a group of people might not be in town for part of the year - your statistics are blown out.

I have never argued the BDR was the be-all and end-all, but I have tried to argue you pulled it more for a political than a statistical reason. Everyone is trying to find statistics to show it did not work. Perhaps we could have both going at the same time - the BDR and mandatory rehabilitation. That might have made it better.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, is this a statement or are you asking a question?

Mr GILES: I am happy to have a conversation, if that is okay, Madam Chair.

Mr WOOD: I will give you another example. I have statistics showing reductions. These are from the last police annual report. This is offences against the person in the Northern Territory 2010-11 and 2011-12. Part of that period includes the BDR. If you look at serious assault resulting in injury, in 2010-11 it was 411 and in 2011-12 it was 866. That is 110%-plus.

Aggravated sexual assault was 266 in 2010-11 and 174 in 2011-12, down 34.6%. Dangerous or negligent acts endangering persons is down - only a small number - by 25%.

Mr GILES: It is all over the place. There are no constant trends amongst much of it at all.

Mr WOOD: I agree. That has been my argument ...

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, with respect, can I rebut that? I am not talking about Tennant Creek. I have a different conversation about Tennant Creek if you want to have that, member for Barkly. From the Alice Springs perspective - because the BDR was really only one part of a tool in Darwin - there were other elements, but it was one tool - in other parts of the Territory there are multiple tools.

Part of the Territory with those multiple tools had the biggest issues. It seems the more tools we had in the suite of alcohol supply measures the worse things became over the last few years. It continued to get worse when the BDR came in.

Since the start of the intervention, when you had your \$100 cheque ...

Mr WOOD: That was Commonwealth.

Mr GILES: Yes, but all these things came in - the dry town, the 2 km law, the tip out laws, the banning notices and then the BDR came in. However, property break-ins went through the roof. People were being gaoled because they were breaking in to get grog.

I do not need statistics to look at this. I have not researched any statistics on this, but I know the number of people in Alice Springs who were being broken into for grog. Minister Conlan, I believe, was broken into three times in a couple of weeks, and my next door neighbour was done over a couple of times. I can give countless examples of people being broken into because people were after grog.

Mr WOOD: They must not have reported it.

Mr GILES: No one in Alice reports these issues on a broad scale. It has been a regular issue for some time but we are now seeing a significant dent, we are getting the front counter of the police station operating. JESCC has more staff and is providing better servicing. We have a significant reduction in property crime in Alice, and I could find it here somewhere. I do not know the statistics, but I know anecdotally property crime has gone down. Whether it has been reported or not, people are saying how much better it is now they can go out at night and not come home to a house that has been broken into. That is not just a glib throwaway line; that is constant. I know crime still happens, but the level of reduction is significant. The removal of the BDR, albeit done by the member for Blain when he was Chief Minister - we support removing it and it was good for Alice Springs.

I know there are still substance abuse issues we have to deal with, and we are trying, but we want to get to the heart of the issue.

Member for Barkly, you mentioned there are some real challenges in Tennant, and I would be happy to chat with you about that. When I was in opposition, as the member for Braitling I corresponded with Chief Minister Paul Henderson. We chatted and tried to work out solutions to some of the problems in Alice. He was forthcoming; he did not agree with everything I did – that is politics - but we came up with some solutions.

Tennant Creek has significant issues and much of the crime statistics data is – Tennant Creek changes that data on a Territory-wide basis significantly from a statistical point of view, but Tennant has some real challenges. I have some thoughts as to why that is, and I would be happy to work to identify what is happening in Tennant Creek and what can we do. The BDR is not the answer in Tennant Creek and I think a range of things need to happen. I am happy to chat to you after estimates, but the situation in Tennant is really bad and I think the lack of housing is one of the biggest issues.

Mr McCARTHY: Chief Minister, Port Augusta tightened it up and pushed it to Coober Pedy. Coober Pedy tightened it up and pushed it to Alice. It is possible the focus on Alice has pushed it ...

Mr GILES: And Mt Isa.

Mr McCARTHY: ... into Tennant Creek.

Mr GILES: Yes, Mt Isa as well. There is a lot of subjective stuff here and a domino effect for a lot of different things. Over recent ...

Mr GUNNER: Talking anecdotally, like the Fannie Bay shops for example, people have said it has never been worse ...

Mr GILES: Right now?

Mr GUNNER: ... since the BDR was scrapped.

Mr GILES: That is not the information I am receiving. I am happy to talk to you about that too, member for Fannie Bay, and I am not retorting in a glib sense, but I am receiving completely different information.

Mr GUNNER: It has been very public. The traders have spoken quite publicly in the media.

Mr GILES: Has that changed in recent times? I think it has changed over the last few months significantly, but I will follow that up with the Police Commissioner.

As at 31 May total offences against property were down – this is reported property crime – 7% than for the same period in 2011-12 when the BDR was in. I expected that number to be much higher. My anecdotal evidence is it is significantly higher than 7%. I am sure, member for Fannie Bay, you know a lot of people in Alice Springs, and you – I will ask you to explain without saying what – I imagine the feedback you are getting is it is much better now. That is the feedback I get wherever I go in Alice.

Mr GUNNER: If you want to talk anecdotal – I will not go there. I have not asked my family in the last couple of months what their ...

Mr GILES: I know your family was being broken into fairly regularly. I have not heard that has happened recently.

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to give them a call and ask for their feedback.

Mr GILES: Yes, it would be good to see how things are trending, but I think you will find they are trending down. It is not to say all crime has stopped. Some people repeat offend.

The total number of antisocial behaviour incidents recorded from 1 July 2012 to 31 March 2013 in the Darwin Metropolitan Command has a significant reduction of 8.7% when compared to the same time - apples with apples - last year. There are trends. I will not say things are ...

Mr WOOD: It is too short a period for trends.

Mr GILES: Yes, and it is all subjective. If you go to the next graph you will see something has gone up a bit and, as you just explained ...

Mr WOOD: That is why we got rid of quarterly statistics and went to longer periods: to get the trends. The previous government was criticised for that, but the idea was to have a longer period so you could get the trend.

Mr GILES: Different things happen on a monthly basis and have different impacts here and there.

Mr GUNNER: For example, minister, if you compare the June quarter 2012, which was the last period of the Banned Drinker Register, with the March quarter 2013, there was a 24% increase in domestic violence.

Mr GILES: You cannot compare June to March. You cannot compare different seasonal months. You cannot compare June to March because different things happen. In Alice Springs, for example, crime goes down when it is cold, so you cannot compare June to March. You can only compare June to June.

Mr GUNNER: June has not come out yet.

Mr GILES: Yes, but you have to compare apples with apples.

We should get back to the questions. We have had a good chat, but let us get back to what we were talking about.

Mr WOOD: When I spoke to you about core social values - we are talking about crime and how we can stop it, but there is a cultural thing we have to change. You see the influence alcohol has in our society, especially in sport. If you attended the Adelaide River races you would have seen what the culture is about. It is not pretty, especially if you drive past there at 6 am, as I did on my way to Merrepen. If you see what people are like at the V8 concert, it is not pretty, or the last race on Darwin Cup day. That is the culture, and part of the government's emphasis has to be on changing that. We need less emphasis that everything to do with sport is about alcohol - the cricket is about alcohol. Although we are just talking about how we fix it from a police perspective, from a government perspective it is a much bigger picture.

Mr GILES: The important thing is 'everything in moderation' and 'everything responsibly'. I will go home tonight and have a beer, but I will not have 12 ...

Mr WOOD: You will not have time.

Mr GILES: You spoke about the culture; the core fundamental issue in the majority of this is the culture of welfare dependency.

MR WOOD: That was not the problem at Adelaide River races.

Mr GILES: No, we are not talking about the Adelaide River component. That is just to do with alcohol. We are talking about the fundamental issue of crime and all those other areas. That is the cause, then we deal with the issues from that. Let us get back to the questions, Madam Chair.

Answer to Question on Notice 3.12

Mr GILES: I have a question on notice response for you.

Madam CHAIR: Do you have the number

Mr GILES: Yes number 3.12. As at 31 January 2013, lease negotiation of 47 lots had been completed for an annual leasing cost of \$253 000 to NTPFES. Community locations are included in the attachment and I am happy to table that.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay, did I interrupt you before?

Mr GUNNER: No, I have finished whole-of-agency.

Mr WOOD: Minister, what is the cost of training a police officer?

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, it costs about \$228 000 per annum, which includes recruiting, training and fitting out of the officer - the uniform and so forth.

Mr WOOD: Why do they not throw their hats in the air at the end of training like they used to? Is it too nice a hat to throw now? Once upon a time ...

Mr GILES: You never know, member for Nelson, some people might have the follicle complexions of yourself and need to keep their hats on.

Mr WOOD: Chief Minister, in the 2010-11 annual report the Commissioner said it was a significant year for the NT police with total crime in all major categories falling or remaining stable. Could you explain what the situation is in relation to 2011-12, and perhaps 2012-13? Why was that section about the major categories of crime not included in the 2011-12 annual report?

Mr GILES: I cannot explain the 2011-12 annual report ...

Mr WOOD: No, I am looking at trends. In the 2010-11 report the Commissioner said:

2010-11 was a significant year of achievement for NT Police with total crime for the NT in all the major categories falling or remaining stable.

