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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION BILL
(Serial 25)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill brings back the Banned Drinker Register. Our government is delivering on a key election commitment to Territorians to reduce alcohol-related harm and make our community safer.

We know most people drink responsibly; however, we also know the misuse of alcohol has a huge impact on the lives of Territorians and our communities. Alcohol misuse accounts for a significant proportion of work that police, health services and the courts do. Alcohol misuse impacts on school attendance, domestic violence, child protection issues, incarceration rates and the road toll.

This government knows the original Banned Drinker Register, BDR, was working. At the time the BDR was recklessly scrapped by the CLP government, after 14 months, more than 2500 people were on the register. The availability of alcohol was restricted to those people. Over 16 400 sales to problem drinkers were declined in the first year of operation. People who were engaging in alcohol-related crime or misusing alcohol were being stopped at the point of sale from purchasing takeaway alcohol.

As per the previous model the new BDR is established under section 31A of the *Liquor Act*. Anyone wishing to purchase takeaway alcohol will present their photographic identification for scanning, as required under this section. The ID will then be cross-referenced with the BDR.

Where a person does not appear on the BDR the screen at the point of sale will show a green tick and the sale can proceed. Where a person does appear on the BDR the screen will show a red cross and the sale cannot proceed.

Where an ID is scratched or unreadable a manual search of the BDR can be undertaken by the sales person at the outlet and a sale will either be approved or refused. This process takes less than 10 seconds and will operate in conjunction with the existing scanning systems we already have in place in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy.

Materials will be available at the point of sale to explain to a person who is being refused service why they are unable to purchase and how they can obtain more information about their ban.

The forms of ID accepted by the scanners include:

- Australian and many international passports
- Australian and some international drivers' licences
- Evidence of Age cards
- Ochre Card
- Australia Post Keypass Card.

The addition of the keypass card means Territorians will have greater access to obtaining photographic ID. The card can be applied for at any Australia Post outlet across the Northern Territory and will potentially reduce the demand of people seeking ID from the Motor Vehicle Registry outlets.

Scanning devices from the previous BDR are being reused wherever possible. Next generation equipment is being used where that is not possible. Cabling work for new or renovated premises will be completed this month, and training and technical support will be made available for all outlets in the coming months.

A mobile scanning solution for drive-through outlets is currently being worked through and will be rolled out in the near future.

The BDR is a simple and effective way of restricting the supply of alcohol to people who use alcohol to create harm in our community. Alcohol misuse creates real problems in their lives and for others. The BDR covers everyone equally—all adults from all backgrounds across all locations, incomes and jobs; everyone. This is a Territory-wide measure.

Being placed on the Banned Drinker Register leads to being issued a Banned Drinker Order, or BDO. This prohibits the person from purchasing, possessing or consuming alcohol during the specified period. The BDO will specify the reason the order has been made and we intend for it to include prominent information about how the person can access therapeutic help for their problem drinking.

From the first point of contact with the BDR, the banned drinker will see that the BDR begins to address problem drinking from a health perspective. It will encourage the person to accept responsibility for the harm their alcohol abuse and its associated behaviours is causing.

There are a number of ways people can find themselves on the BDR: by police; court orders; self-referral; or referral from an authorised worker, family, carer or guardian.

Firstly, a person can receive a police BDO for:

- receiving three protective custodies in a two-year period
- receiving three alcohol-related infringement notices in a two-year period
- any combination of three protective custodies and/or alcohol-related infringement notices in a two-year period
- being the defendant in an alcohol-related police-issued Domestic Violence Order
- being charged with an alcohol-related offence where the penalty is imprisonment for six months or more.

The BDR ban will take effect from when the trigger recorded in the Integrated Justice Information System updates the Banned Drinker Register in real time through the live interface.

All reasonable efforts will be made to provide a person with a copy of their BDO at the time it comes into effect; however, not receiving a copy of the BDO will not prevent it from being in force. Where a charge is dropped and a BDR ban is in place, the ban will cease at the time the charge is removed from the system.

The police BDO pathway is tougher than the previous BDR with the protective custody and infringement notice period going from three incidents in two months to three incidents in two years. This will see a lot more people who misuse alcohol being eligible to go onto the BDR.

In addition to police BDOs, section 12 of the bill states that where a person receives a court order which includes alcohol prohibition conditions, that person will automatically go onto the BDR for the same term as that condition. This includes court orders, court issued Domestic Violence Orders, bail conditions, family responsibility orders, child protection orders and parole conditions.

Where a court order is in place and a police BDO already exists, the term of the court order will supersede the police BDO. The court may include any other matter considered appropriate, for example, alcohol assessment and alcohol treatment.

Under section 42 of the bill this pathway also includes any person who commits an offence by supplying alcohol to another person who is subject to the prohibition of the consumption of alcohol by being placed on the BDR.

Providing alcohol to someone who is known to be on an alcohol provision order and therefore on the BDR is commonly called the offence of secondary supply. At the time a person is charged with secondary supply a BDR ban will be put in place and remain in place until that person faces court. That means it is an offence if you know someone is on the BDR and you provide them with alcohol. If someone is found guilty of the offence of secondary supply, a fine of up to 20 penalty units, which is approximately \$3000, and a BDR ban of 12 months will start from the day the person is found guilty.

It is important to note, however, that we have considered the broader circumstance in which this provision may operate and have provided an exclusion for protected persons as defined in the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*. In effect this means a vulnerable person under duress as a result of domestic or family violence who purchases or provides alcohol to a banned person is protected from prosecution.

Tackling what is considered more organised secondary supply—for example, selling alcohol to banned persons and dry communities—is a high priority for this government. Further time and consideration needs to be given to tackling this kind of grog running as it relates to the BDR. This is most closely aligned with the *Liquor Act* and will be considered as part of the alcohol policies and legislation review which is currently under way.

As I noted earlier, the new BDR has additional pathways for someone to be placed on the BDR. I have spoken about police BDOs and BDOs running in conjunction with court orders, but there are several other referral pathways that do not require a charge or a conviction for a criminal offence or infringement to place someone on the BDR. The improved self-referral process in section 14 of the bill allows a person to apply to be placed on the BDR by simply presenting to a police station, court house, remote health clinic or other designated location, prove their identity with 100 points of ID and be placed on the register.

Unlike the previous BDR there will be no requirement for a person wishing to self-refer to be assessed or appear before a tribunal. Once their identity is established they will be placed on the BDR as soon as practically possible.

The same process will exist for those people to remove themselves from the BDR should they wish, as described in section 17. The only time a request for removal will not be processed is when a person is on the BDR through the self-referral pathway but has subsequently activated a BDR trigger by committing an offence or getting on the BDR by another pathway.

Further pathways are outlined in section 18, where applications are made by others. This is distinguished into two groups: applications by family members, guardians or carers and applications by people in relevant positions such as police officers, registered health practitioners and child protection workers who are aware of the harms that alcohol misuse is causing to the person and their family. For convenience we describe this second group of applicants as ‘authorised workers’.

The authorised workers pathway includes police officers, child protection workers, registered health practitioners, such as doctors and nurses, and others that may be specified in the regulations in future, such as paramedics, social workers and the team leader at a sobering-up shelter.

The authorised workers will be able to apply, using BDR-specific criteria, to the BDR Registrar to make a determination based on the evidence available about whether to place that person on the BDR. The BDR Registrar may request additional information from the authorised worker making the referral, may refer to additional health or police records, or may request an in-depth clinical assessment be conducted by the clinician before a decision is made.

This enables added flexibility to the BDR model to allow clinicians and the BDR Registrar to make an assessment of a person regardless of the level of engagement by the referred person. It is not a requirement for a person who is the subject of an authorised worker referral to attend a meeting or engage with the BDR Registrar for the determination to be made on the evidence presented. When the person is referred by the BDR Registrar for an assessment by a clinician, section 22 outlines that the assessment can be made in person or on the basis of the information provided or available to the clinician.

The other referral pathway established in the bill is the family, carer or guardian pathway. This pathway allows a concerned family member, carer or the person’s adult guardian to make an application to the BDR Registrar for the person to go on the BDR. In this circumstance the Registrar will refer the person to a clinician for assessment. It will not be sufficient for a family member, carer or guardian to say that someone has a problem. A specialist clinician will need to assess the person or their relevant information to confirm to the BDR Registrar that this is the case and that a restriction on the person’s ability to purchase take-away alcohol is needed.

For both the authorised worker pathway and the family carer and guardian pathway, an application form will be available online that will outline all of the evidence required by the BDR Registrar. The application is completely confidential. The application is intended to demonstrate how a person’s alcohol misuse is causing harm and how a BDO for this person will meet the objects of the act to:

- prevent alcohol misuse
- protect people from severe or serious harm as a result of alcohol misuse
- protect people, particularly children, from harm or nuisance resulting from the misuse of alcohol by others.

The assessment report from the clinician in section 20(3) of the bill must contain recommendations about the person being on the BDO and any appropriate therapeutic support that should or may be provided. It is intended for these recommendations to be made in regard to how a BDO for this person will meet the objects of the act.

The base ban length associated with a BDO will be three months. Where a three-month ban is breached, the ban will escalate to six months; where a six-month ban is breached, the ban will escalate to 12 months; and where a 12-month ban is breached, the ban will be reset to day one of that 12-month ban.

A person who serves their ban and does not breach while the ban is in place will not be penalised further for previously being banned. They will simply be removed from the BDR at the time their BDO expires and be able to again purchase takeaway alcohol. A person who repeatedly breaches their ban and has numerous bans in a 12-month period can be the subject of a case review by the BDR Registrar. This will allow for follow-up for the offer of therapeutic support where appropriate for people that are banned and still struggling with persistent alcohol misuse.

Once a person is on the BDR, clinical assessments and therapeutic support programs are offered. It is anticipated that some people registered on the BDR may not be aware of the therapeutic support options available and being placed on the BDR may encourage them to seek assistance for an alcohol-related issue.

We know from the AMT, alcohol mandatory treatment, evaluation that forcing people into treatment programs when they are not ready to make change is ineffective. It is hoped that a BDR ban and engagement with a clinician will encourage people to advance from pre-completion stage, where they are not thinking about changing their alcohol behaviour and may not even see it as a problem they can address, to stages where they are considering reducing their alcohol consumption because of its harmful consequences and are willing to attempt behaviour changes to modify the harmful levels of their drinking.

Creating these opportunities for people with problem drinking to move through the stages of change, with intervention matched to suit their readiness for change, with support over a long period, is the proven way for ongoing and sustained behavioural change. It reduces alcohol-related harm and will make our community safer.

A banned drinker order will contain information about where the person can go to get help to address their problem drinking. It is intended that this help will be in the form of therapeutic interventions that are available from general practitioners, primary healthcare providers, specialists, alcohol and other drug services and helplines.

A person does not need to have a banned drinker order to access these therapeutic supports, and anyone with problem drinking can voluntarily seek assessment. Where a person is put on the BDR for a period of six months or more, that person will be encouraged to access a clinical assessment. This clinical assessment will be conducted by the specialist AOD clinicians and will include a full health history, including an assessment of alcohol use.

The assessing clinician will provide a recommendation for therapeutic support to the BDR Registrar. A person who chooses not to engage with the assessing clinician will remain on the BDO for the full length of their ban. To encourage people to engage with the assessment and therapeutic support, a ban reduction is available as an incentive for participation in and successful completion of a recommended therapeutic program.

These therapeutic support programs cover a range of treatment and support modes suited to the level of readiness for a person to change. The therapeutic support programs can be offered by AOD clinicians, GPs, psychiatrists, as well as non-government organisations and the private sector.

Services available for clinicians to recommend include:

- alcohol counselling and support
- alcohol brief interventions that aim to initiate a change in unhealthy or risky behaviour, such as alcohol misuse
- alcohol motivational interviewing in a goal-orientated, client-centred counselling style for eliciting behaviour change
- supervised alcohol withdrawal and detoxification from alcohol
- intensive alcohol and other drug treatment in a community setting, structured assertive day programs or group therapy
- residential AOD treatment
- other treatment options, including mutual aid such as the 12-step programs, peer mentoring and recovery champions.

All these therapeutic options are considered by the clinicians assessing someone on the BDR to ensure the therapeutic support best suits the banned person's circumstances.

There are some key differences between the original and the new BDR that will make the system more effective. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill adds additional pathways and triggers for people to be placed on the BDR. These include:

- changing the protective custody triggers from three incidents in three months to three incidents in two years
- changing alcohol-related infringement notices from three incidents in 12 months to three incidents in two years
- combining protective custody and alcohol-related infringement notices so that any combination can make up the three incidents in two years trigger
- the defendant on a police DVO where alcohol was a factor in the incident
- single, mid- or high-range drink-driving offences
- a second low-range drink-driving offence within three years, consistent with the increased penalty for repeat low-range drink-driving offence in the *Traffic Act*
- child protection orders where an alcohol-related condition is made part of that order
- where the BDR Registrar determines through a referral and/or clinical assessment that someone is misusing alcohol and may benefit from therapeutic support.

There are other key changes as part of this legislation that will streamline the system and prevent duplication of functions and powers.

Unlike the previous BDR, there is no tribunal function to put someone onto the BDR. A person who activates an automatic trigger goes straight onto the BDR with a police BDO. Where a decision is required before someone is placed on the BDR, the BDR Registrar—a delegate of the CEO of the Department of Health with appropriate qualifications and experience—supported by a staff of specialist clinicians, will make the determination.

These powers, along with administrative decisions made by police and other agencies with a role in the BDR, will be reviewable by the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, commonly known as NTCAT, to ensure the review process is as accessible as possible, there will be no fee charged for a person to seek a review by NTCAT.

NTCAT will have the power to review a range of administrative decisions relating to the BDR, including:

- a BDO made by a police officer
- a BDO made by the BDR Registrar
- an extension of a BDO by the BDR Registrar where the basis for the BDO remains
- the BDR Registrar refusing to vary or revoke a BDO when a therapeutic support program is completed
- the making of or refusal to vary or revoke an income management order.

In addition, there will be no separate SMART Court, as there was before, to deal with alcohol and drug matters. Alcohol matters are a part of everyday court business, and we believe there is no need for a separate jurisdiction. Alcohol-related offences will be dealt with in the usual manner. Where a judge wishes to seek clinical assessment for a defendant, it will be provided by a specialist clinician.

The bill provides for the new role of the BDR Registrar in part 5, Division 1, a decision-making role in the Department of Health. The BDR Registrar will have a range of functions and responsibilities, including:

- receiving applications for self-referrals
- receiving and assessing applications from authorised workers, family and carers
- recommending therapeutic support options for people on the BDR, following a clinical assessment
- determining whether a person's BDR ban should be reduced following engagement in and completion of the recommended therapeutic support intervention
- determining whether a person's ban should be increased following application by an authorised worker or contravention of the order
- coordinating clinical assessments and case reviews for people requiring additional assistance with managing alcohol
- making, varying or revoking an order for income management as a result of a case review or repeated breaches.

It is intended that when the CEO appoints a suitably-qualified public sector employee as the BDR Registrar, the CEO is satisfied that the employee has relevant qualifications and experience to enable them to carry out their decision-making powers.

This role is also intended to promote coordination amongst the greater alcohol and other drugs workforce engaged with the BDR. It is anticipated that this role will better identify linkages between services so the effective therapeutic supports can be delivered to those who need them the most.

In circumstances where a person receives a ban of 12 months or repeatedly receives bans that sees them on the BDR within a 12-month period, the BDR Registrar will have the power to make an income management order. The making of an income management order will act as an additional deterrent to people breaching their bans.

An income management order will be made where the BDR Registrar believes it will assist in meeting the objectives of the act to prevent the misuse of alcohol, to protect those people from severe or serious harm, or where it will protect people, particularly children, from harm or nuisance resulting from the misuse of alcohol by others.

An income management order will run for 12 months once the BDR Registrar is satisfied that it will be helpful to the person misusing alcohol. The BDR Registrar will have the power to revoke or vary an income management order if the banned adult has completed a therapeutic support program or if the BDR Registrar is of the belief that it will not benefit the person. There is no requirement for the BDR Registrar to vary or revoke an income management order that is an administrative decision.

Case reviews will be available as a way for the BDR Registrar to engage with a banned adult who has continuous bans or continuous breaches, or where recommended therapeutic supports are not undertaken.

Those people who choose not to engage with a therapeutic support and continue to receive BDOs with no sign of behavioural change will be followed up for intervention by the BDR Registrar. While it is impossible to force a person to change their behaviour, it is hoped that this additional contact by the BDR Registrar may give a banned adult with alcohol misuse issues the encouragement they need to engage in support.

This bill, in section 39, allows for information to be shared between an authorised worker, family member, carer or guardian and the BDR Registrar regarding an application to have that person put on the BDR.

In addition, the bill also allows a police officer or the BDR Registrar to provide information about a BDO that is currently in place to an information-sharing authority if it relates to the enforcement of the BDO or if it relates to the provision of a service or function relating to the person with a BDO. This could include a police officer or the BDR Registrar providing such information to a licensee, the legal representative of a banned adult or a public sector employee acting under the law of the Territory, for example, an assessment clinician.

This bill provides, in section 40, that this information must not be disclosed for any other purpose. Information can, however, be disclosed in a statistical form for the purpose of reviewing the BDR and its effectiveness. Work is already being undertaken on a data and evaluation framework to ensure we can adequately review the BDR.

This was something neglected by the former CLP government in its haste to bring in alcohol mandatory treatment. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill repeals the *Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act*. Alcohol mandatory treatment was an expensive model attempting to deal with alcohol-related harm to a restricted group of problem drinkers.

A transition plan has been put in place for people subject to an alcohol mandatory treatment order. People with problem drinking will not be detained for assessment or treatment, and there will no longer be any enforced secure alcohol treatment in the Northern Territory. Instead, people with identified alcohol misuse will be encouraged and supported to voluntarily seek therapeutic support to help them address their issues. It will be health focused, not a punitive approach.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill also repeals the *Alcohol Protection Orders Act*. Those people on an alcohol protection order, APO, as of 1 September 2017 will have their APO become a banned drinker order and reserve the remaining APO as time on the banned drinker order. Sections relating to alcohol mandatory treatment within the *Police Administration Act* are also repealed under this bill.

In order to support the implementation of the new BDR, our government has allocated an additional \$15.5m to the Department of Health in Budget 2017–18 for:

- specialist assessment and withdrawal services
- integrated pathways to treatment and follow-up services
- expanded capacity for rehabilitation services
- establishing the BDR function and employing specialist clinicians.

This funding will enable the creation of a one-stop shop with the Stringybark Centre at Berrimah being repurposed to provide a sobering up shelter containing 30 beds, specialist alcohol assessment and withdrawal unit containing 12 beds and flow on to a 40 bed treatment facility. An integrated approach to the assessment for all people wanting to access this treatment will be introduced. This will occur from the first contact, such as at the police watch house, sobering up shelter or hospital/emergency department.

This will streamline the process for clients and alcohol and other drugs treatment services facilitating immediate identification and referral to services which meet a client's assessed needs. Integrated care pathways, a care plan, will then be developed, facilitating a seamless service; for example, appointments for onward service referral can be arranged immediately rather than the client waiting to be contacted by another service and a gap in service provision then occurring.

The overarching care plan will identify the lead agency and appoint a case manager to ensure prioritisation and coordination of individual client care. Structured care plan reviews will be undertaken with all services and clients on a regular basis. The integrated assessment service will operate from the Stringybark facility in Berrimah and from a campus of the Drug and Alcohol Services Association Alice Springs facility.

The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice will use \$1.7m in additional funding to establish a BDR system and the roll-out of technology. This is new funding to the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice. This funding is in addition to the allocation committed during the election of \$4m and \$1.2m which will be redirected from the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Tribunal and community visitor program.

In total, \$6.9m will be utilised by the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice for the functions required to re-establish the BDR, including the BDR help desk, compliance functions, court administration, NTCAT administration, data and research capacity, communications and the BDR system management.

In closing, the Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill will bring back the Banned Drinker Register, and it is our government meeting our commitment to addressing alcohol-related harm within our communities. We said we would be tough on alcohol-related harm and the impact it causes in our community, the antisocial behaviour, violence and trauma our frontline emergency service workers deal with every day. I am pleased to have brought this legislation into the House to address the single biggest social challenge we face with alcohol misuse.

We support responsible drinking and evidence-based measures to support harm minimisation. Showing photo identification when purchasing takeaway alcohol is not a hardship, especially when hearing from police, frontline health workers, paramedics and businesses how effective it was in 2011–12.

As the Minister for Health I am leading a comprehensive review into alcohol policy and legislation with the former Chief Justice, Trevor Riley, chairing an expert advisory panel. The panel has representatives with an excellent skill mix. We have alcohol and policy health expert Professor Richard Matthews, Indigenous health community representative Trish Angus, and industry and business expertise with Dennis Stedman.

The cost of alcohol harm to the Northern Territory was reported at \$640m in 2009. We cannot afford to let this level of harm continue in our community. We have the highest proportion of deaths attributable to alcohol in Australia; for non-Aboriginal Territorians we double the national rate; for Aboriginal Territorians it is nine to 10 times higher.

In 2015–16 alcohol abuse was associated with a minimum of 53% of all assaults and up to 65% of domestic and family violence incidents. Northern Territory Police respond to an average 22 500 domestic and family violence incidents every year.

The BDR will benefit the health and wellbeing of Territorians, and it will make our community safer. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 24)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Liquor Act* to enshrine in the act the condition of store licences that is currently contained in regulation 5BA of the Liquor Regulations. Regulation 5BA provides that it is a condition of a store licence that the area in which the public can browse for and purchase liquor is limited to a maximum of 400 square metres.

Regulation 5BA was enacted in December 2016 to minimise the alcohol-based harm in the community. A particular concern was, and continues to be, that large, Bunnings-style outlets would lead to greater levels of alcohol abuse and alcohol-related harm in the Territory. Regulation 5BA addresses that concern by restricting the floor size of takeaway liquor licences.

Liquor Regulation 5BA is currently the subject of a challenge in the Federal Court. Members will note that on 26 April 2017, in my capacity as Health minister I announced an expert panel to conduct a review of the Northern Territory's alcohol policies and legislation. The terms of reference for that review include the density of liquor licences and the size of liquor outlets as a key matter for the review to report on.

The review will look into what is best for the community. It will consider a range of resources beyond matters that may be considered relevant in any Federal Court proceedings and beyond what may be considered to be in the commercial interests of any one particular enterprise.

This bill inserts a new section 33AB into the *Liquor Act*, which reflects the licence conditions currently contained in Liquor Regulation 5BA. The bill is intended to preserve the status quo to allow the review to be conducted and the public interest to be best served. For this reason, and to ensure the restriction is unable to be circumvented, the amendments will apply retrospectively to all licences whether granted before or after the commencement of the act.

I commend the bill to honourable members and table a copy of the Explanatory Statement.

Debate adjourned.

SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT (ASSOCIATE JUDGES) BILL (Serial 26)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

This bill amends the *Supreme Court Act*, the Criminal Code and associated pieces of legislation to make changes to the office of the Master of the Supreme Court.

The title of Master originated in the early 16th century and evolved from the office of Norman clerks. Over time the role of the Master has changed, increased in scope and character to become one which is increasingly judicial and no longer solely administrative. The bill therefore seeks to modernise the office of the Master and imbue the Master with similar protections and benefits to those enjoyed by other Northern Territory judicial officers as now befits this changed role.

Firstly, the choice of a new title, Associate Judge, conveys an understanding that the role performs judicial functions but not necessarily the same range of functions as a judge. The title of Associate Judge will make the nature of the office more easily understood by the public, which will better reflect the position the Master holds in the hierarchy of the other judicial officers in the Supreme Court, as well as the increasingly judicial role of the Master of the Court.

The title of the Master is antiquated and mysterious. The use of the term Master is also inconsistent with the use of non-gender specific titles. A change in the title of the office of Master to include the word judge also increases the level of understanding of the functions of a holder of the office of Master and makes it clear that it is a judicial office.

Similarly, the recent changes to the lower courts in the *Lower Court Act* have made the title for the judicial officers of the Local Court a judge instead of a magistrate. The title Associate Judge has been adopted by the Supreme Courts of New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and by the High Court of New Zealand. While aside from the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Western Australia presently retain the title of Master, Queensland no longer has an office of the Master or similar.

The title of Associate Judge, with the associated forms of address such a title properly attracts, is more in keeping with the Master's contemporary standing and function as predominantly judicial rather than administrative. Consistency with New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania is a further benefit.

To affect the name change the bill amends the *Supreme Court Act* and makes consequential amendments to various other acts and regulations. Additionally, changes have been made to enable for the appointment of more than one Associate Judge. Presently the Supreme Court has one Master, and while it is not envisaged that more than one Associate Judge will be appointed in the foreseeable future, this change will enable another Associate Judge to be appointed should this ever become desirable in the future.

Secondly, the maintenance of judicial remuneration is one of the cornerstones of judicial independence. In order for judges to competently and impartially apply the law it is essential that judges be, and be seen to be, independent from any influence that might tend, or the thought reasonably to tend, to a want of impartiality in decision-making. An adjunct to this is that our judicial officers are holders of an office as opposed to employees of the state.

Section 41C of the *Supreme Court Act*, which provides for the Master's remuneration, largely mirrors that relating to the Supreme Court judges except that it does not specify that the Master's salary allowances and other benefits shall not be altered to his detriment during his term of office. The bill therefore inserts a provision in the same terms as found in section 41(3) into section 41C of the *Supreme Court Act* to ensure that during his or her tenure the terms and conditions of the Master shall not be altered to his or her detriment.

Thirdly, the present power to commit for contempt is expressly excluded from the powers conferred upon the office of the Master. There is no uniform approach across the states and territories as to whether a Master or equivalent should have the power to commit for contempt. For example, in New South Wales an Associate Judge may only commit for contempt in limited circumstances; however, in Victoria the power is broader. In South Australia and the Northern Territory the power of a Master to commit for contempt is expressly excluded.

As part of the development of the Local Court Bill 2015 the contempt provision applicable to Local Court judges was revised. The Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal also possesses the power to make an order for contempt. As the contempt power is extended to all other judicial officers, it would seem onerous to admit that power from the Master acting as a judicial officer in the Supreme Court. The bill therefore amends section 29A of the *Supreme Court Act* to give the Master the power to punish for contempt.

Finally, as it is presently drafted, section 190 of the Criminal Code creates a specific offence for a person who assaults the Administrator or a judge, but this does not presently include the Master. While the other offences within the Criminal Code are available to the Master they carry lighter terms of imprisonment. There is no reason why the Master should be excluded from the protection afforded to the other judicial officers by section 190 of the Criminal Code.

The bill therefore amends section 190 by inserting a provision that specifies that 'judge' refers to a judge or Associate Judge of the Supreme Court or a judge of the Local Court. Enacting these amendments will enable the Master of the Supreme Court to better fulfil the functions of a judicial officer, for example, the power to punish for contempt is an important component of the function of the office, and more in keeping with the Master's contemporary standing and function as a predominantly judicial rather than administrative officer.

I commend the Supreme Court Amendment (Associate Judges) Bill 2017 to honourable members and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

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

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that the application of the National Electricity Law continues to be fit-for-purpose for the Territory as part of the Territory's progressive adoption of the National Electricity Rules.

On 1 July 2015 the *National Electricity (Northern Territory) (National Uniform Legislation) Act* came into force in the Territory. The purpose of this act was to facilitate the transfer of economic regulation of the Northern Territory's prescribed electricity networks to the Australian Energy Regulator, referred to as the AER, through a phased approach, thus transitioning to greater alignment of the Territory's regulatory arrangements with the national framework.

The act provided for the adoption of the National Electricity Law and National Electricity Rules on 1 July 2016 and the ability to make modifications to suit the Territory's circumstances.

The National Electricity Law is a schedule of the *National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996* and has been adopted in all jurisdictions except Western Australia. The National Electricity Rules are made by an independent rule-maker, the Australian Energy Market Commission.

The National Electricity Rules are being adopted in the Territory in a phased approach. Package one of the adoption commenced on 1 July 2016 and included derogations and transitional arrangements to recognise circumstances unique to the Northern Territory.

During preparation of package two of the adoption of the National Electricity Rules it was identified that some amendments to the act were required to ensure the National Electricity Law, as applied in the Territory, continues to be fit-for-purpose.

The first amendment to the act reflects expected modifications to the National Electricity Rules to recognise transmission network assets in the Territory. Consistent with the current practice and package one of the adoption of the National Electricity Rules, all electricity assets are treated as distribution for the purpose of economic regulation. This is because it is not economically efficient to undergo a separate economic regulatory process for distribution assets and transmission assets due to the small scale of the Territory's electricity networks.

