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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Arnhem

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the Member for Arnhem for today.

Leave granted.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 7)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr McCARTHY (Public Employment): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill will amend the *Public Holidays Act* to clarify that ‘public holiday’ will mean either a day or a part of a day to ensure that an appointed public holiday can be a day or a part of a day and, legislates additional public holidays when Christmas and New Year’s Days fall on weekends.

Through an amendment to Schedule 2 of the *Public Holidays Act*, the Bill will provide that if the public holiday for 25 December, Christmas Day, and the public holiday for 1 January, New Year’s Day, were to fall on a weekend then that day and the following Monday shall both be public holidays. These changes also align with the other Australian jurisdictions that legislate additional public holidays in their relevant Holidays Acts.

Further, the Bill amends Schedule 2 to provide for part-day public holidays on 24 December, Christmas Eve, and 31 December, New Year’s Eve. These public holidays will commence from 7 pm and run until midnight.

These amendments will provide certainty as to the status of public holidays during the festive period and ensure that workers can access entitlements under the *Fair Work Act* National Employment Standards for working during this period.

I will now address each of these reforms in detail.

The Bill amends the definition of ‘public holiday’ in section 4, Interpretation, to clarify that a public holiday means a day or a part of a day that is declared as a public holiday. Currently there is doubt as to whether a public holiday could include a part day. This amendment puts this beyond doubt.

The Bill amends section 6, Additional Public Holidays, to provide for the appointment of a day or a part day as an additional public holiday.

Similarly, the Bill amends section 7, Alteration of Public Holidays, so that the minister by notice in the *Gazette* may declare a day or a part day in a year that would, otherwise than by virtue of the Act, be observed as a public holiday shall not be observed as a public holiday in that year; and provide that the minister may appoint another day or part day in that year to be observed as a public holiday in its stead.

There is also a consequential amendment to section 10, Payments and other Acts on Public Holidays, that will ensure that it only applies to whole days that are public holidays. This section provides that when the day on which a payment, notice, act or thing should be made, given or done falls on a public holiday, it may be made, given or done on the working day next following the public holiday. It is intended that this section will only apply when a day is a public holiday; not a part day.

The Bill also amends Schedule 2 of the Act in two ways. Firstly, it provides that when 1 January, New Year’s Day, or 25 December, Christmas Day, fall on a weekend, both that day and the following Monday shall be public holidays. Before this amendment, the minister was required to appoint these days as additional public holidays by notice in the *Gazette*. Under section 9 of the Act, these gazettal notices are required to be published not less than 28 days before the public holiday appointed in the notice. This amendment provides for administrative efficiency in that it removes the requirement to deal with these days on a case-by-case basis. Because it is an amendment of Schedule 2 of the Act, it will also provide business and Territorians with certainty about the public holidays to be observed.

Secondly, the Bill amends Schedule 2 to provide for two additional part-day public holidays. New public holidays will be established from 7 pm until midnight on 24 December, Christmas Eve, and 31 December, New Year's Eve.

Both Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are important times for family and community celebrations when Territorians would like to be celebrating with their family and friends. The establishment of Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve as public holidays acknowledges that Territorians who are required to serve us, such as police and emergency services, hospital staff and workers in hospitality and tourism, have the same access to entitlements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*; their modern awards or enterprise agreements for working at these times.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House and table the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION **Sessional Orders**

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly adopts the sessional orders in the same terms as the sessional orders adopted by the 12th Assembly as follows:

1. Pairs
2. Right of Reply
3. Committee of Members' Interests
4. Prayers
5. When a ministerial statement may be made.

I table a copy of the orders for circulation now.

A number of sessional orders existed in the 12th Assembly that we propose to be accepted in the 13th Assembly, and which will be referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration of their appropriateness to be accepted as standing orders.

There are no surprises in these proposed sessional orders. There are no new sessional orders and only a few minor omissions from the sessional orders that were adopted by the 12th Assembly. These omissions will be reviewed by the Standing Orders Committee, which is made up of government members, Independent members and members from the opposition.

I will now speak in a little more detail. Sessional Order 1, Pairs and Divisions—the following sessional order existed in the 12th Assembly:

Unless otherwise ordered, the existence of a pair arrangement will be noted in the division lists in the Minutes of Proceedings and the Parliamentary Record when the relevant whips or non-party aligned Members have advised the Table Office that a pairing arrangement is in place.

We propose the adoption of the sessional order relating to pairs in the 13th Assembly. Pairs are an important and formal recognition that sometimes each of us, as members of this House, have commitments which cannot be scheduled around the sittings calendar. Obviously, as members of parliament, we take our responsibilities very seriously and there is a strong expectation that we will all be in the Chamber each sitting day, but there are times when it is appropriate to provide the opportunity for a pair.

We have had some very unique circumstances in this House. In the term of the last Assembly two babies were born and we had our fair share of sick children and other family commitments. This notes that we take our responsibilities as members of parliament to the highest level, but we acknowledge that parliament days are very structured and, like all workplaces, sometimes there is an appropriate reason to provide for a pair.

We feel it is important to propose this sessional order because we like to be proactive in this regard so everyone know where they stand when considering a pair request. We recognise that seeking and

approving pairs is at the discretion of the government and opposition Whips. Having previously taken on the role of opposition Whip I understand that relationship, and the new opposition and government Whips will work together on this matter.

Sessional Order 2 is Right of Reply. In the previous Assembly it became necessary to adopt a sessional order relating to a right of reply for persons referred to in the Legislative Assembly. I will not read the full sessional order because it is very detailed, but, broadly, this sessional order provides for guidelines for a person who has been referred to by name or in such a way that they are easily recognisable, and where that person feels that they have been adversely affected in some way as a result of that.

Madam Speaker, as you would be well aware, but to explain for those reading this, the process is for those people to contact the Speaker, as the authority of the Assembly, and seek an opportunity to respond and have that response incorporated in the *Parliamentary Record*. I was a member of the Standing Orders Committee in the last Assembly and we went through that process.

Parliamentary privilege is an important aspect of parliamentary debate. It allows us to hold a robust and frank discussion, which is needed in this House to fully inquire into all aspects of legislation and consider issues from all angles. Sometimes parliamentarians get a bad rap for saying things under parliamentary privilege that they would not normally get away with.

The Territory is a small place; that is evident. They say it is six degrees of separation, but I think in the Territory it is about one degree of separation. Workplaces, sporting clubs, relationships, family connections—everyone is linked throughout the Territory. We feel that it only seems fair that if a matter is raised in the Legislative Assembly and an individual is identified in a way in which they perceive to be negative, that person should have the opportunity to respond and have that response incorporated in the *Parliamentary Record*, alongside the original comments, so they feel that their voice has been heard.

It has been identified that the Standing Orders Committee is the appropriate avenue to consider and resolve such an issue should it arise in the future.

It is proposed that the 13th Assembly adopts the 12th Assembly's referral for the Standing Orders Committee to act as the Committee of Members' Interests. Last week this House agreed to accept the recommendation of the Committee of Members' Interests to annually publish online the Register of Interests of members of this House. The committee found that all other states and territories, and the federal House of Representatives and the Senate, have already adopted this practice. I acknowledge that this is an important body of work that was undertaken by the previous committee.

The Register of Members' Interests plays an important role in ensuring the transparency of the decisions made by this House, something we need to be mindful of. We want this Assembly to be open and accountable to Territorians. Transparency is important in adding to that. We need to make sure Territorians feel that we are putting the public's interests first. By providing the members' interests online we feel that it is catching up with technology. We are making it easier for people across the Northern Territory to access that information.

In regard to members, the same processes take place. They need to advise the Clerk and the Register of Members' Interests of any changes. Once a year, after the second sittings in February, they will be uploaded.

Sessional Order 4 is Prayers. Pursuant to Standing Order 7, a prayer is said at the commencement of each sitting day. It is then for an order of the Assembly to determine what we will do regarding prayers. Saying those words every morning is a good grounding and a strong reminder of the privilege we are all granted to be in this Assembly and this House to be a representative for our community and for Territorians. We have such a privileged opportunity to have a voice in this Chamber and the prayer is an important part of our day when we come together. Everyone in the House is extremely busy. We are busy preparing for debates and legislation, and people are coming and going, but as an Assembly—I think Madam Speaker will agree with me—it is important for us to come together first thing in the morning and join together in thought and prayer and be reminded why we are here and the job we have ahead of us. We propose that this prayer be formalised in the sessional orders for the 13th Assembly.

Sessional Order 5—when a ministerial statement may be made. In the 12th Assembly it was decided that a minister may make a statement on government policy, a government decision, a government action or a proposed government action at any time when there is no question before the Assembly, provided that

copies of the statement are distributed to Members of the Legislative Assembly by 5 pm the day before the statement is made.

We will continue this practice that was established in the last parliament, and I thank the last parliament for providing the opportunity for opposition and Independent members—all members of the Chamber—to have a copy of the ministerial statement by 5 pm the day before the statement is due to be made in the House. We feel that it goes to the tone we are setting in the 13th Assembly. It is important to have access to that information and to take time to read it and gather your thoughts. We had a number of shifts in the last Assembly; statements were delivered earlier on, then it was late at night, then there was no distribution of the statement until the minister spoke. Different people have different views, but we feel that the culture of this Assembly needs to shift. The Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said that before.

We acknowledge that we will disagree on matters, but we are representing vastly different communities in this Chamber. We need all Territorians to know that their voice will be heard by their representative.

We would like the tone of the debate to be respectful and robust, but every member in this parliament needs to be given the opportunity to be well prepared in order to speak up for their community. We believe that sharing the statement at 5 pm the day before provides opportunity for people to take some time to gather their thoughts on how they will respond to the statement.

We acknowledge the high level of trust that Territorians have placed in our Labor government and we recognise that we cannot take that for granted. We are serious about working together with all members of this House to deliver the best possible outcomes for Territorians, and we have started to demonstrate that already. A number of issues have been raised by the members opposite over the past two weeks and we have agreed to work together on them.

We are representing a broad part of the Territory. We come from diverse backgrounds, so it is important for that representation to be spoken about here in this parliament and for us to have a robust debate, but it needs to be in a respectful manner.

In the change in make-up from the last Assembly to this Assembly, Territorians have shown us they will not put up with arrogant behaviour. They expect better of us. We will have our differences and there will be robust debate, but hopefully we can work together on some of the very serious challenges facing the Northern Territory. We want to have a strong contest of ideas and to draw on everyone's experience and knowledge. We want to be wise when coming up with the best solutions for Territorians.

I do not believe there are any surprises in these sessional orders. Those of us who are privileged enough to have already served one term representing our community are familiar with those sessional orders. It is proposed that the sessional orders will be adopted by the House to now act as an immediate guide, but we will also refer them to the Standing Orders Committee for a more detailed consideration and, where appropriate, we will report back to the House with further recommendations.

We want to raise the issue of incorporation into *Hansard*. Obviously it was an issue. We saw it in the last Assembly, but the strong advice we have on the subject is that it is not best practice. It sometimes overcomes time limits and does not provide an opportunity for members to respond on the spot. If something is said in this Chamber, we are all here listening to it and we can call a point of order and contribute to debate. Incorporation into *Hansard* does not allow for that; it is certainly not best practice. We will not propose a sessional order to allow incorporation into *Hansard*.

I hope members of the Assembly are comfortable with the sessional orders I have outlined this morning. This is an immediate guiding document, but they will be referred to the Standing Orders Committee so we can have further consideration if people have any feedback.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, we were provided this document a few minutes ago. Having listened to the Leader of Government Business, there are a few comments I would like to make.

Without harping on about the decision made yesterday to not allow a member to ask a minister more than one question at a time, or ask consecutive questions during a Wednesday Question Time, I have a few questions to put to the government. I noticed yesterday that some ministers were asked up to three questions in a row. That was on a Tuesday, but on a Wednesday they can only be asked one at a time. I am having trouble getting my head around the rationale for that. Perhaps, over time, the government should look at reviewing that decision for Wednesday Question Time. It is irrational; it makes no sense at all and it makes them look pretty silly.

I am also interested in the decision to keep Prayers at the commencement of each sitting day. I think that is an excellent decision. However, I noticed on the first day of parliament that most—I would hazard a guess—members of the government chose to make an affirmation rather than an oath. They chose not to swear on the Bible; instead they chose to make an affirmation, which is their choice and I make no judgment on that. It indicates to me that those people—the majority of the government—do not have any particular Christian affiliations.

I am rather curious as to why the government has chosen to keep a Christian prayer at the beginning of each sitting day. I support it wholeheartedly and unequivocally, but I see it as a little inconsistent to what I observed on the first day of parliament. How many members of the government have a commitment to a Christian prayer? Or is this just keeping with tradition? I would like an answer to that question if possible.

The Leader of Government Business also mentioned the relationship between the opposition Whip and the government Whip. Still there is no recognition in this Chamber of the five Independent members of parliament, who have no assistance or recognition. We are not getting any indication from the Chief Minister about how he will rectify that situation. It is probably easier to ignore us and pretend that we are not here than think about how everyone in this Chamber can be recognised. It is time—seven weeks into this new government—that an effort is made by this new government, which is amenable to working with people and wants to consult with people and lay the foundations of being a government based on ethics and values. That will be reflected in the allocation of adequate resources and proper recognition of the five Independents in this Chamber.

However, for the most part, I have no problem with the document that has been tabled today—the sessional orders for the 13th Assembly—but I would like those few questions answered.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, as a point of clarification, if we adjourn this debate are these orders operational?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes. If it is agreed to they become the sessional orders.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: If it is not agreed to does that mean we will not have non-government Question Time, or was that a separate motion yesterday?

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, yesterday we gave notice of the sessional orders. In regard to non-government Question Time, that issue was voted on yesterday. This is separate. I am proposing that we will vote this morning—and I will answer the Member for Araluen's questions—but for further issues to the sessional orders I propose that we will refer to the Standing Orders Committee anyway, which is the appropriate avenue to discuss intricate details.

I thank the Member for Araluen for her comments. I appreciate the time she took to respond to the motion before the House. We debated the issue of Question Time yesterday, so I do not have anything further to add, but I note the member's comments.

In regard to the opening prayer each morning, the Member for Araluen raised an important point. I understand, from talking to the chair of the select committee, that it is looking at whether we should have a welcome to country each morning. It is very important that we take time each morning to stop and reflect on the privilege of being in this Chamber. I note the comments about oaths and affirmations, but it is important for people to take that moment, whether they listen attentively to Madam Speaker or are simply reflecting on the role they have here in the House. I think the select committee is looking into that.

We want to incorporate every aspect of the Territory and our important culture, and we want to make sure we respond appropriately, but we need to be careful in regard to timing each morning. The select committee can look into that.

In regard to a technicality—Standing Order 7 says that we must have a prayer each morning. I understand the select committee is looking into a welcome to country and anything else that may be appropriate in addition to the prayer.

On the other issue you raised—that was a decision of the Remuneration Tribunal, which is independent. I will not provide further commentary on that. It was based on advice from the independent Remuneration Tribunal.

I undertake the role of Leader of Government Business, and the government Whip is attentive in ensuring the Independent members are informed. I will keep up that communication. I am not saying it will not happen—but I will pay attention to ensuring the opposition, Independent and government members are aware of the business of the day. At times there will need to be last-minute, intricate changes, but I undertake to communicate that as best as possible with people. It is only fair that people understand what is happening here in the House. I will undertake to continue that communication.

I think I have answered the questions that were raised. I thank people for their contributions. I hope the motion will pass today, but the Standing Orders Committee has the ability to provide further advice.

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO 2)
(Serial 6)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The primary purpose of the Public Information Amendment Bill (No. 2) 2016 is to strengthen the existing *Public Information Act* to ensure public funds are used appropriately in providing the public with information that does not promote party political interests.

As I am sure honourable members would agree, an essential role for any government is to provide comprehensive information to the public about government policies, programs and services which impact upon their rights and obligations; and that for a democracy to be successful, political parties and politicians should be able to engage in free and open debate about each other's views and policies in the public arena.

However, there are times when government advertising may come into question, resulting in claims that information given to the public has been politicised.

The Bill will be supported by regulations that will assist government agencies in their compliance and the Auditor-General in determining whether or not public information promotes party political interests. These regulations are prescriptive and set the criteria for the standards and content of types of public information produced by government ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and members of the Assembly, and government agencies.

The regulations, which will be tabled for information when the Bill is introduced, are based on the public information guidelines previously available under the Act, which were revoked by the former government in November 2013. Incorporating the standards and criteria from the previous guidelines into regulation will ensure a higher standard of appropriate public information that is in line with the expectations of the public.

Turning now to the specific elements of the Bill, clause 4 of the Bill removes the definition of 'public information guidelines', given that standards and criteria are now to be covered by regulation.

Clause 5 is amended to provide that Jacana Energy and Territory Generation are not public authorities for the purposes of the Act, consistent with the Power and Water Corporation not being a public authority under the existing Act.

Clause 6 amends section 6 to insert section 6(2)(a) that allows the Auditor-General to determine a contravention of the Act if the content provided does not meet the criteria prescribed by regulation for the giving of public information.

It also amends section 6(2)(d) to provide that including in advertising an image of the holder or occupier of the office of a minister may contravene the Act. Further amendments in section 6 are in place so this would not apply if the audience was interstate or overseas, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the information by giving a 'face' to the NT and aiding the developing of relationships between the government and national and international audiences. This also does not apply in times of emergency, for example, a cyclone or a flood, where there would be an expectation of leadership from the community.

Clause 7 ensures that if the request for the review of public information is made to the Auditor-General by a member of the Assembly, the member will also receive a copy of the report on the findings of that review.

In conclusion, I am confident that this Bill strengthens and improves the existing legislation, and makes it clearer to all what is appropriate public information.

It will increase accountability and provide the public with confidence that public information is objective, factual and free from political bias, while allowing government to continue to provide information to the public about the programs and policies their taxes fund.

I commend this Bill to honourable members and table the explanatory statement and regulations that accompany the Bill.

Debate adjourned.

**DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORDERS)
(NATIONAL UNIFORM LAW) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 3)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The main purpose of this Bill is to provide for the automatic recognition and enforcement in the Northern Territory of domestic violence orders made elsewhere in Australia.

The Bill is based on model legislation developed by the Australian justice and police agencies under the auspices of the Law, Crime and Community Safety Council, known as LCCSC, which is the ministerial council comprising Commonwealth, state and territory Attorneys-General and Police ministers. The model law was approved by the Council of Australian Governments at its meeting in December 2015. At that meeting COAG agreed that states and territories would introduce the automatic recognition and legislation in the first half of 2016.

It is very pleasing for me that the Territory is now fulfilling this commitment.

Under existing state and territory legislation, the protection provided by domestic violence orders ends at state and territory borders unless the protected person or a police officer registers their domestic violence order in the new jurisdiction. These provisions were enacted as part of a national scheme for the registration of interstate domestic violence orders.

For the Northern Territory, Chapter 3 of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act* provides for the registration of domestic violence orders made elsewhere in Australia or in New Zealand.

Registration occurs after an application is made to the Local Court by a person who has the benefit of the order or an adult acting on their behalf, or by a police officer. The act of registration is performed by a registrar of the court. If modification is required for the order to operate effectively in the Northern Territory, the registrar must refer the order to the court for modification prior to registration. If an external order is not registered but a police officer reasonably believes a person in the Territory is a defendant named in an order enforced in the jurisdiction in which it was made, the police officer can make a declaration to the Commissioner of Police to that effect. An external order will then have the same status as a court domestic violence order under the Act for a period of 72 hours following the declaration.

Under the current legislation in place throughout Australia, the domestic violence victim usually has to apply to the Local Court for the registration of an interstate domestic violence order. This forces the victim to have to deal with the court and law enforcement processes again, in another jurisdiction. The proposed new legislation vastly simplifies the requirement for a domestic violence victim. The general rule will be that the domestic violence order made in any jurisdiction will apply in all Australian states and territories. The victim is spared the ordeal of going through a registration process.

Since 2009, following the release of a report by the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, titled *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009–2021*, state and territory Attorneys-General have been considering reforms to state and territory domestic violence legislation which would effect the automatic recognition of interstate orders.

The project stumbled at various times because of our reluctance to develop recognition legislation until such time as an information system existed so that police and courts in the states and territories had quick and reliable means of accessing domestic violence information—an important part.

Following the tragic death of Luke Batty in 2014, and a generally heightened awareness around Australia of domestic violence issues, the Commonwealth committed significant funding to the development by CrimTrac, now the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, of a prototype information system.

In April 2015, COAG agreed to take urgent collective action to address the unacceptable level of violence against women. COAG proposed that by the end of 2015 a national domestic violence order scheme will be agreed, which will provide the automatic recognition and enforcement of domestic violence orders in any state or territory of Australia and the progress will be reported on a national information system that will enable courts and police in different states and territories to share information on active domestic violence orders. New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania were to trial the system.

In May 2015, the LCCSC noted that reducing violence against women is a priority item on COAG's agenda and it was expected that model laws would be agreed to by the end of 2015. The LCCSC affirmed that there was a need for both legislation across jurisdictions and a national information system that provides timely, accurate and valid information to enable enforcement action.

It is generally accepted that the objective of the national domestic violence order scheme is to provide a seamless national scheme and increase protection for victims of domestic violence across Australian borders by removing the need for individuals to personally register their domestic violence orders in a new jurisdiction. It also aims to streamline enforcement processes because orders can now be recognised in real time.

The model law has been drafted in accordance with the four policy principles as agreed in December 2014 by the national domestic violence order scheme working group, comprising representatives from justice and police agencies in each jurisdiction.

The four principles are as follows: a family and domestic violence order made or registered anywhere in Australia is nationally recognised and enforceable; an order made in one jurisdiction can be amended by another jurisdiction, but only by a court; where an order made in one jurisdiction is in force, if necessary a new order can be made in another jurisdiction, but only by a court; and the latest order in time prevails.

Key provisions of the Bill: the Bill provides for a new Chapter 3A of the Act. The four principles are contained in Division 1 of Part 3A.2. A recognised domestic violence order is one or other of the following: an order made in the Northern Territory; a domestic violence order made in another jurisdiction that has enacted the model provisions; or a New Zealand domestic violence order registered in any participating jurisdiction.

Proposed section 103C limits the scope of recognition of orders from South Australia and Western Australia to only those that are made to address domestic violence. This provision is necessary because South Australian and Western Australian legislation does not differentiate between domestic and personal violence orders. In the case of the Northern Territory, personal violence and restraining orders are made under the *Personal Violence Restraining Orders Act 2016*.

Section 103C is drafted on the basis that issuing authorities in South Australia and Western Australia will word their orders so it is clear as to whether they deal with a domestic violence concern in order for them to be recognised under this new scheme.

Proposed sections 103F, 103G and 103J set out the circumstances in which variations, revocations and new orders can be made. These provisions make it clear that a domestic violence order can be varied or revoked by a court in another jurisdiction, and that a police-issued domestic violence order cannot override a court domestic violence order made for the same defendant and protected person.

Section 103J clarifies that a person is not prevented from applying for a new domestic violence order in the Northern Territory. An order made by a police officer in the Northern Territory only operates in the Northern Territory until it is dealt with by the court. In the circumstance where a police order is made when there is already a recognised DVO, the police order only becomes a recognised DVO for national purposes if it is confirmed by the Local Court and is properly notified to the defendant. For this period, it also operates to the extent that it does not diminish the protections afforded to the protected person under the recognised order.

In permitting police to make orders in these circumstances the NT Bill differs from the model Bill, which prohibits police from making an order if they are aware that there is an existing order covering the same parties. We have varied from the model as a result of the issues raised by the NT Police concerning the potential need for urgent action to fill in gaps in an interstate order. For example, an interstate order may not have a 'no contact' condition but NT Police may consider, for the purpose of ensuring the safety of the protected person, that there is an urgent need to impose no contact conditions. These kinds of police orders will only apply in the NT until confirmed by the court and given to the defendant, and cannot diminish the protections offered to the protected person. The Victorian Government has taken a similar approach as outlined in section 49 of the *National Domestic Violence Order Scheme Act 2016*.

Proposed section 103W acts as a safeguard to prevent 'forum shopping' by giving the court discretion to hear an application for the variation of non-local domestic violence orders. The section sets out a list of matters the court may consider in deciding whether to hear an application for the variation of non-local domestic violence orders. These factors include:

- where the defendant and the protected person live and work
- difficulty of either party to attend the proceedings
- where there is sufficient information available to the court about the domestic violence order
- whether there are existing criminal proceedings for a breach of the domestic violence order
- the practicality of the applicant applying for a similar domestic violence order in the Northern Territory, and the impact of the application on children subject to a domestic violence order.

Proposed section 103W(5) specifies that a court in the Northern Territory must refuse to hear an application for the variation or revocation made by a defendant, if the defendant would not be entitled to make such an application in the issuing jurisdiction. One example is where there is a time limit on when the defendant can make such an application.

Sections 103K to 103M provide for the enforcement of recognised domestic violence orders. Section 103K gives effect to the principle that a recognised domestic violence order is enforceable in all participating jurisdictions once the defendant has been properly notified. Section 103L defines proper notification under the law of the Northern Territory to be where the domestic violence order is made by a court and the defendant is present in the court, or when the defendant is given a copy of the order in accordance with section 119 of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*.

Jurisdictions have agreed to accept compliance with the service requirements set out in the local laws as proper notification of the interstate domestic violence orders, and proposed section 103K(3) gives effect to that agreement.

Sections 103N to 103R set out the elements of the enforcement of non-local domestic violence orders to ensure they are treated in the same way as a local order. This means the Northern Territory will be able to recognise prohibitions and restrictions imposed by a non-local domestic violence order as if it was made in the Northern Territory.

Similarly, all existing Northern Territory provisions that restrict the grant of a particular licence or permit, such as a firearms licence, will extend to a person with a domestic violence order from a participating jurisdiction.

Section 103M provides that a breach of a domestic violence order is recognised in all participating jurisdictions. This means that a contravention of a non-local domestic violence order, that is a recognised domestic violence order under the Act, may be enforced in the Northern Territory as if it was a Northern Territory domestic violence order.

Sections 103X to 103ZA set out the principles relating to the exchange of information between jurisdictions for the purpose of enforcing domestic violence orders.

Under the proposed section 103ZF, the new recognition provisions will apply prospectively to new Northern Territory domestic violence orders and to New Zealand domestic violence orders registered in the Northern Territory. That is, orders made on or after the commencement date of the Act will be recognised in other participating jurisdictions. This is necessary to ensure that all required information sharing systems are in

place and that the parties to the order are properly notified that the domestic violence order can be nationally enforced. However, there is some scope for domestic violence orders made before the commencement of the scheme to be recognised nationally are prescribed by regulation under the Northern Territory Act or if individually declared by a court registrar.

Regulations made in the Northern Territory can expand the scope of automatic recognition. This regulation-making power is slightly at a variance with the model Bill and the provisions enacted in other states and territories. We will use this regulation-making power if we back capture for the national system orders made prior to the commencement of the legislation.

Additionally, the model Bill and section 103ZK provide for a declaration process. The declaration mechanism is based on the existing manual process for registering external domestic violence orders in the Northern Territory. It requires a person to apply to a registrar of a court to have their domestic violence order declared to be a recognised domestic violence order under the national scheme. This could be utilised, for example, in the case of a domestic violence order in place prior to the commencement of the Act or an order from a non-participating jurisdiction.

Part VIIA of the *Police Administration Act* regulates the civil liability of police officers performing duties under the laws of the Northern Territory. Part VIIA does not identify any of the factual circumstances in which it might be considered that there is negligence or a breach of the statutory duty that could give rise to a civil liability. There are fears that police and others may be liable because they do not enforce an interstate order or if they enforce an interstate order that is no longer current.

