

**Mr WOOD:** A point of order Madam Speaker, the Attorney-General is not here. Who will take questions?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Good point Member for Nelson, Chief Minister?

**Mr GUNNER:** I will take questions on behalf of the Attorney-General and Minister for Health today.

### **Kormilda College**

#### **Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for EDUCATION**

Your government was elected on a platform of trust, transparency and accountability. I was thrilled this morning to hear from Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion that he set aside sufficient funding to ensure that Kormilda College will continue operating in 2017 and that parents, teachers, staff and students from Kormilda have finally been given a degree of certainty.

The school community is fortunate that, in this instance, they did not have to rely on your government, which to all intents and purposes did not appear to care whether the school remained open. In fact with the many contingencies you had in place, none of which supported the school staying open, it almost looked as if it was the intent for the school to close. Why did you not listen to the voices of Territorians who begged you to keep their school and lobby harder with the Commonwealth for the school to remain open?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Daly for the question. I have been working hard to ensure Kormilda College remains open and I am very pleased to say today that I have been successful.

The Department of Education is responsible for regulation of non-government schools, including Kormilda, so there have been a number of meetings with the department on this matter over a number of weeks. I met with the college principal, board chair and the Bishop. My office, immediately on becoming aware of this situation, also made contact with Senator Birmingham's officer also to advise them of the situation. I wrote to the federal government and I spoke with Senator Birmingham and Senator Scullion to seek a commitment to providing financial assistance for the school to remain open.

This government stepped in and made available up to \$5.1m to ensure the college could remain open so that staff could be paid and students could complete their studies.

To clarify a response from yesterday, I have been open and transparent about the \$5.1m. I said on the radio a number of times that \$3.1 m was for operational costs for this term; \$2m was to cover a bank line of credit. The amount of \$5.1m out of the NT government's budget probably equates to \$500m in the Australian government's budget. Our actions have ensured that the school can continue to operate this year. Without our support, the school would have closed this month. We have, and will continue to, listen and consult with Kormilda community and I will be meeting with members of the new steering committee this afternoon.

Delivering education in the Northern Territory is expensive; particularly catering for the needs of remote indigenous students. However, I do need to reiterate that we are in this position because the board has failed to manage the school in a financially responsible way. This government has a responsibility to all Territory students and we understand how important education is to ensuring all children have a bright future. That is why this government has made a huge commitment to reverse the damaging cuts done by the CLP; damage for which members of the opposition and other members of this house are responsible for.

Cuts to education funding by the CLP represent the biggest challenge to ensuring Kormilda and other NT schools can continue to provide a quality education for NT students. I welcomed the announcement today by Senator Scullion that the federal government has decided to come to the table and set aside funding for 2017. However, just like us, Senator Scullion has asked that the school put in place a sound business plan. This is what I have been calling for. It is time to stop playing politics.

## Infrastructure Projects

### **Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS**

How is the new government ensuring that infrastructure projects continue to roll out to create jobs and strengthen the Territory economy?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Karama for her question. It is a very important question and we know that the roll out of government infrastructure funding is critical in the Northern Territory economy; especially at a time where we are seeing absolute transition. It is vital because it supports jobs and local businesses as well as delivering vital infrastructure to the Territory to enable better services and economic development opportunities.

It has been a real priority since coming to government to send out a very clear message that we are absolutely continuing the \$1.7bn infrastructure program and making sure that rolls out the door. We need it to flow through to support jobs and business. I have made that very clear to my department.

We know that this financial year alone more than 200 contracts have been awarded. On top of that we have \$67.7m of tenders in the market, and we have strengthened our buy local policy. That means more local businesses will benefit from Territory government expenditure. That means there will be more local jobs being supported by this government. That is a very good thing.

We also have a further \$48m in tenders that are in assessment and will be awarded soon. That is a significant amount of money. I also want to inform the House that in the coming weeks and months you will certainly be seeing a greater ramping up of the number of projects and the value of projects going into the market to support more jobs and investment in the Northern Territory, and more local business, which is critical.

We need to see good infrastructure so we can deliver better services and support and grow our economy. That is exactly what we are committed to doing as the new government. We are ensuring that \$1.7bn program continues.

When the CLP came to government, in the last term of government, it had the INPEX project sitting there. The hard work of the Labor government delivered them the \$64bn INPEX project. What did we see in that term of government? We saw a government that failed to plan and prepare for the construction to operational phase. We are now here in government and we have the task ahead of making sure that in this period of transition we are committed to making sure we continue to support Territory jobs and business, and continue to grow our economy. That infrastructure money is a vital part of that and we are committed to ensuring that continues to flow.

