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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**VISITORS**  
**Essington School**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5 students from Essington School, accompanied by their teachers, Kate Kain, Louise Hand and Peter Bannatyne. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS**  
**Red Nose Day**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, annually 3200 Australian families experience the sudden unexpected death of a baby or child. This has to stop. Through world-class research, advocacy and education, we passionately believe we can put an end to this. Red Nose relies on the generosity of the community through Red Nose Day and other fundraising events and our partnerships with small businesses and corporations. Our grief and loss services and Indigenous programs are partly funded by Commonwealth and state governments.

Red noses for the SIDS campaign have been placed on your desk today.

**Sessional Orders for Thirteenth Assembly**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, in the sleeve at the back of your copy of the standing orders you will have a green supplement containing the sessional orders for the Thirteenth Assembly. During the May sittings the Assembly adopted a new sessional order applying to the reordering of the routine of General Business Notices and the Orders of the Day.

Please replace this green supplement with the updated orange supplement which has been placed on your desks. The orange supplement has been updated with the new sessional order.

**Standing Order 141(6)**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, Standing Order 141(6) requires:

*On the calling on of the notice to present a bill a Member will present to the Assembly a printed copy of the bill with their signature appended.*

As notified in my procedural bulletin dated 21 May 2015, from today it is proposed that this standing order is observed by a member presenting one signed copy of the bill to be given to the Clerks. The Table Office will then, immediately upon presentation by the members, email the bill to the 25 members of the Assembly as an attachment so it may be opened and read on their laptops, tablets and other devices.

The Clerks at the Table will obtain a few hard copies for those members who do not wish to read the electronic copy. Members should approach the Table or press the attendant call button for a hard copy if you require it.

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I also acknowledge and welcome the students from Essington School, a fabulous school in my electorate. Looking up there, I see many familiar faces, including little Lachlan. I have embarrassed him, as his mother asked.

Madam Speaker, I also acknowledge you in taking on these new sessional orders with the electronic copies of the bills. This is a sign that this parliament is focused on making sure we do our bit for the environment no matter how small. I thank you and the Clerk for taking that on.

**MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR**  
**Message No 6**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have received Message No 6 from His Honour the Administrator notifying assent to the bills passed at the May sittings. The message is dated 31 May 2017.

**MOTION**  
**Leave of Absence – Member for Brennan**

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, it is with sadness this morning that I move a leave of absence be granted to the Member for Brennan, who is on bereavement leave. To further update the Chamber, he sadly lost his mother last week. We send our sincere thoughts and prayers to Tony and his family on behalf of this Chamber.

Motion agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION (2017–2018) BILL**  
**(Serial 20)**

Continued from 11 May 2017.

**Consideration in Detail:**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly on 11 May 2017, following the tabling of the estimates report the Assembly will have before it the question that the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill stand as part of the bill and the reports of the Estimates Committee and the Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee be noted.

The following time limits apply to the debate on the committee's reports: ministers, Leader of the Opposition and shadow minister, 20 minutes each; any other member, 10 minutes each; and the maximum period for consideration should be five hours. There are no extensions in speaking. If the debate is not concluded after five hours I will put the question about debate that the remainder of the bill stand as part of the bill. I call the Chair of the Estimates Committee, the Member for Karama, and the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair for the Consideration in Detail.

**Ms AH KIT:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of the Estimates Committee on its consideration of the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill and related documents, and the activities, performance, practices and financial management of the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation with reference to those corporations' Statements of Corporation Intent 2017–18. I also table the committee's minutes.

The committee's report outlines the key areas of interest or concern in the questions asked at the hearings.

This is the Legislative Assembly's 16<sup>th</sup> year of Estimates Committee hearings. The estimates hearings provide a valuable opportunity for members to ask ministers questions relating to agencies being funded under the budget. Estimates is an important component of providing Territorians with an open and transparent government. It plays an important role in scrutinising the budget. The government understands the importance of the estimates process. I am pleased to highlight that every government member of the estimates committee turned up to do their job.

For the first time, everyday Territorians, businesses and organisations were given the opportunity to ask questions. I thank all those members of the public who submitted questions and participated in the estimates process.

A huge amount of preparation is required in the lead-up to estimates hearings. I acknowledge and thank the Territory's hard-working public servants who prepared and researched in preparation for the estimates. I thank the public servants who appeared with their minister to assist in answering questions.

I enjoyed the estimates process. Having the ability to ask questions about the budget directly to the minister responsible is an important job. I acknowledge and thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for joining the Estimates Committee members to do just that.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the members that participated in the 2017 estimates hearings. I wish to place on the record my thanks to the staff of all agencies involved in the estimates process, and the staff of the Legislative Assembly for their work to ensure the whole process ran smoothly.

I thank the Estimates Committee members who turned up to do their job this week, the Members for Namatjira, Arnhem and Katherine. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for participating in the hearings and scrutinising the budget on behalf of his electorate. I acknowledge the absence of the opposition and

Independent members, who chose not to participate in the estimates process. I invite them to participate in scrutinising the agency annual reports in November.

For the first time, in November, there will be a scrutiny of the annual reports over a 30-hour period to scrutinise the actual budget expenditure and policy performance of agencies as part of the parliament's deliberation of departmental annual reports. This was part of our policy platform in the lead-up to the election on parliamentary reform and opening parliament to the people.

The 2017–18 Northern Territory budget is one that caters to the needs of Territorians and the potential of the Territory's future. The investments contained within the budget will help retain Territorians, support our Territory lifestyle and attract new opportunities for the future of the Northern Territory. I commend the report to the Assembly.

**Ms UIBO:** Mr Deputy Speaker, estimates is an important part of providing open and transparent government. Estimates plays an important role in scrutinising the budget which, this week, took place over three long but interesting days. As a former educator I thoroughly enjoy learning, and this week was a huge learning curve, as I have never attended any part of estimates or watched a full hearing. Being part of the process was beneficial to me and, I hope, my electorate as I grow in this role.

I enjoyed learning about the process, and I look forward to part two in November when the committee will scrutinise the annual reports and provide further in-depth understanding of where and how NT money is being spent.

Despite the unusual lack of participation by opposition and Independents this week, government took the process seriously, which is why the participating government committee members were in attendance for every session over the 30 hours.

For the first time this year everyday Territorians, businesses and organisations were given the opportunity to ask their own questions. More than 200 questions were received by the public and asked by committee members to our government ministers and the three government-owned corporations.

I take this opportunity to make mention of and express my gratitude to the Estimates Committee Chair, the Member for Karama, Ngaree Ah Kit, who provided a smooth, clear, open and running process of estimates hearings this week. I thank my fellow government committee members, the Member for Katherine, Ms Sandra Nelson MLA; and the Member for Namatjira, Mr Deputy Speaker, Mr Chansey Paech MLA.

I also make special mention and express my appreciation to the Member for Nhulunbuy, Mr Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA, for participating in the hearings and scrutinising the budget on behalf of his electorate. The questions asked by the Member for Nhulunbuy were not only important ones related to key issues and concerns in the electorate of Nhulunbuy, but more broadly across the Northern Territory. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for his participation this week over the 30 hours.

I acknowledge the very hard work of the Department of the Legislative Assembly staff, who in the background made the process smooth in this unusual but very informative and important estimates hearing. I also acknowledge the very hard-working public servants on their preparation of materials and the running of estimates.

As a former educator, I enjoyed the learning process. I have never been part of Estimates Committee and I understand there is a lot of work that goes in to its preparation. I thank the public servants, on behalf of the government and the committee members, for their hard work and continued service for Territorians across the beautiful area we represent.

Estimates is a very important process for the Northern Territory, and I invite other committee members to return to the process in November when we scrutinise the annual reports.

**Ms NELSON:** Mr Deputy Speaker, the estimates hearings show that this government is continuing on the path of transparency, openness and inclusion, despite the criticism from across the floor. During the estimates hearings we asked numerous questions and the government showed that it remains focused on delivering the best outcomes for Territorians.

I thank all the public service staff members who put a lot of time and effort into research and preparation for these public hearings. Members of the committee had many questions to ask and we put a lot of time and effort into preparing those questions. There was also a lot of engagement with the community and

stakeholders who wanted to hear the responses, particularly from the constituents of Katherine. I take this opportunity to thank members of the public who submitted their questions and participated.

For too long Territorians living in rural and remote communities, including Katherine, have walked away from consecutive budgets feeling as though they have once again been forgotten. They have been left always wanting more from each budget and forever feeling as though they have been relegated to the back seat in favour of those residing in the population hubs of Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs.

The 2017–18 budget promised to make inroads into that disparity and provide hope to people, like my constituents in Katherine, that they are now being led by a government and local member committed to them and their region.

As the Treasurer previously suggested, this is not a budget created without having to overcome some major financial hurdles. The most seemingly insurmountable of which was a revelation that the NT would lose about \$2bn in GST revenue over the next four years. Circumventing that economic blow required strong leadership, difficult choices and a plan to invest in infrastructure to stimulate local spending and create local jobs. We are delivering on our promise to be a government held to account by the people it represents. It is such a shame that opportunity was not taken up by the opposition and some of the Independents.

This is a budget not only for now but also for the future—for future jobs, for the future of our children, our communities and the Northern Territory. Investing in the future is something close to the hearts of every Katherine resident, because we are incredibly passionate about our town and we want to see it afforded every opportunity to grow and be in an economic position to support our families and our businesses, both now and for generations to come.

The estimates public hearing provided me with reassurance that all commitments for Katherine will be delivered. The estimates hearings are an important opportunity for the opposition and Independent members to question the government about its budgets and plans, an opportunity which the opposition and all but one of the Independent members chose to squander by putting politics ahead of representing their constituents. Such a shame.

I was one of the four members of the Estimates Committee who showed up and did my job, what I was elected to do and what I am paid to do, that is, represent my electorate of Katherine. The actions of the Opposition Leader in the two weeks leading up to estimates show that he has learned nothing from the voters' verdict of the arrogance and pettiness of his party four years ago.

I recall the Opposition Leader saying in his speech on 18 October:

*It was a self-destructive streak characterised by overwhelming self-interest that put the electorate second, behind personal ambitions and private agendas. Instead of working collaboratively under the elected leader to take government from Labor, there were factions within the party wing and the broader party organisation ... The interests of the voters were put on the shelf.*

I also remember this line from the Opposition Leader's speech.

*At the heart of a successful politician is the electorate.*

Opposition Leader, were your electorate and constituents forefront in your mind when you made the decision not to represent them during the estimates public hearings? What the Opposition Leader and all but one of the Independents did was rob their constituents of their rights to question the government about the budget.

I commend the committee report to the House, and I take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members and the Member for Nhulunbuy for participating.

**Mr PAECH:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I speak about the Estimates Committee as an elected member who has experienced estimates for the first time.

I will start by acknowledging and paying thanks and respect to the Legislative Assembly staff, who managed the secretariat for the committee and made sure the smooth running of estimates occurred. I also acknowledge the phenomenal work of the Member for Karama, the Chair of the committee. Her role was vital. I offer thanks to the Member for Karama for her acknowledgement of country each day when public

servants and members of the public were tuning in to watch the Estimates Committee participating on Larrakia land.

The Estimates Committee has been a very interesting process for me, to say the least. It was an opportunity to gain an understanding of the role of estimates and the process in which we allow members of the public and the public service to tune in and see members of the committee questioning government members on being open and transparent and the important role that is played in scrutinising the budget.

It was a very good process. Walking away from that process last night I realised I have learned a lot about how estimates work and the phenomenal amount of work involved from our amazing public service to make sure questions asked can be answered in that committee.

I speak from the position of being a government member on that committee. The process was taken seriously, which was why every member of the government on that committee took the opportunity to ask questions every day of the estimates process. Whether the questions were from the members or the public it was important to see the process in operation. I pick up from other members of the Assembly this morning, talking about the questions from the public. There were in excess of 200 questions from the public. This is the first time this occurred in parliament.

I want to take a moment to reflect that this was the first time this year that Territorians, Territory businesses and organisations were given the opportunity to ask questions relating to the budget. Those questions were answered, and in endeavours where they were not able to be answered they were taken on notice.

Those members from the public, whether they are individuals, Territory businesses or organisations, are the lifeblood of the Northern Territory.

I am very proud to say that every endeavour was taken to answer those questions and if they were not able to be answered they will be answered and the response will be sent to them. It is very important to highlight that this is a great process which is furthering the government's commitment to being open and transparent.

I also offer thanks to the government ministers who appeared before the Estimates Committee and answered questions. I take note that from time to time there were some hard questions and I think they were answered very respectfully and professionally, so I thank them for that.

As a new member I was not entirely sure of the estimates process. This has been a great opportunity for me to look at how the estimates process works and how we are able to engage with our constituencies and make sure they know about the process and are able to participate in it. That is a mechanism we have been able to enhance by opening questions to the public.

I hope that in future estimates I will be joined by the members opposite, the opposition and Independents, because it would further allow us to work together to make sure Territorians are comfortable with an open and transparent government and that we are all able to participate in that cycle of our democracy.

I thank, as other members have, the Member for Nhulunbuy for coming in. I understand from the same position, being a First Nations person—it is good to go back to your constituencies, your mob, and say you have asked questions that related to matters of interest to people in the community, such as child protection, housing, roads and a range of other issues. People are able to tune in to watch their local member ask those questions, see a response being tabled and see how it works in that system.

I also highlight that this was a good opportunity to talk about and dissect the good things in the Northern Territory Budget 2017–18 and the massive benefits that will deliver to Territorians right across the Northern Territory. I am looking forward to the process coming up in November. We have allocated time to look at the annual reports, ask the hard questions and look at the deliverables, as well as see whether or not we have met those targets and undertaken the work that is needed to further progress that process so we can make sure we continue to put Territorians front and centre.

It has been a great opportunity; I have learned a tremendous amount each and every day of the Estimates Committee. I have also taken some lessons not to drink too much water because I am required to run out of the committee quite a lot to go to the restroom—many lessons learned there. I think that estimates is a great opportunity and I hope that in future the members opposite will work with government members to make sure we can have a smooth estimates process where we come together and ask questions on the budget and annual reports.

It will be a great outcome for Territorians because we need to come together to ask questions and look at areas that can be reviewed and areas that are performing well. It is a great process and I highlight the phenomenal work that is being done by the Northern Territory public service staff. They are very professional and their answers were very good.

I also acknowledge the work of Territory-owned corporations Power and Water, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation. They all do a phenomenal job in delivering great services to Territorians. I am thankful for their responses delivered yesterday in estimates. It was great to hear firsthand some of the initiatives and projects those Territory-owned corporations are looking at, rolling out or already doing for Territorians. The Territory is in very good hands.

**Mr HIGGINS:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the responses from the members of the committee. I note with interest that there has been no attempt by any of them to justify the policy of the 30 hours. You know you are winning the argument, from my point of view, when you have to pick on the person who cannot defend the policy. It shows they do not have a true handle on what Territorians expect.

At the core of the Country Liberals' disagreement with Labor's first budget is the excess burden it places on Territorians now and into the future. Labor has taken the easy route, the lazy road, on a journey with no obvious end in sight and no light at the end of the tunnel for Territory workers, families or businesses.

What we have is a vague promise of better times ahead but no roadmap on how to get there, just an ideological vision of spend, spend, spend. For many years Labor governments across the country have committed money they do not have. They have borrowed heavily and left legacies of debt for future Coalition governments to clean up.

The key flaw is that Labor thinks spending taxpayers' dollars, Territorians' money, is an economic outcome. But it is not. It is spending other people's money and is a means to achieving an end, not the end alone. Instead of doing the hard work required to get the best from the economy, Labor has effectively said to Territorians, 'We will make you pay, but as well as that we will make your children pay'.

Labor has delivered a budget that lumps Territorians with a \$1.3bn deficit. Labor has delivered a budget that racks up in excess of \$5bn in debt and a \$1m a day interest bill which lays out no long-term economic visions or strategy for growing the economy in the longer term. Budget 2017–18 lacks the private sector input that will broaden the Territory's economic base. It is the opposite to the sentiment expressed by the Treasurer during a budget speech when she said the government is:

*... building new confidence in the economy that will leverage greater levels of private investment, in turn creating more jobs, growth and wealth for the Territory.*

As far as I can see, that task has not been taken up. It does not leverage private sector investment to the Northern Territory, so to deliver on their big-spending, uncostered promises they have to raid the hip pocket of Territorians. This is through not just higher taxes and charges—I will discuss those in a moment—but also lending to southerners and overseas financiers, who are the real winners from Labor's historically reckless budget.

This budget has the characteristics of the huge spending spree of the Rudd Labor government, announced in response to the global financial crisis. Kevin Rudd and Treasurer Wayne Swan inherited a zero debt from the Howard-Costello government after the 2007 election. This was a unique opportunity for future governments to ensure Australia remained on a sound fiscal footing and was not burdened by debts of the past or paying interest bills in place of developing nation-building infrastructure for the future.

The legacy of the Rudd-Swan spending spree is, 10 years on, a massive debt burden that the Coalition and future governments will wrestle with for decades. It has also contributed to sluggish economic growth for the best part of a decade—the economic labouring under \$1bn-a-month interest repayments.

The Country Liberals support controlled debt, but also support physical accountability and responsible governance. It is these factors which are surely missing from this Labor government's budget. By contrast, the government is physically reckless, inheriting from us a debt-to-revenue ratio of 27% and now projecting that this will rise to 87% in the forward estimates.

One of the key focuses of the estimates questions we submitted as part of this process is for the government to release business plans, the economic modelling that underpins the infrastructure spending announced in the budget.

The new museum is a case in point. There is \$50m committed to build another museum, in a city that already has more than its fair share of museums. There is Bullocky Point, the aviation museum and the military museum at East Point. Each of these institutions has an interesting story to tell, but I remain to be convinced that aside from the \$50m sugar hit to the construction sector there will be a lasting economic benefit to the Territory from construction of a new museum.

Where are the ongoing, sustainable jobs? The government has failed to make a strong case for spending these tens of millions of dollars. It is not as if Territorians are crying out for another museum.

What of the original infrastructure projects announced in Budget 2017–18? Where is the business plan for the proposed fine arts gallery in State Square? Where is the business plan for the underground Supreme Court car park? These projects are the best use of taxpayers' money at this time.

The same questions apply to spending across the Northern Territory. The government makes no case where there is a case to be answered. Territorians will never know the answers to these questions because the government has not done the requisite due diligence and undertaken the necessary business cost-benefit analysis to be able to deliver a strong argument in favour of these projects. The Territory deserves better.

This risks dragging down the Territory economy because it is being fully funded by taxpayers, borrowings, or both. Infrastructure like museums cost millions each year to run. In the case of Bullocky Point, it is \$8m. The government has made much of its commitment to stop the flow of people out of the Northern Territory, blame for which falls fair and square on Labor, going right back to the days of Paul Henderson's house price shock, which forced thousands of Territorians to move interstate.

Inflating the cost of living is counter to the spirit of keeping people here and is very much at odds with Labor's pre-election rhetoric about cutting the cost of living.

Labor's Budget 2017–18 will deliver pain for Territorians every time they use a Motor Vehicle Registry service or access a pay for service with Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Safe NT.

During the election campaign, the Chief Minister claimed the only way for the Territory to grow is to allow private enterprise to invest and by diversifying the economy. We on the opposition benches wholly agree with this sentiment, but we also dispute whether the government is fair dinkum in its implementation. In the first few weeks in office it dropped two part-day public holidays on Territory businesses, with zero consultation, and then disappeared on holiday while eateries like Hanuman and the Q Bar, to name just a few, were left to deal with the consequences.

Then it slapped the ban on Dan Murphy's coming to Darwin to invest in our city and deliver to Territorians what Australians in any other comparable sized city take for granted. A shovel-ready project would have created jobs in construction and engineering into the future.

Then there is fracking; the hydraulic fracturing inquiry will cost an estimated \$3.1m and the expert panel is due to produce an interim report this month. Given the scope of the report, including Dr Allan Hawke AC's two inquiry reports—and you, as a government, talk constantly about the Territory's dire economic circumstances—you should make a decision on the future of fracking as soon as that interim report is released. That would, if nothing else, provide industry with certainty; although, I understand the Primary Industry minister was busy telling everyone who would listen at last month's APPEA conference in Perth that the Territory will have a regulated onshore mining regime. And it should; I agree with him.

I said during my budget speech in reply that if you have any idea how to manage the economy you would have immediately called a halt to this moratorium and let the private sector get on with developing the Territory under the best-practice regime recommended by Dr Hawke. You should have considered conclusions from the previous five reviews and noticed the Hawke recommendations were consistent with other Australian and international reviews.

The environmental risks associated with hydraulic fracturing can be managed effectively, subject to the creation of a robust regulatory regime. If the fracking inquiry is nothing more than rubber stamp, as the



minister appeared to be saying at APPEA, then why not put Territory jobs first and activate the rubber stamp now?

With estimates of thousands of jobs going begging because of this moratorium, maybe it is time the Chief Minister and his colleagues got back to their roots. They can start this progress by outlining the methodology used to arrive at the 50% renewable energy target they took to the election. While they are at it, explain why Western Australia Labor quietly dumped its 50% renewable target on the eve of its state election.

The last time they were in government they commissioned a renewable energy requirement and in an embarrassing *Back to the Future* moment they have commissioned the same report, by the same person, and an additional cost of at least \$700 000 to the taxpayers. How do we explain that one?

While on the subject of private sector jobs, online bookies are greatly concerned by moves from COAG and some states to introduce a point of consumption tax on the gaming industry, which currently employs 500 jobs and injects \$50m into the Territory economy. I have made this offer before to your government in the past. If you wish to present a bipartisan Territory position to Canberra on this, all you have to do is give me a call. We have been keeping track of it.

A couple points need to be made about where Labor targets its spending and where Territorians are getting value for money. For instance, the Chief Minister employs union liaison officers in his office. Can the Chief Minister explain to Territorians why he thinks taxpayers should be bankrolling union liaison officers? At face value there is no justification or reason at all.

Buy Territory is in area with which all governments struggle. Labor promised it would do it better but did not. Why was the Bombing of Darwin commemorative book, an iconic Territory keepsake, published in Queensland despite comparable bids in the Northern Territory? Why was an early childhood development plan awarded to a Victorian company at a cost of more than \$126 000? Why was a \$20 000 review of Aboriginal engagement with the justice system awarded to a New South Wales company?

An area this government has excelled in is buck passing and blame shifting. I point directly to its robust and extremely disingenuous effort to shift blame for the reduction in GST allocations from Darwin to Canberra. The primary reason we lost out in distributions is population decline. I said earlier where the origins of that destructive trend began.

Remember Paul Henderson? It is all too easy for politicians to stand here and say over again that the Territory has a great future. It is more accurate to say there is a lot of work to be done before the Territory's economic and social infrastructure develops. But the Gunner Labor government is not prepared to do the hard work.

Improving our tourism infrastructure is needed, but the government's reliance on museums and arts trails is limited and holding us back. We need this targeting spending to develop economic infrastructure, the kind that will help grow the economy and create sustainable jobs.

We are told the private sector will build a water park. I am interested in how the government will support this on a registered sacred site. If you have not had a look, then look.

New roads will increase the opportunities for tourism, beef and mango exports, and more importantly, connect Territorians. For too long we have accepted substandard infrastructure in the regions as part and parcel of living out bush. We should not. There are potential innovations, ideas and businesses waiting to be unlocked when we connect Territorians with each other and connect isolated places and communities with the rest of us. We need infrastructure that leaves the Territory wealthier and more productive after it is built. Unfortunately, the budget just announced is the worst possible budget at this time.

I will close by acknowledging that it was not the estimates process that anyone in this House or across the Northern Territory was hoping for. I also speak for the Member for Spillett when I say how frustrating and disappointing the past few weeks have been. The first estimates hearing was a chance for the government to show its seriousness about rebuilding integrity and trust in government. These are worthwhile objectives, but in the hands of the Chief Minister and his ministerial colleagues they ring hollow and lack substance.

I offer congratulations, but also my sympathies, to government backbench members of the Estimates Committee who participated in this week's sham process. The government left you in an incredibly awkward position, and the vision shown on the television news bulletins highlighted just what a macabre

spectacle it has been. The Dixier questions you put this week, without the counterbalance of budget scrutiny from opposition, served to highlight the importance of the estimates process and this government's arrogance at letting the process break down.

With just two opposition members and five Independents, we have little or no say in the day-to-day running of the Territory. Nonetheless, we have been a very effective opposition, bringing the government to account on issues such as public holidays, the Home Improvement Scheme, bail, law and order and Dan Murphy's, just to name a few. But it would have been disingenuous of us, as non-government members, to have swallowed the bitter estimates pill being prescribed by Labor. It would also have been disrespectful to Territorians who have every right to expect rigorous scrutiny.

The government can try to bend the truth all it wants, but the fact is that under Labor's watch the amount of time dedicated to scrutinising their budget fell from 60 to 30 hours. To do that, Labor rode roughshod over not one but two government-dominated committees. It overruled the Select Committee on Opening the Parliament to the People when it cut the time available to question ministers and bureaucrats from 60 to 30 hours. Then the questioning schedule by its own Public Accounts Committee was also overruled, upending a longstanding convention that meant opposition and Independents had discretion to determine the time ministers were questioned. For us, that slight was the final straw. This was a situation that should not have been allowed to happen.

Labor's budget delivers Territorians record debts and deficit, with the least amount of time for scrutiny. I hope this is never allowed to happen again. The opposition has submitted to the Assembly over 1400 questions from the budget estimates hearing process, as well as a further 60 questions at the end of March. We have submitted them and look forward to them being answered without waffle and rhetoric. These are important questions and should be treated respectfully.

I noticed, during a news bulletin this week, the Treasurer expressing her disappointment on how things have turned out. We share that disappointment, but for a different reason. This government has to stop its rot! It must start to be open, accountable, and above all, honest. We do not support the report. We wish—it is also the wish of the deputy leader—that this will not happen again.

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## VISITORS

**Madam CHAIR:** Honourable members, I take this opportunity to welcome some guests to the gallery. First, I acknowledge and welcome the Member for Stuart's wife, Kathy, and her parents who are from Chicago in the USA, Mrs Anna and Mr Tom Crouk. Welcome to Parliament House in the Northern Territory. I hope you enjoy watching the deliberations in parliament.

