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Public Sector Employees

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

This morning the *NT News* reported that the Gunner Labor government planned to make sweeping job cuts across the public service. The story contained confirmation from the Treasurer that all government agencies have been asked to identify duplication and inefficiencies which, as we all know, is thinly veiled code for sackings. How many of these Territorians does your government intend to sack in order to fund your costly and, to date, ineffective agenda? How does sacking public employees add to economic prosperity, stability in government and population retention? Why should the public service trust you?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I genuinely appreciate the opportunity to provide confidence and certainty to public servants of the Northern Territory. Sometimes, as members of parliament, we may wonder who is listening to us in the Chamber, but one group of people that listens is public servants. I send a message of confidence and certainty to them. We value the significant work they do during difficult times. During the last four years we had a very professional public service working very hard, and I guarantee this government values them; we back them.

We will do what we said we would do. We are putting in place our promises regarding jobs, kids, trust and supporting the bush. We have a big policy agenda and we need a good public service to do that, which is why we trust and value our public service. I can assure the public servants of the Northern Territory that we do not have an agenda to sack them. It was a scurrilous accusation from the Leader of the Opposition. They have the certainty and confidence from me, as Chief Minister, that we do not have an agenda to sack them.

The quite remarkable accusation from the Leader of the Opposition is that we should not be looking for duplication and inefficiency. That is a bizarre approach from an opposition. No wonder their budget was so much trouble over the last four years. All good governments going into a budget process show internal discipline. It is something we have been asked to do by the Chamber of Commerce, amongst others. As a government you should have a thorough process about what you do. You should show some internal discipline.

We are asking questions about and testing what we do as a government to ensure we are not duplicating, do not have inefficiencies and that we tackle waste; this is good government. It is what Territorians expect of a government going into a budget process. I provide absolute confidence to Territorians that we will have a plan to invest in job-creating infrastructure. We will put in place plans that evolve the front line of the Northern Territory, and we will do it with the valuable, hard-working public servants we have in the Northern Territory. To do it, we will show some internal discipline, something the CLP never did in its last four years of chaos and uncertainty.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. The Chief Minister was asked a direct question about how many public servants he would sack.

Mr GUNNER: I have already answered that and I am now critiquing the CLP on its bad budget practices of never following up on duplication and inefficiencies. This is quite an extraordinary omission from a minister of the previous government about the ineptitude of the previous government.

We will be a good government. We have a great Treasurer. We will follow up on duplication and inefficiencies, and we look forward to working with valuable ...

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Restoring the Northern Territory's Reputation

Mrs WORDEN to CHIEF MINISTER

How is the government working to restore the reputation of the Northern Territory at home and abroad? Why is it so important for creating jobs, investing in kids and in delivering for the bush?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question and I appreciate it. Every time I think I know the size of the job in front of us, I am reminded there is more to do. When you are reminded by the opposition that they have—they love inefficiencies and duplication. You realise the extent of the damage that has been done to the reputation of the Northern Territory and our ability to administer ourselves. There was extraordinary damage done by the CLP over the last four years of chaos.

This mission we have to restore the reputation of the Northern Territory is a key challenge for us. We know the Territory is a vibrant, exciting and special place. All of us put our hand up to be members of parliament because we love this place and we want it to be even better.

I want other Australians and those living overseas to view the Northern Territory as a special, vibrant and exciting place, and not the laughing stock the CLP reduced us to during its four years of shenanigans. You wonder about the reputation we hold in Canberra when the Leader of the Opposition himself admits that in the last four years they did not tackle duplication or inefficiencies. The federal Treasurer and Finance minister would not have much respect for that. I spent two days in Canberra, at the invitation of the Prime Minister, to help repair our relationship and rebuild the trust the Australian government can have in us.

I know some people in this Chamber have criticised me for accepting the Prime Minister's invitation, being in Canberra, meeting the ministers for Defence, Finance, Education, Trade and Northern Australia. These were significant and important meetings for the future of the Northern Territory. We need a good relationship with Canberra to deliver on the federal government strategies of developing the north, closing the gap and the Defence White Paper.

There is a significant opportunity for the Northern Territory that can only be delivered if they have trust in us to do our job as a government. I will have to go back and tell them we are not going to follow the CLP practices of encouraging duplication and inefficiencies.

The Minister for Finance, Mathias Cormann, would be appalled. We had a strong conversation about the federal government's agenda in that space. He was very keen to put his point. He was a very important person to talk with. He is often forgotten in the conversation about delivering on Defence for the Northern Territory. A lot of attention goes to Marise Payne as Defence minister, or Chris Pyne as the Defence Industries minister; however, Mathias Cormann, as the Minister for Finance, actually sets the procurement directions of the Australian Government. It was a very crucial meeting for ensuring we deliver on these opportunities for Territorians.