When I looked at the 2011-12 report, there is no reference to something I can see is better or worse ...

Mr GILES: To be fair, member for Nelson, we were not in government for that ...

Mr WOOD: In 2011-12 you were; you got the bottom end of it. Even the Police Commissioner is in his blue uniform.

Mr GILES: We were in government in 2012-13. Did you not just hand up 2011-12?

Mr WOOD: Yes, the back end of it. The reports are written at the end of ...

Mr GILES: It ended on 30 June 2012; the election was in August 2012.

Mr WOOD: Some of the reports we have state the election has changed things. Some report I have state clearly there has been an election since ...

Mr GILES: I do not think it is fair I comment on an annual report before we were in government.

Mr WOOD: There were figures in one and not the other. I have specific ones, member for Fannie Bay, in the next section.

Mr GUNNER: In Output 7.1?

Mr WOOD: Community Safety and Crime Prevention.

Answer to Question on Notice No 3.14

Mr GILES: I table a copy of separations by classification in answer to a question?

Madam CHAIR: You are finished with the whole-of-government?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of agency-related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies.

OUTPUT GROUP 7.0 - COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION
Output 7.1 – Community Safety and Crime Prevention

Madam CHAIR: We will now move on to Output Group 7.0, Community Safety and Crime Prevention, Output 7.1, Community Safety and Crime Prevention. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: I have asked many of my questions already, thanks to the liberty of the Police minister. I think this is the right spot for this one. We ...

Mr GILES: Member for Fannie Bay, I am happy to be flexible where possible unless it is not in my portfolio.

Mr GUNNER: I am sure of this one. We had, under our government, sanctions when a person had been admitted to protective custody three times in three months. Your model is requiring protective custody of three times in two months. Using protective custody numbers from 2011-12, how many problem drinkers will be targeted through the narrower criteria?

Mr GILES: What were your sanctions after three months? Three times in three months?

Mr GUNNER: Three times in six months, sorry - the Banned Drinker Register.

Mr GILES: Are you asking what the change will be?

Mr GUNNER: There is a difference, obviously, in the number of people captured.

Mr GILES: It is probably a question for the Health minister.

Mr GUNNER: They are your protective custodies, Police minister.

Mr GILES: The Police Commissioner has reminded me we do not know because we have not put it into practice yet. We have not done any analysis around ...

Mr GUNNER: I am asking based on the 2011-12 numbers.

Mr GILES: Yes, we have not done any analysis around it.

Mr GUNNER: Are you prepared to take that on notice - 2011-12 numbers?

Mr GILES: I cannot give you an answer because we have not done the analysis.

Mr GUNNER: I am asking for the analysis. The information is there ...

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay, if it is taken on notice the minister must respond within two weeks. It sounds like ...

Mr GUNNER: They are already quoting data from there. For example, Police minister you used a figure of 117?

Mr GILES: Someone was picked up 117 times while on the BDR?

Mr GUNNER: That is right. You have the data; you have used that example; so you have looked at it. You have it; it is possible to get it.

Mr GILES: Your previous government reported that data, to be honest. You reported the people who were picked up. The issue is - I do not have a problem doing the analysis, but it would be subjective because, at the moment, there is no penalty for people put into a watch house or picked up by police, whether it is a sobering-up shelter, sent home or whatever. If we run the analysis it would be different post 1 July when rehabilitation starts.

Mr GUNNER: If police picks somebody up for protective custody it is because they need to be protected and taken to a place of safety. The police view ...

Mr GILES: Do you want to know how many people will be picked up three times in two months?

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr GILES: We will do that, but I put a qualifier on it to say I anticipate once the alcohol rehab starts it will be a different number because there will be a punitive approach for helping people in rehabilitation which will see less people in protective custody, but ...

Mr GUNNER: I am prepared to accept the caveat, but the numbers are there.

Mr GILES: The bigger caveat is you need to ask the Justice minister.

Mr GUNNER: You will not take that on notice?

Mr GILES: No, the Justice minister will deal with this in the crime stats.

Mr GUNNER: Police take them into protective custody. The original stat goes in at the watch house?

Mr GILES: Yes, but the way it is reported - I understand you will ask why that is the case, but the way it is reported - it comes through Justice, it is not a flick it off. I was about to say we do it but was advised we do not. It is the Attorney-General. Rest assured, I was about to say we would do it until advised we do not.

Mr GUNNER: We will ask the Justice minister tomorrow.

Mr GILES: No, he is tonight.

Mr GUNNER: No, he has gone home.

Mr WOOD: No, it is today. We are today now.

Mr GUNNER: No, he has gone home.

Mr GILES: Has he?

Mr WOOD: We will have to wait. Can we call him if we finish early?

Mr GUNNER: At the rate we are going he will be here at 8.30 am on the dot. The architect of the current estimates process has gone home.

Mr WOOD: I will ask an important question in the sense we will debate it soon. Chief Minister, I am asking the Police Commissioner, through you ...

Mr GILES: Do you believe I cannot answer this one, member for Nelson?

Mr WOOD: You probably can, but I would like to hear the Police Commissioner.

I recently visited the sobering-up shelter and asked how it all worked in relation to how mandatory sentencing or rehabilitation would work. If a person was delivered by the police - someone was delivered when I was there - they walk from the car to the front door and are in the sobering-up shelter. If they are a bit more intoxicated - I will use Katherine as an example - are they taken to the watch house or the hospital?

Mr GILES: Let me give you some hospital data and clear things up before we go any further. I will ensure I have the right data.

There has been much speculation in the media about police dropping people they pick up at the hospital. The only time people are dropped off at hospital is where there is deemed to be a health need.

In 2011-12 - I cannot give you figures because no data was collected, it has only been collected this financial year - between the period 1 July last year to 31 May this year in the Darwin 175 people were dropped off at hospital in the Darwin metro community area. If we work out how many days in seven months and divide it by 175, it tells me less than one person a day. In the northern command it was 181 people in a seven-month period, which is six more than 175. It is still less than one.

In the southern command it was 431; less than 2.1 people per day dropped off at hospital. When you compare that to people who were dropped at the watch house or sobering-up shelter, there needs to be some understanding that the numbers are not what people were representing. People dropped off at hospitals were there for health needs.

I will ask the Police Commissioner if he wants to expand on your broader question, because I know you like hearing ...

Mr WOOD: No. I will give you a reason once I get a better understanding of what police do when they pick up someone who is drunk.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you. In the first instance, the choice of delivery is not to a police watch house - the fewer people in the watch house the better. That is following on the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

We look for, in the first instance, a responsible guardian who can take care of the individual and, if that is not available, we will attempt to take them to a sobering-up shelter. The watch house is a place of last resort for people who are so intoxicated they cannot take care of themselves.

As the Chief Minister articulated, from time to time those people who are taken into protective custody have what the police officers believe to be a health need that ought to be properly assessed by a medical professional.

Mr WOOD: Minister, this is where my questions are leading. Under your new proposed laws, if you are taken to the watch house three times - which I presume is the place of custody; I do not know what my legal terminology is here. Some people have said once you are put in the back of a police van you are in custody. That might be something we can debate. However, let us presume the only custody in this is the watch house. That means a person who is drunk and goes home with a guardian will not have a mark against them in relation to the mandatory rehabilitation rules. Someone who goes to the sobering-up shelter will not be included in the alcohol mandatory rehabilitation tick. Someone who goes to the hospital will not be included in that either, even though they might be stone motherless, but they have a health problem as well. The only people who will be marked off as in custody will be the ones who go the place of last resort.

Mr GILES: The watch house.

Mr WOOD: That is right. So ...

Mr GILES: If we can provide people alternative solutions, such as being dropped at home or dropped at the sobering-up shelter, that is the preferred choice.

Mr WOOD: One thing for people in the sobering-up shelter - and I am not trying to verbal them, but they would tell you they should be part of this process because they are dumped there all the time and are problem drinkers.

The other issue is this puts the onus on police. The police will know, depending where they take these people, they will either be in the mandatory rehabilitation process or not. That is one thing police may have to think about. I am not saying that might spoil their judgment but it, obviously, is adding to the responsibility of the police officer.

The other issue is if the sobering-up shelter is full - and that happened. I remember being in Alice Springs when the problems occurred over Christmas and people were being taken to the watch house because the sobering-up shelter was full. People who do not need a tick against their name may be taken to the watch house just because they could not fit them in the sobering-up shelter.

At this point, you will be putting pressure on police. Also, people who may not be the candidates you want for mandatory rehabilitation may be brought into this simply because the sobering-up shelter is full?

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, thanks for your questions, I appreciate them. You are getting into questions of alcohol rehabilitation policy. The Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation will provide answers on those matters. Good, effective community-based policing will see police have full knowledge of repeat offenders, for want of a better word, with chronic alcohol issues. When those people go into the watch house, for the most part there will be nursing staff there who can provide an initial assessment. With community-based policing there will be a process where police are ensuring the wrong people are not going through the process.

I know what you are asking, but police know the people who self-harm in this regard. They know the people who are self-medicating to the point they are hurting themselves or those around them. This is not about police saying, 'I know they are the worst', but they know the people who - I do not want to verbal any officer, but you know who the chronic alcoholics are and who needs help the most. They will be the people who come through on a more regular basis.

I do not know if you want to add to that, Commissioner. Is that a fair assessment?