The object of the legislation is to ensure that interstate orders are enforced wherever possible.

For the purpose of maximising the achievement of this object, section 103ZC spells out that enforcement officers, the courts and the Territory will not be held legally liable because of a lack of access to the best information when acting in good faith. This is of particular relevance to police operating in our remote communities. The proposed limitation of liability in section 103ZC(3) provides protections for acts or omissions even if a person fails to find current information about a domestic violence order. Of course, this section does not provide protection for acts or omissions done without good faith or for which there is no justification at all—an important point.

Parts 3 and 4 of the Bill make amendments of a consequential nature to the Domestic and Family Violence Regulations and the *Firearms Act*.

Transitional provisions: the key transitional issue is that of determining the extent to which legislation should recognise domestic violence orders made prior to the commencement of the model law. The model law is structured around the last in time principle. It is critical that police and courts have the capacity to identify quickly the current domestic violence order in place, as it will be the only order that is legally enforceable.

Currently, there is no information system capable of providing this kind of information. Additionally, most jurisdictions have expressed the view that, even if the technical system existed, they would probably not be in a position to back-capture the data for all current orders in place prior to the commencement of the scheme.

The Bill provides that additional transitional arrangements be contained in regulations. The basic fact is the Northern Territory cannot address the extent of the need for transitional arrangements until the information system is developed.

The national domestic violence order scheme will rely on courts and police in all jurisdictions having access to valid, comprehensive and real-time information on active domestic violence orders. The information system will enable enforcement, action and prosecution of breaches, with the technical capability to support and deliver the scheme in accordance with the policy and provisions set out in the model law.

Following COAG's decision in December 2015, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission is developing an interim capability to be made available to all jurisdictions in the short term while concurrently developing a comprehensive national capability over a longer term. An interim technical solution has been identified which builds on the current national policing system and, according to Commonwealth advice, can be made available to all jurisdictions in late 2016.

Although the interim solution has limitations, the Commonwealth has advised that it will provide police with a basic capability to determine whether a domestic violence order is in force with respect to a person and its key conditions.

The interim solution will require implementation of additional support arrangements by jurisdictions to ensure domestic violence order data is available via the system and police can act on the most accurate and up-to-date information in enforcing interstate domestic violence orders.

The longer-term national solution envisaged involves a purpose-built capability available to all jurisdictions, including police and courts, and builds on existing prototype work. It will not only provide immediate capability for domestic violence order information sharing and enforcement across police and courts nationally, but could also provide a base platform for future national justice information sharing. With future investment it may be extended to other types of court or judicial orders, which would be of great national benefit.

For both the interim and national capabilities to be an effective tool for police and courts, each jurisdiction will need to provide domestic violence order data and implement supporting business and system changes. This will ensure that police, courts and justice agencies can access current and timely domestic violence order information. To fund this approach, the Commonwealth proposes that the residual funding from the prototype be redirected to undertake the work on the interim technical solution. The Commonwealth is still exploring options to fund the national technical solution.

This Bill, along with its interstate equivalents, is testament to the wholehearted commitment of Australian governments to reducing family and domestic violence.

Timing of the commencement of the legislation will, however, depend on the development of effective information systems. We are dependent on the Commonwealth's endeavours regarding that development.

Implementation of a national domestic violence order recognition scheme promises to improve the safety of vulnerable victims across state and territory borders, and demands maximum accountability of perpetrators. Let me be clear that perpetrators of domestic violence should have no place to hide. They should not be able to go across state and territory borders. Furthermore, the scheme presents an impressive example of integrated and collaborative law enforcement. This issue was raised at the ministerial council meeting I attended last week. Some may say that for discussions that started in 2009 there certainly is a great body of work being undertaken across state, territory and Commonwealth boundaries. It is work within justice and police; it is a hugely important body of work.

I commend the Bill to honourable members and I table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

PAPER TABLED

Office of the Children's Commissioner – Own Initiative Investigation Report

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Madam Speaker, I table the *Own Initiative Investigation Report: Services Provided by the Northern Territory Department of Correctional Services to Don Dale Youth Detention Centre and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre*.

In December 2014 the Office of the Children's Commissioner received complaints that involved the management of young people in custody in the Alice Springs and Don Dale Youth Detention Centres. The complaints showed concerns about the systems that were in place for the management of young people at risk of suicide and/or self-harm; the use of restraints; and the transfer of young people to adult correctional facilities.

In May 2015 the then Commissioner for the Northern Territory Department of Correctional Services was advised by the Office of the Children's Commissioner that, due to the serious nature of the concerns, an own initiative investigation would be conducted in accordance with the *Children's Commissioner Act 2013*. The Northern Territory Labor government is tabling this investigation report. It is the right thing to do and is consistent with the government's commitment to accountability, openness and transparency.

The incidents contained within the report occurred up to September 2015. Through machinery of government changes in September 2016, oversight and responsibility for youth detention centres in the

Northern Territory were transferred from the former Department of Correctional Services to the new Department of Territory Families.

This is much more than an administrative transfer of one area of government to another. It is a fundamental rethink of youth justice. It is about moving away from a punitive regimes where the evidence today states that this approach clearly does not work.

Incorporating youth justice into Territory Families is about a whole-of-life approach to Territorians by the Labor government. That includes young people who find themselves in the youth justice system.

Our approach will be evidence based and will use best practice to look at youth offending before it happens—early intervention, diversion programs, therapeutic measures and all other interventions we can make in the lives of young Territorians so they can lead rich, fulfilling lives as members of our community.

It is our duty as elected representatives of the people to ensure our children have the best possible start in life. This means we have to invest heavily in families and communities. We must ensure the family unit and communities are healthy and strong, and that our children can grow in these nurturing environments. We want to keep our children out of the criminal justice system. Too often in the past it has been all about policies on managing the end outcome for a person in detention. As Minister for Territory Families I am assuming responsibility for this investigation report and the implementation of the recommendations outlined.

The investigation report was finalised by the Children's Commissioner on 24 August 2016, and was received by the Chief Minister's office on 1 September 2016. The investigation report contains 21 recommendations, 19 of which require implementation. Territory Families agrees with the commissioner's recommendations and we have commenced implementation. That includes working with the Department of Health on procedures where detainees are identified as at risk of suicide or self-harm.

The report references three videos of security footage of incidents that formed part of the investigation. On advice from the Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory, the footage has not been tabled with the report.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I do not want to shut down this debate, but I remind the minister that these matters are being considered by the Royal Commission into child protection and detention. I wonder if some of the details the minister refers to are treading on shaky ground in regard to a potential conflict of interest.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Araluen. The advice is that it is probably not a problem because what happens here is different to what may happen in the Royal Commission. The minister is just tabling a report that has been provided to her.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Madam Speaker, just a clarification. I hope the minister is not presenting information that may prejudice or be intended to prejudice the Royal Commission inquiry.

Madam SPEAKER: No, I do not believe so. The minister has the information, and it may be that the Royal Commission looks here to see what is being presented ...

Ms Wakefield: I will address that further.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, minister.

Ms WAKEFILED: The Children's Commissioner concurs with the advice, which is to not table the security camera footage. The report provides recommendations that relate to a variety of matters, with particular focus on the management and service intervention for young people in youth detention centres who are at risk of suicide or self-harm, together with the use of restraints in youth detention centres, staffing and training matters, infrastructure, and transfer processes of young people to adult correctional facilities.

Recommendations 10 and 18 of the final investigation report relate to the use of spit hoods in youth detention centres. The use of spit hoods has been stopped in youth detention so those recommendations have been placed on hold by the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Of the remaining 19 recommendations requiring implementation, five have been completed. They relate to placing youth in isolation, or at risk; prohibiting the use of the Hoffman tool to remove clothing from a young person; the use of restraints, including the restraint chair; and youth justice officer training requirements.

We will be working closely with the men and women who work in the youth justice system to ensure they have the best possible training, and develop skills so we can deliver on the new approach Territory Families will take. We have consulted with unions and we are committed to working together as we move forward.

I want to acknowledge and thank the people who work in corrections and youth justice for the professional approach they have taken to the change of government machinery. We have many fine Territorians working hard on the front line of youth justice across our community. I thank each one of them, especially for their persistence and continuing advocacy. I feel very privileged, as a minister, to have access to such experience and expertise, and I look forward to working with all of you to deliver our shared vision.

The Youth Justice Legislation Amendment Bill, which I tabled in the Assembly yesterday, will ban the use of restraint chairs in the youth justice system. They will never again be used on young people in the youth detention centre as long as this Labor government holds office. This gives a strong direction on the way we believe we must proceed. We want to send a strong message to Territorians in this first sitting of parliament—a Michael Gunner-led government—that we take this issue very seriously. The legislation did that yesterday. Tabling this report from the Office of the Children's Commissioner shows that we take this issue very seriously.

As I said in this Assembly yesterday, the ABC *Four Corners* program aired an investigation into the Northern Territory's youth detention centre. It had a significant impact on the community, as evident by the number of community members who approached me, expressing their distress at what had occurred. It is a priority for me, as the Minister for Territory Families, to ensure that young people are treated with respect and dignity, while also ensuring the safety of staff. As I said yesterday, these priorities are not mutually exclusive, and I am committed to consulting and working with staff and the community to create a safe environment for young people and the dedicated staff who work with them.

The remaining 14 recommendations are in train; an action plan is in place and work continues to address each of the recommendations. The first progress report in relation to the implementation of the recommendations is due to the Office of the Children's Commissioner on 25 November 2016. A clear implementation planning process for each of these recommendations is clearly under way.

This is important work. We will be thorough in how we approach the Office of the Children's Commissioner's recommendations, and that includes exploring best practice, leading research and contemporary solutions from Australia and around the world.

My friend, the former Member for Nhulunbuy, Lynne Walker, stated that this is the heavy lifting of government. It is not just the great responsibility but also the great privilege of government. We will work diligently with all stakeholders to ensure that our youth justice system in the Northern Territory becomes a leading example of evidence-based best practice. We will treat young people in the youth justice system humanely and we will never give up on our kids and their prospects for rehabilitation.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Jobs

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 117, I wish to make a ministerial statement, as circulated to members last evening.

The Labor Party has a long and proud tradition of implementing policy that creates more opportunity and a more productive society. We believe that to create a stronger and more prosperous community we must invest in our greatest asset: our people. It means supporting all members of our community regardless of their social or economic status. It requires us to invest in our families and their education, health and safety. It means providing the right economic environment for the government and the private sector to create jobs and ensure that people are able to be productive and engaged in our community. It also means ensuring those jobs are safe, properly rewarded and sustainable.

In this second decade of the 21st century it also means being agile, smart and flexible in focusing on the jobs of the future, not just the jobs of the past.

Supporting our community means trusting it and seeking its trust. It means engaging people in an open dialogue that is designed with the community, not against it. It is about the direction of the government, the open and transparent actions by government and the creation and implementation policy that is designed with the community, not against it.

My government is a proud Labor government, and our election platform and commitments have mirrored our commitment to these important principles. We were elected on our commitment to invest in children, restore trust and grow jobs.

Investing in children is the only way we can overcome the significant long-term issues that have consistently held the Territory back from reaching its potential. To ensure our children have the best possible chance, and are able to maximise their opportunities, they must be healthy and engaged in learning from a young age. Our investment in children today will pay dividends in decades to come, not necessarily during the life of this government or my time as Chief Minister. It goes beyond election cycles.

The investment we make today in the health, wellbeing and education of our children will deliver more Territorians who can work, and will create the jobs and future wealth of our community. Similarly, open and transparent government, and restoring people's trust in government, is not only the good thing to do, it is the smart thing to do.

That is why we will open up government data to support the growth of the private sector and ensure that the machinery of government is fair and not corrupt, nor favouring one group over another. Over the next four years ministers of this government will report to this House, updating the parliament and Territorians on progress made against each of these commitments.

Before detailing Labor's initiatives to strengthen the economy and create jobs, it is important to understand the serious challenge that four years of chaotic and incompetent CLP government presented for Territorians.

It is clear that the failure to engage with Territorians and provide consistent policy and implementation, as well as the continual scandal and disruption of government, has taken its toll on the current state of the economy and our prospects of future jobs growth. The failure of the previous government to embrace new technology and concepts such as ride sharing means we are ill-prepared to create future jobs in a progressive future economy. It has undermined the certainty and confidence of business and our investors.

Similarly, the savage cuts to investment in education, youth services and programs designed to support Territory families has had an impact on the confidence of our people. These decisions have resulted in a slow economy beset by low growth rates and significant loss of population to interstate.

The NT is at an economic crossroads. The previous government's economic forecasts, as outlined in the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook, released in August, reveal that economic growth is forecast to slow from 10.5% in 2014–15 to 2.1% in 2015–16, and 1.5% in 2016–17.

The deficit is projected to blow out to \$876m in 2016–17, restricting the government's capacity to address growth. Even worse, the Territory is in operating deficit in 2017–18 and 2018–19. The debt is currently \$1.85bn and rising. The labour market is also forecast to slow from employment growth of 1.3% in 2015–16 to just 0.3% in 2016–17. In the most recent data employment has declined by 0.1% in the year to September 2016.

Latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows the Territory has the lowest population growth of all jurisdictions, growing by just 0.4% in the year to March 2016. The growth figure is very deceptive and the Territory's population growth has historically been driven, for the most part, by natural increase—in other words, newly-born children—along with positive net overseas migration growth. Children are always welcome, but, in economic terms, the Territory needs to obtain and attract working-age adults who can contribute immediately to our economic growth.

Net interstate migration, which is a key measure for the loss or gain of population, shows the Northern Territory has suffered a net loss of 8348 people to other states over the years 2013, 2014 and 2015. This loss of Territorians is one of the largest on record. This loss occurred at the very time the Northern Territory was benefiting from the INPEX project, which was achieving a peak of around 8000 jobs. This shows the extent of problems in other parts of the economy. Despite a massive construction project on Darwin and Palmerston's doorstep, the population still went interstate in their thousands or, more tellingly, chose not to move here in the first place. This loss of population creates a vicious cycle for our economy. The fewer jobs, the fewer people who then come to the Territory or stay here. Fewer Territorians means lower employment. The cycle goes on.

We are addressing this policy failure urgently. Deloitte Access Economics recently undertook some preliminary work on the reasons people come to and leave the Territory. This work provides an interesting

understanding of the flow of population. Deloitte's survey showed that work was found to be a major contributor to people's decision to move to the Territory. In fact, some 72% of respondents cited the following: obtaining work, 43%; career progression, 9%; work posting transfer, 8%; and different unique work opportunities, 8%, as reasons for moving here.

Work was also cited as the most significant reason for leaving the Territory, with 38% of respondents to the survey indicating that obtaining work, career progression, redundancy and work safety were reasons for leaving. Interestingly, this factor combined most strongly with the desire to be close to family and social networks—24%—as factors driving people away from the Territory.

The government is tackling population growth as a matter of urgency, and the measures we will take will be driven by this research and further research we intend to undertake. We are tackling this threat to our future by creating greater numbers of jobs by expanding industry and supporting working families in the Territory to keep them here. Additionally—this will be detailed in future statements—we will act on our decisions to support Territory seniors in an effort to keep them here.

The full Cabinet of the government was sworn in on 12 September 2016 by His Honour the Administrator. Since then the government has set into place a number of initiatives designed to grow jobs. These initiatives are within the framework prior to the election and will guide us over the next term.

The framework is straightforward. Labor's policies and actions will get the money out quickly into the economy, create certainty in the economy and build confidence in the economy to attract greater investment. Additionally, the government is introducing policies designed to support local families in an effort to keep them in the Territory.

To get the money out quickly, and to the right people, the government has already changed local procurement and will undertake more action in the near future. The government has extended the 30% local content to all government procurement. Previously this had been applied only to the construction industry.

We have instructed agencies to ensure that in assessing tenders they ensure local content is driven through the whole of the project. In other words, the successful tenderers must also commit to local content in their use of subcontracts. They will be required to name their subcontractors and stick to those names if they are successful. Further, we have introduced a provision that all recipients of government capital grants must abide by the local content rules.

We intend to reduce the number of boards involved in procurement. When this is completed we will ensure that the final board has a clear auditing role that can allow it to judge the performance of government and contractors. The legislative work to make this happen is under way.

My agency of Trade, Business and Innovation will be asking agencies to regularly report on their procurement performance. The government will also undertake the further following actions to ensure improved local content. We will:

- introduce a much more detailed reporting mechanism to those who have been unsuccessful so they are assisted in knowing where they need to improve for the future
- implement an annual buy local list that shows all the interstate purchases made by government; local business will be able to say what market niche exists for them
- ensure contract packages are of the right size for local business to be able to win them
- implement a rolling 10-year infrastructure plan that shows the future work available, allowing for local businesses to prepare for tenders.

Further local content measures will be announced in the future.

The government has also ensured that procurement spending is proceeding. We have ensured the 2016-17 program is rolling out as intended without delay. We made a deliberate decision not to hold a mini-budget to ensure we did not disrupt this spending; however, we have been left with some serious issues in the infrastructure program.

The first issue is the cash available in the 2017–18 and 2018–19 year. To achieve as small a deficit as thought possible, the CLP government cut the cash to infrastructure going forward; this is a decision which will impact on jobs for Territorians. That is why the government has now officially stopped the \$100m of additional port sale money from being placed in the Northern Territory infrastructure fund. These funds are currently earmarked to be spent on stimulus projects over the next two financial years. This \$100m stimulus will provide a significant shot in the arm for business, particularly the smaller local businesses, which employ many Territorians.

The second issue relates to the design and content of the forward program. This program has been heavily skewed to one or two sectors of the economy, instead of supporting a broader economic range. The government is such a large part of the market in the Territory, so it is important that we provide funding to different business sectors, small and large, located across the Territory.

The third issue we are confronting is the lack of funds against some announced projects and the time-limited funding that has been put in place for many of the significant programs delivered by our economic development agencies. The government will fix these issues and we will ensure that we will produce a forward works program that is clear, spread properly across all industry sectors and regions, implements Labor's economic commitments and is properly funded.

To ensure that we restore certainty to the economy, the government has made a number of commitments. We will implement pragmatic policy based on evidence, and create sensible policy based on consultation and cooperation with the community and stakeholders. Once policy is determined we will not chop and change. We will not rely on thought bubbles as a way to run government; we will ensure policy is being properly implemented and stick to these undertakings. Certainty will be given by providing the Territory with clear long-term plans for the economy.

There has been a clear lack of coordinated, consultative, long-term planning over the last four years by government. This creates economic and investment uncertainty. Businesses I have spoken with list this lack of planning as a critical problem for the future growth of the Territory economy. This Labor government will address the lack of planning, but we will not do this by ourselves or by believing we know best; it will be done in consultation with the community through our economic summits.

Developing our economy and creating the jobs of the future is everyone's business. Businesses, industries, unions, governments and community leaders all have a critical role to play to enable and drive growth. Preparing this program is well under way. A significant effort is going into co-designing the summits and forums between stakeholders and the government so we can get the best information in the best way possible. There will be four phases to this work.

Phase one: consultations and co-design of the summit. Industry stakeholders, companies involved in the Territory, regional economic development committees and key stakeholders in Tennant Creek and Alice Springs have all been consulted and have contributed to the plan so far. Initial discussions have taken place with the Northern and Central Land Councils, and these are ongoing. Discussions with other land councils will commence this week. This week consultation will occur with Australian Government departments, the Katherine Regional Economic Development Committee and key stakeholders, educational institutions, local governments and significant Territory businesses. These initial sessions are informing development of a broad draft economic vision for the NT, as well as focus questions incorporating key issues which will be further consulted on in the next phase of development, the economic development framework.

Phase two: forums to discuss and identify issues papers. Issues papers will be written by the NT Government agencies and key economic and industry development partners, and will be further developed following consultation undertaken at the forums between now and the end of February 2017. These papers will be regionally based and industry based and will form the basis of strategy papers going forward. Full-day sessions incorporating whole-of-region discussions and facilitated sub-groups by sector or industry will help to co-develop economic development strategies and actions.

There is a tentative program for these forums: Darwin and Alice Springs in December; Nhulunbuy in late January; and Katherine and Tennant Creek in February next year. Forums will also be held in other communities, such as the Tiwi Islands and Wadeye, during the consultation phase. Discussions have also commenced with land councils to engage our bush communities. These sessions will confirm the broad economic visions for our Territory and the strategies to address key issues with clear cross-sector and regional action plans.

Phase two will also include public consultation, where all Territorians will have the opportunity to have their say to inform the broad economic vision and priorities for the Territory's future.

Phase three: feedback to the community and stakeholders on issues and strategy papers. The papers to be presented at the final summits will be tested with the public and stakeholders. From this, final feedback on the economic framework and strategy will be formed. This will occur in late February and early March.

Phase four: Territory economic summits. In late March 2017 the summits will be held to accept, improve, add to and finalise the Territory's economic development framework. In undertaking this detailed program the government is undertaking the most comprehensive public discussion program of industry and the community that the Territory has seen since the Territory 2013 strategic plan, which a Labor government developed when previously in government.

Unlike previous economic plans, this discussion includes Aboriginal land holders and their representative organisations, such as the land councils. It is critical to the future of the Territory that every part of our community is engaged in the growth of the Territory to the extent Territorians wish it to be.

Through the summit process we will co-develop the long-term vision in short, medium and long-term priorities and actions:

1. grow our priority established industries like:
 - a) Defence-related industries
 - b) agribusiness, including food processing
 - c) gas and minerals
 - d) tourism
 - e) international education
2. diversify our economy by growing emerging industry sectors like:
 - a) health, especially tropical health, medicine and remote health service delivery through technology
 - b) creative industries, including art, culture and fashion
 - c) land management for desert and tropical regions around the world
 - d) the renewable energy industry
3. diversify our economy through innovation and supporting our Territory enterprises to commercialise new products and services
4. increase trade and investment
5. attract national and multinational corporations to establish offices and create more jobs in the Territory
6. strengthen the traction and facilitation of major projects
7. develop our region and spread economic development in jobs benefits across the Territory
8. support traditional owners, land councils and Aboriginal Territorians who want to develop jobs, businesses and industries on their own country and communities
9. support small businesses and more start-ups
10. deliver existing government-facilitated nation-building and Territory-building infrastructure and investment projects like the luxury hotel, the shiplift and the Tennant Creek to Mount Isa Railway, and to develop the next generation of opportunities
11. ensure we are skilling and training Territorians for the jobs of the future.

These actions will drive the creation of the jobs of our Territory's future. We make no apology for the breadth of this discussion and the time it will take. It is important we put in place the key pieces of the Territory's economic architecture to set us up well into the future. In the interim we are committed to keeping the economy moving.

This is how you create certainty and provide a proper pipeline of work into the future that supports your industry and keeps your economy growing. Primarily this is how you build confidence in an economy. Once we restore confidence in the economy, greater investment will occur. Leveraging private investment will make our economy surge. This government is acutely aware that progress in creating further jobs will require private sector investment as well as government investment. To leverage investment from private business and our friends and neighbours to the north, we must have confidence in the Northern Territory Government.

That is why on Thursday I will travel to Japan, South Korea and China to pursue the Territory's plans for economic growth in a number of sectors. In Japan and South Korea the emphasis will be on the oil and gas sector and what will come once the INPEX production phase begins.

In China I will be leading one of the largest business delegations in the Territory's history, meeting in Rizhao. I am undertaking this trip to ensure our trading partners are aware of the new government's commitment to the region and ongoing relations. In the case of Japan, I intend to reignite a relationship that has, sadly, been neglected in recent years. In South Korea the government intends to begin a relationship that I believe has the great potential to grow in coming years. In China I am looking forward to connecting with the mayor and the administration of Rizhao, and its key business people, such as Mr Ye of Landbridge, and the many business people who are interested in investing in the Territory and purchasing our products.

In addition to the above initiatives the government is taking action to improve and expand people's employment options, satisfaction in their jobs and career opportunities. We are doing so because we believe in supporting Territory families to have good jobs that are well paid, giving them the capacity to engage in our economy. We are also doing so in an effort to stem the flow of Territorians interstate. As identified by the Deloitte research, creating more jobs and providing people with career progression, enjoyment and job support will keep people in the Territory. Keeping people here, as well as attracting people to live here, is critical to our future economy.

On taking office we immediately reinstated support for first home owners purchasing existing property by removing the payment of stamp duty on the first \$500 000 of the purchase. This will provide Territorians buying their first home with relief worth \$24 000, which can now be spent on their deposit. Additionally, we have added, for the 2016–17 and 2017–18 financial years, a grant of \$10 000 for home renovation and purchase of household goods. Also, \$2000 for the purchase of household goods will be provided to those who build new homes. This is on top of the \$26 000 grant already provided. These measures complement the continuing government grant of \$7000 for the purchase of a principal place of residence, and \$10 000 for seniors seeking to downsize their existing premises.

We believe that if you own a little piece of the Territory you are more likely to stay here. The government sees these initiatives as important, long-term, population-focused initiatives. We have already seen 42 applications for first home purchases as at 21 October 2016.

I am pleased to announce, today, a further initiative for Territory families. The government will declare 7 pm to 12 am on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve to be public holidays. We believe that people who work on these nights, either for the government or the private sector, deserve to be rewarded for this. By declaring these times as public holidays people will be able to make a decision as to whether they will or will not work, without consequences, and they will be financially rewarded for doing so.

The government will lead the way by ensuring nurses, police, firefighters and others who work at this time are supported for doing so. This will cost approximately \$450 000 in additional wages, but I believe it will keep more people in those frontline key roles for longer, and help improve job satisfaction. This provision will also apply to private sector workers doing shifts on those nights. This is an important initiative, especially because moves to provide rewards to workers in this way are now undertaken in other states. South Australia already has this in place and I understand Victoria is considering introducing it.

Legislation to change the *Public Holidays Act* will be introduced this week for passage in November. The declaration will take effect this Christmas and New Year.

The government also intends to undertake the following workplace initiatives, which will be further detailed in future announcements:

1. Reversing the provisions of the *Return to Work Act* that have reduced the outcomes for employees.
2. Introducing a program with Indigenous training that will see 500 additional Indigenous teachers, nurses and police in place over the next 10 years.
3. Mentoring programs for new teachers to support them in their early years of teaching in an effort to retain teachers.
4. Introducing a detailed program of supporting and growing the skills of senior teachers, assistant principals and others identified as potential future principals.

The government is moving quickly to turn around the serious economic situation we have inherited. We will grow the economy; introduce buy local initiatives focused on getting more money to local businesses; introduce first home buyer schemes focused on giving Territorians an opportunity to own their own piece of this magnificent place; start a Territory-wide economic forum and summit program to form the long-term plans for the Territory; create a sustainable, sensible, balanced and funded forward works program; and support workers' job satisfaction by providing reward for their efforts at important times, such as Christmas and New Year, as well as restoring their rights under a proper *Return to Work Act*.

These initiatives will grow jobs and keep people in the Territory, which, in itself, will sustain and grow jobs. I look forward to reporting on the progress and outcomes of these initiatives in future sittings, and I commend this statement to the House.

Madam Speaker, I move that the statement be noted.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Note Paper – Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2015–16

Continued from 25 October 2016.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I wish to continue my remarks with regard to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2015–16, which clearly stated the audited final outcomes for the 2015–16 year. It clearly demonstrated in the document that the economy and the Budget books we inherited from the previous government show that there were many things it got wrong.

In coming to government in 2012, the CLP had the opportunity of a lifetime ahead of it; it had the \$34bn INPEX project delivered to it by Labor, which was a once-in-a-lifetime investment in the Northern Territory economy. It is a huge, phenomenal project for the Northern Territory, one that has seen huge growth and investment in the Northern Territory.