However, there are benefits to treating assets that perform a transmission function, that is, the transportation of bulk energy to load centres, as transmission for some purposes, such as planning for future development of the network. As such, the bill amends the act to recognise transmission network assets for the purpose under the National Electricity Rules.

Amendments to the act are also required to reflect arrangements in the Territory's electricity systems. The Territory's current electricity framework requires that electricity entities be licensed by the Utilities Commission under the *Electricity Reform Act*. Applicants must meet requirements under the *Electricity Reform Act* to be issued with a licence to carry out operations in the Territory's electricity industry.

In the National Electricity Market, the Australian Energy Market Operator registers participants. This registration is not appropriate for the Territory because the Australian Energy Market Operator does not have an operational role in the Territory and the Territory is not connected to the National Electricity Market. As such, the bill amends the act to reflect that registered participants in the Territory are those that hold a relevant licence.

The bill makes further minor amendments to the act resulting from policy decisions made as part of the phased adoption of the National Electricity Rules. These amendments include amendments to definitions and amendments to remove references to bodies that do not have a role in the Territory, such as the Australian Energy Commission's reliability panel.

Additionally, the act will be amended to strengthen the Territory's ability to make modifications of a transitional nature to the National Electricity Rules, law and regulations. The ability to make transitional modifications is important to implement the Territory's phased adoption of the National Electricity Rules to provide the Power and Water Corporation sufficient time to transition and prepare for compliance with certain obligations where appropriate.

For example, modifications may be required to defer or modify an obligation for a period of time to allow Power and Water Corporation time to implement systems to develop procedures or technical capabilities. The bill will also amend the act to remove aspects of the National Electricity Law that relate to the National Energy Customer Framework, which is a national energy customer protection framework. As the Territory is not committed to adopting this framework, such references should be removed.

Finally, the bill corrects minor drafting errors and otherwise ensures consistency in drafting style. The bill will ensure the national electricity framework, which represents the best electricity practice in Australia, continues to be fit-for-purpose for the Northern Territory.

I commend the bill to honourable members and table the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND FAIR TRADING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 17)**

Continued from 16 March 2017.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, while the opposition has committed to measures which will stimulate the economy, reduce the cost of living for Territorians and encourage business growth, this bill serves none of those purposes. It is derivative, duplicative and insufficient to remedy the consistent exploitation of Territory consumers and businesses through excessively high fuel prices.

The best case scenario with this legislation is it will marginally increase the ability of Territorians to access fuel pricing information and help them seek out the lowest price in this area. I say 'marginally' because there are currently at least three virtually identical sources of retail fuel prices already available to Territory consumers.

The worst case scenario, which is far more likely, is this entire enterprise is a colossal waste of time, taxpayer money and departmental effort that will do nothing to lower the fuel prices or increase competition in the retail fuel market in the Territory.

Instead of listening to experts in the field, including the ACCC and private business, and crafting a reporting scheme that would stimulate competition in the Territory market, including requiring retailers to disclose profit margins and encourage entry by independents, the Gunner Labor government has, unsurprisingly, chosen the path of least political resistance and carried on with a policy that looks impressive and shiny in press releases but will not substantially benefit Territorians.

When the government announced this MyFuel NT website scheme it invited consultation. Implicating consulting experts is the idea that when informed that a particular policy is incomplete, inefficient and unrealistic the government would reassess its position and implement a compromised solution that addresses the issues raised through the consultation.

That has not happened in either this case or a number of other incidents where the Gunner Labor government members' policies were shown, through consultation, to be ill-conceived and undesirable, and Dan Murphy's springs to mind. Instead, submissions for established fuel information providers informed the government that its scheme, in its current form, would be expensive, extremely difficult to implement and would not be successful in lowering fuel prices.

However, rather than changing their plans to match reality or supplementing it with provisions that would give it meaning, such as requiring retailers to provide profit margin information or increasing market competition, they decided they knew best and rolled out an unimproved, unaltered scheme. It is extremely disappointing that the government did not take the opportunity to improve this policy initiative and make it something that would have the sustained effect of lowering prices at the pump.

It is very telling that the announcement of MyFuel did not influence fuel retailers to be more competitive in anticipation of increased regulation. Instead, it is clear that fuel retailers are indifferent to the government's MyFuel NT plan, as evidenced by the marked rise in fuel prices just days after the announcement of the scheme.

The MyFuel consultation was issued on 12 January 2017. Instead of curbing or decreasing petrol prices, the announcement led the Territory to the highest fuel prices in the nation in February 2017. At that time Darwin consumers were paying an average of \$1.41 per litre compared with \$1.31 per litre in the rest of Australia. As at Saturday 15 April the average price for regular unleaded petrol in Adelaide was \$1.17 per litre while in Darwin the average price was a full 10c higher, at about \$1.27.

Fuel retailers know that this incomplete, derivative and half-baked scheme will have no meaningful effect on market conditions or the exorbitant profits that retailers enjoy in the Territory fuel market, so they have nothing to fear.

This is in stark contrast to the market reaction to the 2015 Country Liberals plan to require retailers to reveal and publish their profit margins to Territorians. In fact, the mere announcement of the Fuel Price Disclosure Bill and related consultation in 2015 caused the Territory to move from the most expensive fuel market in Australia to the cheapest in the country within just a few weeks.

It represented the first and only time that monthly average Darwin prices were lower in the five largest cities since the ACCC started to regularly collect Darwin prices in January 2000. The lesson should have been clear to both the Gunner Labor government and regulators that increased scrutiny on competition and profit margins has a real, measurable effect on prices.

However, this explicit, empirical lesson seems to have been lost on the government entirely. Perhaps the most striking flaw in the MyFuel plan as rolled out by the government is that it adds very little, if anything at all, to the wide range of existing fuel price reporting in the Territory. Increased retail price transparency was one of the recommendations made by the ACCC in its 2015 report on the Darwin petrol market; however, shortly after that report was released a number of things happened which changed the landscape concerning retail price transparency.

Perhaps the most important change came about in December 2015 when the ACCC settled Federal Court proceedings against Informed Sources Australia Pty Ltd. Prior to December 2015 Informed Sources had collected retail price information on behalf of certain subscribers, including BP, Caltex, Woolies and 7-Eleven but did not share that information with the general public.

As a result of the settlement Informed Sources agreed to make pricing information available to consumers at the same time it was received by the retailers. This resulted in the current MotorMouth platform which includes both a website and a mobile application that provide prices to consumers within 15 minutes of a retailer posting a change.

Indeed, today there are at least four websites that currently provide Territorians with updated information regarding retail fuel prices. These include MotorMouth, Compare the Market, WikiCamps and Petrol Spy.

For example, Petrol Spy provides a website and a convenient mobile app that allows consumers to see the specific price at the pump at every petrol station in the Territory. The stations are displayed on a map with the prices predominantly displayed above an icon that designates them as one of the big four retailers—Woolies, Coles, Puma and United—or independent.

It is clear from the polished nature of this website and its mobile app that Petrol Spy spent millions of dollars perfecting its platform and ensuring that pricing information is accurate and up-to-date. Given the refinement of these existing products, such as MotorMouth and Petrol Spy, it is difficult to understand why the Gunner Labor government feels the need to enter this space. It is clear from the existing platforms that private parties are willing and able to provide accurate, up-to-date pricing information to Territory consumers.

Consumers do not even need to go on the Internet to get an idea of prices in their area. The currently available sources of pricing information also include traditional media sources. Various newspapers, radio stations and television programs supplement the sources available on the web by providing periodic pricing information to consumers. For instance, the *NT News* publishes the average fuel prices in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine on a daily basis.

Moreover, potential costs of this program have not been sufficiently explained by the government, although we have been told that the budget will include \$240 000 for set up and \$250 000 year-on-year for maintenance. The scheme will be administered by Consumer Affairs, which I am sure will do an admirable job with the resources it is given; however, the fact it has only been allocated one full-time employee to administer this scheme is concerning.

As part of its submission to the government during the consultation announced in January, Informed Sources estimated that a polished professional website and mobile application would cost in excess of \$6m. Even if we were to assume this number is excessive, Informed Sources estimated that website development, testing and design would cost more than \$500 000. Even if that number is high, it does not include such costs as compliance and support.

The government scheme puts the compliance responsibility on Consumer Affairs and consumers. That means it has been left to Consumer Affairs and, failing that, consumers to verify that the fuel prices being submitted to MyFuel NT are accurate. In the real world this means driving around to the petrol station and sighting it in person. When only a single employee is dedicated to the project, it is hard to believe this individual will be able to simultaneously oversee the building of a website, implementing regulation concerning the reporting of prices and compliance with the scheme.

Compliance is vital because there is a high temptation for fuel retailers to report bogus prices to undercut their competition. Some of the costs of implementation of the scheme are also dismissed by the fact nobody has yet seen the aforementioned regulations that will govern this scheme on the ground. For example, provisions in the bill will require most, if not all, fuel retailers to change their signage due to the fact they will no longer be able to advertise discounted fuel prices. However, we do not know how long it

will take to accomplish that task, which is estimated to cost in excess of \$5000 per outlet, a cost which will most likely be passed on to consumers.

Additionally, because regulations have not been issued, it is unknown whether some retailers will need to purchase special software or equipment to provide the price data in the format that will satisfy the government, or what the time frame for reporting price changes will be.

Many questions remain, but the biggest question by far is, why has the Gunner Labor government decided to implement a scheme that does nothing to augment the fuel transparency that is already being offered to motorists by private providers?

Given that private providers of retail fuel price information currently cover the field, the MyFuel scheme will not have any real impact on fuel prices in the Territory over the short or long term. To think otherwise underestimates the market forces at work in the Territory market for fuel, including the lack of competition and absence of scrutiny of profits being taken by the big four: Woolworths; Coles; Puma; and United.

As the ACCC concluded in 2015, the market for petrol in the Territory is not competitive, and providing another unnecessary vehicle for the publishing of retail fuel prices will not remedy this situation. Unlike the rest of Australia, prices are extremely inelastic, meaning they do not respond to normal marketplace pressures as they do in other places.

In addition, due to the lack of meaningful competition, when the wholesale price of fuel decreases it is not matched by a decline in the retail price. This is the point at which Territory retailers reap supernormal profits. In a competitive market a decrease in wholesale price would immediately incentivise retailers to drop their prices in order to lure consumers away from competitors.

Due to the very limited number of competitors in the Territory market, retailers deliberately maintain high prices to ensure they all share in the windfall of these extraordinary high profit margins. In other words, the profits reaped by keeping prices higher are greater than lowering the prices and outselling competitors.

As a result, the ACCC report concluded that in the period of 2011 to 2014 Darwin consumers paid about \$26m more for fuel than they would have in a competitive fuel market. In that period net profit per site more than doubled. As a result Darwin retailers reaped profits over 10 times the average in Adelaide, despite the fact the cost of supplying fuel in Adelaide, including transportation costs, is identical to that in Darwin. This means the lack of real competition in retail fuel markets in Darwin allows retailers to prop up price and profit levels by 10c or more at the expense of the businesses, families and economy in general.

The primary reason the Territory market for fuel is not competitive is that a mere four retailers, the big four, control prices for around 97% of the retail petrol volume. To put that differently, independent retailers account for only 3% of the market. This allows the big four to essentially ignore the independents and set prices at whatever level they like, reaping huge profits in the process. As the ACCC concluded:

With a lack of effective competition, fuel retailers in Darwin have been able to enjoy high and increasing margins ... competitive pressure to reduce retail prices when TGPs were decreasing has been weak in Darwin.

Providing price data to consumers that is already available from other sources will not increase competition in the retail fuel market. The Treasurer will likely argue that the MyFuel NT scheme adds a new dimension because it requires real time reporting of price changes; however, that is a bit of a red herring. Unlike New South Wales, where prices change on a daily or hourly basis based on competitive pressures, prices in the Territory are extremely sticky. The upshot is that real time publishing of fuel prices will not increase any transparency in the Territory because fuel prices only change once every seven to 11 days.

There is a significant danger that real time reporting of retail fuel prices will make it easier for retailers to charge higher prices to consumers. As the ACCC has concluded:

The direct exchange of price information between suppliers to improve price transparency deserves close scrutiny. The direct exchange of price information between suppliers is conducive to anti-competitive coordination, particularly in concentrated markets.

The Northern Territory is the most concentrated retail fuel market in the country, making enforcement of real time price disclosure particularly risky. This may make an already bad situation even worse. To this

point, the National Roads and Motorists' Association, the NRMA, linked this signalling of price information in a submission to the Standing Committee on Economics.

Price signalling is utilised by oil companies to skirt anti-trust laws that prohibit price fixing, an element of which is an express agreement or commitment between competitors to maintain high prices. By publishing their prices in real time to competitors, oil companies can effectively fix prices through tacit agreement without attracting attention from the ACCC or breaching cartel provisions under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*.

As the NRMA concluded, signalling leads to the retention of prices 'above the competitive level' and can lead to 'inefficient outcomes for the economy and reducing wellbeing for consumers'. By publishing real time fuel price information the government is actually making it far easier for fuel retailers to maintain high prices and discourage discounting by competitors.'

The ACCC understood that instituting only one easy fix, such as publishing real time price quotes for fuel, would not fix the anti-competitive market forces in the Territory, which is why the ACCC provided eight separate recommendations to encourage entry into the retail petrol market, increase transparency and promote competition. Among these recommendations were:

1. promoting new entry in the retail petrol market, including making appropriate sites available for independent retailers, and providing loans or subsidies to ensure that independent retailers are able to purchase wholesale fuel on competitive terms
2. providing the public with information on the ownership and control of retail outlets, such as the fact Puma, BP, Gulf and Caltex brands all have their prices set by Puma Energy, and increasing scrutiny on wholesalers
3. changing the Northern Territory Government's fuel supply arrangements to encourage government employees to shop around for the best price, thereby promoting competition in the Territory fuel market
4. increasing transparency not only through the publishing of retail prices, but also monitoring and publishing margins and profits of fuel retailers, which can shine a light on what is happening in the market.

On 23 November 2015 the Chief Minister, then Leader of the Opposition, announced: 'A Labor government will accept and implement all recommendations of the Australian competition and consumer commission on fuel prices in the Territory.'

This bill and the MyFuel scheme fall far short of implementing all the recommendations of the ACCC. Each of the ACCC's recommendations were focused on increasing competition either directly or indirectly in the fuel market in the Territory. Just a month after the 2015 report was issued, increased transparency over retail prices was provided for through the ACCC's settlement with informed sources. The ACCC therefore solved that problem.

The government could have made real changes to the competitive landscape in the Territory fuel market but chose to provide a solution that already exists. What the Territory needs is more independent fuel retailers and allowances to allow them to enter the market on competitive footing with the big four retailers. Measures such as setting aside prime land for additional petrol stations, providing subsidies and assistance to independent retailers, and requiring the big four to report their profit margins would have gone much further in bringing down fuel prices for Territorians in the long term.

The extra 10% in fuel costs that Territorians pay the oil companies each day represents a significant drain on the Territory economy. There is no value for money returned to Territorians in exchange for that premium. It is simply the siphoning off of millions of dollars that could have been used to support local business instead of padding the pockets of multinational oil companies that immediately move the money out of the Territory.

Complex problems require ambitious solutions, ensuring Territorians pay the same relative price for fuel as the rest of Australia. Putting an end to the stripping of millions of dollars out of the economy deserves a bold response. Simply duplicating services that are already available is inefficient and ineffective. Territory consumers deserve better; they deserve a solution which puts them first and ensures their cost of living is not wastefully increased by opportunistic oil companies.

The opposition will not be supporting this bill.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I support the amendments to the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act*. This government is about fairness, choice and autonomy for all Territorians. This government delivers in the best interest of all, no matter what kind of terrain or remoteness they face. I thank the Treasurer for bringing this innovative legislation to the House.

Under the CLP, fuel prices reached almost 30c per litre more than the Australian average. We have just heard a most extraordinary contribution from the Leader of the Opposition. His opening comments were that the people who sell fuel in the NT have told him they do not want scrutiny and to be honest about the prices they charge Territorians, so do not do this.

The opening salvo was that under this legislation we will be honest. What did the Leader of the Opposition say? Do not do it. He sold Territorians out. It is unbelievable. This is extraordinary. He stood here and said the people who sell fuel do not want this bill. What an extraordinary contribution. I could not believe it. I looked at the Treasurer and said, 'He just sold Territorians out'.

The AANT want this. They will get it. They said this will work for and help Territorians. This will keep the people who sell fuel honest. The AANT have said they want this. I quote them: 'Since ACCC's action taken against Informed Sources in 2016 AANT and NT motorists have lost access to up-to-date information relating to fuel prices. Current providers of fuel pricing rely on crowd-sourcing as major retailers opt out of price disclosure. As a result price information can be delayed by many days. Additionally these apps have very little penetration in the Northern Territory.'

The AANT recognise what we are doing here. They recognise we are keeping people honest about the price of fuel they sell to Territorians. They recognise the importance of competitive tension.

The Leader of the Opposition has said, 'We are going to choose the side of fuel companies over Territorians looking for a reasonable price to put petrol in their car', a quite extraordinary contribution. I could not believe it. I am still in shock that he would lead with that.

We are choosing Territorians. We are putting them first. The CLP is putting Territorians last, again. Every time they have a choice they choose the one in which Territorians go last. That is their choice. That is the policy of the CLP.

We will implement all the recommendations of the ACCC report. This is one of them. The negotiations are coming up soon on the government contract for fuel cards. The ACCC said we should look at how we can use that to create competitive tension. Treasury is working on what that would look like and what that actually means. That is coming up. We cannot get there yet; there is a contract in place. We will be implementing all the recommendations of the ACCC report, unlike the CLP.

They introduced a bill, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned it, and they never passed it. It just sat on the books. They never acted. What was quite incredible—the former Chief Minister did this and the Leader of the Opposition has just given a lengthy speech and done it again. The CLP refuse to acknowledge or give credit to the incredible award-winning media campaign that put intense pressure on the people who sell petrol. Channel Nine, *NT News* and Mix 104.9 got together and said, 'We have had enough', because the government was not doing anything. 'We are going to lead the charge on this.' They won an award for that. The late Pete Davies was incredible in what he did there.

You cannot underestimate the impact of that media campaign. You would have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to get the same level of pressure, but this was even better because it was the media outlets directly saying, 'We have had enough'. It was incredible.

The former Chief Minister refused to give credit to that media campaign. We have just had the Leader of the Opposition do the same. That is quite disgraceful.

There was an incredible effort made by many to put pressure on fuel companies to decrease prices. We acknowledge and thank them. If it ever gets out of control again I would like to think they would lead the charge again. It takes more than government. It takes a community sometimes. The media were incredible when they did that. I thank them for what they did.

We will stand up for Territorians, and I thank the Treasurer for bringing this before the House. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission investigated the Darwin petrol market in 2014. Its research revealed that lower levels of competition were the main driver of higher prices. We have brought this bill forward to create competitive tension.

The ACCC has advised, because we have been talking with them, that the benefit to consumers far outweighs the effect of collusive pricing behaviour, which was the excuse the Leader of the Opposition gave when trying to explain why he is backing the side of people who sell fuel over Territorians. The ACCC advised that is an absolute furphy; the Leader of the Opposition has fallen for it hook, line and sinker.

We have been speaking to the ACCC about what we have been doing in this space. The CLP introduced a bill and did not pass it. Now they are choosing the side of people who sell fuel over Territorians. They have come up with something the ACCC has said is nonsense. We are choosing Territorians; the CLP is putting them last again.

I thank the media again for the very impressive campaign they led. We will implement all the recommendations; this is just one of them.

As the Treasurer reminded the House last sittings, market behaviour displayed by many fuel retailers in the past has been unacceptable. Government must act, and it has done so by introducing this bill.

The Territory government proposes to implement a Territory-wide mandatory retail fuel price reporting scheme named MyFuel NT, which will be managed by NT Consumer Affairs. The scheme aims to empower consumers to make better, more-informed decisions with minimal intervention required from government and minimal burden on business.

A one cent per litre reduction in the price of fuel could save Territory motorists millions of dollars per year. MyFuel NT will increase the competition in the retail fuel market, leading to downward pressure on the cost of fuel and living in the NT.

This government understands that containing the costs of essential services will assist Territorians to succeed. As stated last week, Budget 2017–18 is here for all Territorians through a range of housing options, such as supporting young adults and families to get a foot in the door through the first home buyer support of no stamp duty on the first \$500 000; a \$10 000 renovation grant; the first home builders support of \$26 000; and the \$7000 principle place of residence rebate support, helping people to own a special little piece of the Territory.

Social housing and supported accommodation will span across the Territory, because you are only as strong as your weakest player. Supporting families will also lighten the cost-of-living burden, with the NT government subsidising \$6m each year on childcare. A back to school bonus of \$150 per child will see more children with the tools they need to succeed. Children in sport will also receive \$200 a year to assist them in joining local sporting clubs.

Importantly, Budget 2017–18 will make no increase to the cost of power. One of our election promises was to provide certainty over the four years of our term and to set power prices to CPI after what the CLP did, which was a 30% increase in its mini-budget, an immediate and direct slug on Territorians with no compassion or respect for the circumstances they were in. It was an extraordinary decision made by the CLP.

As a consequence of the CLP providing no certainty to Territorians and businesses, we said, coming into this term, 'We will provide certainty on how we price power in this term', and we made a decision not to increase power prices. That will be in line with CPI. That was in the budget, and that is the certainty you get from this government. We put Territorians first, unlike the CLP, which, for some reason, continues to choose the option that sees Territorians go last. We have made an ongoing commitment to only increase prices in line with CPI; \$80m in power and \$6.7m in water and sewerage subsidies have been made.

Most importantly, this government has made sure the cost of living assists those who have contributed to our society the longest, our seniors. Budget 2017–18 is making sure our seniors are looked after, with \$33.9m put aside for the concessions the minister is working on, for commencement on 1 January.

We, as a government, are building new confidence in the economy that will leverage greater levels of private investment, in turn creating more jobs growth and wealth for the Territory. This government is about driving innovation and bringing digital business opportunities to the Territory.

MyFuel NT will use an open data approach. Territorians will have free access via our website and mobile app to live price data from fuel retailers in the Territory so they can easily find the cheapest fuel, whether it be unleaded, diesel or other fuel types.

As the Minister for Trade, Business and Innovation, I am pleased to see that Budget 2017–18 further supports small businesses, with \$6.9m spent on small business development programs; \$5m for security assistance grants for businesses to improve security on their premises; \$1m in additional business innovation support initiative grants each year to enable local business to undertake research and development; a \$7.9m focus on the small business champions unit created by government and aimed at assisting small businesses; and an additional \$20m in the Immediate Work Grants program, which will help improve community facilities for all Territorians. This is a total investment of \$30m.

MyFuel NT calls for all fuel retailers to be on an equal playing field, making the smaller, family-owned fuel stations as competitive as the supermarket-owned petrol stations. MyFuel NT will benefit the entire Territory. Whether they are remote or high level retail fuel outlets, everyone will be able to gain information from every part of the Territory.

This government is determined to invest in remote communities, which is why we have created a major and historic boost in the bush with the \$1.1bn investment in remote housing; \$734m in spending on roads to connect communities and span private sector growth, especially in agribusiness and mining; programs focused on repairs to bush ovals and improvements to strategic infrastructure of local governments; along with the development of bush schools and homeland schools.

Alice Springs will have \$20m for investing so it can be a destination in its own right and have a vibrant CBD. Tennant Creek will get a new integrated family centre, upgrades to sports facilities and a mining and services centre. Katherine will be the Territory's logistics and agribusiness hub—I prefer 'inland port' but I think I am losing that fight now—receiving significant funding to improve Nitmiluk, invest in schools, the building of a new fire station and to invest in a new arts trail. Katherine is a very important place and there is a real buzz to it at the moment.

This government is creating growth. MyFuel NT will allow all Territorians to reach all corners to bear witness to the positive changes being put in place. MyFuel NT will also benefit the holiday and business visitors to the Territory by supporting more informed planning about the availability of fuel and the prices retailed in the Territory, particularly those who are travelling into the central and remote areas of the outback by vehicle.

Tourism is important to the growth of the Territory's economic future. This government has provided \$43m to market the Northern Territory, including an \$8m injection for promotion supporting tourism and products that share our stories with the world. The introduction of this bill will also rely on the Territory's retail fuel market transparency legislation with other jurisdictions, particularly the New South Wales FuelCheck scheme implemented in 2016 under Premier Mike Baird.

The Leader of the Opposition apparently does not like his colleagues in New South Wales; Premier Mike Baird has done this but that is not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition. Through the public consultation period of January and February this year the government has listened, and now we are taking action. A soft release of MyFuel NT is proposed to start in the second half of 2017 with the mandatory compliance date being 1 November 2017.

These amendments benefit the consumer and business owner, assist the consumer who lives in Palmerston but works in the CBD, identify the best outlet to fuel up and assist the small retail fuel station to be on even ground with the supermarket giant fuel stations. This bill puts Territorians first; that is what we do as a government.

We are committed to being a government for all Territorians; this Territory government will deliver for you. I support the Treasurer for bringing this bill forward, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I have heard a number of issues raised today about this important matter, some I agree with and some I do not. We all want cheaper prices, there is no doubt about that, but

how to get that cheaper prices and competition and whether government is interfering in this through introducing its own MyFuel website is something that needs to be debated properly.

The whole idea behind the introduction of this bill was to encourage competition and therefore lower prices. To do that the government has decided it will change the way price boards are displayed and will bring in a site of its own through Consumer Affairs, showing people what the prices are throughout the Northern Territory.

I would have been more supportive of this two years ago, but if you look up the weekly petrol price reports from the week ending 7 May—you need to understand where we are in relation to other states. For instance, the gate price in Darwin as of 5 May was 118.8c a litre, slightly above Hobart, which is the norm; Sydney, 114c a litre; and Adelaide, 113c a litre. It is roughly 4c to five 5c dearer to buy fuel in Darwin.

Looking at the retail prices for Darwin on weekend of 7 May, these are the average prices for the week: Darwin price at the end of that week was 131.6c per litre; 133.4c in Adelaide; 138.6c in Brisbane; 132.4c in Melbourne; and it was higher than Sydney at 124.7c.

When you look at the ACCC's webpage on trends, you see that prices in places like Sydney go up like you would not believe. It is probably hard to say that could be a fair comparison.

Considering we are paying about three to 4c a litre more for fuel at the gate price, we are still cheaper than Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne and Hobart by 8c a litre, yet we get the same gate price as Hobart.

What is the reason for introducing this? If you look at the figures today—you can go to the past because I know what it was like—what is the problem? Anyone can get these figures off the website. They are not hidden from the public view. I am questioning the need to do this because we are in tight fiscal times. We know it will cost, in the first year, half a million to set up, and it will cost a quarter of a million each year going forward. Will it really achieve something?

The ACCC's report also focuses on something that is more important, the thing that concerned Territory residents, which is the profit margin. Today's profit margins compares even better than some of the interstate capital cities. That is what people really want to know. They want to know people can make a fair profit from selling fuel. They want to make sure people are not making an exorbitant profit, which we believed they were previously. Things have changed in the last couple of years.

The issue the Chief Minister spoke about, helping independents—people would have read, I hope, Informed Sources' contribution to this debate. It put in a submission to the Department of Treasury and said a number of things in relation to this. It said: 'In a market such as Darwin it is important to recognise that regulation of petrol price transparency there is already very good coverage from fuel pricing from MotorMouth.'

If you go to MotorMouth's website you will get a percentage of Darwin retail outlets with the prices from each of them. It does not cover everybody but it covers a fair percentage.

In places like where I live, I will not chase fuel from Howard Springs into Darwin to fuel up. I will know, because I am a local, roughly what the prices are in my area. I do not look up the website; I just know because I will go down to Coolalinga and see the price; I go back home and see the other one at Howard Springs. We are not like Melbourne and Sydney where you have a huge number of outlets over a big city where people go hunting for cheaper prices. Most people here will know the local prices anyway.

MotorMouth said: 'We have to see whether what we are doing today will actually make an effect.'

They are saying—the Opposition Leader has said it, and it is an ACCC recommendation—we need more discounters; we need more people in the market. That is where you will really get competition. I remember the days in Katherine and Tennant Creek when one independent in Katherine and one in Tennant Creek made a difference to the prices. As soon as you do not have that, things change.

They also said, in relation to outside of Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs: 'The concentration of service stations is very low, with many towns having only one or two retailers and those locations, due to the large distances between sites, the competitive intensity is very low. In these locations there is little incentive for retailers to discount. Reporting fuel prices will not change this and only add to retailers' costs of doing business.'

