



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

REPORT

Tuesday 15 June 2021
Wednesday 16 June 2021
Thursday 17 June 2021
Monday 21 June 2021
Tuesday 22 June 2021
Wednesday 23 June 2021
Thursday 24 June 2021

The Estimates Committee examined the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill (2021-2022), the Financial Integrity and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021, and the Statements of Corporate Intent 2021-2022 for the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation. Questions were raised by some Members on the following issues:

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
Chief Minister (Independent Officers)	<p><i>Auditor-General</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact of machinery of government changes on audits• Charles Darwin University audits• NTAGO appropriation and audit cost recovery• Proportion of work related to performance audits• Review of the COVID-19 Financial Report under the <i>Public Information Act 2010</i>• COVID-19 Financial Supplementary Report• Job creation performance audit findings• Agency staffing• Management of staff absences and long service leave <p><i>NT Electoral Commission</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NTEC support provided in local government elections• Vetting of staff in regional local government elections• Local government election fee for service model• 2020 Election Report recommendations• Candidate public funding model• Candidate accommodation and travel expenditure• Programs to increase voter enrolment <p><i>ICAC</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reports produced• Tender conflict of interest• Investigation of matters that do not meet ICAC threshold• Appointment of Deputy ICAC Commissioner• Costs for a Deputy Commissioner

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p>Chief Minister (Independent Officers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters referred to alternative bodies • ICAC Inspector investigations • Parliamentary privilege • Expenditure on contracts <p><i>Ombudsman</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints by category • FOI applications • Judicial Commission
<p>Treasurer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget back casting • Revoted programs • Infrastructure program budget • Budget repair • Capital works program • Projected net debt • GST forecast • Net debt to revenue ratio • Legislated debt ceiling • Debt ceiling exclusions and breaches • Langoulant report and recommendations • Moody's credit rating • Daily interest repayments • COVID-19 expenditure • State final demand • Own source revenue • Cost of Langoulant Report • Expected revenue from park fees • Examples of revenue retained by agencies • NTPS wages policy and enterprise bargaining • Public service wage freeze • Treasurer's Advance • Efficiency dividends • Sale of Land Titles Office • Petroleum royalties • Funding for economic recovery in Central Australia • Cost and impact of community service obligations • Mining royalties • Cost of administering royalties scheme • NT Beverages outstanding debt to NT Government • Availability of land to purchase in Alice Springs • Home Builder and Build Bonus initiatives • Stamp duty concession • Awarding of contracts for superannuation and actuarial reviews • Superannuation liability • Cost of electricity in Tennant Creek • Freedom of information requests and responses

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p>Chief Minister</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre for National Resilience • Border control • Territory Controller and COVID-19 decision making • Controlling crime • Treaty Commissioner • People Matters Survey • 'Inspiring Women to Become Leaders' conference • Research service for Independent Members • Complaints about ICAC • New Major Projects and Investment Commissioners positions • Luxury Hotel • Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility • Media unit • Major project status of Tennant Creek Gold • Local Jobs Fund • Sun Cable • Jervois Copper • Arafura Resources • Project Sea Dragon • Neptune Energy • Status of Darwin Data Centre project • Status of Senior Lifestyle Villages project • Responding to enquiries from the NT Independent • Budget allocation for media and protocol units • Media unit KPIs
<p>Health</p> <p>National Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 testing regime at quarantine facility • Testing turnaround timeframes • Risks associated with COVID-19 self-testing and mitigation strategies • Community confidence with operation of Howard Springs facility • Numbers being repatriated to Darwin per week • Use of Darwin International Airport for repatriation flights • Vaccination program rollout • Vaccination community education and engagement • Number of people vaccinated and breakdown by region • Capacity of remote clinics to store and administer COVID-19 vaccines • Vaccine wastage • Vaccination target • Vaccination clinics • ICU bed capacity for COVID-19 patients • Availability of ventilators in the NT • Howard Springs quarantine facility staffing • Accommodation for Department of Health workers • Contract with Quest hotel