I also take the opportunity to welcome some other guests to the public gallery. I advise honourable members of the presence of Katherine High School students from the Stars Foundation, accompanied by Jessie Hillen and Keely Ah Chin. Welcome. I hope you enjoy watching parliament.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr WOOD:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I remember Chicago—windy, but a beautiful city. I remember it for other good reasons.

I did not prepare anything for this debate because I was not at the Estimates Committee, but there is a good reason I was not there.

I concur with the Member for Namatjira that I hope we sit down after sittings and discuss this as mature people who want to do better for Territorians at the next Estimates Committee.

I heard the Member for Katherine ridicule people on this side who had not participated in this because we were playing politics. I remember using that word in a debate when Syd Stirling was the Leader of Government Business. He laughed at me and asked what the heck I was doing in here. This is politics. This is pure politics, not party politics. That is the difference with what happened here.

I regret not being part of the system we had in the last week. I have participated in at least 14 estimates committees. I was part of the committee that looked at how we should have this in the Northern Territory. I support it to the hilt because it is an important part of how we should run our parliament. It is the time when

this side of parliament, the opposition and the Independents, scrutinise the government. It is not for the government to scrutinise itself. We expect that scrutiny to be over a period of time in which we can do that properly. I did not walk out on this system because I wanted to. I felt that I had only one other way of saying to the government—you have the numbers, so you can override this side any time you like—‘You are doing this wrong’.

I tried to explain to people why it is wrong technically. People are saying they would love to see me later in the year spend 30 hours with the annual reports. We are discussing a bill. We have the Acting Deputy Speaker sitting in the chair, as we do with many other bills, and we scrutinise the bills. We normally scrutinise this bill for 60 hours.

The upcoming annual reports do not fit into this time frame. It is no good pretending what might be in those annual reports because we do not know what is in them. We have to deal with a budget which includes last year’s annual report—the first time we see what government departments spent. Then we can compare it with what government departments will spend this time, whether there has been a reduction, the same expenditure or an increased expenditure. We can ask why that is happening, and what happened to previous programs that might have been deleted or changed. They are the questions we would be asking as members on this side.

We are not there to give you a pat on the back, although we might. We are there to analyse what is in the budget and get you to answer the questions. We want to know if the ministers know what they are talking about. We want to ask questions that the public will also want to know about. It is not just about us. The Estimates Committee is not just about this parliament.

The thing I love about estimates—I heard comments from the Leader of Government Business and I agree with her—is that in days gone by it has not always worked. I have been through estimates when Labor and the CLP have been in. There are times when the system is abused deliberately to avoid answering or to simply waste time.

I would love for us to sit down and say, ‘Let’s make that work better’. To cut the number of hours is sacrilege. This is such an important part. I do not feel that people understand that. I heard people say that this was their first time at estimates and they loved it. That is terrific. I love it too, but I do not want to see it downgraded to a summary of events. I want to see it as a proper period in the life of this parliament where we can thoroughly analyse every department.

I would have had questions for the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources. I had questions for the Minister for Housing and Community Development; local government is one of my favourite areas. I would have had questions for the Minister for Territory Families on the issues around our prisons. Minister for Education, I am sure I can find questions with about nine schools in my area. The minister for lands and planning gets questions from me regularly. The Minister for Health would get plenty of questions. Where is the Holtze hospital? It is in my electorate. I am sure I will have questions for the Ministers for Tourism and Culture; parks and wildlife; and Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

I would have had questions on all of those because I take a serious interest in what I do and in the running of this government. That is why I like being a member of this parliament, but to me there did not seem to be any give or take on the other side. You overrode your recommendations in your own select committee and then you overrode the schedule. To me, that just showed the arrogance that I could not stand in the previous government. I used to get bashed up by the people in the previous government because some of those members, not all, were downright arrogant. I get the feeling that you are heading that way instead of us working towards a more consensus approach.

People would have heard me speak here time and again about the one time I missed estimates, when I was in Canada looking at how they ran their parliaments. Both those parliaments of Northwest Territories and Nunavut work on a consensus. We work on being equal members of this parliament; we work on that process to help push forward policies that will be for the benefit of the community. What I am feeling now is, ‘We are the government; we will say what happens and you mob can jump in the lake.’ To me, that is sad, but that is the impression I got when I heard the government saying this is the way estimates will run.

I am not saying, ‘Fantastic bloke, Gerry Wood’. I am saying that I pulled out of this process because I am passionate about the Estimates Committee and the PAC. It has the ability to do a great job scrutinising the government throughout the year. I put my name down as a member of the PAC, and I hope the PAC acts as an independent body, not as an offshoot of the government.

You will remember last year when it was independent, when the Member for Araluen was the Chair, we investigated the money to be spent on Richardson Park. It was so interesting finding out the truth. It was great and I hope the PAC can put away its party loyalties and operate independently and scrutinise government programs that come up during the year. You have the museum, and money is being spent on Warren Park and other projects; they are the things the PAC should be checking, asking people, looking at them, analysing them in depth and reporting back to this parliament.

Estimates is part of the process. I would like this government to say, 'Okay, it has been a bit of a stuff up; there is a bit of agro around the place at the moment. How about we look at 60 hours next year? How about we get the PAC to look at the annual reports?' The annual reports will not come out like the budget in a nice clean book; they vary as to when people can release them. They are not exactly set. Look at Power and Water; about a year ago they were released very late.

It is not something that is clear cut, but I would rather have a system where the PAC looked at an annual report, got the minister up before the PAC and went through that report in its own time. I put those suggestions forward and I hope that after the smoke has cleared everyone has it off their chest. We are mature enough to come together and work out a better process for next year.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I really feel like I do not know where to begin in my contribution to this debate. Part of me feels so sorry for the Labor back bench, particularly those who participated in estimates, because their lack of understanding about what should have taken place and what estimates should be is vastly different from the experience they have had in the last week. I think their comments highlight how flawed the entire process was. I will touch on some of those comments later in my contribution.

I, too, would like to go back through the time line. As we come into this budget phase we have been preceded by 15 years of an estimates process that is tried and tested. It allows a significant period of time for scrutiny of the budget, and I make the very clear distinction that the estimates process is for scrutiny of the budget. Annual reports are an entirely separate process, and that has been in place for 15 years. It was put in place by a Labor government and continued on by successive governments of all stripes because it is a process of transparency and reviewing the budget.

This government came to power on a promise to Territorians that it would be open and transparent. You claimed all sorts of ways in which you would achieve this. You said you would not be arrogant, would consult with Territorians and would be a different style of government to what we had seen before. Territorians believed and trusted you with an enormous responsibility to not only take government, but to take it with such a tremendous majority—such a tremendous amount of power you have. They gave that to you expecting you to exercise great care and caution, and to be true to your words about transparency, openness and accountability.

What we have seen unfold since the August election last year is an erosion of that position time and time again. My colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, highlighted some of those key attributes, one of which we will debate in this parliament today regarding the 400 square metre legislation, which has eroded public trust in government. It has not been transparent, open or accountable.

This government created its own committee of opening the parliament to the people, a committee that has a majority of government members, that was tasked with looking at ways in which to bring further transparency and scrutiny to parliamentary processes. It was endorsed by all 25 members of this Assembly and participated in by Independent members, opposition members and government members, as it is a government-led committee.

That committee investigated a number of things and, with respect to estimates, it reported that 60 hours should be set aside for estimates as it always has been, and that Independent and opposition members would allocate the time as they see fit. That has always been the case. It is a process for Independent and opposition members to negotiate amongst themselves their priorities of which ministers they would like to have on which days, for which times, and when the Estimates Committee is established that proposed time line is put forward to the Estimates Committee which, ordinarily, is accepted.

It shows the will and the intention of the opposition and cross bench members and how they would like to prosecute their interrogation of various ministers on the budget, which has been handed down prior to it being passed in the parliament at the end of that estimates period.

That was, in one fell swoop, rejected by the government. It rejected the recommendations from the committee it established, which had its own government majority chaired by a government member. In an astonishing move the government rejected the committee's recommendations. To add further salt to the wound, this government, with stars in its eyes, got the power. It cannot see past its majority in an act of unprecedented arrogance. We saw the proposed timetable rejected by the government, and opposition and cross bench members being fed a time table by the government. 'Not only will we cut estimates in half from 60 hours, as it has been for 15 years, down to 30 hours, but we will also tell you which minister you can see, when you can see them and how long you can see them for.'

That is disgusting and disgraceful. It flies in the face of everything you say about transparency, accountability, consultation and openness. It shows nothing but disregard for time-old processes, transparency and the way in which you are going about so-called reforming and opening parliament to the people.

You railroaded the system from start to finish with the weight of your numbers and did not care who you took down along the way. I say you do not care who you took down because, most importantly, you took down Territorians and their ability to have a transparent and open process around the budget. You stopped opposition and cross bench members from participating in a proper process. You also stopped your own colleagues, the backbenchers, from participating in a proper process.

It was very telling that the four members who spoke and participated in estimates were there because they had to make up a quorum. Let us not make any mistake here. You need three people sitting in those chairs at any one time to keep estimates running. You had no choice but to send your back bench out there and do your bidding.

What about the other backbenchers who did not show up to estimates? Why was there not full participation by the full back bench in estimates? Why was it only the Members for Karama, Arnhem, Katherine and Namatjira? Is it because they saw how fraught with problems this process was? Did they see the disregard you had for the process that they participated in as part of your committee in handing down recommendations for this report? Why did the full back bench not participate in budget estimates? That will be a lingering question that I think we all know the answer to.

What we saw was a process of back patting and high fives. My favourite thing I heard over the course of the week was ABC's collage of voice clips of government backbenchers asking questions and ministers stumbling through their own Dorothy Dixier questions. It was beautiful. It perfectly highlighted the farce of the process.

**Mr Peach:** You were not there! You were not doing your job.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The reason we could not participate is because it was a sham, Member for Namatjira. You are so naive that you do not understand the actual process. You said in your contribution that you felt like you learned a lot about the process. I can tell you that you did not learn anything about estimates, because that was not an estimates process. That was a sham put on by the leadership of your party, which does not believe in transparency, does not respect Territorians, and has made a sham of a process that has been in this Chamber for 15 years, well before you and I ever entered this place. It is a process that should be respected by successive governments.

**Ms Fyles:** Let us try something new.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I hear the interjection from the Attorney-General, 'Let us try something new'. That is not something you try something new with. You should set up a committee to give recommendations. You ignored your own committee's recommendations. What else can be said about that, Attorney-General? Honestly, what else can be said about that?

To highlight the farce of the whole process is a classic example that in 30 hours the minister for tourism only had 30 minutes to answer questions on tourism and culture, which encompasses sport and rec, arts and museums, and tourism. Tourism is a major department that employs a lot of people, is an important industry for the Northern Territory and is sacred for our future development. Yet, based on Dorothy Dixers and questions from the public, the minister was still only able to answer questions for 30 minutes. She got halfway through her opening speech before being told to stop because there was not enough time—case in point.

Her departmental staff could not finish answering questions; they had to take them on notice because they were told by the Estimates Committee there was not enough time. A number of questions had to be taken on notice because there was not enough time.

This is a government that did not have enough time to answer its own Dorothy Dixers in a farcical process that should have been 60 hours and should have been done properly.

In putting this position to the government a few weeks ago, in joining forces at an unprecedented level of cooperation with the Independents, cross bench and opposition, we were sending a message that this type of bully tactics would not be supported. But we still came back with a compromise, and what did we hear from this government? Crickets. Nothing. They showed disrespect for the process, the parliament and Territorians.

We offered a compromise of 45 hours for estimates and 15 hours for annual reports. Let us try something new, Attorney-General. But you dug your heels in and continued this rampage of disregard for Territorians and the estimates process. We got nothing back. It was an absolutely shambolic disaster.

A week of high fives and pats on the back was nauseating for everyone involved. I hope you were listening closely to what the Member for Nelson had to say, and that you take a good, hard look at yourselves and at the recommendations of your committee, which spent tireless hours researching and preparing for you. Think long and hard about how you will go about this next year, because this cannot go on. Territorians will not accept this substandard performance of your government. They will not accept the childish comments we heard as a result of us putting our position. They will not accept this contempt for the process any longer. You cannot add value to a process when you are being hamstrung.

The Member for Nelson also raised the issue of annual reports, which are very important. This notion of annual reports being part of scrutinising the budget is just a sideshow so you can distract Territorians and say you have cut scrutiny by half. Sixty minus 30 equals 30. That is half by anyone's equation.

Annuals reports—this little bit of trickery on the side, where you guys can rock up to press conferences and say, 'It's all okay; we are doing 30 hours for estimates and 30 hours for annual reports at the end of the year', which has nothing to do with the budget. The budget will or will not pass today; am I wrong in saying that? Nothing from the Attorney-General. I will take that as a yes. Yet we are being served up on a golden platter and should be extremely grateful because the Attorney-General will allow us 30 hours at the end of the year to look through annual reports.

If this government was serious about transparency it would have kept the 60 hours for estimates and given us an additional 30 hours at the end of the year for annual reports. That is how you increase someone's workload. The Member for Nelson made his point with his strike out the front of Parliament House.

That is how you increase scrutiny, but do not try to confuse Territorians about the process. It is so disingenuous. People understand there is a difference between a budget process and an annual report process. They understand they are more than six months apart. They understand the Treasurer will pass her budget today, or will not, depending on how it goes, and that annual reports at the end of the year have nothing to do with that process.

To peddle that to Territorians further undermines your credibility in their eyes because you are treating them like they do not understand. They do understand and that has been made out very clearly to us all. People are stopping us on the street asking, 'What does this government seriously take us for? Do they seriously think we do not understand?' It was an amazing process to witness.

To touch on some of the comments by the backbenchers, who are subjected to a farce and sham of a process—the Member for Karama said the government understands the importance of the estimates process. No, it does not or it would not have cut it by 30 hours. It would not have cut it by 50%. This is the first time that members of the public and organisations have been able to submit questions. What a load of rubbish! This is another piece of trickery by government to justify its poor decision-making and digging its heels in.

The Deputy Chief Minister and Chief Minister are away and once again, we have seen the Attorney-General at the helm, steering the ship into the shipwreck, and they are not backing down on this decision making.

The Member for Karama also said that we chose not to participate in estimates. What an absolute joke! We had no choice but to defend the principles Territorians believe in and send a signal to you that you cannot bully your way around our community and that Territorians expect better.

The Member for Arnhem said that estimates is a very important process. We agree with that sentiment. That is why we have taken the strong action we have. The Member for Arnhem also commented on part two of the process, that is, the scrutiny of annual reports. I am sorry, Member for Arnhem, but there is no part two in this storybook. The entire story finishes today for Territorians with the budget the Treasurer will hand down. Part two, as you call it, is an entirely different process and if this government wants that new process, great; we welcome it. But do not try to pretend that it is part of estimates, because it is not.

The Member for Katherine said that we have robbed Territorians of their right to scrutiny. Member for Katherine, the only people who have robbed Territorians of their rights is the Gunner Labor government, your colleagues, who you defend. You have people from Katherine here in the gallery today. You go back to your community and say, 'Look at me; I participated in a sham of a process because my colleagues, born to rule, cut estimates from 60 to 30 hours. Look at me; how wonderful. I participated in a sham process.' Disgraceful!

**Mr Paech:** Will you apologise to your constituents, who wanted you to go to estimates?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Member for Namatjira, you always have a lot to say. I admire your enthusiasm as you snip from the sidelines. But the number of questions that were put on notice during this process perfectly highlights that there was not enough time afforded. If this government could not get through its own Dorothy Dixers during the 30 hours allocated, how on earth were Independent and opposition members meant to be able to adequately scrutinise the budget, do it properly, pursue lines of inquiry and execute lines of interrogation? It is impossible in 30 hours.

Territorians have every right to a rigorous scrutiny process. The disrespect, disregard, arrogant and heavy-handedness of this government is shocking and has been felt clearly by the Northern Territory community. Shame on all of you for participating in it!

**Mr MILLS:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, on 1 July we will be celebrating self-government day. In 1978 there was a swearing-in ceremony on the Esplanade to see the transition of power from Canberra to the Northern Territory. It was a time of great euphoria. There was a new Cabinet and the new ministry was sworn in. You can imagine the sense of excitement about the break from the past and this whole new era that lay before Territorians.

Not far from now we will be celebrating that event, but many years later. When a government changes there is always a sense of euphoria that there will be a new era of great excitement and promise. There is only one opportunity presented to create a first impression. This was a significant opportunity to establish an impression. That impression will remain.

You had an opportunity to demonstrate to Territorians a changed approach to governance so that together, we could restore and rebuild people's confidence in the NT Government, particularly when we consider the great responsibility we have been presented in governing, under self-government—hopefully, one day, statehood in the Northern Territory.

You failed in that opportunity. With all the shouting and yelling that may go on in here, particularly from government members, justifying what cannot be justified, you find yourself in an echo chamber where you are reinforcing each other's views.

If you stay in that echo chamber for too long you will find that the impression established by the decision you made in full view of the community—in the face of the expectations they quietly placed on a new government when they got rid of the last one. By default, that resulted in a new government. Such was the rejection of the past—you had one opportunity to establish a strong impression and you have established an impression such as this.

The audacity of going out to the community and trying to tell a story that is plainly implausible and incorrect, that there has now been a change of approach—we are open and honest and looking forward to careful scrutiny. When you change the system no-one believes it.

You may live in your echo chamber and believe each other's sounds but the impression has already been established.

What you lost was not only the opportunity to make a solid first step towards rebuilding something in the Territory that had been damaged; you denied the opportunity for new members to be involved in a robust process. Every one of us who has been here for some time has been involved in that process. For government and non-government members it has been a good process. We have all improved and strengthened in our understanding and appreciation of government through the process of estimates.

That was denied to new members. They were given the role of championing something that is really difficult to champion. They missed the opportunity of being involved in a robust process where there could be deeper questions and lines of argument and interrogation that result in improved governance. Everyone would have learned something.

The new government has had an opportunity to present itself before the Territory community in a manner that restores confidence. You would have gained significantly from that. You lost that opportunity and reverted to form. As you know, the Territory community will not be marching on the streets. They will not push back. You might see occasional letters to the editor, as you are starting to see now. That is normal. The impression that has now been established by your actions, which you have defiantly and arrogantly presented and defended before the Territory community, will be absorbed by the Territory voter. They will make their decision in 2020.

If we operate from the premise that the past, as you say, was terrible—Territorians wanted a change and as a result we are a new government—be aware that the decisions you are making now will have an effect on those marginal seats. People will not abide this and will push back against it. They expected more. When people expect more and they are denied it, it translates into anger and disillusion; they will look for others.

Be careful what flows from this. Make no mistake; people want to see a genuine improvement to governance. They know that the Westminster system is a Cabinet being held to scrutiny by the entire parliament, who are not members of the Cabinet, to ensure we have a good deal. That has been denied. The majority of members who are not members of Cabinet have been conscripted into the role of championing that which is very difficult to champion, and it is in full view of the community.

For the next three years you might justify this in here and pat each other on the back in your lobby. Upstairs you might gather around people of the same view. I have seen it before. You will all be convinced that your course is correct. I urge some members to open your ears, listen carefully, ask questions of your own community and listen to what they say. Ask them how it is going, if the response to the issues that concern them is satisfactory to them. Ask them and listen to them. Hear what they say rather than guiding them in the conversation. You may be surprised. There are three years to go.

You have an opportunity, if you recognise with some humility the challenge you have been presented with, the opportunity to govern. The lessons history will show you from 27 years of CLP government—I was here when there was great euphoria of the magnificent changes that were to sweep across the Northern Territory. I have been here for others too.

You have had that same opportunity, but you have three years to rebuild and restore your credibility before the Territory community.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, this morning I want to talk about something that should be dear to the hearts of each of us in the Chamber: democracy. It is a process whereby everyone in this Chamber is duly elected by the people of the Northern Territory to represent their interests. In a democratic process we should all be allowed to scrutinise government in a fair and equitable manner.

What we have seen from this government is a changing of the rules. They have moved the goal posts and it has not been for anything that would enhance the process of democracy in the Northern Territory. It has been about trying to stop the process of scrutiny and the ability of the seven members opposite them to do their work.

I am employed and paid by taxpayers of the Northern Territory to do a job I take very seriously. Each of us, the two members of opposition and five Independents, take our job seriously. To have estimates cut in half meant we could not do our job effectively and execute our roles as needed on behalf of the people of the Northern Territory.

What worries me about this parliament is that it is not functioning as a democracy at all, for a range of reasons. What happened in estimates this year exemplified a trend there is no explanation for. It is



inexplicable why the Gunner government, being such a strong government—you have 18 seats out of 25. You do not need to be fearful. You do not need to run away from scrutiny, but for some strange reason you have.

Perhaps the Chief Minister, later today, could explain why this new, strong government with a mandate to rule does not want to be scrutinised—sit in a room with a panel of members of parliament constituting the estimates committee and be properly scrutinised. It is bewildering and inexplicable.

For people like me, I could not be party to this, a participant in something that was so clearly against one of my principles. We should always try to reflect a democratic process in this House.

This week I celebrated a special anniversary: I have been an Independent for two years now. Being an Independent was one of the most difficult decisions I made in my life. It has been a good decision because it has enabled me to be truly free to serve the people of Araluen in the best way I can. I am unencumbered by party politics. We all play a game when it comes to politics. You cannot take the politics out of the game.

I moved away from the CLP because I could not adhere to the lack of ethics, integrity and extreme arrogance in how they operated during that period, as the government members like to repeat all the time. They like to reflect on the arrogance of the former CLP government.

The arrogance of this government has a different face, but it is still arrogance. These people are nice, polite and have good manners, but the arrogance is still there. What we have seen over the last couple weeks, during this fiasco of an estimates process, is arrogance in a polite form.

Taking away a democratic process from the Northern Territory was an arrogant move. In the Northern Territory we have a unicameral system. There is only one other jurisdiction in Australia that has a unicameral system and that is Queensland. A unicameral system means we have one parliament; we do not have any other layers of scrutiny apart from this Chamber. The government asked for a process to be undertaken by a select committee to look at opening up the parliament to the people, and part of that process was to keep the 60 hours of estimates in place, to create two portfolio committees and a number of other mechanisms.

Strangely enough, this committee was headed up by the government; the government had the majority on that committee and we all agreed in good faith on the recommendations. I do not think the government has actually accepted any of the recommendations yet; I think it has gone off to another committee for more scrutiny and watering down.

What does this government truly stand for? You all have your heads down; you are all looking at something on your desks, but I would like you to reflect. What do you stand for? What do you think democracy should look like in the Northern Territory? I can assure you as an Independent of two years that it does not look like this. It does not look like a process in which I do not have time to properly scrutinise the government for what it is about to do and its intention with the Appropriation Bill, and I do not have time to execute my role in the way that I have become accustomed to, having been a member of parliament for the last seven years.

The other restriction that has been placed on me is that despite what the Chief Minister has put on the table, I do not have any resources to assist me. The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia in which Independents do not have their own resources; we have shared resources based in Darwin. I live 1500 kilometres away. I do not have anyone helping me with my job, which leads me to the next part of this scrutiny process that the government has created for us, the scrutiny of annual reports in November.

I do not have time to read 31 annual reports, or however many there are. How many do we produce every year in the Northern Territory? It must be over 30. How can I do that? I am just one person with no one to help me. I cannot participate in a process that requires me to read and scrutinise over 30 reports with no assistance; it is unmanageable and unrealistic.

Once again, you have five members of the Chamber who cannot undertake a job that this government thinks is reasonable and should happen because it cannot be bothered being scrutinised.

I was busy doing a number of other work-related things this week, but I watched some of estimates. For a while I watched the Minister for Education deal with her Dorothy Dixers. Each of the ministers obviously knew exactly what they were going to be asked; it was all very well programmed and executed. I laughed because the Minister for Education kept referring the questions to her executive team. I laughed because

even with Dorothy Dixers you have ministers who are not standing up and answering the questions that are being posed to them, referring them to the executive of something or other.

You all have to stand up and be bold and brave. You can answer every question put to you; you do not need to reflect, run away and try to reduce the seemingly insurmountable burden that has been placed on you. You are not unique; there have been ministers for many years before you in parliament. You can do it.

**Ms Lawler:** I know my portfolio very well, Member for Araluen; you have picked on the wrong person. I think I answered every question.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I am hearing some retaliation from the Minister for Education. You need to stand up and do your job and not rely on the departmental executives to answer Dorothy Dixers. For goodness' sake, minister ...

**Ms Lawler:** Obviously that was the only part of estimates you watched. I answered every single question.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** You knew what the questions were and you should have known how to answer them, but you executed what I could see was a role of compering rather than taking responsibility.

**Ms Lawler:** I did answer them; we answered them very well. No, Member for Araluen, you know what? I remember very well when you were a minister and you could not answer media questions!

**Madam Acting Deputy SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** I will not get into any more conversation about the fact estimates was a debacle. It was farcical; I did not want to be a part of it and I could not be a part of it. I stand in this parliament on the grounds of being ethical and transparent. All of us should use this opportunity to reflect on the contribution we make to the democratic process of the Northern Territory.

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#### **VISITORS** **Essington School**

**Madam Acting Deputy SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the galleries of Year 5 students from Essington School, accompanied by their teachers, Marie Noonan and Louise Hand. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to all visitors. Enjoy watching parliament.

**Members:** Hear! Hear!

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**Ms FYLES :** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, it is wonderful to see students from my school of Essington at Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your visit and I look forward to catching up with you soon. I caught up with the other class earlier. Welcome to Parliament House.

It is interesting to listen to the debate today. One of the first points I want to raise is that it has become quite obvious that those opposite have spent the last three days watching estimates, yet they did not have the guts to turn up and try something new. We outlined in August 2015 that if we were privileged enough to be elected as the new government we would try something different and look at the estimates process.

