

Christmas and New Year's Eve Public Holidays

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Yesterday with your announcement of two additional half day public holidays, Territorians are justly terrified that the unions have seized power in Parliament House. The cost of doing business here just went up \$450,000. Did you consult with a single industry body or business group before making this decision?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question.

As the Leader of the Opposition may be aware we are a Labor government, I am a proud union member and everyone on our side is actually a member of the union. A Labor government is in control of the Northern Territory and we are thinking about those issues of importance to Territorians. One of those, and it is the biggest cost to business, is the loss of population in the Northern Territory.

I am not sure where the member for Daly is getting his figures from. The \$450,000 that he quoted is not a cost to business; it is actually the cost to government for police, nurses and staff. The people who are working on those New Year's and Christmas Eves are sacrificing their time with family and friends for those five hours from 7 pm to midnight.

When it comes to business the cost for someone to work those five hours; a waiter or chef, the approximate cost of someone to work those five hours will be an extra \$130. We know that this will come at a cost to business but we believe that this is a fair decision based on the sacrifice that people are making: giving up their New Year's and Christmas Eves.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. It is a very direct question to the Chief Minister. Did he consult before making this decision or did the union masters tell him what to do?

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not a point of order; the Chief Minister has got one and a half minutes to reply.

Mr GUNNER: five days before we made the announcement I personally spoke with the Australian Hotel Association. I personally spoke with the Chamber of Commerce and we were upfront about the plans that we had in this space.

We now have 28 days between the tabling of the Bill and the potential passage of the Bill, I do not want to pre-empt the House, about discussing this very simple, straight-forward question which is: should we recognise the value of Christmas and New Year's Eve?

Without doubt it is different to work on Christmas Eve, December 24, to December 18 on that 7pm to 12am shift. There is an absolute difference between that Christmas and New Year's Eve and we believe that we are making a fair decision that makes the Territory competitive again.

If you look at Victoria they have got 13 public holidays, we are at 11 in the Northern Territory. I have said, very clearly, we have got to make the Territory an attractive place to live and work and we believe these part days go towards that.

South Australia has taken the lead in this space, they have already done it. They have already made those part days; Christmas and New Year's Eve, a public holiday.

Unlike the other side I believe Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve are special and if someone gives that up to serve me or support someone keeping their business open, they deserve to be fairly compensated for that and that is what we are doing as a Labor government with an interest for the benefit of all Territorians.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

ICAC – Progress

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Spillett, please pause. The statement and the passage of the motion yesterday was clear; you cannot ask questions of a person who is a minister twice in a row.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker...

Madam SPEAKER: No, I have researched this. The minister is a minister; if you want to ask him a question you will have to ask someone else a question before you come back to the minister for police.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Speaker, could I just seek clarification from you please...

Madam SPEAKER: I just gave it.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The wording says, 'no single minister', the Chief Minister carries multiple portfolios. The minister is a minister for each portfolio.

Madam SPEAKER: No, the person is a minister and they have responsibility for various portfolios. It is a question to a person once; then you go to someone else and you come back to that minister. That is the ruling.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: He did it yesterday but today is a special and different day. I will redirect my question to the Chief Minister, who cannot handle two questions in a row! He can do it on a Tuesday and Thursday but you cannot do it on a Wednesday!

Madam SPEAKER: What is your question, Member for Spillett?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: My question is to the Attorney-General. Yesterday in debate around ministerial statement on the establishment of an ICAC a number of government members made accusatory statements, but no substantiation about influence and inappropriate behaviour in government procurement possesses. Since coming to government and now as the Attorney-General, because I am not allowed to ask the Chief Minister the question, have you acted on any allegations of corrupt behaviour? Have you referred any issues to police for investigation; or is it just a case of your government being prepared to say or do anything to create a culture of mistrust?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Spillett for her question. This government was elected on a platform of openness and transparency and we are doing that by creating an ICAC; an Independent Commission Against Corruption. I outlined very clearly in the House, yesterday, the process that was taking place around enabling that ICAC to be formed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

However we will not be cutting corners, we will be making sure the legislation and the ICAC is right. I gave a long statement to the house yesterday outlining those plans. I am not sure if the Member for Spillett was not able to listen in, but...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; my question was that the allegations made in this Chamber—have any of them been reported by the Attorney-General to police for investigation?

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. The Minister has two minutes and 20 seconds to answer the question.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, as I outlined in the House yesterday, our Independent Commission Against Corruption will go back and look at everything in the Northern Territory that it is notified of. We do not need to put a time frame on it; we want to make sure that this is a robust Independent Commission Against Corruption. We want to make sure the legislation we put in place does not block—we are willing to have the openness and transparency of an ICAC.