## New Palmerston Police Station

### **Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES**

On Tuesday 18 October at a Save Kormilda rally, respected Territorian Michael Long warned the Gunner government that failing to save the school would have ramifications. 'No Aboriginal children who graduate from Kormilda go into youth detention', Mr Long said. 'Kormilda is one of the best solutions available.'

The opposition agrees with Mr Long that education is a pathway away from a life of crime and antisocial behaviour, but where the prevention has failed the correction must follow.

Palmerston is a great city full of growing suburbs. While it is making the parents, students, teachers and staff wait for a resolution to long-term funding of the Kormilda school, Palmerston needs and deserves a new police station now. Why is the government also making the people of Palmerston wait until 2020, after the next election, for a new police station?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Spillett for the question. I have to start with correcting the final section. We promised a police station for Palmerston in this term. The idea that the Palmerston Police Station will happen next term is puzzling. We promised it this term. We promised the people of Palmerston

a police station and in the suburbs of Palmerston. There is already a police station in Palmerston, with police, at the moment.

I enjoy working with the police. We understand the challenges that confront us at that pointy, acute end in providing the services to the people of Palmerston they deserve. We need to provide the suburbs of Palmerston with services just as the suburbs of Darwin get services such as the police station at Casuarina.

That is what we are working on and what our promise is. I am not sure why the member for Spillett is talking about the term after next. But we will be investing in a police station in Palmerston in this term of our government.

The other thing we will be doing is investing in police resources and numbers. We have seen a media release from the Police Association and the police annual report has been tabled. It shows that the CLP fundamentally broke its promise to Territorians about police numbers during their last term – just one of those things that build up and why people did not trust the CLP.

We will honour our promises. We will build a police station in Palmerston during our term of government. We will honour our promises about the resourcing of police and police numbers in the Territory, unlike the CLP. We need a government in the Northern Territory that will do what it says it will. That is what we will do. We will honour our promises and have that police station in Palmerston during this terms.

I have had a conversation with the Police Commissioner. I thank the member for Brennan, Tony Sievers, and the member for Drysdale, Eva Lawler, who are very strong part of our team leading to that promise, who do good work with the police in Palmerston and hold conversations with the people of Palmerston about what they need.

Madam Speaker, we will honour our promises and invest in police in the Territory and in Palmerston and make sure the people in the suburbs of Palmerston get the services they deserve, just like the people of the northern suburbs of Darwin. We will respect them and do that.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION New Palmerston Police Station**

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER**

Please clarify for the people of Palmerston whether the new Palmerston Police Station's door will be open in this term of government.

**ANSWER**

Yes.

#### **Technology to Assist Police**

**Mr COLLINS to POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES**

How is the government ensuring police can use the latest technology to protect victims of crime and help fight against the scourge of domestic violence?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for the question. It is quite an important one. We have been working with the police. There has also been a recent coronial that has gone into this issue and the two intertwine. I have had the good fortune of going out on patrol with police in the Territory. I did that in Alice Springs and saw the work that they do. I have had some good conversations with the police and a few weeks ago I was able to go out as we announced the roll out of 820 body-worn cameras.

**Mr Higgins:** An initiative of the Country Liberal government!

**Mr GUNNER:** These are cameras that have been trialled extensively by the police over the last year or so to work out what works best; what model works best and how it works best for police. A very good trial; I do hear the Leader of the Opposition claiming some credit for that. No, you are right, they were trialled. It was

fantastic. we have rolled out those 820 cameras to make sure the front line have those cameras. These are very important tools for police in doing their job.

I think a very good example of how they work in the field and then following from the field through to the courtroom; as the member for Fong Lim would have significant experience in, is in the evidence they take. As we have heard from the coroner in a few family violence cases recently; the evidence-in-chief that a body-worn camera can provide in the courtroom can be very powerful and potentially lifts weight off the victim in that circumstance. It gives very compelling evidence and we are going to have, through the Attorney-General, some legislation that comes forward that provides more certainty and makes it easier for the court to use that evidence in the courtroom. They can use it at the moment but that legislation will make it easier; more likely to be used and provide greater certainty of the evidentiary chains. That is something we are working on as part of a body of recommendations from the coroner.

