

Election Promises

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your government is now 53 days old. So far we have heard about a mining moratorium, a planning review, yet another economic talk fest, a review of water licensing and we have seen flip-flopping on the future of one of the largest independent schools in the Northern Territory. Instead of getting things moving, your government is slowing things down. Talk from the public service is about a lack of direction and general paralysis; talk from local business is about a government vacuum. What is the plan, Chief Minister? When will you start delivering on your numerous promises to Territorians? What happened to getting the big rocks rolling?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The big rocks are rolling! We did it in the very first week after we got elected. We brought in our first home owner changes. As you may remember, the CLP cut stamp duty relief to first home buyers and it had a devastating impact on people buying their own little piece of the Territory, and it was critical that we made that change. We did do that in the very first week. The other thing we did in the very first week was fix the Buy Local plans in the Territory. We made sure that the 30% of local content went across industries, not just for construction when it comes to government work.

We made sure it also applied to capital grants so that when someone gets government money they have to abide by our Buy Local Plan; because you want to give local businesses in the Territory a fair crack at that work. They are not asking for handouts, they are asking for a fair crack, and they will get that under a Labor government. We are getting on with the job because we made it very clear before the election that we would get the money flowing locally again and we are doing that. We will provide certainty to Territorians and we are doing that, and that is what you have to do to restore confidence to business in the Northern Territory. You talk about the summits as a talk fest, and this is part of the problem with the CLP during the last term; talking to people was an issue. We will talk to people; Labour governments will talk to people.

Those summits will help shape our first budget; they are not a paralysis; they are not slowing anything down. They are shaping the first budget of a Northern Territory Labor government, which we will deliver in 2017-18—you always deliver budgets! The treasurer will be delivering a budget. It is not slowing anything down. It is involving all Territorians, sectors and the community in the work of government and making sure they have a say in the long term plans of the Northern Territory and in our first budget, which will be delivered by the Treasurer to my right. So we are going to be involving Territorians, Opposition Leader, unlike what the CLP did. That is how you provide certainty. We will provide those long term plans through a process that involves Territorians and the community. We will behave; be a united government; we will not have the problems, behaviourally, the CLP had last term. We have made that commitment. There is a very clear set of standards we have to abide by. We will provide that certainty and restore confidence for doing business in the Northern Territory.

I am looking forward to restoring our reputation and relationship with Japan when I go there very soon. I look forward to accepting the baton from the CLP in Rizhoa. We are getting on with the job of government. I thank the public service members who have been exceptional and excellent in working with us to deliver that. From a Labor government you will get an investment in jobs in the Northern Territory.

Government Election Promises – Fulfilment

Ms NELSON to CHIEF MINISTER

What action have you taken since the election to fulfil your promises to provide efficient, effective and stable government in the Northern Territory? How will these actions help the government to deliver on its promise to restore trust, invest in children and create jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Katherine. I love being able to say that. Thank you, member for Katherine.

The government made it very going into the last election that we will invest in children, restore trust in government and grow the Territory economy. To do that, you have to work with the very capable, very

professional public service we have in the Northern Territory. We have been in government before and know the quality of our public service – highly professional and incredibly competent. They are tireless workers who act in the best interests of the Northern Territory. They will have the respect of this government. All of our members will respect the public service and we will listen to their advice.

We also made it clear as part of our promises going to the election that we need to have a strategic, coordinated public service. We had an argument during the last week of the election campaign about how we will deliver that. One of our first actions in coming to government was reforming the machinery of government. Part of the problem of the CLP's dysfunction was it could not work with the public service. It had too many agencies, with 23 key agencies and up to 36 agencies of various sizes and responsibilities.

One of the very first thing we were briefed on in coming to government was they had a cohort meeting of 35 people. It is very difficult to have a meeting with 35 people trying to coordinate all your promises and plans through government. We reduced that down to 15 key agencies to make sure we had a strategic and coordinated public service so we can, as a government, deliver on our agenda to invest in kids, restore trust and grow the Territory economy. We will have that professional working relationship with a strategic, coordinated public service. That is why it was important to get those number of agencies down.

We have also gone further and created four clusters, or strategic groupings, of agencies. The Chief Minister's is the central, with my department leading that; Children and Families; Development and Tourism; and Environment and Culture—recognising the priorities of government and giving the public service the greatest capacity possible to deliver on our agenda. We have a big four years ahead of us and we will work with the public service to deliver on that agenda of kids, jobs and trust.

We made those changes with full public consultation and with the public service, including the unions that represent them. We did this to ensure we acted quickly and to get on with agenda. I thank the public service and my ministers, and I look forward to working with the strategic, coordinated public service to deliver on our agenda of investing in kids, restoring trust and growing the Territory's economy.