We saw a number of incidents over the last four years that certainly raised eyebrows in the community. In reviewing policy, Territorians rightly reviewed the policies of the last four years at the election in August. That is seen in the makeup of this House.

In regard to reviewing allegations of misappropriations, that will be the role of the ICAC, an independent commission against corruption. We acted on the Martin report. We endorsed 50 of the 52 recommendations, and we brought that into the House yesterday. We are working efficiently to deliver on that. That is something we certainly did not see from the Giles government in regard to that report and those recommendations.

In regard to the retrospectivity of the ICAC, an ICAC will be a little like an onion. We will peel away one later and get to another. We will not put in place blockages. We want to make sure this ICAC is thorough and reviews processes. We did not put a time frame on that. It is not will go deeper than the four years if necessary. That will be for the ICAC to decide. It will not be for us in the House.

Our role, and my role as the Attorney-General, is to make sure there is appropriate legislation and we have an appropriate independent body, and we are setting that up. There was a willingness from this side to set that up, unlike those opposite who voted against an inquiry into political donations and promptly backflipped on it. We are genuine about openness and transparency.

You will see that through the ICAC that will be developed over the coming months. It will have powers to undertake a thorough review and will be there to ensure Territorians have openness and trust in their government, something they certainly did not have with the CLP government.

Port Melville Development

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

There was a decision made last week by the High Court, which set aside a decision to approve the development of Port Melville without an environmental assessment. This action was brought forward by our NT Environmental Defender's Office. What will this action mean to the operation of the port? Will there now have to be an environmental assessment done, and what responsibility did your department and the EPA have in relation to environmental approvals for this port?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his question. I recently welcomed the decision made in the federal court for that decision to be set aside with the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy. It will need to look at the process that went through.

I am advised that the Marine Supply Base does not have approval to operate, but the other activities that are occurring out of the port, which includes the woodchipping activity, are not impacted by the decision. Government is talking to the proponents and the community on Tiwi about this. The member for Arafura is also holding discussions about those concerns.

The Federal Court matter referred to the actions of the Commonwealth, which will need to again look at the environmental process, something I welcome. I am advised that the EPA assessment on Port Melville sits outside the Federal Court. It is an independent body and it is entirely up to it if it revisits its decision making in light of what has occurred in the federal case.

This is an important part of why we need to get our environmental process right. It will not be the first time I have said it, but we support the positive development of good economic opportunities. The Tiwis is no exception. But if we do not get the processes correct then we end up with these developments being tangled and there is a load of uncertainty tied to that.

It is a reminder to all of us of why we have to undertake the important work we have ahead of us, as a government, to make sure we undertake that environmental reform and we are following processes. It goes to trust, as the Chief Minister just said. We do not want major projects or any projects in the Territory being tied up in uncertainty because processes were not followed or we need to look at them again.

We have a comprehensive environmental regulatory reform program we are embarking and working on. We will continue to work with the Tiwis as well on this issue. Thank you for the question.

Secondary Education in Indigenous Communities

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for EDUCATION

What is the government's policy on secondary education in Indigenous communities? Will it follow the recommendation of the Wilson report and remove secondary education from bush schools, forcing children into government-operated boarding schools, or will it support education for Indigenous students close to their home communities and kinship support?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nhulunbuy for the question. A little history lesson. One of the things this Labor government was very proud of was our initiative to put secondary education in the bush. That was a policy of ours when we were last in government.

The previous government developed the report about putting Indigenous kids into boarding schools and is something I am concerned about. I believe all parents in the Northern Territory should have a choice. My children made the choice to attend their local high school and do their secondary education in their town. Indigenous children need to have those choices as well.

There will be some children who enjoy going to boarding school for whatever reasons. They may be wanting to play sport and we see that with many of the Tiwi kids. They want to have an opportunity to play AFL football and if those kids want to go to Victoria they need to have those opportunities at a very young age to develop as football players. But that is a small number of students.

One of the things that we went to the election on was the community lead schools: that is about our remote communities developing school boards and then having input and a say on what sort of education they want for their community. If that board is established and they say very strongly that 'we want these options for that school' and whether that is around language programs we will work with them around those things.

Member for Nhulunbuy, thank you for the question. It is a great question on education.

St John Ambulance Volunteers

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

Your comrades in the United Voice have come out against St John Ambulance using volunteers to help provide paramedic services across the Northern Territory. Chief Minister, what is your position on this? Do you agree with it or disagree with it?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker and I thank you Member for Araluen for the question.

We have worked for a long time with St John Ambulances and I know over that journey that there have been arguments between St John and government. We saw during the last term quite an argument about funding levels between St John, the CLP and the workers for St John.