It is about more than saying, 'Let us give Territorians jobs', which is obviously crucial. There is a significant, strategic benefit for defence if this work is done locally. It all depends on them trusting us, and we will repair the damage to trust done by the CLP.

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired, Chief Minister.

Electronic Monitoring Devices

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

You could have introduced legislation yesterday to implement amendments to the *Bail Act* regarding electronic monitoring. If your government had responded with urgency to the crime wave, we could have been voting on enabling legislation today. The delay in getting this measure to the House proves your government has been asleep at the wheel on crime.

Why do Territorians have to wait until March for this to be supported by the House, and why did you not respond to this terrible crime crisis quicker?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the CLP for indicating its support for this important legislation. I appreciate that. We are putting it forward to the House in March on urgency, so I appreciate the indication of support for the legislation. There is a big body of work and significant changes to the legislation that we are proposing. We have been accused, by some of the sector, of rushing this. Obviously the CLP is taking the opposite stance. We are working urgently on the issues that confront Territorians when it comes to law and order in the Northern Territory.

We have done a significant number of things this year and last year. Last year I provided the police, for the first time, certainty in their recruitment plan in the NT. We provided certainty about numbers—the 120 that was promised by the CLP, which failed to deliver it. The CLP lied in this Chamber about delivering the 120 additional officers.

We will honour the broken CLP promise of extra police resources. Even more importantly, we will give them certainty over four years on how they can deliver that. It gives police the ability to make important strategic decisions because they will know with certainty when the recruitment squads will finish, when the next one will start and what their resources are. They can provide 18 police officers to help prevent youth crime. That is a very important decision, and our police are well placed to lead the investigative ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I appreciate that the Chief Minister is taking the opportunity to try to tell Territorians he has done something on this issue, but why do Territorians have to wait until March to debate this bill?

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order; sit down.

Mr GUNNER: We have done a significant body of work, but the job is not done. We will keep working in this space. We are bringing forward legislation in the March sittings. I thank the CLP members for their support of that legislation. It will be passed on urgency in the next sittings. We have been accused by some in the sector of rushing this. It is important to respond urgently to Territorians' concerns, and that is what we are doing. We have brought forward responses to Territorians' concerns about law and order in the NT because we are a responsive government that listens and acts on concerns.

We are seeking to pass this legislation on urgency, and I appreciate the indication of support from the CLP. It builds on an extensive list of things we are doing to prevent crime in the NT. We are intervening early to ensure we do everything we can to stop people from reoffending. We know that the practices from the last four years—and we will take some of the blame from when we were last in government; we could have done things better as well. We are repairing the damage of significant cuts by the CLP over the last four years.

They do not like hearing it. They do not want to accept any responsibility for where things got to, but we are doing our best to act urgently to fix their mistakes and get on top of the problems involving law and order in the NT. We will keep doing that for Territorians.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Electronic Monitoring Devices

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

When did you draw up the drafting instructions on the bill, when did it go to Cabinet, and when did Parliamentary Counsel receive it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are working on this urgently right now. It will come into parliament in March. It requires urgent work from our departments, and they are doing that work now to ensure it comes before the March sittings so we can pass it on urgency. Doing this in such a compressed time frame means we have already made the decision to not go through the formal processes of approval to introduce and draft.

We have already made the decisions as a government to ensure this happens as quickly as possible, and to not go through the process the CLP is advocating, which would actually slow down the drafting of this legislation. They are saying, 'Can you do it now, but also can you do it in the slowest way possible?' We will not do that. We will not take the CLP's advice to do this as slowly as possible. We will do this on urgency in March. I reject the CLP's advice to do this slowly.

Jobs and Opportunities in the NT

Mr KIRBY to TREASURER

Can the minister please update the House on how the government is supporting community groups to boost jobs and opportunities throughout the Territory.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this government is committed to supporting jobs across the NT. Since coming to government we have taken decisive action to ensure we get the stimulus into the economy that we need. In 2016 business did it tough. The next 12 to 18 months will be challenging, but the future is very bright in the Northern Territory; I must stress that. There are some really good times ahead, but we know the next 12 months will be challenging.

We listened, acted and put the right stimulus measures on the ground. At lunch time today I had the lovely opportunity to meet Chris and Michelle who run NT Shade, a local small family business in Winnellie. Many of the beautiful shade structures over playgrounds in the Darwin area—they make that happen. As a mum of young kids, and seeing the energy you can run out of a child on a playground, I appreciate the importance of that infrastructure. The Member for Spillett is smiling because she agrees.