Commissioner McROBERTS: That is a fair assessment.

Mr WOOD: I can understand that, but there is also one advantage to taking someone to a sobering-up shelter; there is no paper work. That person was out the back of the vehicle and, within 15 seconds, in the front door and the sobering-up shelter staff picked them up.

Mr GILES: I ask the Commissioner to comment.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Paperwork at the watch house is minimal. It is about a health assessment of the person to ensure they are fit for custody, which is an important component of taking someone into our care. We have a duty and a responsibility to them. We fingerprint them. There is no prosecution brief to be prepared, member for Nelson. They are there for protective custody for their wellbeing as opposed to a person who is there for allegedly committing a criminal offence.

Mr WOOD: There are ID requirements under this new law that police will have to deal with, is that correct?

Commissioner McROBERTS: There are, and for very good reason. We need to ensure people in mandatory rehabilitation are properly identified so we know they have hit the trigger. We use a live scan machine, a very sophisticated electronic machine which the hands of the individual are placed on and the process takes not an insignificant amount of time. Nevertheless, there is not a great deal of paperwork as such.

Mr WOOD: Is there a written guideline which says if they pick up a person they must do this and this. Is there a guideline for police so that ...

Mr GILES: An individual person?

Mr WOOD: Obviously police are given instructions on how to deal with drunks - where to take them, where not to. Is there a police memo which says this is the ...

Mr GILES: If there is a bed available at the sobering-up shelter and the person is deemed by the officer to be the able to be dropped off at the shelter, that is the place they are dropped off, or at home, rather than going to the watch house. The watch house is the last resort. It is a judgment, not a tick and flick of, 'How straight a line can you walk?' Or, 'Hang on, you have to go to the sobering-up shelter'. They have to make a judgment call.

Mr WOOD: I am not trying to be ...

Mr GILES: No, but I am answering your question.

Mr WOOD: Once a person goes into custody that is one tick. What if the sobering-up shelter is full? They get a tick but they might not be the right person to get the tick; it just happens there was no more room in the sobering-up shelter. That happened in Alice Springs a couple of years ago.

I will not labour the point. We will probably have to debate it in parliament because it is a serious piece of legislation. I know we are late. I will skip a heap of these.

This was in the Ombudsman's report, Chief Minister. I did not see a response in the Ombudsman's report on it. On page 41 of the Ombudsman's report someone claimed Titjikala residents were told once permanent accommodation had been provided to Titjikala there would be a more permanent presence of police in that community. The complainant said the accommodation was progressively used less and less and, now, not at all.

Could the Police Commissioner comment on whether the complaint had any accuracy and whether police stay at Titjikala?

Mr GILES: We will take that on notice, member for Nelson?

Question on Notice No 3.15

Madam CHAIR: Please restate the question.

Mr WOOD: On page 41 of the Ombudsman's report there was a complaint about police accommodation not being used at Titjikala. Could the Commissioner please refer to that complaint and report back to us as to its accuracy.

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: Absolutely! We accept it.

Madam CHAIR: The question from the member for Nelson to the minister for Police is 3.15.

Mr WOOD: Traffic is not in this area, is it?

Mr GUNNER: No, coming up.

Mr GILES: Have we had Output 7.2?

Mr WOOD: We are still on Output 1.

Mr GUNNER: Output 7.1.

Mr WOOD: Police Commissioner, what work do you do with the Australian Federal Police in relation to possible terrorist threats?

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, what is the specific question?

Mr WOOD: It is to do with community safety. I do not know if the police have a policy to deal with that type of threat. They might have other threats such as a brawl at Wadeye during the footy match, but ...

Mr GILES: I have asked the Police Commissioner to respond as we ...

Mr WOOD: It does not have to be long, just some arrangement between the two forces.

Commissioner McROBERTS: At the highest level the Northern Territory government is a signatory to the intergovernmental agreement on this issue, and is also a member of the Australian New Zealand Counter Terrorism Committee. The Deputy Police Commissioner of the Northern Territory is our senior police representative, and there is also a representative on policy matters from the Department of the Chief Minister. The Deputy Commissioner interacts at a strategic level on counter terrorism matters and the Counter Terrorism Committee is made up of a significant number of other agencies, one of which is the Australian Federal Police, another the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, and others.

In the Northern Territory we have very robust emergency management arrangements. The Commissioner of Police assumes the role of Territory Controller and has responsibility to coordinate all government agency, non-government organisation, and community response to any critical incident we may be called upon to deal with. There exists very significant and well-exercised, well-planned national arrangements for what we call inter-operability - we can call upon federal assets if the need arises. I hope that satisfies your answer without me going into specific matters.

Mr WOOD: We do not need to go into specifics. In this day and age, unfortunately, the world is not as safe as we would like it to be.

Mr GILES: Adding to what the Commissioner said, member for Nelson, you, members of parliament, and Territorians can rest assured there are appropriate structures in place to respond to these issues. Of course, should any issue arise there will always be a challenge; however, risk management frameworks have been put in place to respond according to the level of risk, and exercises occur to ensure everyone is up to speed and ready to perform as necessary.

Mr WOOD: My next question is about traffic.

Mr GUNNER: We are moving on to Output 8; which is where O'Sullivan was meant to come.

Mr GILES: That was in Output 7. You may have missed it.

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output group 7.0.

**OUTPUT 8.0 – GENERAL POLICING, CRIME DETECTION,
INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION
Output 8.1 - Response and Recovery Services**

Madam CHAIR: The committee will now proceed to Output Group 8.0, General Policing, Crime Detection, Investigation and Prosecution and Output 8.1, Response and Recovery Services. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: The government received the O'Sullivan review in December. I appreciate you did not receive the review until you became Police minister in March, which was three months ago. The initial place a review into police resourcing being responded to would be the budget; however, the review was not tabled until after the budget. When and how will you be providing a response to it?

Mr GILES: I only tabled it because you asked so nicely, member for Fannie Bay.

Mr GUNNER: When and how will you be responding to all the recommendations and conclusions in the O'Sullivan report?

Mr GILES: We are doing some analysis now, and will continue to analyse the matters raised in the report. We will be working through the implications within the police force as required, and will discuss these matters as required with the Police Association. We have done so on a number of occasions and will continue to do so. We both agree we do not agree on a number of issues. There are some we disagree with but we will get on with business, do what we believe is best, and listen to the concerns of the Police Association to ensure we do what they think is best at the same time. I will not be providing a formal response. I will seek advice from both the Police Association and the Police Commissioner and will make decisions based on resource allocation as necessary.

Mr GUNNER: How the formal response was handled from the first O’Sullivan review was there were recommendations, comments from police and the NT Police Association to every single review, including whether they would be implemented or not. It has been included in the second O’Sullivan review, so every single recommendation was responded to by both police and the Police Association, including a decision about whether it was to be implemented or not.

Mr GILES: It is not anticipated we go to that formal level. We are working with the Police Association and police to find the best way forward from some of those recommendations. Where we think recommendations that need to be acted on we will do that. It was never meant to be a public report. I only produced it so you could see ...

Mr GUNNER: It was always going to be a public report. It was commissioned by the previous government to be a public report.

Mr GILES: When we received it, it was not anticipated to be public. The only reason I tabled it was so you could read it to see there was no cover-up. A formal response will not be made public. We will work through the issues and try to ensure we get the best outcomes, including services.

Mr GUNNER: There was an election promise in the CLP’s public service policy to ensure priority is given to the police resourcing review.

Mr GILES: Yes, and it is. We are also doing the Safe Streets audit, and a range of things continue to be looked at to seek continuous improvement.

Mr GUNNER: There will not be a formal response to the O’Sullivan recommendations? Will you do it or not? The previous government said it would not do some of the recommendations but gave a reason from the Police Commissioner and the Police Association. It was all listed and has been tabled. It can be done. You will not do that.

Mr GILES: There is no intent to do that. We want to get on with the job and make improvements where they need to be made. We can spend time getting staff to write a special report to table or we can get on with the job. It is not saying we do not want to write it, but we want to make improvements where we can.

Mr GUNNER: I understand what you are saying, but implementing a recommendation and having an independent review could be called getting on with the job. If someone says, ‘Independently, working with police, the Police Association, there is way you can get on with the job’, I do not understand how that impairs your ability.

Mr GILES: Member for Fannie Bay, there is no real issue. If you want a report someone could write one, but we want to take the recommendations, work out what is best, and do those things.

Mr GUNNER: That is, essentially, what I am asking for. It is not for my sake; serious recommendations have been made ...

Mr GILES: Who do I write the report to? The author of the report? Am I writing it to myself? Do I just get on and implement change?

Mr GUNNER: There is an example at the back of how it was done last time.

Mr GILES: Yes, I understand that, but we are more about getting on and doing business, member for Fannie Bay. Next estimates you can ask about the implementation of the recommendations and I will be more than happy to tell you.

Mr GUNNER: I can ask a couple of questions now that go to a bit more detail, and we can see how we take that.

Mr GILES: We do not have a final position on all these things. We are still working with the Police Association and the Police Commissioner to find a position. I will not be able to answer some of those questions.

Mr GUNNER: We will test the waters and see how we go.

Mr GILES: No worries. We will call the JESCC and look for the water police.

Mr GUNNER: What amount has been allocated in this budget for the Darwin Northern Command and the Alice Springs and Southern Command to ensure the response capabilities recommended within the O'Sullivan review?

