Local Business Confidence in 2018

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Business confidence in the Territory is at an all-time low. The latest Sensis Business Index has reinforced concerns with the Territory economy and mirrored commentary from the Territory business community. Today we find that major Territory businessmen, Foxy Robinson and the Paspaley Group have decided to take their new investments out of the Territory to Queensland where it is easier to do business. How many jobs did the Territory lose as a result of your government’s inaction and sitting on its hands?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Territory businesses are very realistic about the year ahead; 2018 is going to be a very difficult year for many. It is obviously the year in which the INPEX construction phase winds down and we have seen this coming for a long time.

Unfortunately, during the last term the CLP government did not plan for this period. We were elected in August 2016 and have been working very hard to get ready for 2018. That is why the Leader of the Opposition did not mention it and in that same business confidence index, businesses said they are confident in the government’s plans while they are worried about the Territory economy.

We have been working with businesses to get ready for 2018 which will be a tough year for many. This is why we have a $1.75bn cash infrastructure budget; have been working with businesses to deliver for this year; have been working with the Paspaley company about the front engineering design for the $100m Ship Lift and Marine Industries Project.

We are doing all the hard work that the CLP did not do last term. Do you know what the CLP did? They announced the idea of a ship lift, but did not work towards actually making it happen; we are doing that work now. Front end engineering design is critical to making sure a ship lift happens. The actual negotiations of the contract with Paspaley were done by this government and not the CLP.

We have done the hard work that the CLP refused to do during their last term in office when we saw chaos instead of people planning for the Territory economy. We have the significant, record infrastructure budget, the netball indoor stadium which is happening right now and we announced Warren Park last week.

We have big projects on the horizon as well as big private sector projects. Last week I had an excellent opportunity to catch up with Project Sea Dragon including going to Legune Station to see what is being planned there. There are 1500 jobs; they are through all the government processes they needed to go through and are now coming to financial close. This is a significant major project for the Northern Territory.

We know times will be tough for business in 2018 but this government is there for them. This year we will do that heavy lifting and make sure as many Territory businesses survive as possible and local jobs are created.

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! My question was not about rewriting history, it was about how many jobs the Territory lost.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, that is not a point of order. You did not state the standing order.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Speaker, we are working to get that $1.75bn out the door. We are working to make sure there are as many local jobs as possible in the Territory. Those are our priorities this year, local jobs for Territorians. We want to keep it local and do things as quickly as possible because we recognise there are Territory businesses doing it tough. This government stands with them to create as many local jobs as possible.

Daly River Flooding

Ms AH KIT to CHIEF MINISTER

With the recent monsoonal rainfall, can you please update the House on the emergency welfare response for the Daly and Darwin regions?

ANSWER
Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for the Question. I thank everyone involved in the efforts so far; there has been a significant number of people working really hard to help other fellow Territorians which has been fantastic to see.

I have been speaking to the Leader of the Opposition about the situation in Daly, part of his local electorate and I have made sure that the Police Commissioner as the Territory controller is talking regularly to the local member to keep him informed about the situation.

On 29 January an emergency situation was declared for the Daly River region as a result of flooding. On 20 and 30 January, 355 people were evacuated to the Ray Foskey Pavilion at the Darwin Showgrounds. I have been there a couple of times, as others have. I went there with the Minister for Education to make sure things are ready for school; you still have to go to school even though there is a flood. The Leader of the Opposition and the Senator has been there as well.

It was a massive effort to get everybody in to the show grounds. Twenty-three helicopters were involved and I thank everybody who participated in that, who flew those choppers to help organise things on the ground both in Daly River and at the ground at Batchelor, and then busked people in to Foskey’s.

I thank Territory Families, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army food bank for helping operating this centre and providing food and shelter on a 24/7 basis. It really is an incredible effort. The department of Corrections providing ready-made meals, Royal Darwin Hospital has been providing laundry services and the Department of Tourism and Culture have been providing sport and art activities for children.

About 90 children have been attending school at St John’s College or Nightcliff Middle School. I thank those schools for being available and making sure that our kids keep getting educated. We have obviously been planning now for the return to community—it is really important. We believe that come this Sunday we might be able to bus some people back in to community. We are doing some work from Wednesday on this week about the state of houses at Daly River—46% were not affected and there is mould and moderate damage to a number of others that we are working on and we do think we might be might be able to start getting people back to community.

One of the really important things is that power was not lost and the health clinic and the store remain viable and operable, which makes a return to community much easier. We are doing a lot of work at that end. We are going to do everything we can to use local Indigenous enterprises at that end as well—we caught a number of them yesterday who are ready, able and willing to help.

The power and sewerage are okay, the two water pipes that we are fixing at the moment we think that will be okay, which makes Sunday viable, but obviously we will keep working this through. Touch wood there is no more rain to make that return possible. I thank everybody who has been involved. Obviously, the Daly has not been the only area affected by flooding and weather, and Darwin Banyan Lodge was opened to provide respite, which is really important, did so to a range of people. We have also had flooding at Darwin River Dam and Rapid Creek.