It was wonderful to hear about how they are benefiting from the community grants program. They have been awarded a voucher of work to help the Palmerston Rugby Union Club improve its shade as part of an approximately \$66 000 upgrade program of works to benefit the club. We said the community benefit grants program is not just about short-term stimulus measures; it is about the long-term gains for Territorians. We are backing those who back everybody else—churches, non-government organisations, sporting organisations, multicultural groups and childcare. Those places give Territorians the vital support they need.

We have had such a fantastic response from local groups putting in applications to this \$10m program, in which works have to be finished by the end of the year. The uptake has been fantastic. We have been overwhelmed by the response. The work is hitting the ground right now across the Northern Territory to support jobs and local business.

We have coupled this initiative with a steel manufacturing package. We have put in a public housing upgrade package in urban areas. We are upgrading our remote health clinics as well. We are making sure we invest in valuable, long-term infrastructure for the Territory. There is some great infrastructure, particularly through the steel package, that will help boost tourism opportunities, which is a great economic driver in the Northern Territory.

We have had a great uptake of the community grants, and it was lovely to meet NT Shade today to hear about how it is benefiting that business, and its workforce.

Legal Aid

Mr GUYULA to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and JUSTICE

What is the NT Government doing to improve legal aid for Territorians, particularly Indigenous Territorians in locations away from Darwin like my electorate, Nhulunbuy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for his question, following on from his questions yesterday about acknowledging the high rates of Indigenous incarceration.

The question the member has asked fits with the federal government; it provides the funding for legal aid. Over the last couple of years we have seen lobbying from all quarters on the cuts to legal aid at a national level. We need to ensure that when people are, sadly, involved in the justice system, they have representation so the system can work.

It has been very disappointing. The last federal Labor government, under Mark Dreyfus, ensured there was funding, but we have seen significant cuts. It is concerning. When I attended the Police and Attorney-Generals' Ministerial Council Meeting in Melbourne last year, this was on the agenda. The states and territories are very concerned about funding agreements that will come to an end in July this year. It is an issue that will have an impact in the Northern Territory because we rely on our community-based legal representation sector to provide that work for many Territorians.

This government is concerned about it, and we have spoken about it at the national level. The funding comes from the federal government, which has flagged changes to the funding agreement that was put in

place about five or six years ago. I would be happy to provide the member with a briefing, and I suggest he contacts the federal representatives about this important issue.

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are 14 times more likely to be incarcerated—we are concerned. Legal aid services provide vital representation, not just in our urban centres but across the Northern Territory. These organisations travel to provide that important service to people in remote communities. The government, along with other states and territories, is highly concerned and has been lobbying the federal government. I thank the honourable member for the question.

Tiwi Bombers

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

How is the government supporting the Tiwi Bombers to create a better future for the Tiwi people?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arafura for his important question and for his very strong advocacy in this area for the Tiwi Bombers. The Gunner government cares about the bush and we listen to the bush. I do not think it has escaped anyone's attention that the Tiwi Bombers issues have been well publicised over the last week. The outpouring of support from the community highlights the need for the club to continue to thrive and the need for some immediate action.

The Tiwi Bombers are not just a football club; they are a way of life. They were established to address some pretty serious issues in the Tiwi Islands. They have been effective in connecting young people to meaningful activity and to other people in the community. They have also been effective in suicide prevention and youth diversion; they are deeply imbedded in the community.

We moved fast to help them in a meaningful way. On Monday I phoned AFL CEO, Gillon McLachlan, to convene a working group to put in place a plan to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of the club. The AFL is aware of the Bombers importance to the Tiwi community, and is fully supportive of our efforts to assist the club to survive and thrive.

The Member for Arafura has been a strong voice for the Tiwi community, and is a driving force in bringing AFL NT and AFL to the table to assist with the Bombers' survival. Year after year the Islands produce footballers with exquisite talent who entertain crowds on the island, in Darwin and in the AFL more broadly. They have the Long and Rioli family dynasties synonymous with Tiwi football brilliance, and they are a source of immense pride for Territorians.

Once we became aware of those issues facing the Tiwi Bombers, we acted swiftly to bring together all the key stakeholders to ensure that this critical football club survives. We are supporting them through the convening of a working party with representatives from, most importantly, the Tiwi football community, the AFL, the Northern Territory Government and AFL NT to develop a sustainability plan for the Tiwi bombers.

I am really pleased to be going there next week with the Member for Arafura to meet the Tiwi Bombers and talk to local residents about a range of issues. We will be there listening and making sure we are putting into action what we are hearing. I thank the Member for Arafura again for being a really staunch advocate for people.