I thank the police for the work they do. It was noted by the coroner in that coronial that the police had been incredibly proactive over the last 10 years in how they approach family violence issues in the body of work that they are doing; all, again, at the pointy end. We have to do a lot of work, as the Minister for Territory Families knows, much earlier in the piece around intervention, prevention and rehabilitation. It is critical that we keep investing in that pointy end and make sure we make those reforms to make it even easier to protect the people who are the victim of family violence.

You do not want— and this is a body of work that the police are doing supported by the Attorney-General, making sure they have those cameras; are getting the evidence; looking out for victims on the front line and then following through and making sure we are getting good court results that lead to prevention and help for the family. That is what that camera can do when used properly with the police. I think it has been a fantastic trial; it has been a good investment in practical technology that has a really sound, safe impact at the other end, which I think is fantastic. I thank the police for that work; the coroner for his recommendations; the Attorney-General for the legislation that she is going to be bringing forward and the Minister for Territory Families, who is doing a body of work about hoping the cameras are never needed in the first place.

### **Homeland Schools**

#### **Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for EDUCATION**

I was going to support the boarding school from my end, but I would like to go further in asking the Education minister—we have a concern that we need our community schools upgraded to lift up the schools and getting them to the highest level where we do not have to send kids to a boarding school in another town or city. We would like to keep them in the communities. The homelands school need to be better than learning centres.

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

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for the question. I, too, am a firm believer that the best place for a child to be educated is in their home community. One of the previous Labor government's key initiatives was to make sure that students could access secondary education in their home communities.

That said, there is some work to be done across the Northern Territory to make sure that can occur and the education provided in those communities is of the highest quality.

One of our key election commitments was around community-led schools. That is about working with school communities and the families to identify exactly what they want delivered in their school community. Further to that, this government also committed \$5m to upgrades of homelands centres, and I know that is work that desperately needs to be done in the 26 or so active homeland centres.

There is money set aside to upgrade homeland centres. There is also \$300 000 per school, allocated by this government, to upgrade all schools across the Territory.

I take on board what you are asking and would be very happy to work with you in the future on upgrading those schools and improve education in your electorate.

## **Mango Industry**

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

How is the government supporting the local mango industry, and are there any Commonwealth policies that are jeopardising the health of this import Territory industry?

### **ANSWER**

Thank you very much for the question Member for Stuart and I will tell this house what is jeopardising our important mango industry and that is the backpacker tax: absolutely putting our mango industry at jeopardy.

The Commonwealth government decided to put 32.5% on the first dollar earned by every backpacker in Australia. After considerable lobbying we are down to 19c. We rely on, in the Northern Territory, 85% of our agriculture workforce are by backpackers. 85%. This is why the Michael Gunner government are calling for the backpacker tax to be scrapped.

What do we need in the next two to three week? We need between four to four and a half thousand backpackers or seasonal workers in the Northern Territory, especially the Top End at the moment, around getting our mangos off the trees not rotting on the ground. These changes; 19c in every dollar from the first dollar earned, will have significant impacts on our mango industry.

We are not just talking about mango industry; we are also talking about the hospitality industry. There has been a 30-40% decline, a 30-40% decline, in inquiries to work in the backpacker industries.

We need our fruit, as I said yesterday, on the shelves in every shop in the world. We have the highest quality mango produce in the world. I did a media conference a couple of weeks ago about an import/export going into America and we hope, for the Territory's sate, that Americans love our mangos.

I was lucky enough to visit (inaudible), the president of the NT Mango Farmers Association a couple of weeks ago and heard of the concerns of what that means for his industry, and it is absolutely important that I, and the Michael government, continue to lobby Barnaby Joyce the Federal Agriculture Minister to scrap this tax on behalf of all NT mango growers. Our mangos should be tasted around the world not rotting on the ground.

## **Funding Election Commitments**

### **Mrs LAMBLEY to TREASURER**

Yesterday you told parliament that the Northern Territory is facing a dramatic drop in economic growth from 10% to 1% next year. You will be facing a significant decrease in revenue due to your moratorium on fracking. There is no money left in the coffers. Your intention is to get to a surplus in 2019-20. How will you pay for your election commitments? Are you facing a black hole in meeting your billions of dollars' worth of election commitments? It is normal practice for a new government to bring forward a mini-budget within months of coming to government. Will you be doing that? Will we see a mini-budget by the end of the year?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Araluen for that question, because it is a good and important question.

There are some challenges ahead; there is no doubt about it. As I have stated before, coming in to government we are currently looking at a deficit that has jumped quite dramatically when you look at the PEFO figures, which is the pre-election fiscal outlook, from a \$93m deficit to now sitting at an \$876m deficit. The estimated debt level is sitting at around \$2.7bn. So there are some challenges ahead.