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p style="text-align: center;">Health</p> <p style="text-align: center;">National Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danila Dilba funding • Community control of health services • Department of Health restructure • Wastewater testing • COVID-19 testing cost and Medicare rebates • Use of private pathology testing clinics • Testing capacity and contingency plans • Environmental health incidents • Rheumatic heart disease • Diabetes prevention and education • Kidney disease and dialysis funding • RDH emergency department • RDH bed capacity and shortage • RDH patient flow • Mental health inpatient facilities • Mental health presentations • Alcohol and other drug services in remote communities • Synthetic cannabis • Upgrades to BDR scanners • Alcohol-related offences • Alcohol-related harm • Reduction of remote health clinic services • Staff shortages in remote communities • Recruitment of health staff from overseas • Assaults on hospital staff • Telehealth services • Hospital staff overtime costs • Remote medical staff turnover • Remote medical staff vacancy rates • Medical misdiagnosis complaints • Hospital code yellow incidents • Hospital FTE staff • Patient transfers between Darwin and Palmerston hospitals • Cardiac patient interstate transfers • Specialist training programs • Wages cap on Department of Health • Number of executive contract officers
<p style="text-align: center;">Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and engagement strategy • School attendance at remote schools • Shared funding arrangements with federal government • Schools to benefit from increased federal funding • Emergency management responsibilities • Expenditure on government education • Number of teaching and administrative staff • Number of schools awaiting upgrades

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance rates and engagement strategy • Number and location of engagement and compliance officers in each region • Impact of COVID-19 on remote schools • School based counsellor vacancies • Initiatives to support Aboriginal people to become teachers • Number of principals drawn from the local community • Number of teachers receiving the housing subsidy • Funding for NT Engagement Strategy • Families as First Teachers program • KITES program • Child and family centre in Alice Springs Town Camps • Preschool enrolments • Preschool expenditure • Primary school principal vacancies, recruitment and separations • Primary school teacher recruitment and separations • Tennant Creek school VET and NTCE options • School of the Air home tutors • Katherine High School staffing • Katherine flexible learning centre • Housing subsidy for teachers in Katherine • Katherine High School attendance rates • Funding to CDU • Get Set Go program • Funding to non-government schools • Financial support for boarding school students • Infrastructure upgrades to Yuendumu school • Vehicles at Yuendumu school • Transportable classrooms • School rooftop solar program • Building better schools program • Aboriginal employees • Special measures recruitment
Renewables and Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable energy program changes • Hydrogen masterplan investment • Alice Springs Future Grid • Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy • Renewable energy targets • Solar energy strategy • Darwin-Katherine Renewables Plan • Remote power system strategy
Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure program • Repairs and maintenance budget • Machinery of government changes • Staffing levels

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p style="text-align: center;">Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development and recruitment • Tennant Creek office staffing • Infrastructure Commissioner • Infrastructure Commissioner office budget • Procurement and tender processes • East Arnhem infrastructure projects • Revoted appropriation • National Aboriginal art gallery • Barkly infrastructure works • TIO Stadium • Homeland schools infrastructure funding • Industrial land availability in Alice Springs • Road upgrades in Alice Springs • ANZAC Parade upgrade • Maryvale Road upgrade • Myilly Point Playground • State Square carpark • Civic and State Square revitalisation project • Alice Springs Youth Justice Centre • Boat ramp funding • Bullocky Point Museum • Cost of Heat Mitigation Review • Cavenagh Street shade structure • Coolalinga and Howard Springs infrastructure plans • Upgrade to Deep Well Station Road • Implementation of ten year infrastructure plan • Buy Local Plan • 2016 pre-election school infrastructure commitment • Aboriginal Land Use Agreements • Stevens Road property purchase • Cost of tender delays • Mount Johns • Asbestos in government buildings • Borroloola township lots • Middle Arm precinct • Residential build approvals • Planning for Weddell • Crown land leases • Agriculture business hub • Defence land • Larrakia Cultural Centre • Development of Katherine East Centre • Richardson Park redevelopment • Relocation of Indo Pacific Marine • Weed control on crown land

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p>Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jabiru redevelopment plan • Director of Building Control • Turf Club building compliance • Integrated Land Information System subscribers • Building certification of NTG owned and occupied buildings • Cost of security on public buses • Public transport antisocial incidents • Taxi regulation and licence caps • Review of taxi industry • Tennant Creek MVR • Cattle road train wash down areas • Maintenance of roads for Finke Desert Race • Weddell Highway • Sea Link ferry facility • Roadworks in the Carpentaria and Beetaloo programs • Humpty Doo Access Road • Tiwi Islands integrated passenger transport strategy • Investment strategy • Central Arnhem highway upgrades and expenditure
<p>Environment Water Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrows project • Water pipeline at Middle Arm • Gamba grass and army • Magpie geese
<p>Police, Fire and Emergency Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency dividend • Commissioner's role as Territory Controller • Crime statistics and impact of COVID-19 • Alcohol-related violence and crime • Expenditure of alcohol-related crime budget • Alcohol policy • Addressing secondary supply of alcohol • Access to alcohol in remote communities • Re-instatement of liquor inspectors • Police attrition rates • Exit interview participation • Separations by rank • Number of recruits this financial year • Impact of Constable Rolfe trial on police service morale • Location of this year's police recruits • Psychometric testing of police force applicants • Unsatisfactory completion of probation for police officers • Probationary period extensions • Police training college • Police staffing • Overtime budget and expenditure • Operation of Humpty Doo police station