The Gunner government has contributed \$80 000 over two years to fund a football development officer based on the Islands. We are investing \$20 000 into the working party consultancy and strategic plan development. We recognise how important football is to the Tiwi community. We have acted to make sure they get the support they need to continue to play football. We are also investing in the facilities there; it was a major election commitment of ours so I look forward to joining the Member for Arafura there next week.

Fishing Infrastructure

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

As an avid fisherman I would like to know how this government is creating jobs and improving fishing infrastructure for Territorians.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have not had the opportunity to go fishing together, but we have had the fantastic opportunity in opposition—while the previous government was fighting amongst itself and not listening—to go out with fishermen, both commercial and recreational, and listen to them about what they want delivered.

What an amazing contribution by the Territory Labor government—a \$50m infrastructure election commitment that we are rolling out already. Not only is fishing iconic to the Territory lifestyle, but we also have the chance to catch a \$1m barra. I hope you catch that, Member for Brennan, and then give the money to a charity that needs it. Anybody in this room who catches it gives it to a charity; we all agree on it.

This is \$50m worth of work that will go to locals. Fifty-million dollars creates jobs and gives remote Indigenous people economic opportunities for fishing tours and access to the land and waterways. This \$50m creates quite an opportunity.

Fishing charters, tackle shops, boat sale servicing and tourism—tourism is the anchor of our market and economy, and we need to make sure we are bringing people to the Territory. Catch a \$1m fish—Gary is not such a bad bloke; he would probably take you on his boat down at Dundee, no problems whatsoever.

I want to put on the record that the construction works to be undertaken in 2016 and 2017—we have fast-tracked \$6m as part of a stimulus package to upgrade and seal a section of the Corroboree Access Road tendered to be released in March. The bitumen to seal the Middle Arm boat ramp car park is tendered for May this year. Construction of a toilet block at the Dinah Beach boat ramp is tendered for May this year. There will be an installation of security cameras at Dinah Beach in late March.

We have had consultation for construction of the Channel Island boat ramp upgrade, as well as the land-based fishing platform for Darwin, Palmerston and the surrounding regions. There will be wheelchair access, and croc protection will always be in place. Be boat safe and smart. We are implementing construction programs of scientifically-designed fish aggregating devices, and we are croc wise at all times.

I could speak forever on this, but I want to touch on Dundee boat ramp. We completed it. We had the former member, the lickspittle to the Giles government, and here we are. We are delivering \$50m for recreational fishers. We will keep rolling this money out; \$6m now and \$50m over the next four years.

Housing Investment – Local Decision-Making

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Minister has committed government to better local decision-making for Indigenous Territorians. Why then does your \$1.1bn housing investment have no avenue for expenditure in the homeland centres?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. Let us first go to local decision-making because that was a strong election commitment that has been well received across the Northern Territory. We are putting a lot of energy into that space through the local government sector immediately, and in terms of the local authorities.

Aligned with that are improvements in governance, training for local authority members, councillors and administration, as well as significant infrastructure programs. Local authorities will have the opportunity to dialogue directly with the regional councils, and be directly involved in improvements to their own community.

You ask a very interesting question about the link with the \$1.1bn program across 10 years in terms of housing. The Homelands Program deals directly with Aboriginal land. It has some significant elements to support homeland residents. The program relates to improving and maintaining housing; it delivers municipal and essential services. Under a new policy directive regarding improving homeland housing, in terms of new construction, it has the opportunity for co-founded models.

I am very pleased to see that a significant investment from ABA, \$40m, has come to government to be worked on in partnership. They are looking at innovation. They are not exactly looking at new housing, but

they are looking at innovation. This is a very important first step. We are saying to homeland residents, 'Let us see where we can work together in partnership. Let us work on this co-founded model.'

Member for Nhulunbuy, we have not walked away from homelands. The previous CLP government cashed a cheque with the Commonwealth, took the money, appropriated most of it and left us with a significant challenge. You can point exactly to the previous government for the deal done with the Commonwealth.

We will continue to support homelands. The Minister for Education is always proud to talk about the infrastructure investment from Education into homelands schools. We will continue to work with homelands residents, and we look forward to the opportunities to work on co-founded models. I am sure, with your standing and ability in the community, you represent a very important partner in this. I look forward to your advice.

Healthcare Services in Central Australia

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for HEALTH

How is the government improving the delivery of critical healthcare services for Centralians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my recent opportunity to be in Alice Springs and tour the facilities of the hospital, which the member joined me for.