Mr GILES: That is a difficult question to answer because operational requirements will see people or resource requirements removed from different locations at different times. That can be such as the TRG, to mobilising horse and motorcyclists, to moving dogs as required. A whole lot of operational requirements and movements occur. I do not know whether you can really have a budget fixed when you have such operational issues.

One example is Yuendumu, where if situations flair up police will be flown in. They could be there for a day, a week or a month. That would have an impact on the budget. It is more about the placement of operational requirements rather than budgetary measures.

Mr GUNNER: When will the Darwin metropolitan staffing establishment recommended in the review - 434 general duties police plus a 20 officer relief pool - be established?

Mr GILES: Member for Fannie Bay, the 94 staff utilised at DIAC are used with the metropolitan command wing not being used for the DIAC facility. They add to the contribution there. While the O'Sullivan review recommends a certain number of staff, you cannot place that number of staff on one command post because where you have a higher rate of issues, operational requirements will see the Police Commissioner and police command moving resources from different places. The number mentioned in that review will not always be in the same place if the levels of crime or operational requirements facilitate the need to move resources to a different location and put them in a different task force.

For example, when the bikies turned up, a number of people would have moved to deal with that issue. You cannot just talk about a number as a fixed asset because you will always make the number really low so you can keep moving people at the upper echelon levels.

Mr GUNNER: What is the point of an establishment number then?

Commissioner McROBERTS: We operate to a base. We need to have a certain number of people so they know where they will work typically, but we reserve the right to best meet community demand at any point in time by moving people to places of greater need. We may have, for example, an establishment at Casuarina Police Station, but from time to time we may seek to deploy some of them elsewhere. That is the dynamic nature of our business and something we do probably every week somewhere. We have pressures and the benefit of having this capacity is we are able to respond quickly to community issues rather than working out the administrative requirements of saying we need to temporarily transfer you to this place. If there is a problem in Maningrida, I want people on the plane first thing tomorrow morning to Maningrida. That is how we deploy.

Mr GUNNER: It is perfectly reasonable to recruit to an establishment number and have it there. It might not be the actuals ...

Mr GILES: It is Territory-wide.

Mr GUNNER: It might not be the actuals you have at Darwin metropolitan, but according to that every police officer needs to know where they will be based. You will have an establishment number you will reach. It does not necessarily mean they will be there that week because operational things might take them elsewhere, but you will meet that establishment number. The question is: when will you meet it?

Mr GILES: I do not know whether or not that will be met as definitively as defined in the report. We have said there is more than 2000 staff, the majority of whom are based in Darwin. They are not all commissioned officers, but ...

Mr GUNNER: They are all Darwin metropolitan staff?

Mr GILES: That is right, and there are different ways you can facilitate those numbers. It is important we continue to increase the number of police we have. We have a graduation squad tomorrow. We are committed to an extra 120 police. We have the extra 94 for DIAC. The ...

Mr GUNNER: They will then be placed in an establishment, I imagine?

Mr GILES: They are top of.

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Mr GILES: The numbers will keep going up, and the attrition rate decreasing to 3% sees the numbers grow again. They will be used where there are operational requirements.

Mr GUNNER: I have a very similar question about Alice Springs and its 170 general duties police plus a 20 officer relief pool for its establishment number. Would the answer be the same: you do not know when you will get there?

Mr GILES: Twenty have been allocated for this year. There are 14 being employed. There will be 22 coming out of tomorrow's squad. Even though people will be based in Alice Springs and living in Alice, if there are issues anywhere in the Territory they can be moved, not permanently, unless necessary. They can be moved quickly.

Mr GUNNER: They can be moved as needed operationally, but they will be held against an establishment somewhere. The establishment target is reasonable but, as needed, they might be moved. You have an establishment target set out in the O'Sullivan review but you are not sure when you might get there?

Mr GILES: No, because it is broad at the Top End where in Alice you know what your number is. You have your 20 relief pool and the relief pool works for the Themis stations to be able to move people around as required. If things come up, people will be utilised.

Mr GUNNER: Obviously there is still that target.

How much has been allocated in Budget 2013-14 to achieve the recommended staffing levels at Borroloola, Ngukurr, Alyangula, and Wurrumiyanga?

Mr GILES: We have not settled on the recommendations yet.

Mr GUNNER: There is nothing in this budget for Borroloola, Ngukurr, Alyangula or Wurrumiyanga because you have not settled on the recommendations?

Mr GILES: There are police, but we have not settled on whether we agree with the recommendations and what we think the appropriate staffing numbers should be. We have not agreed on all those recommendations yet. We have worked on them, there is still agreement to have on baseline funding and a range of different areas ...

Mr GUNNER: I need a response to those recommendations to know how we hold you or not hold you against them, or where we are going on them. It is a pretty comprehensive look at police resourcing in the NT. It was asked for, for a long time from a range of people. It would be good to know how to respond to them.

Mr GILES: It took a long time to be allowed to be done.

Mr GUNNER: It has happened.

Mr GILES: It took a few years. We will not go into that, member for Fannie Bay. I will be more than happy to but we will not. We will go on to the next question, keeping in mind we have not agreed to all the things in the Sullivan review yet.

Mr GUNNER: Yes. What was the number of calls to the 000 and 131444 during 2012-13 to date, and how many of these calls were alcohol-related?

Mr GILES: Which one - 131444?

Mr GUNNER: And 000.

Mr GILES: Repeat your question, member for Fannie Bay, I have a big spread sheet here.

Mr GUNNER: If you table it I will take the lot. I am sure my answer is in there. What was the number of calls to the 000 and 131444 during 2012-13 to date?

Mr GILES: For 2012-13, I will get a calculator and add it up for you.

Mr GUNNER: Last year it was 110 041 for 000.

Mr GILES: From 1 July to 31 March, which is seven months, calls to 131444 were 136 395.

Mr GUNNER: That is for the first seven months of this financial year?

Mr GILES: 000 was 94 451. That is only police. There is data here on all this stuff, but I can tell you - and the Police Commissioner will add to this. Here we are, that is the one I want.

This is some of that subjectivity. The issue around phone calls coming into the call centre has changed dramatically over the last few years with the advent of mobile phones. In the last three years there has been a 53.5% increase in phone calls for 131444 and 000 ...

Mr GUNNER: I have that here as part of the information I had explaining the data from 2010-11 to 2011-12.

Mr GILES: Here is a graph from January 2011 to May 2013. I am not sure why there is an anomaly there, but that is the trend of calls going up.

Sorry, member for Nelson, you probably did not see that. As well ...

Mr WOOD: Very nice.

Mr GILES: It sends a message. More and more people have mobile phones. They get 10 phone calls an incident rather than three phone calls an incident.

Also, many people ring up and ask how to cook a turkey on Thanksgiving Day as well. Calls are going through the roof - a 54% increase in the last three years. That is why we have to keep putting JESCC staff on. With a call centre in Alice Springs your numbers would keep blowing out because everyone has a phone.

Mr GUNNER: We are not having a call centre in Alice Springs?

Mr GILES: No, no, but ...

Mr WOOD: That was the best promise not kept.

Mr GUNNER: I believe the Alice Springs people liked it.

Mr WOOD: It is always politics that decision, year in year out.

Mr McCARTHY: Chief Minister; that also reflects a significant increase in staffing an incident as well - the mobile phone. It is an amazing thing we have witnessed in regional towns - how easy it is to start an incident using mobile technology.

Mr GILES: I agree with you, but it does not have to be in a remote town to happen. It can be in a playground in Darwin. There are 1000 calls a day.

Mr GUNNER: What proportion of calls will be answered within 10 seconds?

Mr GILES: I have that here somewhere. I can find that. I do not know if 10 seconds is the ...

Mr GUNNER: Answered in 10 seconds and responded to within 10 minutes are the two measures.

Mr GILES: No, it is one minute thirteen seconds, off the top of my head.

Mr GUNNER: In 2011-12, 82% was responded to within 10 seconds.

Mr GILES: It will not be as good because calls are going through the roof. I will find the brief. I will have to guess this number.

Mr GUNNER: Do you want to take it on notice?

Mr GILES: No, I can give you an approximate. I have it on a graph. Approximately 66% of 000 calls are answered within 10 seconds.

Mr GUNNER: How many are responded to within 10 minutes?

Mr GILES: We will take it on notice.

Question on Notice No 3.16

Madam CHAIR: Member for Fannie Bay could you please restate the question?

Mr GUNNER: For 2012-13, what percentage of 000 calls were responded to within 10 minutes - a Territory-wide percentage and a Darwin-wide percentage - and what was the average response time?

Madam CHAIR: Minister, do you accept the question?

Mr GILES: I am happy to accept that.

Madam CHAIR: For the benefit of *Hansard*, that question will be 3.16.

Mr GUNNER: Do you have an average response time for 000 calls?

Mr GILES: We take it on notice. We will wait until we have an answer because that way it will all be together for you.

Mr GUNNER: Do you want me to add it into that question? What was the average response time?

Madam CHAIR: We have added that to the question.

Mr GUNNER: That is me for 8.1.