I think most of us in this room have probably done a first aid course through St John and we have volunteered in one capacity or another. I have always been a strong supporter of volunteers and there are arrangements from pretty much every organisation around volunteers. We also know that when you are a professional organisation, like you are with St John, you also put in place some controls around OHS, insurance or other circumstances that look after those volunteers.

Without a doubt I think we have all volunteered at some stage with someone. It is something you have got to do. We have all worked in different organisations whether in the sport context, the NGO sector or St John where you have that relationship between professional paid staff and volunteers. It is always something that has to be managed. I am sure it is something that St John will do. It is just an ordinary conversation you have between workers, employers and, in this case, the volunteers.

I support St John in the delivery of health services in the Northern Territory. I support our volunteers

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. You cannot sit on the fence on this one Chief Minister. Do you agree or disagree with United Voice?

Mr GUNNER: I actually have my own position. I believe that St John does a great service to the Territory, and it has paid staff that work for it and volunteers that volunteer for it. This is something that needs to be managed through in the work place. I have no problem supporting the use of...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. Are you saying you disagree with United Voice?

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not a point of order. Chief Minister you have got the call.

Mr GUNNER: As I have said, I have my own position. I explained what my position is. That is how I will support St John and the services it provides in the Northern Territory and the volunteers who volunteer for it, just like I would with any organisation that relies on, or works with, a mixture of paid staff and volunteers. It happens across the Northern Territory. You see it most consistently every weekend in the sports context where there will be people there who are paid and people who are volunteers.

It is something that always has to be managed. Most of the problems that emerge in the Northern Territory are problems of management. This is something that just needs to be managed and I support the use of volunteers.

Boarding Schools – Funding Deficiency

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

My question was to the Chief Minister on totally different matter but I have found another one that I can ask someone else to allow sufficient recovery time.

Last week you accepted – and I thank you for accepting – the challenge to lead a campaign to lobby the federal government to address the funding deficiencies that have adversely affected NT private schools providing education to remote Indigenous students through boarding schools, if they so choose to attend boarding school. Those funding changes, as you understand, were made under the Labor minister Garrett and maintained under the current federal Coalition. My offer of assistance remains.

I invite you now to update the House on this campaign and what is the preferred federal funding model you will be advocating during this campaign so that Territory schools with boarding facilities are properly supported.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Blain for the question. Yes, first of all I do not want this to become a political football. The Australian and Northern Territory governments acknowledge that Indigenous education is expensive. The Northern Territory government does most of the heavy lifting in our remote communities for Indigenous education.

I gave an undertaking last week to look at that issue which has become apparent. But it also became apparent it was an issue in 2013 when the Australian government undertook a review and when minister Chandler undertook to do a review. This issue around the cost of Indigenous boarding is not new.

That said, there have been boarding schools in the Northern Territory for our remote Indigenous kids for a long time. Kormilda has a history of 50 years of boarding. The issue is why it has got to this crisis point now. One of the issues I spoke about last week was if you make a \$114m cut out of education, which happened under the CLP, that then impacts on schools across the Territory. That also impacted on the non-government schools.

The non-government schools ministerial advisory council wrote to me in recent weeks and said exactly that. They have been very concerned about the cuts to education in the Northern Territory.

Yes, I need to see the review which was held and is being finalised. When that comes to me I will have a good look at it and then work with the Australian government around the issues. Exactly how much it costs to educate an Indigenous child in a boarding school needs to be clear and transparent. I am attending the Education Council meeting in December and that will be one of the issues for me to take to the Australian

government and Senator Birmingham because the issue at Kormilda has been resolved in the short term by Senator Scullion. That is Indigenous funding not Education Department funding. As far as I am concerned this needs to be a long term solution; not just a short term fix for Kormilda. I am also concerned, as I said, that this needs to be something that can benefit all Indigenous boarding schools and not just ones that are nongovernment because now the Northern Territory government is also committed to a boarding school in Nhulunbuy; we have Callistemon House in Katherine. It is important for all boarding schools and I am sure there are other states who are looking very closely at this issue as well; with the Australian government coming into assist Kormilda. I am sure there are plenty of eyes on this issue but thank you for your offer of support, Member for Blain.

Housing— Remote and Regional NT

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

On remote housing, your government has committed to devolve to shires, regional authorities or housing organisations decision making around what to build; where to build it; how to build it and who will build it. This is an enormous shift in responsibility to organisations that are not set up for this purpose. Have you or your department met with a single shire or housing organisation about how these decisions will be made; how much this will cost and when will they be funded to carry these extra responsibilities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the question. The answer is yes. What we have done is embarked on a very significant process of consultation because that is what the Michael Gunner Labor government is about; he is about talking to Territorians; where did we get that lesson from? We got that lesson from the disgraceful previous CLP government. That was pretty easy to work out that we needed to talk to Territorians. Member, your question is very important; it was a spreadsheet that was presented to me by the department that represents about 15 pages on A3 paper with every table filled that represents...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Could the Minister table the A3 document that he is describing?