**Mr Higgins:** 'We will be open and transparent, open and transparent ...'

**Ms FYLES:** I pick up on the interjection from the member opposite. What we saw for the last four years was chaos and dysfunction. The former Treasurer and a Chief Minister did not make it to their first estimates. That is what their team did to them. After the last four years in which we had so many reshuffles, dysfunction and chaos, we said to Territorians that we need to try something new. We outlined that in a paper in August 2015, having 30 hours of scrutiny for estimates and 30 hours of scrutiny for the annual reports.

As somebody who sat on the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee for the last four years and watched the then Chief Minister slowly read answers to avoid scrutiny—they refused time after time to table documents. They read on and on. After that chaos and dysfunction we said we would look at doing things differently. It is so interesting to hear them today. They are passionate about the estimates process with the 60 hours. Do you think they had that enthusiasm in 2002?

We need to look at why the estimates process was put in place as it was in 2002, then look at what we had over the last four years. That is why we felt that it was time to try something new. All we have asked is to try something new. Those opposite have dug their heels in and said they will not try something new.

In 2001 there was an election, with the Labor government elected under Clare Martin. A number of claims were made about budget figures in that election, which is why the estimates process was put in place as we knew it in 2002, with 60 hours of scrutiny. Over time, particularly in the last four years with the complete lack of participation by ministers—also, it was interesting hearing criticism this morning.

The Member for Araluen chose the wrong minister to pick on when she complained about the Minister for Education not providing responses. I do not think we have ever had an Education minister as experienced as our current one. She is a former school teacher and principal. She has worked as an executive and is passionate about Territory kids. If those opposite want to use their passion for a good reason then they need to call on Canberra to stop the unfair cuts that are potentially passing federal parliament today, which is another disgrace from the Liberal Coalition.

I sat as a member of the Estimates Committee and heard answers being slowly read to waste time. Another year I saw five minutes allocated for sport and recreation. How dare the Member for Spillett come in here and criticise the current minister, saying there was not enough time, when her own minister could barely answer questions for five minutes!

After 15 years we felt that it was time to change and try something different. We were very upfront. We outlined this before the election, and through the whole process we said, 'Just try it. Try 30 hours now and try 30 hours for the annual reports. We will then review it and if it works we will put it in place for next year. If there needs to be further changes we will look at them.'

We are trying something different. It is important to note—in regard to the outrage that we have heard from those opposite about the bill—that the bill has never substantially changed from the estimates process. There have been minor amendments, generally drafting amendments and things like that. It is about providing scrutiny for Territorians, and that is what we are doing.

It is completely misleading for those opposite to say we have cut the time in half. We have not. There were 30 hours allocated in June, and there will be 30 hours for the annual reports. Those annual reports outline how we spend taxpayer dollars.

In my portfolio of Health we outlined how we intend to spend \$1.57bn on providing healthcare for Territorians. Do you think we could have some time to provide for scrutiny, face to face, with me, as the minister, and the chief executive? Did we put those programs in place? Did we spend that allocation the way we said we would? If not, why not?

When you look back you can see it is extremely important to have this process, which has been in place for a number of years. Over the last four years ministers would slowly read their answers. We felt it worthwhile to try something new.

It is ironic that the members opposite come here today and make all sorts of claims. They claimed that it was disregard for the old process. Are we never allowed to try something new because it is a disregard for the old process? I think that is you putting your head in the sand. I am pretty sure we did not stop the opposition and Independents from participating over the last few days. When I attended there were a couple of empty seats they could have easily taken if they genuinely wanted to participate.

I thank the Estimates Committee members from the government. They have put in an enormous effort over the last three days, and I have personally thanked each of them. The Independent Member for Nhulunbuy asked some very worthwhile questions and engaged in the process. I thank him for taking that time.

It is interesting to hear some of the allegations being made here today regarding why they did not show up. The Member for Araluen clearly explained just a moment ago why she does not like the new process, because she does not want to have to read all the annual reports. I am sorry, but that is the job of a member of parliament.

She complained about the lack of support. In opposition I read annual reports late at night and then came in here and asked questions of the government, as well as worked with the media to raise those questions. It is your job to read annual reports. It is a job for all of us.

Those opposite kept talking about how they watched the process, but they refused to come into the room and participate. I challenge those members opposite: share your diaries for the last three days. Show us what you were really doing. Were you really that engaged with the community? From all the commentary I heard this morning on radio from the Deputy Opposition Leader and then here in the Chamber, I am pretty sure you were in your offices the whole time, making notes. You could have just come downstairs and tried something new. But no. You dug your heels in and refused to participate.

I found it ridiculous that the Deputy Opposition Leader said Territorians will not accept it and that it was childish. I am pretty sure you are the ones who, as soon as that timetable changed—I think it is important to note that we had a timetable that was 30 hours. The opposition and Independents were okay with that. My portfolios of Health and Justice had two hours. Education had two hours. There were members of the committee who, when they agreed to that timetable, felt that there was more allocation for those important portfolios to provide that scrutiny. Especially in areas the previous government made cuts to.

The previous government made cuts to education and did not support our health workers. The problem arose when the timetable changed, not from 30 hours and 30 hours, but when it changed to having more scrutiny for Health and Education. That is when the opposition members took their ball and left. They simply said, 'We are not playing. We are out of here.' How childish is that!

You are paid by Territorians to represent them. You had the opportunity to represent your communities over the last three days and you refused. It looks like you sat upstairs and watched it on the television. You refused to ask the questions and listen to the answers. I challenge you to share your diaries over the last few days. What were you doing?

I have spoken about the estimates process, the historical nature of it. Previously we held the estimates process here in this Chamber. In 2002 significant changes were made. We felt, as a new government—and we said this before the election—that now was another time, 15 years later, to look at it.

In regard to the Member for Araluen claiming this was not democracy, we outlined it before the election. We have been very upfront saying we would try it. If it does not work or if it needs further changes we can look at that. It is a bit rich for them to claim they did not know anything about it when it was clearly outlined in August 2015.

I sincerely thank the members of the public who asked questions. We had more than 200 questions from members of the public, and I think that is important. In reviewing this process post-November when we scrutinise the annual reports, I want to see how we can incorporate those questions from the members of the public going forward. It was interesting to hear—particularly in the areas of alcohol policy and alcohol harm—the questions from the members of the public on issues they are interested in.

The opposition and Independents have let off a bit of steam this morning and they have misled Territorians by saying that it was cut in half. It was not. There will be 30 hours in November, so I challenge you to turn up. Come to work and do your job, as Territorians have elected you to do.

We had a new process, and after November we will review how this all worked and make sure we can provide that analysis to the annual report. I think I have answered some of the questions here today. I thank the public servants and the agency staff who put together information.

It was interesting that the members opposite clearly watched the estimates process. They should have tried something new, come down to the committee room and asked some questions. Going forward, post the 30 hours, it will be interesting to see the analysis of how we spent such a huge amount of taxpayer dollars.

I note that in the debate this morning the Leader of the Opposition took the opportunity to swipe at the Treasurer's budget. This was a very difficult budget and we acknowledge that, unlike those opposite who offer no ideas, who simply want to turn the lights out and come back in a couple of years. We cannot afford to do that. We need to support Territorians. We know they are doing it really tough right now. Business is very tough and we need to work together with community, and this budget provides for that.

We will keep working with and representing Territorians. I thank the Estimates Committee for the opportunity to answer questions on my portfolios, as do other ministers. I thank them for their hard work. I thank the Legislative Assembly staff, who have provided for that forum over the last few days.

It was very disappointing that the opposition and Independent members refused to come to work and take part in a process that they were elected to take part in and refused to represent their constituents. I challenge them to turn up in November, try something new and see how it goes.

**Ms MANISON:** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak about the estimates process, but also the budget and the importance of it. Like the Attorney-General, the Leader of Government Business, I was stumped by the strategy that the opposition and the Independents took when it came to the process of estimates.

Estimates is such an important process. It is a good process for government to ensure that we are looking, agency by agency, line item by line item, at the expenditure and performance of government. We welcome that scrutiny. It is a good, healthy process for government, but to walk away when we were clear with Territorians about the process we would be undertaking—to miss out on the opportunity to partake in estimates not once but twice this year—was disappointing and, frankly, disgraceful.

They have an obligation as members of this parliament. I have just heard the Member for Araluen speaking about democracy and the principles around it, and the Westminster system. One of those firm principles is that you have opposition and Independents to scrutinise the performance of the government of the day, but they neglected that responsibility and I thought that was absolutely disgraceful.

This is the most transparent government we have seen. We are bringing forward an ICAC. We have reformed Question Time so that on Wednesdays the opposition and Independent members can ask every question of the government to scrutinise them.

We now have the process of estimates twice a year to thoroughly scrutinise the government on its expenditure and performance which is very important. We have provided responses to written questions well ahead of time, the earliest time ever, in fact. In the last term of government, written questions were provided to the government prior to estimates, and ministers refused to table or provide those answers unless they were asked verbally, which is not the way that process should occur. It was not transparent.

I have to say, I am dumbfounded by the approach taken by the Independents and the opposition. They have neglected their duty to Territorians to turn up to estimates.

I thank the hard-working members of the Estimates Committee and the Member for Nhulunbuy, who went about their job. I encourage the members of the opposition and the Independents to turn up in November because it is important to apply this level of scrutiny to government. To just walk away is to neglect their duty to Territorians, and that is exactly what they did. I hope to see them in November.

We have just delivered a very important budget to invest in the future of the Northern Territory, our children, jobs and our communities at a time when we are facing unprecedented challenges. A \$2bn cut to GST revenue coming to the Northern Territory over four years is something the Northern Territory has never experienced before—a cut of this magnitude. It has had a deep impact on our finances. It is occurring at a time when we see an economy that is transitioning off one of the largest projects to take place in this country at this point in time, a \$34bn project. We know we will face significant challenges over the next 12 months when we see that project transition from construction to operation, which will put pressure on local jobs.

This is a budget that happens at a time when private investment is declining, CPI is flat-lining and population growth is one of our biggest challenges. When you are faced with these challenges, as a government you have two choices: you can either deliver a surplus at all costs, cutting thousands of public service jobs and services, sending business confidence and this economy backwards; or you can invest in the future. That is exactly what we have done in this budget. We have invested a record \$1.75bn in job-creating infrastructure to move the Northern Territory forward, to support and create jobs, and to support economic growth and increased private investment in the Northern Territory.

We have had the best consultation process and involvement you could have in forming our economic development framework and our 10-year infrastructure plan because it is based on our economic summits. We sat down with people across the Northern Territory from key sectors, businesses, communities and non-government organisations. We have sat down with those people to make sure we are taking this economy in the right direction.

I keep stressing that we have an exciting future in the Northern Territory. There is a thorough major projects program ahead. There are some very exciting projects on the horizon. We have some amazing

opportunities in agribusiness, Defence, our fantastic pastoral sector, tourism—which is a key sector in the Northern Territory—minerals and education. We will do everything we can to attract more private investment and support more jobs being created in the Northern Territory. We have a thorough plan for investing in our remote communities, the bush and our cities, towns and regions. We will grow the Northern Territory for the better by investing in the future. That is exactly what this budget does.

A lot of work went into this budget and I must thank the members of the public service for all their hard work, particularly the department of Treasury: Mr Craig Graham; Mr David Braines-Mead; Tim McManus; Tarrant Moore; Mary-Anne Paris, who helped in our office; the Secretariat; and the Communications section of the Treasury department.

I also thank Jodie Ryan, from the Department of the Chief Minister, for her ongoing guidance, advice and experience. I did my first budget with Jodie in 2007. She is someone of great knowledge, experience and depth, a wonderful public servant to have in the Northern Territory.

I thank all the departments that put a lot of hard work into formulating the budget. It is a big process and I thank the public servants for all their work not just on the budget, but also their preparation for the estimates process. It takes a lot of work, but it is an important process and I thank them again for their tireless efforts in serving the Northern Territory and the work they have put into that process.

I would also like to thank my office: Lauren; Bec; Hayley; Rowan; Matt; Kirsten; Jamie; my wonderful media adviser, Lesley Major; and my new Treasury adviser, Phil. I have to say a big thank you not just to Phil but to his wife, Amy. Phil was not going to be here for the budget because when he took the job his wife was pregnant with their third baby. Amy managed to hold that baby off and be a week overdue. We welcome Sophia, our little budget baby. Phil was here for budget day and gave a great level of support to me. Thank you, Sophia, for coming into this world a week late. We appreciate it, but poor Amy had to go a week overdue.

My fabulous Chief of Staff, Richard O'Leary, is a rock and a great support to me and this government. He is the utmost professional, offering good guidance, integrity and support, and I thank him for his fearless advice.

I also thank my family, who are always there to support me in doing the best job that I can for the Northern Territory.

This is a very important budget for the future of the Northern Territory. It will invest in our future, create jobs and invest in our children and in our communities across the Northern Territory. I thank all members for their work on the budget. Now it is about delivering the budget, jobs and better services that will make a difference to the future of the Northern Territory. That is why we all put our hands up to be in this place. We will never forget that. That is why we are here.

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

**Ms MANISON (Treasurer):** Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### **REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 22)**

Continued from 3 May 2017.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I oppose this bill. The Country Liberal opposition believes that hard-working Territorians, families and pensioners should not have to pay for the folly, fantasy and ill-discipline of Labor's budgetary management.

Labor has overspent and is now asking every Territorian to pay for its mistakes. How much of this revenue will go to interstate consultancies? It is an interesting question. You cannot tax your way out of a hole. There has never been a state or country that has taxed its way into prosperity.

That is what we are seeing in this bill: raising vehicle rego taxes; gaming machine taxes; and stamp duty. Let me start with one example, the gaming machine tax. If the gross monthly profit is \$250 000 the first

\$5000 will be taxed at 12.91%. The next \$45 000 will be taxed at 22.91%. The next \$100 000 will be taxed at 32.91% and the remaining \$100 000 will be taxed at 42.91%.

Governments should be making it easy for private capital and industry to drive economic growth and job creation in the economy. They should provide the climate for private investment. The economic development framework just launched garnered much fanfare on 20 June. It pointed out the importance of attracting and leveraging private capital. This framework places huge importance in the role of the onshore unconventional gas industry. The only way for the Territory to grow is to allow private enterprise to in our national advantages—geography, climate, people and resources—and to do what private industry does best, that is, get on with the job.

The government's complete antipathy to private investment comes when we throw in the extra part-day holidays and the ridiculous ban on Dan Murphy's, a company wanting to invest its money and build and construct now, not a few years in the future like the government plans with public money, but right now. This private money will grow our economy.

Think about the message this sends interstate and overseas. This Labor government fails to understand investment and how it works. The signals it is sending only drive jobs away from the Territory. That is the opposite of being open for business. With the two extra part-day holidays it has left its employees' agenda to be set by the unions. This hurts small businesses, the largest employers in the Territory. Remember the rationale for doing this: to grow the population, something not borne out in the budget papers.

With the Dan Murphy's decision, it has let its alcohol policy be set by the AHA. With a 50% renewable energy target, it has let the federal Labor Party set its policy, despite the very different energy generation mix in the Territory. The only time we see determination, focus and zeal from the Gunner Labor government is when it comes to announcing another review and spending other people's money. The only time we see gumption is when it comes to announcing more debt for Territorians.

Those opposite have stated many times that the Country Liberals did not have a post-INPEX plan in government. We did. It was a direct and straightforward plan to diversify our economy into seven key pillars: energy; minerals; tourism; agribusiness; international education and training; Defence supply; and service. On our side of the Chamber we want to pursue priorities which help, not hinder Territory businesses, and which grow, not burden Territory taxpayers.

We want to see strategic infrastructure to support Defence and civilian service capabilities. We want a safe and regulated onshore gas industry. For tourism we want to see increased marketing not token (inaudible) for India advertising. We want upgraded infrastructure. We want to see the government get back to the Northern Territory's strengths on trade with Asia. We want realistic government; that is what Territorians deserve.

This week, during the farcical fiasco that was estimates, Territorians learnt the Member for Katherine is an optimist. As she said that, the Treasurer, without hesitation, shot back that she, too, was an optimist. I said in my budget reply speech that Territorians need realists and a real government.

This optimism has prevented the Treasurer from acting in her first nine months to rein in the deficit. The debt and deficit disaster we are living through will get worse before it gets better. Every week the Treasurer would have received updates about how dire the deficit was looking. When there were calls for a mini-budget and warnings on the deficit the Treasurer was optimistic.

We have reached the projected \$5.5bn in debt which saw Labor lose government in 2012. It took the last Labor government 11 years to be in a position to forecast, or dare I say it, achieve a debt of that level. This time it has taken just eight months. They inherited a debt-to-revenue ratio of 27%, and projecting this will rise to 87% in the forward estimates.

What do we see now? The Northern Territory economic recovery will be built on museums and powered by stadia. Labor has banned a national anchor tenant, Dan Murphy's, at Darwin International Airport, sending a clear message to them, a dozen other businesses and nine construction companies which expressed an interest in the project that the NT is not open for business.

Here in the NT we have an estimated gas reserve of 234 trillion cubic feet. What does this government do? Not meet the challenge to provide a climate for private investment, but put in place processes to stop investment and lose the opportunity to create long-term sustainable jobs.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

### **RESPONSE TO PETITION Petitions No 9 and 10**

**The CLERK:** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 123, I inform honourable members that a response from the Minister for Health to Petition No 10 and a response from the acting Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to Petition No 9 have been received and circulated to honourable members.

The text of the responses will be included in the *Parliamentary Record* and placed on the Legislative Assembly's website. A copy of the responses will also be provided to the Member for Daly for distribution to the petitioners.

#### *Petition No 9*

*Restore Motorcycle Education Training and Licensing (METAL) to save Lives in the NT*

*Date presented: 22 March 2017*

*Presented by: Ms Manison*

*Referred to: Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics*

*Date response due: 23 August 2017*

*Date response received: 20 June 2017*

*Date response presented: 22 June 2017*

*The METAL program was originally introduced in Darwin on 1 July 1986. The purpose was to improve the education and training of motorcyclists and thereby reduce the incidents of road trauma involving motorcyclists. The program was heavily subsidised throughout its operation.*

*Over the last 10 years, customer demand has resulted in escalating wait times of up to 12 weeks. Mid-week courses were introduced, however these were not popular as participants would need to take time off during the working week to attend.*

*Resourcing constraints dictated the scheduling of METAL courses as schedules relied on instructor availability, the number of motorcycles in the fleet and the maximum number of motorcyclists able to safely use the riding track simultaneously at a single venue. Coordination of instructor rosters (casual staff that held full time jobs Monday to Friday) presented further challenges with program delivery.*

*While third party delivery of METAL is still in its infancy, participant numbers now exceed the capacity of the previous MVR administered METAL program. Increasing the availability of training options for motorcycle licensing was a key driver in the decision to outsource the delivery of the METAL program.*

*Rider training providers deliver the same METAL course at a cost of \$330 per participant. These costs are comparable with similar courses in other jurisdictions (refer Attachment A).*

*Additional benefits of outsourcing the program has seen providers offering rider training above the standard of the METAL curriculum, including off-road riding techniques and specific scooter training. They can also cater for smaller groups offering a more personalised training experience.*

*It has also enabled innovation from the external providers, where one provider is using helmet/headset intercoms which enables the instructor to communicate with the participants at all times during the training process. Registering a vehicle in the Northern Territory consists of a Compulsory Third Party Insurance (CTPI) contribution and a registration fee. The CTPI contribution for each category of vehicle is determined by the Motor Accident Compensation Commissioner. Motorcycles with an engine capacity >260cc attract a higher CTPI fee in comparison to the car CTPI fee. As expressed in the table below, actual registration costs are minimal.*

*The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics receives \$3.085 million in funding per annum from the NT Motor Accidents Compensation Commission (MACC). This funding is utilised for the delivery of the Drivesafe Urban program, road safety education and awareness and the administration of the METAL program.*



*[Editor's note: Please see the following website address for accompanying tables to Response to Petition No 9.*

*[https://parliament.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/407812/Petition-9-Restore-Motorcycle-Education-Training-and-Licensing-METAL-to-save-lives-in-the-NT-database-form.pdf](https://parliament.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/407812/Petition-9-Restore-Motorcycle-Education-Training-and-Licensing-METAL-to-save-lives-in-the-NT-database-form.pdf) ]*

*Petition No 10*

*Provision and availability of Improved Health Services in the Coomalie Shire*

*Date presented: 23 March 2017*

*Presented by: Mr Higgins*

*Referred to: Minister for Health*

*Date response due: 23 August 2017*

*Date response received: 14 June 2017*

*Date response presented: 22 June 2017*

*The petition signed by 17 individuals states that there is difficulty faced by the Coomalie Shire residents, especially those who are aged, disabled or Indigenous, in accessing a doctor at the local primary healthcare centres, within the townships of Adelaide River and Batchelor. The petition requires that the Northern Territory Government ensures better coordination of essential services between the two townships to ensure regular and consistent visits by doctors, and the ability of residents from both Adelaide River, Batchelor and surrounding communities within the shire to be able to access both services, and that previous weekly health services be restored.*

*I requested that the Top End Health Service investigates these matters and have been advised that service delivery has been modified to incorporate a primary healthcare approach to clinical and preventative health services since it resumed responsibility for the provision of general practitioner services to these primary healthcare centres last year. All clinics now run on a multidisciplinary primary health care model, with an emphasis on sound evidence-based preventive care for all, as well as acute care and emergency services. Skilled remote area nurses staff the clinics with 24-hour emergency cover at all times, as well as primary healthcare services five days a week.*

*A general practitioner provides services four days per week at Batchelor Primary Health Care Centre and three days per fortnight at Adelaide River primary healthcare centre. Duty rural medical practitioners are available to provide support and advice for the remote area nurses at all times. General practitioner services in Batchelor have increased and Adelaide River general practitioner services have moved from Monday to Tuesday to address the disruption in service delivery caused by public holidays. The general practitioner will work with the multidisciplinary team to ensure the most appropriate match of clinical skill and client need.*

*In the interest of providing equity of access, onsite doctor day visits for all our remote community clinics are based on population data. In addition there are specialist visits and access to telehealth consultations.*

*Clients are encouraged to use the services in their local area; however, residents of Adelaide River, Batchelor and the surrounding areas are able to access both services. Clients are encouraged to attend for regular reviews and appropriate screening tests, and referred appropriately for general practitioner review. It is not obligatory to be seen by a nurse in order to be seen by the general practitioner; however, clients are informed of and encouraged to utilise the additional services available. This ensures the most efficient use of resources and health gains for all using services and skill mix available.*

*I am confident this will alleviate any concerns you may have regarding access to primary healthcare services by the residents of Coomalie.*

*Once again, thank you for your correspondence. The Top End Health Service is always looking at ways to improve their service delivery and consumer satisfaction.*

**PAPERS TABLED**  
**Letter Concerning Written Question No 57**

**Madam SPEAKER:** I table a letter to the Speaker from the Chief Minister dated 27 May concerning Written Question No 57.

### Letter Concerning Written Question No 60

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table a letter to the Speaker from the Minister for Housing and Community Development dated 8 June 2017 concerning Written Question No 60.

### Letter Concerning Written Question No 61

**Madam SPEAKER:** I table a letter to the Speaker from the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources dated 8 June 2017 concerning Written Question No 61.

## REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 22)

Continued from 3 May 2017.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, as we just heard in Question Time, there has been plenty of rhetoric concerning consultation by those opposite. For nine months the Labor Party has kept the hamster wheel of government turning through inquiries, committees, committees of inquiry, moratoriums, panels of experts, economic summits, audits, surveys, advisory boards consultation boards and feasibility studies. I have not been able to find any other words that they have used regarding the same thing.

My research also shows that the Labor government has budgeted for a total of 33 new reviews, feasibility studies, steering committees and inquiries at a cost of nearly \$12m. This bill is a hit to the hip pocket of hard-working Territorians. What this bill means to Territorians is that vehicle registration will increase for four-wheel drives by about \$60, medium-sized cars by about \$33, small cars by about \$22, and motor bikes by \$5 to \$7.

The opposition agrees with the President of the AANT, Byron Henderson, when he says:

*I think it's another kick in the guts to motorists in the Northern Territory who are already paying some of the highest registration fees in the country.*

This measure will earn the government approximately \$3.1m next year and \$4.6m annually after that.

In light of an out-of-control spending addiction and a \$1.3bn budget overspend, this year the expected revenue to be raised by this measure is only \$3.1m. A \$3.1m hit to ordinary Territorians is disgraceful. That is approximately \$3m to fix a \$1.3bn hole. It is a lazy, uncaring Labor government going for the easy option. Why is the Labor government not making the hard decisions? Instead it is attacking the little man, the ordinary Territorians who get up early in the morning, go home late at night and spend hours on the road.

To those people, we are with you. The Country Liberal opposition will stand by you. We still oppose lazy tax grabs. We will oppose it because it is unfair, unwise and unnecessary. It is unfair because imposts like vehicle registration are highly regressive taxes. They do not take into account individual's ability to pay. Poorer Territorians, whom Labor claims to represent and fight for, will be disproportionately hit by this higher tax.

It is unwise in the extreme because there has never been an economy that has taxed its way into prosperity. How does this measure assist with attracting additional population, cost-of-living pressures and making businesses more competitive? It does not do anything for any of these measures. It is short-sighted in the extreme.

For this reason I am so disappointed. I have seen many budgets, and we have always said we wanted to cooperatively and collaboratively work with the inexperienced Labor government where possible. These measures are completely unnecessary when one thinks about the possibilities and potential of the NT economy if the government just got out of the way of private investment.

Think of the jobs and ongoing investment if a Dan Murphy's was allowed to operate—if the government got out of the way of the extractives industry and onshore gas. We are looking at a minimum of 6500 jobs in the Beetaloo Basin alone. There are estimates that it could be more.

The opposition opposes these lazy tax grabs because any short-sighted measures such as the ones we have seen have no modelling, no impact analysis and no research. These new taxes have no place in a young, dynamic place. That is what we are, the last frontier. We should embrace opportunity, not drive it

away. We should embrace private sector investment and create the conditions that foster innovation and entrepreneurialism in the Northern Territory.

Government must foster the conditions for growth. Stability and certainty of government policy are all critical to foster private sector investment. I reference the last-minute Dan ban, the 400 square metre retail limit, the part-day public holidays et cetera.