Volunteers from State Emergency Services have been helping Darwin, Palmerston, Daly River, Maningrida and Katherine. Sixty call outs that occurred and so far SES have volunteered 370 hours’ worth of effort.

Members: Hear, hear!

Independent Review of BDR

Ms FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

Alcohol related assaults are up 27% after the first three months of the BDR compared to the same period for the previous year. Over the past year alcohol related assaults are up 40% in Palmerston and more than 20% in Alice Springs. Your government was quick to rule out alcohol mandatory treatment as a failure after an independent review was conducted after only a year of operation, yet, in December only seven people were assessed or started voluntary treatment.

Will you commit today to an independent review of the BDR accompanied by public terms of reference to evaluate its effectiveness one year on?

ANSWER
Ms FYLES: We have committed to an evaluation framework. We put that out into the public domain last year explaining how we would look at the BDR. We would look at the statistics, we would look at the pathways of referral to the Banned Drinker Register and the impact on community.

We are committed around the Banned Drinker Register to evaluating it ongoing and provide that information. To test it. To make sure, ‘is there a pathway that we need to expand’—we are missing a cohort of people that should be on that BDR—‘or is it the court pathway? What aspect do we need to improve?’

But this issue of alcohol and the harm it causes in our community is a massive issue and we certainly are working with those Riley review recommendations and as I said, bringing those into the Chamber to debate later this week around putting in place measures that will protect our community. Thank you.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**
Independent Review of BDR

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

What is the timeline for the review of the BDR? When will the review commence?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, we quite clearly outlined a timeframe of review at six months, 12 months and I would be happy to forward my press release onto the Member for Spillett so that she has that information, which is certainly in the public domain. Looking at around not just the pathways on, but from the health perspective. Thank you.
TEAM NT

Mr SIEVERS to CHIEF MINISTER

Chief Minister, how will the government’s fantastic TEAM NT approach, help deliver jobs and investment in the Territory.

Mr Wood: Not another Bunnings question!

ANSWER

Thank you. Territory jobs, local jobs, are an absolute priority many this year. We know that 2018 is going to be tough. We are going to do absolutely everything we can to sell the Territory—to the sell the Territory positively—and attract business to the NT. This has to be a driving agenda for all of us. We are committed to doing it.

We want to make sure everybody in Australia and the region know that you can do business in the NT. That we are the capital of northern Australia here in Darwin and the whole of the Northern Territory is open and ready to do business.

We have announced reformation of TEAM NT. It will be led by an executive of three eminent Territorians: Clare Martin, Paul Tyrrell and Dick Guit. They had been responsible I think for pretty much every major project across the last 20 or 30 years. 115 years of significant experience working for, advocating for, developing the Northern Territory.

We have given them, three initial tasks—important tasks—to attract corporate offices to the NT, to build a manufacturing base here in the NT—that we are more than just an oil and gas export hub, but that we can actually build and make things in the NT. We are close to the gas and we are close to market. We have to have a vision for Australia about how we are globally competitive and if you have that vision, the north is a natural place to come. The natural place to do business and to improve the air and sea links between the Territory, Eastern Indonesian and Timor-Leste.

They can recruit others to help. These are the executives. We want to make sure we bring all Territorians together. I know we have done a TEAM NT style approach in Jakarta, for example just recently with the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Blain. That last one in particular seems one that is a natural fit to the Member for Blain. I know he has done significant work through Eastern Indonesia, specifically around those air links. And I think we can do better about how we work with such a significant group of people so close to the NT and we do know how important air access is into and out of the Northern Territory.

We have to make sure that we realise our full potential in the NT. If you look at the whole of the north, we are responsible for half of the nation’s exports, from five per cent of the population. Imagine what we could do if we had more people living here. We have an opportunity. If you look at the national agenda, the NT—Darwin right now—is presenting as a low cost energy option. Off our shores we have 33 Tcf just sitting there. We know that we can provide a globally and competitive environment here. We have to do everything we can to sell the Territory.

We announced a defence advocate last year. We are working with her, the former Vice-Marshall Margaret Staib. We announced TEAM NT now, we want to work with everybody. It is not just about governments, it is about all of us working together to sell Territory and make sure we realise our full potential.

For us here in Darwin our competition should be Singapore. We should be trying to find a way to service the region. We should be looking north. I think that is something we naturally do here in the NT. We can do more and better. We have to keep selling the Northern Territory.