Madam SPEAKER: No, sit down. That is not a point of order.

Mr MCCARTHY: Madam Speaker, it represents every potential organisation across the Northern Territory that will be consulted and that will be researched as to their capacity to deliver. This government is all around delivery. Member for Spillett, it is also important to note Territory businesses; this is also about partnerships because in a \$1.1 b spend over a 10 year cycle, that will certainly change the landscape of remote Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory that has been designed and will be delivered by Michael Gunner's Labor government. It is important to realise that we need to partner up with the business sector right across the Northern Territory and it will be led by Aboriginal people. The bottom line is that the decision making will be devolved to the communities and that is where the work has stated.

It is a good question and thank you for it. I am honoured to say that that intensive work has begun and I am proud to be part of it.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Housing— Remote and Regional NT

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In the answer to the question the minister said he 'will' be consulting. Can you please outline the time line of consultation with these organisations, how many people you will be consulting, the time frame for the consultation and the start date for the project.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Spillett. There is much work happening in Housing as we speak because we have existing programs we have picked up from the previous government.

Labor's new \$1.1m spend, which is the new HomeBuild, the repairs and maintenance schedule, room the breathe and new housing construction. It will all bounce off the next Labor budget which will be 2017-18.

The consultation period has started. The reporting to the Chief Minister, who has been very interested in this project, has started and is ongoing. We will deliver in conjunction with the most important part of governance we see for the bush, devolving to local decision making ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 113: relevance. The minister has not given us any details of the time line. Perhaps he could take the question on notice and report back before tomorrow's Question Time.

Madam SPEAKER: I believe the minister had finished, he sat down. Minister, do you want to comment on that?

Mr McCARTHY: It has already started, member for Spillett. I have said that a number of times.

Government Employee Housing

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your government has committed to allowing local recruits working for the government to access government employee housing. How many employees will be eligible for this entitlement? Will they be built to the same standard as existing government employee housing? How many new houses are required in total? How many will you build next year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as the minister for Housing just mentioned, we have started the work of consulting and working towards the promises we made in our \$1.1bn housing program. That includes government employee housing.

We thought it was important to end the discrimination when it came to government employee housing where a teacher from Darwin would be eligible for a house in a community but not a teacher from that community. We thought it was critical to make sure people had the right to aspire in a community and they were treated the same as any other person working at that school.

We have budgeted \$20m per year towards additional government employee housing. It is important to make sure we are building houses for local recruits in remote communities as a critical policy change. Clearly, by making that change, we are not going to have enough houses for all the recruits in those communities

It is an important body of work that we have taken on. I have had the Minister for Housing report to me twice already on the body of work that Housing are doing. I believe, as the Chief Minister, in a policy of this significance that I need to take an active role in working with the minister and having the minister report to me to make sure that we are staying on track. That is a commitment I made in opposition. We did significant consultation opposition around this policy. Especially that bit about the local recruits and I remember standing at full council meetings of land councils where it was hugely significant. The statement of principle that we were making that we were going to provide local recruits' access to government employee housing.

It will be the same standards. I think that is important. You cannot make a change like this and then say you get different standard housing between a local recruit and someone from Darwin. You cannot do that. So the same standards, the program will start. We will do that body of work and we will build those additional houses. So we have got a program over ten years towards the construction of additional government employee housings remotely. The department is mapping where the demand will fall and how we respond to that demand to make sure we roll it out.

There an initial layer of mapping you have to do around service land. There is the mapping of demand versus the mapping of available land and you have got to get the two to meet as much as you can.

There is a body of work that is happening already from this government to address an important issue to the recruitment of locals to work in our remote communities. It fits in with our aspirations for 500 additional local recruits in the front line over the next 10 years so that we, as a government, deliver for remote Territorians. We deliver to their aspirations and deliver to them housing that is sufficient to their needs.

That is what we will do as a Labor government.

Remote Bakery Cafes

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for COMMUNITY SERVICES

A tender document was put out around May this year which asks for the establishment of 15 remote bakery cafes and provisions for ongoing business support for a period of 36 months. Recent tender details say that this tender has since been cancelled and no reason was given. Could you say what is the status of this tender and why it was cancelled? And do you agree with Nick Cater from *The Australian*, 9 August, when he described the name Wicked Kneads Bakery at Yuendumu as misleading considering the dough is kneaded elsewhere then frozen and trucked to the edge of the Tanami Desert where it is put in an oven by European backpackers and prepared for local consumption.