One thing we did going into the election was submit all of our election commitments to Treasury, just as the CLP did, which is the process. We showed them our plans for delivering our priorities, programs and infrastructure plans. We put that to Treasury and we saw that ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. Will you be facing a black hole? You seem to have billions of dollars of election commitments and you have already told us you have no money.

**Madam SPEAKER:** No, it is not a point of order.

**Ms MANISON:** Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for that so I can be direct and get to the point. No, we will not be facing a black hole. We submitted those costings to Treasury and it was very clear we showed them the pathway we planned to follow to reach a surplus in 2019-20 and our plans for moving forward.

There is no doubt though that there will be challenges. As we all know, when you come to government you discover a raft of things measures that may have never had funding committed to them and that type of thing. As we know, we have the Royal Commission coming up and with that we know there will be findings and recommendation that as a responsible government you have to look at. Sometimes circumstances change, but every government faces this situation. However, we made sure going to this election that we submitted our costings to Treasury, which is very professional. It had a good look at our costings and said we can reach that target.

Yes, we will have to reprioritise some of the infrastructure, which any government naturally does.

You talked about a mini-budget; the MYEFO effectively will capture that. We are not going through the mini budget process like your former party had gone through

**Mrs Lambley:** And Clare Martin?

**Ms MANISON:** Yes, but the MYEFO process will capture that. It is all going to be extremely clear after we go through our economic summits and go through our first budget process where those priorities lie. No black holes, Member for Araluen, we have had our election commitments fully costed and we are absolutely determined to reach that surplus in 2019. Thank you.

### **Carers in the Northern Territory**

#### **Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES**

Minister, I am sure you will join me in saying thank you to all our carers in this the National Carers Week. Minister, can you please update the house on how the Northern Territory government is supporting careers?

#### **ANSWER**

Thank you for the question because it is a very important one. In the Territory, we have up to 30,000 carers who are providing unpaid care and support for family members, friends; people who have a disability; mental illness; chronic conditions such as renal disease in particular; terminal illness or any kind of alcohol and drug related issue all often depend on unpaid care to remain in the community.

As I mentioned in my speech this morning, this is an experience that happened to my family; it can happen to a family, for which I would like to acknowledge my mother, Heather Wakefield, who is here and has been a carer for my father for over 30 years. At one stage she was also caring for my grandmother, who lived next door, and providing childcare for my nieces all at the same time. Well done.

This is not an uncommon story; this is nothing special about my family. This happens in lots of families and it is going to happen increasingly as we live longer; we have multigenerational families; women have children later, where they are in the sandwich generation of caring for elderly parents and young children at the same time. This is an ongoing issue for the Territory and it is great that this week we get to recognise carers from the Northern Territory. I was very proud to meet with Carers NT. They are a great organisation and we provide them with \$400,000 a year to support carers in our community. It is important work and I really welcome this opportunity to acknowledge that work and the work of all the unpaid carers in our community today.

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### Visitors

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Steve Hatton, a former Chief Minister. Welcome back! You obviously have not got much to do at the moment; or you have come for some entertainment. I am not sure which it is.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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### Arafura Games

#### Mr HIGGINS to the MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

To the Member for Sanderson, as the assistant minister for bringing back the Arafura Games

**Mr GUNNER:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! As the Leader of the Opposition should know; all questions go to ministers in this house. The ministers are the ones responsible for the administration orders and I, as the trade minister, taking lead on the Arafura Games and in working with the Minister for Tourism and Culture with her sports portfolio as well. But you cannot ask questions to an assistant minister.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 107 is very clear in that it say that members can be asked questions if the motion, or other public matter, connected to the business of Assembly which the member has charge of and clearly this was stated on several occasions with press releases released by the Chief Minister and the assistant minister prior to her trip to Malaysia.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I have the standing order in front of me. The person assisting the minister is not a minister, they do not have a warrant. I get where you are coming from Opposition Leader, but the person is not the minister. If the Sports Minister was not in attendance then perhaps that person could answer but the question should be directed at either the person responsible for sports or, as the Chief Minister said, if you want to have the question directed to trade.

So would you like to redirect the question please?