Mr WOOD: I have the annual report and will refer to it. Page 136 of the annual report for 2011-2012 says, under the NT offender profile, there were 530 people between the age of 10 and 14, and 1239 people between the age of 15 and 17 compared to the previous year. When I say offences, they were committing offences. Compared to the previous year, there were 272 people between the age of 10 and 14, and 773 people between the age of 15 and 17. Does the Chief Minister regard this as an alarming statistic? What is the government doing, as part of an early intervention policy, to reduce the number of young people getting caught up in criminal activities?

That is a huge increase from one year to the next. I do not know whether you have a trend for this year. When you see 530 between 10 and 14, and 1239 between 15 and 27, it is an alarming figure.

Mr GILES: It is significantly alarming. This is for the 2011-12 financial year, before we came into government. Not passing the buck, but it has been a growing issue for years. You can look at the growing issues across a range of outcome areas. Child Protection is a good one to start at; that is reflective. It has similar cross-pollination elements to that data you are talking about. There needs to be a range of strategies to address it. We have many diversionary programs, early intervention programs, assisting families with issues around ensuring proper parenting responsibilities are taking place. A range of things need to happen, Gerry, and it is a whole-of-government approach.

We were talking about Tennant Creek before and some of the concerns I have about Tennant Creek. I have recently asked the Chief Minister's department to immediately work to set up a Chief Minister's Office there to start providing some whole-of-government advice and whole-of-government ideas on solutions to some of the problems. I am working with the local community so we have a senior person there to try to provide some of the answers. Many kids are on the street in Tennant Creek at night causing big trouble, and we have to get some good responses, so I have asked them to do that.

The answer to your question about this is, yes, it is alarming and there needs to be a whole-of-government response. There needs to be fundamental reform across a range of areas. There are no statistics on the previous government's annual report, but I bet you will find the latest numbers are coming from outside the greater Darwin area.

Mr WOOD: I will put my political hat on and am not ashamed to do so. Chief Minister, this age group of 10 to 17 is mainly schoolchildren. I will bring this to, for me, a very local school. With the reduction of teachers at secondary schools, is this not a retrograde step considering schools like Taminmin College will possibly lose some of those involved in behavioural management, which could be seen as early intervention? Will your government reconsider the change to teacher ratios for secondary schools?

Mr GILES: No, we will not. The previous government signed up to a teacher ratio of 27:1. We do not reach that 27:1 ratio. We have reduced the ratio for early childhood education because we understand the importance of early childhood education ...

Mr WOOD: Those teachers ...

Mr GILES: Hang on ...

Mr WOOD: ... they will not go down there.

Mr GILES: ... you asked a question.

Mr GUNNER: How many teachers? What did I miss?

Mr GILES: We are not. Madam Chair will pull it up in a second, but I will answer the question.

The other issue the education union signed up to was productivity rates of teachers in classrooms. It should be 80% of their time in classes; currently, it is only around 60%. While we have not made any changes there we will try to work out ways - the Minister for Education is doing this - to get greater teacher involvement in the classroom. Changing the ratios will help that a bit. These are two things agreed to by the previous Labor government; we have just put one of them into action.

The more opportunities you have for teachers to engage with students, the more opportunities you have to make change in this area. However, much of it comes back to parental responsibility. Many of the issues we have in the Northern Territory are about parental responsibility, not teacher responsibility.

Mr WOOD: I am not denying that, but that is the problem. The teachers at this particular school - and I cannot speak for others - are taking on some of the roles of parents because this school has moved from ...

Mr GILES: That is a real challenge, member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: ... a school that once had sniffer dogs. It has pulled itself up by its boot straps, become a college, taken on many courses - VET courses for kids who do not want to go to school. I have met them; they do not like school, so they are doing VET courses.

The government makes a policy, and that is its right; however, I do not believe it has had enough time to look at the implications that policy will create school by school. I have discussed it with the school council and the teachers in the union and they all say this decision will be a retrograde one for this school.

Here you have to put money into early intervention otherwise these figures will only get worse.

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, I hear what you are saying and understand and appreciate it. If you can find ways where we can save money in other areas, or if you want to cut some things let me know where you think they could be cut ...

Mr WOOD: My argument is spend the money on early intervention and less money on prisons. It is a proven fact.

Madam CHAIR: We cannot spend less money on the prison.

Mr WOOD: You can save money by having less people in the prison, and that is a proven fact. Early intervention and better parenting. You cut NAPCAN funding, a body that has been in the Territory for years and years.

Mr GILES: Unfortunately, member for Nelson, we are signed up to a deal that will cost us a stack of money for the prison. The situation is - member for Nelson, find where you want to cut some money and we can look at it for you.

Mr WOOD: I think you could afford the \$7m you are saving.

Madam CHAIR: If we were not paying for the container deposit scheme perhaps, or AMS.

Mr McCARTHY: You could have saved \$5m on the Palmerston hospital study. I think it was \$9m in our budget reply speeches, Chief Minister, with a conservative brainstorm. There was about \$9m in savings if you scrap the report to find out where you will put a hospital - it was big dollars.

Mr WOOD: The base of my question is if there is no early intervention these figures would be worse.

Mr GUNNER: It is a great philosophical point, but ...

Mr WOOD: It is not even a philosophical point; the stats are showing this will ...

Madam CHAIR: That concludes consideration of Output 8.1. Let us have a 10-minute break.

Mr WOOD: I am leaving at 1.30 am. We have public servants here - this is crazy.

Mr GILES: I am keen to keep going right through. I want to get rid of all of mine tonight.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, you are able to leave.

Mr WOOD: This is not fair. I did not set this committee up to run all night, that is ridiculous. After 1.30 am - the committee should have a meeting about this. This is crazy; people will think we are nuts.

The committee suspended

Madam CHAIR: For the benefit of *Hansard*, there has been one change to the composition of the committee. Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu, member for Arafura, has been replaced by Larisa Lee, member for Arnhem.

Output Group 8.2 - Investigations

Mr GUNNER: We are at Output 8.2, Investigations. Police minister, I only have one question.

Mr GILES: Yes.

Mr GUNNER: This morning, as you would be aware, the Electoral Commissioner advised that police were investigating the Merrepen and Wadeye allegations of electoral misconduct. I want to confirm that is happening. The Electoral Commissioner advised it is being referred to a police investigation.

Mr GILES: I will ask the Police Commissioner to reply.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you. We are currently in discussions with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions on that matter.

Mr GUNNER: Okay, thank you.

Mr WOOD: My question is in relation to the Jawoyn Association. I will not comment on the issues currently before ORIC. I received a complaint from one of the staff who said they had attempted to provide a statutory declaration to Katherine police informing them they believe there has been fraudulent behaviour. Originally, the police did not want to take that statutory declaration. Eventually police took the statutory declaration, but it appears no action has been taken regarding it.

If someone went to the police with a statutory declaration claiming there was fraud in a particular association, what would the normal process be for the police? Would they normally investigate that matter or do they have the right to say, 'No, we are not going to deal with that matter'?

Mr GILES: Sorry. I was waiting for the Police Commissioner to answer. I thought I had already asked the Police Commissioner to answer.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Member for Nelson, firstly consideration needs to be made as to what the statutory declaration is and whether it falls within the remit of the Northern Territory Police to investigate. Delivering a statutory declaration may not necessarily be a complaint, because one could deliver a statutory declaration on behalf of a third party.

I do not have specific knowledge of the matter you refer to and, rather than answer specifics, perhaps you could allow me or the minister to take that question on notice and we will get some more information.

If you are simply asking about the process, then it may be, for example, a case where we would suggest to the person presenting the statutory declaration another statutory authority may better deal with that matter, or we may investigate the complaint.

Mr WOOD: Is there a fraud squad within the police?

Commissioner McROBERTS: Yes.

Mr WOOD: How many staff does it have?

Commissioner McROBERTS: We will get that for you.

Mr WOOD: To clarify, I ask that in case someone thought they were overloaded with work and could not deal with this issue.

This person is saying there was a case in New South Wales - the argument is it has been looked at by a Commonwealth body therefore, 'We will not look at it', as you said, Commissioner. This person is saying in New South Wales an Aboriginal association was investigated by the police and people were charged with fraud and it could go through the courts. Why, even if there is a Commonwealth body investigating it, would the police not conduct an investigation as well?

Madam CHAIR: Member for Nelson, can you just restate that.

Mr WOOD: I will just get the figures about the number of people in the fraud squad.

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, there are five people in the Major Fraud Squad.

Mr WOOD: It is not a huge department.

Minister, there was a complaint via a statutory declaration to the Katherine police in regard to fraudulent behaviour within the Jawoyn Association. That person has said the police did not take the investigation any further. Could the police say why that investigation did not go any further? I have some details but not all.

Mr GILES: We will not take the question for matters of confidentiality.

Mr WOOD: What is the confidentiality bit? I was asked to raise the question.

Mr GILES: Member for Nelson, Madam Chair, a range of different investigations could be undertaken at any point in time, including, potentially, investigations referred to us by other agencies. Because of the content and nature of the way those investigations are requested and acted upon or approached, it is probably not best for us to provide an answer to that question.

Mr WOOD: Could I then advise the person to write to the Police Commissioner with the details to get the answer themselves?

Mr GILES: Okay.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on Output 8.2? Sorry, are you part way through an answer?

Mr GILES: It is probably an opportune time for someone to ask me about proposed liquor breaches in certain establishments in Alice Springs.

Mr GUNNER: That is a good point, Police minister.

