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Crime Wave – Response from Government

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

The Member for Fong Lim was forced into a humiliating back-down last week for comments he made downplaying the Territory's crime crisis. Chief Minister, last week you dismissed the crime wave as a 'spate of crime in December and January'. Do you stand by those comments? What statistics do you have to back that up? What do you say to the countless Territorians hit by ongoing crime in February and March?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Territorians are concerned. We believe Territorians have a right to feel safe at home and at work. I have not been dismissive of Territorians' concerns, and I believe that was a genuine acknowledgement of their concerns about safety in the Northern Territory. We saw an increase in activity in December and January. The Leader of the Opposition might want to have an argument about what words are used to describe it, but that was an acknowledgement of the increase in activity and Territorians' concerns for their safety.

As a government we have taken action. We have provided certainty to police about their recruitment and their numbers. We did that in December. That was important. In late January and early February we also provided 18 experienced front line police who will be working with 52 youth workers. They will try to identify and stop crime before it occurs by identifying kids and families at risk. We have also been working with police regarding extra tools they have at their disposal. In response to Territorians' concerns we put through, on urgency, the electronic monitoring changes to give police power to act when someone breaches bail.

While there was an increase in activity over December and January, there has been a problem in the Northern Territory for a while. Our changes to bail, police bail and the *Bail Act* were done in the context of a 20% increase of youth breaching bail over the last two years. We have acted on Territorians' concerns. We genuinely acknowledged Territorians' concerns, particularly during that December and January period. As a government we have taken a series of actions both for the short term and the long term.

We should not forget the importance of making long-term generational change in the Northern Territory, which is investment in the early years. That is being driven by our Minister for Children, with support from the children's subcommittee and the Ministers for Health, Education, Territory Families and Housing, to make that long-term generational change in the Northern Territory.

We have short-, medium- and long-term responses to ensure we do things differently and better to tackle these generational issues. As a Territorian who wants the best for the Territory, as I am sure everyone in this Chamber does, we are sick and tired of seeing generational problems. As a government we want to draw a line in the sand and make a meaningful difference to the lives of children and Territorians for the long term.

Crime Response – Member for Fong Lim

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your assistant minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, the Member for Fong Lim, who also chairs the Small Business Round Table, has demonstrated his lack of comprehension concerning the crime crisis the Territory is experiencing. Commercial break-ins were up a shocking 90% in Darwin in January. Will your government re-join the real world and send a strong message to Territorians that crime is a serious issue by standing down the Member for Fong Lim as your assistant minister and replacing him on the Small Business Round Table?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have spoken with the Member for Fong Lim. As we know from the public record, he has apologised for his comments. I know from my conversations with the Member for Fong Lim that he understands the pressures Territorians are under, and the concerns they have. He has spoken to small businesses around the Territory, and understands the pressures they are under.

On Monday he spoke with the Police Association, and listened to police talk about the work they are doing. I have complete confidence in my assistant minister for Police. He has listened to the Police Association

and responded to its concerns. He has listened and learned, and knows the work the police do on the front line. The Member for Fong Lim is an experienced firefighter. He has served in uniform. He knows there is pressure on frontline workers. He is listening attentively to the needs of his electorate. He is listening to the needs of small businesses. He knows, as I do, that Territorians want a government that is responsive and understands their concerns.

That is why the government has made investments into the police force and wraparound services for families and children at risk. This will make sure they do not go down the path of a life of crime. It is important that we do everything we can for early intervention and prevention. That is what we are doing with the 52 youth justice workers, 18 police, the wraparound services, the change of behaviour with police bail and electronic monitoring.

We are doing everything we can to ensure we are preventing crime before it occurs. We are changing the culture in youth justice facilities to ensure we are better at rehabilitating people. We do not want to train kids to be adult offenders. We have to be better in what we do in youth justice facilities. We have seen the change of culture with the movement from corrections to Territory Families. We have introduced justice workers in facilities with proper training to ensure we are rehabilitating kids and not being part of a system that is failing in its duty of care, not breaking the cycle and leading kids to become adult offenders. That does no one any good.

The government is doing everything it can, in the short, medium and long term, to be responsive to the concerns of Territorians, understand what they are saying, put victims first and break the cycle. I thank my whole team for its support on this. I thank my assistant minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services because he understands the concerns of Territorians. He has apologised for the way he phrased his comments last Thursday. He knows the concerns Territorians have and their desire to be safe at home and at work. I have confidence in him and the full carriage of his duties, having met with the Police Association.

