

## Fuel Prices

### Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

Madam Speaker, my question is to the Treasurer

**Ms FYLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I apologise, sorry Leader of the Opposition, I should have notified the house that obviously with the Chief Minister's absence I will be taking questions as Attorney-General representing Police, Fire and Emergency Services. The questions for Trade, Business and Innovation will be to the Deputy Chief Minister and Aboriginal Affairs to the Minister for Primary Industries. I am sorry to interrupt.

**Mr HIGGINS:** At the time of the election fuel prices were a dollar a litre for unleaded petrol. Two months into your government they are now at \$1.30. The previous government brought together key stakeholders in the distribution and supply of fuel and pressured these suppliers to lower pump prices. What is your government doing about the soaring cost of fuel?

### ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his questions. We all know that fuel prices hit the hip pocket very hard and affect a lot of Territorians. For far too long fuel prices were too high and the body of work that was done with a very thorough media campaign in the last few years—we also saw the ACCC report into fuel prices that did recognise there had been some significant issues in the Territory, that people were being charged too much for fuel.

We have seen downward pressure on fuel prices. It is important to see because it has a big impact on the cost of living; there is no doubt about it. We have seen some rises in fuel prices across the Territory and we hate seeing people ripped off at the bowsers and that the price in the Territory is still below the national average as of 23 October.

One thing I am very concerned about going forward is making sure we keep the pressure on the fuel companies and making sure people have more information at hand as to what the options are for them; to make sure they know where the best prices are. Ultimately, we know there are a few things that impact fuel prices; world oil prices, something that is out of our control in the Territory.

I would like to see greater retail competition and pressure to keep an eye on things in the Northern Territory. We have seen changes in New South Wales and how they have gone about retail fuel pricing to enhance and promote competition. We must never lose sight of what is going on in the fuel market. We have to do what we can to keep the pressure on and make sure that we have fuel companies doing what they can to keep prices down.

I had the opportunity to meet with the ACCC in my second week as the Treasurer; one of my conversations with them was, 'keep an eye on the Territory, please. You have a role to play here and we are very keen to make sure the body of work you had done that demonstrated Territorians had been paying too much for too long—.' We need to keep the pressure on the fuel companies. It will be interesting to see what happens in New South Wales and perhaps what we can learn from that experience in the Northern Territory.

## A Strong Economy – Right Conditions

### Mrs WORDEN to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER

How is the government getting on with the job of creating the right conditions for a strong and resilient economy?

### ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is an important question about the plans we have in the Northern Territory. I might not have hit the ground running just then but since we came to government we have. We had a clear plan when we came to government which was about investing in our kids, restoring trust and integrity to government and growing jobs and our economy. We had more policy out than any opposition had ever had before going into an election. Our election commitments were there for everyone to see, along with our costings of how we will go about the job.

We were told loud and clear by the community that they were sick of the extreme changes with the previous government jumping from one minister to another, reshuffle after reshuffle. They wanted to see a government that got on with the job of governance. They wanted to see no more handbrakes put on and for us to get on with the job. That is exactly what we have been doing. You will see those changes as result of the change of government and of us making sure we are fulfilling our election commitments through the mid-year report which will be tabled in this House in the next sittings.

When we came to government we made some immediate changes to the machinery of government. We wanted to make sure we had our public sector structured to deliver on our priorities to make sure they were well aligned to do that. We made changes to the Buy Local policy so more Territory businesses could benefit from government investment. We changed first homebuyer conditions to get more people into the housing market. We are continuing that \$1.7bn infrastructure program. We have five-year funding agreements rolling out with NGOs to give them certainty so they can do their jobs. The Chief Minister is now overseas representing the interests of the Northern Territory to build trader and business relations with our key trading partners overseas. We are very proud that we will be holding our economic summits. We will be walking hand in hand with Territory business, the key sectors and regions going forward.

What we find from those economic summits will help shape our future budget, but also our future direction. It is important that you listen to people. We must not miss any opportunities that are ahead. In order to do that you need to sit down with Territorians and the experts and listen.

There are some exciting times ahead. We have hit the ground running. It has been a very busy time, and we are looking forward to a very busy four years, working for the people of the Northern Territory.

### **Community Support Work Program**

#### **Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and JUSTICE**

Last Friday my electorate office received an e-mail from the department of corrections stating that no further applications under the community support work program will be accepted. I seek leave to table the e-mail.

Leave granted.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO:** For those who do not know, the community support work program is a valuable lawn mowing service to senior Territorians.