Mr GILES: I can answer the question.

Mr GUNNER: I will put the question. Chief Minister, on *Lateline* last week you advised that three Aboriginal organisations in Alice Springs have breached alcohol licensing requirements. The licensing minister this morning advised that after hearing of those alleged breaches his investigators, the licensing inspectors, have found no breaches. What breaches are you aware of, and why was the licensing minister not aware of them this morning?

Mr GILES: Thank you for your question, member for Fannie Bay. I can advise that on 22 March 2013 police officers from the Alice Springs Public Order Unit attended an IGA for a licensed premise patrol. On attendance, they observed a male they had seen earlier consuming alcohol at another licensed premise walk into the IGA shop and emerge with two bottles of wine. Officers continued to observe that the male appeared unsteady on his feet, and they formed the opinion that he was intoxicated. The male consented to a breath test and returned a reading of 0.181. Police investigations identified the sales person, who was summoned for selling liquor to an intoxicated person contrary to section 102 of the *Liquor Act*.

I will ask the Police Commissioner to provide further detail to that. The Liquor Commission has been advised of the breach and police are seeking determination as to whether the licensee should have been prosecuted for the actions of the employee under section 123A of the *Liquor Act*.

On 25 March 2013 police officers from the Alice Springs Public Order Unit attended an IGA for a licensed premises patrol. They observed a male, who appeared unsteady on his feet, walk from the supermarket carrying a 30-pack carton of full strength beer. Officers spoke with the male and formed the opinion that he was intoxicated. The male told police he had just shared another 30-pack carton of beer with family prior to attending and purchasing the new carton. The male submitted to a breath test and returned a 0.234 blood alcohol reading. A police investigation at the point of sale confirmed the offence of selling liquor to an intoxicated person subject to section 102 of the *Liquor Act*.

I will ask the Police Commissioner to provide an update on that as well. I can confirm the Liquor Commission was notified of this breach and the pending prosecution.

On 4 May 2013 police officers responded to a report of a stabbing in the vicinity of an IGA supermarket. During the investigation, officers identified the offender had purchased liquor on a number of occasions at the Flynn Drive Supermarket. On review of the CCTV footage, the offender was seen at the liquor department on seven separate occasions. The offender was refused service on one occasion; however, returned shortly after and purchased more liquor from the same person who had previously refused service. On reception at the Alice Springs watch house, a breath test was conducted which returned a 0.262 blood alcohol reading. A prosecution file for breach of the *Liquor Act* for 'sell liquor to an intoxicated person contrary to section 102' was submitted.

I will provide additional information here. There were six breaches between the period 21 March to 4 May, three of which occurred at those supermarkets I identified. Northern Territory Police intended to prosecute these matters and advised Licensing, on 24 April, of five of the matters and that the prosecution was being processed.

On 3 May 2013 Tony O'Donohue of Licensing wrote to police asking if the matters were to be referred to them for action under section 68 of the *Liquor Act*. On 8 May 2013, an officer from Prosecutions provided e-mail advice on how proceedings should be made. On 20 May 2013, an officer from within the Department of Business in Licensing provided advice on the matter.

A decision was made to withdraw the matters from court and refer them all to the Licensing Commission. Three matters were ...

Mr GUNNER: What date was that?

Mr GILES: I do not have the date on the referral. The Police Commissioner might be able to answer that.

Three matters were not initially prosecuted by police. They were referred as new matters to Licensing. The matters were withdrawn on 22 May, 30 May, and 5 June for referral to Licensing. Licensing was aware of the matters as it responded to a media query from ABC on 30 May 2013. NT Police has collated files and delivered them with a letter of referral to Licensing today.

Police Commissioner, perhaps you could ...

Mr GUNNER: Licensing got the files today?

Mr GILES: They got the files today.

Mr GUNNER: Was that after the Licensing minister said he was not aware of the breaches?

Mr GILES: I am not sure of the level of advice the Licensing minister was in receipt of.

Mr GUNNER: There seems to have been a breakdown of communication at the Licensing end.

Mr GILES: There does seem to be a breakdown, but the Police Commissioner can provide more information on the breaches, without going into intricate details- how we were going to court then advised to go to the Licensing Commission to make a determination on those breaches.

Mr GUNNER: When were the outlets advised?

Mr GILES: I will let the Police Commissioner provide that detail.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you, Chief Minister. I can start by saying I applaud the police officers in Alice Springs for the diligent way they are going about policing the problem and hoping to change people's behaviour. They were very enthusiastic in bringing the prosecutions because, at the time, they believed that was the most appropriate forum to deal with these matters.

Subsequent to some of the prosecutions being brought, there was some discussion between police and Licensing Commission officers at a local level. It was felt the most appropriate forum was, in fact, the Licensing Commission. That was as far back as 3 May.

Because some matters were already before the courts there needed to be a process of formally withdrawing those charges. Rather than attempt to do that all at once, it was decided we would wait for the matters to come to court on the dates scheduled and that, in fact, occurred.

Once the matters had been withdrawn, all files were presented to the commander in Alice Springs for good governance to ensure the matters had been appropriately withdrawn. The commander has now forwarded all the files with a covering letter to the Licensing Commission to pursue the alleged breaches of the *Liquor Act*.

Mr GUNNER: Transfer of files from the commander to the Licensing Commission happened today?

Commissioner McROBERTS: It happened today. Whilst one may question the delay, it was not until 5 June that the last matter was withdrawn from court. There then needs to be a good governance process around prosecutions that are withdrawn, for good reason. It is a corruption prevention mechanism and one by which we can be satisfied charges are appropriately withdrawn. The commander did that in a most thorough way - was satisfied the briefs of evidence were sufficient for the Licensing Commission to receive rather than, perhaps, receive them then ask us to do additional work. The matters had to be well prepared and, member for Fannie Bay, they have now been delivered to the Licensing Commission and they will act on the evidence we have prepared.

Mr GILES: I hope that provides some clarity to the matter.

Mr GUNNER: Some clarity. If they had broken the law, why would the police not proceed to prosecute?

Mr GILES: Member for Fannie Bay, there are different penalty provisions and options through the Licensing Commission than would be obtainable through the court process ...

Mr GUNNER: The police have it, they were going to prosecution, and then decided not to prosecute. I believe that is the question most people would ask. Police have the files and are going through a court process, laws have apparently been broken, they are about to be prosecuted and then they are not.

Mr GILES: My understanding is, and I am happy to seek clarification if incorrect - Police Commissioner, the measures the court could impose are financial, where the Licensing Commission can impose sanctions on a licence. That is the difference and why the decision was made to go to the Licensing Commission because, particularly in the area of breaches, sanctions are often seen as a better tool to use.

Mr GUNNER: Does going to court prevent the Licensing Commission from issuing the sanctions? Going through the court process and being financially punished would prevent the other option being pursued through the Licensing Commission?

Mr GILES: That is correct, otherwise it is double jeopardy. That is why the advice was received to say it would be better going through the Licensing Commission because you then have the opportunity to apply penalties.

Mr GUNNER: It sounds more serious to the casual observer - obviously not the Police Commissioner or the DPP - to go through the courts. It sounds as if it would be a more serious charge and a more serious thing if the takeaway outlet was prosecuted by police in the courts.

Mr GILES: There is a range of breaching provisions the Licensing Commission can provide. I will not go through all of them, but they include things like suspending licenses and trade and so forth.

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate some advice, but it sounds like it would be a more serious charge to be taken through the court system as opposed to a possible sanction through the Liquor Commission.

Mr GILES: I can understand how you might say that, but I believe sanctions on licenses are often seen as significant penalties.

Mr GUNNER: Was that a decision? It sounds like part of the discussion between police and the Licensing Commission was, 'If we go down this path we might get this result. If we go down this path we might get another result.' What were the two results ...

Mr GILES: I believe that will have to come out as deliberations from what happens with the Licensing Commission. You cannot really pre-empt what the court may or may not have done.

Mr GUNNER: That discussion has happened between the police and the Licensing Commission in order to make this decision about the court case being dropped ...

Mr GILES: I do not believe they have determined what the penalty will be because ...

Mr GUNNER: They weighed up what the potential penalties were ...

Mr GILES: ... but there will be discussion about the most appropriate way to prosecute this matter, whether it is through the courts or through the Licensing Commission. A determination was made that the Licensing Commission process ...

Mr GUNNER: Based on the penalties. The question is: what were the penalties? A decision was made that a possible sanction was more appropriate than a possible financial penalty? What were the two ...

Mr GILES: The Licensing Commission has a range of options it can use. I understand it is not as significant as you ...

Madam CHAIR: Provided it is not legal opinion.

Mr WOOD: Madam Chair, I am leaving. We are well past commonsense time. We have a number of public servants working at 1.30 am. I do not care if somebody made a decision about going on forever. I need some sleep and believe common sense should prevail. I am not sure what the rest of the Estimates Committee wants to do, but I am going home. I have many questions to ask the minister, but doing it at 1.30 am - I am not an owl; I want to go to bed. I have to be back here by 8.30 am. Good night.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, member for Nelson. Drive safe.

Mr WOOD: I will try at this time of night.

Mr GUNNER: That information was coming.

Mr GILES: I will give it to you tomorrow morning. When we find the answer I will give it to you. They were my questions. I cannot ask more until I know what that difference was between the ...