**Mr HIGGINS:** Madam Speaker, I am not happy with that ruling but we will accept that at this point but I think from the Opposition's point of view, to have assistant ministers; they need to be told what important roles they have got and then we cannot quiz them. Open and accountable government is not being...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Just ask the question, Opposition Leader.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Last month the minister happily attended another successful Mitchell Street Mile, an event made possible by the Country Liberals government. It was an event made possible through the relocation of some of the funds which would have been used for the Arafura Games. In fact, a lot of major sporting event have been made possible through the reallocation of that funding. Will your government be cancelling event like the Mitchell Street Mile, AFL, NRL, and Four Nations Hockey to be given to the Arafura Games? And what will the cost of another Games be?

#### ANSWER

I thank the Opposition Leader for his question. I understand that the Mitchell Street Mile was funded from within in 2016. The Mitchell Street Mile was a fantastic event and it was an absolute privilege to attend it this year. I look forward to the Mitchell Street Mile occurring next year and being just as successful. We saw some athletes running at that event who were coming off the back of their Olympic campaigns in Rio. That is an amazing thing to happen in the middle of the Darwin CBD on a Sunday afternoon, a time that is traditionally quite quiet in the CBD. It is an important event and I look forward to that continuing, as I look forward to a range of sports events continuing and growing.

We have a range of commitment across sports. Bringing back the Arafura Games is an important one. It is fully costed. I acknowledge that it is being driven under the Chief Minister. I look forward to working with people like the assistant minister, who has already done some amazing work to make sure we can bring back the Arafura Games. We need to be up front here. There were many people in the community who

were very upset when the CLP made the decision to scrap the Arafura Games. It was a great relationship builder internationally, it brought a lot into our economy in the Territory and was important to our community members, many of whom have volunteered over the years and been part of the opening and closing ceremonies. It is something that I have been part of. I worked at the Arafura Games in 2007 and I recognise how important that was for our community.

We look forward to growing sports across the board and bring back the Arafura Games ...

**Mr Wood:** Then you should have a minister for sport.

**Ms MOSS:** We have a minister for Sport. I am the minister responsible for Sport. We have a Minister for Tourism and Culture. I can tell the Chamber that I have spoken to a range of people about us putting Sport with Tourism, Parks and a range of other areas where we have exceptionally strong synergies. Sport and Tourism is a great opportunity. These are departments that have traditionally worked together well, but now they are all together under the same department. The opportunities are great and there are many people in the community who can see the great opportunities that come from bringing those areas together.

It is brilliant for the Arafura Games, so I look forward to working on that with my colleagues.

### **Indigenous Communities – Decision Making**

#### **Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Can you please update the House on the steps the government is taking towards returning local decision making to Indigenous communities across the Territory?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Stuart for his question. Members, the Labor government has a 10-year plan to transfer power and to empower people living in remote communities. The plan is returning local decision making to Indigenous communities. The plan is not just about housing and community development, which I have carriage of, it is about local government, education and training, health, looking after children, and law and justice.

Local decisions made in remote communities are the best decisions, and when local decision-makers are making those decisions it is a process of empowerment. Decision-making in this context will be done at a pace determined by the relevant people in the relevant time frames, and it will be about consulting with traditional owners and the organisations that represent Indigenous Territorians. In the area of local government it will be about strengthening local authorities in their roles in local government and service delivery, a very important area in regard to establishing those real decision-makers, based on local knowledge and culture for their communities and people.

Michael Gunner's Labor government is community Cabinet focused, and our Chief Minister has already embarked on that plan across the Territory—the first extensive community Cabinet meeting being in Alice Springs and the next on planned in west Arnhem.

My role, in regard to my responsibility for local government, sees a strong commitment to strengthening local councils and the role of local authorities in that structure as real decision-makers. We are working closely with regional councils and the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, and already I have received positive feedback. This resonated across the NT in the last four years, not the last four weeks. Over the last four years you had a very effective opposition that consulted and learnt important lessons that translated to policy around local decision-making.

This is a big policy change and it will occur in relevant time frames. We are taking a new direction and we will not rush it, but we will do it side by side with regional and remote residents. We are very proud of this policy.

### **Arts Funding**

#### **Mr WOOD to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE**

Is the minister aware that the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, formally 24hr Art, in Parap was denied Australia Council funding under federal Arts minister George Brandis for the first time in 27 years? Is the



minister aware that this loss of funding threatens the very life of one of the Northern Territory's most iconic and contributing arts organisations, that has consistently supported an exhibited up and coming Northern Territory artists?

Is the minister prepared to support and save this iconic NT not-for-profit arts organisation in its time of need and assure the House and the public that the NCCA will not have to close its doors and will continue to be able to be a major supporter of Northern Territory artists.

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable member for his question. It is really important that we do have a question about the arts. I think we can all appreciate how important that is.