The e-mail also says there are 160 applications on the list and that the time frame on the list is now indefinite. Are you able to explain what that means and why your government is not investing in this very successful scheme.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I am happy to update the House on this question. Under the CLP government, it was proposed in the 2016 Budget to cut that program. As we all know, and as the Member for Spillett outlined, this is a very important program, particularly to a number of Territorians who are not able to get into their garden and clean up their yards.

It is very interesting that the CLP brings this question into the House when it was their Budget that would cut the teams from six to three.

Territory Labor is committed to that scheme. I am personally passionate about the scheme. It is very important. The Nightcliff electorate has a large number of seniors, and every day I see the effects and benefits of this scheme.

The scheme is at capacity. The department of corrections—it was in the Budget to cut that from six teams to three. They felt that would not be good for Territorians; they know the importance of this scheme. It cost around \$80 to \$100 to get your garden done on a typical block in Darwin and Palmerston. Heading into the Wet Season—we have had early rain and, as you would know, Madam Speaker, those lawns are growing.

The department of corrections has advised it is at capacity. But we have a full commitment to this scheme. They have the six teams working as hard as they can. If people need a one-off tidy of their yard or a run to the tip, they can try to provide that, but there are pressures on the scheme. There would have been more

pressures on this scheme except that the department of corrections made the decisions not to cut the teams from six to three, which is what would have happened if the CLP budget cuts went through.

It is very interesting to hear the question from the Member for Spillett. This scheme is important; we are committed to it. There are some changes within the scheme. It provides support to councils for the pre-cyclone clean up and I do not imagine that would be changed but there are some other works that these groups do.

I would like to see that these groups are focused solely on helping those Territorians with a disability and seniors who we want to stay in their own homes and communities but struggle with the large amount of work to do in their yard. I can assure the House today that I am very committed...

**Mrs Finocchiaro:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. It is a very direct question: what is this government doing to invest in this very successful scheme?

**Ms FYLES:** What this government is going is not cutting the scheme which is what we would have seen from the May 2016 Dave Tollner budget. I have made that quite clear this government is committed to those six teams. I personally have had briefings on the scheme and made quite an impact on the corrections...

**Mrs Finocchiaro:** You are the government now, what are you doing?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms FYLES:** We are making sure this scheme is running. I can assure Territorians, as the minister responsible, I will be making sure this program is as efficient as possible to get out there and help those Territorians who deserve this scheme to help them. Thank you.

### Resources Portfolio

#### Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

Can the minister please inform the House of the proposed policy work he will be undertaking in his resources portfolio that will help provide transparency in government to Territorians?

#### ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim and my assistant minister for asking that question.

Today, during the lunch break, I announced the Territory government will begin thorough consultations with the mining industry, community and all relevant stakeholders to improve the transparency of mining securities.

Under the *Mining Management Act* mining operations that are likely to cause substantial disturbance to the environment are required to provide a security bond prior to the authorisation being granted for that operation. The purpose of the security is to cover the cost of rectifying any environment harm caused by mining activities. The amount of any individual security bond has not been disclosed to the public in the past.

We know there is currently a matter between the NT civil administration tribunal that has highlighted a policy issue in this area. We will abide by this decision by the tribunal in good faith because we came to government with a promise to Territorians that we would be an open, transparent government and that pleased Territorians trust us with your vote to run the Territory.

We will soon begin our extensive consultation with industry and other key stakeholders and have a sensible conversation with all relevant stakeholders on what that way is around a way forward for the mining security bonds.

This is a very brave and the right thing to do around opening transparency of the mining securities. We have contacted the mining sector and spoken to them this morning around this and they, as well as other groups, are very keen to sit down with us and discuss a way forward. We will continue to be an open and transparent government and we will continue with a policy of nondisclosures of securities for individual mine sites until that sensible conversation is had and considered. We are not about thought bubble

policies; policy on the run; we are a government that will consult extensively; have a sensible approach to any policy that is developed.

This is why we have delivered on our promise of a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing of unconventional gas reservoirs. This is why this Labor government is committed to making environmental and mine management plans publicly available for the first time. This government not only walks the talk, it talks the walk.

### **Housing – Supporting the Wellbeing of Territory Children**

#### **Mr COSTA to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

How will Labor record \$1.1bn housing program support the health and wellbeing of Territory children and how will this support a more fair and prosperous Territory in the long term?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question because when we consider overcrowded housing and the considerable challenge of remote Indigenous housing there are members of this House that can share personal experience about that and the impact on families; children and their proper growth and development. The Labor government has looked at this in terms of policy definition across all the aspects of how to create improved wellbeing and housing has been identified as one of the major projects we will engage with.

I am looking forward to providing more information to the Leader of the Opposition in his opposition business time. The \$1.1bn investment over the next 10 years is about new housing; the room to breathe policy providing new living spaces; better appropriated living spaces. It is about that important, cyclical maintenance to housing and government employee housing.