In Katherine it does not take long to go around town and see all the outlets. Most people would go down the main street and see United on one side, Shell on the other, the Woolworths site and a couple of others, but it is not a big town so it does not take much to find out what the prices are.

The other issue that was raised by the Chief Minister is an important because the smaller companies are will not be able to compete with the bigger companies unless they cut their margins quite considerably. They will not get fuel at the same price as Woolies and the big companies. They will get it at a higher price and their margin will be lower.

As MotorMouth said: 'The mandatory posting however of fuel prices disadvantages small independents as prices become more exposed to larger competitors. Many independents are better served to fly under the radar than to compete head-on with larger competitors on price.'

There are small outlets which charge more but they are local family-run businesses so they do not have the turnover that will make their business profitable. They need to have a higher margin.

This issue also applies to outback communities which sell fuel. That is why the profit margin is more important than this. I have been to Bulman; it costs a lot of money. You can grumble that Bulman charges an arm and a leg for fuel, but what is the cost of the fuel? I do not know what they get for fuel. They are operating a small store. Is it fair that we put up \$1.80 a litre compared with Katherine at \$1.39 when we do not know the margin?

That is why I am not a great supporter of what is being put forward.

There are only two other states, from my reading, that deal with this sort of legislation. The other states have dealt with price boards. I do not mind if the government wants to change price boards. To be honest, I can read the price boards: the top one is the discount one; the ones at the bottom are what I normally pay. It looks good, but is it good? Will it make a difference? Will it cost all those retailers \$5000 to change their signs. Will it achieve anything? I have not seen any proof of the pudding that it will. It looks cosmetic. I am not going die on the stake for it. I am not sure that people cannot tell the difference between discount and what the price is. We are used to it. It has been there for donkeys' ages, since Coles and Woolies brought in their shopper dockets.

This type of legislation is not around everywhere. There is a radio station that does it. I pick up on what the Chief Minister said, that Channel Nine and Mix 104.9 did a great job in promoting prices. Perhaps that is where we should be looking. We are looking at something that will cost a lot of money to operate. We do not have any guarantees it will make a difference. Right now, without that happening, we have cheaper prices than three other capital cities in Australia even though we are paying up to 4c more at the gate; so, what is the problem at the moment?

I am worried we are spending money which we could keep for other things. This is based on a presumption that this will make a difference to something that is not a problem at the moment. That is my concern.

Fair Go For Fuel is the Tasmanian radio broadcasters' campaign for fuel price monitoring. In Tasmania they simply do it by having the public ring up and give the prices. What is wrong with that? It is free. Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin are small places and do not have many outlets. I do not go to Nightcliff from Howard Springs for my fuel.

People in that area would be happy to hear the prices. It would be a good thing for the newspapers to include—print the daily prices. Promote it through the private sector; I do not think that would do any harm.

We are spending money on something we should not spend it on. If you want to tell people the prices, put it out for tender. See what people come up with that is cheaper than operating at half a million dollars, then a quarter of a million dollars every year. Is there a cheaper way to do it? That is what I prefer.

I will not support it, not because I do not think people should be notified about prices but because I do not think it is the government's role to do that. There are alternatives. I am not here to stick up for Informed Sources—they are the only ones who sent me a letter. I am not sure I agree with their costings. The costings from the government seem a lot higher than what the department sent me.

Those at Treasury are wonderful people and send me accurate information, but it is not the same as the information Informed Sources sent me, saying it will cost up to \$6.8m. That is why I think it would be better to put it out to public tender if the government wants to go down this path.

I do not see this as a high priority, but the important thing to note is the profit margin. That is what shows you are out of sync with the rest of Australia, not the retail price. The profit margin is not hard to show—gate price, retail price, profit margin. Compare that with Adelaide's gate price and retail price, then Hobart's prices et cetera. It is not hard to do.

With all the competition elsewhere in Australia, if we are selling fuel in the Territory cheaper than places like Melbourne, then what are we complaining about? They have the competition. Out bush is a difficult area to compare, but we are selling fuel cheaper than Melbourne and Adelaide at present.

I am worried we are spending money on something that is not essential at the moment. I prefer the information from government. It has its own trading site showing the profit margin. It could copy this out of the AIP site. Just take what you need off that—the gate price and the average retail price. Tell people that if they want to find out if fuel companies in the Territory are making an exorbitant profit, this is where they can find out. Governments and the community will start to crank up, like Mix 104.9, Channel Nine and the newspapers did. When they see that profit margin it will be public pressure that will change it. That is, to some extent, what happened before.

At the moment I do not see a problem with our prices. They have gone up and down since; I have seen the graph. When I look at prices this week—unless they knew we would debate this and decided to put their prices down—I do not see this as a major issue that we need to spend that sort of money on.

If the government wants to go ahead with it I would rather see it go to public tender—see if someone can set up an app. There might be a requirement in the legislation that people who get a phone call from this company must supply the information. But, see what it would cost on the private market because I do not see this as something the Treasury has to operate under. There could be alternative ways of doing this which are much cheaper, either through the media, as has been done before, or seeing whether a private company could come up with something cheaper than what the government is offering.

That is even fair just from the point of view of a competitive nature. If we are talking about competition we might say, 'Let us put out a tender to see whether we can beat the Treasury's price'—that is competition—'and see if we can get something that would be just as beneficial'.

The ACCC and Informed Sources said we need more people in the market to have competition, but they cannot be of those big four or you are just going round in circles. Secondly, the real issue is profit margin; that is the bit that needs to be publicised. That is the reason I am not supporting this.

It is a bad idea to send out these prices; this is not the way to do it. It is a costly way to do it, especially when we are supposed to be in a tight budget situation. I think we could spend that money more wisely.

Ms MOSS (Corporate and Informed Services): Madam Speaker, I stand in support of this bill and commend the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics for bringing it forward. We are all familiar with the fuel discussions over the past couple of years. They ignited during the Casuarina by-elections so I am very familiar with the media campaign that came out of the discussion around fuel prices at the time.

I echo the comments of the Chief Minister because he is quite right that the opposition and the former government never gave due credit to the community and media action that resulted in positive changes to fuel prices for Territorians. That was led by Mix 104.9 and, of course, Pete Davies and Katie Woolf, Channel Nine and the *NT News*, who kept a real watching brief on what was happening with fuel prices and kept pressure on the government of the day.

As the Chief Minister said, they won an award for that. Everybody else can recognise the important part they played in informing consumers and saying, 'Enough is enough. We can do something collectively about this.' I too commend all those media outlets and the community on their work; it would be really great to see the opposition acknowledge the many factors that occurred during that process.

MyFuel will be good for Territorians; it will bring down the cost of living in the Territory and help bring fuel prices into line with other jurisdictions across Australia. Fuel prices contribute to cost-of-living pressures every day for families across all our electorates. For any family with a car—in my electorate many have multiple cars—this adds to their cost of living pressures every day.

The legislation will introduce a mandatory fuel price reporting scheme, requiring NT fuel retailers to report fuel prices, to be introduced on 1 November 2017. This will encourage fuel retailers to price competitively. The behaviour of the retail fuel market in the NT has been subject to public concern over some years. It is pleasing that the minister outlined the introduction of minimum standards prohibiting the display of discounted fuel prices and reducing confusion. The Member for Nelson has a view about that; he is very clear on it, but we should be encouraging people to be up-front about the price of fuel.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the ACCC, has found that between 2000 and 2011 Darwin motorists paid on average around 10c per litre more for petrol than motorists in the five largest cities. The ACCC also noted that high fuel prices in Darwin were mainly due to high retail margins and profits and that net profit in Darwin was around 10 times the average in Adelaide. That is huge.

In response to these findings we have committed to adopting recommendations made by the ACCC to help improve competition in the retail fuel market across the NT and to assist consumers in making more informed fuel purchase decisions. One of the important aspects of the ACCC report was the increased transparency and promotion of effective competition.

I am pleased that MyFuel NT will be a Territory-wide mandatory retail fuel price reporting scheme managed by NT Consumer Affairs. My Department of Corporate and Information Services is working with the Departments of Attorney-General and Justice, and Treasury and Finance to establish the MyFuel NT online portal, providing real time fuel prices from consumers across all retail fuel outlets in the Territory.

The MyFuel NT program will be consistent with other jurisdictional reporting schemes and will display fuel prices using an Internet-based online portal. The MyFuel NT online portal will enable motorists to locate the lowest fuel price in their region.

The benefits to Territorians are obvious and will include increased competition and downward pressure on retail fuel prices through improved transparency, the ability for consumers to shop around for the lowest local fuel price and the identification of price leaders to allow consumers' purchasing habits to play a role in driving competition on price. It will provide data free to third parties in line with government's open data principles, and provide a valuable and reliable source of comprehensive fuel price information free to consumers.

The development of the MyFuel NT system is under way, and it will be ready for trial release in quarter three of 2017. That is really soon and is a proactive measure. The MyFuel NT application will adopt an open data approach and provide fuel price data free of charge to third party commercial entities such as mobile apps, developers and current data providers.

This will help drive innovation and new digital business opportunities in the Territory. It aligns with the open data commitment made by the Territory Labor government we took to the election. We believe opening up data for Territorians, as the MyFuel NT initiative does, has clear economic benefits for all Territorians, in addition to social and environmental benefits in other contexts, and increased transparency.

The Gunner Labor government believes Territorians have a right to access information gathered and held on their behalf by government, with proper safeguards in place in relation to issues like privacy. Government data is a valuable resource with the recent open government data and why it matters report to the Prime Minister suggesting access to government data has the potential to generate up to \$25bn per year for the Australian economy. Easier access to Territory government data also helps businesses create more jobs and enables the creation of new innovative businesses and restoring trust in government.

We are awaiting the tabling from the federal government of the final report to the productivity commission inquiry into data availability and its use, which will be this month, to examine the report's impacts and application in our context.

We will then be developing a detailed public data proposal including policy position, project business case, methodology and technology platform cost and data requirements. We will be working in depth with our key data holding agencies in framing the proposal. I am putting out our public data policy for comment. We will be engaging with agencies to determine the data sets and assist agencies to undertake data readiness tasks.

In September next year we will launch the Territory government's public data portal to help crowd source the next wave of Territory economic and social development. Open data must comply with the digital

standards the Northern Territory Government is adopting, particularly with respect to making it secure and usable. Open data and examples like MyFuel sit squarely with the Gunner Labor government's broader innovation agenda.

As the Chief Minister has said in our innovation paper, Labor believes creating a culture of innovation must start at the top and be reflected in every area of government. This includes but is not limited to expanding and diversifying our economic growth, delivery of housing services, education, health, water and land management, renewable energy and procurement processes.

The shifting global mindset to more collaborative, flexible and digital solutions to some of our most complex issues is an exciting one. It holds incredible potential for the Northern Territory for those willing to embrace it. The MyFuel initiative is a perfect example of that. The promotion and facilitation of open data, which MyFuel does, reflects the Gunner Labor government's priority of restoring integrity to government.

The ACCC found that the market was not delivering fair prices for fuel in the Northern Territory, and MyFuel is an example of how the Gunner Labor government is responding to the expectations of Territorians for government to act on the cost of living.

MyFuel is an example of how this government is working to restore people's trust in government, and I am pleased that my department is playing a central role in making this a reality. MyFuel is not only a great initiative to bring down the high price of fuel in the Northern Territory; it also demonstrates this government's commitment to open data, innovation and acting on the concerns of Territorians.

MyFuel will deliver economic benefits to the Territory and will benefit families as well, freeing up the financial capacity for families to invest in other aspects of their lives and their children. MyFuel is good policy for our community.

I am proud to stand here, as part of the Gunner Labor government, in support of it. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I share the Chief Minister's astonishment at the Opposition Leader's opening remarks regarding this bill.

I listened and thought to myself, 'Golly, this all sounds incredibly familiar. I have heard this before or have read it somewhere.' And then it clicked; it came from the submission that was provided to the government by Informed Sources, which owns and operates MotorMouth, which would benefit greatly by being the only app that provides this type of service. Surprise!

The MyFuel NT bill introduces a mandatory fuel reporting scheme across the Northern Territory. Consumers across the Territory will, for the first time, be able to view comprehensive, accurate fuel price information across the Territory. It will help consumers find the cheapest petrol in their region and keep downward pressure on petrol prices through increased competition.

In Katherine this will greatly benefit the high tourism period; it will not only benefit the local Katherine residents. I noticed the Member for Nelson kept pointing out that Katherine is such a small place; it has nine fuel stations and they are not all on the main road. This app will make it easier for tourists to plan their road trips.

The Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Legislation Amendment Bill will allow the government to use regulations to implement MyFuel NT and price board standards. It will also help to establish offences, penalties and offence provisions for those not in compliance with the ACCC. I cannot imagine why you would oppose that.

In addition to the convenience of having an app that will allow consumers to plan their trips, this app will also be a great tool for consumer advocacy. I am all for that.

I support this bill and commend it to the House.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS
Future Leaders of the NT Cattlemen's Association

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of the future leaders of the NT Cattlemen's Association here for Question Time. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION
Business Confidence

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): I move that this Assembly calls on the government to take action to address the lack of business confidence in the Territory. This government tells us that its budget is about jobs and optimism. Those are lofty goals and wonderful buzzwords; however, these words are just spin. Like the budget itself, these words are sickly sweet, honey-laced and ultimately devoid of any substance or long-term vision.

The budget announced by the Treasurer last week has no cohesive economic strategy, lacks an overarching purpose and splashes money around in an irresponsible manner designed only to get the Gunner Labor government looking good in the short term rather than providing long-term wellbeing for Territorians.

The \$1.3bn debt in 2017–18 is shocking. Even more shocking is the unprecedented level of borrowing of around \$5bn by the end of the financial year. According to Labor's own estimates, by 2021 our borrowings will outpace revenues by a staggering \$1.5bn.

The government has attempted to assure Territorians that staggering numbers like \$5.5bn net debt and \$7.5bn in borrowings by 2021 are disciplined and responsible, but everyone is quickly realising that they are representatives of a government with a serious and growing addiction to the irresponsible spending of the public's money. After all, we all understand that spending over \$1m per day of taxpayers' money, simply servicing a dangerous level of debt, is a waste.

Labor rationalises these unprecedented levels of debt, borrowing and interest repayments by stating they are creating jobs, but these are not the long-term, sustainable jobs the Territory needs. There is no doubt the construction of an unneeded water park and a superfluous \$50m cultural centre will provide jobs in the short-term construction phase, but they will not encourage long-term employment in the Territory.

We already have cultural centres and water parks, and the government has failed to produce any businesses cases, projections or estimates of the numbers of long-term jobs or tourist dollars that a water park, an underground car park, or a cultural institution at Myilly Point will bring to the Territory. Unlike any business that would be required to produce a business case to justify new spending, much less massive debt spending, this money is apparently being spent without any rational basis for believing that any return will accrue to Territorians who are footing the bill.

What we desperately need is job creation in the public sector that can be encouraged and grown over time. These jobs flow from harnessing and nurturing the core strengths and assets of the Territory, sectors like agriculture, mining, tourism and onshore gas exploration and production. Instead of stimulating these sectors of the economy, the budget cuts millions from the Tourism budget, fails to provide for any additional spending in the mineral sector and excludes productive infrastructure projects that would expand the agriculture market.

The government tells us that those on this side of the House are pessimists who want to cut jobs simply because we disagree with the choices made in this budget, choices that threaten the livelihoods and futures of each and every Territorian through debilitating debt and the complete lack of long-term vision.

This type of misinformation is not only not helpful, it is indicative of a 'my way or the highway' mentality that is representative of this fledgling new government. When the public, media or opposition voice concern over ill-advised government policy, Labor will either drown out the criticism with misinformation or invent a

distraction to muddy the waters to the point where the public cannot discern Labor-created reality from actual fact.

The Gunner Labor government began its misinformation campaign over a month before the announcement of the budget, with misleading and outright false claims about the GST situation. Territorians were told the GST had been cut by \$2bn over four years. This was consistently labelled as patently incorrect by the federal Treasurer, many commentators and me. Not only has the misstatement not been corrected, it has been proliferated and included in self-serving press releases and flyers paid for by Territorians.

The bottom line is that projections about what the GST share will be in the future are nothing more than self-serving guesses. Projecting a \$2bn shortfall effectively is merely an attempt to absolve the government of its physical responsibility and sets the Commonwealth up as a straw man for Labor to attack. Why have we mortgaged the future of Territorians? The government's answer is, because those people in Canberra do not care about us. It is a predictable political move; it is rubbish.

Labor tells us we can trust them, but they cannot take responsibility for their own actions which have led to unprecedented levels of debt. When challenged on their numbers they point to the executives of the Department of Treasury and Finance, but it is unlikely that any rational Treasury appointee would disagree with the government's narrative, however unfounded, and still expect to keep their jobs.

After confusing the GST situation to the point where the truth was completely obscured by falsehood, the government then flooded the media with self-serving press releases which flaunted all the out-of-control spending represented by their irresponsible budget. These press releases were intended to pour honey over the actual kerosene facts of the budget, including the massive debt being accrued to the detriment of the economy.

Most of these press releases were intended to dress up short-term projects as job-creating projects that would secure jobs. What they failed to indicate is that most of those jobs will not be sustained and will evaporate following the construction of the cultural institution, car park and water park. The goal of all this misdirection and spin was to change the subject from out of control spending and debilitating debt to something more comfortable.

The government does not want Territorians to know that the jobs they keep talking about as a result of the budget will be short-lived, primarily construction jobs that, like a sugar high, will soon disappear and leave the economy with a massive hangover. They are spending money on short-term one-off pet projects that may be able to prop up the economy for the next year or so, but eventually the money will run out when the debt becomes unmanageable, and the jobs will follow.

The Territory really needs long-term job creation fuelled by private investment in businesses that return a dividend to the local economy. This is not only a matter of buying local, which is necessary and proper, but also encouraging private local sector investment. We need comprehensive, long-lasting projects that will achieve economies of scale for the Territory, such as those that flow from onshore gas and mineral exploration. We also need to support and encourage small businesses to grow and prosper, increase the population, grow the economy or bring long-term jobs and prosperity to the Territory.

The vast majority of businesses trading in the Territory are small businesses, over 95%. Small business employs the largest number of workers outside of public administration and safety. Any government that ignores the needs of small business does so at its own peril and to its own detriment; however, this is precisely what the Gunner Labor government is doing.

Rather than dealing with the real issues that are preventing Territory businesses from thriving and growing, the government is racking up debt to spend on pet projects and ignoring measures that would provide increased sustainable employment to Territorians.

Prior to the budget, in January of 2017 the Chamber of Commerce released the results of a survey which asked businesses to outline the top 10 priorities the government needed to tackle to get the economy back on track. More than 450 responded. Brian O'Gallagher stated at the time that businesses:

... desperately want the government to listen directly to their concerns and act quickly.

Let us walk through some of the top priorities outlined by businesses in that survey. Most, if not all, have not been addressed in the budget or by the government policy to date. The number one priority indicated in the survey was:

Increase and Roll Out Strategic Infrastructure Expenditure – NT Government needs to urgently invest in upgrading or providing new strategic infrastructure across the Territory to stimulate the local economy and to help leverage additional private sector investment.

The budget provides for an infrastructure spend that was essentially identical to that announced by the Country Liberal budget in 2016. The difference is that the projects flagged as priority status by the government lack any adherence to any overarching vision and are largely not strategic in nature.

Car parks, cultural institutions and water parks will not stimulate the local economy or leverage additional private sector investment. This is particularly true given that the 2017–18 budget cut funding for tourism marketing and associated activities by over \$5m. The infrastructure spends in the budget are little more than short-term band aids and not a long-term cure.

The second most important priority in the Chamber of Commerce survey was:

Commit to Local Procurement Policy – NT Government and its agencies must commit to and strongly enforce its local procurement policy (and ensure that this policy cascades down to the subcontract level).

To its credit, the Gunner Labor government has, at least in principle, committed to a buy local policy; however, the formal requirements to be applied to that stated policy are yet to be seen. There are many complexities in defining what constitutes a local business—complexities that need to be addressed.

For instance, would a construction contractor that is headquartered interstate and established an office in Darwin three years ago to win work at INPEX be considered local simply because it established a Darwin office and performed work on the INPEX contract? What time, local employment and other requirements will be set up to draw the line between truly local businesses and those that have simply set up a shopfront in the Territory in order to tender for work.

The third priority for businesses in the Chamber survey was:

Maintain Law and Order – Government needs to commit to ensuring law and order is maintained – noting that many businesses are suffering from increased insurance premiums and downtime costs due to vandalism and other crimes.

As I will discuss later, businesses are fed up with the epidemic levels of property crime and antisocial behaviour affecting them. The government's response has been slow and ineffectual, leading businesses to the necessary conclusion that their concerns are not being heard or taken seriously.

If businesses cannot be protected against random burglary, vandalism and antisocial behaviour, this will not grow and prosper the economy. Instead, they will pack up and leave. It is surprising the budget makes allowances for \$10 000 payments for businesses that have been victims of crime; however, this is akin to locking the gate after the horse has bolted.

The effects of crime on Territory businesses were the subject of another Chamber of Commerce survey released last week, which called on the government to make swift changes to protect businesses. So far these calls have gone unheeded.

The fourth priority identified by the Chamber of Commerce survey was:

Abolish Payroll Tax – NT Government needs to have a plan to quickly phase out Payroll Tax, which is simply a tax on employment, and to use this as a competitive edge to attract new businesses to the Territory.

Instead of abolishing any taxes, the government increased fees and imposts on Territorians. In order to abolish the payroll tax the government would need to balance the budget and make difficult decisions about the funding of unnecessary projects. As we have seen, the Gunner Labor government is unwilling to do the hard yards in this respect.

The fifth priority of the business survey was:

Achieve Government Operational Savings – Like many businesses, government needs to streamline its internal bureaucratic operations and direct those savings to minimising debt or supporting more strategic initiatives (such as providing stronger front line services or providing strategic infrastructure).

Clearly, the Gunner Labor government did not listen to this advice. The \$1.3bn debt expanding to \$5.5bn in 2020–21 is massive and debilitating. Spending is not aligned to the goals of creating sustainable jobs or fostering the expansion of small business. Instead, it is focused on short-term projections not linked to a specific business case or economic strategy.

The survey goes on to identify another five priorities that Territory businesses consider essential to rescuing the economy, all of which have been largely ignored by the government. This includes making a decision on onshore gas exploration.

As the survey respondents stated:

NT Government needs to quickly make up its mind on whether and how hydraulic fracturing can proceed in the Northern Territory – so investment and job opportunities associated with the development of an onshore gas industry can be sustainably pursued.

This is a sentiment the Country Liberals and others have consistently voiced; the question of whether onshore gas could be safely produced in the Territory was answered long ago in the affirmative and had the backing of some of the best scientific minds in and outside of Australia.

For each minute that the Gunner Labor government delays the commencement of production we are losing jobs to Western Australia, South Australia and other places that will be happy to employ thousands of people while securing independence for international sources of natural gas to generate electricity and drive industry. Countless jobs have already been lost and many more will follow for as long as this pointless moratorium is allowed to continue.

The budget addresses the symptoms of the slowing economy in the Territory but fails to address the causes. Territory businesses are doing it tough but increased spending on short-term projects will not remedy the underlying infirmities in the business sector. Moreover, the basic lack of confidence in the government to keep businesses safe will put forward policies that will cut down on property crime and antisocial behaviour while hobbling the economy.

As Maslow outlined in his 1943 paper entitled 'A Theory of Human Motivation', concerns about safety effectively prevent humans and businesses from achieving their full potential. In April this year the Chamber of Commerce NT took it upon itself to inform the public and the Gunner Labor government on the issues that were affecting business confidence in a survey of small- and medium-sized businesses. An unprecedented 400 local businesses took time out of their busy days to respond to the survey, eager to have their concerns for 2017 and beyond known to the government.

As Brian O'Gallagher of the Chamber of Commerce commented in the *NT News*:

When businesses are doing well they do not often take the time to be a part of these types of surveys. It is when things are not travelling well that they take the time to get involved.

Of the 400 businesses that responded to the Chamber of Commerce survey, a whopping 65% claimed that they had been a victim of crime and vandalism in the last 12 months. Most of these incidents were break-ins and attempted break-ins. Over 75% of these incidents resulted in damage to property, theft of goods, and physical and emotional impact on staff and operations.

By far the most significant impact was the financial impact the crime visited upon businesses, directly impacting the profitability of these enterprises, with losses ranging from \$1000 to \$150 000. Indeed, over 64% of those businesses did not make a claim on their insurance to cover the impacts, primarily due to the fear of increased premiums or loss of coverage.

The government's own numbers show that commercial break-ins were up an astounding 100% in Darwin for February 2017 as compared to the previous year. There were 728 commercial break-ins in Darwin in the month of February, compared to 364 the previous year. That was in the space of just one month.

For the same period, house break-ins were up 32.9% with 764 home burglaries in February 2017. The statistics are just as worrying for other areas. In Alice Springs and Palmerston commercial break-ins were up 35.4% and 17% respectively, with 409 in Alice Springs and 164 in Palmerston.

Contrary to the view of members of the Labor government, the crime crisis, particularly the dramatic rise in property crimes committed against small businesses that are already struggling to survive a slowing economy and economic headwinds in the Territory, is not hyperbole, over the top or a media beat-up. It is the new, unfortunate reality we find ourselves having to deal with.

However, the government seems dead-set against dealing with the reality of property crime in any direct or immediate way. Despite having passed legislation allowing police to issue electronic monitoring bracelets to those on bail, as far as we know not a single person has been fitted with one. The Chief Minister told us he would give us a briefing. If he really worried about crime he would have had his finger on the pulse and been able to tell us that not a single person has been fitted with a bracelet.

The government has also flatly refused to make additional changes to the *Bail Act* that would decrease property crime, such as removing the presumption in favour of bail for recidivist property offenders and those who have previously breached bail. Allowing offenders to time and again commit crimes and breach bail without any real consequence sends the message that property crime is not serious and this government is not interested in protecting Territory businesses.

The way it stands today this legislation was nothing more than window dressing meant to take pressure off the government in the short term.

In addition, it is well known that most of the crime in the Territory is fuelled by drugs and alcohol. However, instead of dealing with these problems based on the mountains of research currently available on the subject, the Gunner Labor government has decided that a costly inquiry is required in order to tell us what we already know. We know the harm from alcohol can be diminished by measures such as lower density of retail sellers, the introduction of floor prices, increased availability of counselling and rehabilitation, and the presence of police or security officers at outlets. Indeed, the government's focus and credibility in this area is completely non-existent.

First it blocked the establishment of Dan Murphy's based not on a review or inquiry but on the false premise that floor space has nothing to do with reducing the harmful effects of alcohol. They have still, to my knowledge, failed to produce any evidence that floor space, as apart from density of liquor outlets, has any effect whatsoever on harm mitigation.

This resulted in litigation in the Federal Court, an expensive exercise based on nothing but the inability of the government to accept that it was wrong. Now the government intends to legislate its ill-conceived 400 square metre floor space cap in a direct bid to undermine the proceedings in court and further entrench this conflicted, unfair policy decision.

Next it announced yet another inquiry into the harmful effects of alcohol in the Territory. This inquiry will likely cost Territorians millions of dollars and is unlikely to add anything to the volumes of studies, working papers or inquiry results that tell us the ways to mitigate the harmful effects of alcohol in the community. The answer to these problems is not new, but the difficult decisions that take resolve to make—resolve which the government lacks.

Floor prices should be considered but they are out of the question due to Labor Party policy. The futility of the 400 square metre floor space limit should be scrutinised closely but will not be. This is clear, given the introduction of legislation. Lockout laws should be considered but they have also been ruled out.

It is hard to determine what is on the table and what purpose the inquiry led by Justice Riley will serve when Labor has already determined the policies it will and will not implement. The one policy that will apparently not be part of the inquiry is the BDR. Labor is charging ahead with the BDR despite a complete lack of evidence that it works.

It is shocking that the introduction of a floor price, which has been consistently shown by studies to work in reducing alcohol-related harm, is off the table, while the BDR, which presently has no evidence to support it, is being implemented immediately without publishing indications of its usefulness despite this inquiry being called.

The head of emergency at RDH told Sky News that limiting opening hours, decreasing licensing density, police outside bottle shops and floor prices all work; but the evidence base is not there in terms of the BDR.

The budget cuts funding for primary healthcare for alcohol and other drugs. The Central Australian Health Service will receive almost \$3.5m less to deal with alcohol and other drugs in the budget as compared to the PEFO. Similarly, the Top End Health Service will receive almost \$2m less in the budget to deal with drugs and alcohol as compared to the PEFO.

Why is the government spending millions on inquiries instead of spending money on frontline services to treat drug and alcohol dependency?