Mr McCARTHY: Chief Minister, I would like to ask a question in relation to that matter. Does the prosecution focus on the person who sold the alcohol, whereas the Licensing Commission matter will deal with the retailer? Is that how it works?

Mr GILES: I will take some advice from the Police Commissioner, and ask the Police Commissioner to respond.

Commissioner McROBERTS: Thank you, Chief Minister. That is typically the case, member for Barkly. The Licensing Commission has the capacity to focus more on the licensee, or the establishment and the licensing conditions around that, whereas a breach of the *Liquor Act* by an employee who might be acting quite opposite to what the employer requires him or her to do could more easily and appropriately be dealt with in the court.

Mr McCARTHY: In response to that it is a matter of, in a real world situation, a backpacker facing a \$10 000 fine as opposed to the retailer having their licence suspended for one day. You really need to look into that, Chief Minister.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on Output 8.2. This concludes consideration of Output 8.2.

Output 8.3 - Services to the Judicial Process

Madam CHAIR: I call for question on Output 8.3, Services to the Judicial Process

Mr GUNNER: I am happy to skip to Output 9. I have questions, but I am happy to skip to Output 9.

Madam CHAIR: Okay, there will be no consideration of Output 8.3.

OUTPUT GROUP 9.0 – ROAD SAFETY SERVICES

Output 9.1 – Road Safety Services

Madam CHAIR: We will now proceed to Output Group 9.0, Road Safety Services, Output 9.1, Road Safety Services. Are there any questions?

Mr GUNNER: The Road Policing Policy Unit provides advice on road safety legislation policy and procedure for road safety management and best practice road policing strategies. What input has Northern Territory police had to date into the government's deliberations regarding the introduction of open speed limits?

Mr GILES: You are probably best to have the Police Commissioner answer that question himself. Have you anything to add in that regard Police Commissioner? No, there has been no contribution to that at this point in time.

Mr GUNNER: Police have not yet been asked to make a submission to the review of open speed limits?

Mr GILES: No. The review has been undertaken based on crash data and structural integrity of the road.

Mr GUNNER: Will the Road Policing Policy Unit, which has that expert capacity, be asked to provide advice?

Mr GILES: There will be a point in time during a Cabinet process where I anticipate discussion will take place.

Mr GUNNER: Does it not make it hard to make a decision around this if you do not go to the police who have a whole unit of expertise around this issue?

Mr GILES: We have utilised all road crash data that comes through police by some mechanism.

Mr GUNNER: That is data. The police have a unit which provides advice on road safety legislation, policy and procedure for road safety management and best practice road policing strategies. We are not using them in discussing this?

Mr GILES: I anticipate there will be discussion with that unit at some point in time.

Mr GUNNER: I find that interesting, Police minister. I would say you should use the NT Police and their expertise.

Mr GILES: Discussions are undertaken with a number of police in the police service about a range of measures relating to speed limits and otherwise, not particularly with this branch.

Mr GUNNER: It seems quite extraordinary, but okay.

Madam CHAIR: Are there any other questions on 9.1?

Mr GUNNER: I am finished. I am conscious of the time.

Madam CHAIR: If there are no other questions we will conclude Output group 10.0 and 11.0 as well.

This now concludes consideration of all output groups relating to the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank officers from Police, Fire and Emergency Services who provided advice to the Chief Minister today. Thank you very much.

Mr GILES: I thank Rose Hallett, Audrey Ko and Police Commissioner John McRoberts for their time this afternoon and for being prepared to answer questions and provide additional information through written questions taken on notice. I also thank the personnel and staff working behind the scenes to ensure we have the appropriate answers and information to provide the services required at this estimates hearing.

Madam CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mr GUNNER: I echo that appreciation to all department staff, not just the ones here, but the ones behind the scenes doing the work.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, if we can take three-and-a-half minutes, I will just grab the staff.

Madam CHAIR: Yes, we will have a five-minute break for transition. Thank you very much and goodnight. After the five minute break the committee will move to consider outputs related to the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Chair, I listened to the argument of the member for Nelson and I agree. I do not think it is proper to have public servants in the Transport portfolio waiting around at this time of night. It is inappropriate for this committee and reflects on the changes made to this committee. It really is inoperable. I feel sorry for the member for Nelson. I am quite concerned about him driving home to Howard Springs at this hour. I am quite happy to come back tomorrow at 8.30 am. I will be here at 8.30 am on the dot. I would like to continue with the questions I have prepared for weeks now, and to be in some way reunited with the Department of Transport to hear that Territory story. I am not prepared to continue now; I would like this to be continued tomorrow at 8.30 am.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, member for Barkly. We have a quorum. It is operating within the rules to continue. Minister, you have indicated you would like to continue.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, I was under the impression that under the new rules we were to go to exhaustion. I was aware I was to be on the indicative agenda from 8.30 am until 6.30 pm afternoon. I have a range of high-level appointments I have to conduct tomorrow and, for me, coming back at 8.30 am would not be feasible. I am happy to continue tonight.

Madam CHAIR: Member for Barkly, if we cease the questioning tonight you will miss the opportunity to question the minister.

Mr McCARTHY: Yes, I find that unfortunate, Madam Chair. I believe it reflects on this ridiculous arrangement around estimates. It denies Territorians being able to be effectively informed with the

opposition's questions, which demonstrate the voice of the people. It is unfortunate, but I agree with the member for Nelson, and I will not be able to participate.

Mr GILES: Can I make a suggestion, member for Barkly? If you are unable to participate, perhaps you could table your questions and we can answer them through written questions.

Mr McCARTHY: I will consult with Caucus about that. It really is important to have that conversation. Minister, I was really looking forward to it. I agree with the member for Nelson and do not think it is a sensible situation. I have to drive as well; thank God it is not to Tennant Creek.

Mr GILES: It would be a long drive to Tennant Creek.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you for your offer, I will confer with Caucus. Thank you, minister.

The committee suspended

DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Madam CHAIR: I now invite you, Chief Minister, to introduce the officials accompanying you and to make an opening statement regarding the Department of Corporate and Information Services if you wish.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Chair. I welcome to the table Ms Kathleen Robinson, the department's Chief Executive.

The Department of Corporate and Information Services, or DCIS as it is known and I will refer to, is the NT government's shared services provider. DCIS provides corporate services to agencies so they can focus on their core business, and supports those agencies in delivering frontline services to the public such as health, education and policing. Telecommunications and broadcasting policy, including monitoring the Australian government's policies and actions for the National Broadband Network and the digital television switchover also sits within this portfolio.

DCIS has responsibility for three government business divisions: NT Fleet, Data Service Centres and the Government Printing Office. The three GBDs provide fleet management and printing and information technology services to government.

The formation of DCIS in 1988 as a shared corporate services provider was an initiative of the former CLP government. Combining corporate services into one agency enabled centralised transaction processing that has provided savings to government over the years since 1988. DCIS has implemented, and continues to implement, a number of initiatives that are not only producing significant savings to government, but also providing benefits to the broader NT community.

In April this year, I announced a joint initiative with Telstra to provide improved telecommunication services to 13 remote communities across the NT, bringing 3G mobile phone services to eight communities and ADSL2+ broadband to six communities. I know many of my parliamentary colleagues in the bush, including the members for Arnhem and Stuart, are very happy with the outcome of this initiative. The NT government is contributing \$2.8m towards the development of this vital infrastructure.

Maintaining strong and active lobbying with the Australian government to get a better deal for Territorians, particularly Territorians living in remote areas, from the National Broadband Network - it has even been necessary to lobby the federal government and NBN Co for a commonsense decision on the NBN service to the new suburb of Kilgariff in Alice Springs, the Territory's second largest urban centre.

Encouraging tenderers to tender online by improving and modernising the government's quotation tender online system: over 80% of tenders are now being lodged electronically, providing real savings and benefits to both the business community and the NTG. This will enable the old tender boxes to close in 2013, and will make the rush to drive into the DCIS offices before a tender deadline a thing of the past.

Releasing a smartphone application for government procurement, the first jurisdiction to do so; issuing the new Northern Territory government vehicle policy framework that not only improves the efficiency of the vehicle fleet, but delivers significant and ongoing savings of \$7.9m per annum through extending the working life of vehicles, choosing lower cost vehicles and removing the previously costly green incentives.

I acknowledge sometimes you have to spend money to save money and, in recognising this, an Across Government Contracts Unit was established in DCIS as part of the mini-budget initiatives. Centralised contracts provide savings through economies of scale and reduced administrative costs in agencies. The government already has nine across government contracts and is looking to expand this number to 14 contracts during 2013-14 and over 20 contracts in total. Work is under way on seven new contract categories. Once all contracts have been implemented, agency-wide savings of at least \$7.5m over the three-year contract terms will be produced.

Another initiative is a payroll automated improvement program. DCIS pays around 20 000 employees each fortnight and processes over 1.1 million pay transactions annually. Automating the process of payroll transactions will reduce the manual effort to pay staff and increase accuracy and timeliness. This program will strengthen the resilience of systems and payroll processes to reduce service costs.

A major expense item in the DCIS budget is the cost of rental payments for commercial property leases. Rents in the commercial property market have been increasing and this trend is expected to continue in 2013-14. As the biggest lessee of commercial property in the Northern Territory, the government's lease portfolio is experiencing cost increases that have been factored into the DCIS budget. The DCIS budget increases by \$5.8m from 2012-13 to 2013-14, primarily due to the property lease cost increases of \$3.8m and the payroll automation program of \$2.5m, with reductions elsewhere in the agency.