Kormilda College – Funding

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Your government was elected on a platform of trust, transparency and accountability. The Chief Minister has claimed to commit \$5.1m to address the financial difficulties faced by Kormilda College. I have been advised that only \$3.1m is allocated to keeping the school's doors open until the end of this school year, with the remaining \$2m a contingency for staff entitlements should the school close, a fact this government has failed to disclose.

The government has continued to leave parents, teachers, staff and students in the dark about the terms and conditions of this money, as well as excluding them from the working group. Minister, when will your government start being open and accountable to parents, teachers, staff and students who now face an uncertain future? Why has the school been excluded from the working group, and when will you provide the school community with the terms and conditions of the committed money?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Spillett for the question. On 12 September, the day I was sworn in, I was straight away briefed and I found out about the dire situation Kormilda College was in. I then met with the college Principal, Dr Helen Spiers; the board Chair, Mr Peter Jones; and the Anglican Bishop, Greg Anderson.

It became very apparent about their dire situation and it was clear that unless there was a bail-out from government, that school would be unable to continue operations in the 2016 school year. I spoke to the department, which then worked with Kormilda College, and that \$5.1m figure is what was needed to get the school through to the end of this school year.

Of course, I was very concerned about the parents, teachers and children at the school. That \$5.1, \$3m of that was to cover salaries and the operational expenses of that school. The \$2m you say is for teacher long service leave and payments and those sorts of things was for the bank loan. If the Bank of South Australia, with which the school had a bank loan, foreclosed on that loan then the school would be in even more dire straits and it would not have had that \$2m that was a line of credit to it.

The situation the school faced was dire. The Northern Territory government has committed 100% of the bale out to Kormilda College. The federal government funds that school, with 75% of the funding that goes to Kormilda College from the Australian government. We fund 25%. We need to see the Australian government stepping up to also assist the families at Kormilda, not just the Northern Territory government.

The Northern Territory Department of Education will continue to work with Kormilda College. We have put in place a financial expert and we need to get to the bottom of the financial situation there. We cannot be an irresponsible government, we need to be a responsible government. The Northern Territory government needs to make sure that there is due diligence about how that \$5m will be used by the school. We do not need that money to be frittered away and lost.

The terms of reference are being worked on by the department as well as the Kormilda College Board. As I said, the Northern Territory government has stepped up and bailed out Kormilda College. If we had not done that, that school would be closed today.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Kormilda College

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What have you done personally to lobby Canberra to secure extra funds for Kormilda so its doors can stay open? Is it really your plan to take ownership of this school in 2017?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Spillett for the question. I have spoken to Senator Birmingham, the federal minister for Education. I have also written to Senator Birmingham. Senator Birmingham assured me he wanted further information. Just as we are being fiscally responsible, the Australian government also will be. The Australian government through Senator Birmingham, assured me that he would like to have a close look at all the figures and finances of Kormilda College before he makes any decisions. He does not want to set a precedent for bailing out private schools. It is a non-government, private school and a business.

I have spoken to Senator Birmingham ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I directly asked the minister if it is her plan to close Kormilda College in 2017 and take ownership of that school.

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not a point or order. There were two parts to your question and the minister has time to answer the question.

Ms LAWLER: Member for Spillett, I was getting there. As I said, I have written and spoken to Senator Birmingham, and this afternoon I have a meeting arranged ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Economy – Challenges in the NT

Mr COLLINS to TREASURER

Can the Treasurer outline to the House the challenges that face our Territory economy, and what the government is doing to meet these challenges and provide confidence and stability to the Territory economy.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As we all know, it is really important in the Northern Territory that we get the economic conditions right. If we have a thriving economy, everybody benefits across the Northern Territory.

It is a big job head as Treasurer, and from looking at the pre-election fiscal outlook—we will be seeing the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report come in to this parliament next week—it is important to look at the

books and see where they are at, and what we have to work with going forward. As a government we have committed to returning the budget to surplus in 2019–20, as the previous government had.

We have come out of a period of phenomenal investment with the \$34bn INPEX project, which made a huge difference to the economy. It drove growth at 10.5% in 2014–15; however, we have also seen a significant decline in that growth to the point where it is forecast to have slowed to 2.1% in 2015–16, and is expected to be around just 1.5% in 2016–17.

Over the last four years of chaos and dysfunction in the last term of government, when we had a huge opportunity, a massive project—a one-in-a-lifetime project, as many people call it—in the Territory, it was clear that the government had failed to plan for the downturn from the construction to the operational phase of that project. We have heard that there are many businesses doing it tough.

In that period of government we also saw them sell our assets. The port and TIO were sold, and we saw the bus network go. They raided the coffers where they could. The budget deficit in the last year of government jumped significantly. Looking at the pre-election fiscal outlook, the estimated deficit sits at \$876m for 2016-17, which is up significantly from the \$93m estimated in 2015-16. We have seen a huge jump there. We have also seen a jump in the debt, which is currently projected to be almost \$2.7bn in 2016-17, up from \$1.85bn in 2015-16.

