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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Darwin Middle School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 8 students from Darwin Middle School, accompanied by their teachers, Cathy Deans and Cathy Hood. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you have a lovely time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Daffodil Day

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, tomorrow is Daffodil Day and the pins have been placed on your desks in order to promote this event. Chances are we all know someone affected by cancer. In Australia today there are more than 1.1 million people either living with cancer or who have survived a diagnosis.

The Cancer Council funds research, undertakes prevention campaigns, such as the Sun Smart campaign in schools, and provides support and advocacy services. Overall, the aim of the Cancer Council is to work towards a cancer-free future.

I urge members to show your support for the Cancer Council this August by hashtagging #daffodilday and showing us your pin, your Dougal bear, your dedication or simply your smile. Get involved and help raise vital funds for cancer research, prevention and support services and advocacy for Territorians and all Australians.

ASSEMBLY MEMBERS AND STATUTORY OFFICERS (REMUNERATION AND OTHER ENTITLEMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 27)

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 *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act* provides for the determination of entitlements of Legislative Assembly members and statutory officers, including local court judges. The act enables the minister to determine an entitlement for an Assembly member for which the Remuneration Tribunal is yet to determine, and these ministerial determinations are automatically revoked once the Remuneration Tribunal makes a determination for the same matter.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act* to remove the power of the Legislative Assembly to disallow Remuneration Tribunal determinations following concerns expressed by Members of the Legislative Assembly and you, Madam Speaker.

The bill will also remove two superfluous phrases from section 5 regarding the minister's power to determine entitlements for Assembly members, which were erroneously left in the section when it was amended in 2016, and which restrict the operation of the section contrary to parliament's intention.

Under the act, the Remuneration Tribunal conducts inquiries and provides a report and determination on the entitlements of Members of the Legislative Assembly and Local Court judges. The Remuneration Tribunal report and determination must be tabled in the Assembly by the minister within six sitting days after receiving it.

Currently, the act permits the Legislative Assembly to pass a resolution to disallow all or part of Remuneration Tribunal determinations made under the act within 10 sitting days of being tabled.

The amendment bill proposes to remove the allowance provision, and for determinations to come into effect on the date specified in the determination.

There are a number of arguments for removing the disallowance provision:

- Firstly, decisions of an arbitral nature made by other independent bodies such as courts and tribunals are generally not disallowable.
- Secondly, bodies such as the Remuneration Tribunal are established specifically to be independent of bureaucratic and political processes. Their decisions can always be overridden by legislation in extreme circumstances.
- Thirdly, the power of disallowance is in itself political, and where it is applied to parliamentary entitlements, there is potential for conflict of interest to arise.
- All other Australian jurisdictions have removed the disallowance provision for Assembly member entitlements, except the Commonwealth.

The perception of parliamentary or political interference in Remuneration Tribunal determinations is seen to be a greater concern, both in terms of parliamentarians being able to intervene in determinations for their own entitlements and in the entitlements of the independent judiciary.

Removing the disallowance provision supports the independence of the entitlement-setting process by the Remuneration Tribunal and brings the Northern Territory in line with other Australian jurisdictions.

Research indicates the disallowance provision has only been used four times—in 2001, 2007, 2010 and 2014—and all four related to entitlements of Assembly members.

There has been no occasion under the act, nor under the previous Remuneration Tribunal legislation enacted in 1981, when the Assembly has disallowed a tribunal determination relating to entitlements for Local Court judges. However, unlike the situation for parliamentary entitlements, several parliaments—New South Wales, Commonwealth and Western Australia—have the power to disallow tribunal determinations for judicial entitlements.

A key consideration in judicial remuneration setting is the general tenet of judicial independence from the parliament and the executive. Consistent with this, salaries, allowances and conditions of service for judicial officers should be determined in a manner that recognises and maintains judicial independence.

On balance, it is proposed to remove the disallowance provision applying to determinations for Local Court judges as well as Assembly members on the basis that it further strengthens the position that tribunal determinations are not subject to interference by parliament, and is consistent with the general tenet of judicial independence.

It is acknowledged that there is a risk in not providing a safety net of parliamentary disallowance if the tribunal makes an error in a determination. However, only once has the Remuneration Tribunal made an error which required the power of disallowance to remedy, and there is no history of errors in determinations for judicial entitlements.

The tribunal is very conscious of the statutory requirement that the entitlements of Local Court judges, once made, cannot be altered to their detriment during their term of office—section 55(2) of the *Local Court Act*. For these reasons, the risk appears to be relatively low.

Subsequent determinations can generally, although not always, rectify errors in previous determinations.

Since the act states the tabling and disallowance of determinations applies to all determinations made under this act, any amended or corrected determination would therefore need to be tabled for another six sitting days.

The convenience of retaining the option to disallow a determination is outweighed by the argument that independent bodies, such as the Remuneration Tribunal, are established specifically to be independent of bureaucratic and political processes. The power of disallowance is in itself political, and where it is applied to parliamentary entitlements, there is a potential for a conflict of interest to arise. It is therefore proposed to remove the power of disallowance in its entirety.

The determination will no longer be subject to the 10 sitting day disallowance period, but will come into effect on the date specified in the determination.

Should the disallowance provision be removed, the minister is still required to provide a copy of the determination—in confidence—to the affected members within 14 days of receiving it, and to table the determination within six sitting days of receipt.

The Remuneration Tribunal has no objection to this proposal, as it is consistent with the position of other Australian jurisdictions that have all removed the ability for Assembly members to disallow their own entitlements.

Removing this disallowance provision is another step in achieving this government's commitment to an improved public integrity framework.

Section 5 of the act enables the Chief Minister to determine an entitlement where no such entitlement exists. This power is generally used as an interim measure until the Remuneration Tribunal determines the relevant entitlement and has only been used twice since the act was enacted in 2006; once to correct the inadvertent omission of an additional salary of office for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the 2015 determination, and the second was to put in place a new retirement allowance pending the next inquiry by the Remuneration Tribunal in 2016.

When section 5 of the act was amended in 2016, the intention was to remove the restriction on the minister to determine salary-type entitlements, thereby enabling the Chief Minister to determine the same range of entitlements as the Remuneration Tribunal, both salary and non-salary type entitlements.

A check-and-balance mechanism was also put in place when an amendment to the section was debated in the Legislative Assembly in the February and March 2016 sittings. The Chief Minister must now consult with the tribunal before making a section 5 determination, and the tribunal's advice must be tabled with the determination.

This consultation and tabling requirement was included in the act specifically to address concerns raised about the minister's broad discretion through the section 5 power.

Two references to section 4 that allow determination of non-salary type entitlements were inadvertently left in section 5 of the act during the consideration in detail stage amendment in March 2016.

Retaining these references could be interpreted as continuing to limit the ability of the minister to determine salary-type entitlements and also means that any ministerial determinations on salary-type entitlements do not lapse when the tribunal determines the same matter. This is clearly inconsistent with the remainder of section 5 and with parliament's intention at the time.

Removing the two references to section 4 out of section 5 will make it clear that the Chief Minister may make determination for any category of entitlement when such an entitlement has not already been made by the tribunal.

As the two section 5 determinations made by the Chief Minister on 23 May 2016 did not lapse when the Remuneration Tribunal's Decision 2 of 2016 commenced on 1 January 2017—due to the unintended restriction created by the wording of section 5—it is necessary to formally revoke those determinations in this amendment bill. This will make certain the tribunal's determination now applies in respect of those entitlements. It is proposed that the revocation be retrospective to the commencement date of the tribunal's determination for these entitlements, being 1 January 2017.

I commend this bill to honourable members, and I table the explanatory statement to accompany the amendment bill.

Debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (DANGEROUS NAVIGATION OF VESSELS) BILL (Serial 28)

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 purpose of this bill is to make changes to Part 6 of the Criminal Code to create an offence of navigating a vessel in a dangerous way so as to cause death or serious harm to another person.

In recent years, there have been at least two cases involving high speed collisions at sea, resulting in persons suffering serious harm where the defendant navigator was only convicted of minor summary offences.

Over recent years New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia have amended their legislation to provide for an offence of dangerous navigation of a vessel causing death or serious harm. Therefore this is an important bill as it corrects an omission in our Criminal Code, brings our legislation in line with other jurisdictions and makes our community safer.

As a matter of policy, it does not make sense that a person driving a road vehicle in a dangerous manner—for example, under the influence of alcohol or drugs to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control or driving at dangerous speeds—and who kills or seriously harms someone can be prosecuted for dangerous driving causing death or serious harm, but a person navigating a vessel in the same manner and causing the same harm cannot.

The proposed bill will fix that loophole.

A new section 174FC is inserted into the Criminal Code to create the offence and largely replicates the existing section 174F. That section is the offence of dangerous driving of a vehicle causing death or serious harm.

The bill will enable a person to be prosecuted for dangerous navigation of a vessel causing death or serious harm in the same terms.

The section also mirrors the penalties and strict liability provisions of section 174F, namely that an offence causing death attracts a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment with a maximum of seven years' imprisonment for serious harm.

Ordinarily, it is not appropriate to assign strict liability to an offence that carries a penalty of imprisonment. However, section 174F of the Criminal Code, upon which the new offence is based, already contains strict liability offences with maximum penalties of 10 years' imprisonment for dangerous driving resulting in death of a person, and seven years' imprisonment for dangerous driving resulting in the serious harm of a person.

In keeping with the High Court decision of *He Kaw Teh v R* (1985) 157 CLR 523 there must be a clear parliamentary intention to create a strict liability offence, which both the existing section 174F and the new section 174FC do. The proposed offences deal with similar conduct and identical results to the offences in section 174F.

It is therefore appropriate that the proposed offences reflect the same deal of criminality and culpability. This ensures consistency between the section 174F offences and the proposed offences, and avoids internal inconsistency within the Criminal Code with regard to penalties and fault elements.

However, making the proposed offences 'strict liability' does not equate in any way to a 'free pass' to a successful prosecution. Police will need to maintain their existing evidence-gathering practices.

The proposed penalties are also broadly consistent with those in other jurisdictions. New South Wales and Western Australia also have a maximum penalty of 10 years for dangerous driving causing death, and seven years for causing grievous bodily harm. New South Wales also has higher penalties—14 years and 11 years respectively—for circumstances of aggravation.

South Australia has a maximum penalty of 15 years for driving causing death or serious harm for a first offence and life imprisonment for a subsequent or aggravated offence.

Queensland has a 10-year maximum penalty for causing death or grievous bodily harm, with 14 years for aggravated offences.

The Australian Capital Territory imposes a maximum penalty of 14 years for culpable driving causing death or 10 years for causing grievous bodily harm, with higher—16 years and 12 years respectively—for aggravated offending.

Victoria imposes 10 years for causing death or five years for causing serious injury, and 20 years for culpable driving causing death.

In addition, the bill incorporates a definition of 'navigate' because it is recognised that navigating can include a wide range of activities.

In the bill 'navigate' includes activities such as steering a vessel, or directing or managing the course of the vessel. This definition of 'navigate' is not intended to be exhaustive and allows the court to consider the individual facts of the case.

Finally, a reference to the new section 174FC(1) is inserted into section 316 to enable the offence under section 174FC(1), namely dangerous navigation causing death, to be considered as an alternative offence to the crime of manslaughter.

This also mirrors the situation with regard to dangerous driving whereby section 174F(1), dangerous driving causing death, may already be considered as an alternative offence.

This is an important bill which will assist in ensuring that users of our waterways do not behave dangerously and risk the lives of themselves and those around them.

The amendment is required to address a shortcoming identified our Criminal Code, which has caused people who operate vessels dangerously to not be dealt with in the same way that dangerous drivers of vehicles would be under similar circumstances.

I should also state that, as a government, we engaged in preliminary consultations regarding this amendment.

Prior to seeking Cabinet's approval to draft, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice consulted with the President of the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory and the Northern Territory Seafood Council, seeking their views on the proposed amendment to the Criminal Code as proposed in this bill. The Seafood Council and AFANT indicated broad support for the proposal.

I commend the Criminal Code Amendment (Dangerous Navigation of Vessels) Bill 2017 to honourable members and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of family and friends of the late Dr Yunupingu. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you all to Parliament House.

I acknowledge Ms Dorothy Gurruwiwi, Ms Susan Gurruwiwi and Mr Djunga Djunga, and past Deputy Chief Minister Syd Stirling, who is in the gallery with his partner, Jenny Djerrkura.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT Death of Dr G Yunupingu

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, it is with deep regret that I advise of the death of Dr Yunupingu on 25 July 2017, a noted and acclaimed musician, a true Territorian and Australian.

I remind honourable members that on completion of the debate, I will ask members to stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

CONDOLENCE MOTION Dr G Yunupingu

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank you for hosting this condolence debate in the parliament, the people's House, so we can pay our respects to a great Territorian, to celebrate the life of an incredibly gifted and dearly missed first Australian, Dr G Yunupingu.

I am pleased that we are joined today by close family and associates of Dr Yunupingu. I welcome the aunts of Dr Yunupingu, Ms Dorothy Gurruwiwi and Ms Susan Gurruwiwi, along with his uncle, Dr Djunga Djunga

Yunupingu and wife Helen. To you and other Yolngu, and the family members present, I offer my heartfelt condolences. I also acknowledge the presence of Mark Grose and Michael Hohnen of Skinnyfish, and Michelle Dowden, long-time friends and collaborators of Dr Yunupingu, who have been such an integral part of Dr Yunupingu's amazing journey. I offer my condolences to you as well.

I was shocked and deeply saddened to learn of Dr Yunupingu's passing just over a month ago. His premature death at the age of 46, just a few years older than me, was a reminder of the unacceptable gap that exists between the life expectancy of Yolngu and Balanda, and the work we need to do to address chronic illnesses, like kidney disease, to support and grow health services like renal dialysis on country to keep people on the land that nurtures them and close to the family who love and care for them.

I was saddened to learn of the distress the breaking news caused Dr Yunupingu's extended family in his home town of Galiwinku and across other communities and homelands. Too many of them did not get to hear of his death through the traditional cultural practice of the naming ceremony, but instead via news and social media outlets.

First and foremost, he was a Yolngu man of the Gumatj. His family name, Yunupingu, means 'the unbreakable rock which stands against time'. I see before me in this Chamber, right in front of me, his totem, the ancestral crocodile, *baru*. I know it to be a powerful symbol, revered by his clan and others.

What was extraordinary about Dr Yunupingu was that he was such an ordinary and humble man. For a man whose unique musical talent catapulted him to international stardom on world tours, playing at sold-out performances at the Sydney Opera House and Carnegie Hall to audiences including Queen Elizabeth, President Barack Obama, and Crown Prince Frederik and Princess Mary of Denmark, he remained a humble Yolngu, who was most at ease when on country with family.

Even after swags of Arias, NIMAs, Deadly Awards, AIR Awards, LIMelight Awards, Northern Territory Indigenous Music Awards, APRA Awards and even a Helpmann Award, he stayed humbly a Yolngu man.

Born blind, his childhood at Galiwinku was, as I understand, pretty much the same as other kids there. His blindness did not appear to exclude him from anything. He rode a bike guided by calls of 'go left', 'go right' and 'stop'. He played basketball and marbles; he went to school and church and he listened to the *manikay*, the ancient song of his ancestors at ceremonies.

With the absence of sight but a set of ears, highly attuned to the world around him, he absorbed the sounds and music that filled his world. Fellow musician, Stuart Kellaway from Yothu Yindi recalls that his ability to listen made him an incredible mimic, the ultimate imitator. Years later, on tour with Yothu Yindi in London, he would make them all laugh with phrases like, 'Are you right there, mate?' in a perfect Cockney accent.

To bring his tunes and his voice to life, at the age of just seven, he picked up a right-hand guitar and turned it upside down to play as a left-hander. Djunga Djunga lays claim to teaching his first three chords. Before that, he had taught himself to play piano. It was his talent for drums which saw him recruited to Yothu Yindi as a 16-year-old, when his cousin Dr M Yunupingu travelled to Galiwinku to seek out this talented blind kid. He sailed through the audition and could apparently put out an incredible beat. Before he knew it he was on the road with Yothu Yindi, touring Asia and Hong Kong. During his seven or eight years with Yothu Yindi he played not only drums, but guitar, keyboard and provided vocals as well.

Whilst a wonderful apprenticeship, as the youngest member of the band, it was essentially homesickness which took him back to Galiwinku. The next step in his career was with the Saltwater Band in Galiwinku, another brilliantly talented outfit established after Dr G had met Michael Hohnen, who was teaching a university music industry training course. Hohnen worked with the band, securing them gigs and valuable performance experience ahead of their debut album in 1999 and a second album in 2004.

It was during the studio time in Melbourne that Michael Hohnen recognised the potential for a solo project. Michael said in a 2009 article in Limelight Magazine: 'He would sometimes stay behind to work on his own songs and I started realising that no one was really getting how special and multidimensional this beautiful musician was. I started encouraging him to try solo things. I'd get my double bass out to accompany him and he loved that all acoustic sound. I explained to him what I was imagining, to change the songs from Saltwater's usual rock/reggae to something more personal, turning them into a series of ballads that worked as an album. I knew Yolngu would like it, because they always liked soft, gentle music. I also wanted to produce something that non-Indigenous people could connect with, too.'

The result was the debut, self-titled album released in 2008, which reached gold in October that year and was platinum by November. It was released in the UK in 2009 and in the US in 2010 and reached triple platinum, but not before second album, *Rrakala*, was released in 2011.

He became a phenomenon. He was a hugely gifted song writer who sang predominantly in Yolngu Matha, including but not limited to Gumatj and Galpu. He was described almost universally as having the voice of an angel and the Indigenous equivalent of a classical composer. He had a voice that could move people to tears.

Michael Hohnen describes this extraordinary connection of audiences in Nicolas Rothwell's *Journey to the Interior*:

The reaction from that European crowd ... was just what we were finding with mainstream audiences in Australia. People crying, deeply moved, saying they felt [he] could see into their hearts. It was then that I realised he made an appeal to everyone—that he was much more than just the crossover artist the Aboriginal musical industry has always been looking for who could go well in Australia: he was someone for the whole world to hear and treasure.

Indeed, it was Michael Hohnen who was the conduit for interviews with Dr Yunupingu, an enigmatic and intensely shy man away from Gumatj country and family. Even on stage he would rarely speak to his audience, only through his songs. But we have some beautiful glimpses of his appreciation.

Dr Yunupingu said in a 2008 AAP story with Alyssa Braithwaite, 'When I hear non-Aboriginal people start crying when they hear my music, I am pleased to hear it, as it means we are all sharing the same experience and that there is not so much difference between us, black and white'.

The sentiment was captured again most recently when Djunga Djunga Yunupingu spoke at the NIMAs just a few weeks ago here in Darwin:

He built a bridge through his song and introduced the world to our story and an understanding of Yolngu spiritual life ... He left us without knowing his place in this nation; without knowing true unity for all Australians, both Yolngu and Balanda, both walking and working together hand in hand, two laws, two people, one country ... I hope we continue to find better ways to walk together.

I was fortunate to have been part of the audience for a very special performance at the Menzies School of Health Research 30th anniversary dinner a couple of years ago. His performance was stunning and breathtaking, and we all knew we had been part of something incredibly special and intimate.

His aunt Dorothy has said there is one thing she would like me to acknowledge today, that her nephew took a message to the world about Yolngu people living on the land, their language, the stories of their ancestors, stories of the land, and he shared these stories through song in the language of his Gumatj clan and his mother's Galpu clan.

I understand that both aunts have just returned from Melbourne, along with Mark and Michael of Skinnyfish, to watch the preview of a feature-length documentary which captures privileged insights into the life and work of Dr Yunupingu. It was the closing film for the Melbourne International Film Festival. Dorothy described the standing ovation the audience provided, 'Even after the film had finished when all that writing at the end of the film had finished and gone, people were still standing and clapping. Everyone loved him; we felt so proud.'

At the centre of Dr Yunupingu's world was his Yolngu identity, his culture. As his aunts, Dorothy and Susan, have reminded me, he travelled all around the world but always came back home to Galiwinku and to Gumatj land. It was this language which said who he was and where he came from. It was this language which was his foundation. His music transcended the boundaries of language.

Madam Speaker, we will remember Dr Yunupingu formally at a memorial service at 11.30 am on Tuesday 19 September at the Darwin Convention Centre.

We will remember him and listen to him always.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I reiterate the words of the Chief Minister in thanking you for bringing this condolence motion to the House. I thank the Chief Minister for his words.

I was fortunate enough to have seen Dr G Yunupingu perform twice. The most recent time was the opening of the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre a couple of years ago when he was fully established as the Territory's most successful, and its most loved, cultural force.

The first time—and probably the more memorable of the two—was a concert he gave at Daly River as part of the Merrepen Arts Festival with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra in 2008. It was not long after his debut album was released, as his star as a solo performer was on the rise. It was a wonderful Dry Season night in a beautiful part of the Northern Territory and the atmosphere was perfect for something special to occur.

The Darwin Symphony Orchestra was exceptionally good. They were not strangers to Merrepen or to the Mango Farm, having performed there twice before, very much at the top of their game. But Dr G was virtually unknown to me, so it was a memorable moment when he walked onto the stage and began to sing. Not surprisingly, the rest of the world, when they heard him in the months that followed, very much felt the same.

His is an amazing story. In many ways, it is one of the great Australian stories, which shines a light on the world in which we live, in the country's north. He was born blind into a loving family on a small island hundreds of kilometres from Darwin and thousands from the nation's major cities. His success came from the enormous talent that was his birthright and a conviction to bring the stories of his land, the sea and his people to the wider world.

There are some beautiful recollections from Dr G Yunupingu's childhood—riding a pushbike around the island, setting directions based purely on sound, as the Chief Minister mentioned; the tiny Casiotone keyboard his parents bought him when he was five; and the nursery rhymes his aunty Dorothy sang him, both from our world and the old songs of his culture.

He taught himself the guitar, as we have heard, playing left-handed and upside down, and he was a key component of the iconic Territory musical export, Yothu Yindi. I suggest it is no coincidence that Yothu Yindi also received international acclaim—talent is irrepressible and Dr G and his band mates were the cream of the crop. *Tribal Voice* was an enormously successful recording that blended music with politics and made its own contribution to the national discussion about reconciliation.

On his own, Dr G largely stayed away from politics, but the stories about his land and life were all the more powerful as a consequence.

His best-known piece, *Gurumul History (I Was Born Blind)*, contains the lyrics 'united we stand, divided we fall', sung in the soaring, lilting pitch that is his trademark. These words, so well-known to all of us, took on a whole new meaning of struggle and fight.

It is desperately sad that Dr G is no longer with us, no longer there to talk to the nation, no longer there to talk to the world with his songs. He died too young; we all know that. It is sad, and my thoughts go to his family and the Galiwinku community for the loss of this kind and gentle man.

The circumstances around his death gave a national focus to the health of people in remote parts of the Territory where there is no easy access to medical services that we in towns and cities enjoy. It is our job as the people's representatives to address issues of this type.

The government has me as a willing supporter in any measures it takes to improve the health of all Territorians. It is the least we can do in his memory.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I also rise to offer sympathy and condolences for those who are suffering grief and deep sadness at the loss of Dr Yunupingu. I also hope that the sadness and the grief that all of us feel at this loss will convert into thoughtful and deeper responses to the causes of the problems that attention has been drawn to at his passing.

The voice that cut through and caught people's attention appealed to something very—and in some ways it shone light, as he understood light but he had not seen. It shone on the places that do not often receive light.

In some ways it is a prophetic message that he has provided because he has drawn us into considering the places that we do not often deeply consider—the underlying causes of the health, education and cultural differences of our fellow Australians.

At his passing there were many responses. One that struck me immediately was the poetic response of Paul Kelly, 'A great tree has fallen'. Those few words captured the sense of the loss. It caused me to consider the

old saying, 'The best way to measure a tree is once it has fallen'. It is hard to see its size, its stature and its presence while it is still standing. But once it has fallen you can begin to measure, gauge and consider the significance of the tree that stood amongst us, the space that has been left and how we fill it.

At any time his music was played, no matter where, people would stop. There was something deeper in the music, the voice and the words. I had an opportunity to witness this cut-through, this shining of light into places that were almost mystical—going places that were so difficult to go.

I was at the jazz festival in Makassar in eastern Indonesia. I had been invited by the Australian Ambassador to attend a special event. In my role in the Australia-Indonesia Institute—we had provided some funding through the Commonwealth for Dr Yunupingu to perform at the jazz festival.

We understand that very deep and special connection between the Yolngu and the people of Makassar. It was a standard jazz festival, lots of exciting music, but the tone changed dramatically when this humble man walked onto the stage.

You can imagine that you had all the embassy staff and other Australian dignitaries, sitting with their batik, but around them was a sea of Indonesians waiting to hear this man who did not speak, but he sang. The moment he began to sing, the connection between what he represented and his voice was astonishing. There was a connection between the people of eastern Indonesia and this man who represented something ancient and a very special bond between the two peoples.

I felt like an outsider and was so privileged to observe this. But then the music changed and a very special song was sung when a Bugis lady sang along with him on a new song, and you heard some English, some Yolngu and Bahasa Bugis being sung together in one song. I wish I could experience that again and again, because the magic that occurred that night, with the incredible bond between the Indonesians and the Yolngu, was something to behold.

The embassy staff and others were astonished at what we had just witnessed and I wish I could communicate that to others. That is one opportunity I have now been afforded to share with you all. It was deeply significant.

The first time I heard Dr Yunupingu sing, he sang these words—and I am sure we have all heard them and it has affected us:

I was born blind and I don't know why. God knows why because he loves me so.

There was something deeper to his message and the space that has been left. I think it is for all of us to step up and see how we can now fill that space in a practical, thoughtful and meaningful way.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for taking the time to remember Dr G Yunupingu, with the family members here. I am very grateful.

I would like to solemnly speak on the passing of the great Territory Yolngu man, the world-acclaimed artist, Dr G Yunupingu, who passed away in Darwin on 25 July. To the entire extended family, *Mukul Walal*, the aunties; *Dhuway Walal*, brothers and sisters of Dr G; *dan Gurrutumirr Mala*, extended family—I extend my deepest sympathy and condolences.

Dr G was born in Galiwinku in 1971. He was born blind. He never learned Braille and never had a guide dog or even a white cane, as many vision-impaired people in Australia do. People the world over loved this gentle, shy man, who was gifted with a voice, the likes of which many had never heard before.

When the Australian nation and our Yolngu nations heard the news that he had died at such a young age, endless people felt truly shattered.

For Yolngu, sadly this is too familiar a story. As we face tragic and sad losses of our people every day, the tragic death of Dr Yunupingu reflects the reality of Yolngu living in the northeast Arnhem Land. Kidney disease, in particular amongst our people, has reached levels that one could never have imagined 20 years ago, and it is causing endless emotional pain for people.

I encourage you, one day when you have 20 minutes to spare one morning, to go to Darwin hospital and sit quietly out the front. It reminds one of a war zone. There are so many Yolngu in wheelchairs who have lost limbs due to kidney failure. Many other people, including leaders, cannot be seen in our communities

anymore as they are stuck in Darwin, where they attend dialysis several times a week. They are unable to attend ceremonies, pass on knowledge to the young generation, teach discipline and provide social cohesion.

I am sure you do not hear about the fact that for some it is just too hard. They cannot keep doing dialysis, so they say their goodbyes to their family quietly then stop going to dialysis and allow themselves to die.

What is wrong that despite the millions of dollars being spent each year on Indigenous health in my region of Nhulunbuy alone we have mortality rates like what you would expect in a third world country?

I spoke last week in parliament about the effect on Yolngu of not having their traditional law recognised. I cannot stress enough the negative effects it has on people every day, in every way. The true lack of recognition of our Indigenous languages is part of the same. Over half the population in my electorate are only using Australian first languages, known as Yolngu Matha.

So many Indigenous peoples worldwide have been wiped out over the last 200 years and lost their languages. One would have thought it would be celebrated in Australia that Yolngu still speak their original language and have lost none of it. But the reality is that neither the government nor mainstream Australia value our languages enough to make space for us to use these first Australian languages.

Departmental personnel come to our communities to discuss important and sometimes critical matters, yet there is no provision for translation in most cases, which would mean everyone could understand, but of course there is no time for that and no money for it.

During the intervention, Yolngu became too frightened to discipline their children as there were so many government officers visiting and talking about child abuse. People became frightened that if they disciplined their children by even a gentle spank, for example, their child may be taken away from them or the parent could be sent to prison.

