

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon Roger Steele

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of a former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon Roger Steele. Welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of two Year 5/6 classes from Bees Creek Primary School, an exceptionally good school, accompanied by their teachers, Gayle Purdue, Linda Brodie and Miss Sarah. I understand there is an exceptionally good student here, Molly Ratahi. I will be watching you, Molly, and I will report back to your mother.

Members: Hear, hear!

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Namatjira

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I move that the member for Namatjira be granted leave of absence this week on account of bereavement.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER
Permission to Film Budget Speech

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that, pursuant to sessional orders, as is normal practice each year, I have given permission to the media outlets and the Chief Minister's photographer to take video and still photographs of the Treasurer's delivery of the budget speech.

MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR
Messages No 33 and 34

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message No 33 from His Honour the Administrator, notifying assent to three bills. The message is dated 17 May 2016.

I have also received Message No 34 from His Honour the Administrator, recommending to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act that authorises an amount to be paid from the Central Holding Authority for the purposes of the agencies specified in the bill for the year ending 30 June 2017. The message is dated 18 May 2016.

REORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 59, I move that the routine of business this day proceed with the Treasurer's presentation of the Appropriation Bill in accordance with the provisions of Standing Orders 170 and 171, followed by a suspension of the Assembly at 11 am or at the completion of his address, and resuming at 2 pm, commencing with Notices, Petitions, Responses to Petitions, Questions and the formal routine of business outlined in Standing Order 60 to allow for government members to speak on the Appropriation Bill and other bills during Government Business.

I further move that tomorrow, 25 May 2016, the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply commence at 10 am, followed by Government Business, Notices and the formal routine of business after that.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, in order to not interrupt the Treasurer presenting the budget, I take the opportunity to advise of the imminent presence in the gallery of two Year 5/6 classes from Bees Creek Primary School, accompanied by their teachers, Dixie Blake, Rebecca McSkimming and Mrs Stanwix. On behalf of honourable members, they will be extended a warm welcome to Parliament House.

APPROPRIATION (2016-2017) BILL
(Serial 170)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

I table the 2016-17 Appropriation Bill and related papers.

This budget sets out a clear choice for every Territorian in the upcoming August election. It is a clear choice of long-term jobs and economic stability over the Labor Party's plan to destroy entire industries.

This budget sets a clear choice of continuing to grow a prosperous, robust and diversified economy, over Labor's plan, which, again, racks up the debt and attacks the very heartland of our Territory.

This budget protects our way of life and focuses on growing the private sector, utilising the

strengths of our workforce to adapt to new industries, and carries on with the task of providing the best education, health and safety for our community.

Those opposite have made the choice to destroy our agricultural and horticultural industries. They have clearly made a choice to stop the onshore gas sector and development in the construction and building industries.

Basically, the Labor party wants us to go back to where we were four years ago, when I delivered my first budget: massive debt and deficits; unaffordable housing; cost-of-living increases; and out-of-control crime.

This government has always had a plan to cut the debt, stop the Labor waste, diversify the economy and grow the private sector. It delivers improvements in health, education and community services. This budget continues this plan, and it is fully funded and fully costed.

As reported last year, the Territory has turned the Labor debt corner. In its first term the Giles government has reduced projected debt levels and achieved surpluses three years ahead of our target for the fiscal balance and the general government operating balance.

However, recent reductions in revenue are estimated at more than \$1bn over the budget cycle. This is made up of a reduced GST share, totalling \$750m, and lower estimates of stamp duties and mining royalties. These reductions will delay the achievement of ongoing surpluses in the short term.

It would be irresponsible for us to continue to target a budget surplus in 2017-18 at the expense of protecting jobs and maintaining investment in critical areas of the economy. Rather, we will continue to target investment where there is greatest need and ensure that services are maintained.

I have been cautioning against national and international headwinds for many months. Now, more than ever, we have to continue to be responsible with our spending and be focused on achieving positive outcomes for our community from every dollar we spend. With this in mind, the government has taken the responsible decision to defer its target to return to surplus. The 2016-17 fiscal deficit is now \$794m, and deficits are forecast to reduce over the forward estimates before returning to a surplus of \$12m in 2019-20.

In case the opposition does not get it, we are managing the budget and the economy like any prudent person. It is because we tackled the Labor waste and made the hard decisions when

we did that government now has the ability to modify its spending to suit the times. Imagine for a minute how different things would be now if Labor had its way and we had to deal with a \$5.5bn debt mountain. By comparison we have slashed net debt to less than \$2bn in 2015-16, with a projected net debt of \$3.1bn by 2019-20. This represents savings of \$130m in interest payments alone. In addition, Labor's net debt to revenue ratio was predicted to be 98% this year. Instead, due to our willingness to make tough decisions, it now sits at just 29%.