What else did we see in the last term of government? Public assets were sold; TIO, the Territory Insurance Office, was sold and is now gone forever; the Darwin Bus Service was sold; and we saw the long-term lease of the Port of Darwin.

Looking at the conduct of the government over the last four years, what did we see? We saw more than 14 reshuffles. We had a few different Chief Ministers. We almost had a third Chief Minister at one point. Many people filled the role of Deputy Chief Minister. We saw Cabinet reshuffle after reshuffle, which made it hard for the government to get the strategic direction it needed to help build critical relationships with Territorians and business, and to demonstrate leadership for the public sector. It was a very difficult four years.

When you see instability and chaos in your government, that does not promote confidence around the decisions and strategic direction of the government. We have heard the message loud and clear from Territorians about how they felt. Now we have been given the job of government and moving forward.

We need to have a good hard look at the Budget books. The Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and Statements indicate that for 2015–16 the final result was a \$78m deficit and a \$1.85bn net debt. It was \$389m lower than the 2014–15 outcome, but that was thanks to a \$506m proceed from the long-term lease of the Port of Darwin. It comes back to the cost of where we are at.

The government over the last four years had a phenomenal project—the INPEX project—which had a huge impact on the economy. Everybody knew there would be a downturn from construction through to operation, and we will see more of that over the next 12 months, yet it failed to plan and prepare, and it was not ready. We are now in government, dealing with those challenges ahead.

I also note that when you go through the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report you will see there is about \$14m of expenses relating, for example, to the long-term lease of the port. There were some very interesting figures in there. The Department of the Chief Minister had a significant jump in its budget that year as well.

There is a lot of important information, and it illustrates the story of how we went that year. It is also a reflection of what we have seen in the last four years—a government that simply failed to plan. They were constantly chasing their tails rather than getting on with the job of good government and dealing with the challenges ahead that people so desperately wanted them to deal with.

We also saw, for example, the buy local policy—a well-intentioned policy, but it simply was not achieving the results that businesses so desperately needed to see.

The steel manufacturers were a classic example of that. They lobbied the government hard to make sure the government was very clear on the challenges they were facing. With downturn interstate as well, they saw many interstate companies coming here and competing, trying to win work in the Northern Territory. Many of those companies were in really tough financial times. Many closed their doors, but it took the government far too long to act on strengthening buy local policies.

I was very proud to be there with the Chief Minister in the first week of government, where he moved immediately for this government to strengthen buy local policies. When there is a significant downturn, we need to make sure we are supporting local business and government investment. Of course we want to achieve best values for money, but it is important that we make sure there are opportunities to support local jobs and local business, and build the Territory.

The previous government failed to listen—failed the consultation test—and we hear that time and again. It was a huge issue with its performance, and its instability impacted on confidence.

We have seen ongoing population decline in the Northern Territory. Over five years we saw around 11 000 more people leave the Northern Territory than come to the Northern Territory. That creates some real issues, particularly when you look at our dependence on GST revenue, for example; 50% of our revenue is from the GST.

It is critical that we have as many people here as possible. It creates certainty. It helps grow the economy and create jobs, and it is important that our population moves forward. Our net interstate and overseas migration to the Territory—the figures are not looking too good.

Thankfully we have not had any problems with ensuring there are plenty of births here, but if it was not for the natural increase in our population driven by births we would be in some pretty scary territory with our population figures. That is a challenge.

Property prices—look at where they are at. We have seen a decline. I appreciate that there have been some very challenging times in the property market for people, and there are questions around affordability, but these are the cold hard facts that illustrate the challenges we have. Median house prices, for example, in Darwin and Palmerston—the latest data indicates they have come down in the last 12 months, with the average three-bedroom home going from \$610 000 down to \$576 000. We have seen a decline in Katherine from around \$430 000 to around \$400 000.

Median weekly rent prices—unit data in Darwin and Palmerston is down from about \$448 per week to \$390 per week. We have seen a decline in Alice Springs from about \$380 per week to \$350 per week. You can see those impacts flowing through when the population is not there. I have received a lot of feedback from landlords that they are not tenancing their property as quickly as they used to, or they have vacancies for much longer. One piece of feedback I received time and again from people trying to sell their home was about reintroducing incentives for established homes across the Territory, because people were struggling to sell. The turnover in the property market was not going where we needed it to.

One of the first initiatives we implemented when we came to government was the change to first home owner incentives, especially for established homes. We are looking at incentives to get people into the

housing market, but it is also about keeping people in the Territory. If you create an opportunity for a person to own their home they are more likely to stay. We saw that over the previous term of government. There were significant changes to first home owner incentives and it made it very difficult for people to get into the housing market.

We have made some significant changes to stamp duty concessions for first home owners for established homes. That is almost \$24 000 now. That is a significant amount of money, especially when you are not on the greatest wage. If you are in the first home owning section of your life, that is generally pretty early on in the piece. It is a significant change as an incentive to help get people in.

To make it an even better incentive, and to support local business, we have added the \$10 000 home renovation grant, which will support local business in the Territory. It is also an incentive to get people into established homes because we know that often these first home purchases need a bit of love and care—a one-bedroom or two-bedroom unit in Stuart Park or Alice Springs, or a post-Cyclone Tracy house in Wulagi or Anula, will need a bit of work. This is another incentive. You can make your house your own. You can freshen it up with some paint, do a bit of fencing and do what you need to do to buy that home. We have created some great incentives.

We have now received 42 applications, as per my last count, and 29 of those have been approved. We have seen an impact across the Northern Territory; we have seen the take-up in Darwin, Palmerston, the rural area, Katherine and Alice Springs. I hope to see some in the Barkly and Tennant Creek sooner rather than later, Member for Barkly.

We are doing what we can, as fast as we can, to give people a reason to stay in the Northern Territory and to ensure that people get into the housing market, but, most importantly, stay here and make their future in the Northern Territory. That is a critical thing to do at this time—when you look at where we are at.

The *State of the States* report that was released earlier this week by CommSec gave some very real insights into where we are at in the Northern Territory. To quote directly from the report:

The Northern Territory holds fourth position and remains in top spot for economic growth, construction work done and unemployment. However the Territory is ranked last on four indicators – population growth, business investment, housing finance and retail trade

That is an ominous warning, and we already knew that. We knew this is what we would inherit, and we knew of these challenges we would face as a new government. When you look at the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook, which is the most up-to-date document of where the Territory Budget books are at, you can see that the deficit for 2016–17 jumped from \$78m in one year to now almost \$900m. We have seen net debt jump from \$1.85bn to \$2.7bn. That is set to increase in the forward years to over \$3bn.

These are the numbers and challenges we inherited. The previous government had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity put in its lap—a huge project—and it blew it. This is what we have to deal with. There are real challenges ahead and it is important that we get it right.

We have engaged in much debate about infrastructure in this Chamber already. Everyone clearly understands the importance of infrastructure investment at this point in time. We have to make sure government is not only building the infrastructure Territorians need in order to support services to enable more economic growth opportunities and services, but that it is a prime supporter of jobs, businesses and Territorians. It is critical to keep that infrastructure investment going and get that money to Territory businesses.

We heard that message loud and clear, and that is why we made a determined decision, as a new government, that we would hit the ground running and do everything we can to ensure infrastructure investment flows through the economy, and that we do not put handbrakes on the economy. This is not the time for that. This is the time for a government's call to action. People need to see work occurring, money flowing and jobs supported. That is exactly what we are doing as a government. We are supporting jobs and business, and doing what we can to take the responsible measures that need to be taken.

We are in a period of transition, but I am very optimistic. We have a very bright future in the Northern Territory, but do not kid yourself; there is a downturn. The previous government failed to plan for it and we are dealing with that challenge as a new government. We are prepared for that because we know we are going forward.

We will support jobs through infrastructure. We will listen to the regions and our key sectors about where those economic opportunities lie ahead for development of, and growth in, the economy, the growth of jobs, and keeping people in the Northern Territory. We are listening to people and we are proud of our process of going through deeply consultative economic summits and listening to the needs of business in our key sectors and regions. We are listening to Territorians and making sure our plans—and where government spends its money and supports Territorians—are right and that we will be heading in the right direction over the next four years of government. That is why we are doing this up front, because it is critical that you listen, take the advice on board and work hand-in-hand together with Territorians.

We will not follow the example of the previous CLP government. We will listen, be consultative and deliver stability and certainty. That is exactly what we plan to do.

We will step up to the challenges ahead. There are a few challenges ahead aside from the downturn; we face other challenges there. Commodity prices have an impact here in the Northern Territory. We have a large mining sector. These things make a difference, and we have seen that at full effect.

We have a budget which is 70% dependent on the Commonwealth Government, 50% of which is GST revenue. As I have said before, population affects that. But it is also about national partnerships and funding agreements with the Commonwealth. We know that we will see some of those agreements expire in the near future.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing—we have put our commitment on the table: a \$1.1bn, 10-year, record Territory government investment into remote Indigenous housing. We, as a team, are incredibly proud of that. We need to make a difference in the bush and we know housing plays a critical role in that; it will support local jobs for local people.

That will go further than just jobs growth and support; it is about looking at the factors that affect someone's life outcomes. It will make a huge difference and will be a legacy of this government. We are dead serious; that is why we are putting a \$1.1bn, 10-year commitment into remote Indigenous housing.

We have agreements around health and education, which are not cheap areas to fund. The cost of delivering quality education and health is considerable, and we will be working very hard on our funding agreements with the Commonwealth.

We have a wonderful Health minister and Education minister, who will do everything they can to get every cent the Territory needs, because every cent makes a difference. There are risks going ahead and we are very aware of that.

Also, when you come into government you find unfunded legacy commitments from the previous government. I think all ministers are going through their agencies and finding unfunded commitments, which each of us will have to deal with. These are the challenges of government and we are prepared for them. We will work very hard on those going forward, and we are prepared for the job. There is a huge body of work ahead, but everybody is head-down and moving forward in the direction that Territorians need us to take. It will be a challenging time, but we are well prepared for it and will work with Territorians on it.

We will show leadership in this area and do what Territorians have desperately wanted to see over the last four years: strong, stable government that listens to, works with and walks with Territorians, hand in hand. A government that gives certainty—these are the things we are committed to. We introduced more policy than any other opposition had before in the lead-up to the election. We showed people our plans. Our election commitments were all submitted for full costing and we were very upfront with what we intend to do. There is a lot of work ahead, but we are all working very hard as a team to do what Territorians so desperately need.

I want to point out from the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report—the previous year there was a remarkable statement from the Auditor-General saying that the Power and Water Corporation was unable to provide financial statements, so there was no annual report for 12 months from the Power and Water Corporation or Indigenous Essential Services. The Auditor-General, again, highlighted some issues within the Power and Water Corporation.

Within the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report the Auditor-General provided a qualified audit opinion, and it has been issued again on the public non-financial sector corporation balances contained within the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements for 2015–16. The qualified audit opinion has been issued as the Auditor-General was unable to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to support the validity,

completeness, accuracy and classification of property, plant and equipment, and related assets and accounts within the Power and Water Corporation and Indigenous Essential Services.

The continuation of the qualification is as a result of the flow-on effect of asset evaluations undertaken in 2014–15, and remaining unresolved matters as of 30 June 2016.

The numbers contained within the public financial corporation sector include the consolidated numbers for the Power and Water Corporation and Indigenous Essential Services. The non-financial public and total public sectors have also been issued with a qualified audit opinion based on the flow-on effect of the Power and Water Corporation's and Indigenous Essential Services' contribution to the total balances in these sectors.

There were major changes to the Power and Water Corporation in the last term of government and structural separation has had quite an impact on the corporation. However, it is very clear, again, that the government, in my view, went in too hard, too fast and had not done the work in preparation for that structural separation, and we are still contending with many issues now as a result. It rammed through the structural separation without making sure it had a good look at some of the financial reporting issues within the corporation. When you look at some of the increases we have had between the three government-owned corporations, you can see they did not plan ahead.

I do not think the former Treasurer, in previous debates, would have said how proud he was that the structural separation would mean that what was one Power and Water Corporation is now three. We have seen growth in the board, with three boards compared to one. We have also seen, as a result, a lot of back office additions, particularly when they have been trying to sort out their financial issues, which means there are about another 200 employees in all three government-owned corporations. It created quite a process of duplication in many ways. I do not think that was part of the former government's plan to drive efficiencies within the Power and Water Corporation.

We still have some challenges ahead, but we will work hand in hand with the staff; we have some amazing staff at the Power and Water Corporation, Territory Generation and Jacana Energy who are very professional and committed to the Northern Territory, and have been doing a very good job for a long time. But that was another clear example of where the government failed to plan and rammed it through without doing the work beforehand, and we now see those very significant challenges ahead as a new government.

Madam Speaker, we have inherited quite a situation from the previous government, which had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with the INPEX project and failed to plan. In that time the government sold what it could. Where are we now? We have a \$900m deficit and a \$2.7bn debt. We have some challenging times ahead because it failed to plan.

We now have the responsibility to make sure we support jobs, business and Territorians and move this place forward. If we do not get the economy right we have issues. That is why we are listening to those key people in business, the sectors and the regions. Everyone has a role to play, but in a small place like the Northern Territory the decisions of government have a huge impact on people, jobs, confidence and growth. Going forward, making sure we build a resilient, diversified and strong economy will be a priority of this government. Have no doubt, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report clearly demonstrates that we have some real challenges ahead.

Madam Speaker, I move that the paper be noted.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS

Commonwealth Youth Parliament Delegates

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Mark Munnich and Honeylynn Lisson, two young Territorians who were selected by this Assembly as Northern Territory delegates for the 8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament, to be held in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada from 6 to 10 November this year.

On behalf of honourable members I extend a warm welcome to you. Maybe you will have the opportunity to meet some of the members.

Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION
Animals in Darwin Correctional Centre

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I move that the government reverses the agreement that restricts the keeping of animals in the Darwin Correctional Centre.

Last year there was a coroner's report into the death of Peter Fittock at the Darwin Correctional Centre in Berrimah, which stated the following:

He ran an animal breeding and animal rescue program in the low security section. They bred rats, mice, worms and insects that were sold to suppliers of pet foods. It was in an enclosure called the Living Skills Unit, but commonly called the 'rattery'.

He also worked off site for the Ark Animal Hospital in Palmerston and was in the course of obtaining a veterinary nurse's qualification. At the time of his death he had worked there for five or six years and was very well regarded.

...

However, there was evidence from the Vet where he worked that the deceased had been quite stressed because the animal program was under threat. He was of the belief that the government had signed a lease for the new prison that had a clause that did not permit animals on the site.

...

... the Prison Officer who generally accompanied the deceased to his place of employment ... thought the primary reason for his actions was that he didn't want to lose the animals.

...

It is clear that he was a well-respected prisoner that had gained the trust of the Prison Officers, obtained a low security rating and was trusted to run the animal breeding and rescue programs.

In summary the Coroner said:

It appears likely that the stress consequent upon the possibility that losing the animals produced in him and his pragmatism resulted in his decision to end his life.

When I heard that I was saddened that a program that was going so well in the old prison had not been moved to the new prison. So I ask, was there an agreement between the previous Labor government and the owners of the new correctional facility that said animals could not be permitted in the facility? I hope this debate will discover if that was the case and if that decision can be reversed.

In the old Berrimah prison animals were permitted. There were a number of reports in the media which highlighted the positive benefits that came from the use of the animals in the prison. For instance, in June 2008 it was reported that as part of an orphaned animal program, prisoners were raising cockroaches, mice and rats. These vermin were fed to wallabies, possums, whistling kites and blue-tongued lizards. Mr Fittock was part of that program.

Minister Burns, who was the minister at the time, said the program was so successful that it had branched into commercial production. From there a partnership was developed between wildlife rescue and the prisoners, who then started taking care of injured and orphaned animals.

Dr Burns said in a media release at the time:

The program fulfils a key role in our drive to provide rehabilitation options and stop recidivism among prisoners ... The program gives inmates a sense of achievement and pride, and provides many who were involved in building cages and other infrastructure with a new set of skills.

The sale of mice, rats, cockroaches and mealworms made over \$9000, which went directly to wildlife rescue. In 2011 there was another story about an inmate called Pete:

Pete – whose last name cannot be revealed – is a prisoner at Darwin Correctional Centre.

Again, we are talking about the Berrimah prison:

He is one of several inmates taking part in a unique wildlife rehabilitation program run in the low security unit.

'It's really rewarding to see something and know that if you didn't help it, it would die,' Pete said.

...

'It's definitely a lot of work...when you see a little wallaby that comes that still's got its eyes closed, got its ears pinned back, only weighs a couple hundred grams, right from the start you've got to accept no sleep for a month because you've got to feed it every two hours,' he said.

Prison guards say the program has profound therapeutic and rehabilitative effects on the prisoners, and they say they have seen noticeable behaviour changes in some of the most 'challenging' prisoners.

'We had a prisoner that was quite a testy prisoner – he just managed to get out to the low security section. He had an interest in the wildlife program...and he asked if he could build the aviary up,' Deputy Superintendent Rob Miller said.

'Just prior to his release, he came up to me and said "Mr Miller, I've killed things all my life but because of this program I'll never kill anything again" – look at me', he said, 'I've got goosebumps on my arm just talking about it'.

'The change in that prisoner was amazing.'

The program will continue in the new Darwin Correctional Centre.

That was in 2011, but, as we know, the program did not continue at the new Darwin Correctional Centre. This program you introduced into the prison could possibly expand and look at other animals besides native animals, as it was in Berrimah. Perhaps start a program training dogs from the RSPCA to get ready for adoption. As an example, dogs are used in some prisons in America, and here are some stories off the web about those programs:

Earlier this year, Karma Rescue, a nonprofit that saves at-risk dogs from high-kill shelters across Southern California, partnered with the California State Prison Los Angeles County in Lancaster to create 'Paws for Life', a program that matches rescued dogs with inmates who train them to boost their odds of adoption. Programs that pair inmates with shelter dogs exist across the nation, but this is the first program in California to take place at a high-security prison with inmates serving life sentences

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The inmates eligible for the program were part of the prison's Progressive Programming Facility, a voluntary program through which prisoners commit to rehabilitation by upholding an environment free of violence, disruption and illegal drug use.

Some prisoners put down their thoughts as to why they would like to be part of the program:

I've been in prisons and jails ... since the age of 12 and now I am 40. ... One of a multitude of things I lost out on was raising my dog Tippy ... He had an abundance of character and I loved him as one of my family members ... he was my best friend.

If I were chosen to be part of this program, I hope I can help make a dog available for adoption so another family can have as much love and joy in their lives with their adopted dog as my family and I had.

I know some people in society may think that we as prisoners don't have anything good left in ourselves or have redeemable qualities, or be allowed any goodness in our lives; however contrary to that thinking I know in my heart this to be the opposite. Having someone to even suggest that we

as prisoners would be good candidates for the Karma Rescue (Paws for Life program) demonstrates my beliefs that we have much left yet to offer society even if we potentially will never again be a part of that society.

Once again, thank you so very much for this program and opportunity. And, hey, who could better identify with a locked up pound dog than us?

That was signed by Christopher.

Another prisoner said:

My reason for wanting to be a part of Paws for Life is simple. For most of my life I lived a very selfish lifestyle which led me to prison. I see Paws for Life as a chance to save a dog's life. I understand what it's like to be caged up. Also I know this could be a life saving program for these dogs. Plus Paws for Life gives me the chance to give back, to do something for someone else, to give back to a society that I cheated ... I do understand that a dog trained is a dog that's ready to be adopted, and a dog adopted is a life saved, and changed!

That was signed by Travielle.

The article goes on to say:

Fourteen inmates were then selected to train five shelter dogs who stayed at the prison this summer for a 12-week program. From the very beginning, the program struck a chord with everyone involved. Karma Rescue's founder Rande Levine wrote, 'Men who had not seen an animal in decades were openly emotional at the sight of the beautiful creatures before them. Just petting our dogs brought many to happy tears. It was a day I will never, ever forget.'

Several times a week, professional dog trainer Mark Tipton and several dedicated Karma Rescue volunteers drove out to the prison to instruct the inmates on how to train their assigned dogs for 'Canine Good Citizen' certification, a designation that increases the chance that a dog will be successfully adopted.

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Four of the dogs in the program have already been adopted into loving homes. And the inmates gained experience and skills that renewed their own lives and souls as much as the dogs they shared their lives with during those 12 weeks. The program was so successful that it will continue, with 10 new dogs entering the prison in September

That afternoon at the graduation ceremony revealed a part of humanity we don't expect to see around a prison yard. When you think of a warden of a maximum security prison, 'compassion' is not the first word that you would expect to come to mind — but the prison warden John Soto seemed to embody the very concept.

He said:

'My love for animals was the initial kicker, I loved animals my whole life; my wife is my encouragement to look at ways for our inmates who really want to do well. If I could do anything for them to make a change in their life, it's so worth it ... I tell everybody...the difference between them and us is that we turned left and they turned right, we could have easily have turned down the same road and be faced with the same circumstances they are. I would only hope that someone would give me a chance if it happened to me', Mr Soto explained.

Although the program was limited to 14 inmates, it was clear there has been a ripple effect through the prison.

'The calming effect of the staff, the interaction between the staff and inmates is amazing. Before it was yes sir, no sir — now it's more cordial ... it's two human beings having a conversation. The hearts are totally open', said Mr Soto.

For Captain Crystal Wood, having the Paws for Life program represents a 'lifelong dream' of hers to have a dog program at the prison. She noticed a huge change in the inmates in a relatively short time after the dogs entered the prison.

'A lot of times in this setting it's so depressing and you don't show emotion ... feelings and when you have a creature that gives you unconditional love and licks you and doesn't care – you see men who've been in prison for 20 and 30 years break down and cry just for the compassion and the humanity. It's just generally made the yard a calmer place', Captain Wood said.

I saw this when I visited the Ohio Reformatory for Women in the USA about six or seven years ago. I went to the therapeutic section of that reformatory and found that women were looking after greyhounds, which I presume had been retired. They were getting the greyhounds ready for adoption. We could have something similar in the Northern Territory in partnership with the Darwin Greyhound Association and the RSPCA.

There are other opportunities, though. There are up to 1000 prisoners at Holtze. You would think there would be an opportunity to have a poultry farm there, considering the size of the facility. You will have plenty of leftovers. There is plenty of room to have free range chickens. I wonder why the prison could not use its facility to produce its own eggs. You could produce chickens for food, which would be good for the prisoners, and they could also learn about poultry management and, at the same time—not that they would eat the animals, rather have them for the eggs—they could get attached to those animals.

Some of you, maybe not too many of you, may remember at the old Berrimah prison there was a small cattle station; it was called 'mango downs', from memory. Over 12 months prisoners learned to ride, care for and train their horses. Unfortunately that program was shut down.

I remember going there for a celebration—you might say people who qualified got their certificates, and we went there to see the awarding of those certificates to those prisoners. I remember one of the prison officers saying to me that one prisoner, who had not talked or smiled since he had been in prison, had started to smile and talk for the first time.

The prison site at Holtze is large so you would think that keeping a few horses there would not be a big deal. The prison also has its own recycling plant for a sewage system, so some of that could be used to water pastures. It could also be used to keep horses there. The horses finish their life in racing, so it could be a good opportunity for the prison to adopt some of those horses.

I remember speaking to the people at Wongabilla, who had a diversionary program. Wongabilla is the horse facility run by the Police and Citizens Youth Club. They run that just near the old Berrimah prison. I remember being told that most of those young people do not get into trouble after they have been at that facility, where they learned to care for and love the horses they were required to look after. With so many Indigenous prisoner in our facilities, which is very sad, you would think having some horses around would be a natural fit.

I have spoken here before, to the previous minister for Corrections, Mr John Elferink, about the future of the Mataranka Station. I was involved with Mataranka when my daughter went there to train, many years ago, as a jillaroo. Then, when it became part of that animal cruelty scandal and Charles Darwin University took it over, I said to the minister, 'Why don't you take it over and use it as a facility for training prisoners in stock work?'

You might have heard the previous minister, in his last few days in his job, when he said Mataranka Station would be used for juveniles. Since then, the federal Indigenous Affairs minister, Nigel Scullion, has supported that move and is offering to gift that station to one of the Indigenous associations so it can be used for that work. Because it is a big station, it could be used for juveniles and adults. I think it would be a great move if we could do that, because we never got the work camp we were promised in Katherine. The previous minister for Corrections might remember that promise by the CLP, but we never got that farm.

Mr McCarthy: That was a Labor plan, but the CLP scrapped it.

Mr WOOD: It was, but the others said they would do it and it never happened.

This might be slightly moving away from the Darwin Correctional Centre, but Mataranka has a cattle station. What better way for prisoners to raise those cattle and use some of them for supplying meat to

facilities in the Northern Territory? After all, a number of prisoners, under the Sentenced to a Job program, work in the AACo abattoir. You can see an important link there.

The other thing is to help pay for the cost of running Mataranka so it becomes a proper commercial cattle station and sells its cattle as part of the live cattle trade. People then see that their job is not just to ride a horse around and say they have trained a horse, but they can say they worked on a proper cattle station.

There is no doubt there are proven benefits to having animals in prison. Their therapeutic role is the key. Dr Burns, prison officers and social workers know the difference it makes, and it has benefits for the rest of the community, as seen by the Paws for Life program. There is a cost, just as there is for any prison program, but if the benefits outweigh the cost then we should do it.

With so much publicity about Don Dale, whatever the future of animals in our correctional facility is, animals should be part of any program to help kids turn their lives around. I mentioned this in a previous debate about Don Dale. When I visited the facility four or five months ago, I was told I was in for a surprise because I had said to the previous Correctional Services minister, 'Why don't you have a small poultry farm at Don Dale?' I said I was happy to supply feeders, nests, fences and the chickens as long as they supplied the feed. When I went there, they said, 'We have a surprise for you', and I found three Silkies.

That is not exactly the way you should do things. There was the possibility of having a small chicken farm there where those young people could have had the responsibility every morning to collect the eggs, check the water, feed them and let them out. There was plenty of room at the Don Dale centre because it had moved into the old Berrimah prison. There was lots of grass they could have eaten because it was only there for good looks; it was not there as a park. There were opportunities for that to occur.

We must also get our caring for wildlife program up and running again and look at expanding animal programs. If that means sitting down with Lendlease, which is the company that runs the prison, and changing that agreement then so be it. With all the talk about corrections in the NT, we have the opportunity to show that the NT is open to alternative programs, or at least programs that work in partnership with existing programs that show we can lead the way in corrections. I hope the government will support this motion.

Whilst this motion is fairly narrow in the sense it just says we would like to overturn the agreement, if that is the case and it does not allow animals into the new Darwin Correctional Centre—I think the whole philosophy behind having animals is very important. I am not saying it is the major part of rehabilitation or turning people's lives around, but the one thing an animal—especially a dog. I do not think we have used dogs in our facilities, but no matter what sort of lousy person you are, a dog will always be loyal to you. You can be the worst kind of person in the world and a dog will be loyal to you.

Some of these young people have come from families that have no love at all, or very little. I visited Wildman River before it closed down—and I have always thought that was a mistake. I have spoken about Gunn Point, which had animals. It had pigs, poultry, cattle and hay, and people were able to do things. We got rid of that as well.

When I went to Wildman River I sat down with a young bloke there, and all he was worried about was that he wanted to see his girlfriend. It was not mum or dad he wanted to see; there was something missing at home. He just needed someone to give him a hug. That was not his only problem in life, as he had been pinching cars. Sometimes you feel like the use of animals can at least substitute, in some people's lives, a love that they probably never knew in their life if they were from broken homes.