Banned Drinker Register

Mr HIGGINS to ATTORNEY–GENERAL and MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

In opposition and then when elected to government, your members were constant in their criticism of the former CLP government and its ripping away of the Banned Drinker Register without any measure to take its place. The reintroduced BDR is failing Territorians as a standalone tool. Territorians do not feel safe. The latest crime statistics show a clear increase in alcohol–related assaults across the Territory. I put to your that you have simply ripped an important prevention tool—the point of sale intervention—straight out from under
Territorians with no clear plan or intention to replace them with something else. Can you please tell the parliament what you intend to do immediately to stop the harm alcohol causes across the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for his important question. I was speaking a few moments ago about the harm that alcohol causes in our community. We can all agree on that point.

As a point of sale intervention, we have put in place a Territory-wide measure, the Banned Drinker Register, a simple, effective measure that stops the supply of alcohol to those who cause harm.

The temporary beat locations was a measure introduced under the previous Labor government. It was a police operational resource for them use where and when they see fit.

In restricting the supply of alcohol, we have measures in place and will continue to work on that. The Riley review into alcohol policy and legislation has made some clear recommendations. We have been working in earnest on those.

For the supply of alcohol the Banned Drinker Register is in place Territory-wide. Police have the right to use temporary beat locations—possies, whatever they want to call them—where and when they see fit. Just because a police officer is not in front of a bottle shop does not mean they have gone away to take some rest or do something else. They are out there making police operational decisions and placing resources where they see fit.

We have recruited 90 police. We have a number of police who have just started training in Central Australia. We are committed to making sure police have the resources to do their job.

We acknowledge that the Banned Drinker Register and TBLs are two measures to reduce alcohol-related harm in our community.

I challenge all of us, as government and parliament, to work together. We have established the alcohol review implementation team within the Department of Chief Minister and they are working through the Riley review recommendations and their possible implementation. I will be bringing that back to this House to provide further update. Some of those recommendation will be debated later this week with the independent Liquor Commission put in place. There are a number of measures that will take time. We acknowledge the harm that alcohol causes and we will be using the Riley review and its recommendations to guide us to have an evidence-based approach for tackling this issue.

For so long, we have seen the harm and this government is determined to turn these issues around. We are willing to work in a bipartisan approach. I thank you, Leader of the Opposition. To date, you have stood by your word and you and your staff have attended briefings so you can be informed on these issues and we can be making decisions in the best interests of Territorians, not just short-term political gain.

Mr COLLINS to TREASURER

How is the government using its infrastructure budget to support and create jobs in the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for his question. We are hearing loud and clear from people across the Northern Territory that they have been doing it tough and it will be a challenging 18 months ahead. That is why it is critical to ensure that we get as much money out of the door as we can when it comes to government expenditure, particularly in the infrastructure budget. We planned for this period as we knew we would be coming into a challenging year, particularly when the INPEX project transitioned from the construction to the operational phase.

That $1.75bn budget is about getting money out the door to support people across the Northern Territory, including a $1.15bn capital works budget—including the GOCs—$219m in cash for capital grants and the record repairs and maintenance budget to make sure money hits the ground across the Northern Territory for both small and medium-size businesses.
The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics is working hard to get money out the door. Agencies with infrastructure responsibilities are working as hard as they can to get money out the door—Housing, Education, the government-owned corporations. They know it is important to make sure this work is done.

We will see a huge amount of construction work under way this year—or that is about to get under way in the Dry Season. The $12m RDH car park is coming out of the ground, as are the $80m netball courts.

It is great to see the minister for sport about to commence work on the Warren Park redevelopment. There is also the RDH PET scanner worth $15; $20.7m for major redevelopment of Darwin High School; the Keep River Plains Road has early upgrades starting, and that $50m will hit the ground this year; and there is $40m for Gunn Point Road.

We are looking at some big, significant projects around Darwin, particularly going into the Dry Season. There is the $32m car park; that will be a huge project which will free up valuable land getting chewed up by heat-generating car parks in the CBD.

Barneson Boulevard is another project coming up this Dry Season. Another project is the Palmerston Police Station worth $26m—with a strengthened Buy Local policy to support local jobs and business across the Northern Territory.

We knew this period would come and brought projects forward. We are working on what we can do to stimulate the economy where it is needed and delivering important projects to support the Territory not just now but in the future, as well as supporting local jobs and business across the Northern Territory.

There are many more projects across the Territory. Those are just a few. This year jobs are our number one priority.

Temporary Beat Locations and POSIs

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE referred to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

As you are aware, Northern Territory Police have withdrawn from full-time temporary beat locations in Alice Springs, citing operational priorities as the reason. There is clear evidence which demonstrates that point of sale interventions prevent alcohol-related violence, especially domestic violence. Northern Territory Police resources are stretched to the point they cannot take up this role; however, it is the government’s responsibility to ensure someone does. The Riley review recommended that POSIs remain in place until licensing inspectors are in place.

Given that licensing inspectors can be appointed under section 18 of the current Liquor Act, why have you not acted swiftly in order to keep Territorians safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will answer part of the Deputy Opposition Leader’s question, and then I will ask the minister for Police to provide further response.