Every adult who has a child that has been sniffing will tell the same story, that when their child started sniffing avgas and they wanted to discipline them, they felt it would do nothing, as they felt paralysed. Yet now, 10 years later, we are hearing that was not what the authorities meant and that parents are allowed to discipline their children, provided they do not use excessive force. Meanwhile, many children's lives have been affected in ways that it may be impossible to reverse and people remain scared to discipline their children out of fear of the authorities.

The majority of Yolngu live every day with the stress of people coming to their community expecting them to be fluent English speakers. What happened to the Yolngu's rights under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to use our own language? Our children are not to blame that many of them grow up not speaking, reading or writing more than very little in English.

They attend school as young children only to find they cannot understand their teachers, as their teachers speak in what appears to them a totally foreign language. Then they find that their teachers become frustrated with them because the children cannot follow that foreign language and perhaps even raise their voice as the child seems to not obey instructions. After a while they do not want to go to school anymore, perhaps do not try anymore as it is too hard, or start playing up at school and being naughty.

It is well written through research the world over that children need to learn in the language used primarily at home. When nearly 100% of the resident population in these communities speak Yolngu Matha and over half the entire population in my wider electorate speaks Yolngu Matha on an everyday basis, why, after all these years, can we not provide these children with education which ensures they grow up fluent readers, writers and speakers of Yolngu Matha, as well as English?

Those adults over 50 who are still alive are all fluent speakers, readers and writers of both English and Yolngu Matha. They were at school during an era when there was highly effective bilingual education. Surely, the cost to provide teachers experience in bilingual education would be nothing like the cost of the revolving door of teachers on northeast Arnhem Land communities, who go to those places with no background whatsoever in bilingual education.

We talk about closing the gap, but we do not have the basic steps right yet. Most Territorians, I am sure, would have felt proud these last weeks to have the largest Indigenous festival in Australia, the Garma Festival, held here in our back yard. There were some extremely important topics spoken about in the Q&A program. However, something is very wrong when such a major festival is held on land where a Land Rights Act exists, yet they could not work out a way to have the tradition of questions, answers and debates so that

the ordinary people, people from grassroots level of our communities in this region could understand and participate.

Once again, we see that mainstream Australia at one level seems to celebrate Yolngu retaining their culture, yet in another way the continuation of Yolngu people speaking in the first Australian languages is used as a weapon to exclude us on so many levels. By not allowing the translation between English and Yolngu Matha in areas where Yolngu should and needs to have input, effectively our voices are being silenced.

The late Dr G Yunupingu not only took the music of our people to the world, but he has also taken Yolngu language to the world. Yolngu Matha is a language that has been around since before non-Indigenous people set foot on this land.

I owe it to my people, the Indigenous people of the Northern Territory and the people of Australia to speak of the realities of what my people are experiencing inside this parliament. And I seek to be given the approval to use my own language Yolngu Matha with an interpreter to do so.

With such a high proportion of Indigenous people making up the Northern Territory population, I challenge this parliament to be the first parliament of this fine nation of Australia to take the step of truly recognising the languages of the first Australians to truly allow us to have a voice and freely debate matters that affect our people and affect all Indigenous Territorians.

Mr COSTA (Arafura): The member spoke in language.

Madam Speaker, I start in my own Tiwi language because Aboriginal languages gave to the heart of our culture and who we are, and this was never truer for Dr Yunupingu.

I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this condolence motion before the parliament today. It is an opportunity for all of us to pay our respects to this Yolngu man, a much respected member of the Gumatj clan. As the Chief Minister has pointed out, his totem sits at the centre of our parliamentary Chamber. While the crocodile is synonymous with the Northern Territory, it is also a powerful symbol and totem for many clan groups including the Gumatj.

On behalf of the people of Arafura electorate, from the Tiwi Islands, Oenpelli, Goulburn Island, Crocker Island, Maningrida and the many homelands in between, I extend heartfelt condolences from the people I represent to the family of Dr Yunupingu.

I acknowledge the elders who are here today from Dr Yunupingu's family. We are so sorry for your loss of a loved one. People in my community and my family suffer the same health issues that Dr Yunupingu suffered, so we feel the loss keenly.

I know Mark and Michael from Skinnyfish were like family to this great man as well, working with him, nurturing his unique talent and caring for him, literally guiding him as he took his music to the world.

He developed a talent for music from an early age, not held back by his lack of sight—far from it. He learned piano, guitar and drums and matched it with a voice, which was indescribably sweet and pure. His music was peaceful, harmonious and a joy to listen to.

Born on Elcho Island and raised a traditional man surrounded by his culture and the stories of his ancestors, grandmothers and grandfathers, these were the inspirations for his songs. Almost always he sang in Yolngu Matha. His music was embraced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people not only around the Territory, but around the nation and the world.

I remember hearing him as a younger man in concert with Yothu Yindi in Lismore. I watched with great interest and admiration as the creative talent of Dr Yunupingu grew and flourished from Yothu Yindi to Saltwater Band, then his solo career with a debut album in 2008 that skyrocketed him to fame. He has received, deservedly so, endless accolades and awards. He was five times Artist of the Year in the National Indigenous Music Awards.

But through all the fame he earned, he remained a humble Yolngu man who cherished more than anything to be with his family. He was a unique and very special individual with incredible talent, and there is no doubt the world is a richer place having had him in it.

Dr Yunupingu performed internationally for Queen Elizabeth, as the Chief Minister mentioned, and for Barack Obama, but his mind was always turned towards home. He was, and still is, the motivating spirit behind the Yunupingu Foundation, which will continue to have a positive impact on young people in his community and beyond.

We are all lucky to have been living in the world at the same time as Dr Yunupingu. His voice and his spirit are transcendent; his legacy is one of deep passion and commitment. His heart is in his country still and his song will not be silenced.

Some of his last words were his gospel album, which demonstrated the death of beauty that came from cross-cultural interactions. It is incredibly powerful and a positive message that he has left for us.

I quote the song between him and Paul Kelly, *Amazing Grace*. I will not sing it, but you can hear the rhythm in my voice, because I am not a very good singer:

*Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see.*

My condolences to his friends and family on their loss. *Ma nimbungi, ma mamuk.*

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak on the condolence motion for Dr G Yunupingu, as an Aboriginal minister and on behalf of my family.

I acknowledge that we are on Larrakia land while we talk about this great Australian, so I pay my respect to Larrakia elders, past and present.

Let me start by acknowledging the family, who are here to pay tribute. Thank you for being here; it is deeply respected and acknowledged. On behalf of my family, I offer my deepest condolences to you all.

I know you are all very proud of the amazing achievements of Dr G. It was lovely that so many of you were in Darwin for the National Indigenous Music Awards and were able to participate on stage in the heartfelt and moving tribute, a fitting tribute, to someone who touched so many people through his music and his story.

It is hard to say something that has not already been said today about Dr G; however, I will share some of the things I observed and felt about him.

Dr G proved you do not have to be loud or boisterous and you do not have to have a big presence, and by acting with grace, dignity and respect, you show yourself not only to be a person with substance, but a person with impact and influence, and this is how he was. Dr G was a strong Yolngu man of Gumatj clan, who showcased his culture to the rest of the world in a very practical way. Not through lectures, not through telling us, but through using language combined with beautifully crafted and flawlessly performed music.

From the worldwide response to his passing, his voice and message echoes through countries all over the world. The message was embraced far and wide. He supported Elton John in his Darwin concert in 2008, and Elton became a lifelong fan like I did that night. He collaborated and performed with international artists like Sting, Delta Goodrem and will.i.am, famous from the Black Eyed Peas, who is also a huge fan.

In recent times, Dr G showed his versatility as an artist by successfully collaborating with Australian hip hop legend rapper Briggs. For those diverse artists, it was not Dr G chasing them, it was them chasing him, captivated by his pure voice, spirituality, his arrangements and the power of his performances.

I saw him perform in Darwin with Elton John and in Barunga, where I got to meet him personally. Then I was in Adelaide for the WOMAD Festival, where I saw a crowd absolutely mesmerised by his talent, his voice and his presence.

Dr G gave hope to so many people and was a significant role model to all young Australians, especially young Yolngu. He did not have to jump on a soap box to do this; he just showed them that anything is possible by doing what he did without compromising his artistic or cultural integrity. He showed that with talent, faith and determination you can achieve anything.

Who would have thought that someone from a small town in Australia, especially one as remote as Galiwinku on Elcho Island, would end up performing to the Queen and Barack Obama? What an amazing journey—how good is that?

Hopefully from Dr G's example, young Yolngu and young Australians are now saying, 'Yes, I can achieve anything I want to'. I want to share a message that has stuck with me from all the messages following Dr G's passing—and I know Mark is here today—and I think this message is so strong:

Dr G Yunupingu showed us that music is a powerful force for reconciliation ... he is a national treasure.

Sadly, Dr G's passing also brings attention to the issue of the high rates of kidney disease affecting Indigenous Australians and extreme challenges faced by dialysis patients, especially those who do not have a dialysis facility in their home community and have to go elsewhere to receive their treatment. It is killing too many of our people. Let us hope that with continued research, we can reduce the unacceptably high rates of incidents of kidney disease in Aboriginal Territorians and all Territorians.

Let us also hope that we will be in a position to provide more services closer to country to those who have kidney disease.

Madam Speaker, Dr G leaves a lasting legacy on Australian music. I will never forget his beautiful and calming voice that never ceased to settle my spirits and settle my soul. One of the songs not in language that has been mentioned today—but I will say the main chorus:

*I was born blind and I don't know why.
God knows why because he loves me so.
As I grew up, my spirit knew.
Then I learnt to read the world of destruction.
United we stand, divided we fall.
Together we'll stand in solidarity.*

My deepest condolences to all the family. Vale Dr G Yunupingu.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, I also acknowledge the life of Dr G Yunupingu, a great man who left us way before his time. I also extend my deepest condolences to his family, friends, community and fans.

As a child growing up in the 1990s, I learned to appreciate music. My parents would play music on the weekends when we had friends and family over. There was music played in the car when we drove around, and it was on the television. But I had many special memories of when my mum would play her CDs of Aboriginal groups like Kuckles, the Coloured Stone and Yothu Yindi. The stories told by these bands of strength through struggle really resonated with me, even as a youngster. From an early age I learned that music can make everything better.

I was fortunate to watch Dr Yunupingu perform live many times. Each time my eyes would light up, my smile would widen and my heart would feel fuller. I felt a sense of innate pride for Dr Yunupingu because he was a talented Aboriginal Territorian who was excelling on the world stage. He was living the dream and sharing his gifts with the world. He inspired others, like me, to dream big.

Watching Dr Yunupingu perform as the opening act to Sir Elton John's concert at TIO Stadium at Marrara in 2008, and perform in front of President Barack Obama during his visit to Darwin, will always remain highlights for me. His performances on those occasions stirred some deep emotions in those sitting around me. I heard the gasps of delight and people commenting that he had the voice of an angel, and I agreed wholeheartedly.

When he opened for Sir Elton John, Dr Yunupingu sang my favourite song—as everyone has mentioned this morning—*Gurumul History (I was Born Blind)*. The English translation appeared on the screens on either side of the large stage. I remember feeling sad, then happy, then inspired by his words. Here was a man exposing his soul through his song whilst providing hope to others as he moved forward in life.

Music has always been an important part of my life. When I need motivation, am feeling sad or feeling happy, I play music.

Dr G, your song *Gurumul History (I was Born Blind)* helped me through some of my toughest times. I drew strength from your words and your life. Thank you, Dr G Yunupingu, for blessing us all with your presence and your music. Sleep peacefully. *Mamuk*.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, it is with great sorrow and enormous gratitude that I add my words to mark the passing of Dr G Yunupingu and celebrate his many gifts and achievements. I acknowledge his close family and friends who have joined us in parliament today. It is a privilege.

My experience with Dr G Yunupingu is not unique. We never shared a meal or even a conversation. But Dr G Yunupingu's songs have been the soundtrack of some of the most treasured moments of my life. I was privileged to watch him on the banks of the Daly River. It brought back memories, as the Member for Daly described. That sunset lit up the trees, and Dr G's performance on the banks of the Daly River was a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The music was as foreign as it was familiar and I was profoundly moved, as I am today. Although the collaboration of instruments were contemporary, the ancient and traditional quality of Dr G's voice transformed a magnificent concert into a ceremony, and we left feeling truly enriched.

Dr G's music—this is where I will get emotional—was on high repeat at the Nightcliff family childcare centre. It still is to this day. It is the music that the childcare centre plays to put our little angels to sleep. It is the comfort music for my family. Through joy, sorrow and sickness, Dr G's music is very much part of my family story, as it is to all those here today.

His self-titled debut album, released in 2008 by Darwin's own Skinnyfish Productions, makes me proud. That is why Dr G moves me so much. My children love his songs when they come on the radio or we play them on the iPod. They are proud and that makes me proud, as a born and bred Territorian, that they are growing up with our strong Indigenous heritage.

Dr G's close friend and long-time musical collaborator, Michael Hohnen, who is here with us today, is someone I have had the privilege of getting to know during my time as the local Member for Nightcliff. He told reporters at the time that he truly believed the album would succeed, in reference to his 2008 album. Skinnyfish hoped to sell 2000 CDs. The album, of course, was a tremendous success, selling more than half a million copies and winning the artist a series of industry accolades, which the Chief Minister and others have described today.

Writers clambered for interviews, but the singer, who was so apt at sharing culture and stories through song, was a reluctant star and never granted an interview with a journalist.

I do not know many world famous artists who can boast a strong commitment to art and privacy. It is a wonderful reflection on the Australian media and the community of journalists and individuals that they were able to accept and respect that choice.

Author Nicolas Rothwell is one of many to have written on Dr G's success, and he captured the impact Dr G had on the nation. We have heard that here today. He described Dr G as a broker between two worlds. He has gone on to take Yolngu life and cultures to the world, more than what a generation of political campaigners were able to do.

His article published in *The Australian* discussed the political landscape that Dr G's debut album was released into. The long awaited apology to the nation's stolen generation was delivered just days after Dr G's debut album was released. The nation took on a new spirit of hope and reconciliation. Whilst his music, to me, symbolises my early years as a mother and member of parliament, for the nation his songs formed a soundtrack for reconciliation, a gentle and powerful anthem that drew a following of Australian and international fans who were engaged with Indigenous music, many for the first time.

But it was not just good timing. It is deeply moving to see the tributes that have flown since Dr G's passing. Elders have described him as a cultural man, a man of heart and a role model for the Yolngu that the Yolngu hold above others. Elcho Island elder Wityana Marika explained to ABC's Eleni Roussos in a moving one-off interview the night we had the heartbreaking news, 'He was celebrated for his self-taught musical genius, his ability to play an instrument, his unwillingness to allow his blindness to be a disability'.

Dr G was raised in the homelands and outstations of the Territory's Elcho Island. He was born blind, but those closest to him say he never considered himself disabled. Even serious childhood illness did not hold him back, although it would leave its mark, punctuating his life with endless routine of illness and treatment.

Dr G was open to challenge and adventure. He was just 20 when his musical career began. His relatives in the world famous Yothu Yindi band needed a drummer, and the young musician accepted the job and went

on tour exclusively with the group. Dr G would later join Elcho Island's group Saltwater Band, becoming one of its most experienced members.

These formative years honed his songwriting skills, unknowingly preparing him for the ground-breaking solo career he had. It was during those years when he was with the Saltwater Band that my partner, Paul, had the privilege of flying him around. He still shares those stories with joy.

It was there that he first met classically trained musician Michael Hohnen and started his most significant and enduring musical collaborations, setting himself apart as a singular artist. The singer fast became the Territory's most notable musical expert. We have heard the many concerts and performances with world-famous people, which he took in his stride, even American presidents and the Queen.

He was an artist of exceptional calibre. Dr G wrote Yolngu songs for Yolngu people. His work was symbolic and traditional. Friend and producer Mark Grose said, 'While he was perceived to be a shy man, in the company of friends he was wildly funny and known as a prankster. He loved to trick and enjoyed wholeheartedly exchanges with a broad range of friends.'

He went on to describe Dr G as a humble and gentle man with a beautiful smile and a powerful voice.

Condolence letters give some indication of the singer's profound impact—the outpouring messages of grief from Prime Ministers and dignitaries. Mark acknowledged and thanked the team of professionals at Royal Darwin Hospital's ward seven for the care they provided to Dr G.

As the Health minister, I know Dr G had a significant impact on our staff at Royal Darwin Hospital, and his passing has been very hard on them.

Mark said two things that I believe sum up Dr G's greatest gifts. He said:

The greatest achievement any of us can have is to touch the hearts of others. All of us who have known him have taken him into our hearts.

He was indeed a formidable force of reconciliation. His music was a powerful legacy that creates pathways to reconciliation long into the future. He has left us far too soon. His death is a tragedy and highlights the desperate need to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancies.

But it is not time for political statements today. To the Gumatj clan, to Dr G's Yolngu and his producers and dear friends at Skinnyfish, across the Territory and around the nation and world, I extend my sincerest condolences.

Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I, too, stand with my parliamentary colleagues as not only the minister responsible for the arts in the Northern Territory, but as a Territorian who has been deeply touched by the story and music of Dr G Yunupingu.

I welcome Dr G's family, friends, colleagues and communities, and I send my condolences to not only the Galiwinku community but the music community, which has been deeply touched by his work. It is a privilege to have many of you here today.

This has highlighted important conversations regarding the health and social challenges that still exist in the Northern Territory, and the importance of us continuing to strive to do better. I think that has been highlighted today, following the passing of Dr Yunupingu.

His story is known very well in the Northern Territory, across the country and around the world. Dr G was an incredible Australian. Talent of that kind is exceptionally rare for us to come across, and it is unlikely we will see a talent quite like his again.

As a young Gumatj man from Galiwinku in northeast Arnhem Land, Dr G had his musical beginnings as a member of the Saltwater Band before joining the internationally renowned Yothu Yindi from Yirrkala. He went on to become an international artist in his own right, performing for world leaders, as we have heard today, including Queen Elizabeth at her Diamond Jubilee concert at Buckingham Palace in 2012. He was one of only two Australian performers at that event. He truly was a significant voice.

I was there, as was the Member for Karama, when the then US President, Barack Obama, came to Darwin. I recall being ushered into a plane hangar with a number of community leaders from across the Northern

Territory, Defence troops from Australia and the US Marines. The then US President, Barack Obama, was speaking alongside the then Prime Minister of Australia, Julia Gillard. Dr G that day was accompanied by Michael Honan, who shared the stories behind Dr G's songs. They filled this hangar with the sweetest, most soul-shaking sounds. There was not a single person there who was not exceptionally moved. That moment made me so proud to be a Territorian, to see someone so recognised and celebrated in the Territory in that way.

He was unifying. His music reached all audiences and touched all people. We can learn so many lessons from that and from the way Dr G went about his music, his performances and his interactions with people.

He continued to perform regularly on stages across Arnhem Land. The Territory was his home and was an inseparable part of his identity. For all those special experiences we all speak about—and anyone who has seen Dr G perform will recount that as an exceptional performance. Those performances were always accessible. It is incredible how many people have had the privilege to experience that.

Dr G was an ARIA Award-winning artist; he was highly respected and revered amongst his peers and audiences alike. He performed with Yothu Yindi when they were inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame. According to Skinnyfish Music, who we all know worked extensively with Dr G, his debut album sold half a million copies across the globe, the highest-selling Indigenous artist in Australian history. His album, *Rrakala*, went platinum in Australia.

He is also a revered star amongst his Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musical peers and communities, winning a Deadly Award for Male Artist of the Year in 2012, and four National Indigenous Music Awards, or NIMAs. As was recounted by the Chief Minister and Minister Vowles, at the recent NIMAs it was obvious how much Dr G has impacted on the musical community and the community at large.

A few weeks ago Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists from across the country performed in celebration of his life and to honour his passing, with the closing act of the night, the sensational Saltwater Band, singing the songs of Dr G. What a special tribute.

That night Dr G was inducted into the NIMAs Hall of Fame. With approximately 30 family members from Milingimbi, Galiwinku and Yirrkala in attendance and some went on to perform a ceremony in his honour.

Dr David Djunga Djunga Yunupingu delivered a moving eulogy and told the audience about Dr G's early life and, as the Chief Minister said, how he taught himself three cords on the guitar. Dr G learned the rest, including keys, drums and vocals. He was exceptionally talented.

He was a performer who captivated audiences, and he took Yolngu Matha language and stories to the world. Like many in this House, I feel privileged to have seen Dr G perform. It is an experience that will stay with me forever.

I still listen to his albums on a regular basis. They speak to the very soul and character of this place that we call home. It is music that causes us to reflect on how our stories are such an integral part of who we are and what it means to be a Territorian, and how lucky we all are that Dr G had the capacity to share that in such a way that connected people, places and stories.

His music was simultaneously transporting and centring. It gives us a sense of home, and for those who are afar it tells the story of this place in a way that nobody else possibly could.

Bruce Elder, the leading music critic, describes Dr G as the greatest voice this country has produced, and I concur with that. His loss has been deeply felt, not only in the Northern Territory and Australia, but it will continue to be felt across the world for generations to come.

His legacy will continue and he has created a pathway that emerging Territory artists will continue to follow.

I send my sympathies to Dr G's family here, in Galiwinku and across Arnhem Land, and to Mark Grose and Michael Hohnen of Skinnyfish Music, the family at Skinnyfish, and all the musicians across the world who have worked with Dr G through his rise—in recognition of this incredible Australian.

We will continue to treasure the contribution of Dr G Yunupingu for generations to come.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable members. I extend my condolences to the family and friends of the late Dr Yunupingu. He will be deeply missed for many decades further into the future.

Motion agreed to.

Members stood for one minute of silence as a sign of respect.

Madam SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable members for their contribution to the motion and invite honourable members to join the family and friends of Dr Yunupingu for light refreshments in the main hall.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT (ASSOCIATE JUDGES) BILL (Serial 26)

Continued from 10 May 2017.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the redesignation of Masters of the Supreme Court as Associate Judges represents another positive step forward in the modernisation of the Territory courts. It has the full and unequivocal support of the opposition.

Steps toward the continual evolution of the court system will ensure the Territory retains an efficient and effective judiciary that is able to adapt to the expanding needs of the public well into the future.

A little over a year-and-a-half ago, the Country Liberal government concluded a reformation of the Local Courts, which began with the 2015 enactment of the *Local Court Act*. That act did away with the largely outdated and unnecessary divisions between the Local Court and the Court of Summary Jurisdiction. The jurisdiction of the new merged Local Court was also expanded in order to ease the pressure of increased case filing on the Supreme Court and recognise the ability and expertise of the Local Court in dealing with more serious matters.

The Local Court now routinely deals with criminal matters where the defendant is charged with an offence which carries a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment and civil matters up to \$250 000 with small claims now being heard by NTCAT, the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The creation of the consolidated Local Court in turn, necessitated a change of designation for magistrates. The use of the title of magistrate has fallen out of favour prior to the passage of the *Local Court Act* for a number of reasons. Primary among those is that since the mid-1980s there was no appreciable difference between the duties of a magistrate and those of a judge in the administration of justice in the Territory.

The required qualifications for the two positions were identical, and the powers and duties of magistrates were identical to those exercised by county and district court judges elsewhere in Australia.

At a Commonwealth level, a similar shift in historical convention and practice was reflected in the renaming of the Federal Magistrates Court to the Federal Circuit Court of Australia in April 2013, where federal magistrates were replaced by federal judges. Moreover, the hierarchical differentiation of magistrates from judges in a historical sense was no longer accurate. Magistrates were bound to the same judicial conduct, ethics and competence standards as judges.

Changing the title of magistrate to judge, therefore, better aligned their designation to the actual duties, responsibilities and levels of professionalism that those officers demonstrate on a daily basis. Like the title of magistrate, the title of Master has significantly fallen out of favour in Australia.

First, as the Attorney-General identified in her second reading of the bill, Master denotes a specific gender long past the time when the exclusion of women from any professional endeavour became unthinkable. The rationale for dropping the convention of addressing judges of the higher courts as 'Mr Justice' was identical, although it was not until the appointment of Justice Mary Gaudron to the High Court that this practice ceased permanently in Australia.

Second, the term Master is often confusing to practitioners and litigants. For example, Masters in other states, such as South Australia, often hold concurrent commissions to the district court, which means they should be addressed as 'His Honour Judge'. Further, designation of Master misleadingly gives the outdated impression that the Master is limited to a merely bureaucratic or administrative function.

Finally, modernising the designation of the Master reflects the broad range of work that Masters of the Supreme Court perform in our court system, which is deserving of a more orthodox judicial title. As Hon Michael Kirby AC, CMG related in a 2005 article in the *Judicial Officers' Bulletin*, the work of Masters is wholly judicial and is not simply administrative or bureaucratic.

While serving as Acting Chief Justice of New South Wales in the 1980s, Justice Kirby recalled lobbying on behalf of the Masters for a change in title. For the most part, he recalls the work of the Masters was identical to work performed by Supreme Court judges, saying:

Their wish for redesignation seemed entirely fair to me.

Despite his efforts, however, it was not until the appointment of Chief Justice Spigelman that this became reality. I completely agree with Justice Kirby that it is right and proper that the true role of the Masters in the administration of justice in the Territory be recognised through the passage of this legislation.

In addition, I am encouraged that the bill provides for future developments including the appointment of additional Associate Judges as the need may arise. It is also entirely appropriate that, as a judge, the Master will now have the ability to punish parties for contempt when appropriate.

The other changes, including remuneration arrangements and the addition of an offence under section 190 of the *Criminal Code Act*, are all reflective of the judicial nature of the office the Associate Judge occupies.

Madam Speaker, for the reasons I have outlined, the opposition supports this bill and commends its passage to the House.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to debate and the support he has offered this bill. I acknowledge his comment that it is a positive step forward, as are the reforms the former government put in to the Local Court and with NTCAT. I had the opportunity to attend some of those proceedings and changes.

As I outlined in my second reading speech, this bill makes changes to the Office of the Master of the Supreme Court by amending the *Supreme Court Act*, the *Criminal Code Act* and other related legislation. These amendments will modernise the role of Master by changing the title to Associate Judge, which is more contemporary and reflects similar changes in other jurisdictions.

I note the comments the Opposition Leader made about the title. The changed title also acknowledges the increasing judicial responsibilities the office has assumed over time.

Key changes proposed in the bill include:

- changing all references to 'Master of the Supreme Court' in the *Supreme Court Act* to 'Associate Judge of the Supreme Court', enabling there to be potentially more than one Associate Judge appointed
- inserting a new section 41C(3) into the *Supreme Court Act* to provide that the salary, allowances and benefits of the Associate Judge must not be altered to his or her detriment during the term of office
- enabling section 29A of the *Supreme Court Act* to enable Associate Judges to punish a person for contempt of court
- amending section 190 of the *Criminal Code Act* to include Associate Judges in the offence of assaulting the Administrator or a judge

The bill also amends various other laws in minor respects to reflect the change in title to Associate Judge.

It is worth going through those points in a little more detail. The new title of Associate Judge was chosen to create consistency with other jurisdictions by mirroring the title used in the Supreme Courts of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. The new title also allows modern drafting practice by moving away from gender-specific titles.

Currently, the *Supreme Court Act* is written in such a way that implies only one Master will exist at one time. The bill presented an opportunity to amend existing references to allow for the potential for more than one Associate Judge to be appointed. Whilst it is not anticipated that more than one Associate Judge will be required for the foreseeable future, this change allows for the potential of more than one Associate Judge being appointed should the need ever arise in the Northern Territory.

Section 41C protects the remuneration and other benefits of the Supreme Court judges from being detrimentally affected during their terms of office. The new section 41C(3) is drafted in identical terms and will extend that protection to apply to the remuneration and other benefits of Associate Judges.

Judicial independence is an essential component of a strong and stable democracy. A judge must be, and be seen to be, independent of any influence that might tend to sway their impartial decision-making ability. Central to that idea is that judicial remuneration should be out of the hands of the other arms of government to ensure that a judge's salary and other benefits cannot be used as a weapon to influence or punish a judge in their decision-making. In effect, the Master already enjoys this protection as his remuneration and other benefits are tied to those of the Chief Judge of the Local Court who is similarly protected under the *Local Court Act*. However, this amendment provides certainty.

The amendment to section 29A of the *Supreme Court Act* will enable an Associate Judge to punish for contempt. Section 29A of the *Supreme Court Act*, which identifies the powers to be exercised by the Master, has not been amended since that act came into effect in 1979. In that section, the power of the Master to commit a person into custody for contempt is expressly excluded.