I went to the West Central Community Correctional Facility in Marysville, Ohio, which is down the road from the women's facility. That is a very strict therapeutic community where prisoners help themselves. I sat opposite six of the residents, as they call them, and all of them told me they had been involved in drugs or alcohol when they were young—10 or 11—and were from broken homes, or mum and dad were never home. There is the formula guaranteed to get you into prison.

We have to do something, as the minister for Families said today. We need early intervention. I have said that many times, as has Howard Bath. We need to put more emphasis on parenting. Some years ago in Brisbane schools a trial was done where teachers were trained to identify problem children at a very early age so that when they saw certain behaviour they had to notify someone, and that notification enabled another group of people to visit the family to try to intervene early. As the saying goes, spend a dollar now and you will save 20 later.

We will always have people in prison. It would be lovely to say no one will be locked up, but if we can use animals as part of rehabilitation and to do good for other people, not just keeping animals but doing something for the environment and wildlife—if you run a poultry farm you are caring for chickens that will produce eggs for your fellow inmates in the prison; there is a reason for what you do. That is a good feeling for anyone. Caring for a dog that might not be suitable for adoption—we always see plenty of pictures of dogs on the TV that are up for adoption. If you can care for those dogs and know that by training them they will be suitable to be sent to a good home, that must make some people feel good.

There are many benefits. There are experts around the world who know much more than I do; I just know when you see the changes in people's faces who care for animals—I will tell one more story about animals. In the Ohio women's reformatory, in the therapeutic centre at the bottom basement of this old building, there was a lady who was on death row. She told me she had trained to be a minister. She was looking after raccoons. She basically cared for injured wildlife. I hoped she would not end her life that way and that she would not be executed, because she had found something worthwhile to do with her life, which was to help injured animals in that prison.

I hope the government will see that there are great benefits in having animals in our prisons—and for our youth. I hope the government will move on this motion and sit down with the owners or managers of the prison—it is a public-private partnership—and reverse this decision not to allow animals in the prison.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for bringing this motion to the House today. The government supports the intent of the motion. I listened to your speech, partly in the Chamber and partly in the lobby, while making some final notes. We agree with the philosophy you were talking about regarding the benefit of having animals within correctional facilities.

There is a slight technicality in the wording that I am hoping we may be able to amend. We support the intent of what you are bringing to the House today. I want to read these words and I can circulate them and you can let me know if you might be willing to accept them, because I would like to reach a positive resolution.

I move that all the words after the words 'that the government' be omitted and insert the following words: 'agrees to adopt a sensible policy approach that allows animals to be kept at the Darwin correctional precinct'. Member for Nelson, I understand the Table Office will circulate those words. Perhaps you can let me know in your closing remarks if you are willing to agree to make that change.

The government has sought to make inquiries concerning the current operational and legal framework regarding animals at the Darwin Correctional Centre. To clarify that specific issue, I will first provide some background on animals in the former and current Darwin Correctional Centre. In September 2006 an informal partnership began between the former Darwin Correctional Centre in Berrimah, which you have spoken about, and animal rescue, a Darwin based not-for-profit organisation that operated through the Ark Animal Hospital.

The partnership consisted of prisoners from the then newly-commissioned living skills unit at Darwin Correctional Centre becoming involved in the construction of animal cages and pouches in preparation for prisoners caring for injured and orphaned wildlife. I note that the Member for Nelson has provided some detail, particularly about the program and the relationship for some prisoners.

The relationship with the animal centre was overseen by the Darwin Correctional Centre native fauna program, and they worked closely with other not-for-profit organisations such as Wildcare, FrogWatch and the Northern Territory Wildlife Park.

Prisoners were trained in animal care by animal rescue and the NT Wildlife Park on a regular basis. Discussions were held with animal rescue about whether this could lead to formal vocation training accreditation programs for prisoners.

In July 2007 a food production area was opened at the living skills unit—and I feel like I am repeating some of the Member for Nelson's speech, but I promise I had this written before today. The area produced rats, mice, cockroaches, crickets and mealworms for supply to animal rescue. This food was packaged under the label 'prison harvest'.

The native fauna program at the old Darwin Correctional Centre therefore consisted of the food production area, 24-hour animal care by prisoners, a raptor enclosure for injured birds, a pre-release enclosure for

animals and birds that had recovered, and the ongoing production of animal boxes, cages, aviaries, cane toad traps and barriers.

As we know, in September 2014 the new Darwin Correctional Centre in Holtze opened and it did not make a provision for the continuation of the wildlife rescue program. I am advised that this was for a number of reasons. The design and construction of the new correctional centre did not include what was required for a wildlife rescue program. The wildlife rescue program did not fall within the new budget lease arrangements and operational program costs for the Darwin Correctional Centre, and corrections management had identified a lack of governance around the program at the time. It is fair to say that during the final move arrangements to the new Darwin Correctional Centre, it was not contemplated to have animal programs at the prison.

The Darwin Correctional Centre has clearly not been commissioned for such purposes, and it has been reported that the new prison facility has a no pets policy in the lease agreement under the public-private partnership arrangement which established the prison. In effect, the prison is owned by a consortium and leased back to the department.

However, I am open and prepared for there to be further discussions and negotiations with the project company as to whether animals can actually be housed within the secure perimeter area of the correctional centre. The project company would need to be advised of, and agree to, a change in the policy which currently restricts having animals within the Darwin Correctional Centre. Bringing animals into the Darwin Correctional Centre raises fit-for-purpose and lifecycle maintenance issues.

I hope that addresses some of your questions, but I am willing, as the incoming Minister for Justice, which includes corrections, to investigate these opportunities—picking up on the points you talked about in your philosophy.

The government supports the intent of this motion, and it is opportune to take this time to speak on why the government is supportive in a little more detail and suggest where the government intends to go with this.

Our government is committed to providing programs that create opportunities for prisoners to undertake meaningful activities that contribute to their rehabilitation and reintegration back into our community. I do not wish to speak ill of the old Darwin Correctional Centre's wildlife program; the previous program was obviously very important to many prisoners. But our government's focus, my focus, is on future programs and what we are able to put in place that could create skills which could be transferrable to employment and business opportunities post-release, particularly for prisoners who return home to community, perhaps in more remote and isolated areas.

I will request that the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice and the Commissioner of Corrections explore further opportunities for animal programs, something which does not exist at either of the correctional centres now. This will involve considering the exact location of programs, when they can be conducted, noting requirements for the programs and of the project deed.

Many other jurisdictions have programs running in correctional centres, often centred in low-level correctional facilities, and they provide a range of activities in farming or horticulture. There are different opportunities. The types of programs our government would be keen to look at for prisoners at the Darwin Correctional Centre would be—we see the benefit in giving skills they can take home to a remote centre.

There are two fundamental reasons our government would be in favour of such programs. I will speak to them in my dual role as Attorney-General and Minister for Health.

Engaging individuals in meaningful activities within the corrective service setting can have significant benefits to individuals' health, mental health and wellbeing. Whilst there is limited research on the impact of prison animal programs that have been implemented in Australia for over 10 years, some of those limited findings show a positive outcome, so it would shape our views.

Animals are used therapeutically in prisons and other settings around the world, and the Member for Nelson outlined a number of instances today. Prison animal programs have a value that has been associated with many positive anecdotal reports. Research shows the generic human-animal bond—literature also shows there are health benefits associated with the introduction of animal programs to other institutional environments. Within institutional settings, such as hospitals, nursing homes and psychiatric institutions, animal programs have been associated with the improvement in social or disciplinary behaviour of residents and a reduction in anxiety, and it has helped them feel better about themselves and pass time.

When our young son had an operation—he is very close to our chocolate Labrador and I have photos of him as a baby asleep on the floor with the dog asleep next to him. It is a very close bond. When he was sick in hospital he was able to be visited by a dog and that lifted him and helped with his rehabilitation. I understand the positive effects that animals can have.

I think we all know about Laddie at the Namarluk School. When I hold my mobile offices along the Nightcliff foreshore—when Laddie comes past, the very cute golden Labrador who is the students' pet, it lifts my day. The Member for Casuarina has visited Laddie at Namarluk School. We understand the positive effects of having animals for farming and in general, and what that can do.

Some of the emerging results in research into incarceration settings also indicates that these programs have an impact on reducing incidents of violence, recidivism, blood pressure and depression, and increasing self-confidence and social skills. Participants in one program, caring for and residing with trained service dogs, experience benefits in the way of personal changes in attitudes, emotions and behaviour. They also had the opportunity to give something back to their communities, which is very important and helped them deal with anger, taught them patience and gave them unconditional love. It was certainly important for those prisoners.

There are a number of examples and you have listed some. It can be as simple as a fish tank being installed in a facility. I think we all agree on the positive benefits. We support an amended version of the motion because appropriate programs can also teach skills that will provide assistance to prisoners once they are released back into the community.

Member for Nelson, you have spoken many times about your desire for programs including chook sheds and gardens in correctional centres. Our government also believes that learning how to manage these types of initiatives could give prisoners valuable skills for when they are released back into their communities. Learning how to care for hens and harvest eggs provides opportunity not only for food, but for vital skills for a person when they return home to community.

It also brings added health benefits and improved access to good nutrition. We can see the point of the motion you have introduced. As the minister, I have inherited a justice and corrections system with many issues. I think that is evident. We are re-examining policies and systems. Yesterday the Minister for Territory Families talked about reviewing the *Youth Justice Act*.

Some very positive points were made today. I am not sure if you would be willing to accept the words I have changed in the motion so that we can support it. I explained at the start that it is around a technicality with those words. If we could change those words we would be more than willing to support this motion today.

I look forward to hearing from the Member for Nelson and any other members who wish to speak on this.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition also supports the intent of this motion. I am happy to support the original wording or the amended changes that have been put forward. We need to consider that animals in a facility like this can offer three types of benefits to society as a whole.

One is that we talk about wildlife care, animal rescue and adoption—there is the aspect of contributing back to society. Many people in our society have a lot of care and sympathy towards animals, and I completely agree with them in a lot of instances. Animals are more deserving of love and care than some people in society.

The second potential with these animals in correctional facilities is, as the Member for Nelson highlighted, the ability to make some sort of income or savings. The classic example is eggs; we have the potential for egg production. If you go to the rural area you will find that every Saturday at the Coolalinga markets there are chickens being sold, so there is the potential for all of that, as well as when you get to the old hens you can have some food out of it.

That also raises the last area of an income and savings. When you look at producing something from those old chooks—if I keep on the chook issue—you could teach some of the inmates cooking skills. Some people may not eat the product of their cooking skills, so you could use that food to feed some of the other animals.

The last area is companionship. Animals offer a great deal of companionship to people. While some people in society may think that people in prisons are put there to be punished, they do not need to be punished in excess. To have them in complete isolation on their own, I do not think is very good. If you can counteract that with some companionship with a dog, a chook or whatever, we should support that.

When you talk about larger animals, as opposed to chooks, you get to beef and cattle. There is a lot of potential, especially for our Indigenous inmates, to be taught skills in horsemanship. That gives them a bit of pride. Indigenous people in a lot of communities years ago were great horsemen and cattlemen. You can teach them some of these basic skills.

The Cattlemen's Association here has a program—I cannot remember the name of it—which tries to get Indigenous kids jobs on properties to teach them some of these basic skills. There is the potential to teach some of these very basic skills to these kids—I should not say kids as we are talking about adults—in prison. It gives them something and they come out with some skills.

Many of the issues have been covered by the Member for Nelson and the Attorney-General. We support the motion. We would like to see it.

We accept that there could be problems in regard to ownership and what lease agreements there are between government and the owners of the prison, or the structure around how the prison is run. Foregoing all of that, it is a well worthwhile motion and policy that we should implement as soon as we can.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I would also like to make a small contribution to this motion. I thank the Member for Nelson for bringing it to the House and the government for its amendment.

My experience with the program is not a personal one, but there is a wonderful woman in the Palmerston community, by the name of Pam Norman, who does a lot of things in our community. She volunteered on this program for two or three years before the program ended. In speaking with Pam, I thought it was important to convey some of her sentiments about the program to the House.

From Pam's experience it taught prisoners many skills that gave them job opportunities once they were back in their community. Pam talked to me about the fact a lot of Aboriginal prisoners would learn how to care for animals, make the animal feed, set broken limbs and those types of skills. At the end of their sentence they would then get a job as a ranger on their community, and they thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity that gave them.

Pam saw, firsthand, the value of the program. Pam also mentioned to me the prisoners' ability to work with dogs. She remembered that, on one occasion, some dogs needing to go to the RSPCA were taken to the prison first, and it was the job of the prisoners to rehabilitate the dogs and calm them down before they went to the RSPCA to be rehomed. She reflected on the amazing work of the prisoners in working with those dogs to achieve that.

In her role in the program, Pam used to gather a group of ladies together and knit blankets for the wallabies as they needed them. She laughed when I asked her about this—I know she is very passionate at it—and she assured me she still has a large stack of blankets ready to go. She has given quite a few of them away to other wildlife organisations, but she still has a large stock there. If the program was to get up and running I hope someone puts out calls to Pam; I can give you her number. We can then get those blankets out to the wallabies in no time at all.

I want to quote Pam, who is a strong advocate of this program. She said to me, 'Anything that can give quality information to our prisoners is important. More research should be done around the benefits of dogs in prison and the benefit it has on prisoners. Anything that gives more consideration to our wildlife, encourages people to learn more about wildlife and gives people opportunities for future employment is very worthwhile and important.'

I thank the Member for Nelson for bringing this motion to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, if the Member for Spillett could thank Pam for her excellent comments—please pass that on. They were excellent comments.

You can get a bit over-emotional about some of these things because, in reality, we are dealing with people who—many of them—deserve to be where they are for doing bad things in life. As the Member for Daly said, people need to be punished, but you do not need to take that to the extreme, otherwise we would just

stick them in a cell with bread and water for the rest of their lives. We have to believe that they are human beings and there is hope for them to rehabilitate. At the same time they need a period of time to make up for what they did. Making up for what they did is good for the community. I am trying to think of the T-shirt that the residents at the Marysville West Central therapeutic community. 'Giving back to the community' was on the back of the shirt they wore while they worked on jobs for the local council.

As the Member for Spillett said, by rehabilitating dogs and training them so they are suitable for adoption; fixing up animals that have been injured; learning the skills of a poultry farm; learning to ride a horse and using those skills to get a job later in life; learning about animal husbandry; looking after cattle that could be used to supply meat for the prison and income to offset the cost of the programs—that is all paying back to our community. This is not just a feel-good exercise, it is an exercise in doing something positive, not only for the prisoners but for our community.

I heard the Member for Daly use the word 'companionship'. That is a great word. The Attorney-General said animals are used in hospitals and mental health facilities, places where people are sick. They have a great use in rehabilitation. There are multiple reasons that animals would be so good in our correctional facilities. I thank the minister for her comments. I understand she has given me reasons the new prison had difficulties in relation to moving the programs from the old prison to the new program.

Considering the new prison is a million times bigger than the old prison—and I used to get into trouble from people who would say, 'You put it there'. There is a good reason for that. I wanted it there because there was water and good soil; it was largely away from any residential areas, even though some people thought it was next door to them. There is the ability to use that land for these purposes.

You do not want to put a dog pound there. The prisoners would be awake all night and there would be some internal complaints if dogs are barking all night. Part of that is about training the dogs. That is what you are trying to do. A dog that keeps barking is not exactly one the RSPCA will let out to someone living in the suburbs; that would be more of a nuisance.

The changes to my motion, which are that the government agrees to adopt a sensible policy approach—how could I say no to that? I do not want them to have a silly policy approach to animals. I understand the program will cost money. You have to live within a budget, and that is why I have talked about other ways to recover some of that money. We would have to look at the design and where these programs would go.

It is funny that when we say the prison is not necessarily designed for animals yet—an example is a prison in the United States, in California, which is a high-security prison. I will bet my bottom dollar that prison was not made for animals, but they made room for them. A dog does not take up much space.

A member: On the bed.

Mr WOOD: Yes, on the bed. The management needs to be flexible and sensible. There will be some practical issues, but, like a lot of things, if you look for the negatives too much you never get anything done. If you look for the positives you will get something done. I am sure we can find a way around some of the difficulties, because the outcomes are more important than the problems people might perceive as being too difficult to overcome.

I was on the ticket box at the football last Sunday and the Fittock family stopped there. I mentioned that I was bringing this forward today and they were very pleased. We should not forget that, in the end, I brought this here today mainly because when I read the coroner's report I could not sit there and do nothing about it. It seemed to me a terrible thing to happen that some decision within the bureaucracy, for whatever reason, meant that this person who lived for his animals and worked at the Ark Animal Hospital, and was nearly ready to obtain a veterinary nurse qualification, decided to take his life because the word had gotten back to him that the program would not be taken to the new Darwin Correctional Centre.

I dedicate this to that man and his family because I believe that he was doing what our prisons should be doing: caring for animals. I do not know whether I need to say anything official, Attorney-General, but I support the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION
Infrastructure Plan

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls on the Territory government to be transparent on its forward infrastructure plan and to demonstrate to Territorians how a change of plans to meet its election commitments is to be funded.

This is the first motion the opposition has brought before this new parliament. We recognise the fundamental importance of the role of government in delivering new infrastructure across the Northern Territory. We sometimes puff up the business of government to be something more complicated than it is, but, at the end of the day, governments really only make laws and spend money.

When it comes to spending money it is a responsibility of government to ensure decisions are aligned to effective policies and tailored to ensure overall benefit to the Northern Territory economy. It is well recognised that spending on infrastructure has a multiplier effect on the economy and is vital to the creation of jobs and the strength of business in the construction sector, as well as other related industries. This is particularly important in a small jurisdiction like the Territory, where the government has a disproportionate role in the economy as compared to other larger states around Australia.

Apart from very large construction projects like the Ichthys LNG Project, government is the largest and most consistent source of construction demand in the Territory. Businesses across the Territory are heavily reliant on this regular source of construction work to support their operations and maintain a stable construction workforce. The Country Liberals recognise the critical role of government in stimulating and maintaining the construction sector and the flow-on effect it has right through the Territory economy.

This is why we place such a heavy emphasis on the delivery of new projects, and why we produce consecutive record infrastructure programs. This is why we created the Infrastructure Development Fund. This is why we stepped up and funded the Palmerston Regional Hospital. This is why we allocated \$100m from the lease of the port for a new shiplift facility, and \$100m as a part of the Boosting our Economy package.

We get it and business gets it. This is exactly why it is so concerning that a new Labor government is applying such a relaxed approach to this vital part of the Territory budget. Here is what we know. Treasury has advised that the Labor party capital commitment exceeds capacity by \$223.5m. We also know that these costings did not include the full extent of commitments made through the election. For example, only \$13.85m of the total \$61.7m in repairs and maintenance grants to schools is accounted for, leaving a further \$47.85m in additional unfunded commitments from that one promise alone.

You have said that your new projects will be prioritised over currently approved projects. Over the forward years to 2019–20 you have committed \$425m worth of new projects. Treasury has advised you that funding these projects through reprioritisation may be difficult.

Say you have a promise. You have promised Territorians the world and have not thought through how that might be funded other than through reprioritisation and substitution. There are no special tricks with budgets. The laws that govern them are fixed. There are only two ways out of this predicament. Either you cut projects that have already been approved or you find money from elsewhere. We know that; the public knows that; business knows that. There is nothing to hide. This is the simple fact of the matter. We do not have an argument with that. You won government; you have the mandate to deliver on election promises.

What is unclear, though, is which projects will be cut, when will they be cut and where the extra money will be coming from. This is a sensible issue. It is important. The government should not be flippant on this matter. It cannot run loose with such a vital part of government policy. We have sought information on how this process will work and we have been stonewalled. We have asked questions in this Chamber and have been fobbed off. We could not even get a straight answer from the minister for Infrastructure on whether or not the Zuccoli primary school will progress during this term of government.

We have submitted a freedom of information request seeking information about the internal processes for achieving the necessary savings to fund the lavish election promises. That request was refused. We requested a briefing from the Treasurer's office and, initially, that was knocked back.

The scary bit about this—the really worrying part—is that I honestly do not think all this is intended to conceal information. It falls a long way short of the openness and transparency so frequently trumpeted by the new government. I do not think there is a grand conspiracy to cover up a secret plan. I think the truth of

the matter is that there is no plan. I do not think the government knows how it will achieve the necessary savings to fund its election promises, or has a clear idea how they will be implemented.

For example, the government has committed to provide \$300 000 to each and every school in the Territory, all 189 of them—government, non-government, urban and remote. Taminmin will receive \$300 000, with 123 students and \$300 000 will go to Woolianna, with 62 students. We have sought information about how this allocation process will work. Will it be by grant to a school for a special purpose? Will it go to the department of Infrastructure to deliver? Will it work differently for government and non-government schools? No information has been made available. That will be part of the Cabinet decision-making process, we have been told. What a cop-out!

Beyond this, the government has provided no detail on how this promise will be funded. This is the real rub. We are talking about \$15m per year for this commitment alone. We have been told that, like every other commitment, it will be funded through substitution of existing works. What are these works and when will these details be known? We know you have canned the Katherine Gorge skywalk, but what other projects will go or be pushed out to later years? We have over \$100m per annum in remote housing commitments, all to be funded by substitution from existing programs.

Many of the existing programs within the current program are funded over multiple years. It is not feasible to simply down tools halfway through building a road, school or hospital. That is not the way infrastructure programs are delivered. Treasury has advised that there is only capacity over the next four years to support new or expanded projects up to a combined value of \$300m. That only gives you \$75m a year to play with. Between the new money promised to schools for repairs and maintenance and the new money promised to remote communities for new housing, we already have up to \$115m in extra commitments each year.

We are \$40m a year short before we even touch the raft of other promises made by this government. Which departments' capital works programs will be slashed to fund these promises and what projects will be cancelled or deferred? This government fails to understand that projects do not appear from nowhere in the year they are funded. They are often years in the making, with initial consultation, scoping and design occurring long before the project ends up on the infrastructure program. This is a question about government's competence and ability to make decisions, but more importantly it is a question about certainty for business.

Construction businesses in Darwin and Alice Springs are making decisions today about how they will operate over the next few years, whether they are employing staff or letting them go. The list of upcoming projects, where they will happen and when they will happen is not a matter of casual interest for them; it is fundamental to the survival of their businesses.

We are fully supportive of the government's commitment to increase funding to remote housing, but there is an important question to be asked about what work will not go ahead in regional centres like Alice Springs and Darwin in order to fund the remote housing program, and what businesses will then be affected. It is not clear that the government members have turned their minds to this issue; it does not even appear to be on their radar. They will get a shock. Many of these businesses will simply not be in a position to shift their focus to chase remote housing work. They will represent a \$100m reduction in the total amount of work that was previously available to them.

Some businesses will be deeply affected by these decisions and they need to start planning for that now. It is useless to say to them, 'Wait until after we have had an economic summit; we need to do a bit more consultation. This is a Cabinet decision and we will let you know as soon as we make it.' It is just not good enough.

How can it be that the Chief Minister can come out with a brand-new decision about increasing the number of public holidays in the Northern Territory without a scrap of consultation, yet when it comes to something as important as the Territory's infrastructure program he is prepared to flip flop, stall and obscure. It comes down to the government caring a great deal for its union mates, but it is very dismissive of the small business community, which is the backbone of the Territory economy. It is happy to bump up the cost of doing business for local restaurants and clubs at the flick of a pen—find out about it in the newspaper—yet when it comes to certainty about flow-on construction work, the government does not say peep.

It is unsustainable and run entirely counter to government's own commitment to openness and accountability. It is cynical and has real and detrimental impact on local construction businesses.

I will move to a few issues in my own electorate. For starters, we had the Primary Industry minister spouting that he would finish the Dundee boat ramp. When questioned on whether he had seen that boat ramp, he dodged the question. 'I went there plenty of times while I was in opposition', but he did not state whether he had seen it. If he had, he would see that it is almost completed.

That is on top of the two bridges that we built in government, the Charlotte and the Leviathan. Both of those bridges were promised by the previous government but were never built. We also committed, in our budget, to do the Rocky, which would then complete all the bridges on Fog Bay Road, leading out to Dundee. That is an issue where they say, 'Yes, we do everything for fisheries and for tourism'. These are two key issues, the boat ramp and the Rocky.

I will explain why Labor did not build those two bridges. It was because they happened to get money to put the bridge across the Daly. Whoops! Sorry. It is half a bridge. It is a bit like the half a police station you are proposing for Palmerston and Katherine. If you go to the Daly you will see we have half a bridge. We have the side of the bridge that you drive on when you go to Wadeye. The side of the bridge when you return from Wadeye does not exist. They have a record of only half finishing things.

When that bridge was built they said the west of the Daly would become accessible almost all of the year. Everyone there knows that was absolute rubbish; you drive off the bridge and into water at six metres.

We have started the lifting of Yellow Creek, but Yellow Creek is not sufficient on its own. There is still design work being done on Saddle Rail Creek. I want to know if the government will commit to finishing that. If they do not finish that we have a waste of money on the bridge, an unnecessary delay in the bridges on Fog Bay Road. The people cannot make any use of that infrastructure. I think the bridge cost about \$23m or \$26m—I am going on memory.

These issues are very important and the people of the Daly want to know that. It is not just people of the Daly; the Member for Barkly had a dig about the amount of money we had spent in the Daly area. What he failed to recognise was that when speaking about sealing Litchfield Park Road—the bridge over the Leviathan Creek, and the bridges on the way to Fog Bay are applicable to the whole Territory. They are key tourism roads, and key roads that fishermen use, which enable people to get out and enjoy our lifestyle.

While I stick up for the Daly electorate, and am very proud of it, those projects are not just specific to the Daly; they are for the whole of the Territory.

The other issue is Alice Springs; I want to table a letter from Alice Springs Town Council. It was given to the previous Chief Minister and clearly outlines the government's priorities in regard to infrastructure there. They are very concerned about whether this government is willing to go ahead with the upgrade to Anzac Oval, the crematorium or the construction of a community events centre, all of which comes to about \$3m.

I seek leave to table that document, Madam Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr HIGGINS: I think the issue of infrastructure—the spending and reprioritisation—is something this government has clearly fallen down on. It was an issue that the government was very upfront on saying how open and accountable it would be, yet this is the biggest impact on the whole of the Territory economy. There seems to be no plan in place, and no details as to when a plan will be available.

Madam Speaker, I commend the motion.

Ms MANISON (Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics): Madam Speaker, firstly I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward this motion to General Business Day. It is a really important motion that this Assembly calls on the Territory government to be transparent in its forward infrastructure plan, and to demonstrate to Territorians how a change of plans to meet the election commitments is to be funded.

We will support your very important motion. It is important to bring the debate into the Chamber because the Leader of the Opposition is absolutely right in what he is saying. There is a need for infrastructure and investment right across the Northern Territory, where governments must be very careful in how they think about their approach.

How infrastructure is delivered, where it is delivered—what are the benefits of that infrastructure investment? Is it not only because it will provide service—does it open up a road to access better services?

Does it open up the opportunity to drive more business development in an area? What is the value of that project at any one time? How many jobs will it provide? Where will those jobs be and how will they support business? It is critical at the moment. It is a very important body of work, but it is not easy because we know how important it is and the complexities around it in regard to getting those decisions right.

Prior to the NT election we were very up front about our commitments. We sent our costings and commitments through to Treasury for assessment and, yes, they assessed it. 'You will need to look at reprioritising around \$223m worth of infrastructure.' This year alone we are talking about an infrastructure program of \$1.7bn, but this is still no easy task.

We are not just looking at a project on a piece of paper; we are actually thinking it through. We are thinking about the consequences of moving or deferring a project and what that may involve. We are thinking about the best value for money and the best support it gives to the NT economy at any one time. It is something we need to listen to Territorians about.