The budget announced by the Treasurer last week addresses the symptoms but not the cause of decreasing business confidence in the Territory. The massive debt that will be incurred by 2020–21 will mortgage the future of each and every Territorian and saddle them with insurmountable debt. However, the spending has not targeted the areas of the economy that would provide for long-term sustainable jobs that would help the Territory to prosper.

Pet projects are emphasised and shiny objects favoured over strategic infrastructure that would actually create long-term private sector employment. At the same time, funding and policy has not been targeted to support small business, which is the beating heart of the Territory economy. Business confidence is at an all-time low. If we do not address the underlying causes of this uncertainty, no amount of new cultural centres, water parks or car parks will bring us back from the debt spiral Labor has initiated.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his motion, which I can assure the House and the business people of the Territory, has our support.

Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said earlier, this government is not just about words. One of the first orders of business was to re-establish small business round tables, of which I am fortunate enough to be the chair. We have been traveling around the Territory, including Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs and Katherine, and we will have meetings in Tennant Creek soon.

We have been meeting with and talking to small business people around the Territory. Those meetings have been well received. The small business people we have met have enjoyed the opportunity to put their concerns directly to the government. The other members who have attended and I have enjoyed hearing from the small business people about their concerns. We relish that opportunity.

I will talk about the government's consideration of business. On this side of the House we believe Territorians deserve a government that will always put them first, a government that listens and consults before taking decisive action, and that is why we are delivering on our promise to restore trust in government, create jobs, invest in children and build safer, fairer and stronger communities across the Territory.

Territorians want and deserve a government they can trust, one which always puts the public interest ahead of the private interests of a lucky few. The previous CLP government failed to deliver on its promises to Territorians. It had no plan for the economy or for the INPEX project transitioning from the construction phase to the operations phase. It failed to invest in jobs and population growth, and it left a huge budget deficit. Its calamitous version of governance sowed the seeds for declining business confidence. It was neither trustworthy nor transparent; it was neither visionary nor consultative; it was a lot of ego and nothing more.

On top of that, the Territory has been slugged with a \$2bn GST cut over the next four years. This week's disappointing federal budget has revealed that it will be left to the Territory government to do the heavy lifting to get our economy back on track. There was little last night, other than a small national increase in health and education funding, to demonstrate any commitment to the Territory's future, developing the north or closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. This lack of support from Canberra confirms the fundamental importance of the approach taken by the Territory Labor government in its jobs-creating budget.

Our record \$1.75bn investment in jobs, infrastructure and housing is now even more important to the economic future of the Territory.

The Territory is facing tough economic times. Business confidence has been damaged, and the task of repairing this is challenging. But we believe in the Territory. We believe in rising to our challenges and

investing in our immense human, geographic and environmental assets. We believe in investing in our future, jobs, our kids and our community. That is what this government is all about, and that is what our budget is all about.

This government took a detailed jobs plan to Territorians before the last election, and we have delivered on our promise to support businesses and jobs for Territorians through these tough economic times. We have delivered a range of economic stimulus packages, such as the \$16.3m bigger and better Home Improvement Scheme, which has received 1547 business registration applications since February. The estimated total economic impact of this scheme to date, both direct and indirect, is around \$48.3m.

We have also delivered a hugely successful \$30m Immediate Works Stimulus Package for not-for-profit organisations. This program received 319 grant applications and has 258 businesses approved to participate.

To date, more than 450 first home buyers have been approved for the first home buyer stamp duty discount, and 218 applications have been approved for the Home Renovation Grant.

We provided a \$5m boost to the local construction industry for repairs and maintenance to urban public housing stock, and we have fast-tracked \$129m in major infrastructure projects across the Territory. We reprioritised a capital works program that includes \$26m for a new Palmerston police station, including a new watch house and community hall; \$8m to construct a new Katherine fire station, co-located with St John Ambulance; \$12m for a free multistorey car park at Royal Darwin Hospital; \$25m for a new home for rugby league at Warren Park; \$10m for a new netball court in Darwin; and \$6m for a new women's shelter in Alice Springs.

Further to this, the 2017–18 budget supports the government's five major projects over the next four years, aimed at boosting the Territory economy, creating jobs and transforming Territory cities and regions into tourism, business and investment attractions. This includes revitalising the Darwin CBD through the investment of \$100m, comprising the redevelopment of State Square, including an underground car park, a fine arts gallery and moving the bus terminal; building a new museum at Myilly Point; moving Charles Darwin University students into the CBD; a contribution towards a ship lift facility and developing a marine industry park; revitalising the Alice Springs CBD through investment of \$20m in consultation with the mayor and other stakeholders; a \$50m investment in the iconic national Indigenous art gallery; investment to establish Katherine as a logistics and agribusiness hub of national and international significance; and funding to investigate the development of Tennant Creek into a mining services hub.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to know about business confidence, let me remind him of some of the industry commentary he may have missed from the Master Builders of the NT, 'They will go flat strapped to turn the economy around. We are not sure that the government could have gone any harder than this to underpin the economy and our industry, and for that they deserve top marks from us and acknowledgement for those decisions. Those investments will underpin the sector and carry the construction industry until private and Commonwealth investment start to have an impact next year.'

The Property Council said, 'The government's \$120m CBD package is more than just about revitalising Darwin and Alice Spring's CBDs. It is a down payment on future job creation and population growth.'

REINT said:

It is a big spending budget and it has to be done in the times of dire need.

...

For the Housing sector, it is not a bad budget at all.

The Australian Council of Social Services said:

When times have been tight [other governments] have actually targeted those who can least afford to lose resources the most, so we really commend the Treasurer on not taking that step ...

Investment in things such as youth justice, out-of-home care ... family support, this is the stuff that will keep our community together, make our community safer and have a brighter future for young people and families.

The Tourism and Transport Forum of Australia said, 'This provides the right investment for Tourism to become a super growth industry in the Top End and the Red Centre. We are pleased to see the government listening to their message and making sound investments in the demand driven infrastructure that will generate a strong economic return for the Territory.'

This government has also committed to building jobs in agribusiness, and we are delivering on that. The Northern Territory and Japanese governments have recently signed a memorandum of cooperation to promote and progress research and development in agriculture and aquaculture in the Northern Territory while also developing supply chain logistics into Southeast Asian and other markets.

The MOC will result in more jobs for Territorians in the short, medium and long term. NT Labor promised to upgrade facilities at the Berrimah export yard prior to the election, and we have delivered with a \$4.1m grant to the Northern Territory Livestock Export Association. The upgrades to the Berrimah export yards will create dozens of jobs and ensure best-practice standards for livestock handling while stimulating the Territory's steel industry.

In the resources sector we recently announced major project status for three potential operations which have the potential for thousands of construction and ongoing Territory jobs.

To grow the Tourism sector this government has committed to investing \$5m into attracting visitors from emerging travel markets in China and India. We are strengthening marketing activities in these places, including cooperative marketing campaigns with key airlines based on research to address drivers, barriers and perceptions.

Negotiations are ongoing to attract direct flights from China. We are funding an accreditation workshop in Darwin so hotels and accommodation providers will be ready for this change. The initiative will assist them to develop amenities and provide translated, culturally appropriate tourism material. We are delivering a grants program that will enable the tourism industry to become China ready. We will be further developing tour guide training for Kakadu guides so they are better able to cater for Chinese visitors.

We have seen the destructive behaviour of the CLP destroy trust in government. We are determined not to make the same mistakes. Territorians deserve a government they can trust. Business confidence is predicated on certainty from and trust in government. Our government listened to concerns about the misuse of power and promised to take action by establishing an independent commission against corruption; draft legislation is expected next year.

We have released a discussion on whistle-blower protection laws; we have launched an inquiry into political donations with a report due later this year; we have made all ministerial travel costs openly available to provide transparency; we have banned the spending of public funds for political advertising; we have required environment management plans to be made publically available not just in summary, but in full.

We have also conducted a review, in consultation with the industry into how best to make information on mining security bonds publicly available, and we committed to a moratorium on fracking until a scientific inquiry finishes its work later this year. At the end of that inquiry we will either ban fracking completely or allow it in highly-regulated and tightly-proscribed areas. This moratorium and inquiry is not just about getting the best science and evidence; it is about ensuring Territorians know the process we took to arrive at our eventual decision, that it was rigorous and done right.

Industry wants and needs strong, robust and transparent environmental laws so it can proceed with developing with certainty. The government is creating a major reform in this important space. We are restoring trust and transparency in the water allocation process by reinstating water advisory committees and re-establishing strategic Indigenous water reserves.

We are reforming the environmental impact assessment process and introducing new environmental approvals that will be more accountable and will deliver certainty to project proponents about environmental requirements. We are also creating a fully functioning *Environmental Protection Act*.

A discussion paper will be released soon, seeking further input on a number of key policy matters, including the framework for the new environmental impact assessment system. New draft legislation for stage one will be released for community consultation later in the year.

The CLP government failed to deliver adequate housing and jobs to remote communities. This government has announced a \$1.1bn remote housing program, and work has commenced for the first recipients of our promised Room to Breathe program. This is about crucial remote housing improvements for the bush and delivering work for remote businesses.

We are currently consulting and scoping works to be completed in 24 communities across the Northern Territory. The 24 communities were chosen based on their level of overcrowding to provide a fair geographic distribution across the regions where existing Indigenous businesses have the capacity to undertake the work within the time frame.

We are also delivering on our promise to spend \$20m on remote public housing repairs and maintenance. The focus will be on preventative maintenance and tenant support programs. Work will be undertaken through local and Indigenous businesses. Consultation in partnership with local decision-making is the key aspect of our housing reforms.

Remote housing early works are being driven by local residents and representative groups. We could talk all day about what the government is doing to restore business confidence and trust, create jobs and invest in our kids and in a better tomorrow. This government recognises the potential of this place and is investing in that potential. This government is on the side of business and jobs.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this motion. It is critical that we have good business confidence, especially going forward into the period we have ahead.

I delivered the budget last week for the Northern Territory and, as we know, front and centre of that budget was building business confidence not only in Darwin, but across the Northern Territory, into our regions, towns and remote communities.

This is about looking at future opportunities for business and, most importantly, supporting jobs for Territorians now and into the future. Job security and growth is important to our business confidence, growing our economy and growing opportunities for the Northern Territory. That is exactly what Budget 2017–18 is about.

When we came to government we continued working with our key sectors and with people across the whole community to hear what Territorians' concerns are. The number one thing being brought to my door was jobs and confidence going forward, especially over the next 12 to 18 months when we will see the transition of the biggest project in the Northern Territory, the Ichthys project, as it goes from the construction to the operation phase. Thousands of jobs will finish at that time.

It is important to keep people's confidence up and keep people in the Northern Territory. You have to be realistic about what the challenges are, which we have been, hence why we have pulled out every effort in Budget 2017–18 to support jobs and business confidence. We have listened to the business community. It has genuine concerns because 2016 was a tough year. The previous government pulled out a raft of stimulus measures to address those concerns.

When we came to government we made a commitment to the business community because it had said to us, 'No handbrakes. Do not stop the flow of money from government to local businesses and jobs.' So we kept the infrastructure budget rolling out.

We brought back the Home Improvement Scheme. We should have done that sooner, but we did it. We have received great responses to that.

We brought back First Home Owner Grants for people buying established properties so they can get into the housing market. We have a stimulus measure there to support jobs and local business. We brought in our Immediate Works Stimulus Package. We have community grants to help our community groups, not-for-profits, churches and multicultural centres invest in their facilities to support local jobs and local business.

We have upgraded urban public housing to support local jobs and local business. We have upgraded remote health clinics. We have consulted with the steel sector, an industry which was hurting, and invested an extra \$5m in some fantastic government infrastructure projects across the Northern Territory, targeting those local steel sector businesses. We have had a great response to that. It has saved businesses.

We have ensured we have a government that listens and engages. The Member for Fong Lim is doing a wonderful job of chairing our small business round tables across the community. He is listening and reporting back to the Cabinet, speaking on behalf of the small businesses in the Territory. It is critical that we work with businesses, listen and, most importantly, take action when they need it. We are being realistic about the current economic challenges and conditions. That is what the budget is all about. Since we have come to government it has been about jobs, supporting Territorians, economic growth and the long-term future of the Northern Territory.

We have to be very realistic about the conditions ahead and why we must support business confidence by doing everything we can to keep people here. When you look at the budget papers—I keep speaking about this but private sector investment is down; state final demand is forecast to be -2.8% in 2017–18 and -5% in 2018–19.

Population growth is a critical component of this economy. It is a risk to the future of the Northern Territory if we do not grow the population; it is forecast to be at its lowest point in years at -0.3% , only increasing in 2018–19 to 0.3% . Employment is down; we are looking at an added 0.5% in the financial year ahead and then 0.6% the year after for the forecast, and CPI is unusually low.

I keep saying to people, 'Isn't it fantastic when CPI is at 5% .' When it sits at zero—it has been 0.1% this year and is forecast to grow to about 0.4% next year—it tells you there are some real concerns. We have seen that in the housing market; housing prices and rent have been declining. It is critical for the government to do everything it can to increase business confidence so people stay here for the future and we do not lose our skilled workforce.

The future is incredibly bright; there are some great opportunities ahead for the Northern Territory. It is important that when those opportunities present themselves we are poised to jump on them and make the most of them for the long-term interest of the Northern Territory. In order to do that we have to keep our skilled workforce and their families here to be part of the community.

We have a challenging set of numbers with the economic forecast going ahead. We listen to business and we hear about the effects of the slowing economy, what they have felt and the challenges they see ahead. We have seen the unprecedented \$2bn GST cut in the Northern Territory. That has had a huge impact on the Northern Territory's finances, which we have seen in the budget, and we will be working very hard to improve the deficit position and pay down debt over this term of government. But you cannot do that if you do not have economic growth, people in jobs and business working the way it needs to work.

We faced two different options going forward, as a government—tackling issues head on regarding business confidence and the future. We could have slashed and burned jobs. If we wanted to slash thousands of jobs we could have reduced the services and made huge cuts. If we did that it would have sent people out of the Northern Territory, destroyed business confidence and sent our economy backwards. That is not the responsible thing for the government to do right now. Now it is about investing for the future of the Northern Territory, and that is exactly what we have been doing since we came to government.

We are investing. The first week we were in government I sat down with the Chief Minister in the Chamber of Commerce and we took the first actions to improve our Buy Local procurement policy. The previous government started that process and I commend them for it, but we have taken it further. We have strengthened the Buy Local procurement policy to ensure that we hear less—ideally, you do not want to hear too many of these stories.

There is nothing more frustrating than hearing that great Northern Territory Government projects and procurement opportunities have been taken by a southern company which has grabbed the work, taken the quick cash and jumped back across the border. We do not want to hear those stories. We want to hear that government money and government procurement is a culture of buying local and supporting local jobs and businesses.

In this budget we are investing in the industry advocate because enforcement is a key component of that. That was the feedback we had loud and clear from business. You often hear stories about a business which has just won the job down the road because it has a postbox in Winnellie so is classified as local. Those are the stories you do not want to hear.

You hear stories about businesses that tendered for a job, won it by saying they would use a local supplier and a local subbie, but then did not go through with it. Instead, they got materials cheaper down south and

have not used the companies they said they would. This is about enforcement and overview to ensure that when companies win government work and commit to using local it is monitored and appropriately enforced.

If the federal government stays true to its word about its Defence White Paper and the potential of that investment, that could potentially deliver about \$8bn for the Northern Territory over the next 10 years, \$20bn over the next two decades. We are investing in a Defence advocate because one thing we have heard time and time again from local business is that we have the capacity and capability. We can do the Defence work but we cannot get our head around the constant Defence procurement methodology.

Seeing these huge tier one contracts being split up between Tindal, Williamstown or somewhere else down south with the best intentions of rolling them out to local companies—but people still see those as missed opportunities. We are looking at those Defence models and making sure we are proactively knocking on the door at a political level. There has to be some political work. There has to be business work, business advocacy.

I commend the Territory business community, especially the Master Builders' Association and the Chamber of Commerce. They have knocked on Defence's door and said, 'We have the capability. You should be investing in the Northern Territory. We have the local businesses and local people who can do this work.'

This budget will invest \$1.5m in ensuring we have a Defence advocate based in Canberra, constantly there at the door. I have gone from the top to the bottom of the Northern Territory, speaking to people about the budget, and I think there is wholehearted agreement that we are competing with every other jurisdiction for Defence investment. All states want that investment, and we have to show Canberra why the Territory should be a priority for Defence investment and that our local business is more than capable of doing it. We have the expertise, the ability and the workers to get that done.

We are investing \$1.75bn in infrastructure in this budget, a record investment in infrastructure. Now is not a time for government to walk away from Territorians. Now is the time for government to invest in local jobs and local business to help build business confidence.

We have significant work happening. We have our stimulus measures on the ground. We have a record repairs and maintenance budget, which will deliver some great improvements to government infrastructure as well as short-term jobs and long-term investment to ensure better services and better quality infrastructure to Territorians.

The infrastructure investment in this budget is for job-creating infrastructure. It is about creating jobs in the short, medium and long term. It is about creating more economic development opportunities and private investment opportunities for the Northern Territory.

I have said it before and will say it again: the future is bright. There are some wonderful projects on the horizon for the Northern Territory. We can see that \$1.6bn worth of major project status has been given to mining projects. There are tremendous opportunities, such as Project Sea Dragon. We are seeing the luxury hotel get off the ground; we put \$10m in this budget for that project, which will see about 500 construction jobs and hundreds of jobs ongoing. There is a raft of exciting initiatives across the Northern Territory that we can and will pursue.

We are seeing substantial investment in our bush communities—the \$733m roads and transport infrastructure investment in this budget. We are opening it up to more opportunities for business and key industries. It is important transport access from the top to the bottom of the Territory. We have put our major projects program on the table.

Nobody can doubt how ambitious this vision to grow the Northern Territory is. We are committed to seeing the Darwin CBD further developed to create more business opportunities and growth for the Northern Territory, the ship lift facility developed to enhance the marine engineering capability and build that industry across the Territory, and helping Katherine reach its full potential of being an agribusiness and logistics hub.

We want Tennant Creek to attract more mining investment in the region. It is a proud mining town. We want to maximise the opportunities there with processing facilities. Alice Springs is a wonderful part of the Northern Territory. It has so much to offer the rest of this country. We are investing to make it the inland port. There is \$20m to revitalise the CBD and enhance tourism, making it the number one tourism attraction in the world, not just in this country, to see the best Indigenous art. We are committed to that gallery.

The budget is about ensuring better business confidence when it comes to tourism. There is \$43m in the tourism marketing budget. We have an extra \$4m for marketing the Northern Territory to China and India to further expand markets to the growing middle class, which wants to travel. We need to get a slice of that market.

We are looking at the potential of agribusiness growth across the Northern Territory. We have the \$10m investment over four years to look at soil data, quality and information across the Territory so we can share that data with potential private investors to set up business and further grow and develop that industry. We see huge potential there.

There are wonderful opportunities ahead for the Northern Territory but we have to do it hand in hand with business. Businesses must feel confident about the future. That is why we have made the decisions we have in this budget. We need businesses to stay, be here for the long run and invest, and we need their expertise. We will never realise our full potential unless we have business confidence.

We are working with business to boost its confidence going forward. This is exactly what Budget 2017–18 is about. If our business community is doing well, the rest of the Territory will do well. Government alone cannot prop up the Northern Territory. We must open it up to more private investment to ensure better service delivery. It must not only be based in our urban centres, but in our towns and regions in the bush. Decisions must be made for all Territorians.

I was very disappointed with the federal budget last night. The federal government failed to invest in its own policy agenda of developing the north, closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and the Defence White Paper. We have a lot to offer the rest of this nation in regard to growth to further support it. A time like this, when we have seen the GST cut and the challenges that presents, is a time to partner even further with Canberra to recognise these challenges.

There is a large body of work to be done and we have some challenges ahead. To have business confidence going backwards is not what we need to see. We need everybody's shoulders to the wheel, working together going forward for the future of the Northern Territory. That is why we have made the decisions we have. It will be a tough 12 to 18 months, but we will do everything we can to keep people in the Northern Territory, build confidence in the Territory's future, grow our full economic potential in the Territory and make sure we have a better future for the Territory.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this motion. It is one of those motions where you can talk about anything; I will talk about Coolalinga Central.

This is an example of what can happen when private business gets going. Coolalinga is one of the district centres in the rural area that was not owned by the government, and it is the one that has developed the fastest because people made the effort to develop the area. It might go against some of the planning theorists—developing on either side of a highway. I understand that can be a problem, but it attracts people to those businesses.

It is no good hiding businesses if you want them to be successful and employ people. I remember discussing this with some planners, one from Victoria and one from New Zealand, when they came to talk about Weddell. They spoke about the shopping centre at Rosebery in Palmerston. It is off Lambrick Avenue, not on it, so how many people pass it? Now you can see which shopping centre is doing well: the one that has a corner facility on Temple Terrace and Lambrick Avenue. It has vision.

We had plans many years ago to put little shopping centres in suburbs, but some of those centres only exist because they have a liquor licence. They would struggle without it.

Coolalinga is an example of there being issues with the road. The service road needs to be sorted out; there has to be permanent access across the highway. I hope those things will be in next year's budget or put forward as soon as possible.

Coolalinga Central will officially open this Saturday at 11 am. Coles will open at 8.30 am, the same time as the Freds Pass Show. You can go to the show and then see the brand-new shopping centre. The shopping centre is not finished; there are a lot more shops that will go there, including a new restaurant. At the moment we do not have a seven day a week restaurant open at night in the area, except the Howard Springs Tavern. There is nothing wrong with the tavern but sometimes it is nice to have a restaurant that is not part of a tavern. It will attract a lot of people.

My concern is, will it take away business from other places? Possibly. If you read today's paper—when Wello came to discuss this we talked about car parks suitable for trucks and caravans so people coming up from down south as well as people from cattle stations and communities could stop there with oversized vehicles and not have to worry about parking.

That might sound minor to some people, but it is really important for people who live in other parts of the Territory. Many people will go to the Woolworths on one side, Coles and Kmart—there will be a great range of facilities in the area. I do not think Woolworths will suffer too much. Generally what happens is they lose business for a while and then things settle down and people use both businesses.

I was there when Kmart and the muffin place opened. The muffin place had a queue half way out the door. There were so many mums with babies in strollers; it was amazing. People are going, and that is a great thing.

Kmart is employing about 180 people, many of them young people. I see that as a great thing for employing locals and people from the Palmerston region and Coolalinga.

There is plenty more to develop there. I think there is a car wash going up soon, there are some houses and flats to be built, and that is part of the Coolalinga activity centre, which the government is looking at in conjunction with the Freds Pass district centre. Things are moving in that area and I was very pleased to see that.

On the opposite scale is the CBD—the Member for Port Darwin is here. I go to Salvatores for tea. I walked down the mall last night and there were not a lot of shops open. Of the ones that were open I only saw one with its front lit up, which was the new children's toy shop, Milly Molly Mandy, which just opened.

One thing people used to like doing at night was looking in windows, even if the shop was closed, to see what they sell. Now we have roller doors in front of the jewellers; that is not good. The lights are pretty dim; it is not a brightly lit mall. On top of that, sadly, there is a lot of antisocial behaviour. I have heard this before.

The last time I was sitting in Salvatores there were problems. Last night a bloke came up and wanted my drink. He said, 'I'm thirsty', and grabbed it. I said, 'No, it's mine', and I was called a something 'c'. Then he went past and onto this nice old couple wandering around the mall. That antisocial behaviour has to change. We can spend millions of dollars upgrading State Square and building a museum, and that is fine. I am a supporter of that, but you have to do this in the right way, with compassion. I get so cranky about closing the alcohol mandatory treatment facility because I believe it is needed. I got into trouble yesterday for saying that I think people will die. I did not find it offensive; I found it truthful.

There are people who will not go to voluntary treatment, and they are the ones we must help. We cannot escape the fact that there are people who are simply past the point of no return unless we give them a hand. If that requires some mandatory help, well so be it, if it is done for the right reasons—compassion to help those people. With all the right safeguards around it I think it is a good thing.

I am so disappointed that because the Menzies School of Health has written a report—my understanding is that they have not said to get rid of it; they have said there are some issues. What is worrying me is that now people are becoming statistics; it has not been a success. I never expected it to be a success that people would change their drinking habits of many years over night, but it gives people a chance. It gives people an opportunity to turn their lives around. It takes in the people on the street who cause others not to come to the CBD because they are a nuisance and they do not care.

We have to tackle the social problems in the CBD. So people do not think I am picking on Aboriginal people, I ask that we have a change to the lockout laws in Mitchell Street, which is not Aboriginal people generally speaking. It will affect non-Aboriginal people. It got no support from this place at all. It is not against alcohol; it is against the misuse of alcohol, and it is about helping people who cannot help themselves.

When we are talking about having confidence in business we have to make sure business wants to be here and is attracted here. If you want tourists to come out at night, not the Mitchell Street group—there are other nice restaurants in Raintree Park, beautiful restaurants. Salvatores is nice. I sit outside because I find the air conditioning too cold and I like to see what is happening around the place.

If you want to attract people to that sort of less yuppy side of life and more of a tourist experience, then between Rorkes and Salvatores is not exactly the place that gets you going. I do not have to prove anything to you, but just count the number of empty shops in the mall. It is disheartening to some extent. Even Dollars and Sense has gone. What will happen at Christmas? Where will I get a stupid tee shirt from? There are shops that have never had anyone in them. They are all probably moving to Coolalinga. All the residences in Darwin are flats and apartments. Surely there are enough people there to support something like a Myer, but it does not seem to be.

Will the CBD just be a tourist mecca? If it is then there will be part of the year when you will have to wait for a ship; the rest of the year there will not be anyone coming up from south because it is too hot. It is a problem that has been with us for a number of years, and it seems to be worse now. I know the government had an economic summit, and I know there have been many groups looking at the mall, including Darwin City Council.

I was a little disappointed with the Chief Minister yesterday when he was talking about developing the CBD. He did not once mention the Darwin City Council. I know the Member for Port Darwin works for the Darwin City Council, but I think the Chief Minister should have recognised that Darwin City Council is very important.

Issues like parking—do they encourage people to come or go away? I drive down Cavenagh Street early and that bitumen is hopeless. There were issues about changing the parking in Cavenagh Street. They were going to plant trees further down Cavenagh Street. Past St Mary's is a very beautiful part of Cavenagh Street, but you come up to the top part and the bitumen is rough and the trees are half alive. It is not as beautiful. Trying to beautify some parts of the city—I know they have come in for some criticism because if they beautify it a certain way they lose car parking and it does not help with business.

I am not sure how many people use the Chinatown Car Park. It was built to overcome parking problems, but I do not know how much it is used. It is used as the big hole next to the Darwin Cinema. It is bigger than the big hole in Palmerston. There are two big holes around the place at the moment. I am not sure who is pumping the water out of the one at Palmerston, but there has been a hole on Mitchell Street for an awful long time, and that is not a good sight for a CBD.

It would be interesting to know what is happening with that. If they were not going to build it, they should not have dug it up. There is just a big white fence there; it is not an attractive sight. The people involved have to work out not only spending money, but how we can attract people to come to the city. When I see Coolalinga, I see fewer people being attracted to the city, because you do not have to pay for parking and all the things you want are there. Trying to attract people to the city will be a big effort.

The Treasurer spoke about developing industry. The gas discussion goes on and on, but it is not only gas; we have to try to develop our own industries, and how we do that will need some brains. We have the economic summit. We have Luke Bowen and people like him working towards these things. If the government thinks it is moving in the right direction, I would like to see from the government a three-, four- or six-month report.

I went to a field day in Katherine to look at crops at the Katherine Research Station—growing soya beans, a different type of legume, and cassava. The cattle station owners were looking at the possibility of expanding into agriculture for either stock feed or exporting feed overseas. They are the sorts of things we need, but believe it or not it is not new.

People who have been here for a while will remember the Douglas Daly and might remember the town of Fleming. If I asked at school where Fleming is in the Northern Territory I wonder how many hands would go up. Fleming is on the road into the Douglas Daly. There are six big silos sitting empty there. It probably stands as a testament to agriculture that did not quite make it. They were growing soya beans, mung beans and other things. They did not have the irrigation, so it was successful for some years but other years it did not work because relying on the Wet Season rainfall can be risky. It is so variable. It did not work, so today there is mostly hay, bananas, watermelons and there might be poppies. It has developed, but not in the way that was intended. We have tried things before. It would be good for the government to give us an update of how we are agriculturally increasing production.