What is your government's view on these bakeries and should they be training local people in the art of actually making bread?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his question. A public tender process was conducted for the establishment of 15 bakery cafes. There was much disparity in the approach and price of the three tenders received. The department decided not to award a contract and allowed the tender to lapse.

The scope of the work is being revised to allow the establishment of the bakeries to be tailored towards the needs of individual communities, fitting with the new government's policy around devolving that decision-making. A new tender process is currently being prepared and it will be released in the coming weeks.

In relation to the other part of the question, as an opposition member I travelled extensively in the electorate, crossed some boundaries into other electorates and heard some interesting comments. One of the first important points coming from community members was about nutrition. Whilst we celebrate economic development in regional and remote communities and we celebrate the opportunities around economic development, it must also be balanced.

This concept is a good economic development concept, but there was concern around what the products would be, how they would be retailed and the outcome in regard to good nutrition for regional and remote residents. This not only resonated at a community level, but it was spoken about strongly by teachers, nurses, health workers and professionals in the community.

We will get this right. There was considerable disparity, apparently, in what came in under the previous government. The department has provided very good advice to go back and revisit this, and then we can incorporate an important level of decision-making as a place-based concept. Let us talk to Yuendumu and see how that can operate.

I agree that baking bread is an honourable occupation and could replicate trades of the past. As the Chief Minister has already said to this House, we are about creating jobs. It is not just about the concept of going to work; it is about feeling good about yourself. It is about the wellbeing factor and role modelling for your children and your community. This has some great potential and opportunities, and I am looking forward to bringing back the good news stories when revisiting this concept.

School Funding

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for EDUCATION

When Labor was last in government I understand the school by school funding equation had a base of 60% attendance. I understand that the last government changed this regime so that there was no bottom calculations made on attendance. Punitive funding arrangements do not allow for schools that will better engage communities in increasing attendance. Minister for Education, will your government now return the 60% bottom line to the school by school funding calculations.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for the question. I am heartened to hear that you have such a strong interest in education in the Territory and I am also very keen to provide that opportunity for us to have longer conversation rather than just these three minute replies of mine.

We do know attendance is such a critical issue in our remote schools; the facts are that children need to go to school and they need to go to school regularly. It is of great concern to me; I was just reading a briefing to see that in the department's annual report that attendance across the Territory had actually gone backwards by 0.8% in the last 12 months. That upsets me; I know the previous government and Minister Chandler were very focused on attendance. It is something that is absolutely crucial if we are to make changes in education. The issue around funding for schools is one that this government has looked at very closely because, yes, there have been cuts to education.

We are putting \$20 m back which will see increases in all school budgets; schools have those global budgets and schools will be able to increase either the teachers they have; or they may choose to put on counsellors or teacher assistants. There does need to be attendance but there also does need to be some increases in the funding of schools because they have been substantially cut. Your figure of 60%—I think that is the average of a lot of our remote community schools; but one of the things we are bringing back is that buffer of about 10% around the attendance figures. T

here are times—often in preschools, even in our urban schools—that for whatever reason; sometimes when little ones start schools they get sick. Even in our urban schools we sometimes see low attendance figures in preschool because the children stay home; that affects their funding as well; it is the exact situation you speak about, that schools then cannot afford to put on the extra programs or they are concerned about the funding they have. Member for Nhulunbuy, I am very happy to meet with you to talk in more detail about these issues because getting things right in the bush is vital to making improvements across the Territory. This week I was briefed by MacKenzie who has done some good research in how we move our schools from fair to good and from good to great. The results in the Territory continue to be of great concern to me.

Poker Machines – Increase in Number

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

The former CLP government significantly increased the number of poker machines throughout the Northern Territory in recent years. I remember when in opposition Labor objected to this CLP policy. What will your government's policy be on poker machines? Will you be reducing or increasing the number of poker machines?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the important question. It is something I have spoken with the Attorney-General about a number of times. We had a very clear policy position when we were in opposition. We opposed the increase which the CLP introduced. We said if we were elected, we would put a cap again on the number of poker machines in the Northern Territory.

We had that cap on the number of poker machines the last time we were in government. We will have to revisit it now. We believe we have to be very careful about the number of poker machines in the Northern Territory.

I said at the time that I do not remember seeing queues for pokies. It was not as if I thought there was a massive demand and people were queuing up to use them. But the CLP made a decision to increase the number of pokies in the Northern Territory. At the time the clubs opposed the increase. The pubs were interested but the clubs said they did not particularly want it.