We have the alcohol reform implementation team, and we are working in earnest with stakeholders and put in place wide-reaching alcohol reforms.

I have been very open since I became minister responsible for licensing that I feel we could have a far stronger regime that would back up our hard-working police officers and frontline health practitioners, such as nurses and doctors.

There is no such thing as a liquor licensing inspector. We have licensing inspectors that do a body of work related to food health safety and real estate—it is wide ranging. The recommendation from the Riley review is something we are looking at how it could be implemented in the Northern Territory.

It is a big body of work. This is the first time a government has looked at the whole picture. The Riley review gives us recommendations for a coordinated approach, strengthening licensing and looking at risk-based licensing.
We acknowledge that Territorians have the right to drink responsibly and celebrate with family and friends, but considering the harm it causes to our community, we have to tackle those issues.

We have an industry reference group I have met with, and I am working with industry, because these are people’s businesses and livelihoods, and they deserve to run those businesses.

This is a difficult task, but I am committing to Territorians to implement the Riley review’s recommendations so we can tackle this with a coordinated response.

The member’s questions related specifically to the TBLs and POSIs, and I will now ask the Police minister to provide further response.

Mr GUNNER (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Madam Speaker, I am happy to talk about this because police outside of bottle shops was not ever funded or resourced by the CLP. There was an expectation that police do that from within.

You are talking about 60 police. That is the Police Association figure. About 60 police when you look at the roster required for the front of bottle shops. In a six-month window, we are recruiting 90 additional police to make sure we are looking after the whole of the Territory community. We have to make sure we are looking after all Territorians.

We know that police have a very important job; they are the best-placed people to decide what police do. They get intelligence every day that changes what they do each day. We want to be very clear. Police are best placed to make police decisions in the interests and safety of the community. Police are part of our local community and always decisions in the best interests of the safety of the community.

Cavenagh House Redevelopment

Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for HEALTH:

The redevelopment of old Cavenagh House building was recently announced and when completed, the Department of Health would become the anchor tenant. Can you please update the House about how this redevelopment will create jobs and ensure Territorians continue to receive high quality health care services?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, wherever they are across the Territory, Territorians deserve to access health services and have access to those services as close to home as possible. We are committed to delivering those services.

We have very important staff that provide support to those health workers. They are located in a number of premises in the Darwin CBD. In January, the government announced that we will deliver, not only a new building to house Department of Health administrating staff, but will also provide an opportunity for jobs for Territorians. This is also about revitalising our central business district.

Anyone that has been to the current locations of Health staff—they are not co-located for the first point, in terms of working efficiently across agency. Some of those office buildings are well past their use by date.

Health will be the anchor tenant in this project and I thank the minister for information and corporate services and her agency, because they did a lot of this work. An extensive public tender process was held, seeking 10 000 square metres of office space. Not only will this create a new home for Health, it will provide CBD activation and vital construction jobs.

The proposal by Sandran was selected as the preferred tender after detailed assessment, including oversight by an independent probity adviser. The proposal includes a number of innovative features to refresh what some would say is an underused part of the CBD, creating the Cavenagh Street–Litchfield Street as a green precinct.

There will be the opportunity to upgrades to Energy House, improving the building’s facade; a childcare centre located on the ground floor of that building; a capital contribution to the City of Darwin to upgrade and green Litchfield Street; and a new 320-bay public car park.
This project is not only about providing Health with co-location in a modern building so that they can support our hard-working frontline Health staff across the Territory, but will also revitalise our central business district in Darwin.

The new tower’s architecture will be suited to Darwin’s tropical environment. It will feature an internal atrium, a high-energy efficiency with a minimum of 5-star rating, a rooftop garden and street shading to reduce the heat loads that we have so often spoken about.

This will be the corporate headquarters for the Department of Health and up to 660 staff will be accommodated in the building.

We are pleased to announce this project, something that has been talked about for a long time. I thank all of those involved. It was a robust, independent process.

Homelands Policy

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The department website states that homelands policy is under review. When the review is finished, the updated policy will be published on the website.

Many other elders and I would be happy to provide advice about our needs. Have there been any community consultations in relation to homelands policies and what is the timeline for this review?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. It is a very important question. As the member would be aware, as a Labor government we have been flat out with our 10-year $1.61bn housing plan that incorporates land servicing costs. It creates opportunities to support homelands.

As a traditional man, you would understand the relationship around homelands and the difficult nature in terms of the land tenure and government investment. We have a comprehensive policy to make sure we fuse efficiencies into our delivery that will also support homelands. The department is very focused on homelands. As we have seen in the last 18 months there will be extensive communication and consultation on the ground with communities under our local decision-making policy. We are listening to all Territorians and taking those messages to inform good policy outcomes.

The website is one way to gather information. You are most welcome to be briefed in the ministerial office, as you have been in the past. You are also welcome to meet departmental officials; we will keep you up to date.