The size of the debt is so staggering the taxes and charges they have increased are less than 1% of the total deficit. Look at the bill in its totality. What does it do? It knocks business and makes living in the Territory more expensive. This Country Liberal opposition could not support that. The deficit disaster and budget overspend we have is a direct result of the decisions the Labor Party have made in government. Ordinary Territorians should not have to pay for Labor's folly and mistakes.

Going through the bill, it is regressive tax. Ironically, the Labor Party is introducing taxes that are inherently regressive; something the Labor Party, when in opposition, long railed against. How hypocritical. There has been no impact analysis, consultation, foreshadowing or trade-offs for government. Government has not reduced its cloth. It is not making savings or doing enough heavy lifting. It has no imagination. Putting up taxes on the poorest in our society shows no creativity or vision about how we move the Territory economy forward.

What modelling? I have seen no evidence or research on the case for blanket increases in taxation arrangements. If anything, it will make a negative impact on business activity as these additional costs will have to be passed on to consumers. This makes business more difficult, like when the Labor Party introduced the carbon tax. Tax increases like rego will cascade and knock through every stage of the supply chain.

Anti-business does not help the cause of population growth. The Country Liberal opposition is here for all those who get up early in the morning: the lifters, not the leaners. Those people have no other option but to live in the real world. It is clear the Labor Party does not live in the real world; clearly the Member for Katherine does not:

*I certainly think our budget's ... very fair and it makes sense, it's a logical budget, it's fair.*

Back in the real world, families are calling for a fair go on rego. Who knows what other fees and charges are to come.

We have already seen the money grab from these Labor government members over car rego. They have no understanding that mums and dads are hurting. They have no idea they have just cruelled a multimillion-dollar project; they have cruelled the Northern Territory by their incompetence.

The opposition does not support this bill.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, one of the strange things that happen in this parliament is sometimes governments introduce bills with a series of amendments to different acts. They expect you to support the lot. Here we have a mixture of changes in relation to raising revenue. I support one of them, but I think the others will work in a negative way for the NT economy.

As the minister said in her second reading, there are three main reasons, some minor reasons, that this bill is being introduced. There will be amendments to the Gaming Machine Regulations, the Motor Vehicle Registry and the *Stamp Duty Act*.

Governments like the Territory government are limited in what they can raise through taxation, but the economy is going through a fairly stagnant time. Population growth is going backwards and we are trying to attract more people to the Northern Territory. One way to do that is for businesses to do their jobs more cheaply. When you add an increase in motor registration, you are adding more cost to businesses, especially those that use light vehicles.

In Clare Martin's time as Chief Minister—it has reminded me of the time they upped the registration cost of vehicles—there were all sorts of complications because if a car was used in a certain way it had a registration increase. If you took your family in the car you had to pay registration, but if your dog was in the front seat for work it was different.

It was a disaster. In the end the government scrapped it because it was a public nightmare for the government. Whilst I understand governments have to raise revenue, the small amount, when you consider the debt we are looking at, seems hardly worth the effort to put another impost on businesses. At a time when we are trying to encourage people to stay here it sends out the wrong message, especially from a public relations point of view as well as a financial point of view.

I think the government has made the wrong move in this area. If government stuck to a process where charges went up by the CPI every year, people would accept that to some extent because they see that as the normal thing. Rates normally go up by the CPI—not always, but sometimes—and other charges go up by the CPI.

I was looking at the difference between registration now and later on. For some vehicles it is rather substantial, and if you have a fleet of vehicles that adds up to a reasonable amount of money.

The other one was stamp duty. I am not an economist, but in the second reading the minister said:

*From 1 July 2017 the stamp duty rate for transactions between \$3m and \$5m will increase to 5.75%. For transactions \$5m and above, the rate will increase to 5.95%.*

*The increase in the maximum stamp duty rate will be limited to about 50 or 60 large commercial transactions each year and generally not impact home buyers or small to medium businesses.*

I have not received any feedback from the government as to what that means.

What feedback do you have from businesses and homebuyers that might fit within these changes to stamp duty? How much money do you think will be raised by this? Is it worth it?

We are in a state where the economy is struggling and people are leaving the Northern Territory. We want people to come to the Northern Territory, and to make it more attractive we need to show people the cost of living here is not as high as people claim it to be. People already say it costs a lot of money to live in the Northern Territory. It probably depends where you live; in remote areas it is certainly very costly.

I travel to Melbourne occasionally to see my mum. Generally speaking we are comparable, and on some things we are not, but if we are to attract people—if you listened to the ABC breakfast program recently, you would have heard one of our departmental heads say they had trouble attracting people to the north. I think the program had received a couple of text messages and people were saying, 'I went to Darwin once and, gee, was it hot! I will not go back there again.' Those are the sorts of comments we get.

There is difficulty getting people here. I think they are missing out on one of the best places in Australia because they cannot stand a bit of heat; you get used to it over time. If we are to attract people here, are we sending out the right message?

They are the two that I do not believe are wise changes. I realise governments have to raise money, but will this be counterproductive? Will we lose more money by a downturn in the economy and people leaving than the gain we might get from making some money out of the increase in revenue from registration and Stamp Duty?

I support the increase in the poker machine tax. When this was first introduced I heard some of the clubs and pubs complaining—crocodile tears. I had a look at the Director-General of Licensing's report from 2014–15, and I was surprised when I looked at the 2015–16 version because there was not a breakdown of all the pubs and clubs in there anymore. In the older document I saw every pub and club in the Territory, how much profit they earn and how much they pay out.

I am interested to know why it has been taken out. I am not sure what the reasoning is, but I think it would be fair enough to want to know. People who work in the industry of rehabilitation, like Amity, would be interested to know what the real figures are. You only have to look at the Casuarina All Sports Club—it says gross profit \$9.078m. They pay a lot of tax, there is no doubt about it—\$3.5m. I do not think the increase is enough to stop them from making a considerable amount of money. It is the same for many other pubs and clubs in the Northern Territory.

I am on the record as saying it is sad to close down alcohol mandatory rehabilitation facilities. I think they play an important role in helping those who cannot help themselves; that is where money from these things

should go. If we cannot get it from the Commonwealth Government like we used to through the Living with Alcohol Program, we should be taking it out of this money.

There are businesses here making considerable profits just out of the machines you cannot beat. We should have an inquiry into gaming machines. The ABC did a program some time ago which showed that they are computers set up to make money and for you to lose money.

I do not have any sympathy from money being made out of this. If that money is then churned into helping people—some of the money goes into helping people with gambling addictions, but I think some of this money should go to keeping what the government said is one of the reasons it closed the alcohol mandatory treatment facilities down: it is expensive. I know it is expensive, but it is better to save people's lives and try to get them back on their feet even though that will be extremely difficult. The rate of success in that area is very low, but I do not think we should give up trying to help these people. One way to fund it will be through this money. That is one of the things I support. I thank the government for those changes.

The way I read it, everyone will come in line by 2018, roughly in the same taxation system or bracket, ending on 30 June 2018. It says:

*(i) in respect of a month occurring in the financial year ending on 30 June 2018, at the rate specified in table A; and*

*(ii) in respect of the month of July 2018 and all subsequent months, at the rate specified in table B ...*

My understanding is they will come into the same levels, the clubs and the hotels. I am interested to know if there will be an increase or if it is contractual for casinos. If you put Lasseters and Skycity together you have 1000 gaming machines. Are they affected by this legislation or are they purely subject to a contractual arrangement which cannot be changed?

There are another couple of changes in this bill. One is a minor change in relation to the amendment of stamp duty. That relates to where you have a conveyee who is—I had better make sure I have it right:

*The Stamp Duty Act is amended to provide that the stamp duty senior, pensioner and carer concession is available to those who are eligible for but have not yet received an NT Pensioner and Carer Concession Card at the time they purchased their property.*

There is a change in section 89A(1)(b) of the *Stamp Duty Act* to cover that.

There are a couple of smaller amendments. I do not think they should concern people. I have difficulty believing that those increases in charges—I understand why government has difficulty when there is a deficit and government is trying to raise some of its own money. I think that will work against us because it will increase the cost of living. That is not the sort of message we want to send to the people we should be trying to encourage to come to the Northern Territory.

When the going is good, that is when the Territory economy is booming. I do not think it is a wise move to increase those charges at the moment.

I support the revenue increases even though they are not huge, but they will have an effect with gaming machines. The percentage of tax now applies to a lower amount rather than a higher amount. Before the lower percentage applied it was \$10 000 and now it is \$5000. There has been a change down the list. I support that. That money should go to some of the areas we have major concerns with in the Northern Territory.

I do not support the other changes, for the reasons I have given.

The only option I have here—trying to support something or not support—is to simply not to vote on it.

**Ms MANISON (Treasurer):** Madam Speaker, as we all know there is no easy answer and no popular decision when it comes to revenue. There is no doubt about it.

When framing the 2017 budget we had to make some hard decisions on revenue, particularly when looking at what we are faced with in the \$2bn GST cut. We looked at areas where we could effectively increase revenue for the Northern Territory at a rate that did not hit too hard or make significant increases that would really hurt Territorians.

If you were to look at some of the changes that were made in the mini-budget of 2012 you would see some clear examples of where a government went in too hard and hurt Territorians, for example, the power and water increases. We saw power prices increase by 30%, water prices by 40% and sewerage prices by 25%. We have made Motor Vehicle Registry changes in this budget, which was not an easy decision. But if you look at our increases, which were about 4% to 7%—for example, a motorcycle will cost an additional \$7 a year in this budget, but in the mini-budget it was about \$11.

A small vehicle like a Corolla would be an extra \$22 a year, but in the mini-budget it was about an extra \$67 a year. A large four-wheel drive vehicle in this budget it is about an extra \$60 a year, whilst in the mini-budget the increase was over \$100 per year.

These are the types of hard decisions you have to make as a government, but you make them at a level—as the Member for Nelson just pointed out, population growth is an issue. We want to keep ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 9; I draw your attention to the state of the House.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Ring the bells.

A quorum is present.

**Ms MANISON:** We are very conscious that it is about trying to get the balance right and ensuring that when you look at the difficult circumstances of forming a budget, you get that balance right. You can increase some fees, charges, taxes and revenues, but at a rate which does not hurt Territorians or drive them out of the Territory. That is in stark contrast to what we saw in the previous government following some of the decisions they made.

Those are some of the things we took into account. We also have to take into account the fact we have really limited options in raising revenue: 50% of funding for the Northern Territory comes in through the GST; another 20% is through federal funding arrangements, whether that be national partnership agreements or tied payments coming in from the Commonwealth; and 30% of the total revenue is from the Northern Territory's own-source revenue options. We have a very small population, so we have limited options when it comes to raising revenue.

We have tried to give people as much certainty as we can when it comes to significant cost-of-living pressures. For example, we have capped power and water price increases at CPI because we know price increases in that area hurts Territorians. CPI is flat, which is not great at 5%, but it is not good when you can see it sitting at zero and not moving. That shows there are significant pressure points across parts of the economy. We are seeing that in housing at the moment.

We tried to put in measures which could be managed by Territorians. In addition to that we also made some tough decisions within government around savings measures and restraining recurrent expenditure growth within the public sector. We will ensure it is reduced to 0.1% over the forward years, which is the lowest we have had in the Territory. If you compare that to the last 10-year average it was about 7%.

We have made some tough decisions in government regarding expenditure growth and we have made some tough savings measures. In 2017–18 it will be \$55m of savings, and the year after that it will be \$95m worth of savings. They are tough decisions, but it is important that government does the heavy lifting when it comes to fiscal responsibility.

When looking at the changes we have made in this revenue bill—such as the MVR changes of 4% to 7%. For a small vehicle it is about \$22 extra a year, about \$33 for a medium vehicle and \$60 for a large four-wheel drive vehicle. These were not easy decisions, but ones we felt people could manage. That will raise about an extra \$5.3m for the Territory.

We have restored clubs and pubs—the takings on gross profits back to the pre-2009 levels, when the smoking legislation was introduced. They saw a loss of revenue at that time. Those profits are now back to pre-2009 levels and we have seen an increase. Gross profits increased by about \$60m in 2010–13 and are now estimated to be at about \$95m. They are the profits made on people's losses, effectively—the money that goes into gaming machines. For example, the largest club venue in the Northern Territory is expected to pay about an extra 1.4% tax on the gross profits, the losses that are worn by the putting money into the machines.

They are not easy decisions because they are local businesses and clubs. However, we felt they were at a rate which could be afforded.

We have also looked at property conveyancers and made sure we have targeted major property transactions. These will be, effectively, commercial transactions over \$3m. We have seen the rate for those transactions increase to 5.75%, a 0.3% increase, for properties over \$3m. For properties over \$5m it has gone to 5.9%, a 0.5% increase. That will impact about 50 to 60 transactions per year.

That is about an extra \$25 000 a year on a \$5m property purchase. Those are major commercial decisions and when looking at those purchases of over \$5m—a lot more goes into decisions about those purchases than the stamp duty alone. There are many more commercial considerations that any business would have to look at. That will generate an extra \$4.2m per year of revenue coming into the Northern Territory.

As I have stated, we thought very carefully about what we felt could be managed within the Northern Territory. They are not easy decisions, but are in stark contrast to the previous government's mini-budget and the level of hurt and pain that was inflicted on Territorians. We learned a lot from watching that, talking to our constituents and scrutinising the decisions of the government of the time.

Formulating this budget was about getting the balance right and ensuring that the additional revenues which could be afforded by Territorians were not too hard. But we needed to be realistic. Given our fiscal situation we needed to look at how we could increase money coming into the Northern Territory, but not at a level which drives people out of the place. We have applied the right internal disciplines to ensure government is doing its fair share of the heavy lifting in these tough fiscal circumstances and making the hard decisions about applying the appropriate level of constraint in government expenditure across the board. It is important that we do so at this time.

I thank the members who have contributed to the debate. I acknowledge that the opposition members said they will not support these changes. However, as a government, we felt it is important to get the balance right and look at options to increase revenue, particularly given the situation with the \$2bn GST reduction. We also have to ensure we have the right revenue coming into the Northern Territory so we can continue supporting the important critical services to Northern Territorians. In areas such as police, education and health you have to have the money coming in to support them.

Madam Speaker, we had to look at ways to work towards balancing the budget. There were no easy decisions, but I believe we have made decisions that can be managed by Territorians and which will play a very important part of this and subsequent budgets for the future of the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

**Ms MANISON (Treasurer)(by leave):** Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (NORTHERN TERRITORY) (NATIONAL UNIFORM LEGISLATION)  
AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 23)**

Continued from 10 May 2017.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, the opposition supports this bill. It is of interest that the Labor Party was dead against this bill in opposition and did everything it could to fight tooth and nail to not make changes. How things have changed.

The federal Coalition government *Energy White Paper* ensures the market keeps driving down costs by driving competition and innovation. The changes to this bill today bring the NT in line to benefit from the *Energy White Paper*.

Some of the changes are minor drafting errors. Rather than trying to read the technical stuff here—the brief from the department was good. What they were trying to say, in a nutshell, is there are certain parts of this implementation that do not apply in the Territory. These amendments are to ensure those requirements are not imposed upon us. It was to bring about changes to the legislation. These came out of the COAG meeting in October last year.

The Country Liberal government said it supports this. I want to congratulate the Labor Party in government for its maturity and for continuing with the Country Liberals' agenda of reforming the Northern Territory electricity market. We hope the Energy Regulator does not take a strict approach to pricing.

We support the government's initiative for the roll-out of smart meters and we support the passage of this bill.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I support the review of the National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Amendment Bill. I thank the department for its briefing. There is no doubt this is not the easiest of bills to get through.

As much as I was, at times, fairly critical of a previous minister, the Member for Fong Lim, one thing I congratulated him on was his knowledge in this area when he introduced the National Electricity Bill when the CLP was in government.

On 1 July 2015 the *National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Act*, described as implementing legislation, came into force in the Northern Territory. The purpose of this legislation was to facilitate the transfer of economic regulation of the Northern Territory's prescribed electricity networks to the Australian Energy Regulator, the AER. The 2015 act was the first step in a three-phase approach to align the Northern Territory regulatory arrangements with the national framework.

In May 2016 the Electricity Legislation Amendment Act amended the implementing legislation and the *Electricity Networks (Third Party Access) Act* to ensure national updates to the national electricity law, rules and regulations—National Electricity Rules—would automatically apply in the Territory. The Territory retained its ability to make modifications to the national instruments to suit circumstances unique to the Northern Territory.

The National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Amendment Bill 2017 follows further amending legislation passed by the then CLP government in 2016. Like that, this bill seeks to firm up the application of the National Electricity Rules in the Northern Territory while also identifying which aspects of electricity regulation should remain in Territory control. I think that is the crux of what this legislation is all about.

The bill corrects the minor drafting errors and inconsistencies and removes a number of references to bodies that do not participate in regulation of the Northern Territory. The most substantial amendments to the *National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Act* presented by this bill are found in clauses 12, 14 and 15. Clause 12 replaces section 13.2 of the act and seeks to empower regulations made by the administrator to make transitional modifications to support the Northern Territory's implementation of the National Electricity Rules.

Clause 14 amends a number of definitions in Schedule 1 of the act to make them locally relevant and reflect that a network service provider in the Northern Territory is a registered participant who holds a licence authorising the provision of electricity. Additionally, clause 14 inserts new subsections to provide that certain terms and sections of the National Electricity Rules are not applicable in the Northern Territory. A number of the sections in this clause make modifications that will expire on 1 July 2019, the date of the full transition of regulations to the AER.

Clause 15 amends Schedule 2 of the act to reflect that some network assets in the Northern Territory perform both a transmission and distribution function.

The Australian Energy Market Commission, the AEMC, in its examination of 2016 residential electricity price trends reported the following regarding the three underlying cost components of household electricity bills in the Northern Territory:

1. Wholesale generation and retail market sectors: wholesale electricity costs are expected to rise by 2.5% on average for each of the next two years, 2017–18 and 2018–19, based on the assumed rate of inflation; however, this depends on the decisions of the NT Government in implementing its electricity industry reform.
2. Regulated network sector: network costs make up about half of a residential electricity bill and are expected to remain stable. A ministerial direction requires Power and Water Corporation's increase in regulator revenue to be based on inflation.



3. Government environmental policies: costs associated with renewable energy targets are expected to remain stable over the next two years.

As part of the Northern Territory Government's electricity market reform program, responsibility for network price regulation and oversight of network access was transferred from the Utilities Commission to the AER with effect from 1 July 2015. Full handover to the AER will occur on 1 July 2019; however, some aspects of the electricity supply—for example electricity system planning, service standards, licensing and suppliers in the Territory—will remain the responsibility of the Utilities Commission.

Based on an examination of the bill and the information presented about the cost components of household electricity in the Northern Territory, I do not believe the introduction of the bill will have a direct impact on household electricity prices in the Northern Territory. While the prices paid by consumers are now less than the cost of supply, any of three components on which residential electricity prices are based will be directly affected by changes in Northern Territory Government policies.

From the briefing and the handout I was given, I gather we are trying to smarten up our electricity industry, especially Power and Water, that is, the network service provider. Theoretically, if we can make Power and Water more efficient we would hope to have lower network tariffs. The big question for the government is who will tackle Power and Water? Power and Water has been around for a long time and we have had issues with it for many years.

I should not say this, but generally speaking, in the broader industry Power and Water is not the flavour of the month. People feel it is a monopolistic body. There is nobody else to compete with it. I have never been a fan of moving away from the idea that the provision of essential services should stand with the government, but governments can always threaten that if you do not pull your socks up, something might change.

With all the issues surrounding electricity prices going up down south, we need to make sure that we do not start to copy those changes and that we have an efficient Power and Water that is run as a business. Perhaps it has been run for a long time as a government department, even though it is a GOC.

It is a complicated piece of legislation coming before us. It says in the notes that were given to me: 'The benefits of adopting the national electricity law and rules as appropriate the Territory include best-practice electricity regulation and improved oversight of the Territory's network service provider the Power and Water Corporation. In the medium to long term that is expected to put downward pressure on electricity network tariffs and improve quality of service in the Territory.'

Hopefully these changes will do that. It would be good for the government to say in 12 months' time that this downward pressure on electricity network tariffs has occurred and that the quality of service provided by Power and Water has improved.

I raised this question recently. I put out a media release saying that there are three streetlights—I got into trouble for calling them power poles—that have not been repaired for nearly six months. That is an example of inefficiency. If a pole gets damaged it should not take six months for it to be repaired, especially if it is a light pole. Part of the reason for the light pole being there is road safety. You would hope there is a system in place which makes sure these things get repaired quickly.

Maybe I am picking on a bad aspect, but that is the only aspect I find fault with. I get feedback from the community and it sends out a signal. These notes say we need to improve the way Power and Water operates, and I gather from reading the paper that Power and Water has a new chair of the board. I would like to talk to him, because I have just released a notice today about the reopening of the Darwin River Dam. I cannot believe that was shut.

This is the good old Northern Territory, and we will end up covered in regulations if we are not careful. I will write to the new chair and ask for a meeting with the board to get to know them and to highlight some of the issues I hear from the community about how Power and Water is perceived, especially amongst developers. We can improve a lot.

If this National Electricity Amendment Bill can help that it will be very good. If network tariffs will not lower electricity prices—I think that might be pie-in-the-sky stuff—but at least keep them stable, that will be a good outcome from this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I support the legislation and thank the minister for introducing it.

**Ms MANISON (Treasurer):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Nelson for their contributions to the debate and for making themselves available for briefings.

This was a second piece of legislation, following on from the first, which the previous government introduced and we debated in March 2015, and that was the National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Bill 2015. At the time, whilst in opposition, we supported the bill that the former government had brought forward and this is already in process.

The Northern Territory's adoption of the National Electricity Rules happened from 1 July 2016. This is making sure the next stage of that move to the AER from the Utilities Commission ensures that the Northern Territory, in its unique circumstances—we are an island network and are not connected to the national grid—has the appropriate derogations in those systems to ensure the NT's circumstances are accommodated for in this move to the AER.

The Opposition Leader said we would oppose this back in March 2015, but we supported that legislation.

I appreciate the Member for Nelson's points that he raised. We will not see change overnight. We do not have the Network Price Determination coming until 2019, but they are done in five-year cycles and take a fair bit of work to get them in place.

It is important that people wishing to enter the NT's electricity market understand the rules they are playing by, which will be similar to other jurisdictions down south. It is great that we will see another level of scrutiny and work done on the networks of the Northern Territory to ensure we are comparing and contrasting them with the efficiencies and operations of other networks similar to them in other parts of the country.

It is not just a monopoly being assessed by one operator; we can do a bit of comparison to see how they compare to other parts of the country with other markets, networks, infrastructure and so forth to make sure we run things as efficiently as possible. The goal is to make sure we put more pressure on the network's charges. We can do that by ensuring we have the most efficient networks and that they are reliable. Safety is a key priority of the Power and Water Corporation.

The second piece of legislation coming through will allow for the changes to come into effect on 1 July 2016, but this is a process that had well and truly started under the previous government, moving from the Utilities Commission to the Australian Energy Regulator. The Utilities Commission will still have a role in the Northern Territory in water assets, sewerage and the port, and keeping an eye on those things.

There is a lot of work still to be done at PWC. I welcome the new chair of the board, which I was delighted to announce on Monday. Mr Langoulant brings a wealth of experience as a former Under Treasurer of Western Australia, working with the Chamber of Commerce and a range of other boards. He comes with a fantastic reputation and it will be great to have him on board at the PWC—taking him through the next period of leadership there.

The Power and Water Corporation is a very complicated beast. It has a power network section, remote operations, water and sewerage. It is a multifaceted utility that is critical to people across the Northern Territory. It is responsible for billions of dollars of assets, and it still has its challenges post-structural separation.

It is important in the new phase, particularly going toward our commitments of more renewable energy in the Northern Territory for cleaner and greener energy, and the development of more renewable industry jobs and investment, that it is well placed for those challenges.

I think we have a huge advantage in the Northern Territory that other jurisdictions which have gone for a privatised model simply do not have. As Treasurer you are the shareholding minister of government-owned corporations and get the final say.

We have a level of control in the Northern Territory to ensure that we keep power, water and sewerage services affordable for Territorians. At the moment the true price is something where we provide community service obligations to ensure it is affordable for Territorians because we have very small markets and deliver power, water and sewerage services to very remote and isolated parts of the Northern Territory. Nonetheless it is very important that people have access to these services.

There is a lot to be learned now, after watching some of the things that have happened down south—looking at some of the experiences in South Australia and New South Wales. Energy is very topical for them, but we still have the huge advantage that we have government ownership at the end of the day. We have committed to ensuring we do not sell our power, water and sewerage assets. We will not privatise them and we will stand true to those commitments. In ensuring that we have a say in those major cost-of-living drivers for people in the Northern Territory, it is very important to have the government owned corporations.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Nelson and other members who made themselves available for a briefing on this. I look forward to working with them going forward with issues regarding the Power and Water Corporation, because we all want cheaper electricity. Any briefings you would like to have arranged with the new chair—we will be more than happy to sit down so you can get in his ear. It is not a problem at all, Member for Nelson.

I thank the staff at Treasury, who have been working on this for some time. As you can see, this process started well before this government. It is ongoing and very complex, detailed and technical work.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

**Ms MANISON (Treasurer)(by leave):** Madam Speaker, I now move that the bill be now read a third time.

**Mr WOOD:** Madam Speaker, could I interrupt for one minute? I need to make a quick apology. My phone went off while I was not in here so as that is quite a severe punishment I am just wondering in reparation could I either buy you a nice bottle of wine or, better, still donate \$50 to Foodbank.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I think you should donate \$50 to Foodbank.

**Mr WOOD:** I will do that.

**Madam SPEAKER:** That will be a lovely gesture. Thank you, Member for Nelson. I am sure you will not do it again.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

### **LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 24)**

Continued from 10 May 2017.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, the arrogance and self-induced disarray of the Labor government has been on full display this week. Instead of being the answer to the dysfunctional executive management that it decried in the last term of government, it has taken this government less than a year to show it is every bit as chaotic as those it criticised. The Labor government is not transparent, open or willing to back down from its position, even when the vast majority of Territorians, or even Labor backbenchers, disagree with the course of action that is being dictated by the leadership.