These figures are of great concern but we absolutely have a plan to manage the economy, to invest in jobs and support local business. This includes making sure of the continuation of that significant investment of \$1.7bn in infrastructure; supporting a really strong buy local project, and listening to Territory businesses and Territorians at our economic summit about where the budget next year needs to go.

No handbrakes on the economy. We are making sure government expenditure flows through.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Home Improvement Scheme - Changes

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER FOR TRADE, BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

The previous Country Liberal government's Home Improvement Scheme was a welcome shot in the arm to an economy in transition. The \$2000 match contribution was an efficient way to massively stimulate local demand and support local small business. Why is the Gunner government slashing a \$20m scheme that would have helped 10 000 Territory families? Why is the government giving 200 first home buyers \$34 000 instead of helping 10 000 hard-working families?

Chief Minister, it is a question of effectiveness and fairness. How is slashing assistance from 2000 Territorians to 200, a 90% reduction, a sensible or fair measure to support local businesses and families in the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Spillett for her question.

We were really clear about this on the day the CLP delivered their last Budget. We know there was a need for stimulus in the Northern Territory and we know there was also a question around population in the Northern Territory. We thought it was really important to be policy consistent as a government.

We thought the CLP's plan, under which I qualified as Leader of the Opposition at the time, and I now qualify as Chief Minister, was not the fairest way to deliver stimulus in the Northern Territory, so we had a conversation as a shadow Cabinet. How can we do this better than the CLP are doing?

The scattergun approach is not actually delivering on a clear policy plan so we said 'Let's fix the mistakes that CLP made when it came to stamp duty relief for first home buyers in the Northern Territory'. We are seeing a population drift. We are seeing a massive decline in the number of people buying their little piece of the Territory. We have to stop that. At the same time, let us get some stimulus going; target the stimulus as fairly as possible.

We think targeting the stimulus of \$10 000, rather than the CLP's \$2000, towards first home buyers is the fairest way to provide a stimulus in the Northern Territory. It is also really consistent with a policy of trying to

keep Territorians here, not just some thought bubble stuff where you just rush some things out the door. Let us have a clear plan about what we intend to do. That is what we did as a Shadow Cabinet and I am very pleased to see that as a Labor government we are doing what we said we would do.

We have made it very clear to Territorians on the day that the budget was delivered by the CLP and in my budget reply on the next day, that this will be our plan. We are honouring our promise to Territorians; we have been very upfront about this. However we were also quite smart when we came into government to have a transition. We did not scrap the Home Improvement Scheme on day one; we made sure there was a very clear plan for it to run out until October 1, while the Home Improvement Scheme came in from September 1.

We are having a very clear and consistent policy approach to what it is that we can do to keep Territorians here in the Territory, the place I love; I want them to call this home too and how can we stimulate the economy. I thank the Shadow Cabinet for having a very clear policy commitment and I thank this government for making sure that we have delivered on our promises to Territorians that we made before the election.

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of another former member of this parliament, a Chief Minister, the Honourable Steve Haddon. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Jobs and Local Businesses — Plans For

Mr PAECH to CHIEF MINISTER

What actions has the government taken to support jobs and create jobs since coming to power? What further plans does the government have to provide certainty and create confidence in these economic hard times?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, thank the member for Namatjira for the question. I am very optimistic about the Territory economy. I think we are a great place to live. We have a few challenges on the horizon and the treasurer touched upon some of those with the winding down of the IPEX construction phase and the significant deficit that we have inherited. It was very clear before the election that the books were bad—a \$100m deficit; growing debt. This was despite the sale of the port, TIO, the bus service and the Government Printing Office. The CLP managed to sell everything, spend it and borrow some more. It was a bad set of books.

We made it very clear that we had a plan when it came to growing the Territory economy and we would get the money flowing locally, create certainty and restore confidence. We did that on day one when we came in. We brought in that first home owners relief; we have identified a stimulus package of \$100m for 2017-18 and 2018-19, those crucial years where we are going to see the wind down of the INPEX phase, to try to keep those construction jobs in the Northern Territory. That is very important. We are doing everything we can as a government to make sure local businesses get a fair crack at work from the government, not just from government directly, but from those people who receive capital grants from government. We introduced that 30% across all government contracts to the capital grants; we pushed it through the tender because we were very aware, as an opposition, of the way the CLP was approaching it. Often the local content was met early in the tender. The civil works and things like that—people like steel manufacturers were missing out.

Steel manufacturers closed their doors under the CLP government. We had to make sure all local businesses had a fair crack, which is why we made those changes to the Buy Local Plan. We will create a board that will have the capacity to audit government to make sure we are doing it and not just saying it. We are happy to be open, transparent and held to account. I want to know if, in doing our work as government, businesses are not getting a fair crack so we can fix it and make sure they are. We will have those changes, and that is what we are doing now to get money flowing locally.