We are not ashamed of the economic summit process we are holding. We are not ashamed to sit down with Territory business, key sectors and people from regions right across the Northern Territory to hear, understand and work with them on what the priorities of this government should be to drive this economy forward.

We are at a critical point. I spoke in the Chamber earlier today about what we have inherited as a new, incoming government and where the economy is at. We have come off a government that handed us an economy where we have a deficit sitting in the vicinity of \$900m. The debt is sitting around \$2.7bn and we have some real challenges going forward.

You only have to look at some of the key economic data to see that we have had four years of a government in the Northern Territory that had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity at its feet with the INPEX project, a \$34bn project to benefit the Northern Territory economy, and we are now sitting at a point where we are seeing significant challenges.

I will read from the CommSec *State of the States* report that came out earlier this week, and how it views the Northern Territory economy at the moment:

The Northern Territory holds fourth position and remains in top spot for economic growth, construction work done and unemployment. However the Territory economy is losing momentum, ranked last on four indicators – population growth, business investment, housing finance and retail trade.

We are well aware that there are some challenges. You only need to look at the gross state product figures and the state final demand. Looking at the Budget papers for 2014–15, there was a whopping 10.5 figure for GSP of growth—that moderated down to 2.1 in 2015–16, and in this financial year it is sitting at 1.5. Looking at the state final demand figures, in 2014–15 it was sitting at 8.3. In 2015–16 it was -13.5, a very significant change, and is forecast this financial year at -2.3.

We are in challenging times. We know that population growth is not going in the direction we need it to. The population figures are only staying in the positives because of births, the natural increase in the population. In the last five years around 11 000 more people have left the Territory than have come here.

Net interstate migration is a challenge for us, and overseas migration, and making sure we have the population we need in the Northern Territory. As I pointed out earlier, if we do not have the population it impacts our GST and a range of things, which is a concern.

Look at housing prices in the last 12 months, the median house price in Darwin has gone down from \$610 000 to \$576 000. We have also seen issues with rentals, so there is no doubt there are some real challenges. That is why at a time like this, when it is very clear that we need to make sure Territory businesses and jobs are supported, and that we do everything we can to support growth in the Territory, a government's infrastructure investment is critical.

We are continuing the \$1.7bn infrastructure investment the government brought forward in its last budget. Now is not a time to pull back; it is a time when we need to support jobs and businesses. There is \$600m worth of projects under way or committed at the moment. We have almost \$70m worth of projects out to tender. There is another \$48m of tenders soon to be awarded. The department is working as hard as it can

to make sure those projects get out the door. It is vital that we do all that to make sure we keep more people in the Territory at a time when we know there are significant risks.

The INPEX project is moving from the construction phase into the operation phase, which means there are approximately 4000 people there classified as local workers. That will be scaled down, so it is really important we create jobs, and investing in infrastructure is a great way to do that locally.

I note that the Leader of the Opposition was concerned about certainty going forward. That is something we well and truly know—infrastructure projects do not just come out of the blue. Mind you, in the last term of government, sometimes they did. Generally there is a structure for an agency to put together the planning and design work to push an infrastructure project through. It is no small task; it requires significant work.

That is another thing which ensures that government looks at things very sensibly, carefully, methodically and strategically to make sure you get those decisions right. The opposition would like to see those decisions right here, right now, but I do not have them. We are working through that because we understand it is critical that we get it right. When we make these hard decisions they will be on the public record and you will be able to scrutinise every one of them.

We must own those decisions because we are the government, and we make those hard decisions. You will have the opportunity to do that, and it is important that you do. We need to make sure we make the right decisions, but I cannot provide you the details right now. We are working through this and it is important that we get it right.

In the meantime, the department of Infrastructure is ensuring that the infrastructure projects are brought forward. A significant body of work is occurring right across the Northern Territory and it is vital that the work keeps flowing through to support business.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned in his motion the importance of business having a line of sight on the certainty and direction of government investment going forward. We agree with that wholeheartedly. Through the economic summit process we will develop the 10-year infrastructure plan to give business a clear outline of where the government intends to go with its infrastructure investment.

One thing we have heard from business is about going from busy periods to quiet periods—a lot of these are long-term Territory businesses—and the challenges of sustaining their workforce. No business wants to lay off their loyal, good workers; they want to keep them. An important part of making sure there is a structured and considered delivery of infrastructure is making sure business has that line of sight in order to plan for and support their workforce. We want to keep people in the Northern Territory and give them certainty; there is no doubt about that.

We have been very up front and clear about where our priorities are. As any new government comes in, it has the responsibility of looking forward. I liked the simplicity of the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition—but it is such a good statement—that government is there to make laws and spend money.

Mr Higgins: Simple, hey?

Ms MANISON: It is a very simple way to put it and a very clear and accurate statement, Leader of the Opposition.

It is important that we get that investment right. At a time when we are going through a period of significant downturn you hear from businesses about their concerns. It is important that we, as a government, make the right decisions to support where we want to take the Northern Territory and support jobs and economic growth.

Another important point about the decisions we make about reprioritisation is to ensure they are decisions for the entire Northern Territory, making sure they are balanced decisions that see continued investment throughout the Northern Territory. We need investment in the bush, the urban areas and the towns.

It is about making sure you get the balance right when deciding where you invest infrastructure money. It is also important to get a balance of projects. It is not all about roads; you need to ensure there are good construction projects as well. It is important to get that body of work right.

Yes, it is taking some consideration, but we are committed to working through it. We will not make those decisions at the drop of a hat. We are six or seven weeks into government and we need to get them right. They are too important to get wrong. That is why we are making sure we look at them carefully, and we will listen at our economic summits to ensure these infrastructure investments do what we need them to do for the economy, while we are experiencing some tough times, to make sure we drive the economy forward.

There are exciting times ahead in the Northern Territory, but we have our challenges. Never lose your optimism about this place. The Territory is a wonderful place with a very bright future. If you look at the Defence White Paper you will see about \$8bn of Defence investment forecast for the Northern Territory in the next 10 years. That is a huge investment. About \$1bn of that will flow through between now and about 2020—more significant investment.

We are proud of our investment. I spoke earlier today about the \$1.1bn over the next 10 years which we are investing in remote housing. That is a critical investment here in the NT. We have continued the support that the previous government started for the NT Infrastructure Development Fund. That is another thing we have gone through in a bipartisan way, seeing what interest there is to invest in the NT. We have continued that body of work.

We stuck with the initial \$200m and decided that rather than putting another \$100m in there from the port when we need the economic stimulus now, we would bring the \$100m into the Territory Budget to invest in infrastructure, and that is exactly what we are doing. We need to make sure government money is flowing through where we need it to. We need it to support jobs, business and the economy. This reprioritisation is no easy task, but we are committed to doing it. We are committed to making sure we get the right plans in place.

We will own those decisions; they will be put on the public record and you will be able to scrutinise them. With a General Business motion to be brought into the House, and being expected to provide answers right here and now—I do not think that is the sensible way to go about it. At the moment this is about getting it right, listening, considering and weighing up the best path forward, and we are doing that.

I have made it very clear to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics not to take the foot off, but to keep going forward to get those tenders out the door and support local business. It is doing that. There is over \$600m worth of work at the moment and another \$120m that is either out to tender or about to be awarded. Those tenders will ramp up. That \$1.7bn investment is continuing.

It is no easy task, but we are working through it. We are determined to make sure we get these decisions right for the best interest of Territorians, and to make sure we are driving the economy, supporting jobs and local business. It is important that it is considered and you get it right.

We will bring those decisions forward. The members of the opposition and the Independents will be able to scrutinise those. I just do not have them at hand right now because it is a very important body of work that we are doing in order to get that right.

It is a very important debate we are having. It is clear we have inherited an economy with some real challenges going forward. We have inherited an economy where the previous government came in with an amazing once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the \$34bn INPEX project, and then we saw, over the last four years, constant reshuffles and changes to the Cabinet. That made it very difficult for it to get on with the day-to-day work and grind of delivering good, stable government that has the capacity to plan and meet these challenges going forward.

Earlier this year business was crying out for support. I spoke earlier today about meeting the steel manufacturers, and the challenges they faced, which they raised with the government. It was very slow to react to changing its buy local policy, which has a big impact for local business.

I am very glad to say that, coming into government, we listened and we further strengthened that buy local policy to make sure more important infrastructure work goes through to local business, especially at this critical time. That was an important change and something we are very proud of.

We are looking forward to our economic summits and listening, making sure our plans for the Territory align with where business, sectors and regions believe we need to go, making sure that shapes the budget next year and that we are walking together to make the most of every opportunity for the Northern Territory going forward. That is critical.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion forward. We will be making those decisions transparent. We will be open to your scrutiny and we will be held to account by you and the people of the Northern Territory. It is a very serious and important matter. It is critical that we think carefully about it to make sure we get it right. Yes, it will be on the public record, and it will be there for you to make sure we have thought about it carefully and that we get it right. I totally agree with the seriousness of this motion and how critical it is at this point in time.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Dr Josè Ramos-Horta

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the honourable Dr Josè Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former President of the Republic of Timor-Leste. He is also the uncle of the Member for Katherine. Welcome to the Timor-Leste representative in Darwin. Welcome to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I take pleasure in talking tonight to this very important motion brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Daly.

I do not think I recall a new government ever standing in parliament, in the second week of parliamentary sittings, and admitting it does not have a plan. I find that quite disturbing, shocking, blatantly truthful and open, but I have never heard that. I have never heard a Treasurer tell a jurisdiction, their people, that they do not have a plan, will formulate the plan over time and will let us know what it is.

Four years ago I was part of the CLP government; we had a 100-day plan. We made sure that when we came to government we hit the road running. We knew we had to deliver and we knew we were under pressure. Now, in absolute contrast to anything I have ever seen or heard, we have a government which is openly saying it does not have a plan; it is under no duress; it will take its time; it will work at a snail's pace; it will not make any decisions until it is ready; and in the meantime we can all just sit here and wait. That is absurd and shocking.

I thought it was interesting last week when the Treasurer told us there would be no mini-budget. When most new governments come in they feel an absolute urgency and necessity to reset the economic agenda, but not this government. This government has decided it will wait until May, or whenever it brings down a full budget. It will be approximately nine months into its term before it tells us what its economic agenda is, before it puts something in writing saying, 'This is our economic agenda. This is what we will do. Here are the figures; you can scrutinise the figures in May.' That is pretty much what we have been told. I am not sure why you think this is okay. It is not okay. In fact, it is completely unacceptable on any terms.

I sat back and put my business cap on. My husband and I have run a business for the best part of 17 years, or thereabouts. If my husband and I opened our business on day one without a business plan or a plan of what we needed in order to operate our business—a budget and a clear economic vision for our business—we would not have lasted six months. We would have been bankrupted very quickly.

This government does not feel any necessity to lay out any type of plan for us about how it will achieve its election commitments or keep the wheels of government turning over. It is quite incredible. Earlier I thought, 'This government has come to power because the previous government lost power, not because of what it has put on the table or because it has sold anything special', because it has not.

The Treasurer told us today that the government does not have an agenda. By default we have this large Labor government that has no plan for the Northern Territory when it comes to infrastructure. We just heard the Treasurer very openly tell us that until it has a range of economic summits throughout the Northern Territory it will not have an infrastructure agenda and there will be no plan for how it will spend its \$1.7bn of infrastructure funding. It will wait until it has spoken to all and sundry before it puts together a plan.

That is not how you run a business, and it is not how you run a government. I am surprised that anyone who is employed as an adviser to your government could let you stand in parliament and say and do this. It is outrageous.

Unlike the members of government, other people in this Chamber have a plan, a list of priorities and a vision of what they want to achieve. I have one for Alice Springs. I presented my list of priorities in parliament last week. I laminated three copies and gave them to the local members of parliament whose offices are based in Alice Springs because I want to see those things achieved, or some at least, in the next four years.

That is what you do when you are a government. You set your agenda and hit the ground running. You do not come into government saying, 'Gee whiz, we haven't really thought of that, but when we decide we will let you know and you can scrutinise us then'.

Don't you realise that time is of the essence? Time means money. That is how businesses operate. You do not have time to contemplate your navel and think about what you may or may not do. Consultation is very important but so is action. If you do not act, keep the wheels of government turning or run your business in an efficient manner according to a business plan, you will go bankrupt; you will go out of business. I fear that is how this government, with no plan or vision—no plan for how it will allocate the \$1.7bn of infrastructure funding, or for anything else I suspect—will function.

I think you will find that people will lose patience. I have lost patience here and now. I have been on radio several times and I have started to express concerns about cracks I see in the government, but I have always premised it with, 'I will cut them some slack. I'll give them some time.' From what I have heard today it will take many weeks, if not many months, for them to come up with what anyone would regard as a proper plan for a proper government.

I am horrified and disappointed. I thought this government had its act together, but no. The Treasurer has very clearly told us that—and we can go back over *Hansard* after this and look at what she said in precise terms. She said, 'No, we don't have a plan. We do not have decisions right here, right now. We will not make those decisions at the drop of a hat.'

We are seven weeks into this government, which is equivalent to around 60 days, and there is no plan. Are we to wait another seven weeks to get a plan, or another 17 weeks, or do we wait until May when the Budget comes down?

You cannot play this small target for too much longer. In fact, I suggest you cannot play it for any longer. You have just made a horrendous admission, and the pressure will be on you.

One of the few decisions you have made, which sent the business world into a panic, is extending public holiday penalty rates to New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve. That should be the least of your priorities. Putting pressure on the business community, possibly closing the doors on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve for some businesses that will not be able to afford to pay double-time-and-a-half for their staff from 7 pm onwards, and possibly cutting employment opportunities because businesses cannot pay those labour costs, is unnecessary.

You talk about growing the economy. I do not think anyone in government with any significant role in the Cabinet, without judging the people I do not know, has any idea of how to run a business. Economics 101: if you increase the cost of labour, that must flow on to the consumer. Someone must pay when the goods and services provided on Christmas or New Year's Eve increase in cost. It can be passed on to the consumer, or employment can be cut because businesses cannot afford to pay but someone has to pay.

We heard that the cost of the proposal announced this week to the public service will be \$450 000. Where will that money come from? Has it been budgeted for? I suspect not. I suspect, from listening to the Treasurer, that nothing has been planned. The government will just talk to people for the time being. How much did you give NTCOSS last week? Was it \$50 000?

It is all very well to allocate small amounts of money, but making a ridiculous decision like this puts pressure on businesses and gives workers a wonderful Christmas and New Year's Eve present they did not ask for. But there are other things you could spend money on. I will give you credit for your strong social and welfare agenda. You have a plan to fix problems in the juvenile justice system and the child protection system, and you have a strong agenda around domestic violence and other social issues. Typically, as a Labor government you know where you want to go socially and from a welfare perspective. When it comes to the economy, however, we have had a shocking revelation tonight: you have no agenda. The Treasurer, a lovely, competent and smart lady with everything going for her must reflect her government, and her government has no economic agenda.

Going back four years, when I was Treasurer, the deficit we inherited from Labor in 2012 was almost exactly the same as the deficit you inherited six weeks ago, Treasurer. It sat at around \$900m, so there is no difference there. Your projected debt in 2012, under a Labor government, was \$5.5bn. I remember it clearly. The projected debt you have inherited, as I heard you say before, is just under \$3bn. You have, in fact, inherited a better financial situation than what the CLP government did four years ago.

You are in a strong position in some respects, but offset that with the slowing economy. You talked last week about the fact economic growth in the NT has gone from over 10% a few years ago to a projection of 1.5% this year. Things are slowing; they were predicted to slow years ago. It is all about INPEX. We knew this would happen. You were probably right; the CLP government did not prepare adequately for this downturn in the economy, but we all knew it was coming.

The Territory being what it is, is a very difficult place to manage financially because our revenue options are so limited. You are learning this now, Treasurer; I learned it four years ago. We have a very minimal range of revenue streams for the NT. One of the main ones is through mining. The moratorium on mining means the revenue you will expect from mining will be reduced significantly. You will have less money over the next four years if you keep this moratorium in place, than any previous government.

Mining is at an all-time low in the NT. I was told recently that there are only 15 operational mines, or thereabouts, in the NT at the moment. That is the lowest number of operational mines we have seen in the NT for decades. There is a lot going on, Treasurer, a lot you need to get your head around. It is not just about consulting with people and having summits. You have to get your hands dirty to understand the full complexities of the NT economy. Through the nature of history and the fact the CLP probably made some decisions you do not agree with, you have inherited a very tough economic situation.

I do not envy you at all; it will not be easy. You will not have the money to honour your election commitments. That is clear as day; you will not have the funds. You will have a range of options; you can either cut back on existing services, borrow money, put some of your election commitments on hold or not do them at all. Either way, the options are not good.

I am not here to paint a gloomy picture because I feel upbeat about my role in this parliament, which is to focus primarily on my electorate of Araluen in the town of Alice Springs that I love and adore. I will fight for the next four years to make sure we get our fair share of funding, and that includes infrastructure funding. But from what I have heard today from the Treasurer, I am not sure that any of us will get anything out of this government in infrastructure initiatives.

I have a list of at least eight major infrastructure projects I would like to see get off the ground in Alice Springs. I went through those last week and will not go through them again. I was going to ask a question in parliament today about what new infrastructure projects you have planned for Alice Springs, Chief Minister and Treasurer. Obviously the answer I would have received would have been, 'Oh, gee, we have not decided yet what the heck we will do with that. We need to consult. We will take our time. We have not made any decisions and we do not have a plan.'

I am quite amazed at the lack of professionalism from the other side of the Chamber. You do not come to government without a plan, usually a 100-day plan. Most governments do that. It is about accountability and it is an opportunity to demonstrate what you have achieved—the fabulous things—in the first 100 days. We are 60 days in and we have not seen anything. This crazy decision about public holiday penalty rates for workers on New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve seems to have been plucked out of thin air. The government seems to think it will grow the economy and stimulate population growth. Economics 101—I do not get it. This new government needs to be seriously mentored in economics and educated on what stimulates an economy.

An economy will be stimulated by investment. Government investment in the Northern Territory is critical. Can we wait two, three, four, five or six months until this government gets its act together? I do not think we can. The economy is in a desperate state at the moment. It needs attention, it needs stimulation, and it needs this new Territory government to have a plan.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Madam SPEAKER: Ring the bells.

A quorum is present.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Madam Speaker, I will conclude my comments. I support this motion, brought before the parliament today by the Member for Daly, that this Assembly calls on the Territory government to be transparent on its forward infrastructure plan and to demonstrate to Territorians how a change of plans to meet its election commitments is to be funded.

This motion has only touched on the stark reality of what we are facing here, a government that does not have an economic vision or plan. The Treasurer told us that tonight. I think the Northern Territory is in dire straits. I am very worried and I think Territorians will be very concerned when this becomes public.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to stand here on our very first General Business Day for the 13th Assembly, in our very first motion in opposition. I am very proud of my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, for bringing this infrastructure motion to the House. It is a very important motion and I support it wholeheartedly.

I will repeat the motion:

... that this Assembly calls on the Territory government to be transparent on its forward infrastructure plan and to demonstrate to Territorians how a change of plans to meet its election commitments is to be funded.

It is succinct but extremely deliberate and important.

I echo the sentiments of the Member for Araluen, who, as she said, has lost her patience. It is extremely frustrating to see a government that is two months in—60 days—openly and happily come to this place of business and tell Territorians that it does not really have a plan. It is quite extraordinary—I will go as far as saying unprecedented—that a new government would come here and be a—I suppose you have to give them credit for being honest that they have no plan, but Territorians expect the government to come here with a plan and reveal it to the community in the open, transparent and accountable way in which it promised Territorians it would be.

It is astonishing that, two months in, we are in this situation. We all know how important it is for governments to give confidence to businesses, Territorians, workers and the entire Northern Territory. The government has a fundamental role to ensure that everything across the Northern Territory continues to grow and stay on track.

The government members talk about how they want to support jobs and support Territorians to stay in the Northern Territory, as well as attracting new Territorians to the Territory. At a time of such inaction and paralysis by this government, it is astonishing that one of its flagship announcements of the last 60 days is that it has decided to create two five-hour public holidays.

That flagship announcement, which has taken them 60 days to come up with, will apparently bring people to the Northern Territory and drive up our numbers. Our population will explode as a result of this tremendous burden the government has now placed on small business without any consultation whatsoever. It is truly astonishing.

I think the thread coming from the cross bench and the opposition is that we do not understand where this government is coming from or where it is going.

We have heard promises of consultation, and we have seen tremendous inaction as a result of some of those promises. The summits, the moratoriums, all of these things, yet there they are able to make knee-jerk policy reactions when it suits them, to the great detriment of the Northern Territory. Hopefully the assistant minister for a vibrant CBD will contribute to this debate.

I will not reflect on who is or is not in the Chamber. The assistant minister for a vibrant Todd Mall should be making a contribution to this debate as well.

This new public holiday system the Chief Minister has introduced—in South Australia, 50% of restaurants did not open. How is that making the CBD vibrant? How will putting the pressure of wages on small businesses encourage them to stay open. How will it encourage a vibrant CBD? Surely the Chief Minister considered that we will probably now have surcharges to cover the cost of the labour. These are consequences of this knee-jerk, union-driven decision, which is one of the flagship decisions of the entire 60 days.

Where will this fit into the overall plan? When was it taken to Territorians at the last election? What does it have to do with anything that Territorians really care about?

The infrastructure program is critical to confidence. We have already seen this government fail Territorians with Kormilda College. That is a classic example of how confidence can inspire such problems in our community. Not to backtrack, but Kormilda brought a very serious problem to this government, which gave some certainty to Kormilda until the end of this year, and that was it.

We had this horrific situation where teachers were faced with having to look for other jobs and parents were put in a position where they had to try to find new places for their student children in other schools. The Year 11 International Baccalaureate students were extremely distressed about what their options would be in 2018. This is just one example, in the first 60 days of this new government, where it has not provided certainty to the community. That lack of certainty has created a cascading, broad-reaching negative effect on Territorians.

Its treatment of infrastructure is no different to that example. It is a genuine worry and there is so little certainty about what projects in the existing program will stay, which ones are rock solid and which are up for the chop. In my electorate, in Palmerston, there are lots of wonderful projects from the last four years. My former colleagues and I worked very hard to secure a number of infrastructure projects in Palmerston. Anyone who drives around Palmerston will see it is going absolutely gangbusters.

I wrote to the Chief Minister in September regarding upcoming projects in Palmerston that are incredibly important to the Palmerston community. I still have not received a response to that. Constituents are asking me, regularly, 'What is happening with this? What is happening with that?' I cannot give them any answer, not because this government is trying to block me from the information, but because it does not have a plan. It does not have an answer, which is why there is no answer coming forward, and that is why we cannot report to our constituents.

One example, which I spoke about in my Address in Reply last week, is the \$1.3m to upgrade the kiss-and-go area at Durack Primary School. That is a very significant project not only for parents, families and carers of students at Durack Primary School. That project affects the whole of the Durack and Durack Heights community. We are talking about well in excess of 1000 people who need this upgrade to the Durack Primary School kiss-and-go area.

Amongst other things, primarily it provides safety for students going to school and safe passage of vehicles moving through Woodlake Boulevard, especially during those peak times with early morning drop-offs and the afternoon pick-ups. Parents have an expectation of this government that the project will be delivered. Parents, and the broader Durack community, expect this government to take a position on it. Either come clean and say that it will not happen or stick it into the infrastructure budget. As we have heard, we all have to wait nine months, I think the Member for Araluen said, until June/July next year.

Another significant project is the \$1.3m upgrade to the Kirkland Road and Woodlake Boulevard intersection. This is a very large intersection in Palmerston and one of the key entrance points into our city, coming in via Kirkland Road. There are only two entrances into the suburb of Durack and one of them is right there. It is placed in a rather precarious spot, with the rail line being only a couple of hundred metres up the road.

This intersection needs road treatment. The department is aware of it. The commitment is there but we do not know. We are all left hanging as to what will happen with this project. This is much broader than just helping the people of Durack, although there is no question that it will, and the community fully supports it. The project will provide safety and security for the thousands of Palmerston residents who travel to work, for recreation or to school via Kirkland Road every morning and afternoon. I do not know the exact number, but there are thousands of vehicles each day using this significant arterial road.

The Palmerston police station issue is a real cracker. I have been entertained by the way the Chief Minister has dealt with the issue. The Leader of the Opposition and I have asked a significant number of questions over the last two weeks about infrastructure and various projects and commitments. We have had some obscure and interesting answers from the Chief Minister, particularly on the Palmerston police station.

Before discussing the Palmerston police station, I seek leave to table the government's pre-election costings.

Leave granted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I wanted to table those documents to ensure that when the Chief Minister travels to China and has a bit of time on the plane, he can flip through them and refresh himself on the projects the Labor Party had costed prior to the election.

In answer to my question about the Palmerston police station, the Chief Minister said that the police station doors will open during this term of government. I am not sure how that will be possible. What does half a police station look like? Is it three walls, missing one wall? Does it have cells or not? Does it have a watch house?

You cannot open a building that looks more or less like a police station, transfer police to that inadequate facility—and there is no question that it will be inadequate—and call it a police station for the purposes of satisfying a ridiculous election commitment. There is no question that, under this government, the Palmerston police station will not be ready by the end of this term. The pre-election costings show 2020-21, which is after the election.

Chief Minister, you have two members of government who represent the good people of Palmerston, and I hope they work hard for their electorates. I am in Palmerston, so I will be watching them to make sure they are serving the people of Drysdale—people I am very close with—as well as the good people of Brennan.

We will watch this government to see if it delivers on its commitments. The people of Palmerston will not stand by and listen to the rhetoric coming from this government. Time will tell. In four years' time we either will have a fully-functioning police station or we will not. You will be judged by the people of Palmerston on that.

Another interesting question we asked in Question Time, and received an insufficient response to, was in relation to the Zuccoli primary school and Woolianna School. The Opposition Leader asked the question of the Infrastructure minister, who skirted nicely around the topic and recommitted the money that has been set aside for a Catholic primary school in Zuccoli. That is going ahead; there is no question about that. The question that remains hanging over this government's head is whether it will deliver the Zuccoli public primary school. It is a very important project, especially to the people of Zuccoli and Johnston.

There is no primary school on that side of Palmerston—Farrar, Johnston, Zuccoli, Mitchell Creek Green, all the way down to Mitchell Creek. In a strong education sector we need choice for parents. We need to celebrate parents' rights to choose what school their children go to. We need to provide the opportunity for local kids to go to the Catholic primary school or a public school. We need a commitment on that. Again, the minister was non-committal in her response to that question.

Being committed to a precinct, as the response stated, is not being committed to delivering a Zuccoli primary school. That is just another example of an infrastructure project that we have no substantial answer on.

We thank the minister for Infrastructure for her contribution and for supporting the motion. It is important to us that the motion is supported because it is important to Territorians. We were pleased to hear that. We only hope this motion gives some impetus to this government to take some real action.

As early as Question Time today, the minister for Housing was asked a basic question about what is happening with the roll-out of the remote housing program, whether or not the government has commenced consultation with the shires and housing organisations, what the schedule for this consultation is and when it will be completed and implemented. They were very straightforward questions seeking information.

It was very disappointing that the minister for Housing could not, or would not, answer the question. I followed up with a supplementary question, with no result. The opposition did not say that shires and housing organisations would decide what to build, where to build, how to build and who would build it. That was a decision of government and we want to know how and when it will happen, what impact it will have on the remote housing program, how the works will be procured and so on. Again, we are not getting any information from this government.