It is important to note the difficult circumstances the Labor government inherited after four years of the CLP. The four years of the CLP essentially cashed up a deal for homelands with the Commonwealth and allowed them, the entity that created homelands, to walk away from their responsibility and then spend two thirds of the money. That was a disgrace and that is what you discover when you come into government after four years of a train wreck that has disadvantaged Territorians across the board.

Member for Nhulunbuy, you can be guaranteed that Michael Gunner’s Labor government is supportive of homelands. We are supporting homelands’ jobs, repairs and maintenance for houses under our Homelands Extra program; municipal and essential service delivery in homelands for over 400 occupied homelands across the Northern Territory and when we opened the CLP’s books there was nothing for it. That was a disgrace and that story will resonate throughout the bush for decades.

Member for Nhulunbuy, please take the opportunity to participate in that and introduce us to community members. We look forward to developing new policy. Remember, it is around that shared services methodology of what we can do together.

Remote Housing Funding

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Minister, with the government’s record investment in remote housing, when can we expect to see better homes and more housing for remote Territorians? What other benefits will this program bring?
ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. 2018 will be a big year for remote housing in the Northern Territory. The Member for Arafura will be front and centre supporting that and I welcome the opportunity to work together. It is important to start answering this question by defining Labor’s policy around remote housing because it directly targets overcrowding.

It is about creating local jobs and building the skill sets of local people through training to employment and of course, under those parameters it will deliver improved wellbeing. It is a holistic policy with a 10-year time frame that now has a budget allocation of $1.61bn incorporating those critical land service costs that we discovered very early in the SIHIP program. It has continually challenged a remote area partnership agreement into housing and it has been Michael Gunner and the Labor government acknowledging that and committing those funds to support a record investment into remote Indigenous housing.

It is also important to mention Minister Scullion has committed to match dollar for dollar from the Commonwealth. We need a lot more but we acknowledge his one to one funding to our $1.1bn program. We also acknowledge his commitment to work with the Territory on a commitment of our $510m land servicing.

It would be important for the Leader of the Opposition—the Liberal man—to back that. Let us start to hear some positive stories about that. I would love to hear the Leader of the Opposition’s position on that.

Since coming to government, we have delivered about 900 new or significantly improved homes for remote Territorians and there will be hundreds more to come just this year. We have seen 49% Aboriginal employment across our housing works so far this financial year. In the most recent reporting period from the National Partnership in Remote Housing works, we have seen a workforce comprising 629 employees, of which 318 were Aboriginal—629 Territory construction jobs and 318 Indigenous Territorians.

Under the Northern Territory government’s remote housing investment package Room to Breathe, we have seen 18 contracts awarded to 13 Aboriginal business enterprises and four contracts awarded to regional councils. This program has seen 133 local workers and delivered 155 additional rooms and living spaces.

Madam Speaker, this is just the start. It will be a big year in remote housing and we are proud to deliver it.

Alcohol Review Recommendations

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

I am reading from the alcohol review that was tabled from the parliament last year—page 94, Recommendation 3.6.1:

*POSIs should continue in regional centres after the commencement of the Banned Drinker Register until it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required.*

Recommendation 3.6.4:

*Police should continue to undertake the POSI role until licensing inspectors are employed and trained.*

We have just heard from the Attorney-General that you intend to adhere and implement all the recommendations in this alcohol review, yet already we are seeing a departure from those specific recommendations I have just cited.

The people from Alice Springs are despairing. Alcohol is flowing freely in the town. Could you explain to the people of Alice Springs why you are taking the police away from the bottle shop and have allowed the rivers of grog to flow freely in Alice Springs …

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we want every Territorian to be as safe as possible, and that includes the people in Alice Springs.
Police, obviously, play a critical role in keeping Territorians and the people of Alice Springs safe. Every day police make a decision about where they are best placed that day to make the people of the Territory as safe as possible. We have not given any direction for police to come off the front of bottle shops. Police make a decision every day about where they are best placed.

As I understand, the debate from Katherine to Tennant Creek to Alice Springs has been about where police should be best deployed day to day. I have had the benefit of sitting through some of the intelligence briefings they do for police at shift changes. They get significant amounts of information overnight—the one I attended was the next morning—about where the trouble is and where police need to be. Police make active decisions based on the most recent information about where they are best placed.

I give you this guarantee: police are part of the local community. Every day police are trying to work out how they can do the best for their local community …

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110. You are complicit with the police to depart from the recommendations of the …

Madam SPEAKER: No, that is not a point of order.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, it is not a point of order. Sit down, please.

Mr GUNNER: There has been no departure from the recommendations. Police make decisions every day and that includes standing out the front of …

Mrs LAMBLEY: You are just lying!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, withdraw.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr GUNNER: … of bottle shops. Police still operationally do that and make those decisions every single day. I will echo the NT Police Association, which has said they are disappointed, once again, that police are being blamed for harm within the Alice Springs community.