When you want to create certainty, you have to start from the top. You have to start with Cabinet and be stable, and you have to be consultative in how you conduct your policy development implementation. We will do that.

We already hear the CLP attacking the summits as a talkfest, not understanding the importance of talking to Territorians. We will do that. It is one thing you have to do to create certainty and confidence in the NT. You have to be open, transparent and inclusive.

We are putting plans in place to have that summit and, out of that, have a fully tested set of long-term plans for the Territory—not just thought bubbles from the leader's desk, but actual plans made in full consultation with Territorians. That is how you create certainty and confidence, and that is what this Labor government will do.

Kormilda College – Labor Government Funding

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I congratulate you on your appointment. There are significant challenges that we all face, and I wish you well. You would well know there was an extraordinary show of support for the Kormilda school last Monday night, and a high-quality steering committee was appointed. I think that steering committee would be troubled by your previous comment referring to it as a business and a private school.

May I remind you, you are the Minister for Education and not the minister for the Department of Education. There is a battle to be fought here and I want to be convinced that you support the boarding for remote Indigenous students. I want to know how strongly you have fought. The Commonwealth does not want to give up this money; it must be made to give up this money, otherwise you will have to. If 165 remote students go back to their communities, how much will that cost you, minister?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for the question. Firstly, we know that schools are educational facilities, but the CLP government introduced global budgets for all Northern Territory schools, and all Northern Territory government schools have to stay within budgets. My expectation as the Minister for Education is also that all non-government schools would also stay within their budgets and operate correctly.

As I said, I am highly concerned with how that board has operated. To clear up a few facts, in 2009 there were over 1000 students at Kormilda students and there are now 600. That is probably one of the main issues why that school is now facing dire financial consequences. I have met with the board and had ongoing meetings with the department. I have offered, through the department, counsellors and support for the staff and students there. We have also offered communication staff to assist with their communications to their parent groups. We have written to the Australian government and also have a transition support unit so, if need be, we can find a place for every child who is in the boarding school. We have been working very carefully, following due diligence, to make sure that if anything needs to happen, those student will be well looked after. For the Year 11 IB students, we have worked with Casuarina Senior College to make sure they will also be able to complete their studies.

It is unfortunate that Kormilda College has found itself in that situation. It is not a situation any school wants to find itself in.

There are a couple more extra facts I need to provide. The Northern Territory government provides 23.5% of the budget for that school. I am passionate about education. I am as concerned as anybody about the Indigenous boarders at that school. But as I said, it is up to the federal government. It is the government which provides all the funding for the Indigenous boarding school. It has to step up as well.

I can also assure you that the Northern Territory government has provided an extra \$400 000 ongoing to Kormilda boarders. That is \$400 000 that St John's, Marrara Christian College and St Philip's College does not get to provide for their Indigenous boarders. The Northern Territory government has funded Kormilda well and will continue to fund it. But we need to do due diligence and work out exactly where the money is going and what the best use of Territory taxpayers' money is.

Kormilda College

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

You have the opportunity today to clear the air. Is your plan to lend \$3.1m to Kormilda College and recover the money by taking over the school in 2017? Tell 400 day students, 200 boarders, 150 staff and parents what your real intentions are.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Spillett for the question.

My intention is to do due diligence around the future of Kormilda College. There is no point in making rash decisions. I was concerned that on the first day of coming in as the Minister for Education I found out the dire situation that Kormilda was in. The chair of the board, Mr Peter Jones, said on *Channel 9* last night that in hindsight it would have been better if they had raised the flag earlier, had gone and sought some help earlier, and that is of concern of me.

There is no point in finding out in September that you are about to have to close the school in October due to the dire financial situation the school is in. Nobody can turn a school around in that time, so there needs to be a very clear business model about what that long-term future is for that school. The Education department, the experts, are looking very closely at that. I do not think any Territorian would be keen to see this government bail out Kormilda with \$5.1m and then have to come back with \$5.1m for one term, and then with further millions of dollars and ongoing millions of dollars.

Schools need to stay within budgets. That is a fact and that is the expectation of all government schools. So to be very clear, Member for Spillett, the answer to what will happen to Kormilda is still being worked through. I am hoping that the Australian government will come forward with some dollars to help support Kormilda College into the future.

Supporting Territory families

Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

In recognition of the 40th birthday celebration of NTCOSS—an important organisation I was once a board member of—can you please outline how the government is already working with the non-government sector to support Territory families.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Stuart for the question. Also, I would like to thank you for your service on the board of NTCOSS as a former CEO of a non-government organisation yourself and I both know the importance of this organisation and one of its great strengths is the diversity of organisations that it involves.