It appears the members opposite have come to government without a plan. It is incredibly interesting to think that for the last four years they have been the alternative government, out there for Territorians to see, saying, 'We are the alternative government'. They then had a mandate to be the government with a convincing election win. Yet, in all that time, they did not come to government with a plan to roll anything out. They are still going through very basic machinations. We are still not seeing anything, except what I

mentioned earlier—this hip pocket roll-out of policy, such as the public holidays that will now cripple small business at a very important time of the year.

The government does not have the luxury of time that it has decided to afford itself. Admitting to not having a plan is not good enough. As we mentioned earlier, uncertainty equals loss of jobs, a lack of business confidence, a lack of investment and, ultimately, people will move on from the Territory if they do not have that security.

It is interesting; if the Chief Minister thinks his solution about public holidays will bring people to the Territory and the floodgates will open, I think he has a rude shock coming to him. It is simply not good enough.

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: As we have seen recently, with the 480 jobs lost at INPEX and the moratorium on fracking—I was at Palmerston markets on Friday and a gentleman spoke to me about 140 jobs which were lost from his business as a direct result of the moratorium.

For a government that cares a lot about jobs, it is not doing a lot about it. I have a list of some of the infrastructure projects from Budget Paper No 4, 2016–17, the infrastructure spend being \$1.68bn. I ask the government which of these projects it will cut, put on hold, defer and consult on, and which will be delivered: \$120m for the shiplift facility; \$100m for the Boosting our Economy package; a \$50m contribution towards the expansion of the Owen Springs Power Station and the upgrade of Tennant Creek Power Station; and \$20m to build the skywalk adventure experiences in Territory parks to create world-class visitor attractions and increase employment for Indigenous people. I have a feeling we know the answer to that last one. The Member for Katherine has made it clear how she feels about the skywalk adventure experiences, but the government could just come out clean and say, 'We will not spend \$20m on that. We are allocating that money to something else,' or, 'We are using that \$20m to fill our \$223.5m budget hole'.

Ms Nelson: It is \$10m not \$20m.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Katherine. She says it is \$10m not \$20m. I am talking about both of the skywalk adventure experiences, Member for Katherine.

There is \$16.5m over two years for the Maryville Road; \$16m over two years for the Arnhem Link Road; and \$2m to establish a vapour heat treatment plant for the Territory mango industry.

Major new projects in 2016–17 include constructing high-level bridges over Little Horse Creek and Big Horse Creek—the Member for Daly spoke of that—and sealing the road to Port Melville. It also includes:

- stage one of the new Barneson Boulevard, the third major arterial link from the Tiger Brennan/Dinah Beach Road intersection into the Darwin central business district
- dredging the Cullen Bay navigation channel and around the pontoon
- sealing sections of the Lajamanu access road between Kalkarindji and Lajamanu
- upgrading and sealing sections of Gunn Point Road
- lifting and sealing a section of road between Ramingining and Central Arnhem Road
- upgrading aerodromes as part of the regional aviation access program
- upgrading and sealing selected sections of the Roper Highway between Fizzer Creek and Ngkurr
- constructing the Rocky Creek Bridge and completing the Fog Bay Road.

In health:

- continuing the construction of the Palmerston Regional Hospital—I know this government is committed to delivering this project. Thank you for committing to at least one project you will see through. No doubt you will claim glory for it at the end.
- continued upgrades to Royal Darwin Hospital
- continued upgrades and remediation works to Alice Springs Hospital
- continued refurbishment of the Gove District Hospital, including its emergency department.

In education:

- infrastructure upgrades to schools as part of the Boosting our Economy package
- continued construction of the Nhulunbuy boarding facility
- stage one of the Taminmin College master plan for additional learning spaces and a new science centre, something the College is very excited about
- construction in Palmerston of a new preschool and primary school for children with special needs.

The list of projects goes on and on.

You are the government. The Northern Territory is looking to you for leadership. During Question Time on a Wednesday you are too scared to answer two questions in a row. Why are you too scared to show Territorians that you have a plan, that you won the election and deserved to and that you will deliver for Territorians in the timely way they expect from you? Inaction will only get you so far. Territorians' patience is running out. You will fall foul of your promises to Territorians if you are not decisive and do not show leadership.

I commend the motion to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, this is an interesting motion. It is hard not to agree with it no matter where you stand in this parliament. It is basically saying we all believe the government needs to be transparent on its forward infrastructure plan. I agree.

As I have said recently, one of our problems is that some businesses are struggling because they do not know where they are going. In fact I talked to someone from one business today—I am quite happy to give the name of that company—and the person who manages that company said if he does not get some work in the next couple of weeks he will lay off 50 people. An electrical company has said the same thing. If they do not get some work very soon, with Christmas coming up—and I gather they are shortlisted on some contracts—they will probably have to lay some people off before Christmas.

There is a feeling that things have come to a bit of a stand still. I do not think the decision about the two half public holidays has helped one bit. Whether you agree or disagree with the flimsy excuse for introducing that, based on the fact it will attract more people to the Territory, I do not think it stands up. It stands up as much as my local pub—which decided to get another 10 pokie machines and claimed they would attract more people to Howard Springs. Give me a break. Are people meant to come all the way from interstate to Howard Springs because you have an extra 10 pokies in the pub?

I wrote a submission against those pokies using the literature the pub had put together in support of the extra 10 pokies, and one of the arguments was that more tourists would come to Howard Springs because of the extra 10 pokies. I do not think we will increase the number of people in the Northern Territory by upping the wage rates in the middle of the night for its workers.

I digress. We are talking about infrastructure. The *NT News*, on Friday 26 August, said:

A Labor government will have to shelve \$223.5 million of current spending commitments in order to achieve its goal of a budget surplus by 2019-20.

That was in August, so we have had a few months—when the government already knew that it would cut spending. You would think that if it was cutting spending it would know by now where that would occur. Therefore it would have known what infrastructure programs it would release.

It says:

Mr Gunner gave a guarantee that the return to surplus would not be delayed. Instead, a Labor government would 'reprioritise' Country Liberal Party infrastructure projects on the forward works.

Where is the prioritisation of infrastructure programs on the forward works? Forward means they are up front and ready to go. I get the impression that is not happening. It also says:

Mr Gunner said it was not yet known which of the \$425 million of projects would be put on hold, as Labor did not have access to cabinet documents detailing projects.

It would have had those from the first day it was elected. Mr Gunner said:

We will make the hard decisions necessary in government to maintain this path to surplus. I've committed to this path to surplus ...

There is nothing wrong with aiming for a surplus, but governments that think surplus is the be all and end all, especially in a place like the Territory, with its small population and large area to cover, with its many problems—if you do not think that, at times, we need some debt, as long as that debt can be managed, it might be a bit pie in the sky. In periods of economic downturn, generally speaking, what have governments done to stimulate the economy?

This building is a symbol of what happens when you have a downturn in the economy. The government of the day built this building and the Supreme Court. That was specifically designed to make sure people had work and to keep skilled people in the NT. That also happened with the Labor government. With the first stage of Tiger Brennan Drive the government went into fairly high debt to make sure there was still work while the global economic crisis was in play, which affected the Northern Territory.

I would hate to see governments get pure about the issue of surplus. If we can operate in the black that is fantastic, but if in the process a bunch of businesses pack up and leave the Territory because there is no work, it might not work at all.

From what I read here, the Chief Minister has said the government will work on the infrastructure programs the CLP had in place. It will reprioritise them and they will be put on the forward works. I am interested to know if the government has reprioritised those CLP infrastructure projects.

The government has made a promise of \$300 000 for each school. I understand the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned that it probably has not been sorted out according to the size of the school. Even so, you would not think it would be too hard to send a letter to those schools asking if they were interested.

When we had the education revolution, the first lot of funds that went out was fantastic because it gave the schools the power to work out their own projects and get their own contractors—sometimes people within the schools—to build some of those facilities. But the department took over the second lot of projects.

If you have \$300 000, which is not a huge amount of money and will not build you masses of classrooms—it would not be hard to send a letter to all the schools saying, 'We have promised \$300 000. Come back to us with your plans to use that \$300 000. Take it to the school council and ask them what they think that money could be spent on.' That will at least get people thinking that something is happening. The Minister for Education may know—but there is a little idea to start stimulating the economy.

This was in the Administrator's speech, and is a bit of a concern for me:

There will be a new focus on logistics and transport infrastructure, with a transport supply chain infrastructure master plan ...

I am not saying that is a bad thing, but if we all of a sudden stop—there must have been transport infrastructure plans made by the previous government. They cannot all be bad. After all, we are mainly talking about roads and maybe some boat ramps and other things. What was on the previous government's infrastructure plan that could not be looked at as fair? Let us get that going.

You would have noticed the Northern Territory has been given a fair slice of Commonwealth money for upgrades to roads, especially beef roads, in the Northern Territory. The government announced that as

part of the northern development program. We should be pushing the federal government to get that kicking because there is money there for the upgrade of those roads.

There needs to be a mixture of exciting words from government about the infrastructure it will announce and the money going to those projects. Not only will people let go of workers, but the morale of small business in the Territory will go down. I have forgotten the name they give it—business confidence. I have seen business confidence go up and down considerably, depending on which government was in and what they were doing to help.

With the decision by the Chief Minister to bring in the half-day holiday, business confidence dropped off the scale. I understand businesses have not been part of the discussions. They might have been told but they were not part of the discussions, and I find that very disappointing.

I will slightly sidetrack off that issue; my understanding is that the Territory and the ACT are covered by a national system of setting minimum wages, making workplace determinations, equal remuneration, transfer of business, unfair dismissal, industrial action et cetera. It appears to me to be a bit of a tricky sleight of hand.

We cannot change the wages of workers; that has to be done through the Fair Work Commission. We have a ruling that says if you work on Christmas or a public holiday your pay rate is X number of dollars an hour. We cannot change that, but we can change the type of day it is. It is not a weekday or a Saturday morning; it is a public holiday. We have turned an ordinary day into a public holiday, which automatically ups the wage per hour. That is a little sneaky.

If you want to talk about having public holidays, have them for a reason for the public, not just a few workers. I am not knocking the people who have to work at that time of night, but the public holidays we have—our Picnic Day is a famous union day when people could enjoy a picnic. In this part of the world it is Darwin Cup Day. We have the Darwin and Katherine Show days, which are public holidays. I would rather get rid of the Queen's birthday and stick in Melbourne Cup Day, because nobody works on that day anyway. It would probably make more sense. They are generally days you spend with your family, and you get paid if you work on those days.

After 16 years of working in a hardware store every weekend, I know what it is like. But you are changing a person's pay rate without going to the Fair Work Commission and saying, 'Should we have a special allowance for these workers?' We are changing the bottom line ...

A member: Recognition of a special day.

Mr WOOD: It might be recognition—we could argue the toss about that—but the Fair Work Commission works out whether their work should be recognised by a higher pay rate. We have avoided that process, which is a public process where both sides can argue for or against. We have said, 'We will not go down that path; we will just give that day a new category and call it a public holiday.' That is not the way you should deal with an issue relating to remuneration for workers.

People were ringing me and talking to me this morning, saying that things are crook. When they hear an announcement that they are having two public holidays to increase the pay rates for people working at a certain time—it sent out the wrong message. You can argue the toss about the benefits or non-benefits of what you are doing, but it sent out the wrong message. Bad timing is all I am saying.

We have a transport supply chain infrastructure master plan. I hope we do not have to wait for that infrastructure master plan to come in to being before we do something about transport supply chain infrastructure. It says here that it will:

... set out a vision for significant investment in roads, railways, spur lines, port storage and handling needs.

Fine, but I hope that will not stop any development in transport infrastructure.

The government had the opportunity, with this relatively small motion, to get up and say, 'This is what we are doing'. I had a meeting this morning—with some good news about changes in my area. Admittedly some of it was about infrastructure projects that have been carried on from the previous government's budget.

At least the government said, 'We will have some community consultation'. I knew something was happening. I would like those projects to hurry up a bit because development in Coolalinga—as people may know there is a huge shopping centre going up and that development will cause some major traffic problems in that area. It would be good if the minister said, 'That this is an issue we are looking at now', and had some facts and figures in front of her.

That statement about what you are doing does not seem to be going out to the people. If you are doing it, some people want to see the proof in the pudding, to see what is happening. The government has not been in for very long, but when businesses come up to me—surely contracts do not just stop dead as one government stops and another starts. If those contracts are fairly straightforward and will not change the budget to any major extent, surely they would continue. They may, but that is the information I wanted to hear today, which did not come out in the discussion this afternoon.

Not every business in the Northern Territory is connected with the AHA; there are a lot of small businesses that are run by one or two people who have family in the Northern Territory. They depend on small contracts. We have to make sure those people stay in the Northern Territory.

We have to give them confidence, and that has to come from the government. It does not come from this side. They are working overtime to get these contracts up and running. Notwithstanding they will make some cuts, but, as I said before, being in the red is not the best from a perfectionist point of view, but we live in the real world.

If this building and the Supreme Court had not been built during an economic downturn, a lot of people would have left the Territory. That was the very reason they were built. Going further back, there were two hotels in the Northern Territory that were built to stimulate the economy. That includes the one over the road, which has had its name changed a million times—Crown? Someone can tell me if it was a different one.

Members: Hilton.

Mr WOOD: The Hilton was built by the Northern Territory Government, as was the resort at Uluru. They were not private hotels; they were built by the NT Government to stimulate the economy. That is probably one of the best buildings in town. It is not square concrete; it actually has some character.

If the economy is slowing as the minister said, then the government has to speed up. It needs to do it pretty quickly, otherwise we will see businesses and families leave the Territory.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this motion. I am surprised that we need to speak of this from the non-government benches when it seems to be an obvious position that government should adopt early on to ensure there is a clear narrative, and so people can be confident that the government has a clear plan on the front foot.

These are heavy days for a new government. I am sure many on the opposite side and in the community expected a change of government; I am not the only one. I notice that if it is raised with Labor members that their appointment to government is as a result of the rejection of the previous government, some of them smart a bit because it is suggested they have not won it in their own right and that it was through the rejection of one side that, by default, they became government. Whether that is true or not, you are the government. There is a need to manage the expectations of a community.

When it comes to difficult times like this, a narrative needs to be established in the community. If the government does not establish the narrative, the narrative occurs anyway. It begins to emerge with conversations around the community. I have already heard it. It is reinforced with a motion like this coming from the non-government benches 60 days into the term of the new government. It is not that the margin was narrow; you knew you would be the government. I picked it a mile off.

I am sure there were transition to government teams working to prepare for the decision the community was to make on 27 August. The role of one of these teams would have been to manage the community's expectations. It is not just about the government; it is about government's role in facilitating and managing the community it has been elected to lead. The response to an economic question that affects the livelihoods of many is that there will be a summit.

Though the argument can be run that there needs to be a summit, there was a sinking in the hearts of many when that was the answer to the question that was difficult to answer. Coming to government, it is

difficult to answer such questions, but we are required to answer them. I was in this Chamber when the transition occurred from 27 years of successive CLP governments to the Clare Martin government—the first Labor government in the NT.

Those were exciting times. Some of the speeches made in this parliament today and last week were fairly similar. There was a sense of excitement; the mood had changed and there was a positive feeling in the community. That is a bit like a honeymoon, which never lasts forever. It will not last in this case. Already people are beginning to ask questions. A motion such as this exposes the government as not having dealt aggressively with the big issues being considered by families who own small businesses, who are wondering about the new narrative.

The Member for Nelson has pointed out a couple of significant decisions of government to respond to the anxiety of the business community about the faltering economy. They included the building of tourism infrastructure and of this parliament. At the time of the change of government in 2001, the narrative of making the Northern Territory the gateway to Asia had existed for a long time. The massive infrastructure project at the time was the railway. There was a lot of talk about the effect of the railway on the economy of the Northern Territory.

At the time of the change in government, it was not a CLP Chief Minister with their head out the window of the engine that brought the first train to Darwin, which had been dreamed of for decades; it was Clare Martin. Once that was done we began to look at the difference that would make to the Northern Territory.

The excitement of the arrival of the railway, and the change it would make to the fabric of the Northern Territory community—the ports and so on—to connect this important part of the nation to other regions, did not translate directly into strong growth. The nation went through a difficult period. People wondered what would happen next. It took some time. After 27 years, it took almost four years for that Labor government to find its feet. It had review upon review. There were summits, which were great events that produced materials I still have in my filing cabinet.

People were starting to become unsettled because of the timidity in responses to questions—folding in on oneself—and the piles upon piles of recommendations of what could be done. It almost damaged the capacity of government to operate. People began to lose their confidence in the government. You were saved in large part by the strength of the leadership team and, in part, by the CLP's performance in opposition, struggling with being in opposition for so long. They managed to get through that election and then the Labor government began to find its feet.

Then there was SIHIP, which was a real challenge to govern and manage. Expectations were raised and money did not seem to result in the changes that were expected. It was a massive infrastructure project that brought great pain to the then Labor administration.

Then came the next big project, which was INPEX. That focused people's attention, developed a narrative and created some momentum. I give credit to the leadership of Chief Ministers Clare Martin and Paul Henderson for bringing that great project on to the centre of the Northern Territory economic agenda. We then began to plan, prepare, dream for and manage that.

But it so happened the big project arrived and there was a change of government. If it was a train, it would not have been Paul Henderson's head out the window—it would have been mine, the CLP. Then there was the visit to Japan, which we will quickly go past. I give the Chief Minister, Mr Gunner, my sincere best wishes for his trip. I am pleased he is making that trip because there needs to be repair and restoration of the connection between these two communities. On that trip I was able to see, on behalf of the Northern Territory community, where our gas would be arriving and how important it was to Japan—a great story.

Now the INPEX project is coming to an end so this community is now beginning look to this government and say, 'What is the plan? Where are we going?' Sixty days in we have a motion that is quite simple, plain and greatly required. Fill in the gap; tell us the story. If you press the pause button and say, 'Let's wait for the summit'—it has only been four years since you were out of government; surely there is capacity to be able to gather enough information and give a clear sense of direction, to answer basic questions to give that sense of confidence and direction. It is required.

I have heard the deep concerns of people who have invested in small business. The question is basic: where will you find the extra money? 'We find it by making some adjustments to the forward plans that were established by the previous government.' That sounds fine, but it sends a chill down the spine of many who are wondering where that line will be cut. Stalling the decision-making process only extends the

pain and uncertainty, and will bring about a deeper concern in this government's capacity to lead in difficult times. Make no mistake, these will be very difficult times. Establish the next narrative, the next agenda. Inspire people and take them forward.

I became quite concerned early on. Today I am very concerned when I find that a motion like this needs to be responded to by the government, being called on by the non-government benches. In the early days, there is this sense of excitement. There is big change. There are five Independents and two opposition members. It is a changed political landscape and a whole bunch of fresh, new people have appeared in the parliament. It is an opportunity to reset the agenda, to talk about governance and setting the agenda for the new era.

There is largely silence. The media spent far too long talking about the five Independents and their resourcing, and the opposition and which office they should be in. Meanwhile, the entire government appeared to be somewhere else and not being talked about. That was a bad start.

I have already heard journalists say, 'It does not feel right'—quite confident with the social agenda as there is the appearance of things happening, but a deep disquiet is starting to emerge. The timidity, when it comes to decision-making—summits are fine. I am not saying you should not have a summit, but it should be a set agenda—clarity, so people have something to hold onto. But there seems to be a drift. There are nice responses and the media is cutting you a lot of slack, as are the non-government benches, but it is emerging. A narrative needs to be established and I seriously encourage you to step up. I am happy to help wherever I can to get that traction because, frankly, the community is starting to become concerned.

I support this motion. Unfortunately it is the opposition that has presented this very important motion. It should not be required from an opposition. It should have been clearly marked as needing to be settled and clarified early on. Decisions need to be announced swiftly and confidently. I am happy to help. I am sure all of us in this Chamber want to see you begin to gain that traction and momentum around basic things that are affecting local families.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the people who have contributed to this debate. I am surprised that no one on the other side, apart from the Treasurer, contributed to this debate. It would have been a fantastic time for people opposite to outline their plans in this area.

I pick up on the Member for Nelson's point in regard to the partial holidays and the way they were introduced. That has been a point of discussion between the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and me today, so I am glad he raised that point.

The Member for Blain also raised the issue of summits. By all means they are a good thing to have, but they are not an excuse. We need some action. We were expecting a bit more on the skywalk in Katherine, which is off the agenda, and that is fine. The Member for Spillett read through a stack of projects that are currently on the forward works program. It must be easy to go through and identify some of those and say, 'Yes, we see that as a priority', or, 'No, we don't'.

There is the Alcoota project in Alice Springs. Is that worth the \$4m or \$5m that was allocated to it? We have heard about the national Indigenous cultural centre, which is supported by the opposition. But I have received feedback that maybe we will just end up talking about it for the next four years and never commit any money to it.

The upgrades to TIO through sport—are they essential at the moment? I am not saying they are or not, but these are simple questions that government members could ask themselves and say, 'Yes, we need to find \$225m. Let us go into our forward estimates and cross off the ones we know will not go ahead', so there is at least a bit of certainty.

Then you look at positive ones; \$2m is allocated to some of the sporting facilities in communities. I have been a very strong supporter of investing money in sporting facilities in communities. They are a diversion for people. In Wadeye we did a hell of a lot in the previous government, and I was personally involved in a lot of it. I am proud to say that I was involved and spent a lot of money on the sporting facility there. It was about \$1.2m for lights.

If you speak to the police, they will tell you that has reduced the crime there by about 30%. Instead of having riots we now have football games. Yesterday we had the young leaders here. They went upstairs and saw people on the fifth floor and then they had afternoon tea with me. I have a lot of time for those fellows and the work the organisations are doing in developing those people. I was very proud to tell them

that—well, I am not proud to be getting old, but I am getting older and it is about time people like these young leaders learnt a lot more about politics and what we do in this House because they are the future.

Projects like that should be ticked off, and governments should be able to do that quite easily. The Treasurer pointed out—and it is the second time we have heard the Labor Party say that rent and housing prices are too low. One of the big complaints they used to make from this side of the house was that the cost of living was too high, people could not afford to come here and houses and rent were too dear. I see that as a bit of a twist around. The other one was that projects come out of the blue. They come about because there is a vision. The vision is not only from people in government, but from people in the private sector. They are the ones people need to speak to. The government does not have all the ideas, but it needs to create the right environment. That environment is not being created. We are creating an environment of uncertainty and we need to bring some certainty back into it.

Today was an opportunity for the members opposite to give that certainty. They could have stood up and said, 'Yes, we have a plan,' or, 'Yes, I will push for the projects in my electorate'.

The Member for Katherine is the only member I have heard say that they do not want the skywalk. She wants something else. That is all well and good. The members opposite were elected on their commitments and their promises; they have a right to do it because they are in government. We need other members to stand up and state their plans and what they want to do for their electorates. Will you allow Cabinet to make the decisions that these projects will be scrapped?

The reprioritisation needs to be for the whole Territory. You cannot say you will move money from one area to another. That needs to be taken in to account.

I was glad to hear the recognition of the \$8bn to be spent on Defence; that can fill the gap. I hope the government does a lot of work in that area to try to leverage as much as it can off that.

The infrastructure fund—and the drawing of \$100m out of it—was setup to leverage money from the private sector. By taking that \$100m out, we lose a bit of that leverage.

If you look at the LIP documents regarding Wadeye you will see a project mentioned in the forward estimates to build a Wadeye government centre. Wadeye does not have offices for many of its organisations. There are people working out of demountable buildings and people from the Chief Minister's department who do not even have an office or a computer connection. Wadeye needs to be treated like a town if we want people to go there. We talk about government employment, but we need the facilities to be there. How can you say to someone that you will give them a house, but they cannot have an office? That project would have leveraged off private equity. By taking money out of the infrastructure fund we are reducing our options. I mention that with caution.

When we talk about INPEX, the one shot in the locker, it makes me think about the fracking moratorium and the review into water licensing. I know we will talk about water next, but both of those issues create uncertainty. They may be essential, or you feel they are essential—you came to government with those two issues as well.

Adding to the uncertainty about these projects just makes it harder for business. Investment and work drops off, and business confidence falls. The Member for Araluen raised some other issues and she agrees that there is no plan. 'Our plan is to review what is there' is not a plan. The plan needs to be put in place now.

The mini-budget should have been done. I do not know what you are scared of in doing a mini-budget, whether you were planning for it or not. Effectively, what you are saying is, 'We will reprioritise stuff; we just will not change the final figures.' I have a concern with that because Treasury was clear about the fact it will be very hard to meet your budget commitments through reprioritisation. That tells you that you really need to look at rebudgeting.

The Member for Araluen mentioned that she had eight major projects, and she needs certainty for them in her town. All the members opposite should have been doing exactly the same thing. Which projects are important to you? Many of you are backbenchers; you are not government. Government is Cabinet; you just happen to be members of the government party. You should be standing up in this House and saying 'These are the priorities in my area'.

Members: interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members will let the Opposition Leader be heard with respect, please. No more interjections.

Mr HIGGINS: The Member for Araluen was surprised about the crematorium interest, but it was contained in the letter from the Alice Springs Town Council, so that is relevant. There has been some consultation on these projects in the past. The document I tabled was a letter written to the previous Chief Minister, so I think it has some impetus.

We have to watch that a lot of this consultation and these summits—while some of them are necessary, the delays in everything around them are just red tape. They are extra costs that will be an impost on small business. While small businesses have to wait for decisions to be made, they want to retain staff. We talk about people leaving the Territory. Small business is the best way to keep them here, but small businesses need certainty. If they know they may be awarded a tender in the near future, they will try to keep their good employees. They will not let them go.

Yesterday we heard the announcement about the redundancies at INPEX. I do not have the exact details, but the union is saying 480 people have been laid off; the sub-contractors are saying 460. If there are no other projects, where will those people be employed? Government needs to ensure those staff stay in the Territory, especially local staff.

Many people in the Territory are awaiting a decision. I have said before that politicians are not paid high salaries because they are intelligent and know everything. They are paid big dollars to get a kick in the bum when they get it wrong. It means they have to make decisions. We need decisions, and we need them now.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Groundwater for Stock and Domestic Use

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- supports the development and implementation of management plans, regulations and laws for the extraction of groundwater for stock and domestic use in the Northern Territory
- recognises that stock and domestic groundwater users have made significant investments in their water infrastructure

And calls on the Northern Territory Government to:

- make the necessary amendments to legislation to allow, as a priority, people who extract water for stock and domestic use to be able to continue to do so
- identify a period of time where all groundwater reliant non-income generating users may be exempt from the requirement to obtain an extraction licence
- plan for the delivery of reticulated water to users of groundwater in the rural area.

This motion came about following the removal of the 15 litre per second exemption that applied in the Darwin water control district. When the Act was originally introduced in, I think, 1992—I am sure the new minister will pick me up if I am wrong, but it was the early 1990s—there was a move to encourage horticulture in the rural area. The water control district that goes roughly from Adelaide River in the east down to the Finnis River in the southwest is the Darwin water control district. An exemption was brought in that allowed anyone who was pumping water out of the aquifers in that area, up to 15 litres per second, to not require a water licence. That exemption did not apply anywhere else in the Territory.

The removal of that exemption last year was an issue around commercial users and it was to assist Water Resources to get a better handle on the amount of water being used. While Water Resources can identify, to a certain extent, what crops are being produced by commercial users and can do some estimates on their water use, it does not get a true picture of the usage. The only way of doing that was to remove the exemption and bring those people under a commercial licensing regime. The commercial licensing implies that they need to meter their water in some way.