The decision to refuse the recommendations of its own members of committees and cut the scrutiny of the 2017–18 budget through the estimates process in half, and its refusal to negotiate with the opposition or Independents only to carry on with self-serving estimate hearings filled with Dorothy Dixers, is emblematic of a government more concerned with the egos of ministers than with good government. In fact, the Labor government is not interested in listening to Territorians unless Territorians align directly with its views on a particular matter.

Those opposite say they care deeply about consultation; this much is apparent from the growing list of reviews and inquiries, but true consultation involves not only talking but listening. Without listening, consultations, reviews and inquiries are nothing more than window dressing for the Labor government's real view on public policy which is, 'We know best and if you disagree you are wrong'.

This type of vanity in governance did not go over well with voters in past elections, and I am convinced it will not play well for the Labor government in the next election.

Perhaps the most disappointing facet of the Labor government's performance thus far is that from ministers to MLAs, to the faceless men on the fifth floor, those opposite are completely unwilling, unable and

uninterested in either recognising when they have made an error in judgment or making amends after the damage is done. We teach schoolchildren that one of the most important aspects of being a responsible member of society is owning up to the things you have done, as well as apologising, and where possible, fixing the situation. We should hold our elected representatives to a higher standard than schoolchildren.

Time and again, costly and public errors made by the Labor government have been met not by contrite apology or conciliation, but by spin, misinformation and half measures intended to take heat off the government in the short term, not to solve the problem for Territorians in the long term.

The examples of this campaign of chaos are many and ever-expanding. One prime example is the characterisation of the drastic increase in crime in the Territory as a spate, hyperbole or a media build-up. Such a suggestion is shameful.

As police statistics released last week show, there was a 90% increase in commercial property crime in Darwin over the past year to April, a 52% increase in house break-ins in Palmerston and a 400% increase in sexual assault in Tennant Creek. Instead of looking at all available options to address the crime statistics in the short term, including substantive changes to the *Bail Act* concerning recidivist offenders and serial bail breaches, the Labor government passed electronic monitoring legislation on urgency. This was a positive step in the right direction, but it turns out there was nothing urgent about it because months have passed, and at last check, not a single person on bail has been fitted with an electronic monitoring bracelet by police. Spin, misinformation and half measures.

The bill we have been kept here today to debate, contrary to convention without notice to the opposition or the cross bench until early this week, is representative of all the ever-increasing narcissism and dysfunction present in the Labor government. This bill has nothing to do with alcohol abuse in the Territory, harm minimisation or the best interest of Territorians. It has everything to do with the Labor government's inability to admit or accept responsibility for its own error of judgment.

If we look back to the origins of the expanding debacle that has arisen out of the 400 square metre floor space cap we see a long line of missteps, each compounding the one that preceded it. The first misstep was the highly questionable agreement between the Chief Minister and special interests in order to procure a political donation, which has been described as a Labor election commitment. The receipt of a large donation makes the concession on an important policy decision even more disappointing. It should be obvious that policy decisions that are premised primarily on securing political donations rarely result in wise public policy.

It is clear that the Labor Party did not seek any evidence supporting a floor space limit before making the commitment. If it had it would have discovered that there was none. Tellingly, the policy was never discussed or mentioned in public prior to January, much less prior to the election. To say there was a mandate for this policy is therefore fanciful.

Instead of defending the policy on the grounds of evidence, the Labor government's most common response to this line of argument, at least in this place, has been that the former Chief Minister also agreed to a 400 square metre limit. But a 400 square metre space limit was never submitted to the Country Liberal Party, did not constitute party policy and was not agreed to by either me or the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Full stop.

Next, when the Attorney-General announced that the government would be blocking the Dan Murphy's application for a liquor licence while the Chief Minister was away on holidays, the stated justification for that decision was couched in terms of a well-thought-out policy decision. The Attorney-General evasively stated in the media that the 400 square metre limit was supported by evidence concerning the harmful effects of alcohol on our society. That statement was not only disingenuous, it was purposefully misleading. Indeed, when challenged by both the media and the opposition, the Attorney-General was unable to provide any evidence, either peer reviewed or anecdotal, that floor space at liquor outlets has anything whatsoever to do with minimising the harmful effects of alcohol on communities.

In researching alcohol policies, experts have reviewed scores of studies, scholarly articles and government publications concerning alcohol use and abuse. Not a single one of these has ever been found to mention floor space much less draw a link between floor space and problem drinking.

What numerous peer reviewed studies recognise is that the density or the number of liquor outlets per capita in a particular area impacts alcohol-related harm. As one study published by the Foundation for

Alcohol Research and Education stated, such high outlet density presents serious concerns in light of the positive relationship between outlet density and alcohol-related harm.

The Territory has the highest density of liquor outlets per capita in the whole of Australia. This is the issue we need to address. Instead of hopelessly confusing the issue by drawing a non-existent link between floor space and problem drinking we need to decrease density, which according to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education has the potential to deliver substantial harm reduction, even with regard to the knock-on effects of alcohol misuse, such as domestic violence, assault, antisocial behaviour and presentations in emergency departments.

Finally, instead of backing down on a policy that was unsupported, was not the product of consultation and could not be defended, the Labor government dug its heels in. The government told Dan Murphy's that it was willing to negotiate but then back flipped, stubbornly standing by the 400 square metre decision and refusing to work with Dan Murphy's to find middle ground.

Understanding that there was no rational basis for the floor space limit, Dan Murphy's filed a law suit in the Federal Court of Australia, retaining perhaps the most learned barrister in the Territory. Dan Murphy's put forward an argument in the Federal Court that clearly had the government and its southern lawyers worried. Among other things, the application filed in the Federal Court alleged that no person or group apart from the AHA was consulted about the making of the 400 square metre regulation, and that no proper regard had been had by the Cabinet to where the making of the regulation would minimise the harm associated with the consumption of alcohol or would protect and enhance community amenity, social harm and wellbeing.

Another way of saying this is that there was no justification for the 400 square metre regulation other than compensating a political donor. However, instead of letting the judicial process play out in a fair and impartial way, this bill was introduced in the House in May and represents a transparent attempt by the Labor government to cover its tracks to avoid discovery in the Federal Court that might be damaging and subvert the legal process that is currently under way.

Earlier this month the judge presiding over the Dan Murphy's Federal Court matter, Justice White, ordered the Territory government to engage with Dan Murphy's concerning the scope of documents that would be produced during discovery. Dan Murphy's is seeking a broad scope of documents, including documents in the possession of the Chief Minister, the Attorney-General and Cabinet.

The date set for future direction hearings in the Federal Court, which would likely result in discovering orders being made, is 4 July 2017. In other words, if this legislation were not heard until August any convention would likely dictate that the government be required to respond to discovery orders.

Does the Labor government really think the people of the Territory as so easily misled that they believe it is a coincidence that we are dealing with this piece of legislation on 22 June 2017, little more than a week before the directions hearing in the Federal Court?

The audacity of this government is simply astounding at times. Not only has the government attempted to short-circuit the judicial process by enshrining its misguided, unsupported 400 square metre regulation in legislation, but it now has the nerve to rush through the legislation in a transparent attempt to avoid being required to turn over documents that might be detrimental to government.

Because they have the numbers it is, unfortunately, inevitable this bill will become law, but it will not undo the damage this entire debacle has done to the Territory.

Firstly, it is unlikely that the passage of this bill will end the Federal Court litigation, which has already needlessly cost taxpayers many thousands of dollars. It is possible the nature of the action will change, which could cost taxpayers thousands or millions of additional dollars.

Secondly, the business and reputational damage to the Territory by this unfortunate episode will likely last years. Big-box retailers such as Dan Murphy's will learn the lesson that the Labor government does not play fair and will go to extraordinary lengths to prevent retail it does not favour from setting up in the Territory. Business needs stability and predictability in order to justify investment in the Territory. No rational interstate or international retail business will invest in the Territory once they find out that Labor will change the rules of the game when it suits it to do so.

Thirdly, discouraging larger retailers from coming to the Territory has a tangible effect on the quality of life and cost of living in the Territory. Population growth is critical to the future of the Territory, but we are currently losing people to other locations. The Labor government's own estimates forecast a minus 0.3% population growth for 2017–18. One reason people do not remain in the Territory is the high price of goods and services. Large retailers help bring down the price by increasing competition.

Bunnings is a good example. They increase the variety of stock available for purchase in the Territory, increasing the standard of living and making a long-term move here more attractive. Blocking Dan Murphy's on the flimsy, transparent pretext that floor space has an effect on alcohol harm sends the clear message the Territory is not open for business or worthy of investment.

Finally, the decision surrounding the floor space limit and Dan Murphy's has detracted from the important issue of alcohol harm minimisation in the Territory and has substantially weakened the credibility of the Labor government to drive policy in this space. In the height of hypocrisy the government has commissioned a review into alcohol policies and legislation while it is rushing through legislation relating to alcohol policy that has no basis, evidence or rationale.

There is no question that alcohol-related harm is the single biggest society issue we face in the Territory and across Australia. Nationally, alcohol-related problems cost society over \$14bn per year, yet the tax revenue generated from alcohol sales only account for about half that amount, or \$7bn.

The government tells us alcohol misuse costs the Territory \$650m per year. That seems like a conservative estimate. Alcohol misuse is not limited by race or socioeconomic status. It is a public health issue that affects everyone. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are twice as likely to abstain from alcohol compared to non-Aboriginal Australians, yet they are five times as likely to die from alcohol-related harm.

Instead of dealing with these life and death issues head-on we are debating an irrelevant floor space ban which will have no effect whatsoever on minimising the harmful effect of alcohol on anyone.

This bill is an affront to the common sense of every Territorian and will be remembered as a permanent and indelible mark on the integrity and righteousness of the Labor government.

The opposition does not support this legislation and neither should any member of this House.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing forward this legislation, even though this is not normally the day, especially at the end of budget hearings, that we bring in this type of legislation. I differ from what the Leader of the Opposition said. I am not here to support the economy based on whether we build Dan Murphy's or not. There are other important issues.

Our economy should not be based on the alcohol industry. That is not to say the alcohol industry is not important, but I do not put it up as a key factor in improving the economy of the Northern Territory. Be that as it may, I have some major concerns about this legislation. That might come from a different angle altogether.

People know my views on alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. I am not here to promote Dan Murphy's or any other alcohol business, but we need to deal with this legislation carefully and get some answers from the government regarding why this legislation has come to parliament and what it all means.

It is strange to have this bill come in during a budget sittings. That is not to say it cannot, but for many years the only bill you debated on this particular day was the budget, but the government has the right to bring in other bills.

I have read carefully through the second reading because it is the most important part of trying to understand where the government is coming from in relation to this bill. Hopefully this makes sense but I did not find it easy to understand where the government is going with this piece of legislation. A lot of statements are made in the second reading, but not a lot of reasons are given as backing.

The only reason given in the second reading where the Attorney-General said:

*The purpose of this bill is to amend the Liquor Act to enshrine in the act the condition of store licences that is currently contained in regulation 5BA of the Liquor Regulations.*

The Liquor Regulations say:

*5BA Condition applying to certain licences*

- (1) *It is a condition of a store licence that the area in which the public can browse for and purchase liquor is limited to a maximum of 400 m<sup>2</sup>.*

*Note for subregulation (1)*

*A store licence authorises the sale of liquor for consumption away from the premises only. The term is defined in section 32A(10) of the Act.*

- (2) *The area mentioned in subregulation (1):*

(a) *includes refrigerated display shelving; but*

(b) *does not include the following:*

(i) *driveways or car parking areas;*

(ii) *cool-rooms or storage areas to which the public does not have access.*

The minister said that these regulations were introduced in December 2016 in order to minimise the alcohol-based harm in the community. That is all we know. Why do we need to debate this bill today? I cannot find anything in the second reading that says why, as the minister has said, we need to enshrine in the act the condition of store licences that is currently in the regulations. There is no explanation why this has to be put in the act.

I would like to hear the technical reasons it has to be enshrined. What is wrong with the regulation as it is?

Does it have something to do with Woolworths, which is trying to overturn this ruling before taking the government to court? I do not know. The government has to be clear as to why we are here today to discuss a bill which is already stated clearly in the regulations.

There appears to be another reason for this amendment. Further in the second reading, the minister talks about the alcohol review and says:

*The bill is intended to preserve the status quo to allow the review to be conducted and the public interest to be best served.*

How will removing the regulations and placing them in the act affect the operations of the alcohol review? What do you mean by 'status quo'? How will the public interest be served by this amendment? I am keeping it on a technical level because we are simply dealing with moving a regulation from the regulations to the act. The government has to explain the reason for doing that.

Is it the case that the public interest is your interest in keeping on side with the AHA, which you made a pre-election promise to? I have a copy of that here, signed by the Chief Minister to Mr Des Crowe. It clearly states in response to Australian Hotels Association NT's question on public areas of bottle shops:

*We will restrict the public area of a bottle shop to a maximum of 400 square metres.*

That is written and signed by the government.

What are the reasons for this amendment? Enshrining the regulations in the act? Please explain. Preserving the status quo? Please explain. Serving the public interest? Please explain. Promises made to the AHA? I certainly hope when the minister responds we will get an answer to those questions.

The part of this bill which refers to 400 square metres as the limit on the floor space of bottle shops was never debated in parliament when it came to be as it was snuck through in December as a regulation.

December is not a good time for people who try to keep an eye on what is happening. I remember the debate about the poker machines, which minister Styles put through at 6 pm on a Friday night. It was only by accident—I think he put out a press release at the time—that we realised they were changing the regulations on the number of poker machines and were able to bring that regulation back to parliament for

a full debate. I think this should have come back for a full debate at that stage, but unfortunately, you might say you were not doing your job and missed it.

At Christmas time I was not thinking of regulations being put through the deemed papers list. Why did the government not wait until February to bring these changes through parliament as normal amendments to the *Liquor Act* instead of using the regulations process? Was the Dan Murphy's proposal in the wind at that time and you were acting to stop them by bringing in the regulations?

You also said in your second reading that a concern was and continues to be that large Bunnings-style outlets would lead to greater levels of alcohol abuse and alcohol-related harm in the Territory. This is a theme I will bring up right through this debate. You bring no evidence to show that. That does not mean there is no evidence, but you do not back it up with a statement or any scientific data to prove your point. There is nothing in the second reading.

I hope the government can pull out a piece of information that says, 'We can back that statement up with some research that has been done by various people with knowledge of this industry'.

Even if you have scientific evidence people will not believe you, as they know you did a deal with the AHA, as I have just read out. They believe you did it to keep in the good books with the AHA through political donations, and the AHA did not want Dan Murphy's competing with them; we know that is the case.

I am not a great friend of Dan Murphy's. It is part of Woolies, and Woolies is involved in other things like poker machines. I do not know why people sound like they will be a great friend to the Territory, but in this case I think the arrangement with the AHA is more about a self-serving economic argument rather than an issue about harm from alcohol abuse.

The other way is to just leave things as they are. Dan Murphy's is a very interesting case because as soon as there was an issue of restrictions on floor space size I received a request to talk with the airport with Mr Q and he explained to me how this was being developed. One of the issues is that in the Northern Territory we have a lot of Commonwealth land, and as a government you do not have control over that Commonwealth land. From a planning perspective, people can apply to build on Commonwealth land without any Northern Territory planning approvals. The only approvals they need in this case, for licenced premises, are from the government to have a liquor licence.

We have a system through the Director-General of Licensing where people can apply for a licence. Should it have gone through that process regardless? Under section 3 of the *Liquor Act*, these are the objects of the act:

- (1) *The primary object of this Act is to regulate the sale, provision, promotion and consumption of liquor:*
  - (a) *so as to minimise the harm associated with the consumption of liquor; and*
  - (b) *in a way that takes into account the public interest in the sale, provision, promotion and consumption of liquor.*
- (2) *The further objects of this Act are:*
  - (a) *to protect and enhance community amenity, social harmony and wellbeing through the responsible sale, provision, promotion and consumption of liquor;*
  - (b) *to regulate the sale of liquor in a way that contributes to the responsible development of the liquor and associated industries in the Territory; and*
  - (c) *to facilitate a diversity of licensed premises and associated services for the benefit of the community.*
- (3) *A person exercising a power or performing a function under this Act must have regard to the objects of this Act and must exercise the power and perform the function in a way that is consistent with those objects.*

Perhaps the issues we are raising today about harm and promotion are issues that government could have argued through the normal processes.



Do they believe they would not have had a strong enough argument if a premises larger than 400 square metres would cause harm, as they have said themselves, in the community? Surely that was the place to test their argument, but it did not go down that path. There was a block put in to say, 'You will not even get to the stage going to the Director-General of Licensing to put forward your application unless you stay within the 400 square metres'.

I do not think the present process for granting a liquor licence and the objects of the act are strong enough or capable of dealing with some of the broader aspects of alcohol consumption in the community. I hope the process will be looked at through the alcohol review because we need to have a stronger emphasis on the negative effects of a liquor licence in the community.

I mentioned the lack of scientific evidence, but there are others working in this field. One of the arguments the Opposition Leader mentioned is that there is no scientific debate on whether floor space has an effect on alcohol harm.

I will read a letter sent to Woolworths by the People's Alcohol Action Coalition, the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, the Public Health Association of Australia, the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliances Northern Territory.

The letter says:

*Mr Gordon Cairns  
Chairman  
Woolworths Ltd  
BAULKHAM HILLS NSW*

*Dear Mr Cairns*

*We write to express our deep concern about Woolworths' proposal to establish a Dan Murphy's big box liquor store in Darwin.*

*The Northern Territory is already Australia's heaviest drinking jurisdiction, with drinking at risky levels at least 50 per cent above the national average. The last thing Darwin needs is a Dan Murphy's.*

*What is particularly galling about the dispute over the Northern Territory Government's moves to block the establishment of a super store, are claims by representatives of your company that there is no evidence of the differential harm caused by big box stores.*

*Dan Murphy's Head of Corporate Services, Shane Tremble, recently claimed on drive time radio that there is 'no such evidence' to show that the size of a liquor licence is related to alcohol harm.*

*Actually, there is scientific evidence and we are happy to share this with you. Claims to the contrary are utterly disingenuous.*

I should make a note here that they did not include in this letter a reference to where that scientific evidence has come from.

*Woolworths should take immediate action to publicly refute Mr Tremble's efforts to deceive the people of the Northern Territory.*

*Our concern about the proposed development stems from the well-documented high levels of alcohol harm that already exist in the Northern Territory.*

*The Territory has the highest proportion of alcohol-related deaths and highest rate of alcohol-related hospitalisations in the country. It has high rates of alcohol-related assaults and domestic violence. In some areas of the Territory, alcohol-related domestic violence incidents represent more than 80 per cent of all domestic violence assaults ...*

I will shorten this to some extent. It goes on to say:

*The new Northern Territory Government has a very clear mandate to stop alcohol harm. Approving a big box packaged liquor outlet in light of this mandate would be completely inconsistent.*

*Woolworths is well aware of the evidence on the relationship between outlet size and alcohol harm, because it is an aggressive appellant when governments (local and state) and regulatory authorities have refused past development applications and liquor licences based on this evidence. For instance, the application by Woolworths to establish a Dan Murphy's store in the City of Casey (Victoria) is a recent high profile example where this aggressive behaviour was on full display. In a community with very high rates of family violence, Woolworths pursued its claims over community, health, and police objections, winning on a technical point over the convincing scientific evidence of the harmful impact of yet another liquor outlet in the city.*

They go on to quote some other examples:

*This behaviour is consistent with Woolworths' position as the biggest purveyor of addictive products in Australia: tobacco, alcohol, and poker machines. The differential between retailing behaviour and claimed corporate social responsibility is breathtaking. It becomes even starker when these same tactics are used to promote profits over public health in the jurisdiction with the highest levels of alcohol-related harm.*

*The Northern Territory already has one of the highest ratios of liquor outlets per population in Australia. And Woolworths already has a significant footprint in the Territory, with at least 11 takeaway outlets licensed by Woolworths in the Darwin region alone.*

*The announcement that Woolworths will be taking this issue to court is a clear attempt to intimidate the Government. The Chief Minister has rightly responded that the Government does not form alcohol policy on the basis of threats of legal action. It is absolutely appropriate that the Government makes its decisions based in the best interests of the health and wellbeing of the people of the Northern Territory.*

*Following the announcement of the Northern Territory's Liquor Act review on Monday, we invite Woolworths to respect the democratic processes and make its representations about alcohol superstores through this properly constituted review.*

*Woolworths does not need another store in Darwin. In light of the high levels of alcohol harm experienced, the high ratio of existing venues, and the relationship between large packaged liquor outlets and alcohol harm, we ask that Woolworths discontinue efforts to open a Dan Murphy's in Darwin and cease its threats of legal action against the Northern Territory Government.*

These are people who have studied alcohol and effects of alcohol in our community for some time. I take up the point made by the Leader of the Opposition that we have to be careful with the argument about density. I think it has been proven in many cases that density of outlets is an issue. The issue tonight is about whether there is any proof about the size of the outlet.

I will move on from that. At the same time, as the government knows, it has a review into the *Liquor Act*. In the minister's media release when announcing this review, she said—this is one of the dot points of what the review has to look at:

*... advise the NT Government on the development of an evidence-based alcohol harm reduction framework for the Territory including for the safe, family friendly provision within remote communities and considers issues such as size, density and trading hours of alcohol outlets ...*

I will read from the Attorney-General's media release of 7 March when she said:

*Key aspects of the Review will include ...*

And I will go down to number five:

*Analysis of the density of liquor licences and the size of liquor outlets.*

What is the point of passing this legislation today then? Leave the investigation into floor space to the alcohol review.

I also looked up another site. Unfortunately, I did not get the answer I was hoping for. Professor Tanya Chikritzhs from the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University had started an investigation of liquor superstores in Western Australia. This was the project:

*Large discount liquor 'superstores' are a recent entry into the WA liquor market and their presence appears to be expanding ...*

That sounds like what might be happening here:

*They typically offer a large format supermarket-like experience for purchasing alcohol for off-premise consumption, lowest price guarantee, ease of access and convenient location. Their specific impacts on surrounding communities has not been specifically examined; however, their inherent capacity for large volumes of sale suggest that they may be at risk of facilitating higher levels of consumption and related harms in the surrounding population.*

Then she set out the details of that study.

I received an email today which said that due to some constraints—I will read it: 'Thank you for making contact. Unfortunately, my team has had staffing issues and that project has been on hold for the past 12 months or so and we do not expect any results until mid-next year.'

She said: 'The project was not established to look specifically at the relationship between the size of alcohol outlets and harm and it probably will not be of much use to you.'

Perhaps that emphasises that we need some money, and perhaps that is why this review is happening. Perhaps it is one of the outcomes of that review that before we go down this path we need to do some research on whether the size of the establishment has any effect on the outcomes of alcohol.

Maybe this is a bit late in the process, but we should have simply put a moratorium on any more outlets if the government was going down this path. It has happened before. In Labor's time there was a moratorium on the number of outlets. That would have done two things—it would allow the review to look at this issue.

That is what I find difficult to understand with the BDR legislation. In its media release the government said the review would look at the density and size of outlets. Here we are today, discussing whether we should have a clause in the act which says there will be a 400 square metre limit, and there are statements from the Attorney-General saying this is about minimising harm, but we do not have any scientific proof. We have people's opinions, and I respect that.

We are not short on grog supplies in the Territory, so what is the rush to get a superstore in Darwin? There is a bit of pressure from the airport because it wanted this to be connected with some other development in the area. But I think we need to look further than that.

It is important that we look at whether large superstores like this will have an effect. The problem I have putting that forward is that people will not believe the government. They will say, 'The only reason for this is that you made a promise to the AHA'. It is sad you did that because this is an issue we should be able to discuss. The evidence is very light. The only thing we know for sure is that the government made a promise to the AHA that it would not expand the size of floor space.

I would love to make an amendment to this bill, but it would be to repeal the whole bill and for government to make a statement that it will put a moratorium on more takeaways until the review is completed and, if need be, the independent body assesses whether superstores will cause harm in our communities.

Nothing is coming from the government. I can say what I feel will happen. I know the superstore will sell cheap alcohol, which we know has an effect on people drinking more alcohol. Some people say it is far enough away from the community. That may be the case, but that should be tested when someone applies for a licence. How far is it from the communities that are already suffering from the effects of alcohol? Just because it is on the other side of Bagot Road that does not mean it will not be attractive to people because of the price.

The big bottle shops compete with all the other outlets. Therefore they will try to decrease the price of their alcohol to encourage more people to come to their store. I cannot support this, not because I am against what the government wants, that is, to try to reduce harm in our community due to alcohol abuse, but this piece of the act you are putting forward today is not for real. It is based on something, and you are trying to apply arguments later on to suit the problem.

You started off with a promise, and when you introduced the regulations you said it would help reduce harm, and then you came out with a few other reasons, such as it will preserve the status quo and serve

the public interest. But it does not hold water. You have not delivered this argument to the people or to me in a way that is rational. It is more political. You have done it for reasons other than what should be the right reason.

You should come to parliament and say, 'We want to restrict the size of a liquor outlet based on the evidence that doing so will decrease alcohol harm in the community'. You have not presented the evidence, so the only thing I can go on is that you made a promise and you do not want to break that promise. You will therefore try to sweeten up the argument by putting all these other reasons that 400 square metres should be the limit, but I do not think people will accept that because of what happened pre-election.

I will support the government if it brings forward good policy. People know my background, where I come from and the horrors of alcohol abuse I have seen in my life. I will not support something I think is hollow. To me, this is hollow. I want to see good alcohol policy based on scientific evidence. This bill does not meet those achievements.

**Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the members opposite for their contribution to debate. This bill amends the *Liquor Act* and Liquor Regulations. The key changes include:

- inserting new section 33AB into the *Liquor Act* which provides that it is a condition of a store licence, as defined in the *Liquor Act*, the area in which the public can browse and purchase liquor is limited to a maximum of 400 square metres
- inserting new section 166 into the *Liquor Act* which provides that the new section 33AB applies to all store licences, including licences granted prior to the commencement of the Liquor Legislation Amendment Act 2017
- repealing section 5BA in the Liquor Regulations as the new section 33AB is intended to replace Regulation 5BA while continuing its operation.