As a government we have been very clear that we need to be listening to Northern Territorians and also working in true partnership with our non-government programs and this means true listening and working through around designer policy and programs. As a government we know we do not always have the solutions and that we need to work together as a parliament but as with the community to deal with some of the major issues we are facing at the moment. We know that we will achieve better results by doing so.

Some examples of things we have been doing in the first few weeks of our government—we have already met with many members of the NGO sector and have been talking to them about our intention to work with them to develop a modern youth justice system. The Chief Minister and I have met with the Aboriginal peak organisations of the NT and confirmed our election commitment of \$250 000 to support their operational activities and ensure they have a strong voice. That is making sure we deliver on the commitments we have made to the community.

We have also confirmed our commitment to environmental organisations. As the Member for Braitling I acknowledge the Arid Lands Environment Centre in that funding, which is an important part of our community in Alice Springs.

I am also very proud to stand here today to announce \$340 000 for NTCOSS to support their very important work. This is to recruit a senior experienced policy officer to support the extensive program we need to improve our youth and social services. This is a core promise, and the Chief Minister was very clear yesterday in his Address-in-Reply about the importance of this agenda to government. It means they can increase their coordination with the sector.

As I said, as a former CEO of a non-government organisation, they play an extremely important role in supporting the organisations in a range of ways that are important.

As an opposition we announced a number of initiatives that will be delivered in partnership with the NGO sector, some of which include that we will expand the successful congress and delivered nurse partnership; provide more housing and accommodation, and, in my portfolio, we are looking to provide early intervention support for families at risk of contact with the child protection service. NTCOSS will play a vital role in this and we look forward to that.

Economic Prosperity of Alice Springs – Government Priorities

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

As a local Alice Springs member of parliament, I have had a clear vision and a list of priorities for my community for many years. For the benefit of this new government and the Northern Territory Parliament, I seek leave to table the list of priorities I took to the election in August.

Leave granted.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you for your indulgence. Chief Minister, how will you advance the economic prosperity of Alice Springs over the next four years?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for her question. I look forward with interest to receiving the tabled document with her list of election commitments. We were elected on a platform that had a very clear vision for Alice Springs as the capital of Central Australia, and a recognition that the value of Alice Springs goes beyond Territory boundaries. It services a very big region.

I have already had a conversation with the Premier of South Australia, Jay Weatherill, about the recognition of Alice Springs as the capital of Central Australia, a continuation of the first minister's meeting that was started under Premier Weatherill and Chief Minister Giles, which was a good set of meetings which established a value and recognition for Alice Springs. I told Premier Weatherill that I think we can build more substance into those meetings and he is very happy to grow them to discuss broader issues of interest, common to SA and NT, but build around the importance of Alice Springs, because it is important.

We also want to talk about how we can make Alice Springs a destination in its own right again. We are very sensitive to the fact that as tourism to Uluru has grown there has been less traffic through Alice Springs. We are very aware of- this comes to the question about population growth again – the impact on Alice Springs.

We saw the loss of one electoral seat, so it had an electoral impact. We have the members for Araluen and Braitling. I would like to have another member in Alice Springs again, but that means growing Alice Springs.

First homeowners are very crucial to that. We saw Alice Springs suffer more than any other part of the Territory with that cut to the First Home Owners Stamp Duty relief for existing homes.

We have that clear vision for Alice Springs. I will be having that first minister's meeting with Premier Weatherill in Alice Springs later this year and I am looking forward to a good set of conversations with him about establishing an identity for Alice. I am an Alice boy and am very biased. As a team, we will be very passionate about Alice Springs.

I had the pleasure of addressing the Chamber of Commerce in Alice Springs a matter of days ago. I spent 10 days in a row in Alice Springs as Chief Minister playing hockey at night and working during the day during the Masters Games. We will have a very clear passion and commitment towards Alice Springs. We recognise it as more than just a town, it is the capital of Central Australia. It will feature in our summits and

very strongly in this government. I pay credit to the work of the members for Namatjira, Stuart, Braitling and Barkly. We have a very strong Central Australian team. Of the five members, we have four of them and we will work with the member for Araluen as part of those five about delivering to Alice. I am happy to look at that list and work with you on those things, member for Araluen.

Alcohol Policy - Concerns

Mrs WORDEN to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and JUSTICE

As I doorknocked and travelled around my electorate during the recent August elections, there was widespread concern about the damage the last government's alcohol policy was doing to our community. Can the minister please update us on any actions the government has taken to address concerns.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her question. Alcohol abuse is one of the biggest issues that the Northern Territory faces. I know in my own electorate it is certainly an issue we have been grappling with. I know each member in this House will have their own story to share. Sensible alcohol policy is essential to our lifestyle, communities and personal safety. Part of our government's work is to make alcohol policy expert driven, evidence based and focused on harm minimisation. We will be bringing back the Banned Drinker Register. I already have the Departments of Attorney-General and Health working on implementing this, bringing the changes forward that are needed. That is something we will be delivering over the next year.