The issue of meters covering both commercial and domestic—the Act is not that clear in saying you need a physical meter. It says that you need to meter and report the water to the satisfaction of the Water Controller. I had the Daly River Mango Farm and we pumped water for mangoes. We had a licence and, at one point, we had a meter, but the meter would jam up constantly because of the calcium, and every time it flooded there, which was a regular event, it went under water.

They were then satisfied that I gave them a time of pumping. I would say to them, ‘I have pumped for eight hours today. It pumps 12 000 litres an hour.’ That satisfied their requirements; they got an indication of how much water I was using. The question of meters has been a bit confusing in the rural area when it comes to the requirement to monitor water use.

The exemption of 15 litres was specifically required for commercial users. There was an attempt to delay the implementation of that, or give people time to do it, which they needed. Once the exemption was removed, the commercial users needed to apply for their licences. Water Resources would help them and that was it. At the same time, the impact of the poor Wet Seasons over the last couple of years plus a third issue, which is the amount of extraction from the Berry Springs aquifer, has caused a lot of concern and confusion in the community.

I have explained the 15 litres per second. Anyone using water for commercial purposes needs to get a licence. This motion is not about doing anything with those commercial users.

I will talk about the Berry Springs aquifer as a second issue. The Berry Springs aquifer has very high extraction rates on a domestic level as well as a commercial level. From memory, there are 12 commercial licences, but the concern with the Berry Springs aquifer was that the extraction rates out of it were far in excess of what you could take without impacting on the environment, and that is using the 80/20 rule. I will not attempt to explain that rule.

There was a separate decision to not allow any more bores to be put in the Berry Springs Dolostone Aquifer, which is very specific. Combined with the poor Wet Seasons, Water Resources was clear in its view that there were certain bores that would fail this year. They could not have sufficient water because the last couple of Wet Seasons have had a reduced recharge into a lot of the aquifers. I think the main one is Koolpinyah, but that is a third issue. There are three issues floating around which have caused a lot of people concern.

The government announced today that it would put a freeze on the need to have licences until the end of June next year, but the issue needs to be solved. We need to do something, and I am pleased that was announced because we needed some breathing space. When we had a meeting with the minister we said that we need to slow this down regarding domestic users.

Regarding domestic users, under the Act it says there is an exemption for stock and domestic. That exemption was introduced in 1992. I do not have quotes made in this House when the Act was brought in, but I am sure the Member for Goyder will. Concerns about the use of area rather than volume were expressed, but I will come back to that.

The reason for the stock and domestic was more around the homesteads on large stations. It was an exemption that said if you had a bore on the homestead—you would have a garden and some stock, perhaps chooks, as the Member for Nelson would, and you would use water in the house.

The concerns raised in the House were around the area as opposed to the volume of water used. That concern is still expressed today. Water Resources continue to say stock and domestic is defined as an area, but the area is not the issue. The issue is the amount of water, and that needs to be looked at.

How do you define half a hectare? Does it include the house, because that is where you have showers? For example, I have 20 acres. There is a brand-new house. There was nothing on the block; there was a lot of gamba, which we got rid of. There were no trees, so we have planted native trees that require watering for the next couple of years. Is that part of the half hectare? We cannot get a clear answer on that. The question is about the volume of water that should be used. That is the intent of this motion.

When you look at commercial uses and metering—people are very suspicious of government, especially us rural people, and especially when it comes to water and things we have invested in. Bores are not cheap. We put them down at a high cost, a hell of a lot more than running a pipe in from town water at the front of the block. If people in urban areas had to pay for the water pipes on the streets they would be astounded.

You are talking thousands of dollars to put bores in, and pumps often fail every two or three years, depending on the water quality.

I go back to people being suspicious of government. One of the discussions I had with Water Resources prior to the election was about what happens when someone has a licence and they exceed their allocation. They can be taken to court, but that seems a very long-winded process. It has never been done before, as far as they were aware, and I do not think they want to go down that path. At that point it was about coming up with a policy around what happens.

Will you suggest charging for excess water usage? These things need to be looked at when looking at commercial use. When we look at an area of water usage, as opposed to volume—a lot of concern was raised in the Acacia Hills area. I lodged an objection as a resident of that area. I also lodged it as the local member because people had come to see me—that is, the extraction of water by the water bottling plant.

I was not the minister at the time, so I wrote to the previous minister. The response came back saying that the water bottling plant fell under the exemption because it only pumped 14.99 litres a second, but it ran 24 hours a day. We talk about areas and volumes—I also asked the department, 'How much water can you possibly use on a 20 acre block?' If you have a bore pump running at 14.99 litres a second, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you would flood the whole of Acacia Hills and probably the Stuart Highway down to the Elizabeth River—let alone the draw-down and the cone effect you get on all the bores surrounding that bore, of which mine happens to be one. That was an issue that needed to be looked at when looking at commercial users of water. Is it area or is it volume? How much can you use on a property that size?

Talking about domestic users, there is still a loophole in what people can do—this is where it becomes confusing for people—around dams. The issue is that if your dam has a wall of less than three metres and a catchment of less than five kilometres squared, you have an exemption and you can pump out of your bore and into your dam. I know this; I have a dam and it meets those requirements. That is a loophole that someone could use. You can pump as much water as you like into that dam. When you pump out of the dam, how much do you want to water? Off you go; you are no longer taking it out of your bore. You do not have your licence.

Potentially, a lot of people could build dams; they could be very small dams—pumping out of their bores, into the dam, and pumping it out. We do not want to have to force people to do this. We need to bring some certainty to it.

Most of the people in the rural area are very clear in their views that many people waste water. They are not just commercial users but domestic users. An example of that is if I turn off the highway at Townend Road and drive to our property, I would pass at least two, if not three, properties. Most bores are at the front of the property. Most of the bores have a pressure relief valve, so if you are pumping your bore at 200 PSI you can set them to relieve the pressure at 220, so if someone turns a tap off the pressure goes up. It just fires the water out near your bore, just fires it onto the ground.

I pass at least two or three bores in that area that just fire the water out. The issue is that people do not have timers on their bores. The reason I am raising this I will come to in a minute, but if you do not have a timer on your bore—there is another property near ours that I know very well. When they come home they drive past their power box at the front of the house. Near the bore, they turn the switch on to turn the bore on. The pressure relief valve starts firing water out. I have a great concern then when I come home of an afternoon when I see that on—I leave to go to work in the morning and I still see it on. It is turned off when the person goes to work the next morning. As well as explaining to these people that they need to manage their water a bit better, putting the meter on is not necessarily the only solution. There are much cheaper solutions, and one is to put timers on.

If Water Resources were more amenable to saying, 'If you have a timer and lodge time returns to us we will accept those'—these are the issues that need discussing with the community. I was disappointed that no one from government came to either of the two meetings that have been held already, which Water Resources attended. There was one at Berry Springs and one at the Village Green at Humpty Doo. I think we will have one at Girraween, hopefully, for the Member for Nelson.

No one went to any of those meetings. We rural people can sometimes be a bit scary, but we dress normally. The further down you travel the worse they get. Actually, Nelson and Daly are quite good; it is the Goyder people you have to watch.

The people there were very passionate and made many comments. Some of those comments were about people watering their property. My wife and I were in Sydney about six weeks ago, and I received a phone call to say there was a fire in the conservation zone behind our place. Some of the staff I knew were at Berry Springs, so I gave them a call asking them to check on the house. They asked what I wanted them to do. I said, 'Just turn the bore on and open every tap', because surrounding the house is a stack of sprinklers and taps you can turn on if there is a fire. They all come on and water everywhere.

This came up at the Humpty Doo meeting. If people were to water their firebreaks—you would not do it on a 20 acre property like mine, but you would be more inclined to do it on a one hectare or two hectare property—will that be irrigation and will it become part of the half a hectare? The reason for this motion is to put a stop to needing meters or timers on domestic users. It clearly says if they are not using the water for income production they should not need to get a licence, not at the moment.

Let us get the commercial ones done and see how much water the commercial users are using. Then have discussions with the domestic users. You will find that the majority of domestic users are aware of the examples I have given of people wasting water. They are aware of properties that are covered in a tropical garden that has water pouring onto it all the time. It is those people we need to educate and tell, 'You have to cut down on your water usage'.

Once we do some consultation, people will be a lot happier. The first thing they need to be convinced of is that if they have spent a lot of money putting a bore down, have made their gardens and are using their water by efficient means, why is government then coming along and wanting returns on how much they are using. Their first inclination is, 'They will start to charge us', because charging leads to control of usage. That is an issue that needs to be overcome and the people of the rural area need to be convinced of that.

I will not say any more. The Member for Goyder has much to say on this. She and I have some similar views, as does the Member for Nelson. The properties in Goyder—and I am one of her constituents so I will ensure she says the right things—are larger properties than those in Nelson. The three of us are very passionate about it and I think slowing it down is a good idea, but we need a lot more consultation.

We need to draw a very clear line between domestic and commercial. When we look at the use of water there needs to be two very distinct things. At the moment they are being bundled together and the same rules apply to both, but they are two completely different issues.

Mr Wood: Talk about a union of Speakers!

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is called a speak of Speakers.

I support what the Opposition Leader has said in his motion and want to add my comments in regard to what has been happening for the last four months.

We know there is the removal of the 15 litre per second exemption. It is my understanding, as has been articulated previously, that the intention was to capture commercial operators and users of high volumes of water in the water district area. It is my understanding that the intent was never to capture rural domestic users.

The orchards, the farmers, the nurseries, the fish farms, the bottling plant, which we have heard about—many people find it very troubling that you have a commercial operation that extracts water, pays nothing for it, puts it in a plastic bottle and sells it for commercial gain. Water and water resources ownership is vested with the Crown and the people. That one might have been the trigger for taking the exemption out, but it was my understanding that it was never the domestic people—two, five, ten acres, whatever—who were the target.

Yes, there were two poor Wet Seasons in the Top End and the aquifers have not recharged as much as they should have. However, that would not have come across us by surprise. I would have thought the Water Resources people were dealing with the Bureau of Meteorology, which has forecasting ability. They would have perhaps had a projection, given it was in the El Nino, that we would have a poor Wet Season. There was also the comment made during the estimates hearings this year that because of the two poor Wet Seasons we have had there could be upwards of 700 bores in the rural area that could be vulnerable. They did not say they would run dry, but they could be vulnerable. Of course, that is of great concern to anyone who is dependent on bore water. The amount of reticulated water in the rural area is exceptionally low, which I will come back to later. It is a legacy of how the rural area and the Top End have grown.

There are about 4900 bores in the water control district. Not many people will be affected, because they do not have stock or they are on smaller blocks, or they do not have a love for gardening. I accept that they will not be affected, but many people will be affected and will supposedly be required to get a licence.

A letter was sent out by the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Land Resource Management, which went to every Litchfield Council rural resident. They could not get access to the database, so they asked the Litchfield Council to send them out. It came out of the blue. There were no information sessions and no media releases from the government of the day or the new government. It was sent on 23 August, so it was just before the election. Perhaps they thought they would sneak it through and people would not be paying attention because we were in the middle of an election campaign.

It says in paragraph two, 'Resident of the district, you are invited to submit a licence application to the Water Resources Division by 30 September'. I thank the government for its invitation to get a water licence, but I graciously decline. I have told all my citizens and residents to decline also.

I had a meeting with departmental officials, which was appreciated. Thank you, minister. There have been public meetings at Berry Springs and Humpty Doo, which I attended. The meeting at Humpty Doo was more volatile than those quiet Berry Springs people. I also thank the minister for her time the other day with government people. The Member for Daly and I had a meeting, which was useful. Every time we have a meeting we put more issues on the table and more things can be discussed. I also understand there is a commitment to a meeting in the Girraween area because that is in the borefield area where people's bores are vulnerable.

The requirement in the letter, and through all the meetings, is that if you irrigate over 0.5 hectares, which is 1.25 acres in the old language, you will be required to apply for a water extraction licence, which means that you fill in the relevant forms and it will be advertised in the newspaper as a notice of intent. People can object to that licence application, and they comment on it. It is still not clear whether applicants can see people's objections.

I think they said at the last meeting that about 28 rural residents have applied for a licence. If they are already in the system, I do not know why they are not being advertised right now. The government wants people to pay for the advertising if it was before September; that has now passed. It was extended to December, and the minister announced today that it will be extended until June next year.

You get a licence, then the Water Resources person comes out to your property and assesses what you are consuming. I have my domestic premises, but I also supply water to a caravan on my property, to another person who lives down the back, and to the next door neighbour. That happens a lot in the rural area because that person does not always have a bore. The usage of my bore will be higher, which is fine. That is the way it is, and they have told me that.

I am meant to then field my returns every month, either by text message, email or telephone. I think you are leaving yourself open to failure with a system like that. There is a gentleman in Berry Springs who spoke to me at the meeting. Eight or 10 years ago there was a system of voluntary metering; I think the Member for Nelson even put a meter on his bore.

Mr Wood: No, they did not have any left.

Ms PURICK: They did not have any left. This gentleman did put a meter on his bore and he has been fielding returns to the Water Resources Division for the last eight years. He rang them and they cannot find the returns. He has been putting the returns in.

Minister, I can supply you this gentleman's name and his property details. He is a mango farmer. They cannot find the data. That does not give me any comfort, fielding the returns to the department or the Water Resources people.

I get this allocation—'What if I go over?' They said, 'You will be in breach of your licence', and I said, 'Well, then what? Is there a penalty or will they withdraw my licence?' I do not know. I could not get an answer to that.

The other thing with the licence is that the maximum is 10 years. Will every person who applies get a licence for 10 years? Maybe yes or maybe no. Will a licence be renewed automatically after 10 years? People want certainty. I will not be selling my property. When I fall off the perch someone else can worry about all the problems to do with my property.

Mr Wood: You are next to the hospital.

Ms PURICK: If it is a good hospital—when it is finished.

I do not know. The other thing I will ask to the person who comes to the property is, 'Who are you?' What are their qualifications to assess my water usage? A lot of people in the rural area, such as I, have geese, ducks and other poultry. We perhaps use a lot more water than the average person. I know that will be included, but what if you go over your charge? Will your licence be revoked? If you go over your licence allocation will you pay for the extra usage? They cannot answer or choose not to answer.

I am still concerned about the reporting. It seems to be messy and unstandardised. I do not see any documentation on how it will be done. I do not see any forms or templates.

When a meter goes on, the meter must be calibrated. There are three people who can calibrate meters in Darwin. Two work for Water Resources and one is commercial. To get a calibration accreditation you must do a course that costs \$2000. When one of those three people comes out to calibrate the meter, will there be a charge associated with that? I presume there will be. Why would a commercial person do something for nothing? They will not.

There have been discrepancies. At the Humpty Doo meeting, the Director of Water Resources said the meter only costs \$300 or \$400. That is correct. The meter costs that, depending on the size of the meter and the output of your bore, but to get that meter installed you will need a stand; you will need to have the pipework done; you will possibly need to have filters put on; you will need a metre in length either side of your meter.

A lot of people watering more than 0.5 hectares will need a completely new configuration of pipework at their bore. That is where the costs will come in. I have already mentioned calibration. Then of course you have labour. The job may involve trenching. I have done the exercise and have the information here. I will require new pipework at my bore and it will require trenching. For the department person to say the meter only costs \$300 shows they do not know exactly what is involved in putting a meter on a bore. My bore is five litres per second. I will need a particular size of meter. Someone who has one litre per second will need a different type of meter.

Another thing that the department has not fully understood is that there are some parts of the rural area which have high calcium build-up. The calcium builds up in the meter and the meter breaks. The water will flow but the recording of the volume will not happen. Presumably the resident must replace that meter.

My main concern is the lack of a clear, articulated plan. This happened and the exemption was removed. The previous minister made comments about poor Wet Seasons and bores being vulnerable, then—bam. Letters go out telling us we are invited to get a licence, put meters on et cetera. The pamphlets the department released were very good. I accept that, but there is no comprehensive plan.

They have put signs on the three key roads in the rural area: one is on Girraween Road; I think one is on Whitewood Road; and there is one further down. No one knew they were going up. It just has a sign. 'At danger level; be water wise.' As a matter of courtesy, I would have thought if they want to get to the rural residents you go to the rural members and then we can pass the information on, but no. These signs just went up. Will they stay up there all Wet Season? I would presume so because they are in concrete, in which case the meter will go right up to the top because we have been told that La Nina is coming in now, which will be a fabulous Wet Season.

I know the Member for Nelson will talk about this; a water forum was held in Katherine and all the community was there, all the stakeholders and interested people. It was suggested they hold something like that in Darwin, but it was not taken up. That is why the community does not trust the government. That is why the rural residents do not trust the intention of what is happening here—inconsistencies in the legislation and policy.

If I have 0.5 hectares—irrigation, watering—I have to get a water extraction licence for a meter. I am a very conscientious person and I am conservative in my water use. My neighbour is watering 0.4 hectares like crazy. Like the person the Member for Daly talked about. Twenty-four hours a day I water a 0.4 hectare block, and I will not need to get a water licence. That is inconsistent.

There is also irrigation versus drip irrigation. In the Act it says if you have your bore for stock or domestic you are exempt. Whatever stock you have, which includes poultry, you are exempt, but what are they

meant to live on? They cannot live on sticks and stones. Yes, in the Dry Season all stock in the Top End is supplemented with hay and other food products, but a lot of people, particularly horse people, irrigate pasture, whatever that may be—pangola, jarra grass, humidicola to keep the animals going, particularly in the Dry Season, which is when the high activity level is for horse people. That has to be looked at more carefully.

The Member for Daly also talked about pumping into a dam. There is an exemption. People can build a dam; it is not too hard.

Mr Wood: They have to get planning approval.

Ms PURICK: Not in the rural area; you know that, Member for Nelson. They could build a dam, they could pump, legitimately and legally, from the bore to the dam and then the dam to whatever else, and irrigate or use it for recreational purposes.

My concern, because of the bigger block sizes in my area, is the impact on horse ownership, which is very high. I have told people to start strip grazing and cell grazing, because that is how you can still have your green fodder during the Dry Season, legitimately and legally.

The fire people encourage us to have green belts around our properties. We have sprinklers on the roof of the house because of the problems we have with bushfires. On one hand, one government agency is telling us to have a green belt, and another agency is saying if you have that green belt, because you have more than 0.5 hectares, you will be penalised. The penalty is in the cost of having to do what we are being asked to do.

One of my constituents—who is well known, but I will not use their name—rehabilitates wildlife. They have a large block in the Darwin River area and will be penalised because of their water consumption to make a baby rainforest to rehabilitate wildlife. They will have a serious problem, given what they will be required to do.

As the Member for Daly said in regard to size versus volume, it is not within the current thinking, or how activities and business happen on the ground, for a block of land at 0.5 hectares to need a licence, but on another sized block of land you can water like crazy and do not need a licence. That is why I have called, and will continue to call, for a review of the legislation. It was done in 1992, by the admission of the departmental officials, and has not been reviewed. It has been amended rarely, and they have only been small amendments. It is 25 years old. It is desperately in need of a review.

The definitions of 'stock' and 'domestic' need to be reviewed and changed. The 0.5 hectare rule needs to be reviewed and changed, and it needs to get into contemporary times. How can a piece of legislation that is 24 years old not be considered for a review? I saw in the statement from the throne that there will be a review of environmental legislation; things are changing. Is the *Water Act* part of that review? Water, soil and vegetation—cornerstone. If you are reviewing environmental legislation and soil legislation, is this *Water Act* part of that review? It should either be part of that review or it should have its own review, because this will not go away. Rural residents will not accept what has been put to them.

I, and most sensible, rational people, accept that there is a need for knowledge about our groundwater and groundwater systems. That is a given. There are changes in our climate. I know that. I grew up here and the weather is different from what it was when I was a kid. The Wets are drier and the Dries are wetter; this one is hotter, this one is colder. We used to get hail when I was a kid and we do not get it now. We know it is changing, and it is a given that there needs to be more research and collaborative work of the CSIROs of this world and the Bureau of Meteorology. Most people accept that, particularly in regard to groundwater. But it needs to be a whole-of-community approach, not just targeting the rural area.

I was alarmed that the government officials at the Humpty Doo meeting said the urban people are not the issue as they are on mains water. Where the hell do you think that mains water comes from? Darwin River Dam and the government bore fields in Howard Springs and Girraween. If a government person says that, it concerns me. This needs an all-of-community approach, not just people on domestic bores in the rural area, particularly given the cost.

You need a visible plan, more meetings, and to try to build some trust. There is no trust out there. I know it a sad reality of life, but it does not matter what colour the government is, there is no trust in any government in any state. But there can be if there is a plan on the table that people can see.

Ask the people. In the future we will have problems with bores and groundwater, with Darwin River Dam, and with INPEX and ConocoPhillips using so much water. We want to have another plant over here and another 20 000 mango tree plantation over there, which will need this much water. Why are you not asking the people what they think about how they can come together and try to help and work with government?

We need commercial industry to be part of the picture. I have raised the issue in the past, publicly as well as through social media. I have a question on notice going to the Minister for Essential Services about the use of fresh water by the Channel Island Power Station in its cooling operations. I have been told, and I do not know if it is accurate, it has a desalination plant that is not used. If it is used, why is it used and why does it need fresh water? I do not know, but we need to get more information on that.

The member, in the motion, also talked about reticulation water. In 2015 I submitted written question number 336. The answer was that there is only 168 kilometres of reticulated water in the Litchfield Council area. I know it is a legacy of how it has grown and developed, but I also know that a report was done about eight years ago by GHD regarding what it would cost to get reticulation into major parts of the rural area. I never received the report, but I know it is somewhere.

I live within five minutes of the new hospital, behind Tom Finlay's joint on the Stuart Highway. The first three or four properties on that road are on reticulated water; they have gone off the banjo lines. But the rest of the properties, 20 of them, are all on bores. We are five minutes from a major area. I am not saying we would like reticulated—Wells Creek Road is another classic example; it is spitting distance from Coolalinga Shopping Centre. They are all on bores.

I know there is a cost. I get that, but sometimes the cost has to be shared. This is a problem for any government, but what is the plan for getting the rural area onto reticulated water to save our aquifers? There is always the legacy of the banjo lines, which people call 'spaghetti lines'. There are 352 private banjo lines in the Litchfield Council area. I do not know how many kilometres because they are all private. This needs to be pulled into the whole plan.

There is a regulation—this is what the Act says; get the licence. I have asked the department and the minister, where is this package that includes incentives? Why do we not revisit the tank rebate from the previous government? With regard to developers of Marlow Lagoon-sized properties in the rural area, why is there not a DCA ruling that says to include a water tank? There are no water wise garden rewards.

I am not just talking about urban; I am talking about rural. Go to the Western Australian Water Corporation; it is a fabulous setup. It has a relationship with the local council; I am not sure how it works specifically. If you want people to come with you on the journey—if you want to use that corny expression—you have to give them some kind of incentive, hope or positivity. For a fellow to get up at a public meeting and tell us we should only water between 8 am and 9 am or 4 pm and 5 pm, and that we should mulch more—go suck eggs, mate. We have been doing that for years in the rural area.

People go to the rural areas so they can have larger gardens for their dogs or whatever animals they have. Why is there not some kind of arrangement with Greening Australia to encourage people to have more native plants? The Member for Nelson knows this: down Howard Springs Road the whole green strip in the middle of the road is Greening Australia's native plants—no irrigation. They survive very well and are very pretty through the whole Dry Season. It can be done but there does not seem to be a will; they do not seem to want to find ways to work with the community, and that is a bit disappointing.

It can happen, and it has to happen, even if it involves multiple agencies, which comes back to the plan. There is no fundamental plan about how we will go forward. It needs whole-of-community involvement, and I do not see that happening at all. Until there is a plan, rural residents will resist and they will decline the invitation to get a licence application and do everything else that is required.

I thank the Member for Daly for bringing the motion to the parliament. I commend it to all members and hope it is supported.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will have to do a precis now. The bottom line is, in this whole issue—I have heard the Member for Goyder talk about the micro stuff. The macro stuff relates to the fact that people in the rural area know we are having difficulties with the amount of water extracted from the water table in the rural area, and we need to do something about it.

One of the problems was that the government decided to tell us what we should do about it instead of sitting down with the rural community and asking what we thought should be the solution. We were

basically given the solution when this letter turned up, which say you will have to get a water licence by 30 September if you use more water for stock than for domestic purposes. That started off on the wrong foot.

The Member for Goyder mentioned the NT Water Forum 2016, which was held in Katherine earlier this year. I could not go to it as I had another job to go to earlier that day, but the lady who works for me went to the forum. It was a great forum. We asked the government if it would look at hosting a forum in the rural area, but that did not happen.

Two months out from the election I asked the people in the Water Resources Division if they would be interested in an information evening. I asked Power and Water and I asked the minister, and both said yes. Water Resources decided not to do it.

The Member for Goyder will tell you the revolution is beginning, but if you want to stop that you need to be clever and start work ahead of the issues that are raising their heads. A lot of those issues are not correct. For example, the Member for Goyder talked about town water in the rural area. You would be surprised how many people in the rural area have town water supplies. That includes people on spaghetti lines. The cost of removing spaghetti lines about six years ago was over \$40m. The cost of getting a water line past your property in Howard Springs, in my area, is \$39 000 per block. We need to keep things in perspective here.

If the government decided that we needed to do something, it should have been smarter. We cannot blame it all on the current government, because it was not in power at that stage. Water Resources was left in a policy vacuum. The previous government said, 'This is what we should be doing'. The Member for Daly was the minister then, and it was he who said the 15 litres per second exemption should be removed. Water Resources were travelling through an election period without a minister who knew what was going on, and then had to catch up.

Some major mistakes were made by the previous government; getting rid of the water advisory committee was one. It set up a catchment advisory committee. I ask the government members to check what they were doing. The committee's job was to advise the minister, or the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, as the case required, on key water and catchment issues relating to the development of the NT and growing the Territory's economy. It was to look at identifying opportunities to improve industry and public awareness, and support for water policy objectives.

It was also to look at opportunities to maximise the economic benefits that can be derived from the Territory's water resources while ensuring the use and development of water and land resources maintains the life-supporting capacity of water and related systems. It was also to look at a long-term perspective for land and water resource management in the NT; actively seek input from stakeholders with an interest in water resources; and be aware of changing industry, community and environmental needs, and of options for balancing the demands of different interests.

We have the NT Catchments Advisory Committee; what was it doing? Was it warning the government that there were some issues? I do not know.

From a positive perspective, minister, putting this on hold for six months—when I say 'on hold' that does not mean we do not do anything in the next six months—is a good thing because we need to go back to the community.

You set up a water advisory committee for the Howard East Borefield—we used to have it. The previous government put it in mothballs. There was the Berry Springs Water Advisory Committee, and the government did the same with that. That one is at least up and going again. There is an opportunity for those water advisory committees to be the conduit between government and the community, and for them to talk to the people in those communities about how they see this important issue, and where they see the solutions coming from. You will go to these meetings and you will hear a lot of things that are not necessarily true. It might be what people think is true, but it is not always true. Those things need to be discussed in a less aggressive forum. They need to be discussed with people who are qualified and know the issues.

I am also concerned that we have all of a sudden ended up in this situation. I have here the graph that was used in the public meetings on groundwater trends. I knew nothing about that until I went to a DCA meeting a couple of weeks ago, where a developer who was coming for the third time to get his development approval was told he cannot have any water from the Berry Springs aquifer. Lo and behold—where did that come from?

There was another application for someone on Produce Road, Humpty Doo, at Metcalfe lagoon. When they submitted the original application there was no requirement to find tank or town water. When they came back with their revised subdivision plan they were told they could not access water from the Howard East Borefield aquifer. Since then a number of people on subdivisions have either had to get town water or use rainwater tanks.