Last year the Territory economy grew by an impressive 10.5%, the highest rate of growth since 1998-99. Underpinning this growth is business investment, which grew by 18.7% in 2014-15, the fourth consecutive year of strong growth. The Territory government will be contributing to investment in 2016-17 with a near record \$1.7bn infrastructure spend.

While growth is expected to moderate in 2015-16, it is forecast to return to long-term trend growth rates from 2018-19. Due to government policy initiatives, the size of the Territory economy is now substantially greater than when we took office and is underpinned by one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation.

When we came to government the books were a mess, thanks to a Labor government that did not care about the Territory's future. The Giles government made the hard decisions. We reformed the Power and Water Corporation to create a more efficient utilities marketplace. We saved TIO from being overtaken by global competitors. We leased the Port of Darwin to ensure private sector funds were used for its expansion, and we secured our place on China's Maritime Silk Road trade route. We have significantly cut red tape while focusing government spending on invigorating local business. The opposition did nothing but get in the way and claim doom and gloom about all these reforms.

I now turn to the real benefits of these important reforms. The Port of Darwin generated proceeds of \$506m. Budget 2016-17 reinvests \$431m of the proceeds into a range of projects designed to stimulate investment and diversify the Territory economy, with the remaining \$75m used to pay off Labor's debt burden.

Today I announce a new Home Improvement Scheme. This voucher scheme will see \$20m invested from the port lease proceeds into Territory small businesses and tradies. The Home Improvement Scheme will allow Territory home owner-occupiers to apply for up to \$2000 to undertake repairs and maintenance on their homes by registered Territory small businesses

and tradies. This voucher must be matched on a 50:50 co-contribution bases.

Make no mistake, this initiative is directly aimed at the tradies in our community and is another example of the Giles government's efforts to reduce the cost of living for Territory families. The Home Improvement Scheme will improve the value of homes and is expected to inject \$67m into the Territory economy. The scheme will be available from 1 July 2016 until 30 June 2017, with small businesses able to start registering from today. Unlike Labor's reckless pink batts fiasco, there will be appropriate checks and balances for this scheme.

The port proceeds have also paid for the \$100m Boosting our Economy package. This package has provided a welcome pick-up for small businesses and includes money for upgrades and repairs and maintenance to schools, community and sporting facilities, disability service providers and tourism infrastructure.

A major part of the government's diversification plan has been the implementation of the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund. As the House is aware, the government seeded this innovation fund with \$200m from the TIO sale proceeds. Budget 2016-17 strategically invests a further \$100m from the port lease into the fund. This investment takes the total Territory contribution to \$300m. This government investment will be the cornerstone in targeting an additional \$1.2bn from external investors. This \$1.5bn investment fund should generate more than \$4.5bn in private sector infrastructure investment.

The remaining projects funded by the port proceeds are:

- up to \$100m for a shiplift facility at East Arm
- a \$50m contribution towards expansion of the Owen Springs Power Stations and upgrades to the Tennant Creek Power Station
- \$20m to build skywalk adventure experiences in Territory parks
- \$5m to the Menzies School of Health Research
- \$32.5m for the Arnhem Link and Maryvale Roads
- \$2m to establish a vapour heat treatment plant for the mango industry
- \$0.5m for a bush tucker industry study in Alice Springs

- \$1m for planning a study for Aboriginal cultural centres.

As a result of this targeted spending, the Turnbull government has approved our assets recycling program, which will see an additional \$40m being directly invested into infrastructure projects.

Other programs in Budget 2016-17 that directly support our local businesses and diversify our economy through industry development include:

- a Buy Local Plan, which includes a range of procurement forms designed to assist local businesses in earning a greater percentage of government spending
- \$400 000 to continue the business engagement strategy and promote significant events in the Territory's business calendar
- \$1.2m additional funding to support research farms and develop a strategic plan for the future operation of these farms
- \$4.9m over two years to progress the Marine Industry Park, Katherine Business Park and industry development projects on the Tiwi Islands
- \$5.9m to continue the Creating Opportunities for Resource Exploration initiative designed to assess the Territory's shoal gas potential and stimulate mineral resource exploration.

Fundamental to growing our economy and increasing employment opportunities is having the right road and transport infrastructure. As part of our \$1.7bn infrastructure spend, a hefty \$554m is being invested into road projects across the Territory.