After the past year DCIS has managed its activities effectively and within budget. I expect this to continue in 2013. I look forward to the committee's questions, but before I do would like to say it has been an absolute pleasure working with DCIS, particularly with Kathleen and her executive staff. The outcomes achieved to date have been quite refreshing and exciting, particularly with the initiatives around Telstra and the broadband and mobile phone opportunities. I look forward to further streamlining and improving the tender process and the payroll system.

I now look forward to taking questions from the floor of this committee hearing. I am quite prepared to go through some of the written questions and their answers.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. Are there any questions relating to the statement?

The committee will now consider the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2013-14 as they relate to the Department of Corporate and Information Services.

Agency Related Whole-of-Government Questions on Budget and Fiscal Strategies

Madam CHAIR: Are there any agency related whole-of-government questions on budget and fiscal strategies?

Mr GILES: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In question 1 there is no answer. In question 2, no election commitments recorded for the Department of Corporate and Information Services relate to this area.

Question 3:

Progress on all commitments and policy announcements made within government press releases and media statements made since 26 August 2012.

There have been some announcements that – they are all published in the mini-budget so there is nothing new to add.

For question 4, the answers were provided in question 3

For question 5, the answers were provided in question 3.

For question 6, the answers were provided in question 3.

Question 8:

Details on staff movements and all costs resulting from all Administrative Arrangements changes since 26 August 2012.

The Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment has advised he will provide a response in relation to staff movements.

Question 10:

Details and costs on all government advertising and communications since 26 August 2012.

Advertising and marketing costs totalled \$13 203.65; NTG tender advertising costs - \$134 803.87; DCIS recruitment advertising costs totalled \$41 364.12.

Question 15:

Details on all government tenders, contracts and grants awarded and granted since 26 August 2012, including whether the recipient is a member of the Country Liberal Party. This includes full location details for companies and organisations.

I can advise that all information about tenders can be reviewed online. No tenders, grants or contracts are awarded to any individual person or organisation or otherwise based on their political affiliation. This is somewhat completely different to the Labor practice, where Labor seemed to do this on a regular basis.

Question 19:

Full details, costs and invitation lists for all public service hospitality provided since 26 August 2012.

DCIS, including the government business divisions of NT Fleet, data centres, and Government Printing Office have nil costs in hospitality.

Question 20 is in relation to interstate and international public service travel and hospitality. No overseas travel was undertaken. The cost of interstate travel for the period 26 August 2012 to 31 March 2013 was \$14 846.41. All travel is economy class. Nil hospitality expenditure was incurred.

Question 22:

Details on policy items, strategies, actual, estimates, budgets, forecasts, agency outputs and funding decisions contained within the May 2013 budget.

Details can be found in 2013-2014 Budget Paper No 3.

The same answer is to be provided for question 23. Refer to Budget Paper No 3.

In relation to question 24:

Full details including impact statements and implementation plans on all agency savings identified within the December 2012 mini-budget and the May 2013 budget.

Refer to question 3.

Question regarding implementation plans about specific saving items identified in the December 2012 mini-budget and May 2013 budget can be addressed through the estimates process. I am happy to take questions on those tonight.

In relation to question 26, details can be found in Budget Paper No 4 in relation to the capital works expenditure.

Question 27:

Full details of all revenue measures including new taxes and tax increases including levies and charges. Details to include risk impact statements, community and industry consultation plans, economic modelling and revenue projections.

Details include risk impact statements, community and industry consultation plans, economic modelling and revenue projections. DCIS increased one fee to recover expenses for the managing of salary packaging; that is, novated leases. The fee has been increased to cover administrative costs for processing a novated

lease by \$2 per fortnight to \$10 per fortnight per novated lease, which is comparable to charges in other states and private companies.

Salary packaging of novated leases for private cars is an administratively intense task. The previous fee payable by the employee of \$208 per annum had not been varied since 2004. The department administers over 1100 novated leased salary package arrangements for NTG employees. The increase in fees will result in approximately \$60 000 in additional revenue.

Question 28:

Full details on the operational impacts across all government entities as a result of all government decision and policies.

That is a silly question. I will be happy to take questions on the floor of this committee in that regard.

Question 29:

Full detail on the operational impacts across non-government agencies as a result of the government's savings measures.

Specific questions will be answered through the estimates process.

Question 31:

Full details on the impacts across all government entities as a result of all increases in government and government corporation charges, prices and tariffs since 26 August 2012.

I will be happy to take questions on these matters on the floor of the estimates hearing tonight.

This is a very quick process – estimates - is it not?

Question 32:

Full details of all information and data contained within the two most recent reports on government services.

The ROG for 2012-13 are publicly available documents. The reports do not contain information in relation to services provided by DCIS.

Question 33:

Full details and all information and data contained within all annual reports produced by all government entities across the last two financial years.

Reports are publicly available; specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process. I am happy to take questions in that regard.

Question 34:

Full details on all information and data contained within any report ...

That question too broad and would take too much time to answer. It is the same as question 35, and I am happy to take questions on the floor for that, including question 36, which asks for full details and information to audit data forecast contained within a myriad of reports and forms.

Question 37:

Full details and all information and data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics ...

I encourage those wanting to ask questions to see the ABS website.

Question 38:

Details on all reports and data published on Northern Territory government websites.

Data requested is too broad in scope and too expensive to correlate. Specific questions will be addressed through the estimates hearing process.

Madam Speaker, that is the end of my written questions. I am happy to take questions from the committee on whole-of-government areas or output group areas.

It is very clear that the absence of opposition members and the Independent, who were willing to participate in long drawn out processes throughout the day - which had agreement of the PAC to have an open-ended process where questions went to exhaustion.

Quite clearly, the government is here to take the questions but others are not. While there may be some complaint that we are working late at night, that is what politicians do. We do not knock off when the going gets tough, but ...

Madam CHAIR: Chief Minister, if you do not mind before we move on to taking questions, we have a five-minute break? Would that be all right with you?

Mr GILES: Yes.

The committee suspended

OUTPUT GROUP 12.0 – SHARES SERVICES
Output 12.1 – Finance Services

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, before we move to the output group may I make a short statement and seek your support in something?

Madam CHAIR: If there are no objections, yes.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, given the debacle of the situation where the opposition and the Independent no longer sit around the committee, in the interest of openness, fairness, and transparency and the ability for this estimates process to continue, we need an alternate approach to the rest of estimates for tonight.

The estimates process where PAC, as I understand it, agreed to complete exhaustion of all output groups without a time limit on all portfolio areas seemed to have caught the opposition and Independent napping a bit. Now they have gone home. That does not provide the greatest level of accountability or transparency for Territorians. Even though we are government, we want to be open and transparent. I suggest while the opposition was keen to ask trivial questions and push this as long as they could keep public servants, particularly through my portfolio areas, at the beck and call waiting on Tuesday afternoon and night, all day today and all night, we now have to wonder what is going to happen. There needs to be an apology by those members of the PAC to those invited guests, and there needs to be an alternate approach to how we proceed forward.

I propose we reconvene at 8.30 am tomorrow and allow 45 minutes for each of my other portfolio areas, including the remainder of DCIS which will be at the output areas remaining, 45 minutes for the Transport portfolio, 15 minutes for the Darwin Port and 15 minutes for Asian Engagement and Trade, which would provide a two-hour time frame for the remainder of questions in these portfolio areas to be completed. That would mean by 10:30 am tomorrow, including a five-minute break at 09:30 am, all my portfolio areas would be completed. That would provide an opportunity for the tiresome opposition and Independent member to ask questions they consider a priority and would allow for accountability and transparency.

However, the opposition agreed with this process. They proceeded with trivial questions and argumentative dialogue throughout the whole time I have been here. From what I witnessed of the previous minister, the Treasurer of the Northern Territory and the Deputy Chief Minister's questions, with better allocation of time by the questioners we would not be in the position where we sit here as a government, willing to keep governing in a clear and coherent manner, and they are not present. I seek your advice on that.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you, Chief Minister. As you would be aware with the resolution, the committee gave indicative times to ministers and, if ministers went over to the next day, it would be at the minister's consent. You have indicated you are happy to come back tomorrow.

Mr GILES: Madam Chair, the indicative times I had were from 08:30 am until 6:30 pm.

Madam CHAIR: I understand that.

Mr GILES: We are here at 2:12 am keen to keep going, as per the rules set by PAC, including the opposition and Independent. They are not here, and I am willing to make some form of allowance in that regard.

Madam CHAIR: Thank you. Unless there is some opposition to that proposal we thank you and your staff. May I confirm, Chief Minister, 45 minutes tomorrow for DCIS, 45 minutes for Transport, 15 minutes for Darwin Port, and 15 for Asian Engagement?

Mr GILES: Let us make it 40 for DCIS, which allows a five minute break at 09:30 am. We will finish on the dot at 10:30 am and move to the next minister.

Madam CHAIR: No problem. Thank you, Chief Minister, and thank you to the staff who were prepared and ready. We will see you at 8:30 am. Thank you very much.

Mr GILES: Thank you. Thank you for hanging around, sorry it has come to this.

The committee suspended.