Ichthys Project Worker Dispute – Government Support

Mrs WORDEN to CHIEF MINISTER

Can the Chief Minister update the House on actions being undertaken by the government to support workers laid off as a result of the commercial dispute between Kawasaki and Laing O'Rourke?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is critical that we do everything we can to keep Territorians in jobs, and to create and support jobs in the Territory. That is what we have done with fast-tracking \$120m worth of infrastructure. Our stimulus projects are all about trying to create a large body of jobs that are available for Territorians.

We know that during 2017 we will see the Ichthys construction site wind down and its operations start. We had an early warning of that with the laying off of workers last week. That job remains uncompleted, and the best-placed people to pick up tools and go back to work are the ones who put them down. We want locals to be prioritised—that message will be sent very clearly to the companies involved—to go back to work on that site.

But how can we help them now? The Territory government, unions, the federal government, Laing O'Rourke and INPEX are working to ensure the 300 local workers affected by this commercial dispute are protected and supported. From our end, the Territory government has set aside \$200 000 towards reskilling and upskilling 300 local workers affected by the dispute. I talked today with some of the workers who are affected. Some of their ideas are that training could be for solar, recognising the investment we are making in renewables and the program we will have for that. They are also looking at potential for retraining for the operations on-site.

The Ichthys project will be around for 40 years after construction, at least, and there will be ongoing operational jobs. We are working with those workers for opportunities in retraining, reskilling and upskilling during this period. We can assist them with new skill sets to upgrade their requirements to obtain work in the Territory.

We have also established a Territory workers' database, where they can place their CV so employers in the Territory can see what locals are available to do the work. Businesses will also be posting employment opportunities. We are doing everything we can to make it as easy as possible for workers to have opportunities to get a job, which is important.

I acknowledge the work the federal government is doing in this space as well. We have been working together. It will have an expo on Thursday and Friday in Palmerston, specifically for these workers. It will be like a one-stop shop experience, with the services it has and its offer to help workers. The government will be there as well.

We will maintain our conversations with the companies involved, saying it is important to have certainty for the Territory, for Territory jobs and the project. This needs to be sorted as soon as possible. This work needs to be done. There are jobs waiting to be filled at the site, and we have locals ready and waiting to fill those jobs. We are doing everything we can to support Territorians into jobs to stay in the Northern Territory.

PET Scanner and Cyclotron

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for HEALTH

Can you provide an update on what this government has done to support the delivery of a PET scanner?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I was excited to announce last week, in a joint press release with the federal Minister for Regional Development, Fiona Nash, that the Northern Territory and Australian Governments will deliver a PET Scanner and Cyclotron for Territorians.

This has been an ongoing issue. We need to take a moment to acknowledge how far oncology and services that treat Territorians facing cancer have come, particularly in the last decade. This is an example of the NT government and federal government working together to deliver a project. I am proud we have forged a strong working relationship with Minister Nash and the Australian Government to deliver this project for Territorians.

This is a major advancement for people, and their families, facing the serious challenge of a cancer diagnosis or cancer treatment. A PET scanner can also provide vital scanning and imaging for other health issues, including cardiac. This will mean Territorians will not need to travel interstate. People have contacted me about the need for travel and how that puts strains on families, as the member who is unwell needs their support but has to travel away from the Territory.

This government is committed to growing health services in the Territory for Territorians. This is a project we have worked hard on since coming to government. We acknowledge the federal government and its commitment of \$15m, which was made in good faith during last year's federal election. Over the months since I have become the Minister for Health, the Department of Health has continued to work hard, along with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, to refine the design plan and finalise the proposal. In doing this, the final cost was \$18m.

I acknowledge my colleagues in Cabinet who have committed \$3m to ensure we get this project in the Territory. We will get a full service with both the PET scanner and cyclotron. This area of medicine is advancing quickly. We can operate a PET scanner without a cyclotron based in the Territory, but the time between the isotopes being made and scanning is getting shorter for some scans—this is a positive announcement for Territorians.

The endorsed location of the PET scanner will be within the medical imaging block at Royal Darwin Hospital. I have been meeting with hard-working health professionals who have said this is the best place for it. This is great news for Territorians. This is in addition to this government's \$5m commitment to additional chemotherapy chairs at the Alan Walker Cancer Centre.

This Territory government is delivering for Territorians. We have worked in partnership with the Australian Government to achieve this milestone.