It surprises me that this happened so suddenly. If there is a graph showing groundwater trends going down over the last 10 to 15 years, surely some alarms bells would have been set off. When I go to DCA meetings I do not ask if there is water under the ground. I see a letter from Water Resources saying, 'We support this subdivision because there is adequate water under that subdivision'. All of a sudden, out of the blue, people in my area—although I am not sure there is an official response from the government on this; it does not appear that anyone in the Howard East Borefield can have a bore. I am concerned about that.

The Members for Goyder and Daly raised the issue, and it is true, that you can pour water onto one acre and have a lush lawn and a beautiful jungle, and you do not require a water licence, but you can have drippers around the edge of your block, and because they cover more than one acre you are required to get a water licence. I think that is an anomaly; how you solve it, I do not know. You should perhaps ask the Commonwealth Government if it is willing to do a new metering plan where people can volunteer so we can get an indication of how much water is being used without going through this process.

Minister, your department said at least 90% of people will not be affected by this. I support that because on my travels during the election campaign I learned that most people in my electorate do not water more than one acre of land, but some do. By sending out this letter to the 90% of people who this did not affect, you created a rod for your back. The department should have looked at the commercial workers—the vegetable and fruit growers, and the nurseries—and signed them up, then they would have been out of the way. You would have managed them and then had to deal with a more difficult area, the domestic blocks.

That is where we could have sat down and said, 'Okay, from a domestic point of view, how will we control the amount of water being pumped out of the aquifer?' Instead, you hit everyone with this letter. A number of people came into my office and asked, 'What the heck is this letter about?' Why should I have to answer all those questions? I did not even know the letter was coming.

Things could have been done better. I think the new minister is at least willing to listen. The Member for Goyder has raised a number of concerns that people have raised with her. As local members we need to be positive from the point of view that we have to lead the people in a process which needs to say this aquifer is finite. We, as a community, have to find solutions to make sure we do not destroy this aquifer. It also means that in the long term—how will rural development occur? Where will we go with rural development if no more bores are allowed? As this motion says, will the government look at extending town infrastructure into the rural area? Will rain water tanks be the norm and will there be a subsidy on them?

There are many issues we now need to take forward. The six-month moratorium, if I can call it that, from the minister will give us some time to assess those issues, which are important. But, in the end, the bottom line is that we have to be careful about the water we use. The people who are on town supplies have to be equally careful with the water they use. We are all affected by the water we get out of the ground. We could have two Dry Seasons that are long and two Wet Seasons that are poor, and I bet there will be water restrictions then if Darwin River Dam does not come up to its normal height. We will all be affected by this.

I thank the Member for Daly for bringing this forward. I support what he has proposed. We will run out of time today for a response, but that is okay. This issue is not U for urgent; it is something we need to carry through in the next six months to come up with some positive and practical solutions.

Debate suspended.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I take the opportunity this evening—and there is a motion in place on this very issue, which has been debated—to talk about the six-month grace period which I talked about on the ABC radio this morning for the exemptions under the *Water Act* for the Darwin rural area, and to make sure I put some things on the record about that decision.

I understand the importance of this issue to people in the rural area and I acknowledge that it was brought in under the former government and former Minister for Land Resource Management, who is now the Opposition Leader. Perhaps the communications and the consultation process regarding this decision were the wrong way around. I acknowledge that it has not been a perfect process. One could suggest that the now Leader of the Opposition might have avoided holding public meetings on this issue prior to the election, especially given that we have heard today that the Member for Nelson was looking for a public meeting over the last couple of months before the election.

I have heard loud and clear that there are concerns in the rural area of residents who may be impacted by the exemption. I suggest that the six-month grace period is extended to 30 June 2017, so it will be just over six months. That gives rural residents an opportunity to go to Bore Central at the Goyder Centre to talk about the individual circumstances regarding their bores and properties, and whether this might impact on them.

I have received positive feedback from the Water Resources Division about how that is going. There have been about 300 phone calls and 100 people who have come in to get specific information on their bores. Most of them have found that they will not be impacted at all.

It is really important for us to note that the intention of the exemptions is around commercial users. People are very aware of that intention. It is intended to focus on commercial users. We are very aware that the groundwater in the rural area is low because we have had some poor Wet Seasons and Dry Seasons. We need to be real about the fact we need to take some action and make sure we understand the water resource. I was astonished to learn that out of 5000 bores there are about 12 licences; how little we know about our water resources in the rural area, given the situation we are in.

I have been talking to the water advisory committees; I spoke to Jan Hintze and another member of one of the committees about the measure that was in place, the community education that is occurring and how we can do things better. I take the opportunity to read a statement from the acting committee chair for the Howard water advisory group on the committee's stance on sustainable water management:

The proper management of water is essential for water security for everyone both now and into the future ...

...

To do this we need to gather the information on how much water is currently being used. One of the roles of the Water Advisory Committee is to assist the government in gathering information for use in their planning and I am confident that at no point will the government prevent people from having access to water for their horses, households, gardens and businesses.

I think that is really important for us to remember. While there are conversations being had about 'How can we find loopholes?' and the confusion—ultimately we have to go back to why this was introduced in the first place, and that is water conservation. Making sure rural residents can enjoy water resources for many years to come—and which is secure for them—is the intent.

Coming to government with a strong and sustainable water use policy we had a number of decisions to make as new ministers and government members. We made a commitment to Territorians that we would not do 180-degree politics or chuck things out the door just because the previous government introduced them. I looked at this and then spoke to the Water Resources Division; I have spoken to the advisory committee and have heard what is coming out of the public meetings.

This fits really well within a sustainable water use policy. It would be irresponsible to chuck it out the window, but I acknowledge that the process has not been perfect. We have come in half way through the process. It is now about making sure we communicate properly with the rural residents about the decision that was made and the fact most of them will not be affected by this.

There is a resource in the Goyder Centre where they can have individual assessments of their bores. We can get to a place together where we are properly looking after this resource in the rural area, so everybody gets to enjoy their water and their lifestyle, whether that is stock, domestic or commercial, and so there is something in place to enable us to understand how much is being used in the rural area. That is vital to our water planning going forward.

We said in our sustainable water use policy that we would go back to respecting the views of the community—we know what has happened with community advisory groups—and that we would have respect for the science. We need the data so we can understand it. We said we would be fair and have clear, open and transparent processes. I am really pleased to have had that time with the advisory groups. I really admire what they are doing and the understanding they have on this issue.

The Member for Goyder and the Opposition Leader have both come to my office and aired the concerns they are hearing, and I appreciate that. The Member for Goyder has emailed questions to me. The water resources representatives from government have been working their socks off. They have taken those lists of questions, made sure they got the answers, put the answers in writing and gone to the public meetings and provided answers. There will be lots of questions—Bore Central is a great place to ask them.

People from the Water Resources Division have been attending those public meetings; they have taken their computers with them so they can do the individual assessments at those meetings. I have spoken to the Member for Nelson, and I look forward to working with him on how we can communicate and consult with his community. Collaboratively we can do the right thing, which is about making sure we protect our water, keeping our eye on the intent and the goal, and continuing to work constructively together.

It is much harder to go back and reset a process, and it is possible we cannot do that. There is a bit of angst in the community around this. It depends whose community you are in; they might be different levels. It is our responsibility, as members of parliament, to give the right information, instruct people to have their circumstances looked at to get the right advice, and make sure we keep our eyes on the ultimate goal. That is, protecting a resource—an asset—that is vital and belongs to all Territorians. We need to treat it with respect and make sure we base our policy in a strategic, evidence-based way that involves the community.

I hear what people are saying. The six-month grace period takes us to 30 June 2017, and I have no doubt the people within the department will continue to work hard. I apologise for not making the public meeting as I was in Alice Springs, but I have heard the reports and concerns. I have met with advisory committees and local members, which I look forward to continuing to do.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I want to speak about a wonderful initiative that takes place in Palmerston every year. The Palmerston and Rural Seniors Fortnight was held in August as part of Seniors Month. Each year the Seniors Fortnight provides an excellent opportunity to celebrate senior Territorians and the vital active role they play in the Palmerston community.

This year I had the pleasure of attending the opening and closing ceremonies with the Country Liberals' Marie-Clare Boothby, held at Woodroffe Primary School. As always, I was very impressed by the efforts of the Palmerston and Rural Seniors Committee, a group of devoted volunteers who organised the event.

I thank the Marine Rotational Force men and women who assisted by serving lunch to our seniors. They are a welcome addition to the Palmerston community and contribute to community events like these in a meaningful way.

As a member of parliament and as shadow minister for Territory Families, I believe that celebrating seniors is extremely important, and enabling them to continue to be active and contributing members of society should be a priority. Seniors continue to be one of the most active and involved groups in Palmerston, as many are willing and active volunteers. They represent a wealth of knowledge and life skills, and I am proud that in Palmerston they are embraced as community leaders.

The Palmerston and Rural Seniors Committee members have always shown themselves to be dedicated to celebrating seniors and promoting new activities for seniors in the community, so it is not very surprising that this year they have truly outdone themselves.

This year the roster of events was extensive, with activity spaces for 1250 seniors, a 30% increase from last year, in order to accommodate the fortnight's extreme popularity. These included seniors' lunches and morning teas, a morning at the movies, bingo and trivia, a bus trip to Adelaide River with stops at the war memorial and railway museum, a visit to Darwin Military Museum, escorted motor bike rides for adrenaline junkies, and a lovely sunset cruise. As in previous years, the sunset cruise was the most popular event, with 114 seniors taking part in food, drinks, friends and a beautiful sunset on the water.

It is worth mentioning that these activities are provided free of charge to seniors in Palmerston and the rural area. The Palmerston and Rural Seniors Committee works very hard to seek out grants, donations and

sponsorships each year to make this event possible. Sponsors and contributors that deserve a special mention for helping to make Seniors Fortnight possible are:

- the Telstra shop in Palmerston, Bunnings and Flight Centre, which are major contributors in Palmerston
- the City of Palmerston and the Litchfield Council, which have committed funding to Seniors Fortnight for three years
- the Department of Education, for allowing the use of Woodroffe Primary School hall
- the Department of Transport, which provided buses at no cost
- the Department of Tourism and Culture, the Department of Business and the Office of Senior Territorians, which all provided grants.

Other sponsors, include Palmerston Sports Club; Flight Centre; Cazalys Palmerston Club; Spirit of Darwin cruises; Totally Workwear Palmerston; Adelaide River Inn; Palmerston and Rural Party Hire; ESS Larrakia; and the Country Liberal members of parliament in Palmerston, including me

There were also more than 75 contributors of gifts and door prizes this year.

Most importantly of all, I acknowledge all the hard work of the Palmerston and Rural Seniors Committee, which put this together—bigger and better every year—and I thank the board for its dedication and tireless enthusiasm. They are President, Marg Lee; Secretary, Geoff Boyton; Treasurer, Sheryl Sephton; Public Officer, Neville Driver. The committee members are Lillian Mann, Mary Oliffe, Trevor Miller, Pam Christian-Jones, Pam Smith, Avril Smith, Janette Ashby, Geraldine Crowhurst.

The board assures me that it has had an excellent outcome this year, with an 86% satisfaction rate on the evaluation sheets. It speaks volumes about the quality and popularity of Seniors Fortnight that they consistently find themselves filling up their activities and needing to turn people away.

I am also told that there may be some extra surprises at next year's event, as it will be the 20th anniversary of the Palmerston and Rural Seniors Committee. I am sure its members will find a way to celebrate in style and make the event more memorable than ever. I wish them all the best.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, this evening I place my congratulations on the record for more outstanding achievements at the Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School in Wanguri. They have done a fabulous job recently with a few events and achievements.

Congratulations to Caoimhe Kalinowsky. Caoimhe was successful in winning the Hot 100 Apple for the Teacher award, which is a huge achievement. It shows what a very popular, hard-working and amazing teacher she is in the community, making a difference. Caoimhe teaches a Year 5/6 class. It was a big result. If I remember rightly there were over 70 000 votes and she was well ahead of the next person behind her.

It is a great competition run by Hot 100. It is a fantastic acknowledgment of the hard-working teachers in the community. I place my congratulations on the record to Caoimhe. I know her personally and it has been a real pleasure, as the local member, to see her in her work environment and see the hard work she does at the Holy Spirit school. It is very clear that the kids love her and she is a highly-respected teacher amongst her colleagues. Congratulations, Caoimhe; it is a huge achievement to win such an award when there is a lot of competition out there. Well done.

I also congratulate the school on its recent art show. I had the honour of opening the art show. It was fantastic to see so many mums and dads there, and very proud kids displaying their fantastic art. There were over 500 artworks on display, which included 3D sculptures, collages, weaving and some impressive paintings and illustrations.

In Rooms 8 and 9, the artists designed and created ladybug and bee pots decorated with acrylic paint. Room 4 artists produced their own beautiful dreamcatchers and colourful tealights made from cellophane. Room 6 created 3D wall designs and Olympic rings. Room 10 artists produced rhythm artworks using repetitive designs. Room 12 created funny-face Picasso masterpieces and Room 13 created pop art pieces. Rooms 14, 15 and 17 artists created a variety of multicoloured graffiti designs on baseball caps.

That was a lovely event to attend, to see the artwork that was showcased from the school. Many students submitted multiple pieces and it was a great effort. Well done to Principal Simon Duffy and Deputy Principal Paula Sellars on their ongoing leadership and the wonderful events that ensure the school nurtures these kids in such a beautiful way, not only making sure they have an excellent academic education, but nurturing the important creative and artistic talents of those students.

Lastly, I congratulate Holy Spirit for its win at the Northern Territory Education and Care Awards recently. The staff won the award for the Outstanding Education and Care Service in OSHC, and this is the second year in a row the school has won the award. Well done, Holy Spirit School, for continuing to do a wonderful job in our community as a great school for our kids, giving them a great future and doing a marvellous job.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about education and funding, a subject that has attracted a lot of attention over the last week. This government is putting children at the heart of its decisions in education. I congratulate the Minister for Education for the swift action she took to ensure 600 students could remain at Kormilda College this year.

I also wish to speak about the wonderful schools we have in Katherine, and today I draw attention to MacFarlane Primary School. MacFarlane Primary School provides education for approximately 230 students, of whom 92% are Indigenous. The school draws these students from many backgrounds, with students residing in the urban areas of Katherine, including Aboriginal hostels, women's shelters and town camps, and from surrounding communities, such as Borroloola, Timber Creek, Ngukurr, Minyerri and Yarralin.

Once in town these students are completely cut off from their community networks and, at times, they find it very difficult to cope in the urban setting. Many of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have issues such as low self-esteem, loss of cultural community identity, and language barriers that manifest in behavioural and social problems in the school environment. Some students are case managed through family and children's services due to experiencing developmental trauma. This group of students may have experienced abuse, neglect and violence in their early relationships with their primary caregivers.

Attendance is also an issue at the school, with many families not seeing education as a priority. In 2010 the school introduced a cultural program which, over five years, has shown benefits for our Indigenous students and acknowledges that the students would benefit from the program continuing to build on its successes. Every class is involved in the cultural program, with a male and female coordinator being employed to act as mentors, working with the teachers and students for a three-week block.

The focus of this program is determined in a planning session with the classroom teacher, the cultural coordinators and a member of the leadership team. All the units are linked with the subjects of science, history, English or geography from the Australian curriculum but seen from an Indigenous perspective, which is wonderful introduction to some of these subjects.

The learning experiences are often taken into the field where firsthand learning takes place to engage students. The wonderful experiences provided in the cultural program allow the students to engage with their heritage whilst giving students opportunities to explore scientifically.

At the end of each of these units parents are invited to attend a parents' day to witness the children's learning in a video presentation, and are then offered a DVD to take home of all the activities completed during the three weeks. Through these DVDs and activities it is obvious the students become really active listeners at this time, show respect for adults and each other, engage in their learning and have a lot of fun, which is also very important at school.

Often the students who are disengaged at school shine in Indigenous studies and are happy to share their knowledge with our other students. MacFarlane Primary School has been successfully delivering the Indigenous culture program for the last five years. During this time the school has employed the same Indigenous cultural coordinators to run the program. The school is successfully running another wellbeing initiative in the form of the Best Start mentoring and nutrition program, which is partially funded by the federal government.

This school has a strong leadership team and an active school council, which supports and encourages the delivery of these programs. The two cultural coordinators are local Indigenous people with experience working in education for a number of years.

The female coordinator has spent 10 years working as a tutor at MacFarlane and for the past three years has been employed as a cultural coordinator. She was educated at Katherine High School and in 2012 completed her Certificate IV in Education Support at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Her message to all Aboriginal children, while quite simple, is very heartfelt, effective and emotive: go to school every day, get a good education, stand up strong and be confident, with a voice to lead the way in the future.

The male coordinator has had many years of experience working in Aboriginal communities as a CDEP coordinator and then as the CEO of Jilkminggan. For the past six years he has been employed at MacFarlane Primary School, and since 2012 he has been the cultural coordinator. He also gained his Certificate IV in Education Support at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education in 2012. His passion is to teach every child who wants to learn about their culture and life skills, and he strives to engage those who do not.

Both of these coordinators are strong in their own Aboriginal heritage and respectfully pass on Aboriginal culture to all MacFarlane students. They have delivered cultural awareness professional development to MacFarlane staff, who are most appreciative to be gaining a greater understanding of the children they are teaching. They also presented cultural awareness professional development to another school in the town, as well as visiting doctors from Flinders University. The same calibre of experience and qualifications will be expected of coordinators in the future.

Attendance and behavioural data, along with annual student perception surveys, assist the leadership team at MacFarlane in monitoring the overall performance and effectiveness of the program. This program is supported by many stakeholders, community members, staff and students who connect via this valuable program. Relationships are built and role models are introduced into the program, giving students a visible pathway to their future education and career progression, which is important in communities like Katherine.

However, the program has been unable to successfully obtain ongoing funding from the federal government for this very important initiative. The funding that MacFarlane Primary School has asked of the federal government is \$581 793.12 for three years. I am very pleased that the NT Government is investing an additional \$20m per year over four years into schools. This will help schools employ more classroom teachers or continue programs such as the Indigenous languages program at MacFarlane.

With the federal government's recent announcement to support Kormilda College in 2017, there is clearly funding available at the federal level, and I hope the federal government will reconsider funding this important program at MacFarlane Primary School. This would assist in expanding the program to employ two additional Indigenous trainees, one male and one female, to work with the coordinators and ensure knowledge is passed on so the program is sustainable for future years. This program has enjoyed such a successful outcome it has already had interest from other schools in the area for guidance in replicating the program at those schools.

The program's long-term objectives are to instil not only a sense of culture in the students, but also increase school attendance and, in turn, improve employment outcomes for students. At the start of the 2013 school year, average attendance for Indigenous students was 70%; however, during the cultural program attendance increased to an average of 81%, with some classes having an attendance of 92%.

Parents are engaging in their children's learning and the culminating event averaged out at 12 across 10 classes. The program has a clear effect on attendance and this year has seen the highest numbers for parent participation. Behavioural incidents declined in the time the students participated in the cultural unit, which supports and encourages increased attendance.

Here is a public school with staff members who are wholly committed to ensuring that not only are the children receiving the very best education we can provide, but also the support they need to ensure they feel safe, secure and a part of the school community.

The Indigenous culture program aims to assist all students in establishing an early foundation with good school attendance. Without this strong foundation, future education and subsequent employment are very difficult to achieve.

I stand here today not only to highlight the efforts and successes of MacFarlane Primary School, but also to use it as an example in response to the opposition's criticism of this government to only provide Kormilda College with \$5m to keep its doors open this year. I cannot help but think to myself that the CLP

government cut the number of teachers and funding to schools by \$114m, and, on a federal level, cut the Gonski deal.

I commend the dedicated teachers and other staff at MacFarlane Primary School for their commitment to their students and for striving to provide the best education while creating an environment that encourages attendance and engagement, and which understands that establishing relationships with families and community members is the key to keeping kids in school.

I also urge the federal government to reconsider its response to MacFarlane's recent application for funding so it may continue providing this valuable cultural program. This program, by its description, fits in with the federal government's commitment to achieving better results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Australians in three of its priority areas: getting children to school; getting adults into work; and safe communities.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Katherine, your time has expired.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I wish to talk about a matter that is not only of great importance and significance to me, but to the Members for Braitling and Stuart, the greater Labor Party and members of the Territory.

Today I join the Anangu people, and people right across our nation, in celebrating the 31st anniversary of the Uluru hand-back, which was on 26 October 1985. I pay my respects to the Anangu people for their continuing success, hard work and ongoing commitment to the deep, spiritual connection they have to their country.

The CLP, at the time, resisted the hand-back of Uluru because they felt it would impact negatively on tourism. How wrong they were. That is why I am very proud to stand here before you today as a proud Labor Party member, a proud member of a Territory Labor government, and a proud member whose federal colleagues supported the return of Uluru to its rightful owners.

This treasure remains a drawcard for the nation, drawing in thousands of tourists each year to share in the spiritual connections to Uluru. It is very significant place to the Anangu people and it is tied to the Tjukurpa dreaming. It is a place where all Australians and international visitors can sit, visit and walk around and feel the deep, spiritual connection and energy that Uluru has.

The hand-back of this iconic site in 1985 still remains a very strong movement for Aboriginal people and land rights, and is an icon to the continuing journey of self-determination. The Central Land Council and other advocate groups worked hard and tirelessly in the lead-up to the hand-back. They were seen to spearhead the campaigns. This remains very important and their work continues to ensure they are fighting for the interests of their people.

I offer thanks to the people of Uluru and Mutitjulu, and the national park, for their ongoing role in caring for the country at this very important site. I was fortunate enough to attend the 31st anniversary and join in the celebrations of the hand-back with the Anangu community and members of the Mutitjulu community. It was a great privilege to attend that event with previous parliamentarians such as the previous Senator for the Northern Territory, Nova Peris; the previous Member for Namatjira, Alison Anderson; and a good friend, mentor and colleague of mine, the Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon. He has always been a strong advocate for the people at Mutitjulu, the Anangu people. Mr Snowdon continues to fight for those people in federal parliament. I congratulate him on his efforts and his continuing work in that space.

Today, in 2016, the park continues to be jointly managed by the Anangu people, who have ensured that a majority of the local voice is on the board and that they work with the Australian parks and wildlife service. Uluru-Kata Tjuta has been the place of many developments. As the Member for Namatjira I remain committed to the people of Uluru and Mutitjulu. I look forward to working with the Anangu people at the Mutitjulu community to continue to build a strong and healthy community.

Issues that the people of Mutitjulu are facing can be overcome by working with the local people to achieve better tenure issues around their land, better infrastructure and access to services that will help them reach their goal and shape the future of their community.

As the local member I will stand by the people of Uluru and Mutitjulu to ensure people involved in Namatjira's important events are recognised in forums such as this tonight. I ask all members to join with me in wishing the Anangu people a happy anniversary on this special day, and to ensure that we, as

elected members in this Chamber, continue to fight for the rights of people who may not have the voice to do so.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, I want to pay homage to a wonderful initiative that has been held in my electorate since the beginning of the Dry Season in April this year, which is the Malak Marketplace Organic Farmers Market. The marketplace is held in the car park at the back of the Malak shops and consists of a variety of organic food, drink, produce and art and craft stalls, as well as live entertainment.

The purpose of the Malak Marketplace is, as it says on its website:

... to supply fresh, local organic produce and products at affordable prices to the Darwin Community, with a focus on health and education, local arts and crafts and multicultural culture and entertainment.

The marketplace is held each Saturday afternoon between the hours of 4 pm and 9 pm, and it provides a harmonious and unique environment for community members and visitors alike to take time out from their busy lives. I have attended the Malak Marketplace most Saturdays and have witnessed many community members enjoying the welcoming and friendly environment.

What differentiates this marketplace from others in the Darwin region is that it is an organic farmers market. This ensures that all food and drink stall holders have adhered to using organic produce where possible, as per the guidelines of the marketplace organisers. It is also the only market that does not have a stall that sells soft drinks, which I found to be a novel concept at the start. On a personal note, I do not really miss my soft drinks when I visit the market, as I happily greet Leanne and grab a homemade lemonade each time I am there.

The Malak Marketplace is the brainchild of Lina Paselli and others, who are all heavily involved with Darwin Community Arts, which operates out of Malak shops. The Malak Marketplace was trialled in late 2015 with great success, which warranted a full season to be held this year, from 30 April to Saturday 29 October.

The previous government provided \$25 000 worth of funding to the Malak Marketplace organisers to support their efforts this year. I am pleased to announce that my government also sees the value of this wonderful community initiative and will also support the Malak Marketplace organisers with \$20 000 for the 2017 marketplace season.

Lina Paselli, Sachi Hirayama, May Aggabao and Jim McDougall volunteer their time to drive this initiative and forgo their Saturdays to set up, run and pack down the marketplace each and every week. There is an enormous amount of work involved in operating this successful initiative. I offer Lina, Sachi, May and Jim my heartfelt thanks and congratulations on a fantastic market season.

The location and timing of the market provides locals and visitors to the community an opportunity to be part of a community-driven initiative that focuses on bringing people together to enjoy food and drink, as well as art and craft stalls.

The final Malak Marketplace of the 2016 season will be held this Saturday 29 October between 4 pm and 9 pm, and I encourage everyone to attend.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I wish to speak of the wonderful exploits and results of the rural little athletics club, which has its home at Freds Pass Reserve.

The Member for Nelson, along with the Mayor of Litchfield Council, Marie Bredhauer, and I went to the opening of its shed, which was fun even though the shed had already been opened. The shed has been a combination of generous families and their hard work, and some business which have supported the installation of the shed. It gives them a good facility to store the various pieces of athletic equipment which they use on a regular basis through the Dry Season. It has an area where you can hold barbecues, functions and things of that nature. It was the official opening and it was good fun.

It was also their presentation night. I acknowledge the little tackers from six years old through to the seniors and club champions for their commitment not only to athletics, outdoor activity and sport, but also to the rural athletics club.

Crystal Attenborough, who is a well-known Territory and Australian athlete was there to present to all the juniors, which was good. They were pretty chuffed about that.

Congratulations go to the six years champion, Emily Davis; seven years champion, Jorja Chin; eight years champion, Benjamin Barnard; nine years champion, Bailey Moffatt; 10 years champion, Diana Garadji; and 11 years champion, Colby Allan.

Then they changed the awards and went into the disciplines rather than working it the way they had done previously. The senior sprints champion was Nathan Everett. The senior distance champion was Lynne Logan, who works at Bees Creek Primary School—lovely person; senior walks champion, Pam King; senior long/triple jump champion, Hamish O'Sullivan; senior high jump champion, Brandon McConnell; and senior throws champion, Kelsi Davis.

The overall club champion was John Keirs. Senior champion was Jack Logan, son of Lynne Logan, a lovely young fellow. I have known him since he was a little tacker went I first got into this job at Bees Creek. He has turned into a lovely young man. The junior champion was Chloe Davis.

The Fred Munro Encouragement Award went to Hamish O'Sullivan; Kia Best Memorial Award, Bridie King; and Club Person of the Year, Claudine Garonzi.

The coaches awards are awards of encouragement, recognising not necessarily the athletic ability of the person but how they inspire others, pitch in and do everything that is asked of them. The two coaches awards went to Tahlia Olajos and Nathan Everett.

Congratulations to everyone at the Rural Athletics Centre, Cameron and Jo, and all the other parents who pull the club together and do everything they do every Saturday and Wednesday afternoon. I keep promising that I will come and run with them, but I have not quite gotten there yet. They all start too early on Saturday morning. I will try one year. I said I will go back and do some more running because I did a lot of athletics in my time.

Well done to all the juniors and the seniors. It is a good club and I wish them all the best for next season.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.