Our government also made a strong commitment to reduce the circumstances in which a new takeaway alcohol licence can be applied for. We have capped takeaway licences subject to certain strict circumstances; for example we will only allow take away licenses in greenfield sites, new hotels or if there is a Territory emphasis such as a boutique winery or other circumstances like that. We are committed to dealing with the issue of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. Last week I met with the AHA including the CEO, Des Crowe and President Mick Burns, where we discussed this issue, including the BDR and takeaway licenses. I will work strongly with the community, with the sector and with health professionals for an evidence based approach. We need to work together on alcohol abuse

In terms of the alcohol takeaway licenses, section 125a of the *Liquor Act* provides that, with the minister's approval, the Director General of licensing may issue a guideline in relation to the operation and administration of the Act. I today have approved a new guideline which will be published by the Director General in due course. What our new guideline does is reduce the circumstances in which a new takeaway liquor license can be applied for. I outlined that earlier and I will repeat that. The only circumstances in which this government will allow a takeaway liquor licence to be put in place will be for a premise located in a new residential or commercial land development in a greenfield site, if it is associated with a new hotel for the sale of alcohol to bona fide guests staying within the premise, or for bespoke Territory business premises such as mango beer, which I am sure you might be a fan of, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Purple Mango.

Ms FYLES: Yes. Our reforms will bring back the balance to takeaway licences to the application process and are a positive step to reducing the harm of alcohol in our community; something that we deal with day in-day out in the Northern Territory; whether it is our police out on the beat, emergency service workers or families who suffer the effect of alcohol abuse. This government is strongly committed to reducing the harm of alcohol in our community.

Royal Commission – Costs and Commitments

Mr WOOD to CHIEF MINISTER

You recently spoke to the Prime Minister about the cost to the Territory of the Royal Commission into youth detention in the NT. Can you say what has been agreed to, especially in dollar figures, and why is the NT paying for a Royal Commission set up by another government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for the question. It was very important meeting with the Prime Minister because the original good-faith agreement was established over a phone call, potentially

between the Prime Minister and the then Chief Minister Adam Giles. You will see in the PEFO that was handed out, Treasury did not know—it is noted that the Commonwealth that the cost of the Royal Commission would be \$50m and the Territory would be paying half. That was a note from the Commonwealth.

I was grateful to receive a call from the Prime Minister after the election, congratulating me on the result. I said to him, 'I really need to see you very soon, Prime Minister. I want to have a conversation about a number of things and establish a relationship, one of which is—what is the deal with the Royal Commission?'

I met with the Prime Minister; the arrangement is fifty-fifty in cash. That is an estimated cost of \$25m to the Northern Territory Government. We will honour the good-faith agreement that has been established between the federal and Territory governments. You asked why we are paying for a federal Royal Commission; the then CLP government established an inquiry at the same time as the federal government established a Royal Commission.

The Royal Commissioners have power under the Territory Government Act, but they do not need it because it is a Royal Commission. Essentially they were established at the same time. A good-faith agreement was reached and we will honour that; you have to as a government. In continuity I believe in honouring those agreements, so that has been established and we will do that with the cost of the Royal Commission.

I acknowledge there are some very genuine issues the Royal Commission is exploring, and we will cooperate. We have some very serious issues that need to be tackled in the NT when it comes to investing in our children. We have a long-term plan for how we want to do that—family-nurse partnerships, Families as First Teachers, the whole-of-Territory plan for children driven through the relationship with NTCOSS. We have those long-term plans and we were talking about them for a long time before the Royal Commission, but at the acute end. There are serious concerns around child protection and youth justice.

We have made some cultural changes already by moving youth justice responsibilities across to Territory Families and out of Corrections, by investing in dual pathways—which the minister touched on before. It is about providing help to children before the notification is triggered for child protection.

We are doing a lot in this space, parallel to the Royal Commission happening. The Royal Commission is very serious business and will provide, I am confident, a road map for tackling these acute issues. Parallel to that, we will be doing a lot of work on prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation in the Northern Territory. We will be investing in our children.

Environmental Groups – Government Support

Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

Can the minister outline what the government has delivered on its promise to support important community environment groups? How will this support deliver better environmental outcomes for the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Port Darwin for his important question. We went to the election with a strong platform of environmental reform. That is a platform we are all very proud of.

We have already heard in many of the maiden speeches that have been made already how important the environment is to each of our stories and people's spiritual and emotional connection to the land on which we are living. We are very lucky; we have unique environmental assets and we value that. This underpins our economy. Going into the election and as a government, we recognised that a strong economy depends on a strong environment in the Northern Territory.