This government has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the people of Central Australia by enhancing and expanding local health services. We toured the new state-of-the-art ICU 10-bed facility, which has the latest technology. It had a number of upgrades that will benefit patients and staff. It was great that the Member for Namatjira and I were able to tour that facility and hear firsthand from staff how that is improving their workplace and patient care.

It was, however, sad to hear the statistic from doctors that 70% of the beds in ICU are filled with alcohol-related accident victims. We acknowledge that issue and we need to tackle it. The ICU has the latest technology, including a ceiling hoist in patient rooms, a patient cardiac monitoring system, state-of-the-art washing rooms and negative pressure rooms. This is on the back of the upgrades in the emergency department, which was a \$24.5m ED and Imaging Department upgrade. It was opened under the previous government, but it was a plan from the previous Labor government.

It is important that governments continue to invest ...

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: It is a shame they are so chatty now. They were not so supportive of the hospital in their last term.

It is important for governments to keep investing in health services for the people of Alice Springs and surrounding regions. People in Central Australia visit the Alice Springs Hospital from a large surrounding area. It services a huge number of people. I was able to officially open the \$5.1m Research Education and Training Development Centre, the RED Centre. I met with the Member for Araluen earlier this week and offered for her to tour that facility.

We acknowledge that it was Commonwealth Government funding, but it includes a 100-seat theatre, student computer hubs, a student lounge and offices. This is an important upgrade for the Alice Springs Hospital because it will provide state-of-the-art training for health professionals, doctors and nurses to undertake whilst they are in Alice Springs. If people leave the region for further training, it is hard to get them back.

This is an important facility. This government is committed to the 10-bed hospice on the grounds of the Alice Springs Hospital, which the community called for and this government delivered.

We acknowledge the commitment to health services in Central Australia. I look forward to continuing to work with those members from Central Australia on upgrades to their facilities.

Ice and Crime

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Does your government have a comprehensive plan for tackling the ice epidemic that has beset the Territory and is turning our youth into violent criminals, destroying families, benefiting organised crime and threatening the lives of children and families across the Territory? Without a history lesson, can you tell us what your plan is and when we can see results?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. He does not like being reminded of the last four years.

Territorians have a right to be safe at work and at home. We have a comprehensive plan to tackle crime in the Territory. An element of that is ice, but that does not get away from the fact that the leading cause of crime in the NT still remains to be alcohol. You need to pay strong attention to alcohol, which we have done, and the Attorney-General has talked about the Banned Drinker Register.

We are also very much aware of the problems the Northern Territory faces with ice. The select committee on ice during the last term conducted an inquiry and reported in November 2015. The ice action plan, Tackling Ice in the Northern Territory, was launched by the previous government in February 2016, along with a website: breaktheice.nt.gov.au.

Going into the last election we said we would not be elected and then make the same mistakes the previous government did by tearing things up. We did not come in, like the previous government, and scrap the BDR. We have a plan, break the ice, which we are working on just as the CLP government did. It may come as a surprise to the Leader of the Opposition because he was not aware of hotspot policing until recently—a very common, intelligence-led police tactic. Police, as part of the work they do on things like Operation Sonoma, Winx and Trident, have a focus on ice as part of their ordinary activities.

Police and the Health department take ice seriously. There is a plan to tackle ice in the Northern Territory, which seems to be news to the Leader of the Opposition, but it was launched during their term in government. He does not want a history lesson, but we are happy to provide a briefing for him on the former government's plan on ice.

We take this seriously. It is part of our comprehensive plan to tackle crime and the causes of crime. One area in which we need to act urgently, and we are—the Health minister is leading this—is the Banned Drinker Register because takeaway alcohol remains the leading cause of crime in the Northern Territory. That is a very strong focus for us as a government.

While the Leader of the Opposition does not want a history lesson, I am happy to provide him a briefing on tackling ice in the Northern Territory. It is a very clear plan that was launched under the previous government, and one that we are continuing because we are not a government that gets elected and tears things up for political points. Territorians have a right to feel safe, and we are delivering on that.

Blatherskite Park Development Proposal

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

There is a \$300m private proposal to develop Blatherskite Park in Alice Springs, on your desk. This is a proposal to develop Blatherskite Park into a world-class tourism, sport and industry hub. What is your view on this proposal and when will you provide your government's feedback to the parties involved in this proposal?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a very broad proposal that has been put forward. I have asked my agencies to do due diligence on it. It is not sitting on my desk; I am not sure where that has come from. I have a clean desk; I get through my briefs pretty quickly. I believe that officials from Treasury have gone down to discuss this, and have followed up on the proponents.