Whilst we recognise everyone has the right to drink responsibly, alcohol abuse is a significant cause of violence, crime and antisocial behaviour in our community. We support responsible drinking, but we know the Northern Territory has unique challenges in tackling alcohol harms. We need strong, evidence-based alcohol policy to minimise alcohol-related harm. Our government has started a wide-ranging and detailed review into the Northern Territory's alcohol legislations and policies.

We were elected with a mandate to tackle alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory and minimise the harms alcohol causes in each community every day. As the Minister for Health and being responsible for licensing, it is my responsibility to deliver that as part of our government. I am fortunate I have a government, Cabinet and Caucus that will back me in these decisions.

We are determined to tackle the issue of alcohol harm within our communities. We came to government with an aim to reduce the availability of alcohol. We have capped the number of takeaway alcohol licences in the Northern Territory.

It is important we look at statistics alcohol harm causes in the Northern Territory. Alcohol harm costs the Territory taxpayers \$642m per year. That figure is from 2009. That is four-and-a-half times the national cost per person at \$4197 for each adult Territorian. From 2008 to 2013, 60% of police work involved alcohol-related issues, with 67% of all domestic violence cases having alcohol as a basis.

We have the highest number of alcohol-related deaths and injuries in the nation. We have one liquor licence for every 353 adult Territorians. Almost 70% of alcohol sales in the NT are for takeaway alcohol. Our government was elected promising to reform alcohol policy in the Northern Territory, including bringing back the Banned Drinker Register. We made a commitment to cap the takeaway licences and restrict public areas of bottle shops to 400 square metres.

Limiting the floor space of takeaway outlets is backed by the evidence. Organisations such as Amity, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the Public Health Association have backed this decision.

As Minister for Health, I make no apologies for wanting policy backed by evidence and expert opinion, which is the opposite of the policy decisions that were made under the CLP government. The CLP abolished the BDR and put in place a costly alcohol mandatory treatment policy.

The government has established a review being led by former Chief Justice Trevor Riley, who is chairing an expert advisory panel. The panel has representatives with an excellent skill mix. We have alcohol and policy health expert, Professor Richard Matthews; Indigenous Health Community Leader, Trish Angus; and industry and business expertise with Denys Stedman. They are working diligently on the issues that need to be considered. This is a wide-ranging review.

The expert panel has already held public consultations in Darwin and Palmerston and has received feedback from health professionals, service providers, business, industry and members of the public. The panel will report back by the end of September. We, as a government, have committed to making that full report public.

They will be looking at the following key areas:

- evidence-based policy initiatives required to reduce alcohol-fuelled crime, antisocial behaviour and violence
- ensuring safe and vibrant entertainment precincts
- alcohol service provision and management in remote communities.

We recently released a report on alcohol in remote communities, something the former government sat on. The alcohol service provision management in remote communities will be looked at. We will also look at decision-making under the *Liquor Act*, the density of liquor licences and the size of liquor outlets.

I emphasise that recommendations relating to the size and density of liquor outlets are key deliverables for the review into alcohol legislation and policies. The review is approaching these issues on behalf of our community. They will, no doubt, consider a range of matters beyond those which would be relevant to specific commercial interests.

The review will provide guidance to government and the community on what we need to do to tackle this issue. For as long as I can remember we have been talking about alcohol and the impacts in our community and dealing with the antisocial behaviour, crime, mess and harm that alcohol causes in our communities. Each one of us sees it as we walk around our communities each day, as we come in here. Sadly, we only have to take a few steps away from Parliament House—we have spoken about that in the Chamber many times—to see the impact of alcohol-related harm in our community.

This bill is important because it maintains the status quo while the review does its job. Our policy has not changed. This bill consolidates the floor space restriction into legislation. The Territory currently has no large big-box liquor stores of the type you would see down south. Scrapping the government's 400 square metre policy before our expert panel reports on this issue would be reckless.

I, as Minister for Health, could not do that. We need to maintain the status quo whilst this review takes place and then we will have a lot of hard work. I am heartened by some of the words from the Member for Nelson tonight. We will have a long, hard job once that report is handed to us. I am up for the challenge. I challenge those opposite me to join me, not to flip out a policy when it suits them politically. I note the eye-rolling from some opposite.

This is an important issue. This is an issue that I have been dealing with my whole life. As a child I noticed the impact and harm of alcohol in my community.

The government has taken a cautious approach. Harm-minimisation measures relating to store licences and the availability of takeaway liquor in the Northern Territory must be maintained until the review has the opportunity to properly consider all the issues.

Limiting the floor space of those takeaway outlets has been commended by organisation such as Amity and the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons.

I will take a moment to read a letter that was sent to the Northern Territory published earlier this year. It is important for that letter to be on *Hansard* while we are talking in this debate.

The letter is from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons:

'The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons supports the Northern Territory government's cautious approach to approving a new Dan Murphy's megastore in Darwin. As surgeons we are very aware of the devastating effect of heavy alcohol consumption on the lives of Territorians. Misuse of alcohol is strongly implicated in our high rates of injury due to interpersonal violence, road traffic accidents and family violence.

It is also responsible for a high rate of deaths from alcohol-related diseases including cancer, liver disease and the heart-breaking life-long disability from foetal alcohol syndrome.

Daily we deal face-to-face with trauma that alcohol misuse generates'.

The letter goes on to say

'There is very strong evidence that excess alcohol consumption is directly related to the density of liquor outlets, exposure to alcohol advertising and availability of cheap bulk alcohol.

High volume warehouse type stores, such as the proposed Dan Murphy's store, tick all the above boxes and have the potential to lead to an increase in alcohol related harm in our community.

There is not just a problem for a few heavy drinkers. Alcohol misuse exposes all Territorians to increased risk, injury and death. There are increased costs of policing, legal and prison systems, medical and rehabilitation services which are borne by the whole community.

Family and social breakdown due to alcohol misuse sets up social dysfunction that can affect Territory families and their communities for generations.

We recognise the consumption of alcohol is an integral part of our life style and contributes to the quality of enjoyment of life, but we also acknowledge that each of us has the right to make personal decisions about the amount of alcohol we purchase and consume. As medical professionals we are very aware that this is not done on a level playing field. Skilful advertising, the aggressive promotion of alcohol by the liquor industry is not done with the primary intent to increase the wellbeing of Territorians.

Maximising good and minimising harm for the whole population is, however, the primary responsibility of our elected government. The current stand of the Territory government in balancing commercial interests of a retail giant and the overall wellbeing of Territorians is to be applauded'.

I note the genuine comments from the Member for Nelson, but I was appalled by the comments from the Leader of the Opposition tonight.

We need to tackle this issue, and we have started that first big step with the alcohol review, which is looking at these issues. The expert panel—four people who are very credible in each of their sectors—is providing advice, talking to Territorians right across the Northern Territory, and we said we will be open. That full report will be published, which I think is important. We will provide a response, but this issue will not be solved in our time of government. This is an ongoing issue, but the Northern Territory needs to stand up, talk up and start to tackle it, and that is what we are doing as a government.

We are dealing with the serious health policy issues, and in doing this you need a precautionous approach. There is evidence of the damage brought on by alcohol abuse everywhere, and I spoke about that just a moment ago. We see it as we walk around our communities; sadly, we see it a few steps from the magnificent building that we work in.

You only have to visit our hospitals. Alice Springs ICU earlier this year—seven out of the 10 beds filled that day were due to alcohol-related harm. You only have to go to Royal Darwin Hospital and spend a few hours working with our ED doctors to understand the harm and the impact alcohol causes.

It has a huge impact, with 67% of all domestic violence cases involving alcohol. We have the highest number of alcohol-related deaths and injuries in the nation. For non-Aboriginal Territorians we are double the national rate, and for Indigenous Territorians it is an appalling nine to 10 times higher.

There is an abundance of liquor in the Northern Territory. We have one liquor licence for every 353 adult Territorians, with 70% of sales being takeaway. That is why we are bringing back the Banned Drinker Register. We know the original Banned Drinker Register was working. Police referred to it as one of the

best tools they had in tackling alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour. It was broadly accepted by the community, particularly after it was removed.

We know that more than 16 400 sales to problems drinkers were declined in its first year of operation—16 490 sales were declined thanks to the BDR. Just think about that for a second. The BDR stopped so many people who should not be drinking in the first place. At the time the BDR was recklessly scrapped after only 14 months—and I urge anyone opposite to defend the scrapping of the BDR—more than 2500 people were registered and tens of thousands of sales which should never have been made were free to proceed. The result: the most violent two years in the Territory's history.

Our government is confident that the new BDR builds on the previous model and strengthens the Territory's ability to reduce alcohol-related harm. It will not solve everything, but it is a step in the right direction—a Territory-wide approach to tackling alcohol supply.

I was pleased that Budget 2017–18 provides \$17.2m for the BDR, \$15.5m of which is to the Department of Health to develop specialist assessment and withdrawal services, create integrated pathways to treatment and follow-up services, and expand the capacity for rehabilitation services. We are co-locating the sobering-up shelter in Darwin so that when people are at the point of crisis they can be provided with clinical case workers to support them through the process and work with their primary healthcare providers so they can start on the pathway to rehabilitation.

We will establish the BDR registrar and specialist clinicians. In addition the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice has been provided \$1.7m to establish a BDR system and roll out the technology. The government will deliver the BDR and it will roll out from 1 September. This bill is here today to preserve the status quo. It is important that our policy and legislation is protected so Territorians can start to tackle this issue.

I note that there were a number of questions from the Member for Nelson. The Leader of the Opposition had a random rant, where he said that it is Bunnings which makes the Territory attractive. With all due respect to Bunnings, that is a bizarre claim. What will make the Territory attractive is tackling the issue of alcohol. It is very confronting—all of us notice this when we go away for a few days or weeks—that other areas do not have the same antisocial behaviour. They do not face alcohol in their streets like we do. We notice the difference when we go to other places, but we also notice how confronting it is when we come home.

I thought that was a bizarre claim to make. Do not get me wrong; I love a Saturday visit to Bunnings. The kids can play; I can buy some things and we can usually get a sausage from the charities outside, but I thought that was a very bizarre claim. It is worth pointing out that what will make the Territory attractive is finally tackling this issue for the long term.

Member for Nelson, there is no urgency. This is the ordinary process. The bill gives effect to our policy. It creates certainty that this is the rule for everyone going forward until the review concludes. In developing our policies on alcohol, it is about harm reduction and turning around some of those appalling statistics. You could go on with those statistics on the impact of alcohol harm in the Territory.

The Member for Nelson has read out loud, and so have I, some of the stakeholders' responses. When you speak to people such as health professionals and doctors—are they just making up that evidence? Is that what the opposition is saying?

I agree with the Member for Nelson that we need to ensure the *Liquor Act* adequately addresses the issues of alcohol-related harm, and that is why we have put that review in place. That is why we are being open and transparent in that review and in allowing them to do their work, meet and listen to Territorians, businesses, health professionals and the community groups who often have to pick up the mess.

This bill provides certainty regarding our policy of the 400 square metres. It provides certainty going forward whilst the review is being conducted. We have outlined it many times outside the House and inside the Chamber. That review will take place. We will publish that full review and then start government's response to that. There will be some simple and easy things we can achieve, but there will be a lot of hard work.

I challenge those opposite. Are you up for the challenge? Are you willing to work together on this? Are you willing to put aside cheap political point-scoring to start to tackle this issue? So far to date all we have seen

is an opportunistic opposition that had exactly the same policy going into the election, but it back-flipped out of that as quickly as it could.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the *Liquor Act* to enshrine in the act the condition of store licences that is currently contained in regulation 5BA of the Liquor Regulations. The area will not include driveways, car parking areas or have refrigerated or storing rooms to which the public does not have access.

I acknowledge the work of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice officials in developing this bill. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 17

Noes 5

Ms Ah Kit  
Mr Collins  
Mr Costa  
Ms Fyles  
Mr Gunner  
Mr Kirby  
Mrs Lawler  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr McConnell  
Ms Manison  
Ms Moss  
Ms Nelson  
Mr Paech  
Ms Uibo  
Mr Vowles  
Ms Wakefield  
Mrs Worden

Mrs Finocchiaro  
Mr Higgins  
Mrs Lambley  
Mr Mills  
Mr Wood

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

### Consideration in detail

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3:

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you, we got there in the end. In relation to section 33AB of the bill relating to maximum floor area for store licences, how was the 400 square metre area of restriction contained in that section derived? How did we arrive at 400? Why was it not 300, 500 or another number?

**Ms FYLES:** The 400 square metres was our commitment before the election.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What was that based on?

**Ms FYLES:** We felt that 400 square metres was a reasonable size to allow a venue—I think the current size is 200 square metres. At the time when we were discussing this, when 200 square metres was the largest venue, we felt that doubling it was generous. We felt that it allowed for businesses to provide for additional space, but it upheld not going towards those far larger premises in terms of density.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So the 400 square metres is just an arbitrary number that you guys picked because it was bigger than the biggest bottle shop in the Northern Territory?

**Ms FYLES:** It was a reasonable figure.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But you picked it; it is obviously not based on evidence or other examples.

**Ms FYLES:** It was a reasonable figure.



**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I will take that as a yes to my question. What consultation was undertaken with stakeholders, including current liquor licence holders before arriving at your arbitrary figure of 400 square metres?

**Ms FYLES:** How did you arrive at your figure of 400 before the last election?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You are the minister and I would appreciate an answer to my question.

**Ms FYLES:** So you do not know the answer to your own question?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The real question is, do you know the answer to my question?

**Ms FYLES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I note that this is before a court, so I need to be careful in my responses, but 200 square metres was the average of outlets; I should have corrected what I said previously. We felt 400 was an appropriate number. In regard to consultation, as the minister responsible at the time, it provided for industry and business but it also acknowledged the huge issue in the Northern Territory in regard to takeaway alcohol sales.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You consulted with current licence holders on the 400 square metre cap?

**Ms FYLES:** We advised industry.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** You did not consult them; you advised them that would be your election commitment?

**Ms FYLES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel I have answered the question. I believe the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is simply mincing words for the sake of politics. I provided a genuine response in the fact that 200 square metres was the average before—and we felt that 400 was generous in allowing for the provision of changes to businesses and shopfronts, but also looking at the huge issue we have with takeaway alcohol in the Northern Territory.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I just wanted to make it clear that you advised licence holders, not consulted with them. At what time did you advise licence holders?

**Ms FYLES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask you to rule the question out of order, it is not relevant to what is before us today. I have provided a response.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Out of order. Deputy Opposition Leader, do you have any further questions in relation to clause 3?

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I do. What is the rationale behind restricting the public browsing area of a licensed area?

**Ms FYLES:** That is the public area, so stores have space behind that where they can store things and have items in. That was that provision.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How will the floor space restriction help achieve the objectives of the *Liquor Act*, including minimising the harm associated with the consumption of liquor, and protecting and enhancing the social harmony and wellbeing of the community?

**Ms FYLES:** In case the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not read in my closing debate, I point out the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. The opposition went to the election with the same policy as the government but quickly ran away and left that in a bid to get popularity votes. There is very strong evidence that excess alcohol consumption is directly related to the density of liquor outlets, exposure to alcohol advertising and the availability of cheap bulk alcohol.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Density, not floor limit? No mention of a 400 square metre floor limit. If the minister will not answer question five I will move on.

Is there any peer reviewed evidence that supports the idea that the floor space of a liquor outlet has an impact on minimising harm from alcohol misuse or enhancing the social harmony and wellbeing of the community? This flows from my last question which strikes to the heart of the objects of the *Liquor Act*.

**Ms FYLES:** I refer the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to the issues paper around the alcohol policies and legislation review.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** So you are not able to provide peer reviewed evidence?

**Ms FYLES:** It has already been provided. Perhaps if the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had read that issues paper she would be abreast of these issues.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** With respect minister, an issues paper is not peer reviewed evidence, but I will move on. Is there any anecdotal or non-peer reviewed evidence which supports the idea that the floor space of a liquor outlet has an impact on minimising the harm from alcohol misuse or enhancing the social harmony and wellbeing of the community?

**Ms FYLES:** In regard to licencing commissions around Australia, it would look at the size when making a decision around the alcohol harms and density.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Would section 33AB prohibit a licensee that holds more than one valid liquor licence from co-locating those licences in a single shopfront, perhaps in adjacent stores separated by a common wall? For example bottle shop XYZ has three licences; it decides to move premises and all three of them are next to each other. How is that treated in this legislation?

**Ms FYLES:** That is a question that has been raised and discussed. It is something we asked the reviews into alcohol policies and legislation to look at.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Nothing under this legislation stops licence holders from effectively having a very large floor space premises by co-locating their liquor licences?

**Ms FYLES:** There is a restriction of 400 square metres per licence. There is nothing currently in the act about the density, but we have asked the alcohol policy review to look at it.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Under section 33AB subsection (2)(b)(ii) of the bill, would a glass wall that allows the public to see but not access a cool room comply with this section of the bill?

**Ms FYLES:** Correct. If someone cannot access it ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** If it was a giant glass wall and they could see all the alcohol that would not be a problem?

**Ms FYLES:** It depends what you mean by 'room'. If the public cannot access it—the intent of the legislation is quite clear.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Will the floor space restriction contained in section 33AB of the bill be included in the alcohol policy and legislation review that is being headed by Justice Riley?

**Ms FYLES:** Absolutely. This is all being considered. This is where we are being up front with Territorians with everything on the table. We want to have a clear plan for the provision of alcohol in the Northern Territory that minimises the associated harm.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** If it is part of the review, why are you legislating it now and not waiting for the outcome of the review?

**Ms FYLES:** Because we are providing certainty to business and Territorians around existing government policy.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** If the alcohol policy and legislation review finds that a floor space restriction, such as that included in section 33AB of this bill, is not warranted or supported by evidence, will the government commit to repealing this legislation?

**Ms FYLES:** As I have clearly outlined, we are a government that will provide the information to Territorians. We said that when they hand back their report in September we will provide that full report; it will be published. We will then provide our response to it. As I outlined in my second reading speech, there will be some small wins, I assume. Then there will be some big, difficult issues to tackle.

We need to start the conversation and have the evidence before us. That is what the alcohol policy review will do.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Minister, my question was rather specific. If the alcohol policy and legislation review finds that a floor space restriction such as the one you are seeking to pass today is not supported by evidence or part of the recommendations, will the government commit to repealing this legislation?

**Ms FYLES:** You are pre-empting the outcome of the review.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** No, I am asking you, if a review comes up with that suggestion will your government repeal this legislation? I heard you say on radio that everything would be on the table.

**Ms FYLES:** You are pre-empting the review. You are playing hypotheticals. We have said that the review ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Clearly, the minister does not want to answer that question ...

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Spillett, would you hold? Attorney-General, please finish.

**Ms FYLES:** We have made it clear that everything is on the table. The review is having a broad look at alcohol policies and legislation in the Territory and we will consider all its findings.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** That is all I have for clause 3, but I know other colleagues have further questions.

**Mr WOOD:** I would like to clarify some things. This is where I differ from what the government is saying. The first notice that there was an issue about the 400 square metres was in your response to the Australian Hotels Association. Is that correct? I never heard of the 400 square metres until I heard of this. Is that where this came from? Did the 400 square metres originate from the agreement with the Australian Hotels Association?

**Ms FYLES:** I think I answered that question previously when I explained that 200 square metres was the average size of an outlet. We felt that ...

**Mr WOOD:** I did not ask that question. I asked, is this where this number originated—from the response to the Australian Hotels Association?

**Ms FYLES:** I am answering it.

**Mr WOOD:** No, I am not asking you how you came up with it. I am asking you if this is where it came from.

**Ms FYLES:** I have already answered the question.

**Mr WOOD:** You expect me to have a mature debate with you about a serious business when you made a promise to the Australian Hotels Association to have the 400 square metres? That is why people do not believe you are serious about this.

**Mr GUNNER:** Member for Nelson, if I can assist here? We have to be a little careful with what we say because this is before the courts. Last term we had concerns about alcohol. We have had plenty of debates in this Chamber. One of our concerns was with size and density.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I seek clarification about the Chief Minister speaking on behalf of the minister who has carriage of the bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I believe the Chief Minister can.

**Mr GUNNER:** It is normal that I can speak in consideration in detail.

One of our concerns, Member for Nelson, went to size and density. It seemed to us to be a very simple formula that the more licences you have and the bigger the premises are, the more alcohol is sold and the more harm is caused. That was the way we approached this.

In opposition you do your research—we put out a lot of discussion papers and met with all types of industry and stakeholders. That was essentially where we came from. The AHA wrote to us and we wrote back with our policy position, as did the CLP. We came to this with a general policy approach about how we deal with the issue of supply. There are problems with supply around alcohol.

The Banned Drinker Register is one solution, but it is not the be-all and end-all. We need to do more than that. That is what we thought was a robust policy approach in opposition. We are happy to go through this review process and make available all the data the government has, which is much more than we had access to in opposition—if there is a more comprehensive and robust way to approach this issue.

The question from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was simplistic. I expect that what the review will come forward with is not a yes or no to this, but will be a much more comprehensive policy position, having had all the data made available to them around liquor sales, police hot spots and response times, all that other stuff that we simply did not have access to in opposition. We came up with what we thought was a robust policy approach in opposition. Now that we are in government we think we can do better and be more comprehensive. That is the intention of the review.

With the resources of government you can create better policy.

**Mr WOOD:** I appreciate the answer, but the question I have is—you have made an agreement with the AHA and then the minister said these regulations were introduced in December in order to minimise alcohol-based harm. The minister said it is in the issues paper. I have the issues paper here. It does not give me scientific evidence. I have been trying to find scientific evidence to support your argument, but you have not given me one iota of scientific evidence to say that having a 401 square metre shop will not minimise the alcohol-based harm in the community.

I might not necessarily disagree with what you are trying to do, but there is a bill before me today that I have to look at—technically, you are telling me that you will restrict things to 400 square metres because you want to minimise the alcohol-based harm in the community. Show me the evidence.

**Mr GUNNER:** This is before the courts, so I have to be careful in how I answer. I have said before, on the public record, that there is research on size and density. The number we came to, we had to work out for ourselves. There is no magic number, which I have publicly said before. We had to find a reasonable position and we felt 400 square metres was a reasonable position to fall on. It could be 401; it could be 399.

This happens all the time in government; you have to pick your spot. We came to the question of size and density and thought this was a reasonable position to take. If you want to go 401 then that can be your position. We felt we had to pick a position, and that is how we came to that conclusion. The average is 200 square metres, and we thought we picked a reasonable number with 400. Dan Murphy's was not on the radar back then. I had no idea it was coming to town. The government at the time might have known, but I had no idea about Dan Murphy's. We picked what we thought was a reasonable number for the size and density of the Territory.

**Mr WOOD:** Why were regulations introduced in December?

**Ms FYLES:** It is a government policy. The process was started before that. I signed off on stuff in November and it was finally gazetted in December. It was something I worked on once becoming minister.

**Mr WOOD:** Then why have we now moved to putting this in the act?

**Ms FYLES:** As we clearly outlined in the speech yesterday, and I have answered numerous times, it is to provide certainty about the government's policy.

**Mr WOOD:** I am no legal eagle, but what makes the regulations not have the same weight as being in the act—that we have to change that today?

**Ms FYLES:** Regulations are subordinate to the act. Putting it in legislation provides certainty to the policy.

**Mr WOOD:** If Dan Murphy's had nothing to do with this then why did this not come forward as a normal addition or amendment to the bill instead of looking at regulations in the first place?

**Ms FYLES:** I think you pointed it out earlier that the previous minister—it is just a decision. As a minister, you make either a regulation change or a legislation change. We made it as a regulation change. By providing it as a legislative change it provides certainty.

**Mr WOOD:** But the poker machines never became part of the act; they stayed as regulations.

The other area that concerns me—you say the status quo is maintained while the review does its job. If it stayed as it was, because part of this bill is about taking it out of the regulations, what effect did that have on the review? You are using an argument that we support this change to the bill based on the status quo, and you said that in your second reading. What was wrong with leaving it as it is in relation to the review?

We have this bill before us, which has regulations. The *Liquor Act* has the regulations you put in in December. What does that have to do with the status quo of the review? I am arguing this to some extent as a technical issue. I do not want it misinterpreted that I am fighting for Dan Murphy or for the arguments of the opposition.

I see a bill that does not stand up. I do not see the backing of it from a scientific point of view; I see other reasons for it, and I do not understand why we are moving it from the regulations to the act. You have not explained to me why that was not done in the first place.

**Ms FYLES:** I think I have answered the question numerous times. Moving it from regulations into legislation provides certainty for the government's policies. If it was to be changed again it would come back before the House.

**Mr WOOD:** There is a question about driveways. Will you confirm that the driveways are wholly excluded from the 4000 square metre area?

**Ms FYLES:** The driveways are excluded from 400 square metres.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, 4000 might be a bit big. Perhaps if we combined them in one big monopoly we could keep the problem in one spot.

I will just quickly check. I asked some questions during the discussion. I might make my final comments in the third reading. My concerns are that whilst you might be trying to do the right thing, I see other motives for doing it, and that is the problem I have with this bill.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** The Chief Minister spoke about wanting to address density. How is density dealt with in the bill?

**Mr GUNNER:** I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not understand my previous comments. We were talking about our broader policy when I talked about size and density, and we have capped the takeaway licences in the Northern Territory. That was our approach to density; this is clearly our approach around size.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** As section 166(1) of the bill is retrospective, are there currently any liquor stores in the Northern Territory that are in violation of the 400 square metre floor space restriction?

**Ms FYLES:** Not that I am aware of. The Director-General of Licensing is charged with inspecting, and the advice I have received to date is that there are none.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** How have you determined that no—you are not even sure if no bottle shop will be caught by this legislation? You have not determined that no bottle shop is bigger than 400 square metres, is that correct?