When you look at the opportunities that this policy provides in a focus on children, not only with the physical infrastructure improvements—but I want people to get their head around local people making decisions and being engaged in the work. Not everyone wants to be a construction worker, but in the job statement in this House we heard some very positive contributions from the Labor members of this House. Let us more to come because there are many opportunities for jobs and there will be many more jobs created.

In housing, let us think of those people in our communities who will buy in with their effort and determination to make a difference. That will start to build a capacity for those labour forces across the Northern Territory to commence with repairs and maintenance and then move on to extensions, renovations and new innovative outdoor living areas and be involved in the construction of new housing. You will have a family that is celebrating – as the Minister for Education said in her speech – breakfast together with the family gathering in the morning and people moving through the community to go to work and school and engage in the rhythms of community life. There will be specific teams that will be managing houses and making definition around the tenancy management through formalised groups. They will be working in construction gangs and coming home at night and telling that story to their families.

Madam Speaker, it will be a huge difference and I am looking forward to being part of it.

### **Ti Tree Horticultural Area**

#### **Mr WOOD to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES**

The department recently advertised for expressions of interest from suitably-qualified individuals or enterprises to enter into a lease to develop a profitable and sustainable horticultural enterprise at Ti Tree Horticultural Research Farm near the town of Ti Tree. Could you please advise if the government is abandoning its research station at Ti Tree and leasing a government asset? Could you please state what is the present state of horticultural production in Ti Tree, especially the grape industry in light of an ABC report about two years ago saying the region's once-thriving table grape industry was in decline and three abandoned farms were up for sale.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nelson for his important question. An expression of interest for the research farm, which is 10 km south of Ti Tree, has been released.

Ti Tree is strategically placed between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek and has a recent history of successful horticulture, as the member for Nelson said, especially around grapes.

The expression of interest advertises 9.4 ha of property that features power, water, sewerage, telecommunications, a water allocation, grape trellises, windbreaks and other infrastructure.

The EOI seeks a proposal to grow the horticulture industry on the region; provide the necessary improvements to support the use and development of the land for irrigated horticultural purposes; to respond adequately to the opportunities from (inaudible) land; provide opportunities for local industry; and demonstrates sustainable use of the land in an effective business model.

The Member for Nelson is right; it is out for EOI. Expressions of interest close on 25 November. There has not been much activity going on at Ti Tree; we think with the Melon Virus and the use of Douglas Daly by some commercial operators as a place to grow their crops; we thought an opportunity for Primary Industries or a business to come in and start a new crop there of whatever that is; we will look at whatever comes through the EIO process. It is important that we try and support industry. We have a parcel of land that needs to be used; it could be ripe for other industries; other produce; we want to see what that looks like, Member for Nelson.

**Mr Wood:** Are you going to close down the research station?

**Mr VOWLES:** We will look at what the EOI process come through with and I will look at that question further for you. It is important we support the horticultural industry; we are getting more food to market; we want to see what this looks like in regards to what comes back out of this process. The land has been used for grapes; melons; other cucurbits; cut flowers; onions; citrus fruits and mangoes but there has not been much research going on there since 2009 or 2007. We are having a look at it and we will see what comes back.

#### **Education Sector's Trust**

#### **Ms UIBO to MINISTER for EDUCATION**

My question is very timely with World Teachers' Day tomorrow, which hopefully everyone will celebrate with their constituents. Minister, how is the government restoring the education sector's trust which was so shamelessly eroded under the CLP? How will the restoration of trust better support better education outcomes for our Territory kids?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arnhem. The Member for Arnhem is an award winning teacher and she has a thorough understanding of this matter. The CLP government had lost touch with schools, educators, students and families. Key education stakeholders groups did not feel they had a voice or opportunity to share their expertise or knowledge with the government to inform policy; that is why, as a minister, I need to listen to these stakeholders and hear their voices to shape policy, inform and provide advice.

As a member of this parliament and Minister for Education I am working hard to build and maintain trust with the community of schools, families and all our partners in education.

Since being sworn in, almost seven weeks ago, I have been meeting with stakeholders. I am up to my second meeting with people like:

- the Northern Territory Council of Government Schools Organisation; who represent the interests of parents, school councils and boards
- the Australian Education Union, which represents teachers and many of the support staff in our public schools
- the Northern Territory Principals Association, which is the professional association for the voice of school leaders. I met with them on Monday and it was great to have a teleconference linkup with all their representatives from across the region, having Alice Springs there, Arnhem on the phone, being able to talk to them about the issue they are facing

- the Association of Independent Schools in the Northern Territory
- the Catholic Education Office
- the higher education providers of Charles Darwin and Bachelor of Institute of Education.