I am aware of the funding situation of the Northern Centre for Contemporary Art and decision of the federal government. I am aware of the very good work it does, in Parap, in the Chief Minister's electorate. It is a fantastic art gallery and does very important work.

It plays a critical role for contemporary visual arts in the Northern Territory. Along with a number of arts organisations, it has, unfortunately, suffered at the hands of the federal government. Also, many of our arts organisations, this one included, were defunded by the CLP, so some of our arts organisations have experienced a loss of funding at both levels. That is something we as a government have to grapple. It is something I have definitely turned by mind to.

I understand that there is great concern and uncertainty amongst the NCCA and local artists about the future of that centre. This is a matter that is being considered by me alongside a range of other applications that are before me.

I want to be clear that as a government we value the arts. We have made some big commitments around art and culture in the Northern Territory. We recognise the role that the arts play in our economic position and in making sure we are investing in those creative jobs in the Territory.

We are investing \$100m in an Indigenous arts trail, leveraging private investment, increasing visitation to the NT as an arts and culture destination and making sure we are providing opportunities for jobs in the Territory in our creative industries.

As part of that commitment we will look at developing the iconic national Indigenous art gallery and cultural centres, upgrades to museums and galleries in the Centre and make sure we are really investing in the arts as a contributor to the economy and job creation in the Territory.

The investment in the Indigenous arts trail includes the \$50m for the national Indigenous arts centre in Alice Springs, the \$20m for the Indigenous cultural centre, also in Alice Springs, and will bring significant employment opportunities. I appreciate that investing in arts and culture is good for the economy, but also ensures that we are leaving that important legacy for our children and that we are continuing to share our stories. It is a matter that I am currently considering.

**Assistant Ministers – Role and Authority**

**Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER**

As we have seen today, as part of the open, transparent and accountable government we cannot even ask questions of the assistant ministers. You have said that your assistant ministers will not earn any additional wages, but will you please clarify? Will your assistant ministers have any say in Cabinet? Will they be privy to Cabinet briefings and papers? Will they get to act as ministers when the ministers are interstate or overseas? Finally, what is their authority over departments?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. We have an excellent team that is very deep and I thank Territorians that we have been given such a large, quality, talented team.

As a leader, I asked what was the best way we can ensure all the qualities of our team are used and tasked. As minister, we sign and take oaths and responsibilities under the Administrative Orders. We are responsible and will be held accountable. We will have a good, strong, stable Cabinet. That is very clear.

As ministers, we will work with our assistant ministers and will do good work with them. The member for Fong Lim is the chair of the small business round table that will be rolled out to provide access to business. I am the Business minister. I am not giving away responsibility and not being held accountable or being responsible to business. I am working with the member for Fong Lim as the chair of the small business round table. He could do that as the member for Fong Lim, but we have made it a clear task to me as the Business minister. I will not forsake my responsibilities. I will be the one who has to be held to account. I have taken the oaths, held the Bible and sworn and signed. I will go to ExCo. There is a very real set of responsibilities.

Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear that I am the one who will be held to account. Ministers will be held to account. We will have an excellent working relationship with the ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110. With all due respect to the Chief Minister, he has been speaking for a couple of minutes now. I draw his attention to the question: will the assistant ministers have a say in Cabinet? Will they be privy to Cabinet briefings and papers? Will they get to act as the minister when the minister is interstate or overseas? What authority do they have?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Spillett, it is not a point of order. He has two minutes to answer the question.

**Mr GUNNER:** Only a minister can act for a minister; that is part of how the system works and it is in the documents we sign. It is all very clear, I think, and they will not receive remuneration, but they will work with me or the Treasurer, or ministers all around the table to make sure Territorians are given access to their parliamentarians and that we are a government for all Territorians. That is what you will get from this government.

I want to make sure everyone in our team is tasked and that their quality is acknowledged. I think that is important and we are doing that. As the Chief Minister, I am the one you hold to account. I am standing here while you ask me questions in Question Time, and you ask me questions at press conferences. The department I represent reports to me. It cannot report to anyone else; I cannot sign that away. I am held to account, as are each of our ministers, and Territorians will hold us to account as a team. We will be an open and trusted team.

### **Education – Funding for Disability and Behavioural Support**

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

My question is not about a single private school in one part of the Northern Territory. It extends to a cohort of students across the NT who are often forgotten and who miss out on important essential support services. How will our government work to implement our plan to support the children of the NT with disabilities and challenging behavioural disorders in Territory schools?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arnhem for her question. How lucky are Territorians to have an Assistant Minister for Education who is also an award winning teacher!