Youth Justice and Crime

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and JUSTICE

Territorians are overwhelmingly unhappy with the lack of resolve exhibited by the Gunner Labor government in reaction to the current crime crisis. Property crime is out of control, with increases across

the Territory. Will you consider additional changes to the *Bail Act*, such as removing the presumption in favour of bail for recidivist offenders and those who repeatedly breach bail?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to remind the opposition that when they were in government they failed to deliver in this space for Territorians. They failed to deliver on their commitment of 120 additional police, something that would provide police with resources on their front line. In my electorate they closed the police station. As a government we are taking our responsibilities very seriously.

Our government is putting the victims of crime first. We have historic youth justice reforms, being led by Minister Wakefield, in which we will tackle long-term generational issues to drive forward change. We need to look at these statistics because it helps paint the picture for Territorians. The breaches for youth bail have increased over the last two years by nearly 20%. We acknowledge any victim of crime is one victim too many. The year-on-year figures from last year show a nearly 10% increase in property crime across the NT.

This is something that has been taking shape over a period of time. This government is taking responsibility. We are, through the minister for Police, investing in police. As we have said many times in the House, we are training as many police as we can put through the police academy. We will deliver the 120 additional police that the CLP failed to deliver.

As well as our historic reforms in youth detention and youth justice, we are also providing support for families and victims of crime. One of the things the CLP failed to do is the Crime Victims Advisory Committee. The previous government started a review in 2013 of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act*, but they never followed through. There is a lot for this government to do, but we are tackling the issues. We acknowledge the concerns of the community and that any incident is one incident too many.

Not only will the government not repeat the CLP's mistakes, but we will put in place long-term measures to drive long-term change whilst giving police the tools they need to do their job, for example, the legislation we passed last week in which we delivered on our commitment to police. Within my portfolio of Attorney-General, there are things I will do to modernise and improve the Territory's outdated victims' charter. We will look at this from every angle of government. The Ministers for Territory Families, Education, and Children and the Deputy Chief Minister are all working together to make the Territory a safer place.

Power and Water Costs

Mr WOOD to TREASURER

It was reported in the media in February that there were massive blowouts to the cost of running power and water due to the cost separation started by the previous government. Could you please say what the government is doing to reign in the cost of running power and water, and will the extra costs affect power and water and sewerage charges?

ANSWER

I will be very up front. When we were in opposition we opposed the structural separation of the Power and Water Corporation. We had some great concerns about the process government was taking to ram it through. Here we are today, and I will go into the details about the challenges we have with the three government owned corporations now—dealing with that and some of the mistakes of the previous government.

We will honour our commitment to Territorians on power prices. We will ensure the price does not rise more than in line with CPI, because I would have been a fool to not observe and learn from the last term of government. When power prices were put up by the Members for Blain and Araluen by 30%, water by 40% and sewerage by 25%, it hurt Territorians and was very difficult for them.

We went to this election with a commitment to ensure those prices do not rise higher than CPI. We have challenges within the Power and Water Corporation, Territory Generation and Jacana. Structural separation did not just create duplication, it was triplication—three boards, three chief executives, three chief financial officers, three human resource sections, three different lots of IT systems and the list goes

on. At our last count there was an increase of about 20 extra executive level jobs across those three corporations, and about 170 FTEs.

When you triplicate something, it creates options for extra jobs. I sat down with the boards and chief executives and made it clear that I expect they will be running as efficiently as possible. I said with that, I do not want to see reliability of services compromised or the safety of staff on the job, particularly those doing high risk work, compromised whatsoever.

I have directed that with the statement of corporate intent that they try to be as efficient as possible. I want to see them on financially stable footing going forward, but it will not be an easy task, Member for Nelson, and it will not happen overnight. We need to ensure reliable services continue for Territorians. That is really important.

I have ensured that there is a greater level of scrutiny of their expenditure. I have made it very clear to those boards that I expect them to be running as efficiently as possible, and to really focus on financial sustainability going forward. Another direction I recently gave them was to ensure they buy local and honour the government's buy local commitments.

There is no doubt that there is a lot of work to do moving forward.

Central Australia Travel Advice

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

Tourism is the lifeblood of Central Australia, and the government's lack of action on the crime crisis is killing tourism in the Red Centre. It was revealed last week that foreign governments are now warning citizens travelling to Australia not to visit Alice Springs.