In addition to the reinvestment of the port lease proceeds for road infrastructure announced earlier, Budget 2016-17 also provides for the following major road projects to help connect Territorians:

- \$76m to repair and maintain the Territory's road network
- \$62m to continue priority as part of the regional roads productivity package
- \$34.5m for national road upgrades to Little Horse and Big Horse creeks on the Victoria highway
- \$29m to continue to upgrade and seal Outback Way roads

- \$27m for the continuation of sealing the road to Port Melville
- \$57m to continue upgrades to Palmerston roads
- \$10m, including \$5m from the City of Darwin, towards stage one of the Barneson Boulevard link.

Tourism lies at the heart of the Territory. The government has been focused on rebuilding our tourism infrastructure and visitor numbers as a major part of our plan to secure jobs for our future.

Building on our investment in new regional roads, Budget 2016-17 provides support for local tourism projects and promotes the Territory as a holiday destination, with \$29m for marketing, including \$500 000 to continue the Million Dollar Fish campaign for a further year; \$4.76m for park upgrades across the Territory; \$5m for a tourism infrastructure grants program; and \$3.97m for the development of the Alcoota Fossil Beds in Central Australia.

Budget 2016-17 also invests in motor sports events and infrastructure, including \$9m for upgrades at the Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex and \$2m for motor sport facilities across the Territory. There is also \$1.33m in the budget to develop and maintain mountain bike trails across the Territory.

Unlike members opposite with their heads-in-the-sand approach to onshore gas development, the Giles government is committed to supporting the resource sector. This is evidenced through the Territory's enhanced Petroleum Regulations that aim to support the development of best-practice environmental regulations for onshore gas development.

The Giles government has also facilitated the construction of a pipeline to connect the Territory with the east coast gas network. The pipeline secures an important energy corridor through some of the most remote regions in Australia and brings with it future jobs and downstream opportunities in the oil and gas sector. This budget allocates \$0.5m towards a research study into substituting imported diesel fuel with domestic production of synthetic diesel from natural gas.

Resource investment remains a critical driver of economic development in the Territory, with mining comprising 11.6% of the Territory's economy in 2014-15.

The government continues to tackle cost-of-living head on. In last year's budget we directly attacked the cost of homes and rent. We released large tracts of land and focused the First Home

Owner Grant to new homes. This has made housing more affordable and has directed government funds to local builders. A further initiative to assist first home owners recognises that in some areas of the Territory it may not always be possible to purchase a new home. Accordingly, from today until 30 June 2017, we are providing first home owners with a stamp duty discount on the purchase of an established home. The discount of 50% of the stamp duty otherwise payable will be available up to a maximum concession of \$10 000. This will have a positive effect in the marketplace and directly supports first home buyers.

In addition, the government continues to support Territorians through a 5% reduction in household electricity tariffs from 1 January this year; increasing competition and transparency in the retail fuel market; and \$20m for Back to School vouchers, sport vouchers and the early childhood services subsidy.

As a result of these initiatives, the March 2016 Consumer Price Index declined by 0.3%, and in December last year NATSEM reported the Territory had the lowest cost of living in the nation.

Budget 2016-17 provides \$1.5bn towards health-related services in the Territory. The fiscal rigor applied by the Giles government over the last four years has led to efficiencies which, in turn, have enabled us to expand existing services and introduce new services. This can be seen in our innovative approaches to healthcare delivery.

For example, the government is well aware of the challenges facing locals travelling interstate for important medical procedures. The government has budgeted for a solution to this problem by providing \$8.3m to establish new emergency and elective cardiothoracic and neurosurgical services in Darwin. As well as the initial surgical intervention, the services will also address rehabilitation. This means nearly 600 patients a year will be able to receive treatment close to home and avoid the significant clinical risk of travelling interstate. For these patients and their families this initiative will provide great relief.

As a result of tackling Labor's wasteful spending, today I can announce an Australian first in health reform. Our \$185.9m Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program will be the largest ICT reform in the Territory's history. This investment over five years includes the introduction of real-time, individual electronic health records and will result in the provision of end-to-end clinical information to all health providers at the point of care.

This means the Northern Territory will be the only place in the country where, for example, a patient from a remote area could visit a private GP in

Darwin and have instant access to their medical records. This will provide more comprehensive information for the GP, which will result in better outcomes for the patient.

Construction of the Palmerston Regional Hospital is on track to deliver hospital care closer to home for Palmerston and surrounding communities from mid-2018. Budget 2016-17 increases the government's support for the Palmerston Regional Hospital with an additional \$20m allocated towards the bill cost, a total of \$170m. The additional investment recognises the increased scope of the hospital to better manage and meet the needs of the local community.