Meeting with and listening to those stakeholders about the stage of circling through and meeting with them again, in the early day as a minister, I want to make sure those lines of communication are well and truly open and meet with them very regularly.

Building trust with these stakeholders will take time but I will listen and be open, transparent and accountable for my decisions.

Besides all the work with Kormilda and meeting with stakeholders I have had the opportunity to visit 14 schools in the time that I have been Education Minister. On my trip to Alice Springs I went to Amoonguna, Braitling, Acacia Hill School, Ntaria School and Ross Park Primary School. These are schools with experienced school leaders. It is a good opportunity for me, early in my tenure as Education Minister to talk to the experienced leaders.

I have been to Milkwood Steiner, Moil, Grey Primary, Driver, Palmerston Senior College, Bakewell and the amazing, new Henbury School. I also had the opportunity to travel to Wadeye; they are very keen on looking at education in their community and meet with their education board.

As Education Minister I will be getting out and about, listening to stakeholders and making sure they inform my decisions.

### **Buy Local Policy**

#### **Mr MILLS to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER**

All previous governments have commenced their term declaring very strong bi-local plans but history shows that the declaration of a strong intention is the easy bit. Achieving the outcome is much harder and it has eluded all governments. Minister, to give confidence that your government will fix this perennial problem, I invite you to describe in some detail the plans your government has to manage this policy differently and achieve a meaningful and measurable outcome. Also, I invite you describe the measures your government will put in place to police these measures to reduce leakage to interstate contractors.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Blain for this important question. We have had a great deal of debate in this House of Buy Local and how it impact businesses. We have heard from several businesses how much it hurts local jobs, business and the economy when those tenders are not flowing through.

Yes, in our first week the Chief Minister and I meet with the Chamber of Commerce and followed through with making sure the Buy Local component increased to 30%, flowing through to not just construction tenders, but all government tenders – and across the entire tender, not just one segment of the tender. We have increased that strength.

One thing that came through loud and clear – particularly from the steel manufacturers – was the frustration they faced. They felt that those procurement policies were not policed properly, which was a concern. We need to have another body that ensures that the Buy Local policy is upheld and is implemented. If companies will not do the right thing, then they will be held to account. If you are not abiding by what you tell government you will do when you apply for government work when you make a commitment that you will use a local business and then do not use that local business, you should have a cross against your name, which is not good for the Territory. You have to honour those commitments. We need that independent body to ensure that when businesses tender on jobs and say they will use a Buy Local component, that is the case. We need to see it at this point.

I will read a comment from the Chamber of Commerce in September in the message from the CEO in one of the Chamber Roundup articles, pointing to our work when we first came into government:

*The government have not sat on their hands on a couple of key issues, with the Buy Local policy last week and public service shake-up announced yesterday. The Buy Local policy changes saw the*

*local content weighting raised to 30%, better information to businesses on future government procurement, contractual obligations to use local subcontractors specified in tenders, departmental CEOs have a buy local target to meet; and the introduction of an industry advocate.*

There will also be a restructure of procurement oversight with three procurement oversight groups, including a local business advisory panel, streamlined into one.

We have done a lot of work in this space since coming to government, Member for Blain. It is important that we get it right. We will be working very hard in this area.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Buy Local Policy**

**Mr MILLS to DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER**

The thrust of the question, which you acknowledged, was an invitation to describe the measures the government would put in place to police. I invite you to give some more detail on that because you said a body was needed. Everyone can see a body is needed. Are you proposing that a body be established? What mechanism will government put in place to actually police? You have recognised the need and industry recognises the need. You are the government. What measure will you put in place?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for the question. As I discussed, there is a need. We have heard loud and clear that people do want to see an independent body that will make sure procurement is policed in the Northern Territory.

We need to look at what has worked in other jurisdictions and at what is the best case going forward to make sure we get the best model for the Northern Territory. Much like the ICAC situation, where you need to take the unique circumstances of the Northern Territory into account—our population, how things are done in business and so forth. As you know, it is a very small place.

It is important that we make sure that what we establish suits the needs of the Northern Territory to make sure we get it right. That is work we are committed to. There is very strong feedback that people want that policing mechanism in place for government procurement in the Northern Territory.

#### **Health – Children’s Early Years**

**Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for HEALTH**

How is the government investing in the earliest years of children’s lives to increase their health and wellbeing? What benefits will this have for the Northern Territory in the long term.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for Karama for her question. Our children are our greatest asset. They are the key to our future. There is a wealth of evidence that suggests having a healthy start in life will not only lead to a better future but to a better community as a whole.