The governments of the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany and Canada have issued travel warnings. A German travel agent's alert tells residents that caution is to be taken in Alice Springs, especially after dark. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advisory states there have been some serious sexual assaults against British nationals.

I seek leave to table a copy of those travel reports.

Leave granted.

Mr HIGGINS: Is the Gunner Labor government concerned by the decline in our international reputation, and what is it doing to address this damaging situation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we talked about this in parliament last week, and I hoped the Opposition Leader would stand up as champion for Central Australia in this situation, as we have done. There are 700 000 visitors to Central Australia every year. People love visiting Central Australia for a range of reasons. It is a beautiful, diverse community; more than half of the population of Alice Springs comes from elsewhere for its beautiful landscapes, its incredible art and its wonderful people.

Travel advisories are a part of travel in today's modern world. As the Tourism Central Australia CEO Stephen Schwer has said, as well as the Mayor of Alice Springs, Damien Ryan—we tell people to be aware of their personal safety. A number of these travel advisories talk about taking care on our roads, which we all agree with, and taking care when hitchhiking, which you would do anywhere. There are travel advisories in other parts of the world, such as the UK, Bali and other places.

In these circumstances we are choosing to be a champion for Alice Springs. That is why we continue to invest in Alice Springs and why we have a deep commitment to the arts there, including the art gallery and arts centre—to bring more visitors to the centre. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition to join with Damien Ryan and Stephen Schwer, and the increasing number of people in Central Australia ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! My colleague asked a very direct question. What is the minister doing to address these travel warnings?

Madam SPEAKER: The minister has time to answer.

Ms MOSS: I think I am actually answering the question.

Last week this was addressed on the *Today Show*, and a number of people were concerned that this was making national media. The *Today Show* hosts talked about their positive experiences in Central Australia. Damien Ryan and I have invited them to come to Alice Springs and run a show there, to promote it in the light we all want to see it in.

The Leader of the Opposition can choose a couple of scenarios over a long period of time on which to base his opinions on Alice Springs. We will continue to promote it for the beautiful place it is.

Economy and Jobs – Federal Government

Mr COSTA to TREASURER

When discussing the Territory budget it is often said that Canberra catches a cold and the Territory catches pneumonia. Can you explain to the House the impact of the national economy on the Territory economy? What threats is the Territory facing over the coming year? What is the government doing to support Territory Jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that we have a challenging budget ahead and very challenging economic conditions. When we came to government we were left with books that had deficit and debt. The previous government was too inward-looking and too busy infighting to focus on the challenges ahead.

Since the Northern Territory Government's mid-year report, the Commonwealth has released its Mid-year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, or MYEFO. It foreshadowed that we will see some challenges with the GST revenue coming into the Northern Territory.

There have been some challenges with the size of the national collection pool of GST, and we have not seen our population growing in line with other parts of the nation. We have some challenges there, particularly when you consider that 50% of the revenue that comes into the Northern Territory is from GST, 20% is from other Commonwealth agreements and tied funding, and we have a 30% capacity for our own-source revenue generation.

When there is an issue with GST collections in Canberra, it deeply impacts the Northern Territory, so we have some challenges there. On Friday I will be in Canberra for the Council of Federal Financial Relations, meeting with the other Treasurers and the federal Treasurer. We will make sure we lobby for every possible dollar for the Territory with regard to GST. There are challenges and we will consider those in view of the upcoming budget.

One thing we have been told loud and clear by business, the community and Territorians is that now more than ever we must see that jobs are supported across the Northern Territory. That is why, as a government, we are committed to supporting jobs. We have been working to fast-track our election commitments to ensure we can support more infrastructure and jobs across the Territory. We have brought back the Home Improvement Scheme and changed first home owner conditions, particularly for established homes, to make it easier for people to buy and commit to stay in the Northern Territory.

We have delivered additional stimulus measures. There is a long-term, bright future in the Northern Territory, but there is no doubt that we have some challenges ahead. We are taking action, as a government, to address those challenges and make sure we support Territorians with jobs and services going forward.

Employment of Former Member for Nhulunbuy

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

While you are thinking about laid-off workers and commitment to local content, my question relates to the employment of the former Member for Nhulunbuy. What is the job description, where is the office located, what is the package, who does the former member report to, and do you have plans for other such positions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the former Member for Nhulunbuy, the former deputy leader of the Labor Party, is a very experienced person. Nobody knows the policy of the Territory Labor Party, outside of the Labor team, better than her. She is a senior adviser to me. We have been public about the appointment. We issued a press release making it clear that she had been appointed. It is a serious and senior role that reports to me as Chief Minister.