The power to punish for contempt is an important judicial tool to ensure that the proceedings of the court are maintained in an orderly and respectful manner. It is appropriate and necessary for an Associate Judge to have this power. Members of the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, for example, already have the power to make an order for contempt.

Section 190 of the *Criminal Code Act* attaches more severe penalties to someone who assaults the Administrator of a judge, which reflects the importance of the role and position of judicial officers. Presently the section does not specifically mention the Master; however, there is no reason the Master should be excluded.

The section is being rewritten so that Associate Judges are similarly covered by the offence in section 190 of the Criminal Code. Whilst section 190 of the Criminal Code, in its current form, implicitly includes Local Court judges in the term 'judge', the opportunity has been taken to amend the section to ensure that all judges are specifically identified as being covered by that definition.

It is also worth taking the opportunity to note some background to this bill. Proposals were initially put forward in 2014 and 2015 by the former Chief Justice regarding the amendments that are now being proposed. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned this.

I acknowledge the reforms made by the former government to the Local Court; however, the matters in the subject of this bill were not actioned at the time, and upon becoming Attorney-General in 2016 the current Chief Justice Grant put forward the same proposal as the former Chief Justice.

I am pleased the government has been able to action these reforms, and I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice) (by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

VISITORS Darwin Middle School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of some more students from Darwin Middle School. I did not realise the school was so big!

Year 8 students are here, accompanied by their teachers, Nelly Labiche and Catherine Packham.

We also have more Year 8 students from Darwin Middle School, accompanied by their teachers, Seema Jaitly and Cathy Hood.

On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Investing in Jobs – Mining and Primary Industry

Continued from 23 August 2017.

Ms LAWLER (Education): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to resume my response to the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources' statement on investing in jobs in the mining and primary industry area.

When I concluded the other day I was talking about the Learning on Country program and what a quality program it is. This program develops Aboriginal rangers through a collaboration of school students and local ranger groups. It encompasses shared training and local cultural knowledge. The Learning on Country program is running at five locations across Arnhem Land and in other remote schools. It aims to improve school attendance and completion, and create opportunities for students to pursue a satisfying and rewarding career in their community.

Learning on Country prepares the next generation of Yolngu and land owners to care for their estates, which are of national and international significance.

Schools can choose to utilise vocational education and training, particularly conservation and land management qualifications, to contribute to the career pathways the local ranger groups provide. Last year, 15 students from Milingimbi, Angurugu, Alyangula, Maningrida and Yirrkala homeland schools completed a Certificate I in Conservation and Land Management. Ten students from Shepherdson College, Maningrida School and Yirrkala School completed a Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management.

This shows we are equipping students with the skills they need to become job ready. By investing in jobs and our children, this government is setting the blueprint for future success.

A strong economy where families have jobs and can afford their own homes contributes to good outcomes for children. While our bush schools are leading the way in this area, our town schools are also creating pathways for students across these fields.

Year 10 students from Centralian Senior College will have the opportunity to visit Berrimah Farm and the Darwin Aquaculture Centre at Channel Island to learn about the exciting career opportunities in primary industry. Opportunities like this are linking key subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics—STEM subjects—with primary industry and resources such as studying livestock, fungus and bees, growing giant clams, or protecting our fishing industry.

There is a great partnership between the Education and Primary Industry and Resources departments that will encourage students to study these areas, creating a pipeline of workers to meet industry demand.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I support the statement on investing in jobs. What can I say except jobs, jobs and more jobs! I applaud Minister Vowles and his team on this statement, and I applaud how this Gunner government is investing in jobs across the NT.

This government is creating more opportunities for businesses and Territorians and more investment into the NT whilst building a stronger economy and a better future for all Territorians and their families.

I was extremely happy to hear Minister Vowles speak of the developments across the Territory through mining, agriculture, horticulture, cattle and fishing opportunities. This government is investing in its local economy, business, people and the Territory's strengths.

I am not much of an expert on many of the topics to do with mining et cetera; however, I worked in mines in my younger days, including a gold mine. They were very long hours and long days. However, I say hear, hear! to the \$50m into fishing infrastructure. People may know I am an avid fisher. This \$50m must be an NT record will serve Northern Territory children and families for decades to come, not only in fishing but in businesses, resources and future opportunities by allowing more families to enjoy the great opportunity to throw a line in the water, which is an old pastime. It brings a great deal of joy and happiness to everyone, and hopefully a story about the big fish that got away. I have a few of those stories.

I am an avid fisher and most Territorians I know are fishing families. I am also very lucky to have many friends and family from around Australia, who come to the Territory on a yearly basis, sometimes even more. The first thing they ask me is, 'When are we going fishing?', because they love fishing in the Territory that much.

I must admit, since I have been a member of parliament. Trying to juggle time to get away and fish can be a difficult task, especially with our busy schedules.

Nevertheless, these people visiting the Top End from around Australia and the world will spend bucket loads of cash on holidays in the NT, and to try to catch that elusive barramundi. Many will let that barramundi go again. The benefits will be to our local fishing suppliers, food outlets, accommodation and tourism businesses, which will prosper during good fishing seasons. A great fishing season is coming up, after all the rain we had last year.

Also, as access and security to our waterways improves across the NT, so will the numbers of visitors while tourism, jobs and our local economy prosper. Not to mention the amount of dollars that local people put into fishing—and I am big contributor to that. I know the ache for that next fishing trip. I cannot wait to get to the tackle shop to buy a new fishing lure that will catch me a metre-long barra. Million-dollar barra is coming up.

Then there is fuel, ice, drinks, food, bait, safety gear and the list goes on—wine and a couple of beers. Fishing is a lucrative business. As they say, boat is the acronym for 'bring on another thousand'. Many fishers know that acronym because every time you take your boat in to get a service or repair you are investing in a local fishing business, which is great for our local economy.

Investing in fishing infrastructure and supporting local fishing businesses is a very smart investment for the Territory.

While we are talking about boats, barramundi and investments, we must not forget the NT Million Dollar Fish, which my colleagues have talked about this morning. The Million Dollar Fish Competition is fantastic. I thank Minister Moss, who is bringing it back for its third season.

The Million Dollar Fish Competition is due to open on 1 October this year, with the release of a massive 101 tagged barramundi across our NT waterways. What a great achievement. I thank Minister Vowles for releasing 101 barramundi into Sanctuary Lakes a few months ago.

Of those 101 barramundi, one is worth one \$1m and the other 100 are worth \$10 000. That is a massive incentive to come to the Northern Territory. We have heard that we will have record registrations this season. We are predicting over 45 000 registrations to come to the Territory to catch that barramundi.

This is a significant boost to the NT economy and businesses, and it is a significant prize to those who may catch that elusive million dollar barramundi. The tie I wear today is covered in barramundi. It was made by my lovely Larrakia daughter, Savannah. She spent a lot of time making this tie for me, so I am very proud to wear it today.

I am very proud to speak about fishing and jobs in the NT.

Minister Moss and our Member for Solomon, Mr Luke Gosling, were in Canberra recently learning how to fly fish. What a great advertisement for the Northern Territory and fly fishing fanatics. I am keen to learn this trade one day, as fly fishing is an art in itself. Although some of my friends fly fish with great success, I am yet to master this trade.

Minister Vowles and the Members for Fong Lim and Port Darwin recently attended the launch of the barra sushi market, which is another great product for the Northern Territory, a great home initiative. It will create more jobs and build our economy and our market in the barramundi export industry—another great achievement.

Shady Camp is a popular fishing spot during the run-off season. I have fished there many times over the past 20 years. This fantastic river system has plenty of use. I have seen Shady Camp with cars and boats lined up for over a kilometre to launch at the seaside part of the creek system. In those days the boat ramp was not a boat ramp; it was more of a shallow, boggy dirt road with a lot of crocs hanging around as you launched. It was a very dangerous launch and is right next to the barrage. I have seen crocodiles follow the boat right up to the area where you retrieve your boat. It has been a very dangerous part of the river system for some time.

I join many fishers in welcoming this government's announcement of building a proper boat ramp at Shady Camp. This will allow fishers and their families a safer launch and make it a more expedient exercise than it was before.

I notice in social media some great pictures of what is happening at Shady Camp, and I thank Minister Vowles again for all of the department's work, along with everyone who has worked on that project. I can see from the pictures that it is a great boat ramp now. It is wide, much safer and you will not get bogged launching. I am looking forward to launching next year in the run-off season.

I am also very pleased to hear about all the other upgrades happening, as local fishers, including many in my electorate, have been asking for them. At Dinah Beach the CCTV camera installation has been completed. Well done to everyone involved in that. It is a very popular fishing and launching site to the Howard River, Middle Arm, Corroboree, King Ash Bay, Channel Island and Dundee. The list goes on. As Minister Vowles has stated, this record investment in fishing will create more local jobs for all Territorians.

Howard River boat ramp has been closed for many years. I remember when it was open; it created such a safe and easy way to get to and from Shoal Bay. It will please many locals to know plans are under way to look at a boat ramp for this part of our great river system. It will also take pressure off our great Buffalo Creek boat ramp system. I look forward to these developments as they unfold and to using those boat ramps whenever I can.

A few months ago repairs were made to our local boat ramp in Palmerston. I thank the minister and all the people who worked on that, because many people use Palmerston boat ramp. It is really good to see that we are not forgotten. The maintenance and upgrades are ongoing for all boat ramps.

There is more that fishos and conservationists should be proud of—to look at better places to build artificial reefs that create fish havens, build fish stocks and breeding opportunities, and ensure the NT keeps growing and nurturing its wild and rich fish stock, as well as providing fishing jobs and a food source for generations to come.

There are a lot of reefs out there, but there can never be enough to keep our fish breeding going. Our tourism market—a lot of people come here to fish. The more we can help our fishing system and stocks, the better it is for the Territory.

We have heard about investment in our children—a grassroots approach. It is a program and system that will encourage our children and families to engage in a great pastime and establish more remote recreational fishing clubs. What a great idea, building foundations for employment and future remote fishing businesses.

Possibly everyone in this room has a fishing story from their growing up—whether they caught a fish or not. With their parents, grandparents, uncles or aunts, they went fishing, had a great time and went home with a story to tell—who got the hook in their arm or the big fish that got away.

I remember my grandparents taking me fishing; my father would take me and so would my uncles. We would fish for all sorts of things. One day we even went fishing for eels, which scared the hell out of me. I thought they were snakes. We all have those great stories.

Fishing is more than what we see here. It is also about Territorians' wellbeing. In the age of technology and communications, mainly through IT resources, fishing provides one-on-one time for family and friends, or a good laugh or smile when a silly story occurs. I am sure everyone who has ever fished remembers their funny story, a story you remember with your son or daughter for a lifetime.

The more we create these opportunities the better place we create for Territory families' health and wellbeing. How can you put a dollar figure on that? Bringing joy to families in the Northern Territory is worth every dollar of the \$50m.

As you can guess, I have many fishing stories to tell, and I could go on for hours—tales of Tony, instead of Tales of the Tinny.

The fishing industry, employment and our fishers have never had such a great opportunity. I am, as other fishers are, very pleased with this government's investment in jobs, local businesses and building our economy.

I sincerely thank Minister Vowles, this government and everyone who has been part of these projects in the Territory for investing in the Territory's future of jobs, jobs and more jobs for our families and our children's future.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of Gary Higgins' wife, the lovely Rhonda Higgins. Welcome to Parliament House. Welcome also to Rhonda's aunty, Eileen Brierley. I want you to keep an eye on your nephew today and give us a report at the end of Question Time. She and Rhonda's cousin, Keith Brierley, have travelled from England.

Also, Mary and Larry Conway have travelled from Dublin, Ireland, to watch Question Time. *Fáilte.*

Mr Wood: We will need to be bilingual now.

Madam SPEAKER: I practised my Gaelic. It is meant to be 'welcome'. Obviously, I have failed. I had best not go to Ireland.

On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a warm welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Member for Daly

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Member for Daly approached me regarding a personal explanation he would like to make. I ask members to hear him in silence.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister for Education a question about teacher numbers. I stated that our figures showed a net loss of eight teachers from the Territory in the first six months of the government.

In her reply, the minister stated:

I am not sure where you got your figures from, Opposition Leader.

To explain, I got these figures from the Minister for Education. I seek leave to table an extract from the answers to written questions provided to me by the Minister for Education, which backs up my statement. To clarify, they are the figures received from the minister.

Leave granted.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the family and friends of Mr Lester. On behalf of honourable members I extend a warm welcome to the visitors.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Death of Mr Lester

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, it is with deep regret that I advise of the death of Mr Lester OAM on 21 July 2017, a noted Indigenous Australian, elder and activist for his people everywhere.

I remind honourable members that on completion of debate I will ask members to stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Mr Lester

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, thank you for hosting this condolence motion. I speak in support of the motion that this Assembly marks the passing of Kumanara Lester OAM, and express condolences to Mr Lester's family, friends and colleagues in his birthplace of South Australia, and in the Northern Territory, where he spent many years living and working.

By any measure he lived an incredible life and contributed greatly to the Northern Territory, particularly in his passionate advocacy for recognition of Aboriginal land rights and the development of the magnificent Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

We were deeply saddened to hear of his passing on 21 July this year in the Alice Springs Hospital. Whilst he lived a very full life, it is telling that we speak today of another wonderful Territorian who suffered illness related to kidney disease. The scourge of kidney disease, particularly for Aboriginal Territorians, is a tragedy we must work harder to address. We must support better access to living conditions and primary healthcare, and build on the great work done by the Purple House and other Aboriginal health services and research organisations, like the Menzies School of Health Research.

Kumanara was born a Yankunytjatjara man in the 1940s near Walatina Creek outstation on Granite Downs cattle station in northern South Australia. It is the country we call the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands. Kumanara Lester's story is one of leadership, stepping up to the plate when called to work for a common good. It is all the more impressive given he was rendered blind from the age of 15 because of the black radiological mist from atomic bomb testing at Maralinga that enveloped him and his family when he was just 10 years old.

Forcing the government and community to recognise that harm and the poisoning of his traditional lands occupied much of his life. His continued quest for justice led to the McClelland Royal Commission in the 1980s. Ultimately, government accepted responsibility for the clean-up of the affected lands and their return to traditional owners.

Kumanara Lester also made a key contribution to Northern Territory life through his work with the Institute of Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs. He advocated tirelessly for better social, health and economic outcomes for his kinfolk. Perhaps it was there that some of his wonderful leadership skills were developed, such as his great capacity as a linguist, his ability to communicate and impassion people across cultures, his commitment to education and economic development, and his keen sense to always find a path forward.

His deep understanding of Aboriginal law and culture across the APY lands and his cross-cultural language skills helped him find a natural place in a key leadership role, working for recognition of Aboriginal land rights. In particular, he was instrumental in developing the land rights movement in South Australia, working the Pitjantjatjara Council in the Dunstan government in South Australia to recognise Aboriginal land rights in Australian law.

A legal title was granted in 1981 for traditional owners to their Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands. Later, his skills and knowledge were central to progressing the 1979 land claim for the then Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park. Remember, this was not long after Anangu were actively being discouraged from living at Uluru, a most sacred place, ostensibly for the benefit of tourists.

This takes us to 1983 and the announcement by the Hawke government of its intention to establish Aboriginal title to what we now proudly know as Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. Kumanara's knowledge, language, diplomacy and, perhaps most importantly, the trust people invested in him were central to the negotiations leading to the establishment of this premier, world-heritage, jointly managed national park. It was a difficult time, and many remember the strident campaigning by the then CLP government to undermine that work.

It was an expensive political campaign designed to deny recognition of Aboriginal land rights to the most sacred and significant places. *The Age* newspaper said in an editorial in 1985 that it was the government behaving outrageously, running a campaign which was dishonest, divisive and covertly racist.

It is a measure of the man that Kumanara Lester would only say in his autobiography, 'It was a nasty piece of work'. It is a measure of the man that he preserved with goodwill and good grace. Goodwill and good grace prevailed.

Kumanara went on to become the first Chair of the Uluru-Kata Tjuta board of management to drive forward the development of the park and fulfilment of the vision so many had worked for. In 1995 Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park was awarded the Picasso Gold Medal, the highest UNESCO award for outstanding effort in setting new international standards for world heritage management.

Kumanara Lester worked tirelessly to develop both Uluru and Yulara resorts. His vision continues through the Indigenous Land Corporation, a major investor in Yulara, which works the park for traditional owners, Parks Australia and our local tourism industry to continue building and refreshing the tourism experience at Uluru-Kata Tjuta.

Kumanara Lester was a great Territorian and I salute him for his life's work. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of handback, *The Australian* newspaper commented, 'He has never seen the rock, never climbed it, but this man's wisdom and dignity commands total respect among his people'.

I pass on our heartfelt condolences to his family, particularly Lucy and his children, Karina, Rose and Leroy. We look forward to sharing further celebration of his life at a memorial service in Alice Springs in September.

Madam Speaker, I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank you and the Chief Minister for proposing this condolence motion.

I pay tribute to Mr Kumanara, a proud Central Australian man, a proud Anangu, who passed away last month.

Mr Kumanara left behind a legacy of championing multiple causes for his people and Aboriginal people in general. This condolence speech pays tribute to that.

It is difficult to imagine that many Australians have the living memory of nuclear tests being conducted by another country on our soil. It defies belief that these tests were conducted in such a way that they put at risk the lives of Australian people, and it took decades for authorities to acknowledge and take responsibility for these terrible events.

The tests were conducted just 160 kilometres from where Mr Kumanara and his people were based. Mr Kumanara described with stark clarity the day the Maralinga tests devastated his country and people. He said:

When I was a young boy living in the desert, the ground shook and a black mist came up from the south and covered our camp. The older people said they'd never seen anything like it before, and in the months that followed many people were sick and many died. I don't like to think about it now, but one of those people was my uncle, and he was very sick before he died. People had sore eyes too. I was one of those people, and later on I lost my sight and my life was changed for ever. If I had my eyes I would probably still be a stockman, but because I haven't I have become a stirrer.

The description is chilling but it requires qualification. Mr Kumanara was a highly effective advocate and activist. He was much more than a stirrer. His activism led to the McClelland Royal Commission into the British nuclear tests, a cleanup—insomuch as you can—of contaminated sites and the handback of APY lands and Uluru to traditional owners.

He moved from Adelaide to Alice Springs in 1970 and was a leading figure in the Central Land Council. On an individual basis, he would still reach out to assist his people at a grassroots level, working as a court translator, mentor and educator.

Mr Kumanara's passing brings back into focus one of the greatest injustices meted out to Aboriginal people in this country, but also the commitment to hard work and activism that drove him over many decades.

My thoughts go to Mr Kumanara's family and friends. Central Australia and Aboriginal people in the Territory and South Australia have lost a tireless activist and friend.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Aboriginal people whose land we meet on today, the Aboriginal people from the nation of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people, and the spiritual connection they have to the land.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition for allowing this condolence motion and providing kind words.

Today we pause to remember a good and honest man, a true blue legend from the bush. He was a passionate man who always stood up for justice and equality. Over the course of his life he achieved a great deal for the traditional owners of the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara lands in South Australia. He was a campaigner for land rights recognition and justice. He was instrumental in the development of the Uluru National Park and its board of management.

The state funeral was recently held at Walatinna on the APY lands, 470 kilometres south of Alice Springs. This service was a reflection and a celebration of the life of Mr Kwementyaye Lester.

We must recognise that this is also the closure of a dark episode in Australian history. Kwementyaye Lester was born on 24 August 1941 in a creek bed not far from his home, known today as the Marla Bore or the Marla Roadhouse on the Stuart Highway.

Kwementyaye Lester grew up in the ways of a stockman and skilled horseman that knew his country not only through the Pitjantjatjara homelands heritage, but also through station life and missionary activity in the area. All of these elements shaped Kwementyaye Lester's character, and that was reflected at his state funeral.

Kwementyaye Lester was 12 years old when the British atomic bomb testing began in northern South Australia. These tests took place at Emu Field at Maralinga, and they were catastrophic.

The general public were largely unaware of the risks from the testing of this program, stemming from the official secrecy of the testing program and the remote locations of the test sites. Before the tests could begin, the traditional owners of the land had to be removed. It is immoral by today's standards, but it did not seem to matter in 1953.

But it did matter. Kwementyaye Lester became a victim of the testing. The fallout from a test caused his skin and eyes to blister. Kwementyaye Lester lost sight in one eye and had limited vision in the other. In 1957 he was reduced to 20% vision in his remaining eye. He was taken to Adelaide for surgery, which proved unsuccessful and resulted in Kwementyaye Lester becoming totally blind.

Imagine a young man, in his teens, not able to see through his eyes, raised out bush, knowing no English and beginning a new life as a blind Aboriginal man living in Adelaide. It is here the story of Kwementyaye Lester becomes an Australian story shared by many.

Kwementyaye Lester found support from Christian families in Adelaide, the medical profession and the emerging voice of Aboriginal Australia in South Australia. He was given work at the Institute for the Blind in north Adelaide becoming, in his own words, 'a broomologist'.

He learned to speak English and read Braille in English and Pitjantjatjara. He discovered music and became an accomplished singer in gospel and country. I have been told by my old mate, Warren Snowdon, the Member for Lingjari, that the first song he learned on guitar was Johnny Cash's *I Walk the Line*. Fittingly, it was played at the beginning of Kwementyaye Lester's service on his homelands.

As a performer he entertained many parishes at church functions across South Australia. It was through this activity that he met his wife Lucy; although, as a young stockman, before he lost his sight, he had seen Lucy on the mail truck and saddled up beside her on horseback, hoping to impress her with his riding skills.

They married in 1966 and had three lovely children: Leroy; Rose; and Karina Lester. In 1972 Kwementyaye Lester finished his employment in Adelaide and went to live in Alice Springs. It was there that Kwementyaye Lester involved himself in the emerging Aboriginal organisations being established in our town.

In particular, Kwementyaye Lester was instrumental with Reverend Jim Downing in establishing the Institute for Aboriginal Development. I am very fortunate to have served the Institute for Aboriginal Development as a chairperson and a board member. This organisation is dedicated to preserving Aboriginal culture and language while providing employment and training opportunities for emerging Aboriginal leaders. Kwementyaye Lester had a vision for the organisation: to make sure future generations of Aboriginal leaders were harnessed and nurtured to take up the good fight.

Working in Alice Springs also enabled Kwementyaye Lester to set up his outstation at his place of birth in Walatinna on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara lands.

In retirement he found great joy in visiting his family and friends. He found a soul mate in Bronya Dineen. The telephone and radio meant that Kwementyaye Lester was in constant contact with the world. Many times the phone would ring and a voice would simply say, 'Yami here, I am ringing to ask you something', or, 'That old man Warren there yet?' It could be anything from placing a bet on the Melbourne Cup or the great importance of who would win the Grand Final at the football; there was always something to chat about.

Kwementyaye Lester's funeral was the first in the northern part of South Australia, and the first conducted in the Pitjantjara language, which was a celebration of his life lived well. Speakers at Kwementyaye Lester's funeral included the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Hon Nigel Scullion; the Premier of South Australia, Hon Jay Weatherill; his lifelong Adelaide friend, Chris Larkins; his former work colleague from the Institute of

Aboriginal Development, Helen Liddle; David Sweeney, from the Australia Conservation Foundation; and Hon Warren Snowdon, the Member for Lingjari.

The service was conducted in Pitjantjara by Reverend Jonathon Moore, and Paul Kelly sang *Maralinga*. His legacy will live on through those who undertake study at IAD, through those who receive compensation and restoration of their land, and through his daughter Karina and her continuing mission to make the world free of nuclear weapons, a call she issued on the floor of the United Nations this year.

We honour this great man and his commitment to his people, our people.

His body may have left us but his spirit remains deeply instilled in our great country, deeply ingrained in the spiritual country of the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara people.

Rest in peace, old man.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, I also pay my respect to the late Kumanara Lester, who passed away last month, and to extend my deepest sympathies to his family and community. I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion before the Assembly today.

Kumanara Lester was a renowned Aboriginal activist who dedicated his life to campaigning for Aboriginal rights. Kumanara Lester survived the Maralinga atomic tests that occurred in the 1950s but was left blind as a result. Rather than shying away and letting the loss of his eyesight hold him back, he used this experience to fight for recognition of the 1800 other Aboriginal people who were also affected by these tests.

There were many Aboriginal leaders and activists who were spoken about during my childhood, and Kumanara Lester was one of them. He was acknowledged for his tireless work to clean up Maralinga, as well as playing a key role in advocating for the handing back of the APY lands and Uluru to their traditional owners.

Kumanara Lester was a tireless leader who never wavered from his resolve to help his people and community. He was a leader many looked up to and one who requires much recognition. It is important for all Australians to reflect on Kumanara Lester's achievements and be inspired to keep fighting for recognition when and where it is needed. His passing is another reminder that we are losing too many prominent Aboriginal leaders who have led the way for Aboriginal advancement. It also highlights the need for our next generation of leaders to fill the shoes of those who are no longer with us. Some are already doing this, and I thank them.

I thank you, Kumanara Lester, for your leadership and for inspiring others, like me, to find their voice and help their community.

Sleep peacefully, old man. Mumuk.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak in condolence to the family and friends of Kumanara Lester. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Larrakia people for allowing me to speak on their country about sad things today.

Mr Lester was revered by all who knew him. He was a tireless campaigner for his people, justice and land rights. He was a teacher, activist, leader and an inspiration. Mr Lester was a strong advocate for the recognition and improvement of conditions for his people. Mr Lester initially fought for the causes that impacted his people, but his contributions were so significant that they will be remembered by all Australians, not just Aboriginal Australians.

The sadness of the loss of Mr Lester is compounded by the loss of too many other Indigenous leaders in the past few years. As an Aboriginal person, an Aboriginal politician, I have drawn so much inspiration from the victories and struggles of these leaders. I feel that my pathway to this Chamber was blazed by their hard work and determination.

Sadly, many Aboriginal people are still facing adversities and conditions that Mr Lester and his contemporaries rallied so hard to change. There are many conversations still ongoing, but these issues have yet to be resolved. While work is being done on a national level, it is with the same lack of momentum and urgency that was the cause of frustration for Mr Lester.

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the referendum to amend the Australian constitution to include Aboriginal people in the census and allow the Commonwealth to create laws for Aboriginal people, but we are still waiting for meaningful recognition.

I am very proud to be a member of this government, which has, among this 18-member Caucus, five Aboriginal people, including me and the Members for Arafura, Arnhem, Namatjira and Karama. I also acknowledge the Member for Nhulunbuy. That is why I am proud that, as a government, we are focusing on the wellbeing of Aboriginal people. We are promoting keeping cultures strong and we are taking decisions back to Aboriginal people to make. We are working with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to deliver real changes for Aboriginal people, rather than a rehashed bureaucratic initiative.

I do not believe it is possible to be an Aboriginal person and not be political in any way. There are many distractions in life nowadays; the pace is faster, the day-to-day demands are onerous and friends and foes are not as clearly defined. But the younger generation of Indigenous leaders cannot be complacent. We need to take the baton passed on by Mr Lester and continue.

Mr Lester was undoubtedly a great man, a great Australian and a great leader. On behalf of all of us here and all of my family, I send my deepest condolences to all his family. Thank you.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also extend my condolences to the family and friends of the late Mr Lester, and to his wife, Lucy.

Motion agreed to.

Members stood in silence for one minute as a sign of respect.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Investing in Jobs – Mining and Primary Industry**

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I was a little disappointed, because the minister made a statement about horticulture in Central Australia—I have the shortened version of this statement. But there is nothing in here about Central Australian horticulture. If we are talking about investing in jobs, mining and primary industry, that omission should have been looked at and put into this document. Be that as it may, it is not in this document.

I appreciate that we have a new CEO of NT Farmers, Greg Owens, a good friend of mine. I also congratulate the government for putting some money into NT Farmers in Katherine, which is a major part of the horticulture industry in the Northern Territory.

It has always bugged me that there are over 10 pages in here on amateur fishing. Fantastic! How to win votes. There is very little, except a few small details about Aboriginal enterprises, on the commercial fishing industry which, for some reason—and I am not saying only in this government—always gets put to one side. A number of people here go to a fish and chips shop to buy fish and do not seem to appreciate that we have a fishing industry which, over the years, has been hit black and blue by governments. Fishing areas have been shut down and licences have been bought back. Sometimes that has been for good, but other times it is simply because one side of the industry has had more influence over government than the other side.