We recognise the role community groups play in a healthy and balanced debate. This is something that has been discussed. I have worked in the NGO sector and I believe their voices are incredibly important in holding governments to account and making sure they are offering the perspectives of Territorians on the ground they are coming into contact with every day, particularly over things like environmental assessments and approvals. We value those groups and their voices and what they do to represent the community's aspirations for better environmental protection and sustainable development.

Under the CLP government, we are all very aware there was a range of different important environmental groups and others which were previously funded by a Labor government and had their funding stripped under the CLP. It essentially silenced many of them, or was doing a good job of reducing their ability to participate in some of the important debates that have been happening about important environmental protection matters.

To rectify this, the Labor government will be providing annual funding of \$100 000 to both the Environment Centre NT and Arid Land Environment Centre in Central Australia. It was great to visit them with the Chief Minister while we were in Alice Springs. There will also be \$50 000 per year to the Environmental Defender's Office. These funding arrangements will allow these important bodies to employ policy officers and to be part of some of the really important environmental reform conversations that we are already having on a range of issues. We will also be implementing a secondment policy for public servants to work on projects in collaboration with environmental non-government organisations.

These things will help to build greater transparency and accountability; we just want to be clear that we welcome those voices in debate here in the Northern Territory. We value those voices in debate and policy formation here in the Territory. We have started the ground work on a range of different areas and I look forward to bringing more to parliament over coming days.

Infrastructure Budget

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

In your government's pre-election infrastructure commitments you indicated there would be a realignment of projects, this has to happen because you promised an excess of \$1b of spending over 10 years but not where that would come from. What cuts will the Minister make to the capital, mining new works and repairs and maintenance budgets to achieve these changes? Will these cuts be based on a strategic, financial or political basis? Do you agree that chopping and changing the infrastructure budget at a time when the economy is in transition is a knee-jerk, ill-informed and reckless move?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because it is a really important question. We know, as he stated, in a time of transition it is really important that government spending, particularly in infrastructure, keeps flowing through because it supports local jobs, businesses and it also build the Territory so we can do more, delivering better services to Territorians.

We were very clear in the lead up to the election, as we know there was a process in which the then government and the then opposition submitted their costings for their election commitments into treasury and they were looked at. As part of that we were absolutely clear. To meet our infrastructure priorities there would need to be some reprioritisation work in the vicinity of about \$220m and we are talking this year alone, of this year the infrastructure budget is sitting at \$1.7bn.

So it is a significant amount but there is a significant spend at the moment and going forward because it is import to flow though, support jobs and infrastructure spending through government is a good way of doing that and supporting the economy.

We will be looking at this very carefully, any new government will sit down and look at the books and look at where their priorities lie. This is part and parcel of new government work. We will certainly not be making rash, quick decisions. We will be looking at things carefully to make sure we get our priorities right; to ensure we maximise the benefits not only to the eventually infrastructure and how that can lead to better services and support for Territorians; but also ensuring that it supports local jobs and business at a time when we absolutely need it.

We are going through an economic summit process soon. That is going to be where we listen to Territory sectors and industry groups through the regions about where they see the priorities lying. As part of that, we are going to be making sure that we have a 10 year infrastructure plan developed as well. That is going to be a very important process for giving industry and business a look forward to see what work is coming up through the government and where to gear up their workforce in readiness for that; because that continuity of work is very important. That is something that I have heard many times as the incoming minister and meeting with as many people as I can across the Territory to hear their views. We are working through it. We have absolutely started that process of having a good look at it. We are going through our economic summits; we do have a budget preparation process as well, but we will be transparent about and

we will consider everything about it very carefully and it will be there for the public to see. Thank you for that very important question, Leader of the Opposition.

Mining Regulations – Transparency

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

What actions has the government taken to ensure that mining regulations are open, accountable and transparent?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, thank you very much once again to the new Labor member for Katherine. It is a pleasure to have you here and I do not think I am going to get sick of that over the next four years, so I will continue to do that. Before Territory Labor got into government we made a promise; increase the level of transparency, especially in regards to our resources and the mining and petroleum projects that provide significant economic benefit to the Territory economy. Economic opportunities and the economic stimulus of the Northern Territory should never come at the expense of our environment.

Territorians want to know what activities are occurring as part of our resource projects and are being undertaken with a strong, regulatory framework. We are doing that. We are delivering on our promise. Unfortunately, the previous CLP government failed to acknowledge or act on these concerns and did not apply the necessary regulatory changes.

I am a proud minister of the crown and a new Minister for Resources. On 11 October we put our first full environmental management plan on the website for all Territorians to see. We are a government that says we will do something, and we are doing it. We want to be open and transparent in every industry in the NT. Not only did we just put the first full environmental management plan on the website so everyone can see it, but we are also putting mine management plans up so all Territorians can see those as well.