She is based in Nhulunbuy. I have not physically seen her desk so I cannot answer that, Member for Blain. I am happy to take that aspect of the question on notice. When she is in Parliament House she sits in the Office of the Chief Minister.

We do not make comment about individuals' pay. What I have not done is employed her as an ambassador to Indonesia, which happened in the last term of government between a Chief Minister and a former Chief Minister. We have accepted that this is a person with significant experience who worked tirelessly on policy over the last four years of the CLP's term on policy, talking directly to stakeholders, and who has an intimate knowledge of our policy agenda. There is no one better outside this team that I am sitting with today—we have an excellent team.

It was an excellent appointment, and that is the role that she has taken on for me as Chief Minister. She understands the issues that face Territorians, and will help us in our agenda of putting Territorians first and making sure we are listening to the concerns of Territorians. She is a very well-respected individual.

Mrs Lambley: How much? What's the package?

Mr GUNNER: In response to the Member for Araluen, who keeps yelling out, 'How much?', as I have just explained I will not detail the individual salaries of people. I have already said that. The former Member for Nhulunbuy works for me as a senior policy officer. She is a well-respected individual who is highly informed on the issues that matter to Territorians and on the Labor policy agenda. It will help us deliver on our promises to Territorians.

Mrs Lambley: Take it on notice, Chief Minister.

Mr GUNNER: I have already said I will not answer that, Member for Araluen. I am not sure why you are not listening to the answer. I have said I will not answer that part of the question. I am happy to take on notice the bit about where she sits in Nhulunbuy. I am surprised by the ghoulish interest from the Member for Araluen in these little details. The former Member for Nhulunbuy is a senior policy officer who works for me as Chief Minister.

Economy – Previous Government's Impact

Mrs WORDEN to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Can the Deputy Chief Minister please detail to the House the impact that four years of Country Liberal Party chaos and failure to plan has had on the Territory economy? What is this government doing to fix the problems and support jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we will be a government that delivers jobs, stability and trust, which is in stark contrast to what we saw in the previous four years of the CLP government. We saw a government that took its eye off the ball when it came to the economy.

They were more concerned about infighting. It was more about instability. They failed to plan for the challenges ahead. We knew that we were riding a period of extremely high economic growth driven by a major project, and that eventually that period would come to an end. We had a government that was more concerned about its internal issues than planning for the future.

It sold the TIO, leased the port for 99 years, closed the Government Printing Office and sold Darwin's bus service. Yet we were left with significant deficits, a slowing economy and challenging economic conditions. We will not make the same mistakes. We will learn from what we saw. In stark contrast, we are listening to Territorians and working with businesses and key sectors. We are re-establishing strong relationships with the Australian Government.

As I said in my previous question, it is important that we have a strong relationship with our federal counterparts, particularly when 70% of the money that comes into the Northern Territory is directly attributable to the Commonwealth. We will manage the budget responsibly to meet the commitments we made to Territorians and, most importantly, meet the needs of Territorians: jobs, critical services and infrastructure. They will have a government that responds to the challenges in the economy right now.

We are delivering those stimulus measures to support more jobs because we have a slowing economy. We have fast-tracked projects because people need jobs now. We can see that there is a positive future ahead, and some great opportunities with Defence and private investment in the future. In the next 12 to 18 months the government needs to do everything it can to support local jobs.

We are continuing to get the \$1.7bn infrastructure program out of the door to support jobs and local business. We have strengthened the Buy Local procurement provisions to make sure more Territory businesses benefit from government investment. There is a big job ahead. We are listening, and we will be delivering for Territorians.

Youth Justice – Dylan Voller Bail Conditions

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and JUSTICE

It was reported in the *Sunday Territorian* on the weekend that Dylan Voller was seen in Lasseters Casino, a licensed venue, whilst attending the Royal Commission hearings in Alice Springs. The opposition understands Mr Voller was a guest at the Crowne Plaza Hotel while he was in Alice Springs.

Can you advise who paid the bill for Mr Voller's accommodation in this four-and-a-half star resort? Given his proximity and visit to a licensed premises, was Mr Voller tested for alcohol to ensure he was complying with his bail conditions? Are any of your new bail justice officers monitoring Mr Voller's compliance of his bail conditions?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, having had parole refused, Mr Voller went to the courts to stake his claim. The courts took a different approach and gave him bail.