Someone has to stick up for the commercial fishing industry, because it is an important part of our primary industry. It might not be as big as mangoes or moo cows, but it is an important part, without which we would be eating either farmed barramundi or getting fish from Southeast Asia. We get good quality fish from local waters, provided by our local fishermen. We should recognise that. If we are talking about jobs, we need to make sure we are supporting that industry by making sure young people are moving into that industry.

The crabbing industry is also important. It is not an easy industry. A couple of years ago I drove to the Roper River on my way to McArthur River Mine. I went out to the mouth where it is pretty desolate and hot. There were people living there in an old shack who were commercial crabbers. It is not exactly full of mod cons, and it is hot, especially before the Wet Season arrives. It is also beautiful. When I say desolate—there is a niceness in the country that makes you appreciate the differing landscapes of the Northern Territory. People who work there have to earn their living.

Another area is there does not seem to be anything about cattle. I looked through this. They said on the *Country Hour* the other day—and I thought this may have been something you would hook onto—AACo is looking at going into China with meat. It is also looking at buffaloes into its abattoir. If we are looking at increasing employment, I would have thought they are two important moves by our one-and-only abattoir to increase jobs in the Northern Territory. That is an omission from this statement that you need to look at.

An issue that has been raised a few times—a portion of this statement talks about mines. Most of the mines it is talking about are potential. I know the one in the Member for Barkly's area has been discussed for many years so far. I am interested to see if it gets off the ground. It looks like it might be getting close. The phosphate mine has one of the biggest phosphate deposits in Australia, maybe even the world. I am interested to know the connection between the gas and the phosphate mine and what potential there is for jobs and having an important energy source going past a mine that is producing phosphate. From that you can produce fertiliser.

Whether there is a connection there, it is good for local jobs or if those two connections will not be related to places like Tennant Creek or Mount Isa, I do not know. I think there is an opportunity for the minister to tell us if there are any opportunities for increasing local employment, not only developing a mine but getting the offshoots from that mine, which may increase the number of people employed in that area.

Gas is not mentioned. We still produce it in the Bonaparte Gulf and in Central Australia, but it is a ticklish issue because it includes onshore gas, which people are wary of because of the politics behind it. It should be mentioned in this document, though. The document says 'mining and primary industry'. Regardless of your views on the matter, it should be written in there.

What worries me is that you can gild the lily with mining. Look at the mines that have unfortunately closed down. I am not here to barrack for them closing down, but Frances Creek has closed down, as have the ilmenite mine and the Roper iron ore mine. I am not sure of the name of the other one which used the road through to Bing Bong—Western Desert. Seeing that road cleared through the middle of that station was a disaster. Then the mine closed down and we ended up with this road. I do not know who owns it or is responsible for it. It seemed a bright idea at the time, but I am not sure it was well planned.

I get annoyed when we get these bright ideas about the benefits of mining, and I am not saying they are not benefits, but we have to make sure decisions do not impact in a negative way later on when trying to sort out any legacy left by those mines.

We have a history of mines closing down. I understand Bootu Creek is up again, which is good. That is also good for the railway because the Roper mines were transporting all their material to Darwin by road. There should have been some work done on getting an offshoot, like Frances Creek, which has a branch line. If you can get iron ore, it is ideal for having those bulk commodities shifted by rail rather than by road.

The minister spoke about some work on strengthening the Roper Highway. It took a bit of a pounding when they were moving truckloads of iron ore out of there.

The other area the minister talked about was the hub. I have heard about the hub since day one.

Mr Vowles: We love the hub.

Mr WOOD: There is one at Palmerston—it is nice to have dinner there. At least you can get a good meal.

It is like when the government first announced Desert Knowledge in Alice Springs. We thought, 'What the heck is that?' What is the hub?

Just say I am a mango grower in Katherine. I pack my mangoes, stick them in a truck and send them down south. I would like is for the minister to explain in physical terms what a hub is and what it is meant to do that cannot be done presently. I am not saying it is a bad idea, because I do not know what you mean by having a hub. We have a railway line there and a highway to Kununurra, and there is the Stuart Highway through the middle. I understand it is a junction where transport companies meet, but how that makes any difference to horticultural production in the region—you will spend a lot of money on it. It would be good to hear what that money will be spent on. Otherwise I will go back to the other hub.

I realise there was a bit of emphasis on investing in jobs. I listened to part of the Chief Minister's speech and he found an opportunity to talk about other things. This is about mining and primary industry, and the Chief Minister found an opportunity to talk about the world and jobs, which he can, but I think the focus needed to stay on what this statement is about.

I am a little concerned that we are not doing enough work in the area of how to get enough water. The minister knows that the government has put out statements about land that will be available for people who are interested in developing horticulture and agriculture production, because the department has identified land and water that is suitable.

It has been raised with me that Gunn Point, for instance, which for many years has been identified as having good soils—but I doubt it has very good water. I have had people say to me the aquifer there is not sustainable and that there is salt intrusion.

The government is trying to encourage people to come to the Territory, because they say, 'Look, you have water and good soils', and there is no doubt we have. But I hope you do not make promises—I remember the promises to people who came to the Douglas Daly years ago when they first opened it up. It was to be a big area of agriculture. They invited people up from New South Wales and Queensland to grow soy beans and things like that. Tell me where they are today. It failed.

The town of Fleming would be a classic example of agriculture failing in the Northern Territory, and there are plenty of other failures. I lived on the Daly and know about Tipperary and Scott Creek. We have to ensure we do things properly and that we do not put out information that is not correct. The issue of Gunn Point has been raised, not by me but by people who have knowledge of the water in that area.

I compare it with what is happening in Western Australia. In the country—I have forgotten how many thousand hectares they are looking at opening up on Carlton Hill Station, north of the Ord River—there has been drilling exploration for water in that area. They have the soil and it looks like they have the water. There are people in other states competing with us. If we really want to attract people to the Northern Territory to develop large-scale horticulture and agriculture, we have to ensure we are one step in front of places like Kununurra, because if they are saying they have this much water and this much land and that they have the infrastructure, it will be harder for us to attract people here.

You mentioned extractive industries, a really important area. It is one of those areas people forget about. We would not be standing here if it were not for extractive industries. On the other hand, we have the important issues of the environment. The EPA eventually came out with a plan that says some parts of the Howard River sand plains will be preserved from extractive mining.

On Sunday I am helping to launch a book about the Howard Springs sand plains, which I am very pleased about. I live with extractive miners, so I know some of them are not exactly happy about it, but that is the balance we have to find.

If we remove all the sand that is available in the Howard River sand plain, what is the next option? Where will we get sand from? Will it have to be manufactured sand, or we would have to go to other places to get it, meaning it will have to be hauled from longer distances and therefore sand and concrete will be more expensive? What effect will that have on the cost of building? These are important things a government has to look at. I am not saying the decisions are bad, but I think we needed to preserve some of that area because it is beautiful. We cannot take all the land for sand and then find we have lost some beautiful species of plants in the process.

I am interested to see the government's plans after the sand mining in that area has come to an end.

I like a document that gives me a chance to speak about mining and primary industry. I would have loved to hear more about things like the cucumber green mottle mosaic virus and the effect it has had on the industry, because some of those pests have caused a loss of jobs.

Where are we with Panama disease in bananas? We would have had one of the biggest areas outside of Queensland for growing bananas until Panama disease came. A big company from Kununurra came to Lambells Lagoon to invest in bananas. There is a chance of cyclones in that area, but the chances are less than those in north Queensland.

Where are we with trying to develop the banana industry? It is labour intensive. If you want a good banana industry then you need to attract people here to work in that industry.

Some areas could have had more attention paid to them, but I thank the minister for bringing his statement to the House. I support what we have, but 10 pages on amateur fishing and nothing on commercial fishing ...

Mr Vowles: I wanted a 90-page statement. They would not let me.

Mr WOOD: Balance it. I talk to commercial fishers. They work hard for long hours to supply us with fresh fish, yet they never seem to get any support from government. I am sure government feels that if they stick up for them they will get an elbow from the other side of the industry. I am putting my two bobs' worth in for them; they are a good mob.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, for his ministerial statement. Before I deliver my statement in response I will pick up on the Opposition Leader's remarks in the statement he delivered yesterday about the supposed ban on the gas industry that the government has implemented. He said:

Which industries were really missed out? Gas. Yes, you guessed it, the minister forgot the industry is banned by government.

It seems to me that in his own eagerness to pander to the populace he has not been listening to the very clear, succinct message that this government has been yelling from the rooftops for at least a couple of years.

We promised a moratorium on unconventional hydraulic fracturing, and we delivered on that promise. We promised to implement an independent inquiry during this moratorium, and we have delivered on that. We have said over and over that we would adhere to the moratorium until the independent inquiry was complete, and recommendations submitted by the independent inquiry. Only after that would this government decide whether to ban fracking or allow it to happen under a very strict, regulated framework.

The opposition has some new staffers, who are obviously new to the Territory and have not taken the time to get to know the issues that Territorians are really passionate about. But one would think the Opposition Leader would know better than to mislead Territorians by making statements that imply this government has not delivered on the promises that were made in regard to that issue.

Since coming in to government, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, Minister Vowles, has made several trips to Katherine and has had many discussions with stakeholders in my electorate. With its location on the north-south Stuart Highway, which intersects with the Victoria Highway, linking to Western Australia and adjacent to the rail line, Katherine is ideally placed to take advantage of the significant agribusiness development potential presented by the growing Asian market.

I am excited by the future and truly heartened by this government's commitment to Katherine. Government recognises that in growing agribusiness there will be numerous regional benefits to the economy and the development of infrastructure, transport and supply links, all of which will create employment in my electorate and the surrounding region.

This Labor government is building on Katherine's agribusiness success with \$400 000 in the recent budget to facilitate major agribusiness projects, including agriculture precinct development in Katherine. Pastoralists in the Katherine region are also turning their minds to the opportunities presented by pastoral lease diversification, where good soil and water resources can be developed into high-value horticulture or broadacre cropping.

Investment into soil and water studies conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have seen new land identified with development potential, including in the Katherine region. The investment from this government in the agricultural development potential of Katherine is substantial.

My colleague, Minister Moss, recently announced details of the \$10m Mapping the Future program, which will support scientific teams to gather data about the Katherine region's soil, water and biodiversity assets. This includes on Aboriginal land where traditional owners are seeking some development, which goes into our other focus on economic sustainability and development for Indigenous communities.

With some of the Territory's most productive cattle regions to the west and southeast, and some of the most productive mango and melon orchards in Australia, Katherine is already a significant service centre. As the local Member for Katherine, I am committed to helping build capacity for Katherine to continue growing, to gain control of the future and improve the lives of future generations of Katherine residents. I firmly believe this is attainable with strategic planning, strong leadership, positive collaboration and commitment.

Increased horticulture production out of Katherine through this government's commitment to agribusiness will drive the identification and prioritisation of regional transport infrastructure, and will identify key areas of agribusiness supply chains that are required to get products produced by Katherine farmers to domestic and international markets all year around. Goodness me, that sounds like a logistics hub.

In July of this year, Minister Vowles announced \$1.5m funding for the NT Farmers Association. This funding will provide many direct and indirect benefits to horticulture producers in my electorate. This funding provides NT Farmers with the opportunity to develop the horticulture sector through three dedicated positions—a workforce planning coordinator, a horticulture development officer and a mango industry development officer. This is to further develop and expand the NT's biggest horticultural industry.

I am especially pleased at the funding for a dedicated horticultural industry development officer to be based in Katherine. This position will assist horticulture producers in my electorate to access new markets, diversify and explore alternative crops, and improve farm biosecurity and labour practices, which will in turn increase production and return back to the local economy.

Labour force is a major issue affecting the horticulture industry. Eighty per cent of all low-skill agriculture labour in the Northern Territory, especially picking and harvesting, comes from international sources, including backpackers. Last year, during the backpacker tax fiasco, Katherine experienced an economic downturn as mangoes and melons rotted on the ground. Local farmers lost income, and consequently, backpackers spent minimal money in the local community on food, alcohol, accommodation and entertainment. During this time the NT Government and industry groups such as the NT Farmers Association successfully advocated at a federal government level and achieved a 15% backpacker tax rate that has benefited all industries in Katherine, not just farming.

In February this year, I had the pleasure to attend the NT Farmers Seasonal Worker Program forum in Katherine. It was no secret that I am a huge support of the Seasonal Worker Program.

The Seasonal Worker Program allows employers to sponsor workers from the participating countries of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu—season after season.

This workshop identified several key issues: shortages of seasonal workers is the single biggest issue facing Katherine farmers in regard to production, planning and certainty for the industry; backpackers are generally unreliable and do not cope well with the climate conditions of the NT; and locals are unmotivated to pick fruit and other horticultural products due to the intermittent nature of the work and, in general, seek higher skilled, higher paying employment within the horticultural and associated service industries.

Another issue is that this leaves seasonal workers from Timor-Leste and the Pacific Island nations as a preferred low-skilled or unskilled labour source for the picking, harvesting and packing of horticultural products.

Farmers struggle with the bureaucracy of the Seasonal Worker Program through the federal government due to the paperwork and duplication between federal government departments and organising such issues as flights, superannuation, immigration visas and work cover insurance.

Often many months go by—an average of six to nine months—before farmers are approved as an employer for the Seasonal Worker Program, with many farmers simply giving up during this time because of the level of bureaucracy and paperwork involved.

Many farmers were complaining about the loss of profits and production. Some talking about the need to put expansion on hold and even close their business and relocate to other states. This is happening at a time when the NT economy needs its most viable industries, such as farming, to keep providing economic stimulus. This was really troubling to hear.

We listened to the NT Farmers Association and other stakeholder groups, and we took steps to address the labour issue. We addressed this issue through funding from the government to the NT Farmers Association for a dedicated workforce planning coordinator, which will allow farmers in Katherine easier access to the federal government-administered Seasonal Worker Program for low-skilled seasonal labour. This position will also investigate a specific NT-based pilot project to attract international workers through dedicated horticultural visas.

As you are aware, I am the first Timorese-born member of parliament in Australian history. I am really grateful for the steps this government is taking to encourage the uptake of the Seasonal Worker Program for workers from East Timor.

Fortunately, for the NT Farmers Association and local horticultural producers in Katherine, the NT Government has a very successful working relationship with the Timor-Leste government and it is facilitated by the commitment and dedication shown by the Timor-Leste Consul General, Francisco Filipe.

The NT Government has a bilateral agreement that allows seasonal workers from Timor-Leste to work the mango and melon farms in Katherine and throughout the Northern Territory under the Seasonal Worker Program. This program not only provides reliable low-skilled labour to our horticultural industries and local community businesses, but also has some lasting positive social and economic effects for overseas participants. The program provides Timorese workers with an opportunity to learn new skills and enhance their knowledge of agriculture in preparation of land, harvesting, packing, transport and logistics. These are skills and knowledge they can take back to Timor to impart to their own communities or even open up their own businesses.

A great example of the benefits of this program is a Timorese man by the name of Eugenio Pereira. Eugenio was so inspired by his time in Australia with the Seasonal Worker Program in 2012 that he chased his dream and started his own brick-making business called Mate Moris. Eugenio has said that running a brick-making business is challenging but there are many benefits. He is providing jobs for four of his family members and his company now sells more than 500 bricks a week, helping Timor-Leste's burgeoning construction industry. This is a positive outcome from the Seasonal Worker Program, not only for the Katherine horticultural industry, but the skills he was able to gain.

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 9; I call attention to the state of the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ring the bells.

A quorum is present.

Ms NELSON: A vibrant and productive horticultural industry with an increased volume of product due to reliable labour will directly deliver to Katherine this government's commitment to jobs for Territorians through the provision of jobs in infrastructure to support this industry, as well as employment in service industries, transport, marketing, supply chain logistics and every step taken to get horticultural products to our domestic and international markets.

This will mean more jobs for Territorians in the upgrading and construction of this infrastructure, including employment in the hospitality service industries, such as food and alcohol service, tourism and accommodation.

To realise the region's potential we need a long-term infrastructure plan and, once again, this government is delivering through information gained in our highly-successful economic summits process. Connecting and bolstering road infrastructure to the agribusiness zones of this region will transform Katherine, and this government's strategy of progressively upgrading roads will increase reliability, economic development and productivity. This then leads to more jobs for Territorians.

This government has shown its commitment to Katherine through investing in road infrastructure in our latest budget to realise the region's potential. I will detail those commitments in brief:

- \$40.1m for strengthening, widening and extending the seal on the Buntine Highway
- \$2m for pavement strengthening and widening on secondary and local roads
- \$5m for pavement strengthening and widening on rural arterial roads
- \$2.5m to continue to seal selected sections of the Lajamanu Road
- \$57.41m under the Northern Australia Roads Program
- upgrade the Keep River Plains Road to support Project Sea Dragon
- the development of the Ord.

Construction is also currently moving on the \$44.5m Roper and Wilton bridges on the Roper Highway. Contracts have been let for the \$35.5m Little Horse and Big Horse Creek bridge upgrades.

This infrastructure investment in Katherine will drive jobs in construction, attract families and support the growth of Katherine into the major agribusiness, commodities and logistics hub it is destined to become.

This Labor government's election commitment to Katherine will mean more employment for Territorians in jobs that are available in the horticulture, transport and logistics industries and related hospitality service industries. Our government is committed to training Territorians and equipping them with the skills and abilities to fill jobs in these industries.

It is only when Territorians are not able to fill these jobs that the government will develop strategies to attract staff from outside of the Territory, and that is shown through their support of the Seasonal Worker Program.

I commend Minister Vowles' statement and am eager to continue working with him, the Northern Territory Government, our Chief Minister—whom I unequivocally support—and the dedicated residents of Katherine to continue to increase the horticultural industry, securing Katherine's future as the inland logistics hub of the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to speak after the Member for Katherine—her passion and advocacy for not only the seat of Katherine, but for the region, and her support of good government policy.

That was a great contribution, which I was able to learn significantly from.

I start by thanking the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources for bringing forward the opportunity to debate a statement in this House. It gives everybody in this place the opportunity to share and increase their education and awareness of the lifeblood of the Northern Territory, which historically has been so for over a century.

I also acknowledge the minister, because as a hard-working opposition member over those long four years he was always keen, ready and willing to get in a car to explore aspects of the Northern Territory to improve his awareness of this industry, the opportunities for the Northern Territory's economy and jobs. I had the privilege of hosting the minister in some of the best cattle growing country in the world, including some of the new agricultural pursuits in the Barkly, and celebrating some great achievements in minerals and resources.

The minister was willing to get dust on the boots and share in those experiences. I remember sitting at the Phillip Creek cattle station one afternoon with a lovely afternoon tea, and the host family were keen to get an opposition member at the table to share and inform. That elected community leader would then be able to make informed decisions, and there have been some great decisions and opportunities brought forward to the House for us to discuss.

There is no doubt this statement is linked to jobs. The pastoral sector and the minerals and resources sector offer lots of opportunity for Territory jobs, most importantly in our regional and remote areas. That is very special, because we have a young Territory population, and many of the initiatives the minister is working on and bringing forward will support all Territorians in regional and remote areas—Territorians who have been brought up in the bush and want to stay in the bush and be part of our economic development.

Having an association with the pastoral sector for about 40 years, it is interesting to tour the Northern Territory and the Barkly electorate, where I have seen areas come into new production that I have not seen in production for 30 years, but that represented the traditional harvest method of wild cattle. But there are other new areas I have never seen stocked. It is my continual warning to the constituents and any visitors who come through the Barkly: be very careful on our roads, because there are so many more cattle being produced in this region, supporting our economic development.

When we talk about how that change came about, if we are looking at new production areas and areas that have come back into production, we are talking about a lot of partnerships with traditional owners. A lot of these areas in the Barkly represent Aboriginal Lands Trust areas, where traditional owners have said they want to get a stake in the business for their young people, and they are staging this development.

The first cases over the last 10 to 15 years have been the granting of leases, but we have seen more innovative approaches to sharing the land resources to support an industry built on the back of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory—and now the opportunity of taking the new generation forward into what are significantly improved, more sophisticated and innovative management practices.

With supplemented feeding, better management regimes and improved water management we will see a lot of new areas come under production. We have a minister in the Northern Territory Government who is totally focused on support, and that has a direct link to jobs in that sector.

One example of an innovation around jobs in the pastoral sector is a small family that comes from an outstation in the middle of the Barkly Tablelands, the best cattle-growing area in the world. They have formed a company and over the last five or six years have some success in contract mustering.

That family, living on an outstation, has put together teams of young people—some coming from the towns and others living and working on the outstations—and they have put together a commercial outcome, a contract mustering business, which has been warmly welcomed by some of the biggest producers in the world on the Barkly Tablelands. Some of the biggest companies have been supportive of this contract mustering company and encourage that innovation and participation in the industry, once again growing the opportunities for Aboriginal people to have the chance to get into the pastoral sector, creating jobs and prosperity for the generations coming forward.

It is good to see a government that is coordinated, and works and plans together.

I acknowledge the Minister for Education. Coming back for the August sittings, I was proud to listen to her announcements about the Juno training centre.

The Juno training centre was a very smart move by the Department of Education, leasing 100 hectares of land just east of Tennant Creek. It was a horse farm and represents great memories for me. As a founding teacher of the alternative education program for secondary youth, we did a lot of work on Juno with the juvenile diversion program, preparing youth for entry into formal accredited training through Charles Darwin University's Katherine Campus. We achieved some great results there.

I then had a career change and that program unfortunately dropped away. We now have a Minister for Education who has literally rebirthed that program and opportunity. It reflects two important elements. One is an alternative pathway for students with high support needs. The second is a program that offers tangible educational opportunities that reflect, in most cases with Barkly youth, their family history in building the cattle industry of the Northern Territory.

This training centre will now be able to take crews locally from the Barkly as well as further afield from other regions back onto country—start that important accredited training needed to get a stakehold in the new, modern pastoral sector of the Northern Territory.

Thank you, minister. I look forward to you coming down to the Barkly to open that facility and then coming back to revisit the facility to see some of the success stories that will emerge through the Juno training centre for our kids, and kids beyond. We will share it with the rest of the Northern Territory, linking the pastoral sector and opportunities with jobs for young Territorians.

The minister talks about the Ali Curung watermelons, the Neutral Junction hay production and the Ti Tree farms. It has been good to work with the minister for Environment on water allocation plans to understand the important water resource throughout the Northern Territory.

In this case, I want to mention the Western Davenport aquifer. When the two ministers working together looked at this area of the Northern Territory—it represents the niche agricultural opportunity for us. You have heard the rhetoric about developing northern Australia—and we want to see significant movement from the federal government in support of the Territory government.

You have also heard the rhetoric about the food bowl of Asia. In opposition I spent a lot of time researching, attending forums and conferences, and it became clear from experts that a better way to go for northern Australia would be to concentrate on a high-value product. We do not have the resources to become the food bowl for China. That is proven in terms of empirical analysis of Northern Territory resources. We should get smart and focus on a high-end, high-value product that Asia is interested in for food security and to support their children, developing their full potential in the future. We have a product, and China and Southeast Asia present the market. Developing the north will make that happen.

We have great examples of that happening already in the Barkly. If anybody wants to eat the best watermelon in Australia, talk to Paul McLaughlin at the Ali Curung watermelon farm. Look at the program of two crops per year. One crop is sold in summer when there are a lot of other producers, but the second crop is sold

when there are very few producers from the south of the country where it is winter. Naturally, that resource comes in at greatly improved market value. That is just one example.

The hay production at Neutral Junction—there will be some positive announcements about that important agricultural sector at Ti Tree farms. This offers another niche agricultural opportunity for the Northern Territory—a smaller, more targeted agricultural project with a higher end, value added product that allows the opportunity for the creation of jobs in these regional areas. I am pleased the minister is focused on that. We travelled together in the great electorate I am privileged to represent, and we met a lot of good people and learned a lot together.

I remember one lesson we learned when sitting in the middle of a diverse agricultural project; there was chia, onions, pumpkins and watermelons growing side by side. One of the pieces of advice from this superb agriculturalist to two members of the opposition was that we should have a proactive approach to agricultural and horticultural development across the Northern Territory. Do not take the traditional line of being reactive to this industry; be proactive. Do the research, bring in post graduates from the south, link with the scientific community, look at what can be developed in the north and test it.

When we had an election and management changed hands, I then had the incredible opportunity to go back with the minister, who moved from being shadow minister to minister, to the area I represent to show me the trials of new mango species.

Paul McLaughlin at the Ali Curung watermelon farm has taken that advice, provided it to an opposition shadow Cabinet minister and come full circle with the minister, and now we are trialling this new research in the field. This is the culture of the agencies the minister is now leading, and that should be acknowledged.

It was good to listen to the Member for Katherine when she spoke about the resources the minister has lobbied for and been able to provide to the Northern Territory Farmers Association for a proactive research and development culture, as opposed to the traditional reactive industry.

A couple of weeks ago I was legging it to get home. I had overstayed my daylight hours and was in the dark, crossing the overpass west of the Bootu Creek mine and saw some strange lights. I was not near Wycliffe and the alien invasion—that is a story for another day—so I was surprised. I slowed down to take a second look, and it was a road train travelling back to the mine under the underpass, which represented that Bootu Creek is back in production. That is a supply chain moving high grade manganese from the mine site to the rail head spur line. It will be railed north, stockpiled at the Port of Darwin and then travel overseas. That also reflects a bit of improvement in the steel industry through Asia. You cannot start a blast furnace without Australian manganese, in this case to complement the iron ore.

It was nice to see that because I had stopped there a couple of times before and witnessed a couple of triples going in with mining equipment. The talk in Tennant Creek was that Bootu was gearing up to start. The minister also advised me he was watching closely and would keep me informed of any developments, and here was a road train heading back to the mine site to stock up and reload.

Well done, Bootu. Once again, that is a direct link with jobs at Tennant Creek and the wider region. It is a direct link with traditional owners and a partnership going forward to make sure a valuable Northern Territory resource is managed and distributed well—and the supply chain logistics going to the top of the Northern Territory provides jobs every step of the way.

Emmerson Resources also needs a mention. I thank the minister for his time and effort in meeting with Emmerson a number of times over the last couple of years. He mentioned that memorable occasion with the Chief Minister, who has a pioneering family history in the area of commissioning a gold mine—the first new mine in the Tennant Creek area in around 12 years.

It is high-grade gold. It is a great opportunity and was a wonderful occasion. As the Chief Minister says, it is a real tester in what is coming forward, that is, the opportunity to start to look at mining these high-grade tenements across a significant field in the Barkly.

When we look at the old technology, old mining practices and the old recovery rates, Emmerson has proved, with its new, highly sophisticated exploration technology, that there are still mineral resources in these areas. It can be easily mined, which opens up a plethora of opportunities across not only high-grade gold, but copper, bismuth, cobalt and magnetite. That is the mineralisation of this legendary field—but I draw the minister's attention to the opportunity of tailings, as we have four decades of tailings that surround Tennant Creek and are full of those minerals.

Look at the new technologies, with cobalt and its uses; its price is astronomical. There are great opportunities with regard to tailings and incorporating the process of that into the new mining ventures that will take place.

One thing that got the minister stamped into the Tennant Creek psyche was his announcement that he had secured the support of government to look at an investigative study of a common mill, a processing facility. That will support this industry, and I am keen to work with the minister on that.

I have some more introductions to make of other pioneering families in the district that have a great handle on the opportunity for tailings and how new mineral resources can come together to provide important jobs for the Barkly.

Once again, minister, thank you for bringing this opportunity to the House. Coming from the Barkly, which is the bread basket of minerals, resources and energy in the Northern Territory—we can now add those wonderful opportunities in relation to agriculture, the discovery of those arable lands west of Tennant Creek, and the Wiso aquifer and its potential.

Do not be surprised by how many people listen to what we say in here, how many industry representatives are focused on what we say, and the great outcomes that can be produced.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, as per usual, I will start with a story. I grew up on a cattle station, and in the early 1970s I worked on the stock camp as a young kid—I was only born in 1968—and I was around adult Aboriginal stockman who ran the stock camp. We were on a cattle station which was 2200 square miles—I do not know what that is in acres as they are too small for me. That was a significant sized station. It had about 45 watering points plus natural watering points; it was a big place.

The technology used at the time was horses. When I was a child we updated immensely in technology, and the stock camp trailer was pulled by a tractor instead of the stock camp packs being carried on mules. This is a time in my living memory.