Let us be really clear. Police are busting their guts every single day to make the Territory community as safe as possible. They make decisions every day about how they can best serve that community. We are providing police all the tools they need. We are putting 90 additional police—just in this six months window—including training 32 police—for the first time—in Alice Springs for Southern Command. We see this as a critical issue. We now have more police on the books. We are well ahead of attrition. We are training 90 in this six months.

We have picked up the mess of the CLP that did not fund police for the front of bottle shops, did not fund them to do that activity. They broke their promise of 120 extra police, did not give police the resources they need to do their job they massively stretched them.

What we have done is put in those additional police and make sure there are extra police on the job. Every single day police do their bit to make the Territory community as safe as possible and I cannot agree with the Member for Araluen who calls in to question police motivations, police desire and police efforts. It is a shame, it is a disgrace. Police operationally every single day are doing everything they can to keep Territorians safe. That is what we want to do as a government, we want to keep Territorians as safe as possible and that is exactly what police do.

Project Sea Dragon

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY AND RESOURCES

Territorians have been hearing about the aquaculture project, Project Sea Dragon that is now gaining momentum. Can you outline the status of this project and its potential to create important new industry opportunity for the Territory, including jobs for Territorians?
ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have been working very closely with our community of Katherine as an agribusiness and transport logistics hub. We have a key role in my department and my portfolios in creating and diversifying and strengthening our NT economy. That is about creating jobs. That is our plan. We have a clear focus from our government to create jobs and a future.

A little bit of information, out of 17 private sector that have major projects status they all fall within my portfolio areas. We are talking about the Nolans Rare Earths projects where the neodymium and praseodymium or magnets, the lanthanum, which is a hybrid car battery and there is a couple of others—the Chandler Salt Mine and Mount Todd Gold Mine, but I want to talk about, as the Member for Katherine has mentioned, the Seafarms project, Sea Dragon—new aquaculture project utilising three sites, Bynoe Harbour, Gunn Point and Legune Station.

This is a $1.45bn project, and we want it in the Northern Territory. We want a final investment decision to happen to create jobs, for that is our plan. This is a real project giving life to the long-held vision that we want to grow our economy and diversify our economies.

Stage one alone, and we are talking about jobs and focussing on jobs—without construction figures added in we are talking about 200 operational jobs in the first stage of this project. At its capacity, as the Chief Minister has already mentioned in a previous answer, up to 1500 jobs, this is jobs for Territorians. What I am particularly proud of is the community benefits that go on from this. We are talking about the $40m road infrastructure for Gunn Point Road, which in my other portfolio of fisheries, some fishos are very happy about that upgrade. I am sure the Member for Nelson is as well.

I am really happy about the opportunity of employment of local Aboriginal people in this project, and Seafarms and the Northern Land Council have done a lot of work together to find a solution and pass an Indigenous land use agreement for 95 years on Native Title land.

This is a magnificent aquaculture project that we want in the Northern Territory. In December last year I approved the aquaculture licence for the Bynoe Harbour Grow Out Facility, which is a breed stock and maturation centre.

We will continue as a government under Major Project status to continue to work with Seafarms to make sure we can do everything that we can to get this project up. We want this and we want a future for Territorians, and in our government what we are focussing on—that future is creating jobs.

Palmerston City Council

Mr NELSON to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

You wrote to the Palmerston City Council on 1 June in response to their request for a loan stating:

I have requested officers from the department to work with your council to strengthen the information and justification of its 2017/18 municipal plan. In response, on 20 June the council resolved to engage the services of the suitably qualified professional, (inaudible) Cality Jones who developed the business plan, the Director of Corporate Services also asked consultant John Comrie to look at the finances.

Nine days later you then suspended the council and I quote from your investigation report:

Work on the business case was ceased on the appointment of the official council manager.

Neither reports have ever seen the light of day.

Why did you not wait for the business plan not to be completed or read the John Comrie report before you suspended the council, and why did you suspend the council that was attempting to do everything you asked him in your letter?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will be brief in my response. Essentially, you can get all the information from the independent investigation that was conducted into that council. That investigation sets a very good framework for all local government authorities across the Northern Territory.
From home I have heard the local mayor say that he has tabled that document at a council meeting, but he has instructed administrative staff and elected members to look at this thoroughly and give very clear benchmarks on appropriate and proper management of council.

Member for Nelson, you will see that a number of issues have emerged, and the recommendation from the investigator was what I followed. If you go back to the start of the process—I thank the department officials, as they do across the Northern Territory. They engage with the council, offer expert advice, work with elected bodies and the administration. But when it came to my attention that a contract had been signed—the largest ever quest to borrow in the Northern Territory, before there was …

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I have read the report and the question is specific: why did you not wait for the business plan to be completed, or read the John Comrie report, before you suspended the council? You asked him to work with them, and they did, and before that business plan was considered you suspended them.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nelson—it is not a story. Minister, can you get to the point.