There are some farmers—I met the Tipperary Station Manager at Katherine. I heard him on Country Hour talking about investing in better quality pastures. They are clearing some land to boost the production of cattle. If you went to the Cattlemen's Association you would know there are markets. If we want to tap into them we have to increase production. Believe it or not there is already a shortage of beef in Australia. That

is why beef is costing so much money. It is going overseas. If you want to buy a T-bone steak, it is not cheap. Unfortunately the poor old chickens then cop it because they are cheaper.

There are opportunities in tourism. I have not been to Bulman for a while. They were going to build a new store there, perhaps a restaurant. It is half-way between Katherine and Nhulunbuy, and it is where you start to wear out a bit when you are driving. It is a good spot for a motel or a nice restaurant, and a place to fill up with fuel. There are nice people at Bulman. There are opportunities there.

Aboriginal communities have to start to take some responsibility for driving the Territory's industry. Culturally, a great thing—how many people want to come and see Aboriginal culture? It has to be done the right way. There is nothing worse than what I call 'plastic culture', the 6000 tea towels that come out. That is not the right sort of culture. People want genuine culture.

It also has to be accessible. If you make it too expensive then you will only get the top layer of tourism. There are a lot of people who will come to the north who do not know much about Aboriginal culture, if they can get there with their caravan—you would have more people going into those communities.

There are a lot of grey nomads from Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide who have no idea about Aboriginal people. They have only seen them on TV. There are opportunities for culture to be used in a good way but also in a way that would encourage the economy of those outstations, homelands or communities to benefit.

I lived on Bathurst Island for quite a while. I saw the development of Bima Wear by Sister Eucharía Tiwi Designs, which was under a house. The house was only about five foot six inches off the ground. You had to crawl in underneath. Look at the markets now. Pirlangimpi has its own arts factory there. They produce beautiful art work. It has taken a long time. Sister Eucharía would have been there about 1969 when that started. They started in a tin shed and moved to what were quite modern facilities at the time. There are women who have been working there nearly all their lives.

There are opportunities for Aboriginal people to develop their skills and improve business in those communities. Sometimes we are concentrating on the big picture. There is nothing wrong with concentrating on lots of little pictures as part of the economy. Diverse business is also good because sometimes the big business goes broke, and there has been a history of that in the Northern Territory. Sometimes those small, you might say cottage, industries are just as important as the big ones. There are areas of doom and gloom; the CBD needs a lot of work. There are industries, especially middle-sized industries, which are struggling. There is no doubt about it because the housing industry has dropped right off and people are struggling in that area.

There are some good things happening, such as Coolalinga Central and Gateway Shopping Centre. We should also encourage small business as well; they are really important because many times they support families who go to our schools and support local football clubs. They are just as important as the big businesses. When we are talking about businesses we need to make sure we do not lose sight of the little people as well.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on behalf of some of the initiatives this government has announced. To make sure that the business confidence continues to grow into the future I will pick up on a few comments made by the Member for Nelson in a few minutes' time.

Being absolutely clear, business confidence had hit an all-time low, as had confidence right through the Territory about the direction we were all heading in after the last four years. We were not naive to that; we were speaking to Territorians every day. We understand that 2016 was the worst year some businesses have ever seen. We have put some strong plans in place to make sure that turns around, and we continue to put plans in place and to listen.

The community engagement from this government is second to none. We are still listening to people, from the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister being at their local markets on the weekend, the Palmerston MLAs and the great work they do at the Friday night markets, to me being on the lovely Esplanade every Saturday morning. People have more than enough opportunities to tell us what is going right and wrong. We understand we will not please everyone all the time but we are giving everybody a voice in the progress of the Northern Territory.

We have been listening to Territorians, and we understand there will always be trepidation. When we were starting from such a low base—I can easily compare it to taking over a footy side that has not won a game

for the last four years. You have a lot of work to do to turn that around. If you are taking over a team that is operating smoothly and is heading in the right direction then you just have some fine tuning to do. Make no mistake, we are not doing fine tuning; we had to start from the ground up, even before the election finished.

Listening to the Chamber of Commerce and multiple businesses through the steel manufacturing industry—there were a number of us who did that. There is not a person here who would not sympathise with the stories we heard about Territory businesses that employ Territory apprentices. They were struggling and some of them, unfortunately, succumbed to the financial pressures. We always wish that is not the case but sometimes it is.

The Territory Budget 2017–18 invests in the Territory's future for us, our kids, our jobs and projects. It follows through on our election commitments. As assistant minister for Buy Local, I am very proud to be involved with this government, making improvements and decisions to ensure that things improve into the future. Not long after we took over government and people realised I would be an assistant minister in that portfolio, I had business people on the phone asking, pleading and at some stages crying for help. It was a very sobering time.

I was extremely happy that within a matter of months, towards the end of last year in the teeth of the Wet Season when things are traditionally extremely tough for businesses, through some of the infrastructure grants and the projects we brought forward—people were still on the phone to me saying, 'You haven't fixed everything but it has given us a glimmer of hope to get through some of the toughest times we have seen'. I was very proud to be involved with the Chief Minister in some of those announcements.

The grants we brought forward have made sure some Territory families have been able to stay here. A host of people have spoken about the first home buyer improvements. That has made sure hundreds of Territorians have been able to stay and see a future here. That was not the case a year or so ago. Not only has the market and industry been helped, but hundreds of Territorians have been helped as well.

The Home Improvement Scheme is an indication that we have spoken to Territorians and businesses and taken decisive action when needed. It proves the government is prepared to listen to people and take action after careful consideration. By the same token, those overarching infrastructure grants and projects we brought forward were assisting the large businesses. Mum and dad businesses were helped through the revamped Home Improvement Scheme.

The steel manufacturers and fabricators have detailed the depths of the problems that have been ignored for far too many years. Those issues will take longer to solve. Some of the initial action that has been taken is a step in the right direction, but some of the interstate competition and markets they face show how easy it is for competitors to get to the Northern Territory, whether they have set up a business here or just a post office box.

Some of the cheap imported steel makes it extremely difficult for those businesses. The large interstate companies that are tendering up here are prepared to do jobs in the Territory at a loss to make sure they win the project because they may be suffering downtime in the state they are from. They are big businesses and they can afford to take those hits. Territory businesses that are employing locals at a smaller level cannot afford to take those hits and quite often cannot compete.

It is a very detailed problem for industries like that. We need to be making sure our local businesses are around well into the future, and we are.

I was happy when, as a government, we listened and adjusted the 30% weighting through procurement to ensure the value to the Territory is not just value for money. The depths of the problems through procurement issues—some of the subleasing the Member for Nelson spoke about previously—are detailed and concerning problems.

There are a number of large projects happening throughout the Territory where there may not be a contractor in the Territory that is big enough to take over the entire project, so local major contracts are issued to people who are able to do the electrical, mechanical or civil part of the works. Still, far too often a large amount of that work is subcontracted to either labour hire or interstate companies. This is something we need to be better at.

Some of the initiatives we have instigated straight away have been a good start. It is something this government has a keen eye on. It will not be an easy path to improve business confidence but it is one we

are prepared to take with Territorians. That was probably not the feeling they got from the previous administration. We will continue to engage with Territorians and earn their trust.

We have a plan that is detailed and complex in its entirety but remarkably simple in its ideology, because it involves listening to Territorians, the people we need to gain the confidence of. We can stand in here and quote figures and pat each other on the back for a fantastic job, but sometimes it is tough to sit in front of the business people who have criticisms of the way we have done business. It will not stop us from doing it though.

I commend the Member for Fong Lim, the assistant minister, for the round table discussions he has been having. I have been fortunate enough to attend a number of those with him and see the way he engages with small and medium businesses, listening to their concerns and making sure he gets the queries, concerns and comments straight to the decision-makers. It has been a fantastic process and I commend him for the work he is doing.

We will not always agree with businesses or say what they want to hear, but they will always get a seat at the table with this government. Consulting with people is not a complex issue, but it has been lacking for many years, so it will take some time to win back the confidence of the people and businesses in the Northern Territory that have been let down so badly over the last four years.

As the Member for Nelson mentioned, the city has some ground to make up, and I am extremely proud to be working with Michael Gunner on making sure people have an opportunity and some input. The major projects that have been announced will help, but I can assure the member there is a host of other work being undertaken with the City of Darwin, the vibrant CBD committees and the overarching committees we have reinvigorated, for example, how to enliven laneways to get better shop frontage throughout the city. We want people to have the opportunity to take advantage of some of those shops. If they do not have the ability to pay full retail price because of their situation, that is something we will work on with shop owners.

There will be a number of big-ticket items that will come up over the next few years and into the next term of government, but that is not to say some of the smaller issues—antisocial issues and making sure there are facilities for people to receive the help they need—have been lost. They are at the heart of making sure people have a sense of pride in the Darwin CBD. That will flow over to Alice Springs as well.

We will work on tourism, which is a topic that has been touched on. That is a big part of stability in government—confidence around the nation and overseas. If we cannot encourage people to believe we are a serious player with a stable government then we will make no ground on that. I am extremely happy with some of the ground we have covered already.

I have mentioned Lily Ji, the Chinese actress, who will be in Darwin filming for commercials and a targeted project for Mount Borradaile—and some of the Chinese involvement through traders. There will be some amazing and astonishing footage, which will tap into a Chinese market that is, realistically, untold for how big it will be in the future. I look forward to working with the Chief Minister on that.

I find it astonishing that the Opposition Leader will degrade some of the infrastructure projects that have been announced. He is trying to make a link, saying there are not enough ongoing jobs from those projects, yet he is happy to stand here and say the Dan Murphy's proposal is the saviour of the Northern Territory. That is just a project as well.

There will be many projects happening which this government has had the foresight to bring forward, and they will create jobs not only in construction but on an ongoing basis.

Similarly, the Opposition Leader has continued to wave the flag for the onshore gas industry while this government listens and consults. We will take action depending on the recommendations. Across the Territory there are significant concerns that the onshore gas industry needs heavier regulation before it can be confirmed that it will not cause damage to land and aquifers, the significant number of people employed in agriculture and aquaculture, and all the associated industries people are employed in. It is a significant number of Territorians.

The Leader of the Opposition would have us race in, ignoring the permanently employed people in those industries, to jeopardise the Territory landscape forever without waiting to hear back from the experts on the panel that has already been set up. I also find it astonishing that when it suits, the opposition will hold up the flag to ask if a feasibility study has been done into a project that will have no detrimental effects on the Territory. Yet, with the single most divisive proposal affecting the long-term sustainability of our

beautiful Territory that we call home, they are not prepared to wait for the science to come in. I find that astonishing.

I find these contradictions absolutely bewildering, as will most Territorians. The path back to complete business confidence will at times be a tough and long path, but we are a government that is committed to walking with Territorians. Make no mistake, we entered into this with our eyes wide open; we have not covered our ears; we are still listening and working closely with businesses throughout the Territory.

Our Treasurer and our Chief Minister have realised that at times of economic uncertainty you have to be brave and you have to pay it forward. We have brought forward a number of infrastructure projects that will ensure that money flows and jobs are created. This will keep people in the Territory as these measures will see our declining population turn around into the future. This has to be done to improve our GST funding into the future as well.

Sadly, this has resulted in nothing but criticism from across the Chamber. I wonder what sort of trouble we would be in if we had not brought these projects forward. We have a vision and we have a plan. We are the only members in this House that have a plan, and I commend this government for improving the business confidence across the Northern Territory in these very trying economic conditions.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the motion and to speak on the important matter of building confidence in the Territory and the community to be able to face the issues that are real and cannot be wallpapered over with words and assertions.

In order to build confidence in the Territory community you will need to be very honest with them and yourselves. It has been plainly presented that there are some fiscal challenges, revenue challenges and crime issues. The people will be looking to the government to help them find their way through these challenges.

In order for a new government to be able to impart confidence to the Territory community, there will be a time when it will become quite raw and challenging. I am quite frustrated in this Chamber, hearing the self-patronising commentary about the great achievements thus far when you have only sight of the last four years as though that is the only thing that occurred before your arrival, and you are still finding your feet in here. Yet, already we are seeing the emergence of quite a disturbing arrogance and shallowness in your own self-assessments.

I understand the game. I heard the same kind of language from the previous administration about how they were listening and working for the Territory. They believed in their own story, but judgment day came. I have seen previous Chief Ministers who were shocked to find, once they broke out of the bubble of the self-congratulatory environment that you can operate in with all the paid people you have on the fifth floor and all those people who are respectable of the office of government—that is interrupted by people who then speak plainly. I remember the former Chief Minister, Clare Martin, visiting Alice Springs and being totally shocked at how angry the community had become. It was occurring bit by bit and then it broke out.

I really felt for the former Chief Minister at the time. It is not an easy thing to face the anger of a crowd, raw and unvarnished. I also feel sad when all the people around the person, the Chief Minister in this case, are cocooned and told the opposite.

I saw it with the last administration. They honestly thought they were doing very well and were shocked to find that the Territory community had turned away from them. Watch out that that does not happen to you.

At Question Time I asked a genuine question. It tested whether you are fair dinkum about the things you say. The Territory community wants to develop some kind of confidence. They are not dumb.

If you say that the reason we will take this particular course of action is that it will increase the population—which was the decision to increase the wages of those who are working in particular sectors during Christmas and New Year's Eve. I have no issue with that decision. What I have an issue with is the Territory community being told the truth. If you honestly believe that is the right thing to do then plainly say why you have done it—to cop a mouth-load of childish abuse for daring to ask such a question, designed to expose the need to be honest about the propositions you put to Territorians.

If you do not have the courage to stand up to your convictions at a time like this, when there is a strong government with a small opposition and an Independent contingent in the parliament, which is not properly resourced, make no mistake about that—why is that? You are claiming to open up the parliament. You say

such things but you are closing it down. You are restricting. The result of that will be a reduction in confidence in this government. We saw it with the Chief Minister at Question Time.

I was astonished and disappointed to hear that defensive and offensive response to a question that was probing something a little more deeply. If you make a claim to the Territory community about anything—how wonderful you are, how great your initiatives are, how this thing that you have just decided is the best thing ever—and then you raise propositions that are challenged but you do not contend with them honestly, you will find the tide will turn.

You will find that people will stay polite and pleasant; they will speak to you at the markets. But as it comes closer to election time there will be alternatives and challenges. Are you ready for that or are you happy to push on blithely? Make no mistake, I was happy to leave the last crew. I was not happy to leave my community, but I was happy to leave the Country Liberal Party because of what had happened and what was happening to those who had taken the leadership of government. I observed that behaviour. Watch it does not happen to you.

They honestly believed they were doing well. They believed it so much that they thought they were given polling information that was wrong. 'The Territory must recognise our bravery and our courage.' They did not, for very good reason.

I found the issue at Question Time very troubling. I expected better. I see the worrying trends emerging in this Chamber of talk that does not match reality. Just open your eyes. There are deeper issues in our CBD that will be very difficult to address. You cannot begin to address them until you are honest about them. We could start to become honest in this Chamber.

What the Chief Minister could have done when he said increasing the wages of these workers—that is a point. He can make that decision for whatever reason, but to say that will increase the population of the Northern Territory—I have to pull him up on that; is that true?

I am surprised to see the tone of the CBD at the moment. The number of places that are closed—yes, you are listening. Have you heard the story of those who have made the decision to leave and close their business? What are they thinking now? They will not worry about the self-congratulatory stuff about how good you are and how terrible the last mob were. They want action now.

The gaps are being filled by massage parlours in our CBD. I am surprised at how many there are. The little flashing lights say to come in and have Lily's massage. It is like a lot of people have bad backs. Something is happening in our CBD. Is someone having a look at this? When you start changing the tone of a CBD, and you have all these passenger liners come in and look—the weather is beautiful and Darwin is an interesting looking place. I had friends visit last week and they noticed a tone to the place. I had to explain some things—just as the Member for Nelson had encounters with people who were encroaching on his personal space.

There are others who get off ships and are troubled by the behaviour of the people in the streets. These are real issues that a government will be rewarded in spades by the community for it is honest about them. You need to talk sensibly about the social issues and how you will make progress with them. You get up on your high horse and make such strident comments about how horrible the Coalition government is—reverting to form, pure politics.

There were good things in the budget. There were also some challenges, but just talk sensibly about them. Territorians can understand that kind of talk. Have you thought for a moment that one of reasons the federal government did not support some projects that are being proposed and supported by this government is because there was not sufficient vision or ideas to win its attention? Of course you will not take any responsibility for that; you will say it is Nigel Scullion's fault, and therefore you have won something, a political point that makes no difference.

You need to deal with the real issues. There is something lacking; nothing has really inspired the federal government. Why not consider that there are deeper challenges you need to meet? There are challenges that at this point you could address. There are plenty of good ideas circulating, but you have to act in a way that will win the confidence of the Territory community.

Your new members will say you are bringing about massive reform to the operation of the parliament, such as doing things differently with estimates. You are opening up the parliament, which is a grand slogan. No,

you are not. You are restricting it. You are changing the way the parliament operates. That does little to develop confidence and the engagement of the wider community. People smell it; they know.

Estimates has changed dramatically. When I first came here, and Labor was in opposition, you could ask questions of any minister for as long as you wanted until you had no further questions. Now we have the whole Cabinet in three days, and you say that is a great change. All the language around that will sound impressive but it does not stack up.

There are challenges. There are a number of matters that have already been presented and I hope that once we get past estimates we can get to work.

In regard to the issue of onshore gas exploration, I respect the position government has taken, the need to assess rigorously, because there are many competing interests in this space. It strikes me as an area that we will need to move in with some confidence. If you get too self-absorbed by the need to be popular and diminish any criticism you will end up not making a decision or making one that is not sufficiently robust to move the community forward; you will get trapped.

In the breadth of the challenges we face economically and socially in the Territory, I am hoping we have the ticker in this government to handle those sorts of decisions, because the only sense I make of the government's timidity when it comes to making the robust decisions—do not fool yourself, you have not made robust decisions yet. You have not tested your popularity or brought big decisions into parliament.

We have not really had debates, and you have made sure of that. I do not know whether you can see it or not. You have made sure that it is not possible to scrutinise the government. You have put up a barrage of language that makes it seem as though you are all wonderful. That is fine, but let us get over that and move on. There are issues that need to be properly talked about. There are members of the Chamber who are finding it less appealing to hold government to account. It is not possible to be held accountable when you will not answer the question, and rather than avoiding it, launch into abuse. That is the sign of a lack of confidence.

To build confidence in the Territory community you have to have confidence in yourself as a government and handle the challenges coming your way. It will turn quickly, as we have seen happen before. To give you some history, the debt that many people carry today in their household budgets is a result of the failed 12 years of slow movement, specifically the resistance to release land. You knew INPEX was coming; you have to hold some responsibility. You cannot pass all the responsibility for everything bad that has ever happened to the last four years of government. You have to open the lens and look a little wider.

There was a profound reluctance to release land, which was the main issue. The Territory community was crying out for it. A place like the Northern Territory being short of land—it was a Labor government that refused to release it until pressure mounted, and then there was a slow move in that direction. By that time INPEX arrived and prices went through the roof, turbo-charged by the lack of supply. People and investors rushed into the marketplace. People were excited; their properties were worth so much more. Others just paid the money because the Territory was going somewhere.

At the heart of it we all knew INPEX would not be here forever. We had discussions in Tokyo. INPEX was concerned that the Labor government was hyping INPEX up as though it would be this great saviour for eternity for the Northern Territory, which put INPEX in the position of bearing the brunt of responsibility when they finished the project, the industrial landscape changed and they moved on. Meanwhile, the government was not releasing land in time.

By the time it reached its peak there was sufficient land, but right up until that point—people have massive debt now on their household budgets, and what is happening now? Property prices are going down. You cannot shoot that back to the last administration because it was one of the strongest positions we wanted to bring to government, that we released land. This is a place that is rich in land. If we made more available we would attract more people here, and they would be able to raise their kids and have a future here. We failed to do it and as a result we have debt. These are issues that pre-existed and they underlie a lot of the issues you are dealing with today.

Getting back to confidence of the business community, there is work to be done to be able to contend with the issues that are very real for ordinary Territorians who are making tough decisions. Payroll tax is an example. If you want to support local businesses that have a number of workers, paying large amounts of payroll tax, something could be done to lighten that load in a creative way so they can employ young people and hold them there.

I have met local business people who are paying payroll tax and it is hurting them badly. They have been taxed for employing Territorians. You could have changed a museum into some practical relief at that grassroots level which would have resulted in young Territory apprentices being drawn into the workplace and supporting local business, but you did not do that. You have spent that money somewhere else, and what return will that make?

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, when you speak about business confidence, particularly in relation to Alice Springs, the area I represent, you cannot really have a conversation about it without speaking about crime. The same could be said for all parts of the Northern Territory but, being one of two members of parliament representing Alice Springs, I always like to focus on the experiences of my constituents.

There has been a continuing crime spree in Alice Springs throughout the summer. Even as recently as last weekend, crime has been out of control in Alice Springs. There were a number of incidents involving young people who were captured on CCTV, and many businesses were affected. I know one business in particular is due to be out of commission, not operating, not generating any income or business for at least a week because of the damage inflicted on that business. Crime is a major problem in our community, it goes without saying, but any discussion about business confidence has to talk about crime.

Speaking of crime, I will put some of the latest police statistics on the record for the Chamber and for the benefit of Territorians. The latest stats available on the government website pertain to the 12-month period from 1 March 2016 to 28 February 2017 compared to the same period in the previous 12 months. The statistics for the Territory over the last 12 months are staggering. That is why it is important to put these stats on the record.

In Darwin commercial break-ins are up by 100% in Darwin. In the last year the number of commercial break-ins was at 728 and for the previous year 364. They are staggering statistics. House break-ins are up by 32.9% and property damage has increased by 9.8%. A few areas of crime have gone down, such as alcohol-related assault at 12.5%.

Palmerston is getting smashed. All of you who represent constituents in Palmerston, must be beside yourselves. These stats are truly alarming. Assaults are up by 18.6%, domestic violence related assault is up by 19.7%, alcohol-related assault is up by 28%, house break-ins are up by 38% and commercial break-ins are up by 17%, property damage is up by 20.9%. That is staggering for Palmerston. God knows what is going on. Why are these statistics so high?

In Alice Springs the most alarming statistic is that commercial break-ins are up by 35.4%. Motor vehicle theft is up by 13% and property damage is up by 16%. We have a huge problem in Alice Springs but we are looking pretty good compared to Palmerston.

In Tennant Creek the stats only reflect a few people from one year to the next, but there are some staggering percentages. Sexual assaults have gone up by 250%, domestic violence related assaults are up by almost 25%, assaults in general are up by 16%, house break-ins are up by 34%, motor vehicle theft is up by 191.7% and property damage is up by 25.9%.

Lastly, the statistics for Katherine show that sexual assaults are up by 18.5%, assaults are up by 7.2%, house break-ins are up by 51.2%, property damage is up by 25.7% and crime against property is up by 17.7%.

Right across the Northern Territory we have a huge problem with crime, and these statistics, not surprisingly, clearly demonstrate that we are in a whole world of trouble. Why are businesses closing? Crime is one big reason. You cannot ignore this when you talk about business confidence in the Territory.

What is this government doing about it? The Member for Blain spoke very eloquently this afternoon about his perceptions of this government, and I think he is right when he says you think you are doing the heavy lifting and making big decisions but you are not. What has this government delivered in the last eight to nine months?

There have been some significant things; I give you credit for the abortion legislation that was put through very quickly, and that is probably about it. There are some interesting pieces of legislation that you have given notice of during this sitting, but has there been much heavy lifting or addressing crime in the last eight to nine months? No. The statistics I just read onto *Hansard* clearly reflect that.

I will not speak too much about the budget because I am on the public record as stating my disappointment that this government has decided to put us into the level of debt it has, \$5.5bn with over \$1m per day in interest repayments. It is appalling and alarming, and I am truly concerned.

I will speak about the reaction to the question I asked in parliament this afternoon. I made a comment about how I thought the federal budget was impressive and, as the Member for Blain described, I was stunned at the very arrogant response from government members, who made so much noise. They were yelling so much abuse that I could hardly hear myself think. I am surprised this Labor government would not see any merit for Territorians in what was delivered last night by federal Treasurer Scott Morrison.

One thing I think is fantastic about the budget delivered last night was the fact the NDIS, National Disability Insurance Scheme, will be fully funded. Surely that is something to celebrate for the many people throughout the Northern Territory who have a disability. We are staggeringly overrepresented when it comes to disability in our communities. To hear that the scheme for the first time since its inception will be fully funded by the federal government is fabulous news. You have to give credit where credit is due. Being an Independent, I feel comfortable doing that. I thought the Gunner Labor government would have been very appreciative of that news.

This government announced no new infrastructure projects for Alice Springs in the budget. I am a little surprised that the Chief Minister was carrying on about there being no new infrastructure projects in the federal budget for the Northern Territory. The Deputy Opposition Leader asked a brilliant question about what ideas you have put to the Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility for them to federally fund, and the Treasurer was unable to answer. One can only presume that the Gunner government has not put any ideas to the Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility, and that is probably at least one reason why nothing was funded. Get off your backsides. If you want them to fund something, give them some concrete plans and ideas.

The \$6bn tax on banks is incredible. There will be flow-on effects and what glitters is not always gold, particularly in politics, but the federal government has the courage to generate revenue through additional taxes to pay for their big spend.

The Northern Territory did not receive any new projects. We have had continuing funding across the board for all our national partnership agreements, and the dozens and dozens of projects that the federal government funds have mostly been left untouched. The commitment is there. That is a good thing. There is no acknowledgement of that from this government though.

What we have not seen from this Gunner government are any hard decisions. We saw motor vehicle registration fees go up, which will not impress a lot of people. It places an extra burden on people doing it tough. In the scheme of things that does not even come close to heavy lifting. It is a responsible government that tries to offset spending with increased revenue and savings, and we did not see that from this government.

The business confidence generated by the Northern Territory budget last week is mainly from those people who directly benefit. I listened to people coming out of different sessions that the Treasurer attended. The different stakeholder groups and people who were interviewed were direct beneficiaries of various infrastructure projects on the table. They were speaking very highly of the Northern Territory budget, which makes perfect sense.

This is a very small place of 245 000 people. If you go on radio and make a negative comment about a government that holds the purse strings for the time being, as a businessperson you would be extremely foolish. There will not be too many people going on the public record criticising the first Gunner government budget even though privately they might have grave hesitations.

The overwhelming feedback from people I have spoken to is that it is a very ordinary budget and it does not generate great business confidence. People realise that these are tough economic times but the budget did not generate confidence in the government. Business confidence is also very much about confidence in the government.

I described the budget earlier today in Question Time as a kindergarten budget. I stand by that. It is reflective of a government that does not quite get it, that does not have its head around the fact that it is not just about spending; it is about making some tough decisions. Those tough decisions were not made in the first budget of the Gunner government.

Business confidence for people in Alice Springs, who are used to doing it tough, unlike businesses in Darwin—we have struggled for years in Alice Springs. We have not been the great beneficiary of an economic boom for decades. It is always pretty tough in Alice Springs, and it is highly competitive. We have relatively low expectations of what government will provide in the area of stimulus or answers to our economic woes.

We are used to getting on with it and not complaining, whereas people in Darwin are coming off of a great economic boom. It has been a fabulous time for businesses in the Top End, and it is hard to accept that things are not going as brilliantly as you have experienced in recent times.

I ask the Gunner government members to seriously turn their attention to crime. I am very worried about the changes to alcohol policy that this government is introducing. I am trying to be hopeful and optimistic, but after what I heard today I am very concerned.

Taking Alcohol Protection Orders and alcohol mandatory treatment off the table and putting in place something that is not tested—it has not been tested even though we have heard endless discussion by government members about how fabulous it could have been had it been allowed to continue. The evidence is not there. All we hear about from government members is their commitment to evidence-based ideas, but they have taken away two mechanisms that were not tested prior to their decision to remove them.

On that note, I support the Opposition Leader's motion. This government needs to take action to address the lack of business confidence in the Northern Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition this evening.

Businesses and families are doing it tough in the Territory, and we all recognise that fact. However, the correct approach to fixing the situation and providing a strong economy, jobs market and community for our children and future children is something we fundamentally disagree with the government on.

As a mother, it is troubling to me that the Gunner Labor government would mortgage my children's and my constituents' children's future by spending beyond its means on items that will not lead to long-term prosperity of the Territory. The numbers are almost beyond belief, with \$1.3bn in debt by the end of this financial year, \$5.5bn in net debt in 2020–21 and \$7.5bn in borrowing by the end of 2021. You do not need a degree in finance or economics to understand that those numbers are truly astronomical and the first of their kind since self-government commenced 40 years ago.