**Ms FYLES:** The advice to date is that no bottle shop has floor space bigger than 400 square metres.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** Will you conduct an audit or other investigation to verify that no existing liquor outlet is in violation of the 400 square metre restriction?

**Ms FYLES:** That is one of the duties of the Director-General of Licensing.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But that will take place—when?

**Ms FYLES:** The Director-General of Licensing is regularly auditing, ensuring licensees are upholding their licence conditions.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** What has been prepared by government to support or assist liquor outlets if they are bigger than 400 square metres?

**Ms FYLES:** I am not aware that any are bigger than 400 square metres. That is the advice I have.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But if no audit or investigation has been conducted, there is no certainty around that and there is no set time frame for an investigation. One would think you would need certainty around this if making it retrospective.

**Ms FYLES:** The Director-General of Licensing has advised us there are none. She will continue to maintain compliance through audits.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** And then the penalties process, if one was discovered—what would be the process there?

**Ms FYLES:** As I have reiterated, there are none to date. In applications of licences, it is a factor being considered by the Director-General.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** I am mindful that some people have had liquor licences for much longer than others, but to date, would the Director-General hold the information in a database or elsewhere on the square metre floor space as captured and envisaged by this legislation? In previous years, decades ago, would a licence holder be required to submit the square metre information in the way that is envisaged by this act?

Does the Director-General have that information? Do licence holders need to submit that information?

**Ms FYLES:** I am pretty sure the information is collected. They have maps with red lines around them of different areas. Licensed areas are highly regulated, and that information is provided to the Director-General.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** But you cannot confirm that when applying for a licence you must ...

**Ms FYLES:** What I have just said is it is publicly available information, and licensed venues are highly regulated. Those maps are publicly available and outline the areas accessible to patrons as well as storage et cetera.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** In as much detail as providing information about the square meterage of those areas.

**Ms FYLES:** The Director-General has all the information she needs. She says there are none, and that information is available.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7 agreed to.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The question now is that the bill stands as printed.

Ayes 18

Noes 5

Ms Ah Kit  
Mr Collins  
Mr Costa  
Ms Fyles  
Mr Gunner  
Mr Guyula  
Mr Kirby  
Mrs Lawler  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr McConnell  
Ms Manison  
Ms Moss  
Ms Nelson  
Mr Paech  
Ms Uibo  
Mr Vowles  
Ms Wakefield  
Mrs Worden

Mrs Finocchiaro  
Mr Higgins  
Mrs Lambley  
Mr Mills  
Mr Wood

Motion agreed to; bill stands as printed.

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

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not often that I do a third reading, and I realise time is moving on. I will try to put this debate in a nutshell. I am not saying the government is not trying to do its best when it comes to alcohol reform, which is why we have a review. That is one of the things I find difficult; we have a review and we are passing legislation that should be part of the review. One of the questions put to the Attorney-General from the Member for Spillett was, what happens if the review comes out and says it should be 500 square metres?

As I just said to the Chief Minister, I would prefer it if you had a moratorium and just said, 'For the time being we can have more takeaways, but nothing will be over 400 square metres until we have finished our review'. That does not stop bottle shops by going through the normal process ...

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20; I cannot hear the member over the top of other members chatting in the Chamber.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, please return to your seats and keep your voice at a minimum. Member for Nelson, please continue, but I will remind you that at this point the third reading is not an opportunity to canvass the second reading. Please continue.

**Mr WOOD:** I am not sure what that means, Mr Deputy Speaker, but my understanding is that I am not to introduce new material, and I am not doing that. I am just giving a summary ...

**Ms Fyles:** Rehashing another point.

**Mr WOOD:** Democracy allows us to have a third reading. Are you trying to silence me?

**Ms Fyles:** No, not at all.

**Mr WOOD:** That is all right. Whilst your intent in relation to this bill may be good, there is far too much influence in this debate about the original promise with the AHA, the court case Woolworths is bringing forward, the lack of hard evidence presented to this parliament today, and the issue of whether this should have been held off until we had the review's recommendations.

That makes sense to me because the issues paper talks about the issue of density and size being something the review will look at.

My objection is not based on what the opposition was talking about. I am not here to barrack for grog superstores. We have enough outlets; there are 11 Woolworths outlets already, and this is another Woolworths outlet. It is there to make money and sell grog. People may think variety and a beautiful store are fantastic, but in the end this is about making money out of alcohol.

I agree with the Attorney-General; we have major issues with alcohol in our community, but this piece of legislation has flaws and too many distractions from what you are trying to do in a way that makes it look like it is not legitimate legislation.

**Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I know it is unusual to speak to the third reading, but I will recap that the government has taken a cautious approach.

Harm-minimisation measures relating to store licences and the availability of takeaway liquor in the Northern Territory must be maintained while the review has the opportunity to properly consider the issues at hand, which includes the harm caused by alcohol in the Northern Territory.

To conclude, the purpose of the bill is to amend the *Liquor Act* to enshrine in the act the conditions of store licences that are currently contained in regulation 5BA in the Liquor Regulations. We are providing certainty and will openly provide the review findings, and I look forward to continued debate.

Moving away from this debate today, perhaps those opposite can accept the independent nature of the review and be willing to work towards solutions to tackling this huge issue in the Northern Territory.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 18

Noes 5

Ms Ah Kit  
Mr Collins  
Mr Costa  
Ms Fyles  
Mr Gunner  
Mr Guyula  
Mr Kirby  
Mrs Lawler  
Mr McCarthy  
Mr McConnell  
Ms Manison  
Ms Moss  
Ms Nelson  
Mr Paech  
Ms Uibo  
Mr Vowles  
Ms Wakefield  
Mrs Worden

Mrs Finocchiaro  
Mr Higgins  
Mrs Lambley  
Mr Mills  
Mr Wood

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### **PAPER TABLED**

##### **Travel Reports for Members for Daly and Nelson**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table the travel reports from the Member for Daly and Nelson.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, it gave me great pleasure to, just a few weeks ago, attend the Nursing and Midwifery Excellence Awards at a gala dinner in Darwin. I note Central Australia had its own event to recognise its outstanding nurses and midwives. After the birth of my first son nearly eight years ago I received amazing



care at Royal Darwin Hospital. I nominated one of my midwives back then for an award to recognise the hard work they provide with your first born child when you are going through, what can be, a difficult time.

Our nurses provide outstanding support day-in and day-out across the Northern Territory. Not only do we have wonderful nurses in our tertiary and regional hospitals, but in our remote areas. It was a great pleasure to attend the awards. I want to speak briefly on some of the key award recipients and I will table a full list of the winners.

The Territory's Nurse/Midwife of the Year was awarded to Royal Darwin Hospital and Menzies School of Health Research diabetes educator, Cherie Whitbread. Cherie has made an outstanding contribution to the Northern Territory as a diabetes educator and researcher. She has been pivotal in improving models of care for women with diabetes during pregnancy.

The NT Administrator's Medal for Lifetime Achievement was awarded to RDH's Denys Spencer. Denys was involved in the establishment of the rehabilitation inpatient service at Royal Darwin Hospital in 1996 and has been instrumental in growing rehab nursing as a specialty in the Territory. We are looking forward to the Palmerston Hospital coming online with a specialist focus on rehabilitation, including with the rehabilitation pool this government has committed to.

The Team Award for Excellence was awarded to the Intensive Care Unit at Alice Springs Hospital. The Chief Minister and I had great pleasure visiting them after that award and meeting some of those hard-working staff. They have not only delivered care day-in and day-out, but they have made a smooth transition into the new ICU environment, making sure patient care is a priority.

It was a delight to attend that evening. The emcee was Katie Woolf, who did a fabulous job. Her mother is a nurse and midwife in a remote community. I table the full list of winners to be published into *Hansard*.

I want to talk about another event I had the privilege of attending and speaking at: the Starlight Ball. I have attended the event over many years as a community member. It was a privilege to attend with the additional capacity as the Minister for Health. Time and again I have seen our community come together to donate to this important organisation that so generously supports Territory children and families.

It has had a significant impact on improving health services. I will read a few words, while time permits, which I delivered in a speech that evening.

The Northern Territory Government delivers health services to some of the most remote communities in the world. Our dedicated team works across 1.4 million square kilometres in 50 NT Government clinics and health centres and 20 community led clinics along with our five hospitals. Government cannot do it alone. We need to work in collaboration with our non-government sectors, and Starlight is an important partner in that. Starlight provides a vital role in the Territory in helping us, as a government, deliver high-quality care.

It was a fabulous night. Huge congratulations to Justin Coleman and his hard-working committee of the Starlight Foundation in the Territory on an amazing evening. People attending the ball in Darwin were wondering how they could help us deliver healthcare in some of the most remote parts of the world. People would have seen Captain Starlight in our hospitals; he also makes appearances into our remote outreach centres.

We have evidence from the Department of Health that those clinics are better attended when children know they are getting a visit from Captain Starlight. We know that early and regular treatment can improve long-term health outcomes and, in some cases, save lives. Getting children to attend treatment is key to achieving that. Our government is very grateful, as are all Territorians, I am sure.

That evening I was also able to share how Starlight Foundation has played a vital role in my life, helping our young son Henry get to hospital. It is well-known within the Chamber and the Territory that Henry has ongoing medical conditions. In fact, he had to attend Royal Darwin Hospital today to get a blood test. Over the last five years Henry has visited hospitals in Darwin, Sydney and Adelaide, and one of the constant things for him has been the Starlight room.

He has become so anxious about visiting hospital and having tests that he can make himself physically ill on the way to hospital. He literally knows the roundabout in Nakara where if I turn right we are going to see my parents and if I turn left we are going to RDH.

When you are in an unfamiliar environment going to lots of different appointments, as many Territory kids have to do each day, Captain Starlight makes that journey a lot easier. It is something that can turn a very negative and anxious time into a fun time. It can bring joy, whether it is watching the Starlight television or whether it is getting a visit from Captain Starlight.

I recently was able to share a very special experience with Henry on one of his hospital visits. We were in the new Starlight room, which is fabulous, and we met a young girl and her aunty from the Member for Arnhem's community. It was lovely to have Territory kids—a Darwin boy and a beautiful girl from a remote community—in that room, painting on bags, playing PlayStation. You would not have thought they were in hospital with all the fun they were having.

That is what is truly special about the Starlight Foundation. They offer a touch of magic and turn an unpleasant and sometimes painful experience into something positive and joyful. It was a pleasure for me, as the Minister for Health and as a mother, to attend that evening. Recognising and meeting the needs of sick children is more than just health services. We need to invest in partnerships with organisations such as the Starlight Foundation to make that health journey a bit more fun, a bit more bearable, so we can get our children to the treatments they so desperately need.

Starlight does a wonderful job. I acknowledge Louise, Justin and the Territory committee for their outstanding work. Territory businesses are doing it tough, but the opportunity to come together and fundraise for such an important cause—Territorians did not hold back and significant funds were raised. Starlight led the way, along with non-government organisations working with government, in delivering high-quality health services.

I hope families do not have to visit the Starlight room in Royal Darwin Hospital or attend those outreach clinics with Captain Starlight, but if they do they can know that joy will be brought to their children when they receive those medical treatments.

I thank all Territorians for their support that evening. I congratulate the Starlight Foundation and our outstanding nurses and midwives who were recognised at the gala awards evening.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to finish my contribution that I commenced on 11 May 2017, acknowledging the contribution that Anita Newman, Palmerston's 2017 Citizen of the Year, has made to our community.

You cannot tell the story of Anita Newman without talking about her passion and commitment for Air Force cadets. This has been her life for the last six years and she has now risen to the position of Commanding Officer of 802 Squadron.

Anita watches the kids in her squadron at school and can see the difference in her cadets from other students. She enjoys watching them grow, react and interact with other people. A transformation occurs with her cadets, and watching them change and become real leaders makes them easy to pick out from a crowd. Last year was very significant for the 8 Wing as they won the highly prestigious Air Force trophy. The squadron has gone from strength to strength and grown bigger every semester.

Anita acknowledges the hard work of her cadets as it is a big commitment for the students. She is very proud of the Anzac Day parade that her cadets and students participate in every year at the Palmerston Senior College. Anzac Day is a big commemoration at the school and is attended by a large number of dignitaries, including the Administrator, senior members of the Defence Force, members of parliament and community representatives.

The school's Defence mentor and Anita look at the format and decide guest speakers for the commemoration and then support the kids to participate in the service and catafalque party. Anzac Day gives cadets the opportunity to present themselves in their professional manner, and Anita is always buoyed by how good they look in their uniforms and how well they conduct themselves. In 2014 Palmerston Senior College came second in a Territory-wide Anzac Day service competition.

When I sat down with Anita I wanted to learn more about the people who nominated her for Palmerston Citizen of the Year. Anita told me that she was absolutely stunned when she found out she had been nominated. Anita had always gone along in life contributing in the best way she could, making a difference in any way she could without any fanfare and without thinking it was anything different or special.

The nomination really caused her to reflect on why people would want to recognise her in this way, and she had to ask herself, 'Why am I any different or special?' It turned out that two of her former cadets and three current students nominated her for Palmerston 2017 Citizen of the Year. In true Anita style, her first emotion once she got over the shock was that she was so proud of the kids for taking such initiative, being so proactive and undertaking a formal nomination process.

One nominee is a former cadet and was a new migrant when Anita first met him. Anita would keep in regular contact with him to make sure he was doing okay. That young man is now proudly serving his country in the Australian Army.

One of the other nominees is a young Indigenous lady who has a heart of gold and is committed to becoming an actress. She has been part of Anita's story since Anita returned to the Territory in 2006; Anita encouraged her to come along to swimming and become a junior instructor. She ended up competing interstate in lifesaving and is excellent in equestrian. Anita always told this young woman that she could be whatever she dreamed, and she is doing well and living that dream. Anita is extremely proud of her. Anita was very humbled in telling me that this young woman told Anita recently that she used to have very low self-confidence and that her time at cadets brought out the best in her. She said that without cadets and the support of Anita, she would not be the person she is today and would not have the confidence to do what she is doing.

Anita has made a valuable and long-standing contribution to the Palmerston community and the broader community from a very young age; her energy and passion is to be admired. She is outgoing, at times outspoken, social, funny, caring and kind. Palmerston is lucky to have her as its Palmerston Citizen of the Year, and I am happy to share her story with Territorians in this parliament.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, this relates to you. Before the debate in parliament the president of Right to Life Australia put out the following media release.

*Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, Australian of the Year NT 2015, has indicated that the Aboriginal community knows little about the NT government's proposed Termination of Pregnancy Reform Bill 2017 and has rightly expressed her concerns about its effects.*

*Margaret Tighe, President of Right to Life Australia, said the planned legislation is part of a nationwide push on the part of Emily's List ALP MPs whose plan is to see the legalisation of no-restriction abortions in all parts of Australia.*

*Mrs Tighe said 'We have already seen the deleterious effects of no-restriction abortions in Victoria, the ACT and Tasmania with some babies aborted live and left to die. Ironically many of the babies aborted are more developed than those wanted babies born prematurely and expensively cared for in neo-natal nurseries'.*

*Like Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, Margaret Tighe expressed grave concern for the welfare of Aboriginal woman living in far flung places, miles away from proper medical care!*

*Ms Tighe said 'I can see that the widespread provision of abortion whether surgical or medical will frequently be seized upon by those social engineers who wish to control the Aboriginal population because of the rising cost of Aboriginal welfare'.*

*She continued 'Will death before birth be seized on as an unjust solution to fetal alcohol syndrome?'*

During the debate the Member for Namatjira, in speaking in support of the bill that allowed the termination of the life of unborn humans using the drug MS2-Step, decided to show his dislike for Ms Tighe by saying her comments were racist, implying that she was racist. From *Hansard*, this is what he said:

*I respect that Right to Life, of course, will oppose this bill; I expect nothing less from this group. However, to suddenly profess a concern for Aboriginal women in a desperate effort to give itself a legitimate voice in this debate is crass and downright racist.*

He used that word twice in the debate. He was not asked by the Speaker or the Chief Minister to withdraw that unwarranted and offensive remark. What makes it worse is that Margaret Tighe's media release was spot on.

In the conversation I had the other day with my friend Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, she said that Aboriginal people were not involved in the discussion about this bill. The public service might have known, but not the people. She also said she found the comment from the member appalling, especially coming from a male. She was very clear in saying she agreed with everything Margaret Tighe had said and thanked her for speaking for the voiceless.

Margaret Tighe then wrote a letter to the Member for Namatjira asking for an apology. She said: 'My attention has been drawn to the speech you made in your support for further legalising abortion in the Northern Territory, in which you accused me under parliamentary privilege of being racist, a term which I find to be highly offensive and decidedly untrue, and a damning indictment of my character. If you had made those remarks in public you would have found yourself facing a writ for defamation, one that would have been successful as I could produce many witnesses from a variety of culture and races who would have willingly testified for me.'

'The truth is, Mr Paech, attack is the best method of defence because there is ample evidence that what you have endorsed with your vote is the destruction of the lives of unborn children whose lives are particularly valued by Aboriginal people, as your colleague Mr Yingiya Guyula testified to in his speech to the parliament.'

'Ms Rosalie Kunoth-Monks, Northern Territory Australian of the Year for 2015, said there is no such word as "abortion" in the Aboriginal language. She went on to say that the Aboriginal community knew nothing about the abortion legislation and she was quite shocked about it. As I understand, Indigenous people are about 30% of the NT population. I would appreciate a statement from you in the parliament withdrawing your description of me being a racist.'

According to Ms Tighe there had been no response, so she then sent a letter to the Speaker. The letter was similar: 'Dear Ms Purick, On 21 February this year, during a debate on the Termination of Pregnancy Law Reform Bill, Mr Chansey Paech MLA referred to me in very damaging and derogatory terms.'

She repeated what was in *Hansard* and she continued: 'When I read this I felt affronted and deeply offended at the injustice of Mr Paech branding me as a racist. As I claimed when I wrote to the Northern Territory MPs about his unjust remarks about me I pointed that if he had made those remarks outside the parliament I should have no hesitation in issuing a writ for the defamation in the Supreme Court.'

'I pointed out my many contacts and friendships with people of a variety of races and cultures. I have always taught my children, now grown up, that racism was not to be tolerated. I well recall many years ago when we felt honoured to have stay with our family the highly respected Aboriginal leader, the late Mum Shirl Smith of Redfern in Sydney, on two occasions.'

'On one occasion some years ago as I was driving along Brunswick Road in Melbourne, I noticed a car in front of us which slowed down for the driver to hurl abuse at a Chinese man walking on the footpath. I immediately sped up alongside the offending driver, put my window down and shouted, "racist".'

My understanding is that there has been no response to that letter either. Madam Speaker, what Margaret Tighe wrote about Rosalie Kunoth-Monks is the truth. If the Member for Namatjira asked my wife, a Wadjigan woman, or asked her sisters, they would have said the same thing as Rosalie. Does that make me a racist because I quoted them?

The Member for Nhulunbuy said in his speech when referring to a Yolngu women's forum:

*Motives for medical abortion technology was also raised as a concern. Is it an attempt to lower Indigenous birth rates? If it is not, will it be used in this way by individual hospital or clinic staff? This probably sounds excessive to an outsider, but since the intervention we have heard and experienced all sorts of racist things.*

So are Yolngu women racist? Racist is a very serious name to call anyone, especially when you know the person is not a racist and has not said anything racist, but has been accused of being a racist by the Member for Namatjira, who decided to use parliament simply because he did not agree with Ms Tighe's and Rosalie's views about saving the unborn from the death of abortion.

It seems that the Member for Namatjira reflects an increasing tendency by some groups in our society who will do their best to drown out alternative views by either vilifying people, mocking them or using some other

means to silence them. Unfortunately, some of our media have also forgotten their role as being independent and neutral when reporting current affairs and instead editorialise.

The abortion pill, in my point of view, was structured to silence opponents of abortion in the way it was legislated. But I go on.

Rosie Kunoth-Monks also highlighted that Aboriginal people were not included in this discussion. This government deliberately avoided taking this bill to the Aboriginal people. It had the mechanism through a parliamentary committee to do that and when I requested for that to happen it voted against it.

I could argue that the government's decision was racist, and I bet that would have gotten the hackles up, but instead I will say it was deliberately discriminatory in an attempt to avoid hearing other views, especially views from remote people—views like the Member for Nhulunbuy in his response to the abortion bill. He gave a genuine Aboriginal view, which was one of the best speeches I have heard in this parliament. He reflected an Aboriginal view of the community, of the extended family, the love given to children and how they are cared for even if they are unwanted or born of the wrong skin group. He gave a perspective which should be promoted and, perhaps, copied in the broader society; a view based on life, not death. He gave a true Aboriginal view.

I respectfully ask that the Member for Namatjira please apologise to Ms Tighe, and if that cannot be the case then I will advise Ms Tighe to use section four of the sessional orders, which were placed before us today, which state:

*Right of Reply for persons who are referred to in the Legislative Assembly*

- (1) *Where a person who has been referred to by name, or in such a way as to be readily identified, in the Assembly, makes a submission in writing to the Speaker:*
  - (a) *claiming that the person has been adversely affected in reputation or in respect of dealings or associations with others ...*

It goes on to say:

*and if the Speaker is satisfied:*

- (c) *that the subject of the submission is not so obviously trivial or the submission so frivolous, vexatious or offensive in character as to make it inappropriate that it be considered by the Standing Orders Committee and*
- (d) *that it is practicable for the Standing Orders Committee to consider the submission under this resolution*

Finally I would like to say that Ms Tighe is not a racist; she is passionate and sticking up for the unborn, and that has nothing to do with racism.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, before I begin I express my sincere sympathies to the Member for Brennan, Mr Tony Sievers MLA. My thoughts are with you and your family at this very sad time you are experiencing with the passing of your mother.

I would like to inform the House of my travels over the last five weeks, since we sat at the beginning of May. From Darwin I travelled on Friday 12 May to Jabiru for the Kakadu Triathlon, which was held on the morning of Saturday 13 May. I am not extremely fond of having to rise early in the morning, but we were there at 6 am in the dark. There were many locals from Jabiru and the area, as well as visiting competitors and their supporters to cheer them on. It was fantastic to see a youth crew all the way from Ngukurr, another part of my electorate. There were 10 young people under the age of 12 who were there to compete in the triathlon kids' version. There was also five sport and recreation staff from Ngukurr community who partook in the triathlon, and it was fantastic to be able to cheer for them and support them.

I place on the record my congratulations to Mr John Hickey, the sport and recreation manager at Ngukurr, for his coordination to bring the youth and his staff to Jabiru for the event. Well done to Mr Hickey, his staff and the Ngukurr students who participated. It was great to see them on their bicycles, screaming out to me at 6 am; they were very excited.

I would also like to thank my electorate officer, Brooke Brenner, and her three-year-old son, Cash; my partner, Corey Charleson; and Mr Kerry Gardiner from the community engagement unit for their support at the event on Saturday.

Later that same evening on 13 May the NT Fire and Rescue Service held a cocktail party to celebrate its 75 years of service in the Northern Territory and the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jabiru fire station. An auction and raffle were held in the evening and this helped to fundraise for the Darwin Burns Unit, a very important unit and service in the Territory. The main entertainment for the evening was the Drag Territory. It is a business based in Darwin of very talented performers, drag queens, who entertained us for the evening in Jabiru. It was a fun night. Congratulations to the organisers for such a successful event. I am sure it would have been the talk of the town for most of the month.

The following week, on 15 and 16 May, I travelled to Numbulwar community to meet with constituents and to hold stakeholder meetings. The following day, 17 May, I travelled to Ngukurr community to attend the local authority meeting. I learned a lot. It was an extremely well-organised meeting. Congratulations to the Ngukurr local authority members and the community members who were there to partake in the local decision-making process.

After the LA meeting in Ngukurr I was fortunate enough to travel with the CEO of Yugul Mangi Aboriginal Corporation, Mr Bill Blackley, to visit the bridge being constructed over the Wilton River. The Wilton River bridge is nearing the end of its construction. It was fantastic to see that up close and personal. It is a crossing I have used for the last five years—probably for the last 32 years, even though I have not been driving for that long. Since I was young we have been using that crossing, so it is interesting to see the big investment in infrastructure there. I am very much looking forward to the opening of that bridge, hopefully later this year. Thank you, Mr Bill Blackley, for taking me to see some of his workers on that project.

The following evening I was back in Katherine, my new home town. I was able to attend a dinner with the Numbulwar, Ngukurr and Borrooloola women's basketball teams, who were on their way to the Daly River Sports Festival. It was fantastic to be invited along to speak and see some of those female sports stars on their way to the festival. I thank Mr Sam Nowicki, who is the Numbulwar sport and recreation manager, for his invitation to meet the three teams. I also thank the teams, who were travelling to the festival. It was great to see that cross-community travel, supporting a local community event.

Following on from that, the weekend of 20 May, the Mataranka Rodeo was held. This was my second rodeo ever. I get very nervous watching people jump onto the bulls and bucking horses. I am one of those people who ducks out of the way and closes my eyes. It was a fantastic event. About 2000 people attended in the small town of Mataranka, so it is wonderful to see that the region is being supported by people interested in having a fun Saturday night. It was very family friendly and a great event to attend.

The following day, on 21 May, was the Mataranka Never Never Festival. I congratulate the Mataranka residents, businesses and stakeholders for putting on a great event. I make special mention of Ms Wendy Tralaggan, who is the Mataranka Roadhouse business owner. I thank her for her hard work in coordinating the Mataranka Tourism Working Group. Her hard work and effort got the festival up and going this year. It has not run for a little while. Congratulations, Wendy and the rest of the team, for making that happen this year. I am looking forward to supporting next year's festival.

That same day I travelled from Mataranka to Katherine, grabbed some suitcases and headed up to Darwin and flew to Cairns with the Members for Namatjira and Arafura. The following day, on Monday 22 May, we flew from Cairns to Horn Island and then took a ferry across to Thursday Island in the beautiful Torres Strait Islands. It was my first visit there and it was a wonderful place to visit. We were not there for a holiday, unfortunately; we were there to work. We attended the Torres Strait Regional Authority and were involved in a presentation on behalf of the Northern Territory. We received a presentation from the Torres Strait Regional Authority regarding local decision-making and the system they use in the strait. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn, travel and network. That was part of my Aboriginal Affairs subcommittee of Cabinet co-chair role. The Member for Arafura also has a role as a member on that committee.