Mr McCARTHY: I will conclude by saying the contract had been signed without a subject to finance clause.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! That was not the question.

Madam SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr WOOD: The point of order is that the minister not referring to—it is relevance, Standing Order 110.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

Mr McCARTHY: I have finished.

**Education – School Budgets**

Mrs WORDEN to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Many in our community were concerned about the global school budgets funding model and the significant cuts made to education by the CLP government. Last year you announced an independent review of the school funding model. Can you please tell members what you have done to improve funding in our schools?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, we are a government that supports education in the Northern Territory. You have heard, many times, the story of the additional $124m we have put into school budgets. One of our elections commitments was to do an independent review of global school budgets.

The Deputy Opposition Leader thinks that review means cuts, but it does not. We can demonstrate that. Our schools had a review of global school budgets where all schools were consulted. There was broad consultation with principals and in December I released the full report, with an action plan, with recommendations.

The good news is there is an additional $39m over four years going into the education budget. On top of the additional $20m into school budgets, there is now the additional $39m approved by Cabinet to make sure we get things right.

A review of school budgets does not mean cuts; it actually meant more money for schools. At the start of this year there was an additional $4m distributed in one-off funding to government schools to make sure we fix up some of the messes created by the CLP in the school budgets. For some of the secondary and special needs schools the budgeting was not right. They could not make do with the amount of funding that they received. They were struggling to make sure that they met all their resourcing needs. I went back to Cabinet. We had a look at all those recommendations and we have put more money into our schools. To me, that is a great thing.

But one of the other great things that has come out of that report—and I know the Member for Nhulunbuy often asks me questions about school budgets—we have said that through transparency, to make sure it is all very clear, we will put school budgets up on their websites so the money that goes into schools will be
clear, transparent. Schools will then work with their school councils, work with their school communities around how they cash flow that, where they are spending their dollars and that will be open. Public education in the Territory will be even more clear and transparent about the amounts of money going in.

Because sometimes I am asked by people in the community about how much money a school has got. It will be there for all to see and it will be up to the principals, the school communities to sit down and plan how they will spend that money. Greater transparency around that.

The other good thing that has come out of the review is that we will centralise personal leave and that will take pressure off schools. That was something that we heard loudly and clearly as well through the review.

Good news and it is going to be a great year for education in the Territory.

Jobs – Sporting Infrastructure

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

Territorians love their sport, so I was wondering if the minister could please advise the House on how this government is investing in job-creating sports infrastructure.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Karama is somebody who is actively using sport, being very proactive in her own electorate around engaging with young people and I think that is really important.

We are a government that is investing in sport, because we know how important it is for the health and wellbeing of Territorians. We know how important it is to connected and healthy and vibrant communities as well. But at the moment we also know how important these projects are because they are also job-creating projects.

Now more than ever we need those local jobs for Territorians and we have fast-tracked a number of sporting infrastructure projects—amongst others of course, Royal Darwin Hospital carpark is one that I am very excited about—but really we have fast-tracked these sporting infrastructure projects that support local jobs, they support economic growth and they provide that long term benefit for Territory families.

We have two that are currently under way in the Marrara Sporting Complex and a third starting next month, which creates around 400 jobs for Territorians and that is really significant. We have fast-tracked the $25m home for rugby league at Warren Park in Marrara …

Mr WOOD: And we are going to build a museum at ANZAC Oval are we?

Ms MOSS: The tender for this has been awarded to local firm Halikos and it is creating over 120 jobs for locals …

Mr WOOD: Alice Springs we are going to dig up the rugby league field are we? Put a museum in?

Ms MOSS: This is about the local rugby league community. Getting behind a place that they can call their own again. It is about a project that also creates jobs for locals …

Mr WOOD: What are you going to do with Richardson Park?

Ms MOSS: Four years of the CLP government and around seven sports ministers could not deliver for rugby league. We know how popular netball is and the construction of the $18m Darwin Indoor Netball Centre at Marrara is coming along.

The Member for Sanderson was out there with me. Local firm Sunbuild were awarded the tender and work is under way. This is providing over 100 jobs during the construction phase for Territorians and I am really excited. I know the Member for Sanderson is as well and it will also have a childcare option to allow to assist with that participation by local families and that is a really great thing. Construction of the $16.7m tennis centre is progressing. That is going to provide employment for 200 Territorians during the build and it continues across the NT. $5m investment into the facilities at Purkiss Reserve in Tennant Creek, providing 20 local jobs. The $6.2m worth of infrastructure projects in sports in Alice Spring.
The Member for Braitling was out there announcing and we have the $14m going into remote ovals and sporting facilities throughout the Territory and our regional and urban sports lighting program as well, which some of the local councils settle in here, starting with the consultation process for that.