The first three years of a child’s life are crucial for healthy brain development, cognitive and language skills and social and emotional wellbeing. That is why we are investing in early childhood plan and the child youth and health plan.

We know that access to child health programs in the formative years can have a significant impact on the reduction of behaviours and conduct disorders including involvement in the criminal justice system; depression; intellectual impairment and substance abuse in later years.

Children who are stronger and healthier are more likely to develop into strong healthy adults and suffer from less chronic disease, reducing the burden on our health system. They will have better opportunities in life to access education and develop skills that will contribute to their communities as a whole. To ensure the best start possible for life for our children we have reviewed our child health programs to bring them up to date with the latest evidence for best practice.

We are also addressing inconsistencies that exist between our current child health programs. At present there are two different programs; one for children in remote settings and one for children in urban settings. They use different health assessment schedules and rely on different information systems to collect and store data.

To address those inconsistencies, a new program integrating the best from both the urban and remote programs has been designed, Healthy Under 5 Kids Partnering with Families. This program will provide a universal standardised approach to the delivery of routine child health programs for children from birth to five years throughout the Northern Territory.

Within the platform is a schedule of key assessments at set ages for children from birth to five years. We will be piloting the six month program across 12 sites in both an urban and remote context across the Northern Territory. All child health staff involved in the pilot sites have been trained and the sites are fully resourced and ready to go.

I look forward to providing further feedback to the House on the success of the pilot program next year as we roll out the program to all our health centres. Healthy Under Five Kids Partnering with Families program will provide best practice child health programs for our babies, toddlers and young children. It sets the stage for our youngest Territorians to develop into strong healthy adults and carry the Territory into the future.

This positive investment we place in the first five years will have a lifelong effect on our children. It will be something they will carry through to adulthood and we on this side of the House are committed to delivering that program. In managing children Under five; the health checks and the needs for immunisations; we need to have a consistent approach that is family friendly and will give our children the best start. Thank you.

### **Bilingual Education Options**

#### **Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS referred to MINISTER for EDUCATION**

How will this government protect bilingual education options for Indigenous schools in line with article 14 of the United Nations Declarations of the Rights of Indigenous People?

**Ms FYLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Would the question not be best asked of the Education minister? It is about bilingual education.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Acting Chief Minister, if you wish to refer it to another minister...

**Mr Vowles:** It was to me

**Madam SPEAKER:** It was to the Aboriginal Affairs minister? It is probably strictly with education but it is up to you, government.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for such an important question. I would not want to give it the injustice as I do not know the intricacies of that portfolio so I will pass that over to the Minister for Education, if that is okay.

**Ms LAWLER (Education):** Thank you, Member for Nhulunbuy for the question. I agree it is an important question. In the Northern Territory there are nine government schools that deliver bilingual education programs and I am sure you are very well aware of those. In Arnhem it is Shepherdson College, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Numbulwar, and Yirrkala, one in Katherine which is Lajamanu and three in Alice Springs: Areyonga, Willowra and Yuendumu. These schools receive an additional \$2.75m per year to support their bilingual programs.

The department has a coordinator and some of you, I am sure, know that person very well that provides support to these schools and ensures there is a consistent approach to the delivery of those bilingual programs.

In addition to these nine schools there is also more than 40 schools across the Territory that deliver an Indigenous language and culture program in 28 languages. We have the nine, more formal bilingual



schools but across the Territory there are lots of our remote schools that also have Indigenous language and cultural programs so I know the Member for Arnhem understands that concept at Numbulwar as well.

In all of our remote schools we have Indigenous teacher assistants and they assist the teachers with the language and culture programs as well. The positive thing is under this government's Community Lead Schools Initiative Indigenous people in remote communities will be empowered to make local decisions on the way they was to see education services delivered in their school.

Communities will have a say in the education outcomes they expect for their children so if in that community they want to have a focus on bilingual, two-way learning those are the things that those education boards, through the community lead school will be able to achieve.

Community lead schools will be supported with a ten year community education capacity building plan so the community members have the skills, knowledge and support to confidently make local decisions.

One further thing, there has been a discussion paper written called *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Culture Strong*. That discussion paper is with the Northern Territory board of studies at the moment. They are having a look at that paper and then will provide advice to me.

### **Youth Justice – Investment in Training**

#### **Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES**

How will the government's investment in training help rehabilitate Territory children in the youth justice system?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Brennan who has extensive knowledge in this area. It is great having him on the team.

Investing in training is becoming clearly the important step we need to take in youth justice. Reform of the system and developing a contemporary youth justice and rehabilitation system, which has a focus on preventing problems before they start, is a key priority of our government. One of the clear ways to move that forward is to support staff to have the skills required to deliver on this agenda.