Information such as the rehabilitation commitments, flora and fauna surveys, environmental risk assessments, contingency plans and other information pertaining to the project activities—environmental management plans are statutory compliance documents that are used to verify environmental outcomes being achieved. We must always protect our environment and increase investment in the NT, but not at the cost of our environment. I keep stressing that.

An approved environmental management plan becomes a legally enforceable document whereby infringement notices can be issued for non-compliance. I am proud to be part of a Cabinet, a Territory Labor government under Michael Gunner, which is doing what it says. We are being open and transparent, which is exactly what we promised.

Education – Private School Funding

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

I thank you for the interesting facts you provided me with before, but none of them contained the answer to the question—the projected cost to the Northern Territory or Commonwealth governments if these 165 remote Indigenous students were to go back to communities to be educated there.

Given that it is a significant number that will be a cost to either the Territory or the Commonwealth, and given that the funding arrangements from the Commonwealth have created a significant problem for the Northern Territory—not just Kormilda; they happen to be largely private schools—I invite you, minister, to respond to a challenge. I am prepared to work constructively with you.

Are you prepared to lead a campaign to gain increased federal support from the Commonwealth for education for Indigenous Territorians, particularly those educated through boarding schools?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain. Yes, I welcome that. I think maybe you were Indonesia at the time, but we have pushing the Gonski funding for schools across Australia for the last few years. It was when the Liberal government came in that they got rid of needs-based funding. That is the situation we are

in. If there was true needs-based funding, then we might see that the Indigenous kids in boarding schools were correctly funded.

But we are getting a bit ahead of the game. There is no predetermined result for Kormilda yet. We are looking at the facts very clearly. We need to have some clear information before we make decisions.

A couple of extra points: under the CLP government there were considerable cuts to education in the Northern Territory. The funding for non-government schools went from 24% to 23.25%. It has only recently been returned to 24%. The other thing is that with the CLP cuts across government that then impacted on what the 23.5% for schools was. It is all bundled up. If you cut funding to education in the Territory, that then impacts on Kormilda College and Catholic Education as well as all the other non-government schools.

Yes, I am very happy to lobby the federal government for additional funding for Territory schools. But I will tell you one anecdote. As a principal, in the old days, there were two things you could do to lose your job. One was to flood your troopie through a crossing – and many teaching principals fell foul of that – or to blow your school budget. As a principal, if you blew your school budget you were taken into what we called the 'holding pen' in the department. Basically, you had to serve out your contract and you did not have a job.

For government schools it is a terrible thing to blow your budget. All our principals in government schools know that. The board at Kormilda has to be accountable for that. As I said, until I have a very clear picture of that funding and what the issues are for that school, I will not be making a decision.

Remote Housing Package – Delivery

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

This government went to the election with the commitment of remote housing, with an unprecedented effort from the Territory government to address the overcrowding and poor condition of housing in remote communities. This is a significant problem for my electorate of Arnhem, as well as other electorates across the Northern Territory. Across the Territory's remote communities, Territorians overwhelmingly showed their support for this program. What steps are being taken to deliver on the government's \$1.1bn remote housing package?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Arnhem for her question and congratulate her on her election.

Michael Gunner's Territory Labor government is making a \$1.1bn investment of Territory government funding for housing across regional and remote communities. The program will improve housing, no doubt, and wellbeing, and will address what is so important in engaging regional and remote communities. We are talking real wellbeing, jobs and families.

Decisions will be made by local people. The Chief Minister has made that very clear, and the Department of Housing and Community Development has embraced that it will be focused on local decision-making. We will get this right.

Some facts around this for members of the House: HomebuildNT will see \$50m per year for 10 years for the delivery of new housing for remote communities. An additional \$200m will be allocated for repairs and maintenance over 10 years, to improve housing and provide employment and training for a local workforce.

An amount of \$20m per year is allocated for Room to Breathe, for living and sleeping space, outdoor living areas, outdoor cooking areas and higher amenity for outdoor living and families celebrating this wonderful environment we all share. The program will provide more living spaces, address overcrowding and keep families together.

An additional \$20m per year over 10 years will give government employees working in their own remote communities access to government employee housing for the first time. I congratulate the Chief Minister and my Labor colleagues on that decision.

We will also increase support for homelands housing, and reform the eligibility criteria. The current round of applications for this is under assessment and funding will be released this month.

I am honoured to be in this role, and the department is certainly engaging in a very smooth transition, embracing new government policy and enjoying working with new government members. I will be very important to then consult across the regions. I have already spoken with areas of the MacDonnell, Roper Gulf, West Arnhem and Central Desert regions, and I will identify more communities, which I am looking forward to meeting. We will be looking at representative communities across Groote Eylandt, Wadeye, Elcho Island, Ngukurr, Maningrida and the Tiwi Islands to follow in the coming weeks.

Madam Speaker, this program will deliver.

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