I am informed that in addition to residing in the program at BushMob there are a number of conditions in Mr Voller's bail:

- accept supervision and report to a probation and parole office
- participate in employment, training or voluntary activities
- to not associate or visit with any person or place identified by his probation and parole officer
- to not purchase, possess or consume alcohol
- submit to random breath testing analysis.
- to not consume dangerous drugs or abuse a prescribed substance
- to participate in assessment counselling on treatment as directed by his probation and parole officer
- submit to a curfew, having electronic monitoring.

Breaching bail conditions can result in Mr Voller being returned to prison. Without speaking about the particular case we hope any person released from incarceration takes the opportunity of parole to turn their life around. It is the first step they can take on a long journey and a hard road of reintegration into the community.

To answer the questions asked by the opposition, it is not us paying. Any breaches of parole will be investigated by police.

Backbencher Contribution to Debate

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

The Member for Fong Lim made a dill of himself last week during the debate on the Bail Amendment Bill introduced by your government. Is a fear of your backbenchers dropping howlers like that the reason you do not let them make speeches on opposition and cross bench motions during General Business days?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am fascinated that the opposition's question is about themselves rather than Territorians. I have always been very respectful of General Business time, whether I have been in opposition or in government. It is the opposition and Independents' time. I feel, as a principle, that is the opportunity for the opposition and Independents to put their case. It is their time to argue their agenda before parliament.

We do not have a rule against members of the team, whether ministers or backbenchers, speaking to opposition business items. We have a principle of believing it is your time. We try to help you with your time. You have, on the General Business list, 17 items. You get four hours every Wednesday to debate them, and another one today. We make sure we have at least one respondent across all issues who can respond on behalf of government. We do everything we can to make sure you get through your business on your day. We are trying to help you facilitate your business.

The Member for Nelson actively puts things on the Notice Paper. It can be frustrating if we do not get to your agenda item. It is us being cooperative. The Opposition Leader is complaining about the government being cooperative with the opposition and Independents' agenda on General Business day. That is what it exists for.

There is no rule against people speaking. We always say, as a principle, we will have one definite person who will speak. We want to make sure you get through your agenda. It is as simple as that. There is nothing more sinister to it. You are welcome to have your Notice Paper and agenda. I guarantee you will always have one fully-informed person from our side speaking to it. Others are welcome to speak to it, which happens from time to time, depending on the issue.

More than one person was speaking to the Member for Nelson's motion, the last live motion, regarding male teachers in the classrooms. It was of interest to Gerry McCarthy as a former male teacher. We had more than one speaker the other day to a law and order debate.

We will have more than one speaker at times, but far and away our principle is to have one fully informed speaker, and others are free to speak if they need to, but it is your time and your day. We try not to occupy it as often happened during last term when we tried to get to issues but government was filibustering all the way through it, so we never got to our agenda items.

We are not here to play those games, Leader of the Opposition. We are trying to have respect for your business paper. We are not filibustering our way through, like the former Member for Fong Lim often used to, to chew up the clock. We are trying to treat your agenda items with respect.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Education - Investment

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I heard the Deputy Opposition Leader refer to this government's review of the school funding model as a cover for cuts. Can you outline the government's plan for investing in education?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this government knows how important it is for children and young people across the Territory to have access to a high-quality education. That is why we are investing an additional \$124m into education across the Territory over the next four years. This year we have already provided an additional \$20m directly into school budgets for 2017, growing the global school budget pool to a record \$470m.

Unlike the previous government, which ripped \$114m out of our education system, we know that providing adequate funding to schools makes a difference to the lives of Territory students. Time and again the results of national and international assessments and research show that equity and the allocation of education resources has a significant effect on student outcomes.

To really make a difference the pool of resources for schooling needs to be distributed fairly and equitably across schools based on student needs. We need to take a good look at the way funding is distributed between schools in the NT, which is something I have heard loud and clear from school councils, principals, teachers, parents and other stakeholders. This is why, in the lead-up to the election, we committed to reviewing the global school budget funding methodology.

We are following through on this commitment, and a public tender process is under way to engage an independent expert to undertake the review and make recommendations about how we can improve resources distributed across our schools. Last week we heard from the Deputy Opposition Leader that in her world reviews are:

... generally accepted in the business as a code word for cuts.