The move of youth justice to Territory Families is a major change in policy direction by placing young people in the context of a whole family and a whole-of-life approach and within that, having a very broad early intervention approach - from zero and the things my colleague, the Minister for Health was talking about a few moment ago and the issues that have been talked about in the last week by the Minister for Education. This is a whole-of-life approach. We cannot treat young people as a little section on the side of any department. It is at the heart of everything we do.

There have been a number of reviews undertaken into the youth justice system in the Northern Territory. This week we released the Children's Commissioner's report. We have accepted 19 of the recommendations in that report, with two of the 21 being no longer relevant. Many of those recommendations are about training. We will be focusing on that. Already the training has be taken over by Territory Families from corrections. Any further training will be coming from Territory Families staff, with a focus on rehabilitation rather than corrections. We will be giving workers on the ground the skills they need to do very difficult work. There is no doubt that this is difficult, challenging work but it is also very responsible and privileged work. We need to ensure that our staff on the ground has the skills available.

Territory Families is currently reviewing the training. I and the CEO are very confident of the strong education focus. The Deputy CEO, who was in charge of training for police, has good skills to deliver in this area.

We will be focusing on child and adolescent development and trauma (inaudible) approaches because we know they are relevant in the context of the Territory and we look forward to working with further stakeholders and the education department to deliver this outcome.

### **First Home Buyers Package**

#### **Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER**

In the first eight weeks only 29 people have benefitted from your First Home Buyers package. This amounts to \$292,000. Unlike your scheme, our Home Renovation Scheme was open to everyone. In the first eight weeks 1,560 vouchers valued at over \$2.7 m were issued; that created a \$10 m injection into the economy. That is 1,560 versus 29; \$2.7 m versus \$290,000; success versus failure. Your scheme is a failure that favours a certain few. When will you admit that your scheme does nothing to support local jobs and businesses?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition. We did make a decision to refocus that money to make sure that we target one of the critical problems we have in the Northern Territory at the moment. We have too many people leaving the Northern Territory. We need more people to stay in the Northern Territory and one great way of doing that is getting people into home ownership; to get them to buy their own piece of the Territory so they will call this place their home forever. That is exactly what we did with our changes. We have changed the stamp duty threshold for established homes so Territorians will potentially up to \$24,000 off stamp duty costs for an established home; which is a huge help when you think about what you have to save to buy your very first home.

We have not stopped there because we want to make sure that we have a good, strong, targeted incentive for local business; as well as another incentive to get people to take it up and buy their own home. So we have changed it to a \$10,000 Home Renovation Grant to encourage people to get in there; it is a great opportunity to support local business at the same time. They will be getting in there with their new home and looking at what needs to be fixed up. Is it the kitchen; tiles; painting; fencing? What work do they need to do at their home? That money must be spent in the Northern Territory on local businesses to support local jobs. So far we have received over 250 inquiries and 42 applications, 29 of which have been approved. We expect to see that figure go up. People need to consider what is in it for them, and that is what they are doing.

We are making sure we promote the message so more people know about these changes to the home owner scheme, so people know they have an opportunity to buy a home and stay here in the NT. Too many people have left. We need to keep people here in the NT and we are determined to do that. We see this as a target way of supporting the economy, keeping people in the NT and making sure they have a better future.

Buying your first home is a big step in your life, but it sets up your financial security for the rest of your life. It is an important investment which has been out of reach for too many people for too long. We are making sure more people can buy their own home.

### **Families as First Teachers – Benefits**

#### **Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for EDUCATION**

How is the Families as First Teachers program supporting Territory children and families in remote communities, and how will this benefit the Territory in the long term?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Stuart for the question. He had one of the first Families as First Teachers programs at Yuendumu—a very successful program. It is Children's Week this week and I acknowledge all the people who have worked hard to make it such a success. It is also World Teachers' Day on Friday, so it is a busy week for us all.

Our government knows that creating a strong and prosperous community requires investment in our children and families. Long-term economic development is best achieved when children and families are supported so our children—our future workers, our leaders, our entrepreneurs—grow up healthy and are engaged in learning from a very young age.

The Families as First Teachers program does that. The program provides quality early learning programs that engage families and strengthen children's early learning, and gives them the skills to participate and

succeed at school. The program provides local men and women with meaningful employment opportunities because strong community relationships, especially with families, are important to the program's success.

Sixty staff are employed across the FaFT sites. Of these, half are local Indigenous community members. Each FaFT team includes one family educator, which is the qualified teacher, and a family liaison officer, which is a local Indigenous person who provides their cultural expertise and local knowledge, strengthening families' engagement with the program.