Technology of production in the pastoral, horticultural, mining and extraction industries in the Northern Territory has changed a lot. Keeping on the lines of that story, camp trailer is how you travelled around. I spent a lot of time on the back of the stock camp trailer when I was a young child with lots of Aboriginal people that I grew up with—the Anmatyerr language group. We then progressed to riding the horses, often riding them from one camp to another. There were about 20 stockmen in these camps and you would have around 120 horses in hand at any one time. I spent a lot of time with the horse trailer going from one place to another, tailing the horses.

Things changed a lot. This is the period after equal wages and all of those things had happened—by the way, it is the anniversary of Freedom Day—and after the stand made by Vincent Lingiari at Wave Hill resulting in the Wave Hill walk off. Aboriginal people were still actively involved in the pastoral industry; why are they now not involved? There are all sorts of interesting questions on that. One of them is on technological change.

The stock camp was very much like I said until about 1975–76. Around that time there was a government policy introduced called BTEC—the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign—eradicating tuberculosis and brucellosis from the herd in Australia. It meant places had to be mustered clear and bangtailed. You had to provide evidence to stock inspectors that all your stock had been through the yard and tested for these diseases. How you do that is with a bangtail. This is when you cut off the free hair on the end of the tail so that when you see a beast it is obvious if it has been mustered or not.

To do this you needed to be able to muster cattle quickly, and that opportunity was not there with the relaxed lifestyle. It was a brilliant way of doing business, but it was not possible to do things that quickly. This is when we started helicopter mustering in the Northern Territory. Helicopter mustering is now done with a different aircraft but Hughes was the helicopter of the time. This was an amazing revelation for a young kid on a station with these helicopters coming in to muster cattle. How did you muster cattle then? With helicopters, bull-catchers and wing fences made out of hessian and portable yards; it became highly mechanised.

We then needed a lot more control of herds and put up a lot more fences. We went from free-ranging cattle to having a lot more managed paddocks around bores, a one square kilometre paddock adjacent to the bore, and then the bores fenced off from one another. When you wanted to handle cattle, either to truck them, brand them or do something else, you would simply close trap gates at a yard. No labour.

You would close the trap gates; the cattle would go in for a drink and then be released to the one square kilometre holding paddock, and then you would handle the cattle when you needed to, often within portable yards. You did not tail cattle anymore. Some people still used horses, but not those massive stock camps.

Technology changes all the time. How do you make your workforce resilient to technology change? Education.

My key point in that story is we have to ensure that our locally available workforce is resilient, flexible and not focused on a single way of doing business. That is the age of technological change we all live in. It is present everywhere.

As the minister stated, Primary Industry and Resources is a critical portfolio in the Northern Territory for its economy, particularly in rural and remote areas in the electorate of Stuart, which is noteworthy for its northern rivers, abundant fish, productive pastoral industry, long-established mining and gas sectors, and developing horticulture, agriculture and aquaculture industries.

All these areas bring with them their own innovative technologies and are underpinned by science and best practice, both in land and sea management. Thus jobs in these industries are not the jobs of old. The jobs of the present and the future require mastery of digital technology, complex problem solving, remote monitoring, cross-cultural and often international relationship brokering.

When I say we need to ensure that Indigenous land and labour is participating in the Territory's economy and the primary industry and resources economy, I am not talking about just picking melons or mustering cattle. Again, referring to some of that old language, it is not a time for Indigenous people to be involved in the wood-and-water joey positions. That means people who are doing the basic-level jobs. We respect everyone in every part of the workforce, but to expect only Indigenous people to do those jobs is short-sighted.

We need Indigenous people integrated into every aspect and layer of this economy, from senior management on boards to managing directors and being involved in the technological and other innovations that are required. We need to make sure we have vertical integration of the Indigenous workforce in this economy. It is very important.

I refer to the fact those stock camps I grew up on were predominantly run by Indigenous people, although there were sometimes non-Indigenous people around. They have the capacity to be involved in these things. We need to be talking about that equity of opportunity and how we drive it. We need equity in education and infrastructure, particularly in communications infrastructure, but also roads and those types of infrastructure. We have to deliver those things to the four corners of the Territory. It is the reason we are here.

Today we require skills in science, research and technology to allow the Territory to compete internationally in these industries. We require the best education for Territory kids to allow them to compete and win these jobs in these industries. This requires a real understanding and willingness to fund research in the Territory. This is why the Arid Zone Research Institute in Alice Springs is important. This is where the Desert Knowledge Precinct in Alice Springs could play a far greater role.

Not many people know much about Desert Knowledge Australia in Alice Springs. It is an important piece of infrastructure with buildings and roads. By the way, it has a good cafe with good coffee. It is an important piece of infrastructure, but we forget about the human capital and potential of these places. It is not just about the built infrastructure; it is about the people, the things that are in it—that connection.

It frustrates me that Desert Knowledge Australia is a resource that is begging. I was a manager for a long period of my working life, and my management style has always been based on innovation, looking to use the resources that are available. I have never been a person who wants to sit around and squeal for more resources. It is not about more resources; it is about more equity in the way those resources are used and spread around the Territory.

Desert Knowledge Australia has the potential to be much more important in the future of the Northern Territory than it is. I have these debates with my colleagues regularly. I know I have the support of the Member for Namatjira in prosecuting this.

Interestingly, Desert Knowledge Australia is an act of this parliament. It is an institution controlled by the government of the Northern Territory. It has an interesting board structure that requires the chairperson or deputy chairperson to be an Indigenous person. It allows for representation from interstate governments like

Western Australia and Queensland. It has the potential to represent industries well. I would like to see a governing committee at Desert Knowledge Australia that is a tripartite board that represents Indigenous land interests, major commercial stakeholders in horticulture, agriculture and government.

That tripartite board could be an important tool in increasing Indigenous land and labour participation in the economy, particularly in Central Australia, but not just Central Australia.

It is unfortunate that we have lost a number of scientists and research projects recently from the Northern Territory. These appear to have been cut back on all sides at a time when science is more important than ever. CSIRO has been significantly eroded in the Northern Territory, but many other key players in scientific pursuits in Central Australia have also suffered cuts.

It is not a simple matter to turn around the loss of intellectual and corporate knowledge when it occurs in a long-running research program. You cannot just get it back; it is difficult. We require intense investment in science, technology and research and need to ensure that all these industries develop in an environmentally sustainable way.

We will require cutting-edge science and technology to simply remain competitive. We have to fight for the funding we already have which is supporting the development of the Northern Territory. We have to underpin our industries and be adopting new technology all the time.

VISITORS
Dr Iain Spiers

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Stuart, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the partner of the Member for Katherine in the gallery with us this afternoon, Dr Iain Spiers. Welcome, and I hope you are enjoying the debate.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr McCONNELL: We have to work hard to stay where we are. Let us not ever get complacent. We have to work and innovate.

Innovation that has been developed on the Desert Knowledge Precinct, together with Ninti One and other partners, including the good minister's resources, is something I am interested in. It has been produced by a company called Precision Pastoral.

Precision Pastoral is looking at developing automated herd management using cutting edge technology. This is something I will probably talk more about at another time. We are talking about automated cattle drafting, monitoring grass and its nutrient quality using satellite technology, and linking those things with algorithms to work out when you are getting the best value of your cattle.

You are looking for your herd to put on 1.5 kilograms per day—is it meeting that? Do you have adequate grass in the paddocks for the number of stock you have or can you move that stock?

We have to increase the productive value of pastoral land in the Northern Territory and manage the environmental impact. The best way to do that is with new technology. That is where you gain efficiencies. You can run more cattle but still have the same or perhaps less environmental impact. That is why technology is so important.

We need to prepare Territory kids for these jobs of the future. Indigenous children who currently come from communities of unemployment or underemployment need access to education which supports them in these industries. Beyond the classroom, schools and industry players should be developing links to ensure students can see clear pathways to jobs through an apprenticeship, traineeship, further education or work experience.

I had the pleasure of discussing those methodologies informally with the Minister for Education recently. We want to adapt our modern education methodologies to better represent some of those things that happened in the old stock camps I spoke about, which we hung around as young kids. We learned as much as we could—and we learned more as we got bigger and more involved. As we grew into our teens we understood more about what was going on. That is an important learning skill that is relevant to Indigenous people.

The pastoral industry in Central Australia has developed off the back of Indigenous labour. The industry has, at times, treated Indigenous labour poorly, and that is well documented. It is interesting that Indigenous people in Central Australia with a pastoral background still strongly connect with that history. They are a ready resource to be involved in the expected boom of the pastoral industry.

The pastoral industry in the Northern Territory is doing the best it ever has. The opportunity now is to look at bringing more pastoral land into production, and a lot of that land is in the Indigenous estate. We want to work collaboratively and cooperatively with Indigenous interests, land councils and other Indigenous bodies, and I know the Gunner Labor Government will do that.

We can do it and we need to do it. We need to grow pastoral production, and I am looking forward to seeing Indigenous-held land brought back into the productive side of the economy. I get tired of hearing the Indigenous debate being almost entirely in the deficit space.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCONNELL: I reiterate my disappointment—the Commonwealth's Community Development Program, known as CDP, is a real problem in communities in Stuart and the wider Northern Territory. It is bad, punitive policy. It is not progressive, it will not help and it will not get people re-engaged in the workforce. It is making people resent the system even more.

I agree that a welfare income is one where there is a mutual obligation that it is taxpayers' money and there is an expectation that the welfare is used well and the person builds their capacity. But capacity is not built by engaging people in punitive management and treating people like they are engaged in some type of adult childcare system where they are forced to do these menial tasks.

We need to empower people with opportunity, optimism and excitement. I do not want to talk collectively about Indigenous people too much because, like the rest of us, they are individuals. But I know from experience that Indigenous people are excited about things if you explain future opportunities. You do not demonstrate those opportunities by punitive actions.

Rather than rubbish what people are doing, there are some really good examples of different ways of doing it. We would be better served by a program such as the one previously provided through CDP conversion funding in the Northern Territory jobs package, where CDEP positions—the old fashioned program, with the employment bit in it—were converted into subsidised jobs with a number of employers across the Northern Territory.

I can refer you to my previous role as the CEO of Ingkerreke Outstations Resource Services, which was one of those places that experienced that CDEP transition. It was delivered particularly well. Funding was provided to the outstation resource agency to convert these previous CDEP jobs that had been abolished to normal wage and salary jobs. The conditions were that you employed a local Indigenous person on the appropriate hourly rate. That was a great initiative that we could look at a lot more. Our remote communities could benefit from having more available labour that is paid a proper wage. That would help regional councils, aged care, arts centres, ranger groups and all sorts of other organisations.

If we could use that methodology to engage more labour in the productive workforce, people in those bridging positions will be the ones who go into much more productive work, such as for the neighbouring pastoral property or the mining or horticultural developments nearby.

Let us look more at how being punitive is a waste of time. We are trying to work with people who we want to be productive. We have to work in that positive space. I want to see a lot more of that.

Returning to the statement, I acknowledge the minister's enthusiasm about the linkages between Indigenous marine rangers and data collection and analysis. It is great that the scientific and technical capacity of Indigenous rangers is being developed and that two Indigenous apprentices are now undertaking apprenticeships with the department. That is really exciting news.

The best way to engage with Indigenous people—in my humble view and experience—is to acknowledge them for their skills. Indigenous people excel in ranger groups. We respect that Indigenous people have intrinsic knowledge about land management. We respect that there are things Indigenous people can tell the

mainstream environmental management community. That is why Indigenous people like to engage in ranger groups and why they are so successful.

Another example under the Member for Barkly's portfolio responsibilities is the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service. People love to work for the interpreter service because it respects their knowledge of language. What I find interesting is, Aboriginal people in the interpreter service are willing to be engaged in the structured way the program works with accreditation and that type of thing. It is great to see. There are many more opportunities to do things like that.

Why do I keep referring to Indigenous people all the time when this is a wider statement about the Northern Territory? Is it because I am not adequately recognising the contributions of non-Indigenous people to the Northern Territory, or is because of something else? No, it is not. I recognise that non-Indigenous people have committed a lot to the Northern Territory and are responsible for a lot of development here. I talk about Indigenous people so much because there is the opportunity to engage with them. Many of those people are not currently engaged in the productive side of the economy.

Yes, I acknowledge the need to negotiate with the Commonwealth about the 457 visas, other specialist visas and geographic visa arrangements. But while we are doing that we need to always have—and I believe this government does—an eye on the fact that we want to increase Indigenous participation in the productive workforce.

It is the same thing with the backpacker tax. We need backpackers in the Northern Territory. We especially need backpackers in picking mangoes and melons at the melon farm. We need backpackers to be involved in our economy as they are an important part of it. Our current producers have been significantly disadvantaged by ill-informed policy changes by the Commonwealth recently. Let us keep our watching brief to get Indigenous people engaged in these things as well. I am always looking to government to ask what we are doing to get Indigenous people involved.

Some of the initiatives we have that are important—Minister Moss has recently announced competitive funding for ranger groups on Indigenous land. That is the first significant funding from the Northern Territory government to support Indigenous ranger groups. The minister and the leadership of the Gunner Labor government deserve credit for that. That significant amount of money will contribute to Indigenous people being more excited about working in industries they want to work in.

I note there are numerous major projects coming up in the great electorate of Stuart. There is Project Sea Dragon and numerous other developments within the electorate of Stuart that will only be successful if they engage Indigenous people in the productive side of the economy.

The future of the Northern Territory will be driven by Indigenous land and labour participating in the economy with equity. I look forward to that future.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, as you all know, I represent the amazing electorate of Arnhem. I am fortunate to have within my electorate the Jabiru Ranger mine; the re-establishing Mount Todd Gold Mine, just north of Katherine; and the well-known Groote Eylandt GEMCO and South32 mines.

Mines have played a large part of history in the Northern Territory across the Top End, right down to the central desert. They also have been a fundamental step into employment, particularly for those in remote and regional parts of the Northern Territory.

As Minister Vowles said in his statement:

Primary Industry and Resources ... covers a variety of industries ranging from aquaculture and commercial and recreational fishing to pastoralism and agriculture to mineral exploration, mining and petroleum. These industries are fundamental to the jobs and development across the Territory, particularly in rural and remote areas.

First, to fishing. As we heard from my colleague, the Member for Brennan, this is a popular way of life in the Northern Territory. Commercial and recreational fishing in the Top End is a valued income earner and pastime for Territorians.

Member for Brennan, I hope to hear in future more 'tales from Tony'. My electorate is home to the mighty Roper River, which is well-known and appreciated by locals and visitors alike, especially when coming

through the region or staying and living in the region. It is beautiful in the Dry Season and deadly in the Wet. The importance of environmental sustainability of the Roper River has an impact in the region.

Many people may be aware there is large-scale construction and infrastructure now being placed on the Roper. We have a high level bridge which is near completion across the Roper, and a high-level bridge that has already been constructed and will be opening towards the end of year across the Wilton River. This will, in turn, add to the economy in the Roper region, particularly access in the Wet Season for community locals as well as visitors. We will see how that impacts the area. I think it will be very popular. It is a very welcomed, long-awaited commitment from government to have that area safely accessible, especially in the Wet. The Roper River rises many metres above the water and cuts off people for many months of the year.

The minister mentioned the popular Million Dollar Fish competition, which continues to grow excitement among Territorians and visitors in regard to catching the much talked about golden barra. I remember the Million Dollar Fish competition was first launched when I was living at Numbulwar. I remember seeing a small map on the shop noticeboard and many locals speaking excitedly about where the barra had been released. People were in the shop buying fishing lines, sinkers and hooks and then sitting for days on the front of the Numbulwar beach and up the Rose River. They were going out on boats when they could to try to be the winner and catch the million-dollar fish. I think they would have been very happy to be a \$10 000 winner as well. Even as far as remote isolated communities, the Million Dollar Fish competition is very well received. It was wonderful to see that excitement and activity, and to see it continuing on under our government.

Fishing tourism is also a current and future opportunity in regards to Indigenous economic development on Aboriginal land.

The minister mentioned two important areas that I represent, which are Arnhem and Groote Eylandt. The possibility of expanding the fishing industry on remote coastlines, driven by people in remote communities, is an exciting idea which I welcome.

The government supports sustainable development of commercial fisheries and aquaculture, and is doing extensive work to support this. This work was indicated by the minister in his statement and I am excited about the possibilities for the coastline of the electorate I represent.

The minister mentioned there have been recent amendments to the *Fisheries Act* which simplify and streamline the licensing system. The minister stated:

A special permit has been issued to explore the commercial viability of sea cucumber resources outside of the areas of the current Trepang Fishery. Information generated under the permit will inform future management decisions for the fisheries.

It is exciting that the sea cucumber ranching industry is set to expand. As the minister mentioned, trials are under way on Goulburn Island. I am also excited by this possibility because on Groote Eylandt, at Umbakumba and across some of the small homelands, they are already developing and trying the idea of sea cucumber farming.

It is wonderful that that region of the Northern Territory has a long history of trading with the Makassans from Indonesia, who used to come across and trade cloth, tobacco and artefacts with the local people across southeast and northeast Arnhem Land. This tradition of trading happened for many years. There were intermarriages, and I believe there were some very brave people from the region who ended up living in Indonesia. There are traces of the family history back there.

My family, the Red Flag Dancers from Numbulwar—some of the cloth that was traded, the story of the anchor and the trading of binoculars and setting sails with the canoes was a part of the history with the Makassans across the waters. It is a wonderful history and it is amazing to see this coming almost full circle. Something that was traded many years ago is now becoming a viable business and may become a strong economic development for Aboriginal people living on the coast. I am excited to see that development and am interested to see how it develops across the years that we are in government.

A revamped Aboriginal coastal licence is now available to assist Indigenous coastal communities in developing the small-scale fisheries to supply local, fresh seafood. The minister mentioned the recent success in Maningrida, where a local indigenous fishing enterprise that employs local people and provides affordable fresh and healthy fish for sale in Maningrida has been established.

I am excited to hear this as next week I am going to Maningrida for my very first visit. It will be exciting to hear and see that process in person, but also talk to the residents of Maningrida on the success and challenges they have had to overcome to have this industry set up in their community.

The minister mentioned that the excess fish is being sold to the Darwin Fish Market, so people who live far from Maningrida can still enjoy Maningrida fish. Head to your local Darwin Fish Market to enjoy the wonderful fresh seafood, locally caught and distributed. It is a wonderful success story and I thank the minister for sharing that in his statement.

The minister mentioned the Indigenous marine training program which is established in Nhulunbuy, in North East Arnhem Land. As I understand, this training program has had Indigenous training coordinators employed to work and link with Nhulunbuy High School and registered training organisations in the area.

The aim is to facilitate the delivery of the seafood industry, business and marine ranger training to Indigenous Territorians. Targeting our youth is a wonderful way of ensuring these skills are developed and provide real jobs for young Territorians, whether they are Indigenous or not, in their regions so they get a slice of the action and do something they love. Doing something you love and get paid for is rare, and it is wonderful to have that opportunity for our young people in the Nhulunbuy region.

As a former educator, I was pleased to hear the minister say there are 47 students who have successfully completed their Certificate II in Fishing Operations since March 2016. The course the minister mentioned is a nationally accredited seafood industry skills training course, which has already been held in Nhulunbuy, Wadeye and Maningrida.

As I mentioned, my visit to Maningrida next week will be wonderful. I will be visiting the school with the Minister for Education and it will be nice to see the impact in that community—we are looking at targeting young people and their opportunities for employment, living and working in their communities. It will be wonderful to visit and see for myself some of the great stories in the Top End of the Territory. I am interested to get the local feedback on these type of programs as I would love to see what can be developed and rolled out in the electorate of Arnhem, as we have some beautiful places for fishing.

I hope that in the near future I will be able to host Minister Vowles in the amazing electorate of Arnhem to showcase some of the success stories and explore some untapped potential in the region. Minister Vowles loves that region so it will be wonderful when I get to host him and he can see for himself what locals are talking about in the primary and resources industry and the potential for remote economic development.

I have heard the Chief Minister and Minister Vowles speak on numerous occasions about Katherine being an important transport and logistics hub in the region. There is that word again—hub—which we are not afraid to use. The Member for Katherine is very excited and is happy to be using that word when describing the potential in the Katherine region as well as what is already there and what will be developed in the future under a Labor government. I am very excited about that.

I am a Katherine resident, so it is wonderful to see this focus on development in Katherine as a region—not just the town itself, but around the region—and the potential for future development in the agrifoods and agricultural business. I am interested to see what will come into fruition under our government.

I was interested when the minister mentioned that a draft master plan has been workshopped with NT Farmers. The minister mentioned a range of agreed priorities, such as an agribusiness infrastructure roadmap, which I would be interested to learn more about; robotics in horticulture; and the barramundi sashimi testing. I was jealous when I saw the launch with my colleagues, Minister Vowles and the Members for Fong Lim and Port Darwin—exciting news that this barramundi testing may be a hit in interstate and international markets.

Minister Vowles, when you next do your barramundi taste testing, please invite me along. I will be very happy to give you my local opinion and endorse any fish from the Territory that will be travelling to interstate or international markets. I am happy to hear that news and the industry will be excited about the potential of what can be achieved by having that export from the Northern Territory. It is wonderful news for the NT.

Another point in the master plan that I was interested in was the freezing technology and food processing. The reason this caught my interest was the potential of native bush foods from across the Northern Territory that could be included in this opportunity. As an example, the very famous Kakadu plum has the potential to grow even more so in Australia-wide and international markets. It will be interesting to see what happens in that area.

I have many large pastoralist stations in the Arnhem electorate, and I am acutely aware of the hard work that cattle farmers and their families put in to keep this important industry alive. The lifestyle of our pastoralists can be tough—enduring extremely harsh environments from the heat in the Dry to the Wet and the flooding. Working the land is a challenge anywhere in the world, and the Northern Territory is no exception. Our pastoralists muster up the strength, day by day, to make this industry a success.

I heard mention in the minister's statement of livestock export and the government's commitment to the NT Livestock Exporters' Association to provide support for continual improvements in the handling and transport of cattle through the live export chain. I was also pleased to hear the minister mention the potential for buffalo export.

I have some communities in the Arnhem electorate which may be well placed to develop and sustain their slice of the buffalo industry pie. It is important that we, the government, work closely with traditional owners and land councils in supporting remote Aboriginal Territorians to develop economic strategies on their own land in order to create jobs and keep the profits of businesses in their own communities and regions.

During October Business Month, the Indigenous Economic Development Forum will be held in Darwin at the Convention Centre on Monday 23 and Tuesday 24 October.

I attended my first IEDF two years ago in Alice Springs, when I was a member of the First Circles program. I was pleasantly surprised by the number of Indigenous businesses that were showcased at the forum; the diversity struck me. Aboriginal Territorians and people who have moved to the Northern Territory are diversified in the areas of Indigenous economic development, so it was wonderful to see the array of businesses, from fishing tours to camps, cattle stations, dress and fabric makers, natural soaps, beauty product makers and graphic designers. They were all Indigenous businesses in the Territory.

I encourage anyone who is interested to register and apply for the Indigenous Economic Development Forum, which will be held in Darwin in October. I hope to attend and learn as much as I can, especially how we, as a government, can support those businesses. My focus, as the local Member for Arnhem, will be to look at examples of successful local businesses that would be able to mentor or establish enterprises within my electorate. We have the potential for expanding the buffalo industry, fishing licensing, bush and native foods, bush medicines and beauty products made naturally. Art is another example of the industries we can grow.

The cattle and buffalo industries stand out because of the size of the electorate and the space we have—the potential for traditional owners to be part of that conversation and say what they see fit for their land, as well as government's perspective in supporting them to create and develop businesses which will be sustainable and provide employment in communities. We do not want the terrible habit of having contractors coming in and taking the economy out of the electorate. I am very interested to hear the conversations that will come from that economic development forum.

It is important that we, as a government, deliver ongoing prosperity to Territorians. The primary and resources industries can help prosper the Northern Territory, which we all know and love.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I commend the statement to the House.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I am very thankful for the opportunity to speak today on this very important matter. Whilst my electorate has no water around it and no running rivers, I very much appreciate and acknowledge the hard-working people in the fisheries and recognise their importance in their contributions to the Northern Territory economy. Unfortunately, there will not be a great deal about that in the remainder of my speech, but I take the opportunity to acknowledge them up front.

Horticulture, agriculture, fisheries and forestry are very dear to the people of Namatjira, and in my opinion they have the potential to change the face of the Northern Territory. It is my intention to ensure that Central Australian primary industries have a strong voice in this parliament to highlight their issues and continue the commonsense and practical policy work needed to ensure effective delivery.

I will be working as hard as I can with the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources to support our primary industries. That means working with all major industry groups and stakeholders to do our bit to help them reach their full potential, because we have great potential for growth in the Territory.

I believe it was never realised under the previous CLP government. I acknowledge there was an intention to do some work in the area of primary industry by the previous government, and that resulted in a number of

water licences being issued to people. Unfortunately, it is those water licences that drowned the CLP. But I will not hold on there, I have much better things to talk about for Territorians.

As a local member I travel through my electorate, meeting with industry groups, families on the land, and rural and remote communities to take on board their issues and concerns, and their future vision for primary industries.

I grew up on the land. The grounding I received in cattle, livestock and horticulture industries stands me in good stead to speak on these issues in this Chamber. I have no hesitation in saying that I love the bush. My electorate of Namatjira is the third largest electorate in the Northern Territory, so it is no surprise that it is home to many primary industries that underpin hundreds of local jobs and businesses, and home to many hard-working cattle stations, horticultural projects and so much more.

I take the opportunity to talk about the great work happening in the electorate of Namatjira and in Alice Springs, in the bush foods market. We need to understand that there is great potential across the Primary Industry and Resources and Tourism and Culture portfolios to work with our local producers in bush foods to fully understand the potential the market has for people in Central Australia and the greater Northern Territory.

It is a high-end niche market product that allows for horticultural production of bush harvest to be undertaken so that we are able to deliver a number of products to market while continuing to have a niche market for bush foods—organically harvested produce. Whilst being able to supply market with horticulturally produced bush foods, there are a number of projects across the Northern Territory that have been undertaken previously by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre into the domestication of bush foods and how we can grow that market.

Many people coming to the Northern Territory and coming to the country want an experience where they are able to taste and see bush foods. I look forward to working with local groups throughout the Northern Territory to make sure we can continue to grow the bush foods industry and market.

As the Members for Stuart and Arnhem have stated, there is an opportunity in the Northern Territory to work with traditional owners and communities to look at how we can engage them to work on these horticultural projects to grow their own bush tucker. They are best placed to grow bush harvest. They know how to grow these products. They know the seasons and they know how to use natural techniques that have been handed down for generations to propagate products, clear the ground and replenish the soil. These are all done in the traditional method. I look forward to supporting and growing that area.

I will focus now on a number of exciting projects being undertaken in Central Australia, especially in the electorate of Namatjira.

An expression of interest for the Arid Zone Research Institute has been issued, and the Northern Territory Government is providing opportunities to increase horticultural and economic development in Alice Springs and the region through leasing the land for more commercial horticultural projects.

We know this has been successful in the past. For many years the Arid Zone Research Institute was home to a number of varieties of rare fruit trees, pistachios and olives. It has proven that these types of foods can be grown in the region and do quite well.

The expression of interest has been invited to develop horticultural enterprises using 30 hectares of land and recycled water at the Arid Zone Research Institute near Alice Springs. The recycled water is treated and pumped into what was an empty aquifer so we are able to replenish and reuse the water while being environmentally considerate of the climate.

The Department of Primary Industry and Resources' Central Australian horticultural manager, Mr Stuart Smith, has stated that they are looking for proponents to put forward regarding innovation and market-tested proposals that respond to the objectives of the expression of interest.

The use of recycled water and proximity to Alice Springs makes this a fantastic opportunity for a new horticultural venture. The land is suitable for the production of high value crops such as table grapes, dates, melons, vegetables, herbs, native bush foods, stone fruits, citrus, pomegranate et cetera.

In a previous role I was with the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre and one of our projects was the commercialisation of the native bush tomato. There is a high market on the east coast for this product.

For a period we used the Arid Zone Research Institute site to grow *solanum centrale*, the bush tomato, and look at a range of exciting techniques to commercialise bush harvest.

Speaking from a personal experience, the site has a proven track record to be able to deliver the market demands of bush foods. The site still houses a number of well-established, rare varieties of date palms, which is also important.

I will get back to the expression of interest. It saw proposals from interested parties to licence the land to undertake development that will grow the existing horticultural industry in Central Australia and provide improvements to support the use and development of land for irrigated horticulture, as well as provide opportunities for local industry.