This is false and not true in education. I am not sure which business the Member for Spillett is in, but those of us in education know a review of the funding methodology for NT schools is well and truly overdue. The terms of reference for the review are publicly available as part of the tender process. Key stakeholders have seen the terms of reference and have had input, including COGSO, the Australian Education Union and the Principals' Association.

We are delivering extra into the funding pool for school budgets, and not taking any money away. Over the term of this government there will be an extra \$80m directly funded into schools. That is \$20m extra per year. The review will look at the weighting for student needs and the opportunity to cut red tape for principals and school councils; this will ensure they are not bogged down in administration and can get back to focusing on giving students the best possible learning opportunities.

This government is reinvesting in education. We are putting resources where the evidence shows they will make the biggest difference. It is about listening to stakeholders, reinvesting in education and delivering on our election commitments.

Sea Dragon Project

Mr NELSON to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

You were quoted on ABC saying you would not actively pursue the Ord Stage 3. Considering there will be an \$80m road built to the Sea Dragon farm, would it not make sense to still actively pursue Ord Stage 3?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what I said in that interview a couple months ago was that with our government it is still a priority, but it is not our highest priority. We are still looking, as the previous government did, for any opportunities to develop Ord Stage 3 and Stage 3A. I did state that in the interview.

I am very supportive of any investment into agriculture and agribusiness in the Territory. If someone puts their hand up—Member for Nelson, maybe you have a bit of coin in your pocket and you can invest in Ord Stage 3 on behalf of Territorians. It is still a priority, but it is our lowest priority.

With regard to the \$80m you stated for roads for the project Sea Dragon, this is a fantastic opportunity for the Territory to get on to the world stage regarding prawns. It is a monumental project that has a lot of support; it not only has major project status with us but with the federal government. It is also important for the creation of jobs.

On this side of the Chamber we talk about jobs because we want more jobs for Territorians. We support project Sea Dragon because it will create many jobs between the Northern Territory and Western Australia. My focus is Northern Territory jobs. That project is progressing, but I hope it progresses well and ends up being established as it is an important project for us. We will continue to support investment in the Northern Territory.

Member for Nelson, I could talk about prawns, project Sea Dragon and investment into agribusiness all day. If I had my way, project Sea Dragon would be in the Katherine region as our commitment to make Katherine the agribusiness hub of the Northern Territory.

With regard to funding, there is a lot of federal funding and an allocation of NT Government funding towards that road. We need to ensure that when projects come to the Northern Territory we support them, because we see the big picture—as everyone does in this Chamber—of investment in the Northern Territory, creating jobs for Territorians, keeping families here and keeping local businesses running by spending our money in those local businesses. We will continue to do that.

Tourism – Government Plans for Central Australia

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

Can you update the House on what the Territory government is doing in Alice Springs and Central Australia to grow and evolve our tourism offerings, attract new visitors to the Territory and showcase our rich Indigenous culture?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Namatjira is very passionate about driving more visitation to the centre and showcasing his beautiful part of the world, as are all the local members for Central Australia on this side of the House. There are 700 000 visitors a year to Alice Springs and Central Australia. They cannot be wrong; it is a very special place. This government is incredibly proud of the rich and diverse art and cultural history of the Territory. We all know this is a major drawcard for international visitors.

I have spoken before about our investment in the artistic and cultural offerings in the Territory. We will put \$100m into an arts trail that will start in the heart of the Northern Territory, and this country, in Alice Springs. It will wind up through the Territory, as the song lines do, through our beautiful country. There is \$50m towards a national Indigenous art gallery, and \$20m towards a cultural centre. We are working to get these projects off the ground. They will give our Indigenous culture the respect and platform it deserves on the tourism stage, as well as drive economic growth in the Red Centre through increased tourism visitation.

I was pleased to join the Member for Namatjira, the assistant minister for the Indigenous art gallery, in Alice Springs to announce the co-chairs of a steering committee to drive this important project. They are Ms Hetti Perkins, a curator, writer and consultant, and Mr Philip Watkins, the CEO of Desart. They are both prominent, well-respected Central Australians. This steering committee will run over six months and will create a solid base for the art gallery.

I am currently finalising the rest of the membership for the steering committee, which I will be announcing soon. I am excited about this. We are very fortunate to have attracted some eminent and very accomplished Australians as part of this work. I was excited to be in Alice Springs to share that as well. It is an important milestone for these projects. We are serious about this investment.