As I mentioned earlier today, the parents who participate in meaningful employment not only improve their personal economic situation, they also demonstrate the values and habits of engaging in regular employment. It is great for young children to see their parents in the workforce every day.

This government will expand the Families as First Teachers program so that by the end of 2017 there will be 38 locations with a FaFT program in place. That increase will see more Indigenous and local people employed. It will also more teachers in those workplaces. That boosts those communities and engaging with locals.

This expansion increases the employment opportunities for local Indigenous people across the NT and helps to build the future workforce. I look forward to working with the Minister for Children to implement the Territory-wide early childhood strategy that engages with parents and wider community to ensure we are doing the best for the Territory's future.

### **Mountain Biking**

#### **Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE**

Earlier in the week you supported the sport and active recreation master plan or the Northern Territory. I commend you for that. My question today is about the master plan for mountain biking in the Northern Territory. Mountain biking is a sport and tourism industry that has enormous potential in Central Australia. We have possibly the best terrain and support facilities for mountain biking in Australia.

What is your commitment to the recommendations of this report and will your government support the growth of mountain biking in Central Australia.

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Spear, I thank the Member for Araluen for her question. I think my partner would kill me if I said anything than I absolutely support the growth of mountain biking in the Territory. I was telling people in Alice Springs last week that I dream of cowbells because of the constant playing of world cup rounds in my house. My spare room has been converted into a bike shed. Mountain biking is something I am quite familiar with

The mountain bike plan was a really positive step; it was a good plan. I commend the former government for that work. I know that a range of groups was consulted on that plan.

There is a lot of work to be done. I think we all acknowledge that work has to be done by a range of businesses to make sure they are prepared for the needs of those travellers—people who are packing up their bikes in bags and getting on planes, and who want places to clean them and securely store them, or to be able to hire bikes and do some of the amazing trails that exist already. There are some that are under construction at the moment.

The member for Stuart is also passionate about this as well and has already identified some ways in which we might expand mountain biking in Central Australia. We are committed to working on that and if you have any ideas, please see me. We have fantastic potential in the Territory with some of the most spectacular scenery of anywhere in the world. We have to be aware of the fact that people travel to get on the bike and see some amazing scenery. There are some brilliant trails around the Telegraph Station ...

**Ms Lawler:** It is an evolving sport.

**Ms MOSS:** It is an evolving sport and there are many different aspects to it such as downhill and road biking. There is a range of things we could be doing well in the Territory.

There was a master plan and there is much work that still needs to be done. But we are very lucky in the Territory because we have some fantastic community-based groups which are keen to have input into that and see it grow. They do not necessarily want to keep travelling outside the Territory to keep participating. But the potential for tourism and to encourage people to consider the Territory when they are thinking of where to bring their mates is brilliant.

Thank you for asking me a question today. When I go home Jake will be very happy that I have talked about mountain biking today.

### **Live Cattle Export Trade – Government Support**

#### **Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES**

Can you please explain how the government is supporting the important live cattle export trade and the jobs it creates within the Northern Territory?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Port Darwin. What a wonderful opportunity to talk about primary industries. I will take every question everybody wants to ask on primary industries. Do you think it is important? Of course we do. Our support for the live export trade and the jobs it creates in the Territory is also important.

I have a little information. I love statistics and people do not know that about me. There are 288 000 cattle were exported from the Darwin port last year, with almost 200 000 of those going to Indonesia. We are one of the biggest exporters of cattle in the world out of our port. Cattle from Queensland also come across to us.

Are we serious about the support? We can meet, talk and do all those sorts of things, but how are we supporting live export trade? We made a commitment of \$4.1m to upgrade the export yards. The previous government also knew the importance of that because it matched that commitment.

We know it is important. When both sides support a policy and a funding announcement, it is a good thing for the Territory. We need to keep this industry going.

I have been very busy in this space, as you can imagine, because I a very busy person. I met with the cattlemen board. I had the pleasure, with the minister for land resource management, Minister Moss, of meeting with the board and hearing of the great things it is doing and some of the issues we can address.

I have met with an exporter (inaudible) from Vietnam, who has just exported 50 buffalo to Vietnam, our biggest shipment to Vietnam to date.

I visited the boning yards in Alice Springs. Ben and Nicole Hayes of Undoolya Station in Alice Springs, thank you very much for your hospitality—going there and listening to what they are doing. It is truly inspirational.

I have met with NT Livestock Export Association a few times—continuously meeting and being available for them.

How many jobs does it bring? Madam Speaker, you probably know this. It is between 6000 and 7000 jobs in the industry—live export. This is from road train drivers to people checking your passport—customs people. That is why this government is supporting it, and we are proud to \$4.1m to it.