A number of local business owners in Central Australia are already working in that space. We have the local lettuce farm which produces a number of quality lettuces to our major supermarkets, Coles and Woolworths. Ali Curung provides a quarter of the watermelons to the east coast of the country. This is another illustration of the great work and potential of Central Australia in being a hub of innovation and excellence in how we can harness desert knowledge and make sure we can communicate, not only to the rest of this nation but around the world, that this exciting work can be translated to many other nations of the globe.

The successful enterprise will use the recycled water through the Alice reuse project, which uses a combination of water treatment and storage initiatives to recycle wastewater. Shortlisted proponents were asked for detailed development proposals with a closing date of 14 August. We are looking forward to looking at those proposals.

The Arid Zone Research Institute is currently undertaking a rockmelon trial. The rockmelon planting project is conducted with two Indigenous apprentices. The Minister for Primary Industry and Resources spoke about the positive results we are seeing with the rockmelon crop. It is fantastic to see two Indigenous apprentices back onsite at the Arid Zone Research Institute, learning about horticulture and agriculture and the importance it has in sustainability in Alice Springs, remote communities and on outstations.

A number of outstations in the electorate of Namatjira, particularly in the Utopia/Arparra region, do a lot of work with Arid Edge, an organisation that grows gardens. Arid Edge has community gardens on outstations, proving you can grow a number of introduced plants in Central Australia. They grow well.

We went out there for a community Caucus and community Cabinet not long ago. I was able to show some of my parliamentary colleagues that while you might be 300 kilometres from Alice Springs, you can grow mulberry trees, grapes, dates, oranges, mandarins, tomatoes and carrots. It is very impressive.

I congratulate Arid Edge for the work it is doing on those outstations and homelands. It is very exciting. Indigenous apprentices working on the AZRI site, once they have finished their apprenticeships, are able to look at taking up employment opportunities outside of the Arid Zone Research Institute. Should they wish to return to their community or their home, they can set up their own enterprise or work with the local community to establish those necessary community gardens on country. We know the best way to get food nutrition for people in bush communities is to grow your own and have the supply there. Freight is expensive when you are in regional and remote parts of the country.

Growing your own is a good way of doing things. A number of my communities have grown watermelons, rockmelons and pumpkins, and they donate them to the community, so it provides a nutrition program as well.

The rockmelons were planted to wake up the soil at AZRI in preparation to put in citrus. It is important in a horticultural sense to constantly replenish the soil when changing your crops. This is another great incentive that the young Indigenous apprentices will be part of.

Horticulture makes a strong economic contribution to Central Australia in a number of ways. There are a number of outstanding organisations and businesses in Central Australia's horticultural industry. I look forward to working with them and continuing to make sure we have a bright future for horticulture in Central Australia. As someone who has come out with qualifications in horticulture and conservation and land management, I understand the importance of this industry and the need to continue to grow and develop it.

The minister mentioned the published prospectus, Investing in the Horticultural Growth of Central Australia. I welcome that document, which was recently released. It promotes and supports new opportunities and the diversification of crops in Central Australia and looks at what has grown well historically. Look at these new

trending foods coming in; can you grow quinoa and kale and other types of superfoods in Central Australia? That is one of the many things we need to identify if they are able to occur.

Developing horticultural agribusinesses in Central Australia is a key economic development driver for us. The prospectus aims to encourage new business and create local jobs, and offers advice and opportunity to new investors. For people who have been in Central Australia for a number of years, quite often this is spoken about—getting into business and industry. It can be scary for many people, especially those who have been there for generations and have seen businesses come and go, and businesses fall.

The prospectus looks at how we can best engage with people who are considering coming into the horticultural industry and market, providing a business opportunity for them and jobs for Territorians—how we can do it best, how we can support them and how we can attract people to invest in Central Australia to keep it heading in the right direction and continue growing and delivering.

This is a great opportunity to grow Central Australia. Several investors are looking at Central Australia and what crops can come in or might need a bit more work. The prospectus covers all water control districts in Central Australia, including Alice Springs, Ti Tree, Western Davenport, Tennant Creek, and the Great Artesian Basin, which is in the southeast corner of my electorate. It details information on the climate conditions, water quality and availability, and it looks at the advantages of Central Australia's potential crops, key infrastructure and land tenure.

It is a very exciting project. The prospectus was developed in Central Australia by the horticultural development team in consultation with the Central Australian Development Office. This prospectus is owned by the Central Australian community. They have provided input. It has not been bringing some deadly person in to tell us what will be good for us; it has come from the local community and that expertise and knowledge base.

There are two major horticultural enterprises in Central Australia. One of those is the Desert Springs melons at Ali Curung. I have had the pleasure of going there; it is fantastic. The quality of the watermelons ...

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43 I request an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: It is a great business. The watermelons are huge. It provides about a third of the watermelons to the east coast, and they are looking at diversifying their crops for different seasons.

A fantastic and outstanding business in the electorate of Namatjira is Rocky Hill Table Grapes in Alice Springs. They have some really good grapes. Richie Hayes is a true-blue Territorian. He is a hard-worker. It is a great business that is looking at a number of crops. It contributes to the Alice Springs economy and is a vital source of jobs for people in Central Australia.

The prospectus is available on the website, so have a look at that. Last year Richie Hayes produced 1000 tonnes of table grapes. At \$3 to \$4 a kilogram, that is worth \$3m to \$4m—another organisation in Namatjira that delivers.

The Undoolya Station—Benny Hayes, a true-blue legend. One thousand tonnes of beef a year at \$1.50 to \$1.80 a kilogram is \$1.5m to \$1.8m. That is a great business.

The grapes are grown on 70 hectares and the beef are grazed on 140 000 hectares. The Hayes family are a local family who have been in Central Australia for a number of years. They took over the Undoolya Station in 1906–07. It is just east of Alice Springs, not far from my home. The knowledge and expertise on cattle production and growing grapes—they could sit there all day and talk to you about it.

We have pilot programs for growing lucerne grass in the Ti Tree region. We have a number of great incentives across the Northern Territory, particularly in Central Australia. It is an exciting time.

The Member for Stuart mentioned visas and getting people to work. The Seasonal Worker Program allows employees to sponsor workers from participating countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Timor-Leste. That has been proven season after season, so it is quite exciting.

Namatjira is home to some very exciting mining projects. Tellus Holdings is investigating the development of an underground salt mine and storage facility at the Chandler Project, which is a couple hours south of Alice

Springs. Subject to approval, the mine would have an expected life beyond 29 years. It would provide approximately 350 jobs for Central Australia during the construction phase and 180 jobs during the operational phase. In addition to the 540 indirect jobs during the operational phase—that is a great opportunity and contribution to the Central Australian economy.

I have been speaking with the people of Titjikala about their views on the salt mine and ensuring there is a continual dialogue on the exciting work happening there.

Mount Peake, the titanium and ore project has a capacity to create long-term mines in Central Australia, which has a cost of around \$208m. This is another great project.

Arafura Resources—Member for Stuart, I am stealing a little bit of your thunder here—is progressing plans to develop a Nolans Rare Earth Project near Aileron, just on the other side of my electorate. It is a great project. Subject to the approval, it has the potential to supply 10% of the world's magnetic feed demand for rare earths. That is an astonishing figure.

It has a mine life of about 40 years and will create around 374 full-time jobs over its three-year construction and 250 during its operation. The Jervois copper mine, proposed at \$190m in copper, silver, and gold, is about 270 kilometres east of Alice Springs and has the potential for 360 jobs during the construction phase. In an 18-month period—300 jobs once in operation.

There are some exciting projects in the Central Australian region. I am looking forward to working with the minister and we will continue to be out and about, talking with people in Namatjira.

I proudly stand here today as a Labor member. Territory Labor has a clear plan for agriculture, horticultural industries and primary industries in the Northern Territory. They are supported by our commonsense policies for all our major primary industries.

I am passionate about primary industries and working to develop the full potential of the Northern Territory primary industries, especially in Central Australia, through a fully planned and costed development, making sure we help deliver the infrastructure, roads, water and power that is needed to support these businesses that develop and provide jobs for Territorians now and into the future.

As I said previously, I have been out and about in the car, doing lots of miles, talking to people, having cups of tea on the veranda with the great people from the bush about the projects there, getting their feedback and ideas, and making sure they have been consulted on a range of proposals for people in the bush.

It is good to have these jobs, but I want the jobs to reflect the people of the Northern Territory. I want people to engage in these. I want people on communities to be engaged in meaningful employment, not tokenistic positions. I want to see that Aboriginal people and people living on pastoral properties in Central Australia and in the Northern Territory are engaged, skilled and given the opportunity to participate in training programs such as Indigenous apprenticeships. I note that we have two or three. I hope that in years to come that number will continue to grow and that we make sure we have a very skilled workforce in horticultural, agriculture and primary industries.

We can look at engaging with our younger generations in horticulture—but I pick up on the comments made by the Member for Stuart. The Central Land Council now is beginning to run a number of cattle stations in the Northern Territory. They are good cattle stations and are doing a lot of work. They are re-engaging our young mob to get back out on country, get on the horses, learn to ride, learn how to muster, go out on the stock camps—bringing back the Northern Territory lifestyle.

I am looking forward to working with the land councils to make sure we continue to grow the Indigenous participation in the pastoral industries, as that is vital to its success.

I echo the comments made by the Member for Stuart—I know the Members for Arnhem and Arafura feel the same—the economic future of the Northern Territory is in the bush. The bush holds the key to the economic success for the Northern Territory and we need to make sure we resource the bush, look after it and grow it so we have a workforce ready to take on the challenges and new technologies ahead.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the activities undertaken by my government to support employment in the primary industry and resources industries across the Northern Territory. I was quite surprised to find that those industries combined contribute more than \$3.5bn to the NT

economy. I have appreciated the opportunity to listen to the contributions of all those who have spoken before me as I learned about the positive impacts these industries have had on the Territory.

Fishing plays a big part in the lives of many Territorians and I am pleased to say that I have many avid anglers living in the electorate of Karama. Much to the delight of fishermen, our government is delivering on an election commitment to invest \$50m in fishing infrastructure. I thank my colleague, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, for his update on this investment. This \$50m investment will see improved security measures and upgrades to roads and boat ramps, all of which are being delivered to enhance the fishing experiences of all anglers.

When anglers head out on the water they want to feel safe in the knowledge that when they return they will find their vehicles and trailers where they left them. This is why we gave a commitment to install CCTV cameras at the popular Dinah Beach boat ramp, and I thank the minister for advising that the installation has been completed.

There is no shortage of fishing spots in the Territory with many local fishermen having a favourite spot in which to fish. Unfortunately, some of these waterways are harder to reach than others by way of distance and terrain. In order to encourage the uptake of recreational fishing we need to ensure the safe passage of those wishing to reach these waterways.

I am pleased to learn that one such waterway—the Corroboree Billabong, located a 90-minute drive from Darwin—is currently receiving sealing of a 6 kilometre section of the road. This new sealed section will be greatly appreciated by those who fish there. It is great to learn that the upgrade to the car park at Middle Arm boat ramp is well under way and that the upgrade of Shady Camp boat ramp has been completed. These projects not only support our fishing industry but also provide employment opportunities for Territorians in the civil construction industry, and I thank all those people who have helped to deliver these projects.

The successful Million Dollar Fish program—which we have heard much about—has gone from strength to strength since its inception in 2015, and I acknowledge the previous government for this great initiative. I congratulate Tourism NT for the successful marketing campaign that has lured many visitors to the Top End.

Season one saw a total of 10 \$10 000 fish caught by anglers, and season two saw a total of eight fish being caught, but the elusive million-dollar barra is still at large. Perhaps it will be captured by a lucky angler in season three, which runs from 1 October to 28 February 2018.

Mr Wood: It has probably been eaten.

Ms AH KIT: It could have been. The Million Dollar Fish website is full of helpful information for new and experienced anglers. The website provides information on the competition as well as information on fishing charters, accommodation and other outdoor activities the Territory has to offer. The website promotes the best the Territory has to offer, which helps to entice visitors to spend a little extra money and time to make their experience in the Top End more memorable.

It has been pleasing to hear about guests who have travelled to the Top End to visit family and friends, who have then registered and participated in the Million Dollar Fish competition and stayed a little longer. Hopefully these guests have returned interstate and shared their experience with others. This, in turn, can help to grow the number of Territory visitors, investment in the economy and positive promotion of the Territory in general.

I was fortunate to visit Tennant Creek with my colleagues last month, where I was able to talk with local residents about their thoughts on Tennant Creek being positioned as a mining services hub.

The conversations were helpful and hopeful. I heard stories of hope from residents who were excited about the investment our government is making in Tennant Creek. I watched a local residents' eyes light up as they told me about the opening of the Edna Beryl mine, which will see the extraction of high-value ore. This is exciting news for the township as this is the first such project in Tennant Creek for more than a decade. I look forward to following the progress of this mine and learning of the positive impact it will have on the community.

The Minister for Primary Industry and Resources advised the House that the Northern Gas Pipeline is progressing, with a pipeline licence being granted to Jemena on 26 April this year, and construction of 344 kilometres of pipeline being approved. This is a huge project that will create more than 900 jobs during the construction of the pipeline at a total estimated cost of \$112m.

I am pleased to learn that Jemena will also invest more than \$2m in local capacity-building initiatives to support this project.

I also look forward to learning more about the ongoing jobs being based in Tennant Creek to assist with the operation of the gas processing facility once it is operational.

Our government is working hard to ensure we grow the economy and jobs to make the Territory as prosperous as possible. I thank my colleague, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, for the investments and achievements that have been made under his leadership today.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the minister's statement on the activities this government is undertaking to support employment in the primary industry and resources sectors across the Territory.

As a government and in opposition, the Labor Party has always been about training and jobs, and the pivotal role they play in the economic development of the Territory and the ability of Territorians to get ahead in life.

Territorians look to us, the Labor Party, and trust us in this area because we have a strong track record of creating jobs and providing the strategic training required to support the ongoing creation and filling of jobs across the spectrum by Territorians.

Jobs are the backbone of the Territory. Whilst I clearly do not have either agricultural or mining activity in Sanderson, other than some market-style gardens—I am clutching at straws—I know, with great confidence, that I have many workers employed in both these sectors. They have a keen interest in the future development of those sectors for the economy.

It is to any future constituents who choose to work in those sectors that I make my comments today.

I will focus my comments on agribusiness, mostly because I know my colleague, the Member for Brennan, has the fishing sector covered. There is not much left to say about that. Other members have spoken extensively about the mining sector and how important it is.

The agribusiness sector is where the most exciting future lies for the Territory's economic growth. Agribusiness has already been identified as one of our greatest growth sectors in the Territory, and we recognise this coming to government with the establishment of a logistics and agribusiness hub in Katherine. We have heard about that extensively this afternoon. It is one of our five major projects specifically aimed at boosting our economy and, in turn, creating and sustaining thousands of jobs not only in Katherine, but across the Territory.

We need to acknowledge that this investment is not just about addressing our core agenda of increasing jobs and greater population growth, but to unlock private sector investment. While looking at how important agribusiness is to the Territory now and in the future, my thoughts turn to how influential it has been on our past and where we are today.

Agribusiness, even though it sounds like a common term, is nothing new to the Territory. Agribusiness, which means agricultural activity undertaken on a commercial basis, has been going on formally and informally for a very long time.

Historically—we heard a bit about this from the Member for Arnhem—Makassan trepangers, or fishers, undertook dangerous journeys from the port of Makassar, in South Sulawesi, to the coast of Arnhem Land and the Kimberley well before European settlement and up to the early 20th century. They sailed every December, returning in March or early April the following year, determined by favourable trade winds. During their trade missions, they traded other goods such as pearl shells, beeswax and iron in return for fishing our waters for the very much-valued trepang. It was good that you filled me in on that activity, Member for Arnhem, and what is happening in that space now. It is quite exciting. The trepang would be taken back to Makassar and onsold to Chinese traders supplying markets in south China.

These traders—or sailors if you like—developed strong social and economic ties with local Indigenous groups. In return there was also further trade in things like canoes, sails, fishing gear, beads and materials. Through this early supply chain new materials, customs and fishing techniques came into the Territory landscape.

The Makassans often employed local Indigenous people to help gather and process the trepang and there are some texts that describe hundreds of people having sailed on the return voyage to Makassar, some settling there and having families with local women. This early supply chain and trade relationship proffered jobs for our first people.

Sadly, the whole industry declined from 1880 onwards due to taxes and charges being imposed on the visiting traders by the South Australian Government and a refusal to grant fishing licences. It is such a pity. It would be interesting if this early trading nation sought to re-establish those old traditions. They would possibly be detained, deported and vessels confiscated. How times have changed.

However, it is also possible there were even earlier visitors from places like Indonesia. There is evidence of such trade in rock art spread throughout Arnhem Land. It is fascinating to think back to how those trade systems worked and the clear but simplistic benefits for both sides of the trade equation.

Fast forward to today, and here we are still with so many opportunities, but in a completely different operational environment that is highly regulated and comes with a strict set of accreditation, licensing and operational requirements. However, it remains to be an industry that can, and does, provide jobs for locals.

Northern Australia comprises about 40% of Australia's land mass, but with less than 5% of our population. There is a notable disparity in this equation, presenting a natural resource barrier to development. But there are a few great agribusiness stories that have tackled this and used this equation specifically to build a successful business or supply-value chain.

When I talk about a business or supply-value chain I am talking about people, business, resources, activities and technology involved in the creation and sale of a product from growth or delivery of source raw materials to the manufacture and delivery of product to an end user or market, wherever that market may be.

One such Territory value chain business is AACo, which is north Australia's largest beef producer—a very strange choice for me to speak on today given that I am a vegetarian. But I note that AACo conducted its AGM a couple of days ago at the Darwin Convention Centre under the leadership of its chairman, Mr Don McGauchie, who may also have met with our Minister for Primary Industry and Resources earlier this week or last week.

AACo is one of the oldest, continuous operating companies in Australia, having been established in 1824. AACo is a large landholder in the Northern Territory from the Barkly region, the Victoria River District, through to the Darwin Daly regions. Having a closer look at AACo, I have learned that in 2016 it managed over 450 000 cattle over seven million hectares of property across northern Australia. Its operations include farming, breeding and now the establishment of the Livingstone abattoir facility.

Cattle production is one of northern Australia's major industries. Before AACo's investment in a slaughterhouse in the Top End in 2014, the supply chain was heavily reliant on the live export trade. Livingstone is the only such facility in the Northern Territory, although I note there used to be one in Katherine, but from memory it may have closed in the late 1980s. The facility has the capability to deal with up to 1000 cattle per day, with current production at about 500 cattle per day, producing a supply of what is known as grade beef.

I understand the plant also has a possible opportunity in the prime beef line, which would be more suitable for its domestic market, but of course, such an opportunity comes with a cost.

AACo has what is known as a vertically integrated supply chain that takes its product from the breeding to the export stage. By driving each stage along the line of the supply chain, the company is able to bring efficiencies to the supply chain through increased responsiveness to market demand, ability to adapt new products and meet very short lead times, and the provision of a smaller range of product at a much lower price.

Having such an internal and integrated supply chain also allows AACo to focus on efficiency and quality rather than just end product value. All of these abilities keep the company relatively insulated from potential fluctuations in the beef production and live cattle markets.

I am also pleased the company is looking into possibilities in the donkey market, because we know the Territory has capacity there. Feasibility will be a major factor in the decision-making once the current trial comes to an end.

Further to this activity, the company is looking to diversify into other areas that can make their operations more sustainable. Hay production using waste water is one such innovative proposal.

AACo has worked hard to build a strong relationship with the Northern Territory Government and works closely to ensure their operations increase local job opportunities and have the best opportunity to succeed in a particularly tough market.

While AACo had to bring in specialist workers such as slaughter men and women and highly skilled boners, over time they have provided more and more jobs for Territorians, recognising the efficiencies that come with that investment. It is a strange coincidence that about 18 months ago, upon visiting my daughter in New Zealand, I met a couple of people and within a month they were on their way to Darwin to help get that industry moving.

The decision to build an abattoir has allowed the Territory to move away from a one-dimensional live export supply chain to more complex trade opportunities. Traditionally, we were seen as a cattle breeding region where our produce travelled upwards of 1000 kilometres before slaughter, with transport costs exceeding \$150 per head.

This in turn put a heavy reliance on roads and heavily reduced capabilities during our Wet Season. Since the Indonesian animal welfare issues in June 2012 and the resulting reductions in import quotas for animals in Indonesia, the Territory had to look at other markets. This experience taught us that northern cattle producers are particularly sensitive to live export demand shocks. The introduction of a local abattoir has allowed us to consider opportunities for growth, particularly in developed nations where there may be a higher future demand for Australian beef.

The abattoirs have allowed us to be innovative and consider industry growth through the diversification of product. We are geographically well placed to supply new markets like China and our other Asian neighbours.

The Minister for Primary Industry and Resources and this government clearly recognise the need to support agribusiness as a mechanism to grow Territory jobs.

This government's \$31.55m investment in agribusiness and primary industry projects at the Berrimah Farm research site in June this year provides further understanding of this need. This funding is supporting innovation and research for our agribusiness future.

Whilst I have spoken about one business participating in the agribusiness sector of the Territory, I note that the minister is working hard on agribusiness projects across the Territory, including the Ti Tree melon farm and mangoes at Manbulloo and Orange Creek. This Territory Labor government recognises the importance of agribusiness to our economy and jobs.

I acknowledge and thank the Parliamentary Library Service for the provision of some of the details I have been able to present today. It has been an interesting learning curve on the benefits of improving a supply chain and increasing jobs through infrastructure investment.

I fully support the approach of this government to provide infrastructure project funding to keep our economy moving in the right direction through difficult times. Those Territorians and businesses quietly working in our agribusiness sector are contributing greatly to our economy and will continue to do so in the future.

I commend the minister's statement to the House.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for primary industry, minerals and energy for bringing this statement to the House.

I am disappointed that those three or four major Northern Territory industries have been lumped into one statement. It has done a disservice to the minerals industry, primary industries, the recreational fishing industry, the seafood industry and all that is associated with that.

I would like to hear a statement that focuses on one or two of them and goes into detail of what is involved in those industries, what is happening, what the government's vision is, what the policies are and where they are going. It has not told the true story. It has not given the full picture of what is happening in the Northern Territory.

I have heard from all the speakers today that there is so much to these industries, as we all know. They underpin the Northern Territory economy. We rely on our resources to make our economy in the Territory what it is today.

I could not agree more that these industries are fundamental to the success of the Northern Territory in so many ways. I will talk generally and then I will focus on minerals and energy, because I do not want to do a disservice to primary industries, fishing, seafood or the extractive industries by trying to do a bit here and a bit there. I will leave those comments for another stage. I hope the minister will come back to the House in the near future with a comprehensive statement on primary industries, for example, the fishing, seafood and aquaculture industries.

In the early part of the minister's statement he stated that mining and energy contributes 12.9% to the gross state product for the Northern Territory. Some people may say that it is really good. I can tell you now, it is not good. About 10 years ago the share of the gross state product was up around 20%. We are going down. I will explain why.

We have to get that share of gross state product up. It was the major contributor underpinning the Northern Territory economy. I am happy for other sectors and industries to contribute to underpinning and making the Territory economy what it is today. If our mining industry is going down from 22% not so long ago—I can recall when it was 26%, and for those who do not know, I worked for an industry group in the mining industry. That figure needs to be higher because it is important in making sure our economy continues and is sustainable into the future.

It concerns me that the figure is 12.9%. But it is still a good figure—a good contribution to the economy and everything that goes with that.

In regard to the exploration, mining and petroleum industries of the Northern Territory—I did not hear the minister reference it, and I am sure he knows about it. The Fraser Institute is an economic research institute in Canada. Every year it puts out an annual survey of mining companies as to how the 104-plus jurisdictions in the world are seen as a place for mineral exploration.

The Australians always do well. They have done well for decades; that is a given. The Canadians also do well. The Northern Territory is still doing well, according to this 2016 survey. We are not in the top 10; we used to be pretty close, though. We are in the top 20 as a jurisdiction. They interviewed about 2700 individuals in 104 jurisdictions. The top 10 include Saskatchewan; Manitoba; Western Australia, which is one of our biggest competitors when it comes to investment for mineral exploration; Nevada; Finland; Quebec; Arizona; Sweden; and Ireland, which is ahead of the Northern Territory and Queensland.

To do the survey they look at the overall attractiveness of the jurisdiction; mineral potential; policies of government; regulation; taxation; infrastructure; land disputes, which is land claims and native title; and of course, political stability.

When it comes to investment attractiveness, WA and South Australia are well ahead of the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory is all good; we are 20th. We are miles ahead of many countries around the world out of 104. We have dropped a little since the 2005 survey.

Policy perception of the Northern Territory is also very good. We are number 21. We have been consistent in the past five years as a jurisdiction in how mining and exploration companies view the Northern Territory. That is positive. That means that policy, regardless of which person is leading the Territory government or which party is in power—we are seen as a good place to do business. Again, we are still behind WA and South Australia.

The best practice mineral potential, which is policy based on best practices—assuming the jurisdiction had good practices when it comes to taxation, environmental regulation and things of that nature, the Territory does very well. That means the NT is a place investors and exploration people want to come, because they know it is a good jurisdiction. That is positive. I would like to see the government talk about the Fraser Institute more and how the Territory is perceived. Sometimes our biggest competitors are not necessarily Australian states but jurisdictions in other countries, like Canada and Ireland.

Australia by far is the most attractive place in the world, generally, to explore and commit your funds. We are ahead of the Americas and Canada. We are in the top three in the world and have been for many years. In regard to competitiveness with Australian jurisdictions WA is first, followed by Queensland, South Australia,

Northern Territory, Tasmania, Victoria and then New South Wales. The Northern Territory needs to be first on that list. We need to continually work hard to move up that chain.

Geologically the Territory is blessed. We have an abundance of mineral resources here, such as hard rock minerals, precious minerals, oil and gas and industrial minerals like potash, clay and salt. We just need to make the environment such to encourage companies to come here and spend the money.

We are in difficult times; there is no doubt about that. We are in a cycle, and the cycle is getting longer. But we must remember it is a cycle, and we will come out of it and into better times. The Territory needs to be placed in such a way that it can maximise the opportunity to get people to come here to invest.

We are mid-pack. Government needs to work hard with industry and research associations to pull us up so we can make sure we are head of the pack and that companies come here and not anywhere else.

The key issues in the minister's speech—he referenced the legacy mines and how government is doing an inventory of legacy sites around the Territory, which is close to completion. I want to hear more details about that because it sounds interesting. There are legacy sites around the Territory, from the goldfield times, turn of the century et cetera. It is an issue that industry struggles with around the country. We are not special.

I want to know if Pine Creek goldfields was one of the few projects in my memory that had its title relinquished. I am also interested to know if there have been other sites in contemporary times which have had their sites relinquished because they fulfilled all the rehabilitation requirements.

I have questions about the legacy mines levy. I want some answers. When it was set up companies were levied, paid some money to help with these legacy sites, and it was set up for on-the-ground work to get the rehabilitation work done. It was about setting up the unit within the department.

I am concerned that half of the \$36m collected has not gone into that work. It has been sucked into the Receiver of Territory Monies, in the department. I hope that is not correct and the bulk of the money is being spent on the ground, rehabilitating our sites, whether it is research, actual rehab work, fencing or signage. Can I get some information? If not, I am happy to write a letter to you seeking that information.

In your statement you said you met with the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies; that is great news. It is a good organisation that has been around for decades in Western Australia and does a good job, as does the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. There are a swag of members who do a lot of work in the Northern Territory.

I got the information out of our exploration expenditure. We need to spend money exploring, otherwise we will not have any mines. The more money you spend looking for the mineral deposits and the resources, the greater the chance of finding something that can be developed into a project. A project means revenue for government, opportunity, regional development, infrastructure and benefits to all Territorians.

In 2005 exploration expenditure in the Northern Territory was \$104.5m. Last year it dropped to \$85m. Why has that money dropped? I get it; it is tough times. It is hard getting capital and finance. When you are a junior explorer it is even harder to get finance to underwrite your exploration projects.

The fact remains; if you do not explore you will have no mines. If you have no mines you have no jobs, revenue or prosperity for the Territory. There needs to be some vision for unlocking the future mineral wealth of the Territory. There are lots of programs in the department responsible for mines and energy, particularly in the geological survey area, but there needs to be a bigger vision of how government is working with industry, research associations and Geoscience Australia to unlock the future mineral wealth of the Territory. We know we have it, but we need to work out how we can extract it to benefit everyone.