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p>Police, Fire and Emergency Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural area staffing and vehicles • Rural areas PROMIS reports • Number of assaults on police • Serious breach of bail youth offences • Youth bail breaches • Youth bail conditions • Ringleader legislation arrests and sentences • Victims of Crime survey • Arrests by Strike Force Viper and Strike Force Trident • Complaints against police • Disciplinary action • Border controls • Nhulunbuy airport COVID-19 safety measures • Nhulunbuy township CCTV • Cultural awareness and language training for remote police • Investigation into leaks to the NT Independent • Cost of Nightcliff Police Station • Location of missing police firearms • Incorrectly issued speeding fines • Sexual assault cases involving people under 16 • Staffing of remote police stations • Freedom of Information requests and document redaction • Housing for remote police officers • Remote police language and cultural education
<p>Agribusiness and Aquaculture</p> <p>Mining and Industry</p> <p>Northern Australia and Trade</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department restructure • Major Projects and Investment Commissioners • Development of onshore gas in Beetaloo Basin • Strategic Regional Environmental and Baseline Assessments • Mines in production phase • Investment environment • Budget allocation to establish Minerals Taskforce • On farm quarantine arrangements • Preparation for mango season • Overseas mango workers • Cotton industry • Live cattle export industry • Permits to use 1080 for wild dogs • Cost to cattle industry of wild dog attacks • Reduction in research services budget • Fishing permits • Local Jobs Fund • Mineral Industry Development Strategy • Appropriation for legacy mines • Exploration mining permits • Mining management plans approval timeframes

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mine remediation fund • Mine waste characterisation assessments
<p>Territory Families and Urban Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the age of criminal responsibility • CARE system • Community work programs in Alice Springs • Community work orders • Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Teams • Alternatives to detention for young people • Police diversion • Family responsibility agreements • Victim/offender conferencing • Establishment of Community Accountability Boards • Early intervention and diversion camps • Youth camps on country • Review of Alice Springs Youth Hub • Young people on the streets of Alice Springs at night • NDIS • Worker clearance cards for NDIS • Number of families seeking support • Child protection hotline • FACES hotline • Child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations • Number of child protection cases • Average child protection case load per case manager • Turnover of case managers in the department • Number of staff that have taken stress leave • Children in care not attending school • Children in CEO's care • Out of home care • Out of home care placement types • Relocation of out of home care residences • Number of Aboriginal children removed from home • Kinship care placements • Number of children transitioned out of foster or kinship care • Breaking the Cycle of Crime initiative • Detainee assaults on staff in youth detention centres • Detainee assaults on detainees in youth detention centres • Staff time lost due to assaults • Riot equipment for youth detention centre staff • Budget for Alice Springs youth detention centre • Budget for new youth justice facility in Darwin • Tennant Creek domestic, family and sexual violence services • Domestic, family and sexual violence services provided • Women's safe houses operated by Territory Families • Unoccupied housing stock across the Territory

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p>Territory Families and Urban Housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting time for public housing in Alice Springs • Upgrades to public housing complexes • Housing maintenance call centre • Number of evictions from public and urban housing • Red card system • Public housing safety officers • Complaints regarding public housing • Number of public housing relocations • Frequency of rent assessments
<p>Corporate and Digital Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff transfers due to machinery of government changes • Payroll compliance • Implementation of Auditor-General Recommendations concerning incorrect superannuation payments • Responding to payroll requests • Payroll complaints register • Trainee programs • NTG jobs online portal • Applications to purchase goods and services outside of the NT • Contracts awarded to Territory and non-Territory businesses • Buy Local Plan • Number of audits into procurement actions • Improvements to NTG record management system • Cost of changes to record management systems • Rectifying TRM issues and associated cost • Accessing of TRM records • TRM data breaches recorded by the department • Data breaches across NTG IT platforms • Finance services division training sessions to other agencies • Increase in budget to property leasing services • NT Fleet • ICT resources and FIFOs • Property leasing services budget increase • Use of expertise from outside of the Territory • Funding for Banned Drinkers Register • Systemic outages of the BDR • Upgrades to BDR due to new licences • BDR scan failures • Update on replacement of PROMIS system • Reports on lost time incidents in the work health and safety reporting system • Figtree system • Cost of Territory Check In app • Liquor licence app • Decrease of the digital projects budget • Can-do Territory