Unfortunately, it was a very short trip. The next day we travelled back from the Torres Strait Islands to Cairns and then to Darwin. Two days later I attended the Roper Gulf Regional Council and joint Victoria Daly Regional Council's Indigenous women's forum with the Member for Katherine. It was a pleasure to have both of us attending and speaking to the participants and organisers.

I was lucky to have a weekend at home, which I savour when I am in Katherine. That was a bit of rest during this busy period of travel.

On 30 May I was very fortunate to visit the Mulgga Town Camp in Mataranka with Minister McCarthy. I thank Minister McCarthy for putting that in his schedule and going to see the housing and discuss some of the concerns of overcrowding and essential services, which are both part of his portfolio responsibilities.

The next day in Katherine the Northern Land Council had their full council meeting. I attended with several of my colleagues, the Members for Stuart, Arafura, Katherine, Barkly and Johnston. It was wonderful to have a strong team there from the Northern Territory Government.

Straight after the NLC meeting I visited the Roper Gulf Regional Council Ordinary Meeting of Council. They were very impressed and happy that Minister McCarthy had visited Mulgga Town Camp and were interested to see what will happen with the town camp review once it is released.

On 1 June I visited Yurrawi community on behalf of the Minister for Education to attend the official opening ceremony of the language production centre. The original building was destroyed two years ago by Cyclone Lam. I acknowledge that the Member for Nhulunbuy was in attendance and I thank him for making me feel welcome in his community and his electorate.

The last bit of travel for me—I was able to visit Bulman, Gapuwiyak, Donydji homelands and Raymangirr homelands at the beginning of June, which was a fantastic trip, as well as the wonderful Barunga Festival on the Queen's Birthday weekend.

Thank you very much to the Barunga community for being open and welcoming and I look forward to attending next year at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Barunga Statement.

**Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that this week it is 10 years since the intervention. Ten years and we are still suffering the devastating effects of this invasion.

The breakdown of culture was swift as community leaders and elders were disempowered and painted as dysfunctional abusers and the assimilationist strategy of the government took over.

In the 1800s and the early 1900s Yolngu fought the invasion of pastoralists on our lands and we won. Many lives were lost, and some Yolngu were killed by poisoned horse meat that was given to them. These early invasions were difficult, but they left our culture intact. The invasion of 2007 is still killing many Yolngu. We are dying at a younger age as chronic disease is taking over our people. Cigarettes, drugs, alcohol takeaway foods and soft drinks became a new normal way of life.

Mental health issues are halting the strength of our people. Suicide is taking some of our young people. We now experience family violence. These issues were all evident post-colonialism, but our culture was still functioning strongly and our elders were in control.

Following the intervention these issues have almost crippled us and we are left fighting to cling onto our family and culture.

I was in Mililingimbi the day the police and the Army arrived by boat and barge with vehicles and equipment. People were shocked to see the Army arriving. They set up a tent outside the clinic and I was the first to be asked to work with them as an interpreter.

They took the children into a type of quarantine and, one by one, they weighed, measured and looked over the children, then asked them invasive and culturally inappropriate questions. They asked me to interpret questions such as, 'Have you had sex?' and 'Do you have a boyfriend or girlfriend?' I did not interpret these questions because Yolngu do not talk about this with children in this way; rather we do it through *raypirri*—imparting knowledge culturally: young men working with senior men, and young women working with senior women. We teach them to be responsible young leaders.

I felt uncomfortable with what I was being asked to do. This is not the way we bring up our children. The painting on the chest of the young boy at *dhapi* ceremony—circumcision—tells the story of respect. The singing of ceremony tells young men boundaries: do not put your hand in your mother's bag; do not look at *miyalk*—women—in the eyes; do not talk back or swear at your parents or elders; and more. We do not ask questions; we teach them.

I became worried about the questions being asked. In 2007 I was already a young leader, and these are not the questions that I should be asking. I was being used to undermine Yolngu culture, and I had to walk away.

This was just the beginning of the raft of changes that will devastate our culture, our lives and the future of our children. Over the past 10 years we have endured the following:

- blanket welfare quarantining
- the threat of fines and further welfare cuts for not attending school
- abuse of our children's minds in English only and Direct Instruction—schools are making our children dumber not smarter
- the threat of arbitrary acquisition of our community assets by government
- work for the dole branded Remote Jobs and Community Program
- the demand for leases in exchange for housing and basic infrastructure
- the rejection of Aboriginal customary law in court judgments of criminality
- the criminalisation of kava use
- the unregulated movement of strangers in our communities—the permit system that was once required to enter our land was removed.

We are now also subject to:

- continuous police presence with lower resourcing of legal aid
- the threat of a 99-year lease over our community or a new compulsory acquisition of land
- the slander of our culture
- we were daily subject to mainstream culture whereby outsiders assume superiority.

The intervention also saw a temporary investment in housing, yet homeland housing was defunded and some communities ended up with fewer total rooms than they began with. Our housing assets were also taken from us by government and are now controlled by government housing organisations.

Unbeknown to most, the intervention coincided with a raft of NT Government actions: the acquiring of assets away from community-controlled associations to create new regional councils; the destruction of bilingual or two-way education policies for English-only policies, and now Direct Instruction; the Growth Towns policy, which diverted almost all funding from homelands. Then the Northern Territory released the Wilson education review, calling for the closure of the remote high schools, threatening to force our young people into towns from 11 or 12 years old.

The result is that today our Madayin law and governance, handed to us by Djangkawu ancestors and Barama/Lany'tjun ancestors, is being pushed aside. The rest is our leaders, the lawmen and lawwomen, the Djirrikaymirr, the Dalkarrmirr and the Gong-ganmirr, our senior elders, are being disempowered. We are being left to become dependent and weak, forced to accept the priorities of outsiders. Where does this lead our young? The young are tempted to become like balanda—becoming without souls—or just fall away under the strain.

We did not agree to these laws. They have made everything worse. Our people are locked up at a rate of six times that of black men under apartheid South Africa. The youth detention centre in Darwin is 98% Indigenous.

**Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Sorry, Member for Nhulunbuy, but your time has expired. Maybe you can continue at the next sittings.

**Mr PAECH (Namatjira):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about a few wonderful events that have occurred in the great electorate of Namatjira since we last gathered in this place.



I want to highlight an event that happened on 7 June. I was able to travel with the honourable Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon, to Uluru and participate in an event being launched with Google Australia and the traditional owners from the Mutitjulu community.

I travelled to the township of Yulara to participate in an exciting program Google Australia had launched. They launched a Google Maps of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park. You are now able to logon to Google Maps and participate in an exciting street walk which takes you on a journey at the base of Uluru.

It tells wonderful stories in Pitjantjatjara by Sammy Wilson, a lovely man from the community of Mutitjulu. He talks and sings in his mother tongue of Pitjantjatjara around the stories and significance this great place plays in the lives of many Australians, particularly those of the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara region.

Google was working with the traditional owners on the project for about two years. Google collaborated with Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Anangu people and Parks Australia in conjunction with the Northern Territory Government to make this project a success.

Google was very careful to work with the traditional owners to make sure places of great significance and ceremony were not captured on Google Maps to respect the wishes of the traditional owners. If you logon to Google Street Maps it will take you on a fantastic journey. We were able to witness that firsthand at the venue at Uluru and at the reception at the Sounds of Silence, which is a beautiful place in the park where you are able to have dinner and look at the crystal clear skies at night. That event was very well received.

Jason Pellegrino, the Managing Director from Google, revealed the project with the traditional owners. We were happy to release that project and talk about the exciting benefits it would bring and its contribution to tourism. We know a lot of tourists cannot get to the region straight away, so this provides them with an opportunity to see how amazing places like that are in the Northern Territory.

I put on the record the phenomenal work and commitment of people in Mutitjulu like Dorothea Randall; Craig Woods; Daisy Walkabout; Sammy Wilson; Reggie Uluru; Sid Moore; and Peter Wilson. It is people like this who make communities strong and who continue to shine and highlight the work that is being done.

It was a great event. Thank you to Google Australia, particularly Sanjay for his work at Google Australia.

I will also touch on a few other events. We recently had the Tattersalls Finke Desert Race in Central Australia, and the Member for Braitling, Dale Wakefield; the Member for Casuarina, Lauren Moss; and the Member for Fannie Bay, Michael Gunner, all came down to share in the excitement and action that is the Finke Desert Race. We were fortunate to have them come and see the event.

I travelled with Senator Malarndirri McCarthy to Aputula Aboriginal Community, also known as Finke, where the buggies came through.

Congratulations to Damon Stokie, who was awarded the King of the Desert. It was a fantastic race, great for the local economy, and I am proud to support events like that. Whilst there, I opened the Aputula Aboriginal art local gallery and worked with the corporation there, which is a fantastic organisation. They have a board made up of strong women who drive projects in the community.

We had a sports carnival, where the Mutitjulu Cats played the Yuendumu Magpies. The Finke sports carnival is always an action-packed delight. I received a few lessons from some of the ladies there on how to play softball. Unfortunately I am a little uncoordinated, so I will leave that to the ladies, who played a fantastic match.

It was wonderful to see this event, which gives people the opportunity to get out into the regions, go camping and participate. I scrutineered on the Friday night, when we walked around inspecting the buggies and motorbikes.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Finke committee. It does an outstanding job and managed to pull together a significant race, the best rally outback race in the country. I am looking forward to working with the community and making sure we continue to have many more outstanding events like that in Central Australia. Hopefully we will have many more Finke Desert Races, because they are great events.

It is wonderful to see the riders of buggies and motorbikes make their way to Finke. It is the half-way mark. I heard on the grapevine that our very own Chief Minister may be in next year's Finke Desert Race, so if that is the case I will make sure I am there cheering him on. I think we will be backing a winner with that.

I want to touch on some comments made by the Member for Nhulunbuy this evening. I acknowledge the 10-year anniversary of the Northern Territory intervention, a program which has impacted the lives of my people, my family and people across the Northern Territory.

I acknowledge the work that many of our people have contributed in the last 10 years in standing up, calling out and working to highlight the impacts this has had on people in the Northern Territory. I am here tonight in support of them, to acknowledge their strength and resilience and not to be afraid to call it out.

There is a huge volume of work to be done and we are fortunate enough to be part of a Northern Territory Government which is working with communities to give them back the strong voice they need, the strong voice that was taken away by the Northern Territory intervention, which was forced down the throats of Territorians from John Howard's government.

I highlight the fantastic work of aunty Elaine Peckham, Marlene Hodder, aunty Barbara Shaw and Sylvia Neil, in Alice Springs for holding a vigil out the front of Senator Scullion's office yesterday to remember our loved ones who are no longer with us, who fought through that very hard time, and to acknowledge the work we have to do.

I am proud to be part of a government that is putting people on community at the front and centre to work with them and build strong communities for people right across the Northern Territory. Hopefully I can start to see these big, ugly, blue and white signs which label my people becoming a thing of the past. I am very much looking forward to working with communities not only in the great electorate of Namatjira, but for Aboriginal people right across the Northern Territory.

I stand here with you tonight to pay tribute and respect and acknowledge your resilience to get back up when times are tough. I offer you support; we are here, listening, and we are a government for you. We are a government for all Territorians and we will work to make sure that life is great for everyone in this great place that I am very privileged to call home.

I am sure I will have many more events to highlight the great work that is happening in the wonderful electorate of Namatjira.

**Ms AH KIT (Karama):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, being the last week of the school term, I want to talk a bit about the schools in the Karama electorate this evening.

I will start with O'Loughlin Catholic College. On Friday 12 May O'Loughlin Catholic College students participated in their annual big bike ride, where they raise funds for the Step Back Think campaign. The students started at O'Loughlin Catholic College at 7 am. It was a beautiful crisp morning and I met them right there to see them off.

The students headed out towards Howard Springs via the bike tracks on Vanderlin Drive, then onto McMillans Road track and along the bike route to the Howard Springs turnoff. They then turned around and headed back along the same track, this time heading past the school onto Leanyer Drive, onto VRD Drive and down Lee Point Road. They proceeded on the Casuarina Beach bike track around to the Rapid Creek bridge and continued up the foreshore along to the Nightcliff shops. From there they turned around and followed the same route back to the college for a 2.30 pm finish.

The big bike ride was a huge success again this year; there were 26 determined riders who conquered the 120 kilometre challenge and once again proved that if you set your mind to it and put in the effort, you can achieve anything.

A big congratulations to Gary Blackett, who was instrumental in supporting students and the school to organise this event. The enthusiasm of teachers, events supporters and teaching staff was wonderful and it was also fantastic to see teaching staff participate on the ride including Principal Rhett Bowden and Gary Blackett. It was also great to be joined by David Hardy and his daughter, Rebecca, to see off the riders at 7 am that morning.

Two weeks ago Manunda Terrace Primary School had their first ever pop-up playgroup inside the Karama Shopping Plaza. It was extremely well attended with lots of fun activities for the children as well as a free cup of coffee for the parents. It was a great event that helped to bring the centre to life, and I look forward to future pop-up events like this being held in the centre.

Last week Manunda Terrace Primary School had its annual sports day, with students participating in a variety of field events in the morning. The students then left the school and had a bit of a break before returning at 3 pm for their traditional twilight sports. A huge congratulations to house team Peary on coming first with 502 points, which were accrued by students for their participation throughout the day. The school council supported the event with a fundraising barbecue and I was happy to support them in their endeavours through a donation.

The Malak Re-Engagement Centre is transitioning to a fully-fledged school. On 2 June students from the MRC, as it is known, visited Parliament House with Karen Cieri, who is a backbone coordinator for the Sanderson Alliance. Karen spent a lot of time at the school recently, helping it during the transition, especially on the important task of helping to decide its name.

It was fantastic to be able to join the MRC for its open day last week and to be a part of the decision-making process. We got to discuss which name they preferred. There were two options: Malak Re-Engagement Centre or MRC Flexi-School. I actually left before the decision was made so I cannot wait to see which name they went with.

Tomorrow afternoon, on 23 June, Holy Family Catholic School will hold its annual dance-a-thon, which is the school's biggest fundraiser for the school each year. The dance-a-thon is eagerly anticipated by students and is a great event which helps to promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. I was proud to support this event through a donation of fresh fruit. I hope the students enjoy that. I hope they have a great night and have a lot of success with the school's fundraising.

On Monday I was proud to supply Sanderson Middle School with my end-of-term literacy awards. I was unable to be there in person due to the Estimates Hearings, but I thank my colleague Kate Worden, the Member for Sanderson, for awarding the certificates on my behalf.

It important to note that the Member for Sanderson and I are working as a team to look after Sanderson Middle School, because although it sits in her electorate of Sanderson, a lot of the students from the four primary schools in my area attend that school. It is great to have that partnership and for the school to have two levels of support.

The end-of-term assemblies are my favourite days because it is fantastic to see great work rewarded. The Member for Sanderson and I are wary, as we are missing the Sanderson Middle School's annual Sanderson Shines event as we speak. It started at 5.30 pm and I hope everybody is enjoying themselves. This annual event is an opportunity for the school and the community to engage and showcase the talents of the students. Primary school students from the Sanderson and the Karama areas are also invited to perform on the night and attend with their families. The event was first held in 2014 and it has been a huge success over the past years. The Member for Sanderson and I attended last year. There have been over 500 people in attendance each year. Congratulations to all of the organisers and I hope everyone is having a great time.

Huge congratulations to the Malak Preschool team and Ms McCarthy for achieving a mark of exceeding the national quality standards rating in the 2017 Malak Preschool assessment. This means they have demonstrated a very high-quality early education experience for our preschool students. There are only two other preschools in the Darwin area that have achieved this recognition. I thank the entire Malak Preschool team and staff.

Last Wednesday on 14 June was the Malak Primary School annual athletics carnival under the beautiful Dry Season sky. There was a great turnout with many parents, families and carers in attendance. The school community also enjoyed a barbecue hosted by Save the Children. On 5 June, Years 5 and 6 students had an incredible experience at Batchelor Camp. I am sure the Member for Arnhem has attended the Batchelor Camp; it is tradition. It was fantastic because they got to do all of the activities that we did. They made damper and participated in archery, whip-cracking, rock climbing, the high ropes, the low ropes and the flying fox. I am sure all the kids enjoyed themselves.

Karama Primary School hosted its sports day last week. Mulga, the purple house, were the winners of the day with the highest number of points being awarded to the students for their participation. Whips, which is the red house, won the spirit cup. Overall, everyone was a winner and it was great to see that all the students were keen to participate and to cheer each other on.

I just would like to touch on NAIDOC Week, as it is fast approaching. It commences on Sunday 2 July and runs through to Sunday 9 July. The theme for this year is Our Language Matters. NAIDOC Week is an

annual week where all Territorians are encouraged to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to celebrate our history, culture and achievements, and it is a highlight for me every single year.

I am pleased to learn that the traditional custodians of the greater Darwin region, the Larrakia people, will once again host the flag raising ceremony to officially open the week as well as the family day. They did a fantastic job with these events last year through the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and aunty Trish Kurnoth, and I have no doubt they will do so once again.

I am also pleased to hear that the Juninga aged care centre will be able to host its annual NAIDOC Week luncheon for the residents. For those who do not know, Juninga aged care is our only aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander seniors in the Northern Territory. Lyn Duckworth and her team do an amazing job to care for our most vulnerable, and it is such a heart-warming experience to see the joy on residents' faces every year at the annual event.

I spent seven years on the Darwin/Top End NAIDOC Committee as a volunteer who worked as part of a team, often a small team, to deliver a week full of events for the community. As a committee member I learned a lot about leadership, respect and inclusion, as well as the importance of remembering that the focus of the week is to bring smiles and joy to everyone's faces and to bring everyone together to celebrate our achievements, history and culture.

I look forward to joining upcoming NAIDOC Week celebrations and finding out about the other events planned for the Darwin region.

**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Before I start my adjournment I would like to reiterate the Member for Nhulunbuy's adjournment and the message you delivered during your adjournment, Mr Deputy Speaker. Ten years ago the events of the intervention left another blight on our history. It was a failure to listen and a refusal to speak with community members that has been a lasting hallmark of the intervention. Every member here works very hard and is striving to ensure that does not happen again.

This has been an eventful week for me, personally and professionally. After spending 11 hours in estimates on Monday I arrived home and was told of the death of my uncle, Adelino Tinoco.

Tio Adelino was diagnosed with Alzheimer's several years ago. For his family, swapping the roles of caring for someone who always cared for them must have been so disorienting during those first years. I can only imagine that some part of them was ripped apart as they watched the daily losses that Tio Adelino suffered as he slowly slipped away.

Yet as devastating as Alzheimer's is, their family managed to grasp every bit of life, hope and love that was possible. This very close-knit, loving, caring, affectionate family took advantage of every day and each moment they had with Tio Adelino.

Tio Adelino was also a very close friend of my father's. They grew up together in Timor, attended each other's weddings and supported one another through the civil war in Timor and their new lives in Australia as refugees.

Tio Adelino was also the grandfather of young Alex Skopellos, who is a member of the security team here at Parliament House.

Tio had a loud and contagious laugh; I will miss hearing that.

Last night I also received a message that my very good friend, neighbour and long-term Katherine resident James 'Jimmy' Bitossi passed away. Jimmy's wife, Moragh, sent a message saying:

*Jimmy held out to hear the final score for the State of Origin before he left us peacefully. He is at peace and not in pain.*

My friend Jimmy battled cancer for two years. I spoke of my friend Jimmy and his wife Moragh during my inaugural speech on 18 October. On that day I said:

*To my wonderful neighbours, Jim and Moragh Bitossi, who fed me dinner every Wednesday night, provided me with a safe space to be myself, advised and guided me, and whose support and encouragement was unwavering, I can never convey the depth of my thanks.*

Jimmy was an active member of our community. He served on several committees, volunteered with several community organisations and was registered with NT Friendship and Support as a respite carer. In his early years in Katherine he owned his own business. In his later years he volunteered as a mentor for high school students at risk of disengaging.

There will be no more afternoon visits; no more cuppas; no more Wednesday night knocks on the back door with a, 'What is for dinner, Jimmy?' from me; no more, 'Hang in there, babe, you will be fine' from Jimmy; and no more heated debates over politics.

My friend Jimmy was grouchy at times. He was staunchly conservative in politics, a stirrer, brutally honest, opinionated, funny, very clever, at times he was self-centred and, most definitely, he was spoiled rotten by all who loved him. Jimmy was compassionate, caring and there were times when I am sure I liked him much more than he liked me, a lot of which had to do with our difference in politics. I will miss his company in more ways than I can describe. His death will leave a void in Katherine and in my life.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for allowing me speak about these two great men who, in their own very unique way, left a lasting and positive impact on my life; I will miss them both.

**Ms MOSS (Casuarina):** Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I wish to show respect to Mr Max Davidson, a great Northern Territory character and pioneer of the tourism industry, who passed away on Sunday 4 June 2017 on the Gold Coast. Max began his love of the Territory as a safari guide and buffalo hunter, and is renowned for helping to capture Sweetheart, the Territory's most legendary crocodile.

Max established Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris at Mount Borradaile, West Arnhem Land, more than 30 years ago, and he was invited onto the property in 1986 by the traditional owner, Mr Charlie Munguda. Charlie asked Max to set up a tourist camp at Mount Borradaile to ensure the protection and care of the land the way his family and ancestors had been doing for thousands of years. Mount Borradaile is a registered sacred site and boasts what is considered the richest body of Aboriginal rock art in the world, with thousands of rock paintings documenting 50 000 years of Aboriginal habitation, including the iconic six-metre-long rainbow serpent.

Over the years the original two tent camp has evolved to become a world-class wilderness lodge with a high level of unique tours and accommodation in 20 bush facing tropical cabins. Max's passion for the land and his respect for the Aboriginal culture are evident in the educational and experiential tours his company operates. The tours share the story of the land and its people with visitors, giving them an understanding of Aboriginal culture and appreciation of the landscape and how Aboriginal people have lived in harmony with their environment for thousands of years. The tours are also run in a manner to ensure minimal impact on the environment.

Max was involved with the training of local Aboriginal people as accredited tour guides, a process he believed would ultimately lead to full Aboriginal ownership and management of tourism facilities and activities at Mount Borradaile. Together with his former wife, Philippa, Max worked tirelessly for the benefit of the entire tourism industry in the Northern Territory for many years, working closely with other tourism operators and attending countless trade and consumer shows in Australia and overseas. His achievements were recognised by the four NT Tourism Brolga Awards and the 1997 Australian Tourism Award for heritage and cultural tourism, won by Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris over the years.

His personal contribution to developing the NT tourism industry was recognised with an Outstanding Contribution by an Individual award and then by the Northern Territory Tourism Ministers perpetual trophy, the big bird Brolga, in 2012.

Max passed away surrounded by his wife and family after a battle with brain cancer, and my condolences go to his wife Kay, his children Diana and Lee and to the Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris family, headed by Mr Ray Curry.

His passing will be felt with great sadness from the industry and industry colleagues, not just in the Northern Territory but from across Australia and the international tourism sector, who got to know and respect him.

**Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, on Tuesday evening it was a pleasure, as a member of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Committee for the Northern Territory, to be part of an awards ceremony at Government House. This is my first such ceremony, and another is happening right now while we are

standing in this House. I had the great honour of speaking on behalf of the committee during the evening and celebrating the tremendous achievements of our bronze, silver and gold awardees.

As a committee we make a point of acknowledging their efforts because we know it is not easy for the Duke of Edinburgh awardees to complete. There are a lot of distractions in the world today brought to us by the Internet and our busy lives, and while we try hard to focus and succeed at something, whether we are teenagers or adults, it is always nice to know people have noticed. The awards take place to assure the awardees that other people know and appreciate how much effort it took them to get there. Each awardee has to undertake many months, if not years, of commitment and activity and learned a lot of new things like time management, planning and organising. There is also lots of boring logging of activity, which is really tedious.

What is exciting is that these young people may have had other challenges and changes to opt out, but they kept going through to completion. The committee hopes they will all continue to challenge themselves, whether it be through going on to the next awards or doing other activities that help them to develop their self-awareness. A big congratulations to all the awardees.

We hear so often about the negative things that some young people do in our community, so it is great that these young people are helping to raise the profile of the important contributions our young people are making to the Territory.

The ceremony was also to acknowledge all those who worked hard in the background to create a nurturing and supporting environment for the Duke's participants to thrive. As a member of the committee I am thankful that successive governments continue to prioritise Duke's, enabling them to reach more young people in the Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs areas. As a committee, we see endless potential for the way the program can be utilised in urban, rural and regional NT, and we hope to continue the good work of growing this program with our partners.

We only had one gold awardee on the night, which was Mr Liam Ward. A gold award takes about two to three years to achieve and is a big commitment, in addition to things like school, part-time jobs and friends. Liam gained his gold award through dedicating himself to the sport of kick boxing, gaining his first aid certificate and then mentoring entry-level participants within the Junior Police Rangers program. Liam also volunteered at two consecutive Variety camps for kids with special needs. Well done to Liam.

I will not have time this evening to speak about all the individual activities and achievements of all the awardees, but I will name them so they know they are appreciated and truly recognised for their efforts.

The silver awardees were: Ocea Albanesi; Braeden Parnell; Beau Thomas, who is the son of my good friends Georgia and Danny; Jemma Martin and Riley Linklater.

The bronze awardees were: Aliyah Kuo; Grace Modoh; Tifaine Haansbergen; Theodoros Kathopoulos; Georgios Kourmoulis, Luke Secrett; Matthew Eakins; Abbey Chalker; Jemima Fernandes; Leighton Scott; Sharia Moore; Tyrone Nona; Jason Davern; Daniel Thomson; Don James; Brian Cooper-Kenyon; Kshuan Rivers; Corey Rivers; Jacob Reid; Ethan Bara; Jacob Long; and Isabel Blundell.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is 28 fabulous young Territory people doing great things across our community. I know we all continue to be inspired by their dedication, as much as we are inspired by the efforts of our youth.

Finally, a big thank to the families of these wonderful young people for the support they give them.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.