I am happy to get further advice for you, Member for Araluen, but my understanding is that our department officials have been talking with the proponents about whether this proposal stacks up. There is a very significant public investment in assets, service and the community groups who use Blatherskite Park. This proposal would sideline many of those user groups from Blatherskite Park.

It is a very big proposal that would go to community use of Blatherskite Park as well, so it has to be taken seriously and due diligence needs to be done. Government has a process for unsolicited we can deal with these things with probity, fully understand the details and do things in a way that provide for cleanliness of government, which is important.

I am happy to follow up where that is at. I do not know if you want a briefing—you are nodding; I am happy to arrange that and make sure you are fully informed of the details of the proposal, where it is at and how it stacks up. It is being checked by government.

Early Childhood Education Investment – Tennant Creek

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for EDUCATION

How is this government's investment in early childhood education and care supporting families and creating jobs in Tennant Creek?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this government is placing young children at the heart of its agenda, and it is investing \$6.5m to construct an early childhood integrated learning centre on the site of the Tennant Creek preschool. We know how old and rundown the current preschool is, as well as the story about Michael's grandmother being the original preschool teacher. A new facility is well and truly overdue for the youngest Tennant Creek residents. The young kids in Tennant Creek are deserving of a new facility.

This centre will be a purpose built facility that will provide preschool and early learning programs, health services and family support through the Families as First Teachers program. The facility will include a new preschool catering for up to 88 children, with meeting rooms, visiting specialist rooms and amenities for food preparation and delivering of nutrition programs.

It will be similar to the Palmerston Child and Family Early Learning Centre that the Member for Spillett knows well, the Larapinta Child and Family Centre and also the Brainting Preschool. All of these are great new early childhood facilities, and the Tennant Creek childhood integrated learning centre will be similar to them.

The community will have a say. The Education department does a wonderful job; when they build infrastructure they get input from the community. I take my hat off to the hard-working public servants in Infrastructure and the Department of Education, who are long-term employees led by an able female, which is great to see.

Well done to the people in the Education department who will consult and come up with a wonderful facility. Development of this centre will be good for local jobs and the local economy by providing opportunities for the construction industry during its development, as well as ongoing employment of early childhood educators in the region. The centre will recruit another full-time teaching position and an assistant teacher. You have heard me say before that teachers make great citizens; they are the people who get involved in sporting clubs.

It will be wonderful to have an additional early childhood teacher in Tennant Creek, as well as a teacher assistant for that school. Not only will this new centre improve young children's learning and development, we will also be using the buy local principles and focusing on value for Territory in that facility. I look forward to being in Tennant Creek in February 2018—I hope that it will stick to this time line—with the Member for Barkly to see what will no doubt be an amazing facility, and a much-needed boost to the Tennant Creek community.

Seniors' Concessions

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

During the election campaign your government promised to provide a \$700 debit card to use on travel and government services, such as power, for the 3000 seniors cut out of the scheme by the CLP. We are now in February and seniors still want to know what is going on. The other day I noticed a reply to a petition on my desk, dated 16 December 2016, stating that senior Territorians will be better off by 1 July. This was a Labor promise. It is not something overly complicated. Why the long delay of another four months, or is this about holding off payments to seniors to save money?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the important question. I spoke to the Association for Independent Retirees this week, along with the Member for Port Darwin, which was a great meeting. We have been working very hard on this. As I said yesterday in the Chamber, the concessions for seniors in the Northern Territory have been a really mixed bag; over successive governments additional concessions have been added. They are inconsistent; some have indexation, others do not. Some people can access some and not others, so we are trying to work through that to make sure we have a consistent, equitable and sustainable scheme.

We are very clear that we will be delivering the \$700 that we promised in the election. We are starting a consultation process because different groups in the seniors area are unclear about whether they want a debit card situation, or to continue with the concessions being paid to Power and Water and showing on their bill.

We are still working through that. We are waiting to hear from the community on how they want that concession delivered, but we are definitely delivering it from 1 July. This is about making sure we get it right; this has been a very inconsistent and confusing part of government policy over many years, and we want to make sure we deliver for senior Territorians. As the Chief Minister has said on many occasions, we need to support our senior Territorians and ensure they stay here. The important contribution that senior Territorians—I struggle to realise that I am only two years away from being a senior Territorian, but I will continue to contribute, as many senior Territorians do.

We need to be clear that if we can keep people here—if people retire in the Northern Territory then they keep their savings and knowledge here, we keep people in our workforce longer and we keep families here. The biggest reason young people leave the Territory is that they have come here, had a great experience, had some kids and then move back to the eastern states because of family support.