The Roadmap for Exploration Under Cover that Amira released is a brilliant piece of work. It was a couple of years ago, but that work was and is needed because, for those who are not fully aware, the bulk of the mineral deposits have been relatively easy to find. There have been outcrops that can be accessed easily. They have been able to access the minerals at reasonable cost, but a lot of those projects were discovered many years ago. The greater wealth is probably still in the ground, under cover.

The deeper you go into the earth the more expensive it is and the more risks associated; you need the finance to develop it. The perception that Australia and the NT are mature is partly true; however, the easy deposits have been discovered and you now need smarter ways of doing business to access the deposits undercover, that is, the ones that are deeper.

There is nothing to suggest that there is no wealth of deposits under cover. Geoscience people will tell you that. They are potentially there, just deeper. The deeper you go the more expensive it is.

As a territory, an industry, a government and researchers, we need to develop new technologies and ways to search beneath the 80% of the country that is covered by non-mineralised rocks and sediments. Government, industry and research need to work together more closely.

I compliment the mines and energy department staff. They do a terrific job across the board, particularly those associated with the geological survey and the AGES conference, which has been going for about 20 years now. It is a great conference; it attracts upwards of 200 industry research people from across the country, if not overseas, to Alice Springs. They showcase the work of government in geoscience and industry.

Geoscience, excuse the pun, is at the core of the success of minerals energy. The CORE program—the \$23.8m over four years—is terrific. You have to keep doing that, minister. You have to keep funding the geological program.

Industry no longer goes out and does blatant exploration. It relies upon government to do exploration work that is competitive, and then they showcase it. Then industry comes in and says it is interested. Then it packs up the land and spends its money.

You referenced TNG's Mount Peake vanadium project, which is a great project that has been around for a while. Vanadium is used to strengthen steel and iron. Congratulations to Paul Burton, who is the managing director of the company. He has been around for years. He is a terrific bloke, and if anyone can make this project and company go forward he will. It is in the Alice Springs area, in the Arrernte province. It has a mine life of about 15 years, which would be terrific.

From a mining point of view it is very simple: dig up the rocks. The tricky and complex thing is the processing and separating the minerals.

They also have issues with the patent—they have recently patented the technology to separate these minerals. I wish them well. If they do get this project to go on running—I am sure they will—it would be great for the region. It is hundreds of jobs—a huge investment. Congratulations to them as well.

You referenced Tellus Holdings in regard to the salt mine. That is a big project with a capital expenditure of \$600m—big money, big dollars. If they can get it off the ground it would be huge for Central Australia.

My friends at Arafura Resources Central Australia—I do not know why Central Australia is blessed with all these minerals. They complain about not having anything down there. We love Alice Springs.

I have known a person at Arafura Resources for many years—and the Nolans Rare Earth Project near Aileron is a terrific project. It is complex metallurgy; separating all of the rare earths from each other is complicated.

With all of these projects the geology is done. Everyone accepts they have discussed this with traditional owners under the Land Rights Act, but it is accessing the capital and the finance that will be a challenge for all these companies. Government has been supportive of them, as they have with KGL Resources.

Well done to the government; keep supporting them. Verdant Minerals is highly optimistic with the phosphate project but, again, getting the capital, the money, the banking and the finance behind it will be one of its biggest challenges.

I wish them all well and I hope they get there. Well done to Richard Brescianini and Brian Fowler at Arafura Resources. They have been at it for many years and they will get there—we will have a rare earth project that has refinery and processing.

I would have liked to hear comments on some of the other key projects, such as Phosphate Australia with the Highland Plains Project, and Central Petroleum—there is not much information in your speech about anything to do with the petroleum onshore or offshore. Scant attention—I hope they are not becoming the poor cousin of the resources industry, because there is so much involved there.

Yes, INPEX and Conoco have done great things economically for the Northern Territory, but what about those who have come before—an operating project, that is, those who are spending money exploring. Projects do not just pop out of the ground. There are years under petroleum permits, like exploration permits and leases that companies spend six years on, plus extensions.

Santos and the Tamboran people are working hard across the Northern Territory. We have AWA Energy, Pangaea Resources, Origin Energy, Jacaranda Minerals, Imperial Petroleum, Beach Energy and Central Petroleum in Central Australia.

They are all spending money—I will not go into the fracking debate, what is or what is not. Government has its policy position and I accept that. But it is a golden opportunity for these companies and perhaps others in the future to deliver a new source of stable, long-term revenue for the Northern Territory Government. Regional development, without a doubt—because these resources are never where you want them to be. They are in regional areas in Central Australia, Borroloola and on the west coast of the Northern Territory.

They can bring infrastructure into the Territory and they will create jobs. Deloitte Access Economics found that the Northern Territory onshore gas industry could provide a communitive boost to gross state product of up to \$22.4bn.

Mr SIEVERS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I request an extension of time for the member.

Motion agree to.

Ms PURICK: Deloitte Access Economics reported through their studies that it could yield up to \$22.4bn between 2020 and 2040, and create up to 6300 long-term jobs. That is the onshore component. Remember, everything that is within our borders we capture. Everything that is offshore the Commonwealth owns and controls, and everything within our Territory borders the Northern Territory Government controls.

If the onshore industry develops it could be between \$236m to \$460m to Northern Territory revenue. That is a lot of schools and healthcare we could provide. I understand it is very political at the moment—a community issue. I accept that you are waiting for the latest inquiry into the fracking issues to be delivered, but I hope common sense prevails in the end.

It will not only benefit the Northern Territory. If we think of a bigger picture, clearly it brings benefits to us as Territorians, but the gas development onshore will feed those gas-hungry people on the eastern seaboard. Of course, that can only benefit Australia as a whole.

I will not talk about the basins as we know where they are. The government needs more balance in how it is presenting the minerals and resources industry with the hard rock mining onshore as well as petroleum. I would not shy away from it. Leading up to the election it was a big issue. I was asked all the time by constituents and others about my views on fracking. I was frank with all of them. Personally, I do not have an issue because I have worked in the industry and can understand perhaps a bit more than the average person. However, if they have concerns then they need to be addressed. That is only fair and logical.

I would have liked to see a bit more separation. I cannot really go into fishing, but primary industries I can—it would be remiss of me not to mention the goat, sheep and donkey farmers. It is true, minister, that there is huge interest in donkey farming in the Top End. I have met with people from down south who are looking to develop a donkey farm in the top part of the Territory for export to China. The key issue is the country needs to develop a protocol for exporting donkeys, which we do not have right now. We have protocols for exporting cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats, but we do not have that protocol. If we could set up donkey farming in the Northern Territory it would be a fabulous boost to our primary industries.

With regard to goat farmers, apart from the big companies and businesses, we should not lose sight of the fact there are many small-time farmers out there, whether it be poultry, hay, goat, sheep or specialised crops. We need to put them into the mix regarding primary industries. They are the small businesses that employ two to four people, buy tractors and have things serviced. They need to be factored into the equation as well.

Thank you for your statement, minister. I would like to hear a statement next sittings about primary industry especially, then another one later about the recreational aqua industry, seafood and things of that nature.

Ms MOSS (Environment and Natural Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel as though my contribution tonight has an inadequate number of puns in it now.

I am pleased to support the statement brought to the House by my colleague, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources. My Cabinet colleagues and I have many conversations about these areas and how they contribute to the Northern Territory. As I have spoken about endlessly in this House, our natural resources

are key to the Territory's economic development. As such, they are very much in demand for urban development, agriculture, extractive and other resource-reliant industries.

It was great to hear from the minister about some of the projects and initiatives under way across the Territory and how these things are progressing. Those projects seek to harness our natural resources for the benefit of Territorians. In order to ensure the ongoing economic development of our community and the jobs that flow from that, we need to ensure development occurs in a sustainable way. It means ensuring we are continuing to make sensible, science-based decisions that minimise our impact on the environment, while maximising the benefits that flow from the way we use our natural resources.

As mentioned by the Member for Katherine, I was particularly excited this year to announce, as part of the budget, an exciting initiative that will help us do just that. That is the \$9.9m to fund the Mapping the Future initiative that will help map the soil, water and biodiversity assets in regional parts of the Northern Territory.

This is important work that will provide crucial scientific information to landholders, investors and other stakeholders so they can help us further develop the Northern Territory in an evidence-based and sustainable way. Thanks to this initiative, over the next five years we will collect and collate data to underpin land use plans for regional growth areas which will identify areas that are highly suitable for land uses such as agriculture.

It will allow regional communities to make informed decisions on the location of natural, resource-based, economic development opportunities and local, community-based, land use planning. It will help attract private investment in natural resource industries based on accurate scientific data. It will inform the long-term management, protection and health of community drinking supplies whilst ensuring the sustainability of natural and cultural assets, such as groundwater dependent ecosystems.

The first year of the program involves extensive planning and consultation with industry and community stakeholders across the NT to identify prospective areas for mapping. Scientific teams will be deployed from July 2018 once priority areas have been identified and land access agreements are secured. I am pleased about the number of people who are interested in linking in with this program and are aware of this commitment, because the initiative is as much about investing in our future and creating sustainable jobs across the Territory as it is about ensuring the areas of environmental significance are protected.

The Gunner Labor government understands that good environmental policy is good economic policy, and that is why we are planning for the future effectively and responsibly in order to maximise economic growth, open up new jobs and protect the environment. This work will complement the major reform process we currently have under way to establish a robust and transparent environmental framework for making decisions about development.

There are many examples of what happens when we fail to consider the impact of our activities on our environment and we deal with the impacts of many of those legacy issues into the future. We must learn from past mistakes, and that means carefully considering the environmental impacts of our activities early on so we, our children or our grandchildren are not left to deal with the adverse social, environmental and community consequences later.

A robust, considered, transparent environmental process is not only good for the environment, but is also good for the community and the economy. That is what drove us to take such a significant, comprehensive, environmental reform policy platform to the election, which was strongly supported by the community.

Good policy will not only ensure we minimise impacts of development on our natural environment, but it will also ensure that development can proceed with certainty, maximising jobs and economic benefit to the Territory. As our healthy, strong, environmental economic policy acknowledges, our natural environment is one of our greatest assets and we need to protect, maintain and nurture it in the same way we would any other precious asset. It makes social, cultural and economic sense.

Our environmental reform agenda is underpinned by a number of guiding principles. First, we are restoring trust and certainty through the implementation of a robust, clear and transparent set of rules and guidelines for how the environment must be protected. We are giving Territorians a say on environmental issues and ensuring that decisions about development are made in an environmentally and economically responsible way, taking into consideration the long-term interests of the environment and the community.

We are embedding science and evidence at the heart of environmental decision-making to better focus our protection efforts while generating jobs in research, innovative practice and emerging environment-based

industries. Finally, we are introducing a more effective, transparent and accountable regulatory regime that will strengthen environmental protections, streamline assessment processes and give industry some certainty when it comes to making investment decisions.

There is a lot of work already under way on the reforms to the environmental impact assessment process to provide greater certainty to industry, developers and the community when it comes to new projects, and I commend those working in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the minister's department for progressing those important commitments.

The community was recently given the opportunity to provide input into this process with the release of the Environmental Regulatory Reform Discussion Paper, which explored what a new framework would look like, taking into account previous community feedback that has been provided through a number of mechanisms over a considerable amount of time.

A number of considered and insightful submissions have been received, and my Department of Environment and Natural Resources is using them to guide the direction of our reform. I thank the range of stakeholders who have contributed to that process, from environmental groups to industry to community members.

We intend to roll out the reforms in two stages. Stage one will consider the changes to the environmental impact assessment process and legislation, including establishing an environmental approval to be issued by me, as Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, at the end of the environmental assessment process, including for mining activities.

Under these changes there will be a clearer pathway for assessment, depending on the likely environmental impacts of each project. Larger projects will, of course, continue to require a comprehensive environmental impact statement. The lower level of assessment will be introduced for projects that do not need an EIS but still require scrutiny, environmental risk management and mitigation. The new assessment process will help address gaps in the system that have seen large projects proceed without assessment or approval.

Stage two will consider changes to the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, *Litter Act*, *Mining Management Act*, petroleum legislation and potentially other legislation that has a role in protecting the environment, particularly from waste and pollution.

This is about delivering consistent, clear processes for environmental assessment and regulation which is good for the environment, the community, developers and industry, because it provides certainty for projects and safeguards jobs for Territorians.

We are a government that stands up for the environment, but we also support and deliver economic development for communities across the Northern Territory. We are putting in place important environmental safeguards that mean we can move forward with greater certainty and ensure that the Territory we hand over to future generations is a healthy, thriving, biodiverse place. We are well on our way to delivering those safeguards.

This is not the only area where my portfolios intersect with that of the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources.

I was proud to stand with the minister recently at the launch of season three of the Million Dollar Fish competition, which will see 40 000 keen recreational fishers flock to the Territory from interstate to try their luck at snagging that golden fish.

There has been much discussion about our focus on recreational fishing, but it is an important part of Territory life. It is a key reason people come to the Northern Territory every year, making a huge contribution to our visitor numbers and supporting our crucial tourism industry.

I also want to mention the importance of recreational fishing and related activities to health and wellbeing. I acknowledge our federal parliamentary colleague Luke Gosling, the Member for Solomon, who recently launched the Friends of Recreational Fishing in Canberra. This was a subject of the discussion regarding the importance of recreational fishing to mental health and wellbeing and connection. That is a great benefit to our investment into recreational fishing infrastructure. That investment is significant; it is \$50m and it means a better experience for us all.

It is a better experience for locals who love to go out on the boat or jetty and have a fish; it is great for our interstate men and women who come here to catch one or two of our famed barra, whether it is in the Million Dollar Fish competition or just a fishing trip. It is great for everyone.

I was interested to hear the minister talk about the small-scale fisheries being developed in remote coastal communities such as Maningrida. We know the Territory coastline plays a key role in the economic and recreational life of the Territory, and is home to important ecosystems and abundant sea life.

We are putting in place our Coastal and Marine Management Strategy, which will ensure the health and viability of our coastline. We want to ensure we are supporting the sustainable use of our coastline and Territory waters for recreational and cultural purposes. We also want to ensure we are managing the growing demand for our natural resources and fostering sustainable industries like fisheries in remote communities for the benefit of the economy and those communities.

We are developing that strategy in close consultation with the community. I thank the Partnership Group and interagency government representatives who have already begun that huge piece of work. I have had fantastic conversations about that strategy. I appreciate how much time and effort they have been putting into what will be a fantastic step forward for the Territory.

Thank you to the minister for bringing this statement to the House. We are working to ensure we maximise the use of our natural resources in a sustainable, evidence-based way to grow the economy and support jobs, and we are doing so in a way that makes sure we continue to protect and nurture our beautiful environment.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have to wrap this up? I am so excited to have a second opportunity to talk about primary industries.

First of all, I must do the correct thing in this parliament and thank everybody who contributed. Thank you to everyone on my side for taking the time to speak on this, and for your research and involvement in this ministerial statement. Although I sit in Cabinet, it is a team effort. It is government policy to support the industry.

I also thank everybody not on our team who contributed.

It is my first ministerial statement. Member for Goyder, if I had my way I would do a statement on recreational and commercial fishing. I would do a minerals and petroleum statement, a cattle and buffalo statement, plants, aquaculture, and maybe even one on goats. We have so much to tell about these industries. This is an industry that keeps going. As I have said many times already in this parliament, over almost a year in government, the backbone of our economy is our primary industries and resources, mines and energy.

I will start with the Leader of the Opposition—to say I am disappointed would be an understatement. He said:

... 42 pages of meaningless platitudes ...

It is a shame that a former minister said that. The statement clearly indicated that we have a plan and are delivering it. I understand that now in opposition, a former minister—part of the role of being a good politician and respecting that parliament is about acknowledging the work of former governments and the current government. What industry wants is continuity of policy outside of election cycles. The Leader of the Opposition knows this because I have told him; I do not bag out the previous government to industry.

What I have said many times is that the name changes but the title stays the same. As I just said, people in primary industries, mines and energy or resources just want continuity of policy, regardless of our election cycles. They do not want policies changing from government to government.

We get paid every fortnight. A lot of people in the cattle, mines and energy or plant industries, even private businesses, get paid when they make money from their crops, cattle and investments in minerals and petroleum.

To make sure we are always checking ourselves and doing what we can to support the industry—one thing that is different, and industry has said this numerous times, is that we will work with the industry, talk to the industry and not talk at the industry. We have had many meetings. I say 'we' because there are numerous people on my side who have met with different companies, both in primary industries and in the resources sector.

We must always respect the industries and what we can do to assist those industries to grow and develop. We are trying to do that as a government. We have seen what ad hoc decisions did to the previous government. We have experts in our public servants in Primary Industry and Resources, my department, who have been doing those jobs for many years across many governments. Let us use those experts, their knowledge and experience.

People want an easy, seamless transition from government to government. We have delivered so much already in our first year of government. I had a moment on Tuesday—I was sitting in our lobby and there was a lot of chatter, laughter and conversation going on. I thought, 'It's been a year; where did that go?' We have been so focused on keeping our heads down, getting on with the job, planning out the future and our government going forward for Territorians.

You must always respect the fact time goes quickly. I remember standing here, in opposition, when a former minister kept blaming us, saying 'You did nothing in 11 years'. I think that was the catchcry every sittings almost every hour. I said, 'The last thing I want is to be sitting in opposition and hear you say that in your last year of government'. Even in the final sittings of the 12th Assembly we still heard it.

They had just had four years in government. What were the plans they should have achieved? They should have stood here every sittings saying, 'We said we would do this and this is how we would do it', and in the last year saying, 'This is how we did it and these are the consequences. If we get another go, we know we have to do this.' We did not hear that in the last government. That is something that drives my colleagues and me.

There has been some talk from the Opposition Leader about us not supporting the pastoral industry. I acknowledge the previous government's work on that. I have said that in the media, in meetings and in speeches. I think one of the best things the previous government did in this space is the diversification of land and the use of it under the *Pastoral Land Act*.

I have travelled extensively through the Territory, visiting mines and cattle stations. As I said in Question Time, I went to Neutral Junction Station with the Member for Barkly—growing hay. Wally Klein at Orange Creek Station has his 4000 head of cattle, and now he has three acres of potatoes and garlic. One of the best things to happen in the Northern Territory is the change to the *Pastoral Land Act*, which the previous government did.

You speak about me not acknowledging the work of the previous government, but I obviously do. I will highlight that it was the Martin and Henderson governments that opened up Vietnam as the live cattle export trade. We did that in a previous government, and it diversified the export sector.

I acknowledge that the CLP government came in and focused on the buffalo export trade, in which it did a fantastic job. It is about the industry and how we can support it. The buffalo industry went from over 600 buffalo to nearly 6000 last year. It is a growing industry in the Northern Territory that we support. The previous government supported it and we are continuing that support. We have more than 150 000 wild buffaloes in the Northern Territory. There is a real opportunity to get them over to the Asian markets.

With regard to Indonesia, we saw boxed buffalo come from India at a low price, which is impacting our cattle industry. Buffalo is about \$1.85 a kilo. I think AACo brings it in for \$1.20. I will talk more about AACo for the Member for Sanderson's benefit, to give her more information on that.

There is a real opportunity for traditional owners because there is a payment scheme, if I am correct, of about \$100 for a traditional owner to have the buffalo caught and taken away. There is an opportunity to grow that further.

In regard to supporting the pastoral industry, I just awarded \$140 000 to the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association to support industry development, innovation, adoption and extension. I will pick up on the Opposition Leader's comment—copying the \$4.1m Livestock Exporters' Association grant we gave to upgrade the Berrimah export yards. I can give an update. The first contracts are about to be awarded. All the steel works including fabrication, galvanising and construction will be done by Territory businesses. The civil works will also be done by a local business. It means jobs and contracts for local people.

What the Leader of the Opposition said was a bit cheeky. He said we copied the CLP's \$4.1m commitment. No. We gave surety to the NT Livestock Exporters' Association. We said we would commit and the CLP jumped all over it and said, 'We will do it'. It was a bizarre time. We said we would give \$4.1m to the NT Livestock Exporters' Association to upgrade the yards, and the then Chief Minister said, 'We will do that too'.

The now Chief Minister went to Palmerston and said, 'We will build a new police station for \$15m'. Lo and behold, the then Chief Minister rocked up and said, 'We will build a bigger and better one, and it will be \$30m'. 'Where will that be built, Chief Minister?' 'I do not know.' 'What will it look like?' 'I do not know, but I can tell you it will be bigger than that donga the Labor Party will build.'

That is when I thought, 'What are we doing here? Please, Territorians, do the right thing and vote for us. Vote for a future for the Territory.' It was an opportunity for the previous Chief Minister, who was desperate to keep his job and be re-elected. We can go on forever about selling TIO, selling the port, spending all that money, then borrowing more and putting us in the situation we are in now. However, I digress.

My first overseas trip was to Indonesia to meet key importers, inspect facilities and meet East Kalimantan officials to discuss our breeder program. This occurred in December 2016, four months into my first time as minister. It is important that we went. That is how I am supporting the cattle industry.

I separately met with the NTCA, Tracey Hayes and last week AACo to talk about their future plans. Let us not talk about the \$289m in beef road infrastructure which the Member for Karama spoke. Across governments and across parties, we support these industries.

Another incorrect statement the Leader of the Opposition made was about dogs. He stated that in 2012 when the CLP came to government, wild dogs were costing the pastoral industry a significant amount of money—blah, blah, blah—estimated at \$80m. It was not \$80m; it was \$60m.

To quote Tom Roney's article in the *Centralian Advocate* in February 2016: 'Frustration grew amongst pastoralists across all parts of the NT to the point where a motion was passed at the 2015 NTCA Annual General Meeting called on the Northern Territory Government to urgently improve the effectiveness of the wild dog control program, including addressing the issues of complexity, timeliness, cross-tenure conflicts of interest and the onerous application requirements'.

In 2012 when the CLP came to government it took three years to address this problem, at a cost—and the Leader of the Opposition said \$80m, but it was \$60m per year. That is not something the Leader of the Opposition would be proud of, being a Cabinet minister at the time.

We talked about extensive support to the mango industry, which—as a former mango farmer—we were all shocked when you found \$2m of scarce financial resources for the mango VHT project and industry rejected it. Industry knew nothing about it. It did not want it. You said I have done a good job of not cancelling your programs, but I cancelled that project. I turned that around—it remained in that program over \$1.85m—and when I became minister I turned it into a grants program to industry to do important things, like the \$1.55m we gave to the NT Farmers Association to create three industry-based positions. One was in Katherine that we were very keen for; plus there was \$140 000 to the NT Cattlemen's Association; \$110 000 to the Amateur Fishermen's Association NT; plus—the Member for Nelson will be very happy with this—\$50 000 to the Northern Territory Seafood Council.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the Howard sand plains. This was not fixed or settled. Coming in as the minister, we confirmed the sites of conservation significance and provided existing extractive operations and operators with detailed transitional agreements.

The Chief Minister; the Deputy Chief Minister; the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics; the minister for Environment; and I sat down with the oil extractive industry representatives and heard their concerns a couple of months ago. It was a very good meeting—open, frank discussions about what we need to do and what the future of the extractive industries is. Now we are putting these restrictions on the Howard sand plains. The Member for Nelson mentioned this, so I can give an update.

One of the other things I wanted to talk about was already mentioned by the Member for Katherine. I quote the Leader of the Opposition:

Which industries were really missed? Gas. Yes, you guessed it, the minister forgot the industry is banned by government.

We have not banned gas in the Northern Territory. The lights would go out in Alice Springs if we had. We have not talked about our tremendous offshore gas industry—the Darwin LNG and soon-to-be-opened INPEX site. There were 8500 workers on the INPEX site a couple of weeks ago when the Chief Minister and I made a site visit.

There is a feasibility study into an additional LNG train at Darwin LNG, which is happening now.

The Member for Goyder mentioned Palm Valley, Dingo and Mereenie, which are conventional onshore gas industries that are going strong, empowering Alice Springs and beyond with the gas from that site.

The Leader of the Opposition was a bit cheeky about AAPEA. I attended the AAPEA conference. It was my third AAPEA conference, and it is the first time I went to the breakfast because I was the minister. Leader of the Opposition, I hope you recall a couple of years ago when I was in opposition and you were at AAPEA—you were the minister hosting a breakfast at AAPEA, and I was not invited.

I am not like that. If I knew the Leader of the Opposition was going to APPEA and he wanted to attend the breakfast, as part of a bipartisan approach I would have given him a spot, a free breakfast. That is no problem. I would have allowed him to come in.

I gave my speech to the media. Nothing I said is in any way secret, whatsoever. I provided it to any media outlet that wanted it.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr VOWLES: Let us talk about failure to deliver. I checked the 2012 CLP recreational fishing policy as well as a letter from the former Chief Minister, the current Member for Blain, sent to the Amateur Fishing Association in August 2012.

I count three out of the 10 election commitments have been delivered. The policy and the letter paint a picture of the previous CLP government, which failed spectacularly in delivering its election commitments.

The former leader, who is now the Member for Blain, said, 'We will meet the commitments we have given, or provide very good reasons why we cannot'. Territorians are still waiting to hear why the CLP did not deliver for them.

Looking at the Dundee and Shady Camp boat ramps, the 2012 election commitment could not be delivered in four years. It gets worse. I came into government and had to plead with the Treasurer. I said I needed \$970 000 to put into Shady Camp to finish the upgrade. This upgrade is now almost complete.

Why do we need to find \$970 000 to put into Shady Camp? It is because they promised and allocated \$2.3m to Shady Camp and took \$970 000 out. Almost \$1m was taken out of that funding.

I think the Leader of the Opposition was the fisheries minister at the time. The money came out of the Shady Camp project and went towards trying to finish the Dundee boat ramp, which is in somebody's electorate. That is the Leader of the Opposition's electorate.

I am happy to be corrected if this is not the case, but the Leader of the Opposition pulled money out of Shady Camp to put into the Dundee boat ramp in his electorate. There is something there about pork barrel—it must have worked.

It is about time, and I am respectful of timing. We have come into government and opened Dundee boat ramp. We had some issues and are working through those. We are trying to do everything we can to make that more accessible, as it is a busy boat ramp. We will finish Shady Camp, hopefully within a month. Many people will enjoy the new facilities.

The Member for Nelson asked about the Seafood Council and commercial fishing. I had seven pages on it.

I have finalised the mud crab harvest strategy and asked for a review of commercial fisheries with the objectives of minimising red tape, increasing investment certainty and realising potential for the commercial sector as a food producer.

A development permit has been issued to trial the use of finfish trawl gear in the Timor Reef Fishery, with the aim of optimising the harvest levels of red snapper.

A special permit has been issued to explore the commercial viability of sea cucumber resources outside the area of the current Trepang Fishery. We have a sea cucumber ranch trial on Goulbourn Island under way, at

Minjilang. It is a partnership between the Northern Territory Government and Warruwi community, and a small scale trial into tropical rock oyster cultures has commenced in partnership with the Tiwi Land Council.

We have the revamped Aboriginal coastal licence. This is fantastic work that the previous government did a good job on. We are supporting and getting as many people through those licences as possible.

We are trying to facilitate more people through the Indigenous marine training program to get them into the seafood industry and into businesses. And we are training Indigenous Territorians so they can manage their own waterways.

This only touches the surface. We have worked really hard on forging great relationships with AFANT and the NT Seafood Council. I thank Daniel and Katherine, the Chair and CEO of the NT Seafood Council, for the productive meetings we have. I was recently at the Seafood Council, a couple of weeks ago, where Frying Nemo won best fish and chips. Thanks, Member for Fong Lim, who hosted us there for our Caucus dinner. I had fresh barra from the Northern Territory; it was incredible.

Mr Wood: I thought you ate a clown fish.

Mr VOWLES: I understand the importance of biosecurity in the Northern Territory, Member for Nelson. It is pivotal to our government.

We did all the work on the banana eradication program coming to government. When I was in opposition I was always on the case and going on about that. We went through the melon virus—a lot of work has been done in this area over the last four years. I thank everyone who has worked diligently and professionally.

The Member for Goyder had some great questions. It is great to hear her share her knowledge of the minerals sector. She was CEO of the Minerals Council for 10 years, so she knows her stuff.

Whilst I have a lot of answers, I do not have a lot of time. But in regard to the 1% levy coming into government, I brought to Cabinet the change we saw, which is about \$13m a year. Most of it was going into general revenue. We changed that immediately in March. Out of that \$13m, \$4.45m goes to funding the Legacy Mines Unit in the department and the rest goes into a consolidated trust fund for its original purpose, which was to spend on legacy mines.