If you have ever had a credit card, as many Territorians do, you can understand that if your credit card debt was more than what you bring home in an entire year, you would be in trouble. Territorians understand that. But that is what we have seen from this government. By 2020–21 the Territory government will owe approximately \$1.5bn or more to its creditors, which is more than its income.

It would be a different story if all this money was being spent to drastically improve the lives of Territorians or provide some sort of strategic infrastructure investment that would create jobs in the private sector for longer than just the construction phase. Unfortunately, this money does not do that. It is being spent on projects that are largely unsupported by business cases that indicate they will bring a return to the Territory, a pathway to sustainable jobs or attract people to the Territory.

Over the last two weeks the Opposition Leader, the crossbenchers and I have asked this government to show us the evidence-based approach, the cost-benefit analysis and the information from Tourism Top End that says if we have a museum it will bring 20 000 more visitors to the Territory every year. Show us where evidence, grounded on logic and on the future—show us where these projects were flagged as being key priority projects for a time when we desperately need strong, strategic investment in the Northern Territory.

It sounds very nice to have another water park, another museum and a car park in the Darwin CBD, but the case must be made for spending that money beyond a mere feeling by this government that it would be really great to have it, or based on its simple election promises. This government has four years to deliver its promises. What we needed in this budget was long-term delivery for projects that will sustain jobs into the future and prop the Territory up in the next few years.

The spending we have seen will not remedy the key barriers that private businesses are facing as they attempt to gain ground and employ more people. Many of these barriers relate to the high amount of crime and antisocial behaviour in the Territory. For months I have been speaking about the crime crisis we are facing in the Territory. We just heard the Member for Araluen speaking very passionately about the Alice Springs community and her serious concerns for business confidence in Alice Springs and for the confidence of the community in the face of the crime crisis they have been experiencing. It seems to only get worse as time goes on.

It is important to remember that when we talk about business confidence, when we talk about crime—I think sometimes the Gunner government thinks that everyone who owns a business is some super multimillionaire living the high life. Businesses employ Territorians. They are the largest employer of Territorians. They are the mums and dads putting everything on the line to have their business, putting their heart and soul into something, putting their energy and their children's future—so much goes into running and operating a business. I have so much respect for people who undertake that venture. It is such a huge decision; I can only imagine it.

Employing Territorians, taking on apprentices and employing people in meaningful ways is a profound, enormous and immeasurably positive contribution to the Northern Territory. It cannot be underestimated how significant a player businesses are in the future of the Northern Territory. When we see the government making decisions like it does, the crime situation not getting any better and no decisive action being taken by a government, it puts a lot of pressure on people who are employing Territorians.

For a government that is so fixated on jobs—they certainly like saying the word 'jobs'. You cannot just say, 'Jobs, jobs, we believe in jobs. This is the budget for jobs, jobs, jobs.' Jobs do not magically sprout out of the word 'jobs'. Jobs come from people who have the confidence in the Northern Territory to run their business and employ people.

Despite the rising crime being characterised by the government as merely 'a spate of crime', the numbers do not reflect that this is a spate. Frankly, it is completely insulting to Territorians to call it that. The numbers do not indicate that the concerns about crime over the past few months were hyperbole or a media beat up. Statistics relating to a few weeks ago show that for the fourth or fifth month running, commercial and house break-ins were up by double digits. For the whole Northern Territory commercial break-ins increased by 40% in February and house break-ins by 22%. The numbers are even more striking when we look at individual localities.

In Darwin, for example, there were 728 commercial break-ins. That is a full 100% rise on the previous year. There were 746 house break-ins in Darwin in February, up by 32.9% from the previous year. As the Member for Araluen rightly pointed out, the situation in Palmerston is terrible. As a local member raising my family in Palmerston, it is really shocking to see the way our government has not listened to our community's concerns about what is happening with crime.

We have seen 347 break-ins reported, an increase of 40% from the previous year; 164 commercial break-ins which is up almost 20%. In addition, assault, most unfortunately including domestic violence related assaults were also up in Palmerston by nearly 20% in each category as compared to the previous year. Equally, the situation is no better in Alice Springs, where we have already seen businesses face a 35% increase in commercial break-ins year on year and a shocking 409 business break-ins in February.

These are huge numbers for the population. It is really astonishing that despite the wonderful way in which the Palmerston and Alice Springs communities have separately pulled together, recognised the issue and voiced their concerns, it has fallen on deaf ears by this government.

In March this year the spate of crime, as this government calls it, continued with businesses being hit particularly hard hit. I reference Moorish Cafe, whose staff were spit on and punched, and its patrons have been abused. Pearl Cafe went so far as having to put their restaurant on lock down for the protection of its staff and patrons. These problems have led to these traders calling on the Chief Minister to take a walk around the CBD and have a firsthand experience of what they deal with on a daily basis.

Also in March, a barber on Bennett Street was forced to defend himself when someone became aggressive and started rampaging his shop. That same week a man yielding a knife attempted to steal from a service station on Smith Street. In April, someone was stabbed in Palmerston, which is just shocking.

This daily antisocial behaviour has forced the Alice Springs plaza management to install a \$40 000 CCTV system, which is a significant investment; not long after that \$300 000 worth of damage was caused to the

plaza by youths stomping on their recently-installed solar panels whilst breaking into the building. The youngest offenders were only 13 and 14 years old.

The shopping centre has since had to hire additional security guards, but the point of the matter is that the damage has already been done; not only have they had to make an additional investment but they have been struck again, having to pay even more to reinforce the security of their establishment.

Police are doing their best, and I want to make that crystal clear. We have wonderful police in the Northern Territory. I have firsthand experience with the police in Palmerston, and I can only go by that experience, but they are exceptionally professional and do everything they can to respond to the concerns of the community. They get up every morning and night to make our community as safe as they possibly can.

In April a woman in Katherine spat on a police officer, and a few days later a police officer was injured in a rock attack by three teenage girls in Alice Springs who also damaged two police vehicles. No one is immune to what is happening. I have spoken numerous times before about churches, nuns, police officers, senior Territorians—no one is untouched by this crime spree.

It is well known in Darwin that the Deck Bar was targeted nine times in March. More smashed windows—all of these are expenses and impositions on business. They take time away from the business, and staff are unable to do their job so they get fewer shifts. All of this has a huge flow on effect throughout our community.

Thieves broke into a mobile home park on church grounds in Palmerston in March. They smashed a home and stole possessions of a family who were travelling, including their passports. We saw two separate and unrelated rock throwing incidents in Alice Springs in March, which resulted in broken windows.

In April things did not improve. Two women were involved in a violent robbery at the Palmerston bus exchange, in which they stole a victim's handbag and assaulted someone. A man in Alice Springs was charged with three business break-ins over three nights in Alice Springs. He stole a mountain bike and computer equipment. A man's car was torched at Middle Arm while he was fishing. The list goes on and on with examples across the Northern Territory.

There are incidents happening in Maningrida, on the Tanami Road, in Alice Springs—vehicles are being stolen. It goes far and wide, to every corner of the Northern Territory. It takes its toll on the local community and will continue to so if something is not done.

The government has been slow to react to this pattern of escalating crime and seems content to do nothing while businesses, homeowners and Territorians suffer. They live with the long-term impact of being a victim of crime, not the Gunner government.

The Chamber of Commerce has conducted a survey of local businesses in January and the number three priority was maintaining law and order. The survey results stated:

Government needs to commit to ensuring law and order is maintained – noting that many businesses are suffering from increased insurance premiums and downtime costs due to vandalism and other crimes.

This is only behind increases in strategic infrastructure spending and commitment to local procurement in the survey results. It is a very high priority of business. The Gunner government's perception that all these rich business people do not like paying more insurance, but this is impacting their ability to employ Territorians and keep them in work, which is a high priority of our business sector.

The results of the Chamber of Commerce's survey were reiterated in another Chamber of Commerce survey which specifically looked at the impact of crime and vandalism on businesses. Those results were very telling; 65% of the 400 businesses responded that they had been a victim of crime of some sort over the previous year.

Over 77% of businesses impacted by crime have suffered monetary damage of some sort relating to physical damage, theft of goods, impact on staff or the operation of their business. It was the financial impact of the crime that was the most difficult to deal, with 47% of businesses rating that as the most damaging part of the crime committed against them.

The other damaging effects were a loss of business confidence and an increase in business downtime due to crime and personal stress on management and employees. These numbers are hard to overstate. Businesses are doing it tough, and it appears the government is more concerned with its shiny new objects than protecting businesses so that they have the ability to grow, prosper and employ more Territorians.

It is telling that the only budget measure that directly addresses the concerns businesses have about crime and the impact of it is a grant to install security systems. I am sure it is welcomed by businesses, but it shows that this government has put up its hands and said, 'Well, we can't protect your business, we don't know how or have the guts to do it, so we'll give you a grant of \$10 000 so you can increase your security and deal with the problem.' It is a typical fob-it-off 'We can't fix it, so here, this will make you feel better in the meantime.' It is an insult to business.

In March this year we thought progress would be made in this space. We had a lot of tough talk from the Chief Minister and the Attorney-General about changes to the *Bail Act*. We in opposition were optimistic about it. Electronic monitoring was something we had been calling for with a range of other changes to the *Bail Act* that would complement the use of electronic monitoring, which can be extremely effective in reducing the risk of non-compliance of bail conditions by over 50%.

It can significantly reduce the risk to public safety from offenders living in the community. We were buoyed with confidence that, finally, the government would do something. It brought this bill in on urgency, although it was not urgent because they waited a whole month. We could have dealt with it on the day of the announcement but this government likes to announce things and wait a while, then re-announce it and eventually get around to doing it.

Eventually we got to see the bill which gave police the power to bail someone with an electronic monitoring bracelet during the police bail process. That bill was supported on urgency because we recognised that time was of the essence. The bill went through. We were disappointed it did not include more holistic changes to the *Bail Act*, but, all things considered, at least it was something. We supported it and the impression was given to us and to Territorians that it would be rolled out immediately. We knew it would be piloted in Palmerston and Alice Springs, but this was the government's big fix to crime.

I am not buoyed or full of confidence today. When I asked the Chief Minister in Question Time how many bracelets had been issued by police during police bail to alleged offenders, he could not answer my question. My understanding is that not one person to date, not a single youth or adult, has been bailed by police with an electronic monitoring bracelet. That is two months after we passed an 'urgent' bill. If it was so urgent, why has no one been issued with an electronic monitoring bracelet?

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I request an extension of time for the Deputy Opposition Leader, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I was so disappointed that the Chief Minister, in his answer, offered me a briefing on it. Chief Minister, go and get your own briefing. You are the one who does not know the answer to the question. You are the Police minister, the Chief Minister, the head of this government. If you do not know whether your policies are working or not, you need a briefing. I do not.

Tell Territorians in this parliament how many bracelets have been issued. If the answer is zero, have the guts to say it. Do not try to give us a history lesson on what the bill was about, because we know. We were sitting here. Territorians lived through it; they were waiting for it to happen. Do not patronise us and talk to us like we are children. Get a briefing then come in here and let us know the actual answer.

Another major issue which calls into question the credibility of this government is the discrepancy between the language of those opposite regarding alcohol and other drugs and their diametrically opposed actions. The government members tell us that alcohol-related crime and violence is a scourge on our society and that they are taking action. The Attorney-General often tells us in press releases, such as the one issued last week, that they have listened to the concerns of experts. Do not forget, this government loves evidence-based approaches, but it does not like having the evidence. They certainly can never provide it.

Apparently the members have listened to the experts in crafting their approach to alcohol and other drugs. Have they? We can only take their word for it.

Over the past week the government has admitted that its decision to institute a 400 square metre floor space limit on liquor outlets was not evidence-based, and there is no evidence whatsoever to support the notion that the size of a liquor outlet has any connection to the harmful effects of alcohol. No review, inquiry or other form of investigation was undertaken by the government. Instead, it was a unilateral decision made without consultation and without evidence, which is interesting from a government that was elected on a platform of consultation and evidence-based policy development. You are a bit thin on the ground when it comes to producing the evidence or making decisions that are backed by an evidence-based approach.

The 400 square metre limit space was adopted without any consultation. Instead of admitting this the government is now full steam ahead, enshrining this decision in legislation and fighting battles in court. It has caused all sorts of problems for the government and, in turn, for Territorians. Governments do not operate in isolation. When governments get into strife it costs the taxpayer. This government seems to forget that it is actually taxpayers' money it is spending, not its own money. Now it is ploughing ahead even though it has an alcohol review on foot.

We hear things being ruled out in this Chamber, 'No, we will absolutely not bring in lockout laws. We will not have a floor price on grog.' The list goes on. 'We only have bottle shops that are 400 square metres or less.' Then we hear from the Attorney-General that everything is on the table 'We will look at the recommendations of this review. It is a genuine review. We will listen.'

Then you see bills being brought into the Chamber that are tinkering around the edges. Which one is it? You cannot have your cake and eat it too. You either have an alcohol review, wait for the recommendations and implement the ones you want, or you plough ahead with your own agenda and cut the farce of having an alcohol review, which takes time and money, when you have predetermined the outcome.

What is the point? Do you really think Territorians are that silly? Do you have such little respect for our community that you think you can get away with this? It is outrageous. It does not cease to amaze me how low this situation has gotten.

Looking at the budget, the government has cut over \$7.5m for treatment and prevention of addiction to alcohol and other drugs. These cuts are spread across health—Top End Health Service, Centralian Health Service. You have to walk the talk. You cannot say you are serious about reducing alcohol-related harm and cut expenditure from your alcohol and other drugs budget. These cuts ignore the significant effects that drugs such as ice and alcohol are having on businesses and families.

So many times we have said in this place that almost 100% of service providers such as Banyan House have reported increases to the tune of 125% for people seeking treatment for ice addiction. That is just in the last year. There is no requirement to test offenders for ice or other drugs when they are taken into custody. Why not? Why is there no comprehensive treatment plan to ensure their addiction issues are dealt with before they are released back into our community?

We discount the role that drugs are playing in the increase in crime across the Territory at our own peril. In cutting the budget I cannot see how the government can say it is taking this seriously. We saw a report from the Australian Crime Commission recently that found the Top End is the ecstasy capital of Australia, and the National Waste Water Drug Monitoring Program found that methamphetamine was the most consumed drug in the Territory.

The link with crime is undeniable. We see the supply of drugs in the Territory increasing, as evidenced by the increase in the number of recent seizures. There have been numerous drug raids and seizures over the past few weeks. They are in the paper and on the news. They are not hidden. They are there for everyone to see. Everyone gets it and understands it.

The Member for Blain and other members have spoken about the effects that public drunkenness and anti-social behaviour have on small businesses, such as the Deck Bar and the Pearl cafe being the repeated victims of crime and vandalism. How can we expect businesses to invest, grow and make significant commitments to the Northern Territory when we ignore their needs and cut funding in areas that would help solve problems that affect them, and when Territorians are misled about what is being done to protect them? There are a lot of questions that remain unanswered by this government.

This budget fails to make any advancement towards criminal justice that will reform offenders. The Royal Commission signalled in its interim report that a new youth justice facility would be needed, and we see no planning put in this budget for the construction of that facility despite it being an election commitment by this government. There is \$11m set aside to patch up the old Don Dale, but money needs to be spent on

developing, planning and designing a new youth facility. The evidence is very clear; it needs to provide skills training, jobs training, work experience and life skills to bring down the 97% recidivism rate in the youth offender space.

Vocational education and training has a very strong link with reducing repeat incidents of crime with high recidivism rates. The Gunner Labor government spends an extraordinary amount of time pointing out the chaos of the past and the failings of the previous government. However, the time has come for this government to accept responsibility for its own brand of chaos and disorganisation. The words that are spoken by the Chief Minister and his ministers often do not match reality.

It is near impossible to separate the spin and misdirection from the actual fact of any given policy, and when mistakes are made, they are not acknowledged. Instead, we are given clumsy excuses, more reviews, more inquiries and supposedly pressing issues and invented to distract us from what is really happening. In order for business and individual Territorians to have confidence in this government, they need less chaos and more functional and decisive government.

When mistakes are made they should be owned up to, not put off on public servants or referred to another meaningless and unheated review or inquiry. I hope business confidence in the Northern Territory can and does turn around, because the future of the Northern Territory, the future of our children, depends on it.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am wondering if we are living in the same Territory?

Mrs Finocchiaro: No, we are not. You are living on another planet.

Ms NELSON: You need to come over to my planet. I am having a great time in the Northern Territory. I have a lot of confidence in my government. I love the electorate I am in. We are all really excited about the things that are happening. It is just a shame that you do not have that same experience.

Despite acknowledging the economic challenges facing the Territory, Opposition Leader Gary Higgins has called for more than \$150m of job-creating projects to be scrapped. This approach will not help with business confidence. The CLP Opposition Leader also attacked the \$10m allocated for upgrades to Katherine art galleries, a project that will create local construction and commence a pathway for ongoing and sustainable tourism and arts jobs in Katherine.

The attack on more than \$150m in projects was especially confusing to me because a CLP vibrant arts policy released by Mr Higgins in May 2016, when he was the CLP minister for the arts, recognised the importance of investing in arts infrastructure to build visitation.

It noted a number of opportunities:

Committing to infrastructure projects at a time when construction is the Northern Territory's largest industry sector;

Growing the value of the tourism sector to the Territory economy through further development of our cultural experiences

The CLP Opposition Leader also has a conflicting position on the deficit. Despite saying that deficit does not matter just months ago, the CLP Opposition Leader now supports scrapping projects and slashing jobs, moves that will hurt Territorians. Again, I am confused.

In February the CLP Opposition Leader said: 'I think this argument that always should be in surplus or have a balance book is something that people have got to get over. The thing is that sometimes you have to have debt.'

In February the Chief Minister outlined some significant work being undertaken by this government to support and grow jobs across the Territory. As the Chief Minister reflected, 2016 was a very tough year for the Northern Territory economy, and 2017 will be tough as well. We are facing the challenging headwinds. With challenges come opportunities, and this government will use these opportunities to strengthen the economy for the future and keep the wheels of business turning.

I have said this several times over the last few months but it must be said again today; Katherine is a winner with the Territory Labor budget. This confirms our team's commitment to Katherine. Katherine will no longer be taken for granted as it once was. This government took a detailed jobs plan to Territorians

before the last election and is delivering on that plan. In fact, we have built upon and strengthened that plan in consultation with local businesses, NGOs and the broader community, because that is what we do. We actually talk to the stakeholders in our electorates.

In my inaugural speech, on 18 October, I stated that Katherineites had been brave enough to invest significant time and resources to nurture the small businesses that are the heart of our town's economy. This government is ensuring these businesses get the attention they need with the Buy Local program. This government has significantly strengthened buy local principles so that 30% local content weighting is applied across all government procurement stages. This principle has also been extended to groups which receive government capital grants.

As the Chief Minister stated, guiding the seven new buy local initiatives that we announced in February is replacing the value for money definition in government procurement guidelines with value for Territory. Every dollar that stays in the Territory benefits our small to medium-sized businesses, and our government recognises that they are the true backbone of our economy. Doing this will ensure work gets into the hands of businesses which will use it to create and sustain jobs and drive our economy. This also falls in line with ensuring we have more egalitarian access to business opportunities in Katherine, which will ensure greater government and private investment in my electorate.

As the Member for Katherine, I am committed to helping build capacity for Katherine to continue growing, to gain control of the future and to improve the lives of future generations. I firmly believe this is attainable with strategic planning, strong leadership, positive collaboration and commitment, which we are providing. The Chief Minister and my colleagues in government share my optimism that Katherine can be a leader in the NT economy.

Twelve Katherine families have their first homes because we introduced the \$24 000 stamp duty relief, another boost. The construction industry will have more work because we fast-tracked \$120m of infrastructure programs, including the new fire station, infrastructure spend for art galleries and the \$300 000 commitment to schools.

I also stated in my inaugural speech that one of my major goals as the Member for Katherine was to facilitate innovative and targeted investment in services and infrastructure by prioritising a consultative approach, and I have been doing that. I have been speaking to stakeholders in my electorate; I get out there.

Our government has been proactive in taking action to address business confidence in the Territory, and we will continue with this momentum. In Katherine we have had great public interest and participation with the economic summits and, most recently, the small business round table discussion held on 19 April 2017. Katherine residents are excited at the opportunities to have their input into developing strategies to continue growing a strong, sustainable economy. They are also excited to have their voices heard and to have a government and local member that listens.

Despite the CLP Opposition Leader's tirade and incredibly short-sighted preamble to this motion, I support the motion as it is written. I support it because we, the government, are already taking action to increase business confidence. I also support the motion because, unlike the CLP, our plan and strategies are sustainable.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, this debate is important to the portfolios I have the privilege of representing. There are good news stories that instil business confidence across the Northern Territory. We must start with a plan that was consulted on, resonated within the Territory regional and remote communities, crafted into a policy, and then, with the Chief Minister and Treasurer, put into working policy backed by the resources; that is the \$1.1bn 10-year remote housing investment package.

That investment package has never been seen before in the Northern Territory by a Northern Territory Government. It is important for the Leader of the Opposition to acknowledge that because this is dealing with disadvantage and underpins a lot of the Closing the Gap targets. That policy and investment over a 10-year period ties in with a bipartisan approach not only with this legislation in the Northern Territory but also with the Commonwealth.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we are coming into the final year of a national partnership agreement. This investment is smart, targeted, proactive and designed to bring the Commonwealth back to the table to commit to the next 10 years. It translates to good education, health and social justice

outcomes, as well as business confidence. This cash is available for Territory businesses and, most importantly, Indigenous business enterprises to start to build capacity and deliver jobs across the length and breadth of the Northern Territory.

Yesterday we debated opening parliament to the people. It was mentioned by a number of speakers that the Labor government already introduced better scrutiny and transparency by allowing a Question Time with no Dorothy Dixers so the Wednesday Question Time is all about the opposition and Independents.

Today it was good to see that that policy is working because the CLP opposition was scrutinising itself, and it came across loud and clear for Territorians who were listening that when they scrutinised itself that it is clearly against the Territory. They talk down the Territory. They are about slashing jobs and investment. Today was the pinnacle of this negativity—they believe it is a good thing the Commonwealth government gave the Northern Territory very little in the federal budget.

They laid their cards on the table, and the great citizens of the Northern Territory know well and truly where they are at with the remnants of the CLP, who are still in this legislature talking down the Territory, jobs, investment projects and the future of the Northern Territory. These are very critical years when the Labor government's targets are to build population, not lose it, and invest in infrastructure that addresses needs and creates jobs.

That \$1.1bn 10-year Remote Housing Investment Package comprises \$500m for the construction of new public housing; \$200m for new government employee housing in remote communities, including housing for local employees; \$200m to build additional living areas for existing housing stock under the Room to Breathe program; and \$200m for repairs and maintenance for the middle level construction sector, which puts bread on the tables of Territory families. This includes the very important Indigenous business enterprises that are now given the opportunity to engage in this package to build their business models and participate in the economy of regional and remote areas over the next 10 years.

Leader of the Opposition, we need you. We need a bipartisan approach because the Commonwealth did not lay a lot of cards on the Territory's table last night, but we need those investments to continue in the regional and remote housing package and program. We need you to start talking up the Territory to your Commonwealth Liberal Coalition partners in Canberra to make sure we walk to the table by 30 June next year.

We hope the Commonwealth will not only match the Northern Territory's incredible commitment but possibly do better. It needs to understand one clearly significant area to invest in is Closing the Gap targets, which will reduce disadvantage and improve people's livelihoods, wellbeing, health and education outcomes, and their prosperity. This will deliver far more than just social outcomes; this will build economies in the bush.

In terms of business confidence, I will share other important areas: \$32.6m for repairs and maintenance of urban housing across the Territory, including \$5m as part of the economic stimulus program already rolling out. That is from Budget 2017–18. The Master Builders were very complimentary of it. They understand the economic challenges over the next couple years, have come to terms with this targeted investment underpinning their important construction sector, and acknowledge the Chief Minister and Treasurer were brave and courageous in taking on the responsibilities of keeping the Northern Territory afloat.

There is \$17m for minor new works and upgrades to existing public and government employee housing assets across the Northern Territory. That will be good for all Territory businesses. Indigenous business enterprise is building its capacity in this space and in existing Territory industry in terms of innovation around joint venture partnerships.

We want to look at a new model of government employee housing to complement the Labor government's new policy on local recruits having housing entitlement in remote areas.

This is significant money. It will go further under our plans because we are looking at innovation and crossover of using existing housing stock in remote communities that does not accommodate local families who choose to work with the important sectors of health, education, justice and police.

There will be a lot more return for that investment under a Labor government. We will push the envelope on innovation. We are serious about doing it in partnership and consultation with regional and remote communities.

There is \$14.2m to continue to support the head lease rental initiative of the Real Housing for Growth plan, including head leases for both affordable and social housing. That is a significant investment. It is important for the Leader of the Opposition to note that the development community in the Territory looks forward to any government support it can get.

There are a lot of developers in the Northern Territory saying, 'If you can help us, if you can underpin some of our development with an investment in social and affordable head leasing, that will be the linchpin to get our development across the line with the finance sector'.

This has been welcomed. There is a lot of interest and opportunity in partnering with the development section. When you have a true partnership mobilised it translates to construction jobs as well, so not only do you get a great outcome of social and affordable housing, but you get good economic stimulus in the construction sector.

There is \$10m in incentive funding to expand the community housing sector. We have a lot of interest from the housing sector, and we are keen to look at innovative proposals. We want to use those important funds to seed fund this initiative. When government seed funds an initiative it brokers private sector investment.

That is the story in this budget and debate that the Leader of the Opposition refuses to engage with. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition needs to go back and engage with this concept as well. It is a budget for jobs, targeted infrastructure investment and keeping the Territory buoyant in tough fiscal times by brokering important private sector investment.

This \$10m investment will not only look at how we can deliver community housing better, but it will also broker that important private sector investment, which translates into construction industry jobs and bread on Territorians' tables. It will keep people on our side of the border instead of cross-border migrating, like we saw with the previous administration when over 8000 people packed up and left the Northern Territory.

There is \$7.9m to continue Indigenous jobs development funding for regional councils to support core local government service delivery. That is business confidence for the bush. When you invest in Indigenous jobs in partnership with local government, it is targeted investment across the Northern Territory that keeps people in jobs in regional and remote areas. That delivers services at the grassroots level. We have had this debate in the General Business day debate on local government and its importance. It is not only important for the Territory; it is important for local government jobs to be created.

There is \$1m for the employment and training of Aboriginal interpreters to facilitate the successful implementation of the Remote Housing Investment Package and other government initiatives. There is a budget of \$4.5m to employ very creative Territorians who engage in interpreting services. An underpinning policy of this government is to make sure we consult well in a cross-cultural context and we maximise important local decision-making. That will influence real outcomes for this government as opposed to what we saw in the last four years of the previous administration.

There is \$81.9m to continue providing property and tenancy management for remote Aboriginal public housing, including \$64.7m under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. That is investment in jobs, infrastructure and the maintenance of infrastructure.

There is \$75.1m under the Indigenous Essential Services program to continue providing electricity, water and sewerage services in 72 remote Aboriginal communities. That significant investment underpins business confidence in the Northern Territory.

Our job as regional and remote MLAs is to make sure we can recruit and retain more local ESOs. That is a story for the bush. In my electorate there is a young Aboriginal man who has done his heavy diesel fitting apprenticeship and is now employed as an ESO, managing the powerhouse in the remote community where he lives. That is a great story. To get that young fella there, there was a whole string of Territory businesses and Territory training institutions supporting and underpinning his growth and development as an accredited tradesperson. That was business confidence and confidence in the bush.

There is \$22.3m to continue providing municipal and essential services to homelands and outstations. This is a critical investment for people who live in some of the most remote areas of the Northern Territory, on country, and are able to maintain a job. This investment involves continuing jobs, building jobs and delivering wellbeing across the Northern Territory.

There is \$6m, including an additional \$1m in 2017–18, for the Homelands Extra Allowance program to improve existing housing in homelands. This is a critical area for not only jobs and commitment, but people's livelihood. It is about their homes on homelands. This area had no budget allocation from the previous administration. This was a deal where the previous government had an opportunity with the Commonwealth, took the cash and walked away.

The question should go back to that side of the House. With all the sales of public assets, the deal with the Commonwealth on the asset recycling scheme, the cancelling out and taking the cash from homelands, where is it all that cash? The great economic managers who are trying to buy back their credibility with Territorians—where is all that cash? Territorians are asking the same question; it is not me coming up with this. I get asked that question in Tennant Creek and in Darwin. What happened to all the money? We saw sale after sale.

This program was imperative to supporting homelands. It was cashed up, but the CLP walked away from it. What sort of business confidence does that instil in the Northern Territory? I am proud to say that the Gunner Labor government has continued the Homelands Extra Allowance program.