A friend of mine is about to have a baby in Alice Springs and her mother is moving to Alice Springs. That is what we want to see; we want seniors moving to the Territory to support their families in this wonderful and growing economy that we are leading.

Housing – Remote

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

How will the Northern Territory Government's remote housing reforms grow jobs in the bush and improve housing conditions for Territorians?

ANSWER

As part of the \$1.1bn investment over 10 years—which is a record investment by any Australian state—\$15m has been brought forward directly in response to an economic stimulus plan, particularly for the bush. It delivers those outcomes we want to see in supporting health, education and justice. Out of that \$15m, \$10m will focus on Room to Breathe and \$5m is for R and M. It is good to see the R and M spend already rolling out in Arafura, Arnhem, Big Rivers, Barkly and the central regions.

Member for Namatjira, I will digress and acknowledge the Member for Stuart. I thank him and all the people who have been involved in supporting Kintore because it had houses inundated and had significant challenges with weather.

The consultation is well and truly under way in terms of early works and testing this policy. I thank the bush members who have been instrumental in communicating and consulting with their constituents about this policy and how it works. The department has been doing a lot of work. It identified 23 communities, which is a good spread across the Territory. It looks at department analysis on housing stress, overcrowding and which communities are most in need.

This is an early works program that will continue after 30 June. It will roll into the Labor government's first budget, in terms of the House, and the Territory will see our new programs. The consultations for Room to Breathe are about innovation. We are interested in extra floor space, rooms and privacy for families. We also want to engage people in a conversation about innovation in outdoor living areas, as well as innovation in terms of what will improve their health and wellbeing, and opportunities to stabilise families and get kids to school.

This is an exciting time. We are engaging with peak bodies, including the land and regional councils and Aboriginal organisations, to make this work and engage local people in employment. This will be sustainable. It will lead to training and employment. Aboriginal people will be building their own houses. This is a 10-year plan that I am very proud to be part of it.

Ice and Youth Crime

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Over the past few days Territory police have made a number of notable drug seizures, including the confiscation of ice and large amounts of marijuana. Our police are doing an admirable job, but have they been given the necessary legal tools to effectively prevent crime?

I point out that ice is not mentioned in your youth crime overhaul, and the parliamentary committee that reviewed ice highlighted that over 90% of youth crime involved ice. Why do police not test for drugs when they arrest offenders? Why are we not collecting data on offences involving drugs? How can police adequately do their job when the government does not fully understand the scope of the drug problem they are dealing with?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It begs a bit of, 'Why did you not do this in the last four years?'

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20: interruption of debate.

Madam SPEAKER: The Chief Minister has the call. Please cease interjecting so we can hear the answer.

Mr GUNNER: I regularly meet with the Police Commissioner to discuss the resources he has and the tools he needs to do his job. It is a regular conversation we have.

As the Leader of the Opposition may be aware—it was a point of much controversy in the last sittings—we changed legislation to give police greater authority when it comes to tackling the trafficking of drugs. It was a point of much controversy because the CLP ran very misleading ads in the papers about our support for that legislation, and they were caught out by the Auditor-General, amongst others.

Changes were made to give police greater powers. I remember the debate at the time, regarding the *Misuse of Drugs Act*. Drug trafficking, importation and manufacture—including cultivation—is a transporter crime. NT Police routinely engage in cross-border investigations to maintain a safer NT.

I am happy to make the Police Commissioner available to the Leader of the Opposition. I know from my conversations with the police that they have a very strong and targeted approach to drugs. We have seen that in recent days. That includes what they do to investigate youth crime.

I can only assume that, in some way, the Leader of the Opposition comes from a point of insufficient information—that is a polite way of putting it—regarding the work of the police, the plans that were put in

place during the CLP's term, the legislation that was changed to give police greater powers, and the focus by government and police to ensure they have the tools they need.

I will give the Leader of the Opposition, and Territorians, the guarantee that I am constantly meeting with the Police Commissioner to discuss the resources and tools they have to help them in their job. That includes ice as well as alcohol, amongst other issues that matter to Territorians. Territorians have a right to a safe community. There is a significant amount of work happening in this space and has been for a long time. It was happening under the CLP; I will give them some credit for that, even though the Leader of the Opposition was unaware of that work. The legislation has changed, and the tools have been given to police to act on this issue. There is action being taken and it includes youth crime.

Public Sector Employees – Government's Plan

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

You are responsible for the whole of government, so how are the cuts in the public service to be determined? What consultants are you using to review and determine the breadth and depth of these public service cuts? How much are you paying the consultants who are helping you to determine these cuts and changes to the public service?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have not employed any consultants to help us with this, so the cost is zero. No consultants have been employed to help us on savings measures. The internal discipline we will apply, which the CLP failed to apply during its four years—its refusal to tackle duplication and inefficiencies. This is work we are doing internally with our chief executive officers.