I am proud to stand here as Minister for Education and say that this government will invest an additional \$8m per year over the next four years to better support children who display challenging behaviour, and to provide extra support to children with disabilities in our schools.

This additional funding has been allocated in response to concerns raised by parents and educators about the challenging behaviours that some children exhibit at school and the amount of time it takes to assess children for learning difficulties.

I have seen firsthand, as has the Member for Arnhem, the difficulties faced by teachers with children who exhibit challenging behaviours as well as the time it takes to complete assessments following the cuts that were incurred by education, made by the CLP government. As a minister I have heard the experiences of parents who are waiting for their children to get the help they need, or of the parents lucky enough to afford it, paying for their children to be assessed because they know, just like the experts, that early identification and intervention is the most effective way of improving the long term outcomes for children with learning and behavioural difficulties.

So to ensure we invest this additional \$32m over four years wisely we will develop and implement a five year plan that focuses on strengthening partnerships with external organisations to improve student support for the allied health professional. Increasing access to assessment and diagnosis: reducing the waiting times for a child to be assessed. At the moment some families wait up to eight months for their children to have their hearing assessed, to see a speech pathologist just is not good enough.

We will also build teacher capacity to cater for students with additional need through access to professional development and support. We will provide targeted support programs for students; including for those with hearing loss, autism spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and students with extreme behaviour.

We will also develop alternative pathways to better engage children in learn, so we will work on those reengagement centres across the Territory.

This government will ensure out most vulnerable children have improved access to allied health professional such as speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists. We will insure teachers also have the capacity and support to tailor the programs to better engage children in their classes, in their learning to ensure improved educational and social outcomes for these children.

### **Alice Springs CBD**

#### **Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER**

You have created an assistant minister for a vibrant Darwin CBD. Over 10 years ago a former Labor government committed \$5m to upgrade the Alice Springs Todd Mall which was never delivered and I quote from a document here, Planning Minister Delia Lawrie says

*The project will beautify the heart of town; we will work very closely with Alice Springs town council with our \$5m commitment to enhance the CBD.*

Given that a former Labor government never delivered on upgrading our Todd Mall, would you consider creating an assistant minister for a vibrant Alice Springs CBD?

**Mr GUNNER:** Madam Speaker and I thank the Member for Araluen. As she was reading out the questions I heard the Minister for Housing speaking, people might not have heard her over the microphone, saying 'we delivered on that promise' so I think the Member for Araluen might need to check the record of delivery there but that money was invested.

I have met with the mayor for Alice Spring, Damien Ryan, several times both in opposition as leader and in government as Chief Minister. At the moment there is not a master plan, document or guiding vision for Alice Springs—I have said, 'I will work with you to deliver that'. I think it is important; I made that pledge as Leader of the Opposition and I make it again as Chief Minister.

Katherine has one, Darwin city has one and Palmerston has one, but Alice Springs does not have that document or the thought put into it. I have said I am very happy to work with him to deliver on that. I think Alice Springs has two very good advocates as representatives, the Members for Braitling and Araluen, and I am very happy to work with both of them towards this. We also have members of keen interest in Alice Springs, the Members for Stuart and Namatjira, about these issues. I am happy to work with everybody towards delivering this.

It starts with partnership, and it means the Alice Springs Town Council needs to acknowledge the importance of a master plan. That is not to criticise them; it just means it is missing at the moment. I am happy to work with them. It came up at the LGANT AGM, for example, which I spoke at in Jabiru—the work had been done by other councils and Alice Springs has not done that body of work. I am happy to be part of that journey and work with the member for Araluen on it. I give you that pledge as Chief Minister.

I acknowledge the hard work of the Members for Araluen and Braitling. The Member for Araluen has just been re-elected as an Independent, which shows the level of support she has in Alice Springs. I had a good conversation with Damien Ryan—you have a Chief Minister with a very clear passion for and commitment to Alice Springs, and I am very open to these conversations. I think we need a conversation about the vibrant CBD of Alice Springs.

I had the pleasure of being there recently for the Masters Games, and the place came alive for that, but there are some decisions we need to make planning-wise that could bring that CBD together ...

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Just before you run out of time, Chief Minister, can you answer this question: will you create an assistant minister for a vibrant Alice Springs CBD?

**Mr GUNNER:** I was taking that responsibility on as Chief Minister. I am happy to do it. I am offering what I thought was an upgrade on that. I will work with you, Member for Araluen, and the Member for Braitling on that.