An additional \$36m is also provided for furniture, fittings, equipment, ICT hardware and hospital-specific systems to support the commissioning of the hospital.

This budget commits \$210m to new and upgraded health facilities to continue to provide quality health services for all Territorians, which, in addition to Palmerston Regional Hospital, includes \$16.2m to continue upgrades at Alice Springs Hospital; \$17.7m to continue the refurbishment of outpatients, paediatrics and public areas at Royal Darwin Hospital; and \$4.9m for upgrades to fire safety systems at Gove District Hospital.

Budget 2016-17 also supports delivery of improved ambulance services in the Territory through a \$149m agreement with St John Ambulance. This will see around 55 additional staff, new ambulance and station vehicles and expanded ambulance services to meet the growing demand in Darwin and Palmerston. What a change from the previous Labor mob who threatened to close St John down.

Budget 2016-17 provides \$1.07bn for education and training to help all students achieve better results and better employment pathways. We are investing \$164m in education infrastructure.

The Giles government has made the strategic decision to put all future royalties from onshore gas into education through the Knowledge Territory initiative. The opposition is dead against onshore gas and is putting the future education of our children at risk. This policy ensures the fruits of the Territory's abundant oil and gas resources will be reinvested directly into our children's future. This will grow our economy through access to further education, training, research and innovation, and provide real career pathways and choices for Territorians.

The Knowledge Territory initiative includes \$1m for the voucher program that will assist eligible apprentices and trainees with the cost of work wear and other necessities in their first year;

\$600 000 for higher education scholarships; and \$420 000 for a cadetship program to support paid work experience with private sector employers for students during vacation breaks.

The Knowledge Territory study voucher, higher education scholarships and cadetship programs will be expanded as royalties from onshore gas developments grow.

Today I can further announce that as part of Knowledge Territory \$1m will be used to establish, for the first time, the independent Office of the Chief Scientist.

The Chief Scientist's office will provide high-level advice on matters relating to science and innovation in a Territory context.

Budget 2016-17 provides extensive education structure programs, including:

- \$21.2m to support the construction of a Catholic primary school in Zuccoli
- \$10m to construct a new science centre at Taminmin with eight laboratories and additional learning spaces
- \$4.5m to replace fire-damaged buildings at Angurugu School
- \$6.1m for primary schools across the Territory
- \$4.5m for a multipurpose hall and cyclone shelter at Ramingining School
- \$44.7m for repairs and maintenance and minor new works across all Territory schools.

Budget 2016-17 also provides \$3.3m to run the new Nhulunbuy regional boarding facility and the Palmerston special school.

Budget 2016-17 includes \$19m for the *Great Start Great Future* strategic plan. The strategy aims to improve services and outcomes for Territory children from birth to eight years of age, and the initiatives include \$11.1m to expand the Families as First Teachers program and \$2.2m to operate six child and family centres.

Budget 2106-17 provides \$43.7m, which includes Turnbull government money, to improve Indigenous student outcomes as part of our Indigenous Education Strategy.

Budget 2106-17 also invests \$100m for training and employment opportunities to develop a capable workforce that meets the Territory's current and future needs.

Our government makes no apology for our tough on crime approach, and Budget 2016-17 delivers \$768m to reduce crime, support our police and emergency services, strengthen law and order, and protect vulnerable Territorians.

The Giles government understands that investing in police infrastructure and equipment helps create a safer community. This investment includes \$30.3m from the Turnbull government to continue constructing the Wadeye police station and to upgrade police facilities at Alyangula and Angurugu; \$2.6m for the roll-out of new body-worn video and facial recognition systems for frontline police across the Northern Territory; and \$200 000 for a review into streamlining law enforcement functions and capabilities.

This budget also supports increased demand in the Territory's justice system, including \$4.5m to support the operations of the Darwin and Alice Springs Correctional Centres; \$4.2m to continue and expand the electronic monitoring program; \$2.5m to meet demand growth at Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre; and \$1.8m for court and legal aid support services.

Budget 2016-17 provides further funding to protect vulnerable Territorians with \$10m for children in out-of-home care; \$100 000 to upgrade the Alice Springs Women's Shelter; and almost \$7m to continue initiatives as part of the Domestic and Family Violence Reduction Strategy.

In this budget the Giles government delivers substantial new investment in social housing through the Territory's housing strategy. The strategy supports the revitalisation of social housing in urban centres with \$140m over five years, which will see the construction of about 270 dwellings.