I have nothing on goats, I am sorry, Member for Goyder. I respect goats, but I am happy to talk more about it another time.

Mr Wood: What about chickens?

Mr VOWLES: Yes, I like chickens.

The Member for Goyder said some very kind words about the people in the department. We have some fantastic experts in our departments. We have geologists who have been there many years and know their stuff. They are respected not only in the Territory and Australia, but worldwide. It is important we keep that experience and bring others on to learn.

We are working with Geoscience Australia on that. The Member for Goyder knows her minerals and that the Territory has a wealth of minerals. We have seen the Edna Beryl gold mine, the phosphate mine and the titanium-lithium projects around the region, especially in Central Australia. We are very keen to develop and support that, but I must reiterate that there is a process to go through. The industry knows that and is going through the environmental processes.

As a government we must make sure we are always looking for sustainable investment in the Northern Territory. Long-term investment is about jobs and futures for our kids. It is also about enticing down south mob to come to the Territory and live here. They will have a job for life and a great place to live.

From 2008 to 2012 I got a bit sick of it, but I will roll out the great Territory lifestyle; it is a winner. It is unbelievable living in the Northern Territory.

We talked about FIFOs with the Chief Minister. We will do anything we can to keep people here and in jobs. We have an opportunity in these sectors to do that. As a government we are focused, working hard and serious about growing this industry by having the support of everyone here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the statement to the House.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

PAPERS TABLED
Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's August 2017
Report to the Legislative Assembly

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the August 2017 Auditor-General's Report to the Legislative Assembly.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Chief Minister, I move that the report be noted and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

Travel Reports – Members for Blain and Arafura

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table travel reports from the Members for Blain and Arafura.

Auditor-General's Report on Members' Fuel Cards and Quarterly Fuel Transactions

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General's report and recommendation into members' fuel card use, provided on 18 December 2013. I table information contained in reports in the Assembly each quarter.

I also table the quarter of June 2017 members' fuel transaction reports.

Report of the Standing Orders Committee – Inquiry into
Recommendations Referred by the Assembly on 9 May 2017

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the report of the Standing Orders Committee on matters the Assembly referred to that committee for procedural consideration from the Select Committee report on Opening Parliament to the People.

On Tuesday 9 May 2017, the Legislative Assembly referred to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration and report on recommendations 1, 2, 4, 19, 23 and 26 from the report of the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People, or SCOPP. The report I table today recommends action on all SCOPP recommendations except for 19 and 23, which have been deferred and will be reported upon to the Assembly separately. The reasons for this will become clear shortly. In summary, the SCOPP recommendations considered were as follows.

Recommendation one is that the committee recommends the Assembly adopts the proposals set out in its Green Paper for establishing portfolio based scrutiny committees and referring Bills to those committees.

Recommendation two is that the committee recommends the Assembly establish two portfolio scrutiny committees with seven members with the membership of the committees reflecting the composition of the Assembly.

Recommendation four is how the scrutiny committees would operate.

Recommendation 19 is regarding the conduct of the Estimates Committee.

Recommendation 23 is that the Assembly provides that any petition conforming with standing orders with more than 1000 signatures to be set on the Notice Paper as an Order of the Day to note the petition.

Recommendation 26 is that the Assembly refer procedures for ministers to report matters to the Assembly. In relation to SCOPP recommendations 1, 2 and 4, the committee considered an approach which provides for three main committees instead of the proposed two.

I acknowledge the work of the Standing Orders Committee, particularly the opposition and Independent members. I have found the process enjoyable. It has been challenging and we have talked through a number of questions and ideas.

The recommendations include subject-based rather than portfolio-based committees and the retention of the Public Accounts Committee with added responsibility.

I acknowledge the Member for Nelson, who suggested this in his speeches in May. Upon further reflection and work with the committee we felt this would be a good way forward. That is why we have come back to the Assembly with this today.

Further, it is proposed that each scrutiny committee would comprise of five members instead of the proposed seven. The current membership of the Public Accounts Committee will remain the same. That is because they are midway through an inquiry and we wanted to leave the membership unchanged. Part of the reason for changing the membership from seven to five was to acknowledge that we have a large government majority in this parliament and we wanted to be fair with the workload for the Independent and opposition members.

I would be happy if at any stage the Public Accounts Committee wanted to look at the membership, but they are midway through a report, which is why we have left that committee in place, and for other reasons.

If adopted, the allocation responsibility to examine a bill by one of the two scrutiny committees will be by motion of the member introducing the bill. The committee took the view that the retention of the Public Accounts Committee, combined with the subordinate legislation functions, is preferable to the two scrutiny committees taking on these roles. The scrutiny committees are better suited to consideration in detail type roles of the bills, and the Public Accounts Committee can retain a key role in ensuring scrutiny of government expenditure and subordinate legislation.

The Standing Orders Committee recommendations, if adopted by the Assembly today, which I am hopeful they will be, will establish a committee called the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee and a committee called the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee to inquire and report on matters referred by the Assembly or a minister, bills referred by the Assembly, compliance and fundamental legal principles for bills and matters that are self-referred.

This is where the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Bill will be referred at the conclusion of this debate, when I will seek leave for immediate referral of that bill, as I outlined in my second reading speech on that bill.

The Standing Orders Committee also recommends that a newly constituted Public Accounts Committee would take on the functions of the Subordinate Legislation Committee including subordinate legislation; the operation of agencies, including the Auditor-General's report; and reports of statutory bodies.

In relation to SCOPP recommendation 19, the committee noted that the Assembly has adopted a resolution for the Estimates Committee in 2017, which allocated 30 hours consideration to the Appropriation Bill and 30 hours consideration to the annual reports. We have spoken a lot about those changes and I do not intend to go over old ground this evening.

As we detailed previously, we proposed these changes before the last election. I note that the Independent and opposition members of the House have expressed concern about this change.

We have before us a 30-hour allocation for estimates of annual reports in November. I note this will be the first time the Northern Territory parliament will have an estimates process level of scrutiny applied to annual reports.

We are committed to seeing those reforms through, but we are also very committed to working with every member of this House to develop appropriate systems for scrutiny. As such, the Standing Orders Committee will continue to work on this referral and report separately in 2018. We will not be providing a recommendation to the House at this time. The plan is to allow those November estimates to take place. The Chair of the Estimates Committee is very keen to see those estimates take place in goodwill and with cooperation of the Independent and opposition members.

That conversation will not take place on the floor of the House this evening, but I very much encourage those members to see if we can find a way for them to come back.

The Standing Orders Committee will review the process we have had this year, hopefully in a constructive way, and then report to the House. My intention is that it would be early next year. I am open to the committee—to put in place next year's estimates process, and see the shape it will take.

That is why you will not see the finalisation of that recommendation here in the House tonight.

In relation to SCOPP recommendation 23, it is noted that providing a threshold number of signatures needed to lead to a debate of a petition on the floor has seen a passionate debate. We want to get the balance right. We acknowledge in the Northern Territory that we have some large communities, and a threshold of many hundreds or a thousand signatures is absolutely appropriate. We acknowledge that we have a number of communities that are equally important, only have a very small population and would never be able to reach that threshold. We must always strive to reflect the varied electorate represented in this Assembly.

The Standing Orders Committee has considered the matter in detail, proposes to continue consideration of this referral and will report back to the Assembly in 2018.

I can assure the House that we had very constructive conversations. We looked at different paths forward, and we felt that the best place was to present the majority of this to the House tonight and keep working on it. It may have an impact on other pieces of legislation. That was the best way forward.

In relation to SCOPP recommendation 26, the committee noted that the Standing Orders Committee of the 12th Assembly gave consideration to the matter of ministerial reports and ministerial statements. However, it did not proceed to make any recommendations or report to the Assembly.

Under further consideration it is proposed that the ministerial reports be revived for the first time since the 11th Assembly to allow two hours of global debate on a report. Ministerial statements will remain.

A system is proposed with the following time limits for ministerial reports. The member moving the report will have 20 minutes; an opposition member responding to the report will have 20 minutes, and an Independent member responding to the report will have 20 minutes. The remainder of members will have 10 minutes each to contribute to debate.

This was a suggestion from one of the Independent members, noting the different context of this House. It is not simply an opposition and government; we have a number of Independents and felt that would be appropriate in allowing opposition and Independents to have an extended period for the first speaker and then go to the 10 minutes, with a global time limit of two hours.

I am also happy for the Standing Orders Committee to look at other procedures where, traditionally, the government gets a certain amount of time, then the opposition, then speakers after that get a lesser time, to accommodate for those Independent members, noting the context and composition of this parliament.

The Standing Orders Committee also considered a matter dealt with yesterday by way of a rescission motion. We adopted SCOPP recommendation 5 in good faith and realised that if there was no committee business before the House we did not have the standing orders to meet as an Assembly. There is no need to revisit that as it was rescinded yesterday.

In order to facilitate these changes, the report contains a new sessional order which, if this report is adopted, will come into immediate effect. It is proposed that a new procedure for presentation of bills and new sessional orders will be in force for the October meetings of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, any bill presented from this day onwards will be subject to the new requirements. Bills already presented will continue as presented and debate will follow in the normal course of the previous procedure. As I said, I intend to refer the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Bill to this process.

To ensure that all members and public servants understand the new arrangements, the Clerk will provide an information session for members and staff on the new procedure with accompanying fact sheets and, of course, endeavour to answer questions in whatever sessions might be needed.

I acknowledge that this enormous body of work was undertaken by the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People, which was led by the Member for Fong Lim. I acknowledge that body of work; it was not easy. The Standing Orders Committee has only been looking at a few elements of it, and it has been interesting but demanding work.

I acknowledge the chair of the committee, which is no longer in place, and the members of the committee. I also acknowledge the Standing Orders Committee. I genuinely have enjoyed the engagement of working through these procedural changes to make sure we provide the best possible forum for debate and review of bills.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to; report adopted.

MOTIONS

Appointment to Committees

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate everyone's patience. There is quite a list of things to go through.

I move that the Members for Karama, Katherine, Namatjira, Spillett and Araluen be appointed to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee, and that the Members for Brennan, Arnhem, Fong Lim, Daly and Nelson be appointed to the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee.

Motion agreed to.

Refer Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Bill to Social Policy Scrutiny Committee

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly refers the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Bill to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for inquiry and report in accordance with Sessional Order 13(4)(c) by 21 November, and the resumption of the second reading debate for the bill be an Order of the Day for 22 November 2017.

The ICAC model adopted in this bill has been developed to align with the bulk of the recommendations made by Commissioner Brian Martin as a result of the Anti-Corruption Integrity and Misconduct Commission Inquiry. The bill creates an ICAC with comprehensive powers to investigate serious, sensitive, systemic and corrupt conduct by public officers and bodies. The ICAC will be powerful enough to self-refer to investigate corruption at any level and its powers will be retrospective.

Obviously, I have been through quite a bit of detail. We have debated that bill this week. What I am proposing now is that the referral of this bill to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee be at the heart—an ICAC is about changing culture and behaviour.

We had an exposure draft bill of this legislation because there was a lot of feedback that it was a technical bill; people could talk about, but they wanted to see the bill. That bill has now been introduced with changes made and then presented as a final bill to the House.

I propose that the bill I introduced on Tuesday will go through the scrutiny committee process. It will not come back to the House during the October sittings; it will come back in the November sittings for the scrutiny committee to report to the House and then normal debate will continue. It provides an additional layer of consultation scrutiny.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think everyone will welcome this piece of legislation. I hope, as this will be the first piece of legislation this House has put before a scrutiny committee, that the process put in place, as the minister mentioned in her previous report—I was caught a bit off guard; I thought you were about to note the report and you asked me for a comment.

I am pleased to hear the government is at least willing to talk about some of the issues we had in the previous Estimates Committee. I am happy to work with government to achieve an outcome we can all agree on.

This is an historical occasion. This is the first time we have had such a scrutiny committee specifically as part of parliament. We can always form a committee to look at pieces of legislation, according to the type of legislation being put forward, but now we have two permanent committees that will look at all legislation unless they are required to go through on urgency. People will look at this to see if it works. As a member of this parliament, I hope it works.

I raised this issue a long time ago, even before the group of politicians went to Queensland late last year. I remember going there before that and spoke with one of the people who organised those committees, and discussed how it worked there. I had raised it in parliament before that as a unicameral system this is an important way of making parliament more accountable. The negative side of a unicameral system is that you do not have the checks and balances that parliaments with two houses have.

We should have an upper house, but we are a long way away from that unless this population experiences a large increase in a short space of time.

These scrutiny committees are an important part of the process. The word 'scrutiny' in itself is good for these committees. I have been critical that these committees should have been started earlier, and the minister knows my views regardless of the Termination of Pregnancy Bill. That was a perfect bill to go before a scrutiny committee. It could have gone to the community.

The other bills—the BDR. You can say we had that legislation previously, but again, it was a great piece of legislation that could have included discussion from remote communities about the effect people thought it would have. The other night I spoke about the problems with sitting in Smith Street and people harassing you.

Many opportunities have been missed in some of the legislation that has gone through. Believe it or not, even the bracelets, which I objected to going through in such a hurry before finding out there were still no bracelets two months later, could have gone to a committee to look at the pluses and minuses. That might have gone through pretty quickly.

I am very happy it is now in place. The ICAC legislation will be a pretty solid bit of work for whoever is on that committee.

It will not be something everyone in the community will race in to see. I went to the ICAC meeting in Katherine, and I think there were nine people there. Most of them were public servants or members of parliament. It is not something a lot of the public will latch onto, but I hope the professionals—the police, public servants and legal people—will get involved in this and participate in the meetings of the scrutiny committee. Then we can come back to this parliament with a really good piece of legislation.

I have already heard that some people have issues with the legislation. They do not think it is properly balanced in some areas. It will be up to the scrutiny committee to hear from those people, and hopefully when it comes back it will have amendments.

If I am not on that committee I still want the opportunity to debate it in this House through the normal committee stage. If there are five people on it, that means 20 people are not directly involved in it; although, if I have the time I can also attend those meetings under the way the system is. I can attend and observe what is happening.

I thank the minister for bringing forward something that has taken a long time. It was a promise made pre-election. It was also a draft recommendation of the committee. Unfortunately the draft was left as a draft and not an action, but it is here today.

I thank the government for bringing it forward, and I support these two scrutiny committees.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have done months of work on this. It is not just my work; this was worked on pre-election and then by the opening parliament to the people committee and the Standing Orders Committee.

The advice I have is in 12.9—after the second reading of the bill it goes to a committee stage. This is an additional layer of scrutiny for a bill. A bill can have exposure draft, introduction, scrutiny committee, back into the House for normal debate, or can be introduction, scrutiny committee and then back into the House for debate. There may be bills that the Chair will say it is fairly straightforward and does not need to be scrutinised, so it may come through the parliament. But the provision is there.

I am glad we have made you happy, and I am very pleased we have finally delivered on our election commitment. Many people have been working on this. The Standing Orders Committee has been very bipartisan in the delivery of this.

It can always be reviewed, as it may not be perfect. Hopefully this is a new era for the Territory parliament in providing that scrutiny. As you mentioned, this House is built to have the two houses of parliament, but we do not have the population base. We are trying.

Hopefully this is an additional layer of scrutiny to legislation that can assure Territorians that members of this parliament are acting in their best interests.

I thank the Member for Nelson for his contribution to debate.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS TABLED

Standing Orders Committee – Report on Consideration of Reform to Standing Order 23A

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the report of the Standing Orders Committee on the reference of the Assembly to consider Standing Order 23A.

I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later time.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

Public Accounts Committee Annual Report 2016–17 and Minutes

Ms WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Public Accounts Committee 2016–17 report and associated minutes of proceedings. This annual report provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee in 2016–17. The committee has had three focus areas of activity since its appointment in October 2016.

These include examination of the Auditor-General's report; the systems for management of major projects, including the Palmerston Regional Hospital; and a referral from the Assembly on taxi licencing and subleasing.

The committee has continued to work with the Auditor-General on issues raised in her audit reports. Examining audit reports enables the committee to ensure there is an adequate response to key recommendations and to identify systemic issues in the management of public money by government agencies.

The committee has also continued the work of the previous Public Accounts Committee in examining the management of the Palmerston Regional Hospital project and the issues it has raised for the management of major projects more generally.

The Assembly's referral on taxi licencing and subleasing has gained a significant level of interest, with the committee having received over 70 submissions. As at 30 June 2017, the committee had held one private briefing and scheduled public hearings in Alice Springs and Darwin for July. Those hearings have now been held and the committee continues to gather evidence for its inquiry.

I thank committee members for their continued cooperative approach to committee activities. I also thank the Auditor-General, Ms Julie Crisp, for the ongoing assistance and professional support she provides to the committee and the Assembly as a whole.

Finally, I thank the individuals and organisations that have made submissions to the committee's inquiry, as well as the chief executives of agencies for their preparedness and responsiveness in providing information to the committee, and appearing at public hearings and private briefings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the paper be noted.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

MOTION

Note Paper – Travel Report for Member for Arnhem

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members I draw to your attention the travel report tabled by the Member for Arnhem. I move that the paper be noted.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to share my thoughts and feelings about the marriage equality campaign. The question that will be posed to the Australian public through the Australian Bureau of Statistics postal survey is one question only: should the law be changed to allow same sex couples to marry?

Today is the final day for Australians to ensure they are enrolled correctly to have their say with the postal survey. One of my issues with the way this postal survey has been rolled out is that it will ultimately have the negative effect of cutting out the voices of some remote people, particularly in my electorate.

One of the big issues in Arnhem is a reliable postal service. There are communities in my electorate which only receive weekly postal services, if they are lucky, and sometimes less than that. The delivery of this style of survey is inequitable for remote Territorians and I agree with the media release last week from Northern Territory Senator, Malarndirri McCarthy, regarding cutting out the voices of remote Territorians.

It is appalling that in this day and age that our federal government would choose to conduct something of this magnitude in a way that is unfair for people in the Territory, people in the bush and remote Aboriginal Territorians. It reeks of terrible choices in regards to making sure we have a fair say across Australia on this important issue.

One of my issues is the timing of the survey. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics government website, there are some key dates noted. Today, 24 August, is the day the Electoral Roll closes for new enrolments or changes to enrolments. For those people who have changed their name or their address, today is the last day. I urge people—if they have not enrolled or checked their enrolment, they have until midnight tonight, which is only a couple of hours away, to ensure they have a say on this important issue.

The next date is Tuesday, 12 September. This is the commencement of mailing forms and the collection period. The next date, Wednesday 18 October, request for replacement materials closes at 6pm local time. If anyone has not received their survey in the post then they get a chance to ask for a replacement; there is a deadline for this.

The next date on the website is listed as Friday, 27 October, the date which all eligible Australians will be strongly encouraged to return their form. It is an important date and I urge people to ensure once they complete their survey, it is returned promptly so they do not miss out on having their say.

The second last date, Tuesday 7 November, 6pm Eastern Standard Time, no response received after this date will be processed. For places like remote communities that do not have reliable postal services, they will have to battle with time restraints to have their say counted, which is quite appalling. On the final date, Wednesday 15 November, the statistics will be released by the ABS.

This is a very important issue and I will go on record that I have been quite shocked by the vile 'no' campaign for marriage equality. There has been some pretty disgusting and awful stunts—that is probably the nicest way I can put it—regarding 'no' to the marriage equality question.

I have been quite shocked that even in Darwin I have seen in the news—and I respect that people have different opinions and are allowed to have their say. But I do not think it should go to the point of discrimination and harassment towards someone based on their sexuality, racial background, ethnicity or religion. It is disgusting when any form of discrimination rears its ugly head and becomes the point of public focus. It is terrible that any human being would be discriminated against because of who they are.

I condemn the vile acts of anyone, whether it is 'no' or 'yes', to not allow people to have their say in safety and have their opinions. We are in a country where freedom of speech is referred to as a right. Those

conversations need to be respected, respectful, remembering that we are talking about human beings having access to another service some people may take for granted these days.

I do not have any figures regarding the cost of the postal survey to the federal government but this will impact on the funding we receive in the Territory. It is money which could be better spent on our roads, schools and health system. It is a big cop-out from the federal government to not take responsibility for being elected members of parliament and making those hard decisions.

Being a new member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, I know some decisions you make are not popular, but you need to abide by them, stand strong and ensure you are representing the electorate that voted you in. It is a cop-out by the federal government to not make the decision.

I see this almost as a standing point in history, similar to that of the 1967 Referendum where Aboriginal people were recognised officially and counted in the Census. This is a point in time we will look back on and say, 'I was part of that movement and that time in history'. It is giving same-sex couples the right to marry.

Marriage equality is a good terminology that people are using. I will be voting yes in this postal survey. I am happy to put that on the record. That is my personal view and it will be great to see what the rest of Australia thinks.

I disagree, however, with the way this decision will be made since the results of the postal survey are not binding in legislation. If there is a predominantly yes vote returned, the federal government can choose not to change the legislation. That is not a safety net for this huge amount of money being spent on the postal survey.

I will conclude with a quote from Senator Penny Wong:

Marriage equality does not diminish the worth of your relationships; it simply recognises the worth of ours.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will continue on from where I finished last night.

I was referring to the case of Mr Middlebrook, who was the Commissioner for Corrections, who had just lost his job in relation to the absconding of a prisoner in Nhulunbuy.

That is what Mr Middlebrook was trying to do—I am referring to how he was trying to reintegrate people into society before they were released from prison. Unfortunately, when the press and the opposition are firing bullets for political purposes with no knowledge of the circumstances—add to that, some people in corrections did not agree with the commissioner's directions—any explanation by the commissioner as to whether he disobeyed the Attorney-General's direction, the reason behind his support for prisoner Horrell, went out the door.

Mr Middlebrook did have an explanation; it related to some confusion over the instructions by the Attorney-General, that there should be no sex offenders on the program related to those who had completed the SOTB course and had worked in work camps. Regardless, what has since come out of this mess is no chance of any murderer or sex offender being integrated into the community as was the recommendation Ms Walker had from Mr Horrell.

All murderers and sex offenders seem to be now regarded as the same with what seems little attempt to look at each person as a separate case, the separate background and the different circumstances around their case. Have these people just become a number?

Is this government saying you will not be released out of reintegration? Under their previous watch, a lifer was released for integration in my area some years ago and has not been a problem. Labor has now changed its tune because it does not believe in reintegration, something many of the Labor side spoke in favour of in the debate on parole.

Do they think it is a good idea to release people straight out of prison without reintegration? What is this government's policy? Are we risking more cases, like how Mr Melbourne was mentioned in the coroner's report, if we do not look at this issue case by case and just make blanket bans on prisoners? Will we also recognise the many good things Mr Middlebrook did as commissioner?

For example, he delivered the initiatives under the Pillars of Justice; he reviewed and implemented the new *Correctional Services Act*; he was involved in the review and implementation of the sentenced manager manual; the new regionalised elders visitors program; commissioning of the new Darwin Correctional Precinct; the twice relocated youth detention centre in Darwin; the introduction of youth boot camps; new regional work camps; new bulk recruitment campaigns and program; Sentenced to a Job and (inaudible) programs; introduction of electronic monitoring; development of iTalk and libraries; evaluation of the family violence and sex offender programs; hosted the Australasian Parole Authorities' conference and CSMC; developed the Indigenous language resources; established the community-based supervision model; implemented new models for alcohol and other drug treatment beds; partnerships with the department of Housing for housing refurbishment programs; development of the youth justice framework in partnership with the youth sector; remodel of the family responsibility program; introduction of accredited training for youth justice officers; expansion of correctional industries; enhanced training and education programs for prisoners; and establishment of Loves Creek facility for youth offenders.

He also contributed to offering the former Berrimah correctional services the low-security unit for the new Stringybark mandatory alcohol treatment facility. He worked with the Member for Blain regarding the future use of the existing Don Dale centre. He undertook infrastructure works on the facility of the Berrimah correctional centre to be used by the Darwin Judo Club.

Mr Middlebrook may have had his faults, but he was enveloped by politics. This halted his great desire to help prisoners reintegrate into society with skills and support that would hopefully get them to lead better lives and not return to prison. Those fine objectives were snuffed out by political expediency, opportunist politics, loud headlines, and by some inside who did not support him.

I believe Mr Middlebrook is a good man who may have made mistakes. Who has not made mistakes? He tried to do the right thing and may have upset some on the way, but what happened to him was wrong. He was sacrificed by a government that was hanging on by a thread.

This government, which he supported and helped for many years, needs to rectify that wrong. It needs to either make a statement accepting all the good things he tried to do, or recognising that he still has skills the government might need as it looks to work through the difficult issues around incarceration and the high levels of Aboriginals in prisons.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk on marriage.

Marriage can be spoken about in two ways; there is religious marriage and civil marriage. I have had both. Not that it means I have married twice. I am a Catholic and I married for better or worse, for richer or poorer, until death do us part. I have been married to my wife, Imelda, for 44 years in September. I have three children, four grandchildren and I love them all.

Of course it does not always work for some. We are only human and things do not always work out as planned.

For me, marriage is an important ceremony which involves a spiritual perspective—that is a God perspective—that recognises marriage is something more than a civil contract. It is something blessed and when the vows are made, they are made not only between one another but before God.

For some that may be old fashioned, but it is something I believe and something many people still believe. The problem with the present debate is it is unpopular to hold the religious view to say you are a Catholic. It is then used as a mode of attack to say you have no right to force your views on others. Of course that view in reverse is dismissed when I ask why are you trying to force your non-religious views on me?

As I said before, I am also married under the laws of this country, which involves the *Marriage Act*. We are being asked to say whether we support changes to the *Marriage Act* that allows people of the same gender to be married under that act.

Many years ago I had a conversation, I think in 2002, with a Liberal member of the South Australian parliament. He was trying to find a way of allowing people to have their relationship recognised by the state.

He believed if people wanted to live in a same-sex relationship, that is their business, and the government should be able to ratify that arrangement. He also said it should not be about gays, but anyone who is living together. And there are people, relations, friends, widows, brothers, who live together for company but not in a sexual relationship. This debate today is not the exclusive domain of one group.

I believe this is what should happen, and the problem with the plebiscite is that if it only requires a yes/no answer; I have no ability to put an alternative point of view. That is the change I would support.

Why will I not support a change to the definition of marriage? It is something that has been at the centre of religious belief and cultures, including Aboriginal culture, for thousands of years. It has also allowed the human race to procreate, and that has been the basis of the family, the core foundation of our society, where children can be raised in a loving and safe environment. It is more than just love. I know things do not work out as we might hope, but that is not reason for change.

For me, marriage is a male and female thing. A natural and perfect fit, you might say. The colour red is always red. The colour blue is always blue. They are both colours, but red will never be blue and all the noise and media will not change that fact. And so it is the same with marriage.

Legislation may say blue is red but, just like marriage, you cannot change something into something that it is not. That would be a farce. I hope people will not support the change, but I also recognise people who live together should have the right to have that relationship recognised, and if that is an option put in the plebiscite, I would support it.

When people criticise the government for not taking this issue back to parliament, my view is that the government made a promise. I have a concern. If Labor has a party position, or a team position, I do not think it is fair. I would have thought this would have been a conscience vote. What disappoints me, there was a Western Australian Senator who had to resign because of his principle that he did not support this move to have same sex marriage. That disappoints me with Labor.

Believe it or not I come from a partly Labor family. My grandmother was Labor, my dad was Democratic Labor but that was all at the time of the split. It was about families, it was about working class people. I worked as a young bloke filling out ballot forms to make sure the communists did not take over some of the unions. At that time, if you lived in the 1950s and 1960s, especially the 1950s, it was very strong.

I used to go the Trades Hall Council as part of my schooling and listen to the people talk there. I understood about the basic rights of workers. I believe in the basic rights of workers. A lot of that aligns with my Catholic beliefs. If you read some of the encyclicals from way back talking about the rights of workers, you will understand why as well.

So when a senator cannot stay in the party because he has a different view, it shocks me. If people believe the parliament should vote on this as a parliament, let it be an open vote, but if people are forced by the conventions of one party that you cannot vote against what you believe in conscience to be wrong then—one of the principles of being in parliament is to lead and to listen. There are times when you should lead, and times when you should listen. You also live with your conscience. That is what you take with you through the rest of your life.

I say that there is another option, but for me, marriage will always be between a male and a female.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before the Assembly adjourns for the evening I will draw elected members attention to Saturday 2 September, the Open Day for the Supreme Court, Government House and Parliament House. As you go out to your constituencies, back to your communities, please remind them that 2 September is their opportunity to visit one or all of those three facilities.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.