The CLP allowed a free for all, which we believe is unacceptable. Gambling should be strongly regulated in the community, with wellbeing as the number one priority. We allow people to smoke, drink and gamble in the Northern Territory, so it is about how we manage these things. So many of our problems come back to how we manage them.

A gambling prevalence survey in the first part of this year has been analysed by the researchers and it is anticipated that a final report will be made available in early 2017 to the Attorney-General – the first in 10 years. It is important work we need to undertake about the prevalence of gambling in the Northern Territory to make informed decision about what we do. We have made it very clear that we will have a cap. That free for all will end and we will again put a cap on the number of poker machines there will be in the entire Northern Territory.

It is important work the Attorney-General leading. The prevalence survey report will go to her. I have had a few conversations with the Attorney-General already about how we handle it, bring it in and the timing of it and how to respond to the prevalence survey. We are still making the prevalence survey to make a final, informed decision. Ours is a very clear position. Last time we were in government we had a cap and this time we will have a cap again.

We recognise that you can smoke, drink and gamble in the Territory but you have to manage it. You have to be very mindful of wellbeing and the community impact gambling can have and you have to make informed decisions. Just like we saw the CLP make a decision in a number of areas, where they went to a free for all approach. You have to be more careful and more managed about how you do these things, and we will bring back that cap.

Palmerston City Council Master Plan

Mr MILLS to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

Madam Speaker, once again I still cannot ask the question of the Chief Minister and I am not playing any game here, honestly, but my question is to the Deputy Chief Minister. In your capacity as Minister for Planning and it regards a pledge made by the Chief Minister during the last election.

During the last election your government pledged support for the Palmerston City Council master plan and its incorporation into the NT planning scheme. Post-election do you remained committed to this pledge and if so I invite you to describe what steps have been taken to progress this matter?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for his important question because Palmerston is a wonderful and growing part of the Territory and it is really important that going forward that the planning is absolutely right.

I think we would all agree that the initial planning—as I can remember when I was a kid driving out and going past the big water tower. Things have grown significantly since then and it is a very interesting part that central business district as well. We are seeing some phenomenal growth out there with the gateway shopping centre. You have got the hospital down the road. We have had extra accommodation in there so it is a period of growth.

It is really important that the Territory government works together with council hand-in-hand when you go forward and look at these planning issues and those visions. The planning commission at the moment is embarking on a really important body of work out there particularly to do with Palmerston and the central business district around an area plan. They are going to be doing the same body of work for the Darwin CBD.

They are going to be working closely and engaging with the Palmerston community and city council to make sure that they look and work with them on the master plan and incorporating where they can those principles and good design into that future planning work. It is going to be a really fantastic process to have an area plan done to help guide that future development. It is really important, the one thing I cannot stress enough, as a new incoming Planning Minister is my views around—there needs to be strong consultation.

Communities need to feel like they have a genuine say in the planning processes because I am learning very quickly how contentious planning can be. When things change in somebody's area...

A member: Come to the rural area!

Ms MANISON: The rural area is a classic example. It is very important that people feel like they have a genuine say in that process. There is a body of work happening; the Planning Commissioner assures me that there will be deep conversation and consultation with the Palmerston community and the important stakeholders there. I will certainly be requesting that they get a briefing to you, the Member for Spillett and my other Labor colleagues so that you can best inform your community on that work and how they have a say. It is very important to get it right and the vision the Palmerston City Council has for the master plan—it is an important body of work to feed into that area plan and it is important that we all work together to get the planning right. We know historically that inner CBD in Palmerston is a pretty interesting place and we ought to learn from those mistakes to make sure we get it right in the future. I think with the work that is

happening so far, Palmerston is heading in a very exciting direction; let us keep it moving that way. Thank you.

Blake Street Development

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

In opposition, the Labor Party was vehemently opposed to development of the Blake Street site. Comments made at the time include your comment that a secret plan has emerged for a housing development in the Botanic Gardens; the developer behind this so called 'secret plan' called in the lawyers to seek a retraction to these earlier comments. In government you have authorised the continuation of the first phase of the first phase of this project. How do you justify such a stunning backflip? What consultation did you do in advance of that decision and can you remind the house of whether delivered that retraction and if so, why?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition is actually confusing a couple of issues there. There is the top of Blake Street which is where there was a rezoning application under the previous CLP government which went through; there was also the purchase of a separate block of land down the bottom of The Gardens next to the amphitheatre. That secret plan that you mentioned was that bit down the bottom. That bit down the bottom is what I received a letter about and I replied to the lawyer who wrote to me and I did not retract. I was very happy to stand up on behalf of my residents about the bit at the bottom. We made a very strong stance as opposition; I did it as a local member but we did it as a government too; opposing the application for the rezoning of that land. We made that strong stance because that is when you have to make the stance; prior to the decision as part of the community feedback into the government making that decision. I believe the government made the wrong decision. I opposed it, but the decision was made and sometimes you have to live with those decisions no matter how bad they are. That is part of the process.