There is \$5m to establish and operate a strategic local government infrastructure fund for projects and to improve key infrastructure in remote communities. That is on the table for local government from 1 July. An extra \$5m will create jobs and support infrastructure. It is a new innovation. It is this government's targeted investment, which instils business confidence in the Northern Territory. Businesses sit up and take notice of things like that, and they want to be part of that program.

There is \$3.5m of Commonwealth funding to provide Aboriginal interpreter services. I mention that with regard to our \$4.5m program. There is \$1.3m to extend the provision of budget assistance grants to the Vic Daly and West Daly Regional Councils. Opposition Leader, we need to have a serious conversation about that. I have inherited one of your legacies. This legacy is an extremely challenging one. It risks jobs in the Vic Daly and West Daly. We now have serious challenges in regard to keeping these two councils that were split for whatever reason. We are not quite sure what that reason was, but you can research that in *Hansard*. I was involved in that debate at the time.

Now we are looking at additional funding to make sure we get these councils across the line, to instil confidence in those constituents and in the Territory businesses that support those councils.

There is \$1.3m to manage and operate the Apmere Mwerre Visitor Park in Alice Springs and \$1m to manage and operate the Stuart Lodge in Alice Springs. For the Member for Araluen, who has participated in this debate, those two critical elements of reducing homelessness, supporting better health outcomes and supporting the vulnerable were not funded under the previous administration. They are two critical elements to address disadvantage and support vulnerable Territorians accessing services in Alice Springs, particularly health services, which the CLP walked away from.

In an economy like Alice Springs, \$1.3m into Apmere Mwerre and \$1m into Stuart Lodge is a baseline investment. These institutions generate their own economies. Can you imagine what the Alice Springs business community would do if Stuart Lodge closed down? Those suppliers, the small businesses that contribute to the services and maintenance of the facility—we saw it under the CLP, because it was closed down. They shut it down and left people vulnerable and at risk of homelessness while they were in Alice Springs attending critical health services.

A Labor opposition put pressure on the CLP, drove that agenda and forced them to the wall so that they reopened that institution. They reopened it in a shallow commitment as they went into an election cycle, then walked away from it with no budget appropriation. That is an example of restoring business confidence in Alice Springs, in a small economy that needs every bit of help it can get.

In regard to building fairer, safer and stronger communities, and the business community of the Northern Territory, there is \$140.4m over five years, from 2016–17, to implement the Territory government housing strategy. This will refresh Territory housing stock and deliver a sustainable urban public housing program, including \$17.6m for additional social housing head lease dwellings, with \$2.4m in 2017–18, and \$2m for the Homelessness Innovation Fund, with \$1m in 2017–18.

That investment is underpinned by business confidence. Businesses know these programs are being rolled out in the Northern Territory, which gives them security in their knowledge that this work will be in the pipeline, allowing them to train apprentices, hire workers, deliver better outcomes for infrastructure and be part of supporting Territorians.

There is \$33.9m in Commonwealth financial assistant grants for general purpose and road grants, but the Treasurer has far bigger announcements about roads infrastructure programs. When members are travelling in the Territory they should take the time to look at some of these road construction camps and the logistics of what takes place there.

There was a business in Tennant Creek that was able to hire generators to a roads civil construction camp that was building a significant roads infrastructure project under the previous Labor government. It was a very important area of the national network, at Gilbert Swamp. The project delivered great flood immunity. It is an incredible part of the national network now. Shelves in Darwin, Leader of the Opposition, used to start to go bare when the Gilbert Swamp flooded.

Ms WAKEFIELD: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I request an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Speaker, there was an electrical business in Tennant Creek that hired generators to this contractor. This contractor was regularly seen in our supermarkets, at the local tyre service, and in and out of Tennant Creek providing some social outlet for the workers on that site because the roads contract was over a period of about two months. The logistics around an investment like that builds confidence in Territory business. It is not just about the road infrastructure; it is about the bolt on services that get an opportunity to be a part of that.

The Minister for Education is bringing a \$6.5m investment into early childhood, which underpins the Michael Gunner Labor government policy for Tennant Creek. The Tennant Creek community will show their enthusiasm to the Chief Minister on Friday when he does his budget announcement in Tennant Creek. Bolt on services and opportunities that come with an investment project like this create jobs that underpin existing jobs. It gives businesses the kick they need and delivers significant outcomes for improving the lives and livelihoods of Territorian children.

It is important that this budget and this investment is really debated in its true form across the Northern Territory. It was great today in Question Time—the Labor's new initiative for a transparent governance, providing the opposition and the Independents with a full Question Time on their own. It was a great scrutiny of CLP politics today. They have abandoned the Territory; they want to cut Territory jobs; they want to slash investment projects; they link arms with their Liberal-National Coalition mates in Canberra and say, 'Nothing for the Territory is enough. It is fine.'

When they scrutinised themselves today in Question Time—that needs to be told across the length and breadth of the Northern Territory because they are not listening. They have not listened and they are still not listening. They have not learned any lessons from the past. Let us face it, there are two of them left. I remember when there were 16 of them on this side. It was like a house of cards; they were just folding one after another. We were hitting hard from the other side and they were being knocked down like nine pins, one after another. Some of them were running, some jumping, some just crawled out sideways.

It was chaos. We used to say, 'You have to listen to Territorians.' We are listening. We are a government that consulted over four years in opposition. We served a disciplined program of consulting and listening, then put it to policy. The election was decided, and it has solidified the concept that you must listen to Territorians.

Businesses are listening to us. They are saying that this budget, this targeted investment, is important for the Territory, particularly in the next couple of years. I am proud to stand here and deliver for the sections I am privileged to represent, such as Housing, local government, Community Development, all the important homelands and outstations, essential services and cross sections with Territory business.

There is a powerful message for Territory businesses in terms of the next 10-year program, particularly when we get the Commonwealth involved. A good government negotiates well, shows confidence in the Territory and brings the Commonwealth to the table for remote housing investment at the end of the 10-year term on 30 June 2018.

Both Territory and Commonwealth investments will be significant for Territory businesses. They will create the opportunity for building Indigenous enterprises which will allow for joint ventures, partnerships and working together. Territory industry has the capacity to train young Territorians. Young Territorians in the

bush have the opportunity to engage, develop skills and deliver in this sector. When economies grow in regional and remote areas, it addresses the greatest challenges gripping many Territorians right now.

This is a targeted, exciting and good plan that needs bipartisan support, particularly for bringing the Commonwealth back to the table. The Chief Minister and Treasurer are working diligently to have the discussion about GST, developing northern Australia, how Defence contracts are rolled out, maximising Territory industry capacity, cities deals and investment into our capital city. We need to get the Commonwealth minister to the table with the Remote Housing Investment package over the next decade.

This is a time when businesses are confident. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to speak about business confidence in the Northern Territory. I look forward to further contributions to this debate.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I am glad to respond to this. I was happy when I heard that the government supports this motion and fully agrees with everything I said.

With that in mind, the only thing I would like to point out is the Country Liberals and Independents live in the real world. There are a lot of Territorians who want to live in the world that the other side of the House lives in.

I am happy the government will support this motion and agrees with everything I said.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION **Off-Road Park for ATVs and Quad Bikes**

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I move that the government sets up a task force for Motorsport Northern Territory and the department responsible for Crown lands, the department responsible for sport and recreation, the Police department and any other departments who may have an interest to look at establishing an off-road park in the greater Darwin region so that the owners of ATVs and quad bikes can enjoy the use of their vehicles in a safe and accessible environment. The task force could also look at a facility for competition to attract local and interstate riders, and the possibility of a recreational licence for a bike should also be included in the discussions.

Unfortunately we only have 30 minutes to discuss something that should be exciting to anyone who wants to attract people to the Northern Territory. This is an opportunity to attract many people to the Northern Territory and, at the same time, help a lot of people in the Darwin and Alice Springs regions who own ATVs, quad bikes and off-road bikes.

Recently the police started a campaign where they are cracking down on ATVs. Part of that targeting says: 'It is illegal to drive a quad bike or ATV on a public road or a public place that is Crown land, including a park, beach or footpath, unless you have a conditional registration. You can only apply for conditional registration for a quad bike or ATV for work-related purposes. You can apply for work-related purposes including any of the following: roadside litter collection; ground maintenance; herbicide spraying; and park management. Driving on wet roads or rough terrain is not regarded as a sufficient reason for conditional registration.'

Legally, these bikes can only be driven on private land or at Hidden Valley, where the Territory Quad Association has events. Many families and riders enjoy riding quads, side-by-sides and off-road bikes. Many of these families and riders come from Palmerston, Darwin and the rural area. I see them coming up Lambrick Avenue, Howard Springs Road, Gunn Point Road and heading bush every weekend, even in the evenings.

The problem is there are people who drive their bikes instead of putting them in a trailer. In many cases they are riding without helmets, which is illegal. There are a number of Crown land sites being used, such as Micket Creek, near the shooting range; between Wishart Road and Tiger Brennan Drive near Palmerston; and on land on the other side of the Gunn Point bridge. Some of the old extractive mining sites are probably used as well. Most of this land would be Crown land, therefore it is illegal to ride on with an unregistered vehicle. As I said, you cannot register ATVs for normal use.

The Territory Quad Association runs its competition at Hidden Valley and has a long track on land subleased from the mud races. What would the benefit of a park be? I say 'park' but Central Australian

members may also be interested in a park or parks in their areas. Firstly, people can use their bikes legally in parks. It would protect other areas from environmental damage caused by unorganised and illegal bike activity.

There could be an opportunity to build a first-class facility with several tracks for juniors and adults. Competitions could be held there, such as the Kamfari, and safe riding programs could be held there. A caravan park and facilities could be developed for tourists and local bike enthusiasts. This would include a full-time caretaker and track maintenance person. There could be facilities for garaging bikes instead of having to bring them home. Could riders be covered by insurance through a recreational licence? They could be sited far enough away from residential land not to cause a nuisance. Tracks should be close enough to Darwin, Palmerston and other regions to encourage riders to use them.

If you think that this is boring, just look at the number of ATVs and off-road bikes being sold. It is amazing how many people love this kind of recreation. If you do not think this is an opportunity to make the Territory more attractive to people coming here then you have your head in the sand about what you may say are noisy quad bikes. Many people enjoy using them. You only have to go to the Territory Quad Association's race day and see how many families turn up and enjoy riding these bikes. The problem we have at the moment is they cannot be used legally on roads or Crown land.

If you look around the Darwin and Palmerston region there is practically no land they can use legally. They cannot use the Gunn Point beach; they cannot use the land to the north of the Howard River Iron Bridge; they cannot use the land between Wishart Road and Tiger Brennan Drive; they cannot use the land at Mickett Creek. Even if they use this land, they are not doing it legally, and that brings in all sorts of implications if someone has an accident. The police have said that under our present legislation we cannot use that land.

It is about time we recognised that a lot of people use these bikes and there is an opportunity to not only allow people to use their bikes legally but to develop the Northern Territory as a place where you can come and ride your off-road bike.

This is a booklet from Tasmania. Tasmania is a pretty small place and they have 17 off-road parks where people can legally ride, and they promote them. Some of them are in their national parks. In here they show the tracks you can use if you have a registered vehicle—it might be like a four-wheel drive or a motorbike—and tracks where you can get a recreational licence or restricted licence.

Why is that good? Because that is attracting people to Tasmania since they cannot do it in Victoria. Tasmania is ensuring people get an adventure—can use it in certain parts of Tasmania which means they can enjoy the bush. It is not about wrecking the bush. There is a guideline about the riders' code, what you should be doing, how to be careful when riding on sand dunes—there are some sand dunes there, but they tell you which ones you can ride on and which ones you cannot—and which areas in national parks you should not use if they are wet et cetera. They have a code of conduct.

This is an excellent document which promotes the use of quad bikes. It does not say you cannot use them, but we are saying that to all those kids and older people, because unless they go on private land—and there is land at Acacia Hills because the Territory Quad Association runs some of its events there. There is really nowhere to ride if they do not know anyone with a private block of land. Sometimes that can be a nuisance anyway because neighbours do not want to hear engine noises going around every five minutes.

We can set aside land; we have a lot of Crown land and land being used for gravel extraction. That would be doing something positive; it would get kids to ride bikes; teach them how to ride properly and at the same time give them something to do. It is good to encourage kids not to be sitting at home watching TV or doing iPod stuff or whatever. They could actually be doing something. It is noisy, I understand that, but I would rather have the noise in a certain place where it is legal and kids and older people can enjoy that environment.

There could be junior, intermediate and senior tracks, then a harder track for a particular grade and a competition track. It could be managed in such a way that certain tracks are not used for a couple of years so the environment can recover, and then another track is built in its place. I am copying that from the Mount Bundy training facilities out bush; they use tracks for their tanks, which wreck the environment, but then they stop and let that bit of environment recover for a couple of years. You could do the same sensible sort of things.

It would be a great thing for this government to say, 'We will encourage this kind of sport and make sure it is safe'. ATVs have a very high fatality rate, but you have an opportunity to teach people how to use them sensibly—make sure they are wearing their helmets, they have an understanding of the machine they are driving and they are not carrying people they should not be. You are giving people something to do, a way to be active.

In many cases, it is a family activity. At the Territory Quad Association you will see a tent with three or four racing quads and families all dressed up, from the minis to the adults. It is a good sport; the problem is it drives people mad when those vehicles are used illegally. When people drive down streets with no helmets side-by-side at 100 kilometres an hour, or are roaring around the grass of somebody's verge, that is when people get uptight about it.

There is an opportunity here to say to people, 'You cannot do that but we are giving you the opportunity to do it legally', while at the same time you are encouraging people to come to the Northern Territory.

If there was a caravan park and garaging facilities so people did not have to take their bikes home, some of the clubs might like to base themselves there. There could be facilities for repairing vehicles. If there were good camping facilities, a caretaker and someone doing maintenance on the roads, you would attract people here in the Dry Season.

There are a lot of people down south who like quad bikes. There are places besides Tasmania that enjoy their quad bikes. In Queensland there is a government park. It is called the QMP, the Queensland Moto Park. It is near Wyaralong, between Beaudesert and Boonah. It has four senior MX tracks, three junior MX tracks and a supercross track. Is camping available? Yes; unpowered campsites are available for \$5 per person per night. Firewood and ice are available but, unfortunately, no dogs allowed. There is no fee for spectators. There is a fee if you use the park.

That is a government park and there are many other parks. I think it is good that you register your bikes and then work out what the insurance is. There has to be some insurance if people get hurt, whether that is built into the cost of using the park or there is a requirement to get a recreational licence that includes insurance.

The motion says we need to get a group of people together—it could be the tourist industry, the police, the Territory Quad Association and people who sell quad bikes. There are plenty of other people that sell quad bikes and off-road bikes.

If the government thinks this is a sport that many people are interested in—we know it is because of the number of bikes that are sold—and would be good for tourism then it could say, 'Yes, how can we achieve that?' I think we could come up with something great.

It does not have to be in Darwin. It could be in Alice Springs, out bush or in a remote community. If it is a difficult track with difficult terrain to make it challenging, people would go there. If it is well managed it will attract people because they know it is safe; they know it is a challenge; they know they can camp there. There are some real opportunities.

New South Wales has a number of privately-owned parks, but there is no clear access to national parks. In Victoria you cannot use public land for ATVs, although my understanding is that if you get a recreational licence you can use some of the tracks within Victorian state forests, but you cannot come onto any of the roads because you are not permitted. Tasmania has a top way of attracting people without wrecking the environment. You will get some damage to the environment, but if you keep that damage to an area that is classified for this use at least you have a better chance of protecting the rest.

You must make this park accessible because the population of Palmerston is about 35 000; Darwin is about 80 000; the rural area is about 25 000. You do not want this halfway down the track; you want it in a vicinity that is accessible.

South Australia does not have any clear information on ATV use on state land. There are a number of four-wheel drive parks. That could be an added bonus; you could have one of those parks as an off-road park. Western Australia allows unlicensed riders and non-registered bikes and ATVs to ride in specially designed, legal off-road vehicle areas. You still have to get insurance. There are a number of private parks in WA. There is not much information in regard to parks in the ACT. There are a few parks, many of which are for bikes rather than ATVs.

I believe there is a great opportunity for the government to get on the front foot. It talks a lot about kids who get into trouble. Sometimes kids on motorbikes get tagged as bad kids because they are roaring up the road, creating dust. I know that can drive you mad, but it does not make them bad kids; it just makes them a bit silly.

Wouldn't it be good if one of the policies of this government was to say, 'We encourage people to get out in the bush and do something active'? These kids will not just ride bikes; they will have to fix them, so they will learn mechanical work. They will help the local economy. Look at the cost of the fancy outfit you have to wear on a bike.

I have been to the Thumpers at Acacia Hills. They were out there, churning through the mud. Someone has a brand-new bike because the other bike has worn itself out or been sold. This industry is part of our economy—quad bikes, off-road bikes and all the bits and pieces that come with it as an industry. If you encourage people to take part in that sport and act legally, you are doing a good thing.

We cannot start with the base of, 'It's too hard. I don't think we can do it'. We have to say, 'Yes, we can do it. How can we make this happen?'

We do not have much time tonight to discuss it. I would like the minister to give me a response.

This should not just apply to the Darwin and Palmerston area. There should be a place in Katherine for the kids to go. It is the same in Alice Springs; I bet people are driving up and down the roads there, illegally.

If the police are to come out with the posters—I have them on my board and in my newsletter—saying it is illegal to ride on Crown land, including public roads, and at the beach at Gunn Point, it is all off. If the government does not give alternatives, it will encourage people to go off-road illegally.

You brought in these rules, and I am not saying they appeared overnight, but if you start a public campaign to stop people using bikes on Crown land, it is only fair to you say, 'Okay, you enjoy this and want to do it on the weekends. It is a good recreational activity. We will do our best to get you a park where you can run those bikes safely on the weekend'. And it needs to be a reasonably large slice of land.

You could look at the old site north of the prison where there are old gravel mining extraction areas, or on the road to Gunn Point where there are gravel extraction areas. Some of that belongs to Power and Water and some is national park, but the Shoal Bay Coastal Reserve was never scientifically worked out. It was developed just before an election by the CLP because there were protests about a prawn farm being put on some of the creeks that ran into that area. The government then decided to preserve that and put the prawn farm on the Blackmore River.

There is land within that conservation park that could be used sacrificially without ruining the breeding areas of barramundi. A lot of that area has been hit by extracted mining, and if the land is pretty worthless after it has been scraped, then this is a perfect opportunity to re-use land that has lost its value for anything else.

I encourage the government to get into this with a positive outlook and say, 'This is worth doing. We do not want kids booked and arrested for driving their bikes illegally.' By doing this you show that you support young people, tourism and good old common sense that we can do something positive.

Ms MOSS (Tourism and Culture): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for bringing this forward and for the massive amount of thought and effort he has put into this motion. I am more than happy, Member for Nelson, to receive the booklet you have been referring to tonight. My office has been in touch with you already on this issue, and we will continue to speak with you about it.

I acknowledge that the Member for Nelson has raised and proposed the off-road park a number of times with previous sports ministers. I am aware that in 2015 the Member for Nelson also met with lands and planning and my department to discuss this idea of an off-road park. This has been on the agenda for the Member for Nelson for some time, which I am sure he would acknowledge.

I am also aware that the Territory Quad Association has considered this and has had discussions over the last few years with the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics regarding land for a quad track. These discussions can continue without the need for a task force.

The Gunner government acknowledges how much Territorians love their motorsport. We understand it plays an important role in the community in terms of recreation at both a spectator and participant level. In rural electorates there are a lot of people on quads and ATVs, and it is a big part of their everyday lives.

We are investing a significant amount of money in Budget 2017–18 into motorsports infrastructure across the Northern Territory, which will see a number of key upgrades and enhancements made to facilities, including providing MotorSports NT with \$2m a year to assist its affiliate clubs with improving their events and infrastructure. The Territory Quad Association is also an affiliate club of MotorSports NT.

We have a really good relationship with MotorSports NT CEO Grant Hamon, who regularly provides us with updates on not only the status of the sport in the Northern Territory but what its priorities are. In my time as the minister responsible for sport and recreation, and in my conversations with MotorSports NT regarding investing in infrastructure, an off-road park for ATV and quad bikes has not been raised as an eminent need at this point in time.

It is important to listen to and act on the priorities of our peak sporting bodies and involve them in our decision-making on infrastructure and other investments. They have an intimate and up-to-date understanding of the needs of their respective sports. We are aware of the popularity of quad bikes and all-terrain vehicles as a recreational pastime. The Member for Nelson has talked through a number of issues and aspects regarding riders not needing a licence on private land, which is where most of the recreational riding takes place.

ATVs and quad bikes can only be ridden on a public road or in public places by a person with a conditional licence. Many of us have seen these used in work-related purposes such as litter collection, ground maintenance, herbicide spraying and park management.

Mr Wood: They only go 15 miles per hour.

Ms MOSS: True, they go much slower. Many of us are very familiar with the sight of people using quad bikes for litter collection and things like that; they are doing a tremendous job. I think this licensing policy works, but we are aware of the issue presented by riders without conditional licences using vehicles on Crown land or public space which, as the Member for Nelson pointed out, is illegal. Gunn Point Road has been identified as a location where issues arise with unlicensed ATV and quad bike riders.

The police have recently run a campaign to advise people that unregistered quad bikes are not permitted on public roads or Crown land. They are committed to continuing to monitor and educate the community on this issue to ensure safety and compliance with licensing and registration rules.

I understand the Member for Nelson's point; if that is being enforced, where can people go? I am more than happy to have those conversations with you, Member for Nelson, to explore some ideas you have raised in the House tonight. It is well worth continuing those conversations. I do not think we need a task force to do that.

There are a number of aspects to the proposal being put forward by the Member for Nelson, such as the size of the park required and the considerable government investment required to develop the park into a genuine amenity for the community. I do not know that there is currently evidence to suggest a designated park would attract riders from their current areas of use.

My department has not received any correspondence from ATV and quad bike users requesting a designated area as described by the Member for Nelson, nor has it been identified as a priority by the peak body. It is not considered an urgent recreational need, but I am happy to continue to have conversations about some things you raised.

I note that work has occurred over successive governments when it comes to planning sport and recreational infrastructure priorities.

There is the option for an incorporated association to consider establishing its own park, which comes with its own challenges, including applying for a lease over Crown land. It would have to demonstrate clear development plans for the land, the financial capacity to complete the development in a timely manner and the organisational capacity to operate the facility once it is complete. This involves a range of different things, from rezoning to capital investment and the additional costs of maintaining the park to ensure it remains a safe amenity for a high-risk recreational activity.

It is unknown whether there will be enough users of ATVs and quad bikes to pay to use a designated park to make it viable. There could be a potential burden on the taxpayer to meet the operational costs and ongoing maintenance costs for a proposed park facility. A government funded, owned or managed park for a high-risk recreational activity would raise a number of insurance, indemnity, registration and licensing issues. There is also the question of medical facilities, ablutions, carparks and the costs associated with constructing and maintaining them all.

We are supportive of quad bike riders enjoying their preferred recreational activity safely. There are currently options for them to do so. Quad bike riders who wish to compete in a safe and accessible environment can become members of the Territory Quad Association, which was established in January 2008 for the purpose of promoting quad riding in the Northern Territory. It is a MotorSports NT affiliated club who race at the Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex. I encourage the Member for Nelson to contact MotorSports NT to discuss this proposal and get more information on the current options available for quad bikers at Hidden Valley.

In Budget 2017–18 we announced a number of sporting priority investments. The focus is now on delivering those job-creating projects for Territorians and the community. Not everyone using quads and ATVs is sticking to the rules. That is why police are enforcing the law and fining offenders up to \$1500 when required. The majority of owners and rider are responsible and sticking to the rules.

The Member for Nelson is passionate about this concept. I will continue the conversations with him about this issue, and I encourage him to seek that guidance and expertise from the motorsports community to gauge their interest in that concept. My office will continue to speak with you, Member for Nelson, and my department will meet with you in the coming weeks.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I will not politicise it from this side or that, but many people in this House need to realise the potential problems we have with quad bike usage, especially in the rural area.

For example, I left home this morning at about 6.40 am. I drove 100 yards up the street and turned left, and in front of me were two quad bikes being driven by children on their way to the bus stop. They were on the road, so technically they were breaking the law.

Last weekend two people were injured while riding quad bikes and required a medivac from Dundee. Every time the police come into my office and discuss problems in the electorate, quad bikes come up. Police will tell you that when they find people illegally riding quad bikes they cannot chase them. They get a hand signal from the drivers, who take off into the bush, where police cannot take their cars to chase them. Policing becomes a major problem. Most of these people are not wearing helmets.

While we talk about the costs of what the Member for Nelson is proposing, we need to think about the costs of when we medivac people out of places like Dundee. The police at Adelaide River have fronted me and spoken to me on multiple occasions about people cutting fences and going onto private property—pig shooting on quad bikes.

The people opposite, especially the minister for fisheries, would remember the incident with the closing of Finnis River Station and the access to Stingray Head. Why was that done? Because people on quad bikes were driving out there and cutting fences.

It is a problem, and it is not just a matter of having a facility for racing quad bikes; that is the recreational side. Behind my property at Acacia Hills there is a 200 acre reserve. Every Sunday there are quad bikes racing around in that reserve. If anything goes wrong out there, how do people get help? These people are riding without helmets and there is no control.

It is a problem that this parliament should look at. It will only get worse over the next four years.

We had an incident on our property in the Daly. We used to have to hose the boat ramp off every year to get rid of the mud. The fellow looking after the property was there on his own and I said to him, 'Whatever you do, do not go onto that boat ramp and hose it off. If anything happens you will be in strife as there are crocs.' He was there on his own, late at night, and tried to back the quad bike up the boat ramp. He mounted the side of the boat ramp, tipped the quad bike on top of himself and was there all night until we came home the next day.

Quad bikes are dangerous and we need to recognise that. I will save the rest of my comments for later.

Debate suspended.

CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE REPORTS, AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's March 2017 Report to the Legislative Assembly—consideration deferred.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the excellent contribution of the non-government sector to support the delivery of quality healthcare services in the Northern Territory. We acknowledge that we face many challenges and, as a government, we cannot do it alone.

As the Minister for Health, it is my passion, when working with our partners and supporters for the community, to provide the best possible healthcare services for Territorians.

The Humpty Dumpty Foundation is an Australia-wide charity formed over 25 years ago in Sydney. Today there are more than 300 Australian hospitals and health centres that are beneficiaries of the Humpty Dumpty wish list. The Humpty Dumpty Foundation has been very active in the Northern Territory over the past year. The charity's mission is to raise money to purchase vital and lifesaving medical equipment for children and babies in hospital.

The foundation invites hospital staff and health centre medical and nursing staff caring for sick children to request a specific item of medical equipment on the Humpty Dumpty wish list. The foundation has already reached far and wide across the Territory and provided specialised equipment to help our fabulous doctors and nurses do their daily work.

By February this year 40 pieces of equipment totalling approximately \$430 000 had been provided across the Top End to eight remote community health centres, including Borroloola, Angurugu, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Jabiru, Milikapiti, Maningrida and Wadeye. In addition, lifesaving equipment has also been generously donated to our hospitals in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Gove.

In March 2017, taking a huge leap of courage, the Humpty Dumpty Foundation hosted its first great Humpty Dumpty ball outside of Sydney. It was hosted in Darwin by its patron, Ray Martin AM, and its Executive Chairman, Paul Francis OAM. Guest speakers included Dr Louise Woodward, who is an RDH paediatrician, and Professor Len Notaras. There were 250 generous guests in attendance.

The real purpose of the Humpty Dumpty Foundation was brought to the forefront of our minds that night with moving stories of families who have been recipients of Humpty's generosity, including a local Darwin family which I am very privileged to know. Their oldest son attended childcare with my boys, and when their baby was delivered prematurely they were engaged with the great work Humpty Dumpty provides. It was wonderful to see that family with their beautiful little girl, who is doing so well.

We also had the pleasure and privilege of hearing from a young girl from Sydney who was about to face her 120th surgical procedure. Thanks to the generosity of the attendees at the Darwin ball, a further \$430 000 was raised that night, enabling 23 pieces of essential children's medical equipment to be donated to Territory hospitals and health services across the Northern Territory.

This is one of the great things about Humpty Dumpty; it provides equipment not only to our main hospitals, but to our remote clinics. The little plaques that Humpty Dumpty provides to acknowledge each piece of equipment have been provided to the Members from Katherine and Barkly so they can take them to their communities and acknowledge the work Humpty Dumpty does.