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
<p>Corporate and Digital Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4G coverage and regional connectivity • Telecommunications advocacy • Phone tower at King Ash Bay • Alice Springs and rural broadband connectivity • Tiwi Islands connectivity • Budget for telecommunications co-investment program • Executive contracts by level and cost • IT systems due for replacement or upgrade • New Data Centre facility
<p>Sport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cancellation of AFL matches due to COVID-19 • NT AFL team • Stadium of dreams
<p>Small Business Jobs and Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence Industry budget • Veterans' affairs funding • Advisory Council for Veterans' Affairs • AFANT grant for 50k Hole access route • Fishing permit negotiations • Recreational fishing grants scheme • Manbulloo station access route • Coastal waters recreational fishing • Reducing red tape • Can-do online portal • Buy Local Advocate • Procurement • Territory Assurance Framework • COVID-19 stimulus packages • Impact of crime on small businesses • Decrease in budget for Biz Secure grants • Limitations on the Work, Stay, Play initiative • Number of grant packages paid out • Number of businesses requiring qualified staff due to COVID-19 • Alfresco dining fees • Home Improvement Scheme • Access to overseas workers • Skilled migrants • Fees for online visa applications • CDU training centre for aged care • Impact of changes to Christmas holidays for small business • Apprenticeships • Jobs Hub and Jobs Board • Buy Local Advocate complaints
<p>Public Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTPS Code of Conduct and Chief Executive Officers • Consequences for noncompliance with code of conduct • Consequences for CEOs not meeting budget or performance requirements

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalties for agency heads for breaching <i>Financial Management Act</i> • Accountability for senior staff • Management of breaches of code of conduct • Impact of COVID-19 on responses to People Matters Survey • Employee voice and the role of senior managers • Reporting of bullying incidents
<p style="text-align: center;">Attorney-General and Justice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime Victims Services unit budget • Victims of crime compensation • Recruitment of new Chief Executive Officer • Recruitment of new Director and Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions • Staffing separations in the office of the DPP • Status of Commissioner of Correctional Services • Recruitment of General Manager for Alice Springs Correctional Centre • Staff on higher duties • Status of Aboriginal Justice Agreement • Review of ICAC legislation • Number of employees working on the Aboriginal Justice Agreement • Alternatives to prison • Community custody orders • Reduction in budget for independent officers • Efficiency dividend for independent officers • Reduction in budget for electronic monitoring • Budget reduction for legal policy output • Budget reduction for community corrections • Solicitor-General funding and staffing • Legal proceedings against the NTG departments and employees • Proceedings brought against government by youth detainees • Actions pending regarding <i>Minerals Royalty Act</i> • National Redress Scheme • Proceedings against NTG by Wadeye residents • Legal matters outsourced to local and interstate law firms • <i>Youth Justice Amendment Act 2021</i> • Review of penalties for property offences • Review of ICAC legislation • Review of Victims of Crime legislation • Review of Residential Tenancies legislation • NT Law Reform Committee mandatory sentencing review • Review of penalties for assaulting police • Submissions received on Aboriginal Justice Agreement • Staffing in Aboriginal Justice Unit • Budget for legal assistance