The steering committee will get on with the initial scoping work soon, including considering things like location options, curation, governance and design requirements. It will consult extensively with the community. I have been pleased with the feedback from the community and the desire for many stakeholders to be involved in that.

We look forward to getting on with the consultation and delivery of that important project. We are equally excited about the \$20m going to the cultural centre, and working with (inaudible) to continue with that work.

Crime Increases in the NT

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

On Friday 17 March the Northern Territory Police released their latest NT crime statistics. What we have experienced throughout the NT this summer is, indeed, a crime wave. It is not figment of our imagination, not a media build-up, not a political construct, but a crime wave. We have seen a 90% increase in commercial break-ins in Darwin, a 58% increase in residential break-ins in Tennant Creek, a 32% increase in commercial break-ins in Alice Springs, and so on. It is completely unacceptable that Territorians' safety should be compromised like this by the new government.

For this reason I move that, pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Assembly censures the government for failing Territorians by allowing crime to escalate to unacceptably high levels across the Northern Territory this summer.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, the government accepts the motion, but we do not give it precedence. We have a significantly important bill before the House this afternoon, which many members of the public are here to listen to in the Chamber.

We acknowledge the points the Member for Araluen has raised, and would like to address them at some point, but we feel that, in regard to giving this issue precedence, it is not the time. We have an important bill before the House.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, given that the government will not give precedence in line with Standing Order 67, the matter does not continue at this point in time. Member for Araluen, you may give notice for tomorrow to have it on the Notice Paper for General Business.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Madam Speaker, I heard the member say she accepts the motion. If it is accepted there is nothing in the standing orders to say she can defer or change it. She either accepts it or she does not.

Crime is the biggest problem in the Northern Territory at the moment.

Madam SPEAKER: Please pause, Member for Araluen.

Ms FYLES: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker, we acknowledge the points the Member for Araluen raised. We have acknowledged in Question Time today, and through parliament, that there is concern in the community about crime and antisocial behaviour. But this afternoon is not the time for us to debate it.

We have a very important bill before the House. We have done a lot of work, and have been operating through a bipartisan approach. The galleries were filled with people this morning, something we rarely see. The government fully accepts the intent of the motion; we welcome that debate, but we do not accept the precedence considering the bill before the House and the work that has been put into it.

Madam SPEAKER: The comments of the Leader of Government Business are that government accepts the intent of the motion, but is not effectively giving it precedence. It is not that government does not accept what you are saying, just that, pursuant to Standing Order 67, it will not give it precedence, which means to continue right now. Government will accept the motion from you some other time, but not now.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just to clarify, Madam Speaker, the government does not accept the motion?

Madam SPEAKER: It will not be given precedence. I suggest you seek guidance from the Clerks as to when you can present the motion. General Business day is probably the only time you can, or Question Time tomorrow.

Motion not agreed to.

Harmony Day

Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Can the Minister for Territory Families update us on Harmony Day celebrations and the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination? Can you please outline the Harmony Day initiatives that celebrate our diverse cultural landscape across the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I wish everyone in the Chamber a happy Harmony Day. One of the important messages behind Harmony Day is that everyone belongs. It is an important message for Territorians. It has been a great pleasure to be the minister responsible for multicultural affairs as part of Territory Families. Through that I have met with many fantastic members of our community who were born elsewhere. We cannot underestimate what people from multicultural backgrounds add to our community.

Today, 48 people in Alice Springs became Australian citizens. Mayor Damien Ryan acknowledges that welcoming new people to Central Australia is one of the best bits of his job. In Darwin today 300 people from 45 different countries became new Territorians.

This is a very important way forward. Freedoms and harmony need constant vigilance to ensure that when we welcome people to our community they feel welcome. We must have the courage to view our community clearly to see where there are problems. Unfortunately there are Territorians—this has been raised with me as the minister responsible for multicultural affairs—who experience racism. First Nations people often report experiencing racism, as do people from many nationalities.

Harmony Day is an important opportunity—it is also the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in which we also, in our celebrations, say no to discrimination and racism. I was incredibly disappointed by the federal government using this day, when we should be supporting our multicultural communities, to water down section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*.

I was particularly saddened for Territorians because the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory and FECA have long been opposing this change. It provides protection from racial vilification. Many Territorians have said to me that 18C does not restrict freedom of speech. I think of my grandmother's rules, 'You can say lots of difficult things in a polite way without having to resort to vilification'.

I want to say to those new Territorians who became Territorians today, welcome. You are very welcome in this place.

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