It was a magnificent result for the foundation. It will impact on the lives of Territorians.

As a government and as the Minister for Health, I will strive to do everything I can to make sure we have the biggest health budget we can deliver for Territorians. There is always more to do in this space, and this is the lovely element to Humpty Dumpty. It provides the extras to our hard-working staff. It was magical on

the evening to see the delight of the staff when they realised that they had reached such significant milestones in providing equipment.

I sincerely thank everybody who was there that evening, especially Ray Martin, who was a fabulous host and really brought out the best in people. I acknowledge every Territorian who has been generous and contributed to this great cause.

Another great non-government organisation is the Cancer Council Northern Territory. Its mission is to reduce the impact of cancer on Territorians. We all know somebody who has been affected by cancer, whether it is a friend, a partner, a child, someone at our school or someone in our workplace. The support that organisations such as the Cancer Council provide to people with cancer in the families across the Northern Territory is highly treasured. The Cancer Council provides a range of services such as support groups, up-to-date information for clients and health professionals, and early detection and prevention programs. It also helps to facilitate research.

The Cancer Council receives funding from the Northern Territory Government and supplements these grants with a number of fundraising events each year, including the World's Biggest Morning Tea, which is coming up very soon. The Parliament House Social Club will be hosting a Biggest Morning Tea. I am very proud that in my community the Greek community holds a morning tea that is consistently in the top 10 fundraisers for Australia. Those ladies make a fabulous effort. I invite anyone listening to join us in a few weeks for that.

Mr Sievers: Palmerston too.

Ms FYLES: I pick up on the interjection from the Member for Brennan. Palmerston has its own fundraising morning teas, as we have across the Territory. They also hold other events, including Relay for Life, Girls' Night In, Daffodil Day and Dry July. Last weekend I had the privilege of attending their Gala Ball. I was joined by the mayor, Katrina Fong Lim, the Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling, and the mayor from Katherine, Fay Miller, who joined us for the evening. The entertainment was provided by the Darwin Army Band.

I was pleased to not only attend and speak at the ball but to acknowledge that a major grant from the community benefit fund for \$120 000 over three years to the volunteer program coordinator position has been funded by this government. I am very proud to be able to use that grant money to help such a fabulous organisation. The ball was a successful fundraising effort for the Cancer Council, with over \$35 000 raised for the evening. The CEO, Kathy Sadler, told me this was well above their target of \$25 000.

This funding will enable the Cancer Council to implement a program to provide transportation for clients, utilising volunteer drivers. Ms Sadler said the service will address the issues of transport for younger patients, who may not have access to any transportation concession vouchers, and also assists older patients with their transport needs.

As a government, we very much want to deliver health services for Territorians. It is great to work in partnership with these wonderful non-government organisations. To everybody who was part of the Cancer Council ball—I know Nadine Jones had a fabulous effort providing the support to Kathy and her team—we acknowledge your hard work. To everybody who attended the Cancer Council ball, thank you for your generous support. Thanks to Karl Secondis, the auctioneer on the evening, and the many Territory businesses and individuals who donated items for that auction.

It is always wonderful to attend events within our community, but when it is fundraising for such important community organisations, it is extra special.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge two important events happening this week; National Volunteer Week and also Wear Orange Wednesday. You will note my orange necklace, which acknowledges the work of SESs across our community. I was very fortunate at lunchtime today to attend a garden party at the Precinct and get an opportunity to thank all those volunteers.

As a government we are very focused on community. One of the ways our community is held together is through volunteerism, particularly in small, remote and rural communities across the NT. Today's event was organised by Volunteering SA&NT, which is a peak body that supports volunteers across the Northern Territory. It estimated that volunteers contribute \$3bn a year to the Northern Territory economy. Seeing the range of volunteers, I believe that figure.

People who volunteer are also more likely to have increased health and to report being happier. It is a great feeling when you give back to your community. One of the things we need to acknowledge in a small community—I want to say as the Member for Braitling, because as the Minister for Territory Families I am very aware of the great work many volunteers do to support my department. I take this opportunity to put on record the amazing work that so many foster and kinship carers do. They do incredibly difficult work, and without their volunteering the department would not be able to provide support to many of our most vulnerable children.

I have had the great fortune since becoming minister to meet with many foster carers. I know how difficult they do it; they face many barriers. I take this opportunity to thank them for that particularly special volunteering.

There is a breadth of different types of volunteering that keep our community ticking over. I think of Alice Springs, which is very reliant on volunteers. There are people who volunteer for sporting clubs, like Owen Cole, who has been a volunteer for Pioneer Football Club for a really long time. Football clubs would not exist without their volunteer boards.

You go through a place like Blatherskite Park—the Member for Barkly, in his role as minister, is very grateful to the volunteer board that keeps that very large piece of infrastructure turning over. Rebecca O'Shea is the Chairperson and she does an amazing job. I do not know when she and her husband, Neil Egan, see each other because her husband is also very involved in APEX.

Those service committees are large in Alice Springs and help in a range of ways. For instance, my husband is involved in Rotary, which does things like support the racing carnival by doing the parking. These are the types of things that keep events in our town. It is the same for art events such as the Beanie Festival. Phil Walcott is very involved with the board at the Beanie Festival, an iconic part of our town—the governance given over by a voluntary board through to Red Hot Arts. Again, you have someone like Jason Quin, who is a very busy man giving up his time because of his commitment to the arts.

We need to acknowledge that most of the non-government organisations are managed by volunteer boards. When I was CEO of the women's shelter—there is a lot of risk in running a women's shelter and people like Larrisa Alice have been on that board for 10 years, giving their time and effort. There is a risk in running such a difficult organisation. We need to acknowledge those really broad spaces in which we have volunteers.

I will finish by speaking about the SES, which is a very special type of volunteerism. I grew up in a family of volunteer firefighters and I know how much time it takes to build those skills. It is not that people turn up and miraculously know how to safely put a tarp on a house in the middle of a storm or how to rescue people out of flooding water. That takes practice and time. I acknowledge the SES across the NT, particularly the strong branch in Alice Springs. There are over 30 people involved in that unit, and every Tuesday night for several hours they practice those skills. When they are needed they are there giving up their time. We had flood events over the Christmas period and the SES were involved in supporting people in those processes. We had a major hail storm 18 months ago and they worked tirelessly throughout that.

Again, I would like to thank the volunteers, the core of our community. Volunteering is what people do to give back. It is one of the things I love most about living in Alice Springs. It is not just at the board level; it is in the day-to-day.

Lastly, I acknowledge Maureen Yorke, who the Member for Araluen and I know well. Every year she volunteers and makes a range of poppies for Anzac Hill and Anzac Day celebrations. We have a magnificent sign up on the hill that says 'Lest We Forget', made of homemade poppies. Maureen organises, coordinates and leads that group. I see her every Sunday at the market. She is there with her teddy bear's hospital. She told me she had some teddy bears sent from Canberra to be fixed. Any proceeds that she has from that she gives to community members who need a helping hand in health. I take this moment to acknowledge Maureen as an individual who gives so much, and I know she gets a lot out of it.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak about Jacana Energy and the passing of the torch from one capable Chief Executive Officer to another. Jacana Energy commenced operations on 1 July 2014 after the structural separation of the Power and Water Corporation.

I acknowledge and thank Jacana Energy CEO Stuart Pearce and the bright and energetic team that has transitioned Jacana Energy from what was essentially a government backed start-up to a fully-fledged energy retailer with over 80 000 customers and an annual turnover of \$504m. In fact, Jacana achieved outstanding performance in both the financial and customer satisfaction areas in a relatively short space of time.

Earlier in the day I spoke about the growing population of the Territory, but I am sad to say we are losing Stuart. Stuart achieved a lot in a short space of time but feels the need to spend more time with his family in Victoria, which is understandable.

As the Minister for Essential Services, I got to know a little about Stuart. To my delight I learned that he is a guitar enthusiast, keen on blues and rockabilly, which is perfect for his return to Melbourne and its great live music scene.

What I also learned about Stuart is that he is a fantastic administrator. He had a knack for straight talking. He knew the complex environment he worked in and made sure he not only delivered for the board of Jacana but for the shareholders, that is, the government and the people of the Northern Territory.

Stuart joined Jacana shortly after its creation in 2014. He brought with him a wealth of experience from AGL in Victoria, experience much sought after in the Northern Territory. In those days Jacana had only four staff, no systems, premises or a brand. It was almost a blank slate with a big mandate to be the government owned power retailer and the retailer of last resort. This was a start up in the popular understanding, running on bare bones using borrowed accommodation, staff and infrastructure. You would not have recognised it as the retailer it is now.

Each year Stuart managed to grow the business and deliver excellent financial results to the government. The difficulty was not posting strong results but establishing Jacana Energy as a government owned corporation, independent from Power and Water Corporation, with its own people, practices and systems.

Jacana now employs 55 staff in Darwin and Alice Springs, who manage the in-house call centre, the credit management team and other functions essential to running any organisation. Stuart made drastic improvements to business operations, finances and customer service. Under his leadership Jacana implemented a new financial management system, and it is currently in the process of rolling out a new retail operating system.

This new retail operating system is being trialled with large-scale commercial and industrial customers roll-out. It is planned for roll-out to mass market customers later this year. It is a fantastic improvement on the old billing system it inherited. It includes easier bills that are easier to understand, which helps customers understand and manage their power consumption; enhanced payment channels, such as average monthly payments to avoid bill shock; email billing options for customers who wish to receive their bills this way, helping to reduce postage costs and paper wastage; and self-service systems accessible from a phone or computer.

These reforms occurred under Stuart's leadership and will help drive efficiencies and improve the customer experience, both of which are fantastic outcomes for Territorians. I also note the fantastic levels of customer satisfaction Jacana is achieving. Even benchmarked against private sector retailers, Jacana Energy performs well against all metrics, but it plans to do even better.

The Australian Energy Regulator recorded for Jacana one of the lowest levels of complaints across the entire country last year. What a fantastic achievement for such a young company! I think we can confidently say that once the new retail operating system is in place Jacana will be its own. While we did not ask for the structural separation of Power and Water, I am determined to make the best of it, in partnership with the hard-working staff at Jacana Energy.

I take my hat off to all the workers at Jacana, who share in Stuart's success. No problem is too big for them to solve and no issue too small to handle.

I also welcome Victor Browner, who comes to Jacana as the new CEO. Victor comes to us from the WA government, where he worked closely with government owned corporations. Prior to that, Victor worked for Alinta Energy. I can say confidently that Victor is well experienced in power retailing and navigating the sometimes complex environment that is a government corporation.

I was pleased to meet with Victor and Stuart the other day, and I am very happy to report that Victor is doing his bit to grow the Territory by bringing his family here, where his wife will work and his children will go to school. Victor went to primary school in Darwin and has fond memories of fishing in Rapid Creek and playing in the beautiful natural environment we still enjoy.

I understand that Victor still carries on his love of bikes, and he now rides for fitness and fun. He had already found a group to ride with, but said he struggles to find many decent hills. I have no doubt Victor will settle in well here, so while we are unfortunately losing Stuart, we gain four more Territorians.

Farewell and all the best to Stuart Pearce. Congratulations to Jacana Energy, and welcome Victor Brown. Stuart, you should be very proud of how far Jacana Energy came under your leadership.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I stand tonight to recognise the touching commemoration I attended on Sunday with the Chief Minister. The commemoration was to acknowledge the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea and was held at the USS Peary gun memorial. This battle was paramount to the outcome of World War II. The battle was fought throughout the Coral Sea from 4 to 8 May 1942.

It was one of the major naval battles to take place in the Pacific. It was the first battle in which aircraft carriers engaged each other while the ships did not sight each other and were not directly fired upon. That gives some indication of how heavily the Air Force took part in the battle. There was also a key engagement that forged the alliance between American and Australian troops. The allegiance has stood the test of time, which was clearly displayed at this commemoration on the weekend. With the allies and Japan having sustained heavy losses in aircraft and carriers, the two fleets disengaged and retired from the battle area after a number of days.

With communications being difficult at the time, neither side was fully aware of the significance of the battle or if they had won or lost in particular strategic areas. The truth was, while the Japanese maintained a tactical victory across the battle, it proved to be a significant strategic victory for the allies. They damaged a number of Japanese carriers, ensuring they could not take place in the pivotal Battle of Midway the following month. It was the first time a major Japanese advance had been halted by the allies, a significant outcome.

It contributed to more land based initiatives, like Kokoda, over the coming months and years, and we still commemorate those events and initiatives today. The commemoration was attended by representatives of the Australian Government, the United States Marines and a representative who spoke on behalf of the US government.

I acknowledge a number of people and organisations who assisted that day. The Australian American Association of the Northern Territory hosted the commemoration, and we were welcomed by Vice President Alderman Gary Haslett. Dr Tom Lewis was master of ceremonies and gave remarkable insights into not only the battle of the Coral Sea itself, but how that battle related to the bombing of Darwin and other history in the area. He is a well-read and well-versed historian. Any time he takes to the microphone he certainly improves people's understanding, knowledge and appreciation of the sacrifices people made in those desperate times.

There was a message read by Lieutenant Colonel Brian Middleton from President Donald Trump and prayers from Chaplain Barry Porter. The ode of remembrance was performed by Mr Don Milford, president of the RSL and a very passionate advocate of the Returned and Services League. We were also addressed by Commander Victor Pilicic, who gave remarkable insights into the battle and surrounding events that happened during those times.

The US Marines were there in force, polished and disciplined as always. Unfortunately for the flag party, while it was a lovely Dry Season morning, there was heat and humidity in the air. As the sun came up over the trees on the Esplanade they were left at attention facing into the direct sun for well over an hour. To their full credit they did not flinch a muscle. They were sweating quite profusely by the end of ceremony.

One of the most touching moments of synergy was to see the armed guards at each side of the flag party standing at full attention with their machine guns over their shoulders. Neatly perched on the very top of each barrel was a dragonfly. The connection was stark for me and a number of others.

There was an influx of dragonflies during the ceremony, a traditional sign that the Dry Season has arrived. As a Territorian, the Dry Season is a signal of all the good things that are about to happen through the Northern Territory. I love the Wet Season; I love the storms; I love all that the Wet Season brings, but the

start of the Dry Season is a special time. To be standing with 100 others while the Dry Season is ushered in by hundreds of dragonflies—but also paying our respects to the fallen soldiers who fought so we could enjoy these freedoms. It was a beautiful moment in time for me and everybody else who attended.

I especially thank the ADF Northern Command, the US Marine Corps and the City of Darwin for inviting us and for their efforts in facilitating the touching commemoration. I also thank Luke Gosling for hosting the morning tea afterwards.

Lest we forget.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, it is with some regret that I stand tonight. It has been an interesting day in parliament, starting with Question Time, in which I asked a very unpopular question with the premise that I thought the federal government's budget brought out yesterday was impressive. I did explain the range of reasons for that.

I am disappointed that during Question Time the noise in the Chamber was such that I could hardly hear myself think. It was like a flashback to the former CLP days when there was no respect given to the person asking the question or the person having an alternative view.

At 5 pm today the Chief Minister put out a press release, which is normal practice for a Chief Minister or for any member of this parliament, in which he said, 'The Leader of the Opposition and former CLP Treasurer Robin Lambley'—I am now the Independent Member for Araluen, but I guess he has the right to describe me the way he wants—'have used Question Time today to express their support for a federal budget that is a kick in the guts for every man, woman and child in the Northern Territory.'

This is a sentence in a press release from the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Call me prudish or a bit weathered, but I do not think that is a very acceptable metaphor for the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory to use, particularly given his apparent support for domestic violence and child protection strategies. I think that is completely out of order. I take offence to the metaphor he used in his press release this afternoon.

I ask that he withdraw that. It is offensive not only to me but I imagine the Leader of the Opposition is not too impressed with that sort of language.

It was, however, consistent with the attitude and aggression from the government side of the Chamber during Question Time. It was an extension of the lack of respect the government members had for me during Question Time, and it has obviously been conveyed through the Chief Minister's press release.

Subsequent to that I have been informed by many people throughout the Northern Territory that the Labor government has produced a little flyer, which I would like to table. Madam Speaker I seek leave to table the flyer

Leave granted.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This flyer was produced by the Chief Minister and government's staff on level five, which is now all over Facebook, painting me in a rather derogatory form because I expressed a view different to that of the Gunner government.

I know Labor likes to produce these sorts of flyers. I remember, during the election, seeing similar flyers with the same configuration and colouring. This flyer was produced by level five of Parliament House, under the watch of the Chief Minister, and is spreading some tales about Robyn Lambley, the former CLP Treasurer of the Northern Territory.

I hoped that when we had a change of government there would be some respect in this Chamber, but not only has this been produced by level five, it has been distributed by level five. The Minister for Territory Families, my colleague from Alice Springs, has posted it on her Facebook page. Shame on you! It is shameful that you would create something like this straight after Question Time and post it on your Facebook page under some sort of Labor propaganda—painting me, a colleague, someone you would supposedly like to have a relationship with because we share responsibility for our constituents in Alice Springs.

I cannot express in words how disappointed I am in this government for the deterioration of their attitude and behaviour.

On this side of the Chamber we have a responsibility, as Independent members and members of the opposition, to hold this very large government to account. Whether you like what we say or not, we have a right to say what we think on behalf of our constituents. The question I asked in Question Time today was very reasonable. It was a question about the Territory budget, but I premised it with some compliments on how the federal government handled its budget yesterday.

Obviously this was not met with any respect or consideration by government. It did not fit into its narrative. Now we have this tacky propaganda coming from the Labor Party. Shame on all of you!

I think it is unacceptable that a government should so quickly deteriorate to the practices of what it describes as a shambolic, dysfunctional CLP government. This is what we saw under the former CLP government, and here we have the Gunner Labor government resorting to tacky tactics like this so soon.

I can only express the disappointment in a few words this evening, but I can say that it will catch up with you. It caught up with the CLP. I heard the Member for Blain today talk about his disappointment in the fact he thought he was personally attacked in Question Time for asking a reasonable question about the impact of the increase in public holidays on the public purse. That was a very reasonable question to ask given the fact we are in tough economic times.

He was shamed. The Chief Minister stood in parliament and attempted to shame and belittle him. It was, once again, reminiscent of a bygone era, but it is not bygone at all. This government has found its feet and become cocky and just as arrogant as the former government.

Tonight I stand in disappointment, almost in sadness, because this government does not want to play ball nicely, fairly and respectfully. It came in on a platform of honesty, integrity, respect and all those good values, and they are deteriorating before our eyes.

All I can say to the government, the Chief Minister and his Cabinet is, you have failed. You failed by lowering yourselves to resort to tacky propaganda like this, which you are all posting on Facebook. You know what? It fed into exactly what I thought you would do, to some extent. I did not think you would resort to manufacturing flyers and posting rubbish on Facebook. I can handle a few tough comments. I can handle a press release. But getting your tax paid staff, using taxpayer-funded resources to produce crap like this and putting it all over Facebook—shame on the Minister for Territory Families. You should know better. I am sure many of the other ministers have put something similar or posted this very leaflet that I have tabled in parliament tonight.

I am bitterly disappointed. I expected a whole lot better from this government, but from what we have seen over the last two weeks in parliament my expectations have lowered to the floor. We have the CLP back under the guise of this new Labor government. It is very disappointing.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, it is time for another Around the Grounds in Palmerston, and today I rise to update the House on some fantastic things happening at Palmerston Rugby Union and the netball club, the Mighty Crocs.

As a seasoned player and life member of a great Alice Springs rugby union club, I am very pleased to see the NT Rugby Union season well under way, and I note that the Palmerston Crocs Netball Club is very strong in all junior and senior grades. Junior Croc player numbers are up 20% on last year's registration. This season the club is fielding two sides in the under 5s, under 7s, under 9s and under 11s. The club is also fielding sides in the under 13s and under 15s. Female participation is also strong with sides in the under 13s, under 15s and under 17s competitions. Junior participation has grown for the junior 7-aside competition, and the club runs in the off season.

Importantly, the Crocs Club received an Australia Day award this year for the great work it does to manage and support the 7-aside competition. I was lucky enough to be at the Palmerston Council Awards when that was given to the Palmerston Crocs, which was a fantastic thing to see.

This season the club is fielding sides in both A Grade and B Grade. It is also in the process of establishing a regular women's side. I am very pleased that the Old Salties Golden Oldies side is still going strong, playing socially, and I may still get a run.

The Palmerston Rugby Union Club has close ties with the Palmerston Crocs Netball Club, which fields juniors and seniors in the local netball competition. The Crocs Netball Club is a great team with many

passionate members, and I have spent many weekends with the Palmerston Croc families at the Bunnings barbecues.

Some exciting things are happening at the Palmerston Crocs clubhouse in Moulden as a result of the approval of an Immediate Works Grant by the NT Government. The Palmerston Crocs have been able to do major renovations to their clubhouse to improve the facility for all its rugby and netball members as the club goes from strength to strength.

The improvements include installing solar panels, updating lights and old electrical fittings, laying floor in the office, installing partition walls in the clubroom, installing a shaded outside area off the clubroom, enhancing storage space for the club's training gear and giving the clubhouse a much-needed coat of paint. Further planned works include a second change room and enhancing the gym facility. The club also has a proud history of engaging the Palmerston community by making its facilities available for community events.

A few weeks ago my colleague, the Member for Drysdale, Eva Lawler, and I attended the clubhouse and were very impressed by the amount of work being done. We also watched a few games of rugby union and cheered very loudly for the Palmerston Crocs. I took a video of a great try by the team's fullback, a position I know well from my rugby union days.

Palmerston Rugby Union Club started in 1976 and is the foundation club of the competition in Darwin. The club has called Moulden Oval its home for over 25 years. It has a rich history as part of the Palmerston community. One of the greatest things about being assistant minister for sport is getting amongst grassroots sport in the Territory and engaging with those who tirelessly volunteer their time to keep the club functioning.

These people are champions of our community; one such example with the Palmerston Crocs is Robbie Taylor. Robbie began playing for Palmerston in 1992 in the under 8s and has now played through all the grades. Robbie has spent multiple years coaching juniors and serving on the club's committee as junior coordinator. Robbie is renowned for wearing his heart on his sleeve, and the Palmerston Crocs colours are never far from his heart. Last year, at the club's 40th anniversary and reunion, Robbie was awarded the club's highest honour of life membership. Congratulations, Robbie.

Robbie is excited about his son, Will, who is almost ready to take the field in Crocs colours. Robbie went to Alice Springs rugby union in the finals and he also umpired one of the games. I got some really good feedback from my friends who play rugby there. Well done, Robbie.

Another familiar face in this place is Mr Dennis Bree. Dennis has been with the club since day one and has been a life member for many years. While many of Dennis' colleagues are now tending to old injuries or taking on a hobby that has less bone-breaking outcomes, Dennis still packs down as the prop for B Grade week in week out. I do not know how he does it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That is because he is a rural living person.

Mr SIEVERS: That is right, Madam Speaker. I am well informed by those who have played against Dennis that he is not merely there to make up the numbers; he takes the field and consistently outplays blokes half his age. Well done, Dennis.

Speaking of taking the field, Crocs have a home game this Saturday in which both senior sides play the University Pirates. B Grade kicks off at 4.30 pm and A Grade at 6 pm. Come and have a look. It is free and there will be some great rugby played. Palmerston Crocs train every Tuesday and Thursday, juniors from 5.15 pm to 6.15 pm and seniors from 6.16 pm to 7.30 pm. I thank the club president, Ben Blyton, the union and netball players, and the parents and volunteers, who continue to do a fantastic job with this club. They keep the club running and going from strength to strength. It is a great club, and I hope to see you all there in Around the Grounds.

I remind everyone that it is Mothers' Day this Sunday. To all the mums, you deserve all the accolades and presents, and I hope you all get breakfast in bed. The Mothers' Day Classics is on again this year and I want to give that a plug. The Chief Minister will have his tent there, and we will be cooking bacon and egg breakfasts and serving drinks. There will be raffles, a run and a walk, and all the proceeds will go to breast cancer research. I hope to see you all there.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, Mothers' Day is coming up. I was the golden child and had it a whole week early. I rocked in on Sunday and gave my mum a big kiss and said, 'Your present is in the car, but I have to go to this thing'. Then dad said, 'No, it is next weekend'. At least she got her present early. Mothers' Day is a very important day to acknowledge all our mothers across the Territory.

Tonight I rise to speak about my concerns about road safety in the Northern Territory. This is National Road Safety Week. I will share the intent of road safety week from the Road Safety Week global hub website:

Road Safety Week is an event that can happen at a national, local or organisational level, which raises awareness about road safety, and encourages everyone to take action to prevent casualties and make roads safer. It's all about people working together to promote responsible road use and stop the suffering that results from road crashes, deaths and injuries.

On 26 April I wrote to the Chief Minister, Hon Michael Gunner MLA, in his capacity as the minister for Police, regarding more police highway patrols to curb dangerous speeding. The content of my letter to the Chief Minister was as follows:

Chief Minister, I am writing to you as I am concerned over the lack of police highway patrols along the Stuart Highway. I have recently moved to Katherine and travel regularly to Darwin on the 320 kilometre stretch of highway. I have cruise control on my vehicle and sit comfortably, conditions permitting, at 130 kilometres per hour as per the speed limit. On any given trip between Katherine and Darwin I am passed by a minimum of at least five vehicles. Many of these overtaking vehicles disappear out of sight which means they are traveling well above the 130 kilometre speed limit.

Towards the end of 2016, on several occasions, whilst traveling between Darwin and Katherine I was passed at my travel speed of 130 kilometres by over 10 vehicles. I have been very frustrated on every trip in witnessing people traveling at unsafe speeds. This is simply unacceptable and has become clear to me that there is a lack of police presence on our main highway.

In 2016 the Northern Territory road toll was 45 people. In May 2016 I tragically attended one of these fatal accidents during my campaign travels where a little boy, my seven-year-old relative, died in a single car rollover. This traumatic event will stay with me forever and I cannot imagine what it must be like for personnel in our Police, Fire and Emergency Services to experience this kind of tragedy as part of their regular job.

According to the NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, the road toll statistics show that over a five-year average, between 2012 and 2016, the highest number of road toll deaths have occurred between the months of April and October.

Considering the Northern Territory has the highest road toll per capita in the country, I would like to know what our government is doing to reduce this high rate as we go into our first Dry Season as the new Northern Territory Government.

I ask that you act on this important matter with urgency. I ask you, Chief Minister, in your capacity as minister for Police, to meet with the Police Commissioner to discuss strategies which will create safer Territory roads and promote regular highway speed patrols. I look forward to your response and sincerely hope our Labor government can work on productive ways to keep Territorians and visitors to the NT safe on our highways and roads.

According to the road toll statistics available on the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics' website, this year to date there have been 11 road-related deaths, compared to 13 at this time last year.

Next week, on 16 May, will mark the one-year anniversary of the tragic day a seven-year-old boy in Numbulwar died in a fatal single car rollover.

Road safety is paramount in our vast and expansive Northern Territory. I urge all Territorians and visitors to the Northern Territory to reflect on some of the horrific road deaths we have seen, heard about or read about. I offer the following pieces of advice:

- Drivers, the next time you are late, please think about the danger you are putting yourself and other road users in if you are speeding.

- Drivers, put your headlights on when it rains. I was constantly shocked at the number of drivers during the Wet Season who did not put their headlights on when there are showers or heavy rain periods. This is dangerous and careless.
- Motorcyclists, wear protective clothing and a helmet when riding to protect your body from an unexpected fall.
- Motorcyclists, use defensive riding tactics when riding, as not every driver is vigilant or consistent in their shoulder checks.
- Cyclists, please wear high-visibility clothing if you are on the road and wear a protective helmet.
- Cyclists, ensure when riding at night that you have your lights on, both on the front and back of your bicycle.
- Pedestrians, be road safe and aware.
- Pedestrians, please use designated crossings on busy roads.
- To all road users, please do not drive or ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It is simply not worth it for your life or the lives of those around you.
- Seatbelts save lives. The golden rule of thumb: the number of passengers should not exceed the number of working seatbelts in a vehicle. The overcrowding of vehicles is dangerous. Be safe about the number of passengers in a vehicle. If you have to, you might have to do two trips.
- Appropriate child restraints can save lives. People should use baby capsules and baby seats for their little ones to keep them safe.
- Avoid distractions when driving, such as mobile phones. It is very tempting in this digital age to be distracted by mobiles with texting, phoning, or checking what is on Facebook or the news. It is vital to use technology in a safe and appropriate manner. I hope that we, Members of the Legislative Assembly, all set a good example of this.

I urge all Territorians and visitors to the Northern Territory to make Road Safety Week a part of their week every single part of the year, 52 weeks of the year, as road safety affects everyone.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.