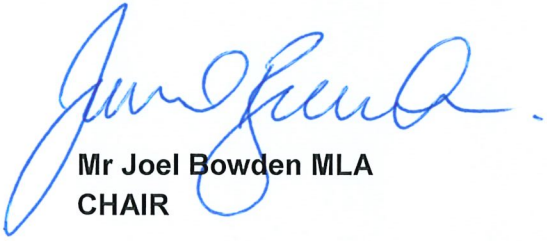
PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
Attorney-General and Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for specialist women’s legal services • NT and Commonwealth funding for NAAJA • Provision of non-financial assistance to legal services • Training to support specialist domestic violence court in Alice Springs • Funding to legal services for risk management • Amount of compensation recovered from offenders • Number of Victims of Crime applications • Publication of crime statistics over ten year period • Role of Criminal Justice Research and Statistics Unit • Recidivism rates in the NT • Costs associated with incident at Darwin Correctional Centre • Overview of damages to Darwin Correctional Centre • Impact of damages on services to prisoners • Prosecutions as a consequence of the Darwin Correctional Centre incident • Assaults on corrections staff • Corrections staff overtime • Status of KPMG report • Strategic review of correctional services • Correctional officer vacancies • Budget for court transport and hospital visits • Prison transport and escort expenditure • Community Justice Centre budget allocation
Treaty and Local Decision Making Aboriginal Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints about the Treaty Commissioner • Investigation into the Treaty Commissioner • Role of Minister for Treaty and Local Decision Making • Aboriginal Interpreter Service funding
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Reconstruction Commission • Local authority projects • Alice Springs CBD revitalisation project • Alice Springs National Aboriginal Art Gallery • Rugby ovals at Anzac Hill site • Establishing a National Aboriginal Cultural Centre • Establishment of ministerial offices in Alice Plaza • Burial and Cremation Bill • Regional development projects • Repurposing of grant funding provided to LGANT • Number of projects funded under the Local Government Infrastructure fund • Southport bores • Incidence of and threats posed by Ehrlichiosis virus • Scale project • Electronic voting • Mobile voting stations

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government reforms • Changes to council boundaries • Amalgamation of Coomalie and Belyuen Councils
<p>Remote Housing and Town Camps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer of staffing and funding under machinery of government changes • Relocation of housing staff • Housing staffing and vacancies • Home Build program • Revoted funding • Remote housing stimulus packages • Overcrowding in remote communities • Room to Breathe additional rooms • Tenancy management systems • Additional rooms in homelands • Remote housing contractor non-compliance • Public safety officers • Public housing waitlists in remote communities and homelands • Housing reference groups • New houses in Northeast Arnhem • Additional housing in Wadeye and Peppimenarti • Value of uncollected rent for remote housing • Rent reform processes • Recovery of outstanding rent • Repairs and maintenance • Contracts awarded to Aboriginal Business Enterprises • Level of funding provided to Tangentyere Council • Homelands policy • Homelands review recommendations • Elliott St public housing units • Returning stock to public housing to increase the bedroom capacity in communities • Additional housing on town camps • Increasing Indigenous employment through training and development • Government employee housing
<p>Indigenous Essential Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water security • Bonyan Outstation in Namatjirra Electorate • Water metering • Electricity monitoring and outages • Santa Teresa Oval • Creating green spaces in remote communities
<p>Arts, Culture and Heritage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Indigenous Cultural Centre • State Square gallery design consultation • MAGNT funding

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
Power and Water Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation expenditure growth • Shareholder dividends • Gas projections • Gas pipeline and flow • Projects delayed • Potential future projects • Developing new gas pipelines • IT transformation program • Service cost per customer • Delays to solar projects • Plans to catch up on scheduled works • Upgrades to substations • Increased need for electricity across the grid • Percentage of solar into the grid • Impact of solar on the stability of the grid • Solar forecasting and spinning reserve • Liability relating to incorrect metering • Katherine PFAS facility • Replacement of faulty water meters • Cost of settling legal matters • Treatment of water in remote communities • GTNT trainees and apprenticeships
Jacana Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to forecast in earnings • Electricity providers • Profit and Nett debt figures • Reduction in cost to serve • Net Promoter Score • Back billing due to incorrect metering • Expenditure on interstate and Territory consultants • Tender for Website Development Services • Procurement processes • Number of billing complaints received year to date • Complaints raised with the Ombudsman's Office • Billing processes • E-billing • Number of Jacana employees • Staff turnover at contact centre • Community Service Obligation • Electricity sourced from solar energy • Electricity consumption • Cost of producing paper bills
Territory Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in future capital expenditure • Investment in renewable energy • Implementation of recommendations regarding System Black in Alice Springs