We will not go down the path the CLP took, where it put on the million dollar man and the renewal management board. I can provide complete assurance to the Members for Araluen, Blain, Spillett, Daly and any other Independent that we are not going down the same path as the CLP in which it outsourced the decisions of government to the million dollar man and the Renewal Management Board.

We are going to take the approach of all good governments by applying internal discipline to what we do as a government, such as checking for duplication and inefficiencies. These are smart things that government should do so it can make sure its budget is focused on job creating infrastructure and delivering valuable services to the frontline.

There was no consultant employed by us on this job. The cost is zero. This is a complete contrast to the million dollar man and the Renewal Management Board.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. Is the Chief Minister going to tell us his part of his efficiency plan? How many public service jobs are you going to cut?

Madam SPEAKER: No, that is not 113 anyway; it is 110. Chief Minister, you have the call.

Mr GUNNER: As I have explained several times, to provide confidence and certainty to public servants that we listen and value them—they do good work and we need them to deliver our plans and priorities for investing in kids, restoring trust, growing jobs and supporting the bush. As all Territorians would expect, we will be a good government that will apply internal discipline to how we do our jobs so we can deliver on those promises and priorities of government.

There are specific questions about consultancies and how much we are paying consultants to inform us on this approach, the Budget Cabinets we are about to take—there are no consultants, no money. We are going through the ordinary practices of a good government to tackle duplication and inefficiencies.

We will be a government that delivers on its promises to Territorians; one of them was about not making the mistakes of the previous CLP of the million dollar man and Renewal Management Board. We will not be making short-sighted decisions and scrapping things for political reasons. We will be a good, considered government that delivers on our promises of job creating infrastructure, delivering for the front line.

I promise Territorians that we will look at the budget and what government does to ensure we are tackling inefficiencies and duplication, as well as to repair the damage done over the last four years regarding the

trust and reputation of government in the Northern Territory. That is an expectation from Territorians towards their government.

VISITOR

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to welcome a young fella in the gallery who has come in to view Parliament House. Hello, young fella.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: It is really good that you have been brought in. Is it mum or grandma? Teacher. I am sure there is a member in here who will go up and say hello to you when we have finished Question Time in five minutes. Who is Stuart Park?

Good on you for coming in and having a look at parliament.

Telecommunications – Remote

Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for CORPORATE and INFORMATION SERVICES

What is this government doing to get Territorians in the bush connected, and what more can be done?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Stuart for this really important question. I know he is particularly passionate about this, and it impacts very heavily on the residents of all our bush electorates.

Improving telecommunications is such a huge part of our commitment to supporting Territorians. I acknowledge the work that has been done previously. It is a big challenge for any government, given our remoteness and the huge areas that governments need to cover in telecommunications. They are critical to health services, education and families in times of emergency; it can mean the difference between life and death.

The Northern Territory Government, as members of the Chamber are aware, does have a co-investment agreement of \$30m with Telstra to bring mobile coverage to more communities. Ali Curung got fixed broadband services installed in November, and Timber Creek in January. We have just added Santa Teresa to the program for upgraded and new broadband services.

The next group of communities to get mobile and broadband services include Titjikala, Manyallaluk, Barunga, Yarralin, Bulman Weemol, Kaltukatjara, Minyerri and Umbakumba. We provided a grant of \$599 000 to the Centre for Appropriate Technology for the installation of 30 mobile hotspots to double the range of mobile services. I acknowledge that it is a fantastic organisation. The Member for Namatjira and I had the great pleasure of visiting it to look at its technology recently, and I thank them for their time.

We are getting on with the hard work that has been started under successive governments, and we are doing everything we can for Territorians in the bush. That includes actively lobbying the federal government for a better communications deal for Territorians in the bush. The federal government shares largely in the responsibility for telecommunications. CLP Senator Scullion is the federal government Minister for Indigenous Affairs and the Senate leader of the Nationals Party in Canberra.

In terms of telecommunications, Labor is leading the charge on advocacy in this area, both in government locally and opposition federally. Malarndirri McCarthy and Warren Snowdon have been advocating against the ABC's decision to cancel shortwave radio in the bush. The Chief Minister has made a submission on behalf of the Territory government to the Senate inquiry, which opposes the ABC's cancellation of the shortwave service in the Territory. We will continue to fight for the return of this service.

We have also advocated to the Prime Minister, as I have to my federal counterpart, Fiona Nash, regarding the national network via optic fibre.

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