With great regret, that is the decision the CLP government made. The minister has been put in the horrible spot of having to manage the next stage of that process around the application of the Development Consent Authority—but the construction of what they have legitimately been allowed to build on that block under the CLP. It was a bad decision by the CLP, but it was a decision made by government and that is how the process works.

We are happy to stand by the claims we made very clearly in opposition, which was that community-purpose land should remain community-purpose land, botanic gardens land should remain botanic gardens land, and the bit down the bottom—which was seeking to incorporate Birdsong Gully into a housing development adjacent to the Amphitheatre—would, without doubt, impact on the quality of Territorians' enjoyment of the gardens, the oval and the Amphitheatre. That was clearly a bad idea and a bad direction for the CLP to attempt to take.

We made it very clear at the time that community-purpose land should remain community-purpose land and botanic gardens land should remain botanic gardens land. We stand by that decision. The owner of the Blake Street land also owns the land down the bottom. He is obviously unhappy that we have made the decision down there and he is now working through the process up here. The local residents are unhappy with us abiding by the process, but there are two winners and two losers. Unfortunately that is how it goes.

We went through the process. I attended public meetings, spoke to local residents, communicated directly with residents and doorknocked through the Gardens. I have done a significant body of work through the Gardens. It is a very hot issue. Sometimes in government you have to follow through the processes you inherit. The CLP made the decision to rezone that land.

Alice Springs Master Plan

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Congratulations on the appointment of the Member for Fannie Bay as the assistant minister for a vibrant Alice Springs CBD. Caught up in his enthusiasm for the new role, the Member for Fannie Bay had much to say last week about his keenness to deliver a master plan for Alice Springs. He said:

At the moment there is not a master plan document or guiding vision for Alice Springs. I have said I will work with you to deliver that.

He went on to say that Katherine, Darwin and Palmerston have one, but Alice Springs does not have that document or the thought put into it.

The assistant minister for a vibrant Alice Springs CBD has completely ignored the extensive work of the NT Planning Commission in developing the Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan.

I seek leave to table a copy of that.

Leave granted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Minister, will you provide a briefing to your assistant minister on this important work for the future of Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. Yes, I am hearing people interjecting about their love for Alice Springs. There is no doubt that there is a lot of love in this House for Alice Springs, we love it. It is an important place.

We have been discussing Palmerston as part of the work the Planning Commission has been looking at. It is important that we look at the CBD in Alice Springs and plan for the future with more area plans to make sure it is clear that we get the best in developing it.

There is broad work occurring across the Territory. The Planning Commission is very busy and has proposed a busy work plan which we have looked at. Part of that work is to make sure the central business district is looked at an area is in place. That work will occur.

Consultation will be important as part of that work and talking to the people on the ground because there is an exciting future for Alice Springs also. It is a wonderful place and has been for a long time but it is important that in our time when we look at planning and its issues, it is carefully considered and the community has a say in a structured way. An area plan for the CBD is an important body of work that will occur.

Bananas – GM Trials

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

About 14 years ago, successful trials of GM cotton were grown in Katherine. I supported those trials and the world did not come to an end. Support from the Labor government at the time was not exactly enthusiastic. Now the NT could be part of another trial of a GM crop – bananas in the Litchfield area. Does your government support the Pauline Hanson view of opposing GM trials on bananas or does your government support these trials so there is a chance the Northern Territory banana industry will overcome Panama disease and get back on its feet again?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nelson. It is fantastic to talk about primary industries and bananas ...

Mr Wood: You can go bananas.

Mr VOWLES: Thank you very much.

The NT government is a signatory to the intergovernmental agreement on gene technology, which was established under the national gene technology regulator's framework. There have been expressions of interest issues which people would have seen in the newspaper. The Queensland University of Technology was granted approval in 2011 for a field trial. What you see now with the advertising last week, 14 October, was an application that has come through; the Queensland University and the Gene Technology Regulator have requested a six year trial at the Darwin Banana Farm at Lambells Lagoon. As part of the consultation process required, they had to advertise; submission close on 17 November to the office of the Gene Technology Regulator.