I am really pleased that we are delivering on quality sporting facilities and delivering on our election promises.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you minister your time has expired.

Palmerston City Council – Suspension

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

My question is in response to the non-answer from the minister on page 11 which says:

_Council must ensure that any request to borrow application put to the minister follows the recommended approach set out by DHCD…_

Which is in your letter:

… and that an appropriate business case be prepared.

As I said before, on 20 June the council resolved to engage a professional to develop a business plan and John Comrie as a consultant to do the same thing. Why then, Minister, did you suspend the council before those reports were completed? Why did you suspend a council that was attempting to do everything you asked them to do and is the recommendation by Russell Anderson in this report?

Ms Fyles: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not repetition; it was different. It is the same theme but a different question.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will direct this to the Member for Nelson. There were significant concerns that emerged around the City of Palmerston Council over quite an extended period of time that had come to my attention through the public domain and from the Department of Housing and Community Development and local government.

In this job you are challenged with difficult decisions and complex issues. On the evidence I was presented with that was emerging in the public domain, the concerns from the residents and rate payers of the City of Palmerston …

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. It is the same question the minister refuses to answer, why did you not wait for the business plan to be completed?

Members: interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Nelson, it is not a point of order. You have asked the minister a question and he can answer it any way he chooses.

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, I chose to suspend the City of Palmerston Council and conduct an independent report. From that, I had to make another very difficult decision to dismiss those members. I am looking forward to new nominations for the City of Palmerston and an election on 17 March and restoring justice and faith in our elected officials. I am looking forward to that and I am focused on it.

Corruption Allegations against the CLP

Mr HIGGINS to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

In a press release issued yesterday, you irresponsibly accused the CLP of ‘criminality and corruption in government’. You have not supported this with any evidence whatsoever. How are Territorians to trust you to appoint a truly independent ICAC when you as the Attorney-General, the highest law officer in the Territory, make baseless allegations in the media intended to convict people before they have even been investigated?
Also, what specific instances of criminality are you alleging and have you referred this to the police as you are bound to do?

**Mr Gunner:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Leader of the Opposition, would you mind tabling the press release you are referring to?

**Mr Higgins:** It is one of your press releases yesterday that clearly states criminality and corruption.

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I am glad you read my press releases in such detail. For those listening at home—and there are a lot of people excited that parliament is back—the Leader of the Opposition is referring to my press release talking about the parliamentary year ahead. The grab he is reading from:

> The Territory Labor government has no tolerance for criminality or corruption in government and one of our core election commitments was to restore trust after four years of CLP chaos.

It is a little far-fetched to say that I am accusing the CLP of corruption. It was a value statement; we certainly have no tolerance for corruption.

Members interjecting.

**Madam Speaker:** Order!

**Ms Fyles:** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is a man of integrity. It is an interesting question to ask based off a press release but I am more than happy to talk about the need for the Northern Territory to have an Independent Commissioner Against Corruption and this morning the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in her response to the legislation before the House spoke in agreement, saying the CLP believes the Northern Territory needs an ICAC and they are supportive.

During the last four years we saw questionable decisions made and we need to have the legislation in place so that if people suspect anything or have a question, it can be referred to the appropriate, independent body. Everyone in this House should be making decisions that are in the long-term community interest of the Territory, not the short-term interest of a few. We had comments from the former Treasurer, Dave Tollner, who has quite gracefully retired from politics and I do not need to bring him back into it. When he commented that many people wanted to meet him and money opened his door, it created suspicion.

As members of parliament, we need Territorians to have faith in us and our system. This ICAC bill that will pass the House—hopefully this afternoon or tomorrow—puts in place the legislative framework so the Northern Territory can have its first-ever Independent Commissioner Against Corruption, something we committed to. That was the statement I made yesterday.

It is good to know that not only is my newsletter making it all the way down to the Daly River region, but that the Leader of the Opposition wrote the media releases. I apologise if there was any offence taken. It was a value statement from me about this government which believes in transparency and putting those mechanisms in place.

Madam Speaker, whilst I am on my feet, I ask that further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.

**Written Question Not Answered**

**Mr Higgins to Madam Speaker**

Madam Speaker, my question is to you, pursuant to Standing Order 114. In November, I placed a group of written questions on the paper to the Chief Minister regarding his department’s annual report. It is now February. I ask that you write to the Chief Minister seeking a response to written question No 135 dated 28 November 2017.

**Madam Speaker:** Opposition Leader, the work will be undertaken and a letter written to the Chief Minister.
Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, the Member for Nelson asked a question in relation to those bills. The urgency motion I do tomorrow, but I have indicated publicly to members that we intend to debate those bills on urgency on Thursday. We have arranged to provide a briefing, but I am happy to do more briefings as required.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay.

Ms FYLES: Thank you for keeping me on my toes.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Attorney-General.