PORTFOLIO	AREAS OF QUESTIONING
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar forecasting • Capacity of Owen Springs power station • Alice Springs peak usage • Timeframe for decommissioning Ron Goodin power station • Reason for blackouts at Alice Springs airport and rural area • Decommissioning of power station generators • Cost to keep Ron Goodin power station operational • Cost to keep Owen Springs power station operational • Number of employees at Ron Goodin and Owen Springs power stations • Budget to address smell and noise of Ron Goodin power station • Operation of large turbine at Ron Goodin power station • Cost of additional battery for Alice Springs • Retirement of Channel Island generators • Cost of extending the life of generators at Channel Island • TGen modelling and transition plan • Retirement of generators at Channel Island • Size of battery required at Channel Island • Capacity of battery in Alice Springs • Retirement of generators at Tennant Creek power station • Overall capacity of Tennant Creek power station • Peak demand in Tennant Creek • Cost of electricity supply to Pine Gap Defence facility • Establishment of additional generators at Yulara • Fuel efficiency savings • Policy on load shedding in Alice Springs
<p style="text-align: center;">Chief Minister (Speaker)¹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning of Member for Blain's photograph in the main hall • Recruitment process for new Clerk • Delays in responses to Written Questions • Number and breakdown of Executive Contract Officers • Cost of settling legal matters • Budget for unplanned activities • Budget to complete installation of audio-visual equipment • ICT systems due for replacement or upgrading • Responsibility for the purchase of flags • Cost of claims for damaged vehicles • Number of Hybrid and electric vehicles • Number of Freedom of Information requests • Incidence and cost of damage to electorate offices

¹ Under the Administrative Arrangements Order responsibility for the Department of the Legislative Assembly lies with the Chief Minister. However, the Speaker appeared before the Committee to take questions regarding the Department.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joel Bowden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Mr Joel Bowden MLA
CHAIR**

Dissenting report of the Estimates Committee: Mr Bill Yan MLA

In April 2019 the final Langoulant report into NT Budget Repair recommended legislating a debt ceiling to boost accountability and transparency in the Territory's budget process and to curb Labor's reckless spending.

The Territory's net debt is currently \$7.7 billion, growing to \$9 billion next year and \$11.4 billion at the end of the forward estimates. Interest payments are expected to increase from \$1.1 million to \$1.3 million every day over the same period and debt per person will grow from \$31,000 to almost \$47,000.

Two years after Langoulant released his recommendations, the Treasurer's May Budget finally committed the Government to a ceiling – a \$15 billion cap I hoped would put the brakes on Labor's out-of-control spending.

However in recent weeks, more flesh has been put on the bones of the Treasurer's budget day announcement which shows the co-called debt ceiling actually only targets borrowings, excludes other liabilities like leases, can be raised by the Government through Parliament whenever it wants and applies no penalties for the Government or Ministers who break the ceiling.

I cannot support a 'debt ceiling' that is a ceiling only by name.

I am hugely concerned the Gunner Government will see this Bill as a green light to spend more and go full steam ahead towards \$15 billion.

In addition, the Gunner Government's decision to cognate the Appropriations Bill with the Financial Integrity and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 is highly unusual. It is the case that many Bills are made cognate, but not the budget.

It is truly unprecedented the Gunner Government has cut out the consideration-in-detail stage of the Financial Integrity and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 and will instead have it dealt with as part of the Estimates processes instead of on the floor of Parliament, where it belongs. In practical terms, this means the debt-ceiling will not go into consideration-in-detail and will pass or fail as part of the budget. This erodes scrutiny and transparency. I oppose this process and am firmly of the view that both Bills should be dealt with separately.

To include both measures together restricts the Opposition and Independent members' ability to forensically scrutinise each part of the Bills and denies Territorians that extra layer of scrutiny the measure deserves. I can only conclude that the Government has something to hide, otherwise why would it go out of its way to do this?

During Estimates the Government was unable to adequately explain how, under its watch, net debt has blown out by \$4 billion more than shown in the 2016 Pre-election Fiscal Outlook.

The Treasurer did, however, make the absurd claim the so-called debt ceiling was a 'hard ceiling' and could not be breached, despite there being no legislated penalties against the Government or its Ministers if the Territory reaches the ceiling. In fact, the Financial Integrity and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 removes the \$16,000 penalty that can currently be imposed on executives.

There is nothing in the debt ceiling legislation that would prevent the Government from lifting the debt figure at any time or scrapping it altogether.

This Bill is nothing more than a cynical tick-box exercise so the Government can say it is implementing Langoulant. That is not good enough. It is not a genuine measure to deal with our debt.

I therefore dissent to the Estimates Committee Report on the basis that I, along with the Opposition team, oppose the 'debt ceiling' set out in the Financial Integrity and Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 and the procedure by which the Gunner Government has stopped the debt ceiling from being scrutinised in consideration in detail on the floor of parliament.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping, slanted strokes, positioned above a horizontal line.

(Signature)

Bill Yan MLA
Member - 2021 Estimates Committee