### **Chief Minister's Travel**

#### **Mrs FINOCCHIARO to TREASURER**

The Chief Minister put out a media release last night on his first overseas trip. It provided details of the travel costs for the Chief Minister and his chief of staff. These alone came to around \$37 000 and account for a small fraction of the actual cost of this trip. Will you provide the total number of public servants travelling on this trip, which departments they are from and their roles? What is the cost of travel for each of these public servants, and did the government fund the travel costs for anyone else on this mammoth trip.

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. Yes, what that trip cost will be on the public record. We made a very firm commitment to Territorians that when our ministers travel overseas they will see the full costs. In the last term of government we had some shockers, and it was often hard to get information out of the previous government about where on earth it had travelled.

Nobody will be able to wipe out of their memory the session at estimates where the former Chief Minister sat at the table—every year, without fail, every Chief Minister will be asked this very standard question: please provide information on all the overseas travel your ministers have taken and the costs associated with that travel as a breakdown, such as hotels, expenses and airfares.

The Chief Minister was very reluctant to provide that information to the Estimates Committee. At one point, when he realised he had the information in front of him, started reading it very slowly, line item by line item. It made you question why the government was not being accountable.

Member for Spillett, I do not have the information about the public servants and their associated costs, but we will take it on notice and get it to you. It is very important to make it clear that we have placed on the public record that we will provide the cost of any overseas travel. If a minister goes overseas, people will know the purpose of the trip, and we will consult locally to make sure when industry believes a minister should attend certain meetings overseas that they do—that they make the most of the trip.

We will make sure ministers go overseas in a strategic fashion when they travel. We heard some stories in the last term of government where one minister would roll into a city to meet with some people and then the next minister came in the following. It was not very well coordinated. We know going overseas is expensive, but it is important work. The Chief Minister is doing some important work there at the moment. We know there is a 68-business delegation going to China.

I am happy to provide that information to you. It is important that all overseas travel is on the record. We will do a much better job than the former government when it comes to transparency with overseas travel.

### **Water Advisory Committees**

#### **Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES**

Can you please inform the House of what role you see the water advisory committees playing in future water management and water allocation processes.

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim for the question. I think it is very topical this week given some of the discussions we are having. I also take this opportunity to wish you a happy birthday, Member for Fong Lim. Everybody wish him a happy birthday.

We believe that Water Advisory Committees are a crucial component of government's focus on transparency and accountability in decision making and they are central to our sustainable water use policy.

I have been really grateful to be able to meet with the acting chair for the Howard Water Advisory Committee and other members in talking about some of the water issues that have come up in parliament this week.

As the Territory grows we need to ensure that we are sustainably using our available and precious water resources. It is a finite resource. We all depend on it both in our everyday lives but also economically, socially and culturally. We need to ensure the ongoing health of our rivers and waterways and to ensure that Territory households, communities, businesses and industries can continue to access that water. That is really important.

These water advisory committees were left to languish under the former government. Since forming the Gunner Labor government we have approved the reestablishment of the Tindal/Mataranka/Daly Waters Water Advisory Committee and the Katherine Water Advisory Committee and more will follow. That is the really important part; this is really vital to the policy that we took to the election.

Sustainable water allocation is underpinned by sound knowledge and understanding of the resource. This is an area that we really need to invest in going forward. We need to understand the water resource and have evidence based policy when it comes to water use into the future.

We will ensure that communities and stakeholders are actively involved in advising on water management and allocations in a regional catchment, through our water advisory committees and through open and transparent water planning processes.

Water allocation planning is an important mechanism used to assist government and the community to determine water management and allocation decisions across the Northern Territory. Community consultation and engagement plays an important role in ensuring a balanced and well informed planning process.

I thank those water advisory committee members for their attendance at public meeting and part of the public discourse too. They are the primary vehicle for community engagement and involvement in defining water allocation rules and decisions within a plan area so really important to our Sustainable Water Use Policy. There are a range of other initiatives that we have in our Sustainable Water Use Policy that I look forward to informing the House as we continue along in implementing this policy.

I want to thank the water advisory committees for the work that they do and I look forward to continuing to engage with them on implementing this government's policies.

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

**ANSWER TO QUESTION  
Ti Tree Horticultural Area**

**Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources):** Madam Speaker, I just want to get back to the Member for Nelson with some more information around Ti Tree.

This is a lease, not a sale of the property. There is no set time limits for that lease. We can always take it back and do some research. But that is not the way the department is going. It is looking at doing on-farm research now with commercial crops and how we can do that and work with industry. All our research is occurring at the Arid Zone Research Institute.

I am chasing up the last time grapes were grown there, but I think it was a few years ago.