We as a government as well as Primary Industries will support this trial to go ahead. What the trial actually does is look at the pattern overseas and how it can be eradicated across the nation. As a government—and the supportive departments do a fantastic job; I think we will be looking at approving this trial; it is a six year trial. It was originally under 1.5 ha but this time they want to go up to a six ha trial. I thank the member for this; it is very important; our biosecurity in Primary Industries is paramount to the growth of our industry. We have had some issues over the last few years. I think the previous government did well; there are some things they could have done better around the Banana Freckle and with the Green Mottle Mosaic Virus. We need to make sure that our industry is protected and that we give the industry opportunity to grow. That is certainly my role and I thank you for the question.

Indigenous Ranger Programs

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In line with Labor's election promises, can you outline the new powers that the government will give to Indigenous rangers to look after their country? In line with Labor's election, can you now commit to more detail to extra funding of resources to Indigenous rangers and if you will; what, when and how will these extras be provided?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I have spoken a lot about our commitments to Indigenous rangers and the Indigenous Rangers program through my Address in Reply and many other times in this House. We have around 40 Indigenous ranger groups across the Northern Territory. I know many members of very aware of the important work they do and have seen much of the work they do in the protection of our land and sea country.

We have committed to ensuring there is a change to the Act to make sure we look at their ability and powers around enforcement, rescue and a range of other areas. This is something we have to work through with local Indigenous rangers groups as well. That work is under way. I am more than happy, Member for Nhulunbuy, to keep you informed of that work as that continues as well because the consultation and involvement of those local groups will be imperative to making sure we get those legislative right in giving them the powers not only to have greater enforcement over the activities they do but in making sure we are appropriately training Indigenous ranger groups to be able to be able to do those additional activities.

I am happy to keep you informed as that work continues. The other area we are looking is making sure there is investment in equipment, things like being able to access vehicles and communications equipment that will help them to undertake their everyday activities, which are a range of things from weed management—which we know is incredibly important in the Northern Territory—feral animal management, fire abatement—they are doing a huge amount of things. We want to make sure we support them in their role.

We have a number of really important commitments around that and, as I said, I am more than happy to keep you informed as we work through that with local Indigenous ranger groups.

Christmas and New Year's Eve Public Holiday

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

It seems that you are intent on imposing public holiday penalty rates on businesses for New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve, placing unnecessary pressure across the board. You have done the costings for government. You have told us today it will cost government—the taxpayers of the Northern Territory—\$450 000 per year for this exercise. How much will it cost private enterprise? No doubt you have done the costings for that too. You have committed to being a consultative government. Will you hold a summit and undertake extensive consultation on this very important issue, and will you consider deferring this decision until you have?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for the question. As I mentioned earlier, the rough cost for an employee for the five hours—we are talking about five hours on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve—depending on the number of employees you have, and your business will obviously be dependent on

business to business—if you take a waiter for example, or a chef or something like that, and you employ them for the full five hours you are talking about and extra \$130.

I spoke, personally, with the Australian Hotel Association and the Chamber of Commerce five days before making this announcement to let them know that this was the direction we were going. I think it is a very straight-forward question about five hours on Christmas Eve and five hours on New Year's Eve. It is a very simple question. Every business, because of the nature of those five hours, can work out quickly what the cost to them will or will not be on an individual business by business basis. They will make decisions as a result of that just like some businesses do on a Sunday verses a Saturday.

Without doubt, the biggest cost and risk to the Northern Territory at the moment when it comes to business is the population loss we have in the Northern Territory net interstate migration. We have to make sure that we are in a place that is actively attractive to work and live in and we are doing that. I have no doubt that this is a measure that will be more popular with workers than with bosses but this is a measure that is fair.

It is absolutely fair that for the five hours on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve we make that sacrifice to give up that time to either work on the front lines, which is obviously a measure in government, or to serve say myself or anyone else in this room out on that night. Or to support that business that wants that time to stay open; they are asking you to go work on that Christmas and New Year's Eve to sacrifice that time with family and friends. We believe this is a fair measure. It is a very simple, straight forward question.

There is 28 days available between the introduction of the Bill and the passage of this Bill. I have spoken with the AHA and I have spoken with the Chamber of Commerce, it is a very simple question and I think it is a question of fairness and, in response to the last part

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. With 45 seconds to go have you done the costings, the impact on private enterprise? Will you consult with all the stakeholders like we have heard for the last two week you intend to on every issue this government is facing? What about all the pizza shop owners, the take-away outlets; all the people, all the businesses that will be affected?

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you Member for Araluen. Chief Minister you have got the call.

Mr GUNNER: as I have said it is a very simple, straight-forward question. The cost is dependent on what each business' decision will be this Christmas and New Year's Eve. They will be capable of making those calculations. We have got 28 days available for comment on the Bill.

It is a very straight-forward, simple question and, in response to the last part of the member for Araluen's question, we will not be deferring the introduction of the Bill or the passage of debate for the Bill.

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