The offer is on the table. I am happy to work with you as well as the Member for Braitling, the Mayor of Alice Springs, and the Members for Namatjira and Stuart, who also have a keen interest in this space.

### **Hydraulic Fracturing Moratorium**

#### **Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES**

On 14 September the Territory government delivered on a key election commitment by announcing a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing to allow for an independent scientific inquiry and comprehensive community consultation to take place.

The government also released draft terms of reference for the fracking inquiry so the community could comment on them. What was the response and what are the next steps?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Port Darwin for his question, his second question in the House, and a very important one.

September the fourteenth was a landmark day for the Northern Territory. It was a day that on which the Labor government demonstrated, once again, that we are serious about getting on with the job and the commitments we have made to Territorians throughout the election campaign. This was a very important one, and one that I think reverberated around a number of electorates and residences across the Territory.

On 14 September, just four days after taking government, the Chief Minister announced a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for exploration and extraction across the Northern Territory while an independent scientific inquiry takes place, and public consultation. Probably the most important part of what we are talking about is making sure the community involved in a meaningful way in this process.

We have heard from many Territorians, as I am sure people on all sides of the House have, that they are concerned about the potential effects of fracking on the Territory's land and water resources, and on the environment more generally.

Our government has listened to those concerns, and that is why we have put a halt on fracking and made sure there is an independent scientific inquiry. It was one of the first things we did.

In line with the commitment we took to the election, the details of the fracking moratorium are as follows: it is Territory wide—fracking will not be approved across the entire Northern Territory while the scientific inquiry is under way; it applies to hydraulic fracturing of unconventional reservoirs as well as the diagnostic fracture injection testing, or DFIT; it applies to hydraulic fracturing under any permit or licence, and this means that fracking will not be approved whether it is for exploration or extraction; it is prospective, not retrospective; the moratorium does not apply to existing approvals, of which there is only one remaining case and the fracking component is now completed.

After the Chief Minister implemented a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing on 14 September, a four-week public consultation on the terms of reference got under way. I am pleased that in the four weeks that was open we received 364 submissions, which is a great response from the community and parties that have an interest in this issue. It is significant and it shows that people are ready to engage positively with the government.

We now have to carefully consider all of those submissions which will inform the terms of reference. We will be releasing those final terms soon, along with the names of the members of the inquiry panel who will undertake this important work. We will also be providing more information about the public consultation

sessions and meetings which will be held across the Territory so all Territorians will have a chance to have their say on this issue. We will continue to communicate with Territorians as this process continues.

### **CLP Plans for Schools at Nauiyu and Zuccoli**

#### **Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS**

We have heard this week about your government's lack of genuine commitment to the future of Kormilda College. My constituents in Daly are very excited about the commitment given by the government's candidate in the Daly electorate during the recent election campaign to match the Country Liberals' plan to relocate Woolianna School and build a new school and flood evacuation centre for the community of Nauiyu. Even you must realise the necessity of the school precinct in Zuccoli is to the future of Palmerston in my colleague, the member for Spillett's electorate. Do you commit the government to continue on the delivery of each of these projects in Nauiyu and Zuccoli, or are they on your \$223.5m list of canned infrastructure projects? When will the Zuccoli public school construction be completed and when will you start Woolianna?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It was quite detailed. I have to apologies as I do not have the detail of the Woolianna School at hand. I will take that on notice.

As we know there has been quite a commitment made and a grant given to the Catholic sector for a school in Zuccoli. That is going forward. We want to see more investment in public education and public schools. We are committed to building more public schools. I am looking forward to a school in Muirhead North down the track. The Muirhead North suburb is next to my electorate, but that investment in public education is critical. It is about getting that investment and balance right. Parents deserve to have choice about education options.

It is important that the government supports public education but also non-government schools, as we have seen with the case of Kormilda College. We made a very firm commitment there of \$5.1m in their time of crisis and need, to keep those doors open for this term.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110. The question said the school precinct in Zuccoli, which is not just the Catholic school; it is the Northern Territory government public school.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister, if you would like to continue.

**Ms LAWLER:** Madam Speaker, yes we are committed to the precinct out there. We are committed to public education as well but it is very clear that that Catholic school is currently looking to be under construction; that grant has been committed. But I am, like all the members her, very proud advocates of public education but we are also very strong supporters of non-government education as well. It is important to get that balance right so thank you, Leader of the Opposition, but I am taking the Woolianna question on notice and I will report back to you.

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.