Budget 2016-17 demonstrates the government's commitment to Indigenous Territorians, with a direct investment of \$1.2bn. Creating employment opportunities for Indigenous Territorians is critical to building self-esteem and confidence. It is also critical in building future economic prosperity in our remote communities. Key highlights in Budget 2016-17 to foster this goal include:

- \$400 000 for crocodile farming business enterprises in East Arnhem
- \$760 000 to continue the regional bus program and trial new passenger services in regional and remote areas
- \$7.2m to continue the Community Champions program
- \$1m to support air services between Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs

- \$2m to support Indigenous business
- \$5.5m to continue the expansion of telecommunication services and provide Internet access
- \$5.25m over two years for bakeries in remote communities. This initiative is as a result of the strong relationship we have with federal Indigenous Affairs minister, Senator Nigel Scullion.

The provision of housing and essential services in the bush is paramount. The Giles government recognises this and \$1m is being provided to establish a Northern Territory Remote Housing Development Authority. This authority will give local people more say on the provision of housing and essential services in their communities. It will empower communities to focus on better local engagement, management and delivery strategies.

Budget 2016-17 delivers crucial investment in housing and essential services in remote areas with \$211m – again, through the efforts of Senator Scullion – to construct new and upgrade existing housing; \$30.3m for housing and essential services in Arlparra, Elliott and Kalkarindji; and \$36.2m over two years to upgrade power, water and sewerage services.

This budget provides for Indigenous people living in homelands, with \$21.3m for the Homelands Program to provide housing and maintenance services, and \$5.35m to continue the Homelands Extra Allowance program. This budget continues the essential rectification work in remote communities affected by cyclones Lam and Nathan.

Territorians love their sport. Budget 2016-17 invests heavily in sport and recreational infrastructure, including:

- \$16m towards the Marrara tennis centre
- \$6.25m to redevelop netball facilities in Alice Springs
- a \$5m contribution to develop the Parap pool
- \$4m for sports infrastructure grants
- \$1m to support local Aussie Rules clubs and competitions
- \$10.2m in grants to other sporting and recreational organisations.

Budget 2016-17 supports arts, culture and events funding, including \$2.8m for show societies across the Territory; \$1.5m for the Territory Remembers

program for the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin; \$1m for arts grants; and \$800 000 to support the NT screen industry.

Territorians love exploring the great outdoors and enjoying the natural wonders the Territory has to offer. Budget 2016-17 continues to deliver for recreational fishers with \$1m towards upgrades of the Corroboree Billabong access road, \$15m over two years for Gunn Point Road upgrades and \$250 000 for ongoing upgrades and maintenance of Point Stuart Road.

In conclusion, in the political arena we find ourselves in today there is a raging battle between style and substance. The Labor opposition is focused on personalities and platitudes. Every effort is made to smear government. Their decadent spending promises and their plans to wipe out entire industries will set the Territory on a path to ruin. For them it is only about populism.

On the other hand, Chief Minister Adam Giles and the Country Liberals team have made hard yards. We have tackled tough issues and copped bruises on the way. It has not been easy, but we have maintained a strong and clear course for a more sustainable Territory with long-term secure jobs.

In my final budget I have demonstrated that we are well progressed with our clear and concise plan to diversify the economy, grow the private sector and lower the cost of living. I have demonstrated that because of our fiscal discipline we now have a clear choice for enhanced health and education services in a safer and more prosperous community.

This August, Territorians face an important decision. It is a clear choice of a robust and sustainable economy or one dominated by debt and destruction.

Madam Speaker, I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate suspended.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Appointments to Public Accounts Committee

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise the Assembly that pursuant to resolution of 16 September 2015 I have received nominations appointing the members for Katherine and Greatorex as members of the Public Accounts Committee.

The Assembly suspended.

PETITION

Petition No 60 – Hospice for Central Australia

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 1356 petitioners praying that a hospice be built for the people of Central Australia. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory We the undersigned respectfully showeth the need for a purpose built hospice for the people of Central Australia.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that a purpose built hospice for the people of Central Australia to access quality services for the dying be built in Alice Springs. Darwin has a world-class hospice; we need a centre of excellence in palliative care in Central Australia, not a multipurpose ward.

APPROPRIATION (2016-2017) BILL (Serial 170)

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr STYLES (Business): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague, the Treasurer, on delivering Budget 2016-17. I wish to speak about how the Northern Territory business community will benefit from it, which I just answered a question about in Question Time.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and we are ensuring we support them to create an environment that is good for business, as opposed to the other side's thinking, which is that it will be bad for business.

The Home Improvement Scheme, announced as part of Budget 2016-17, is a \$20m investment in small businesses in the building, construction and home maintenance sectors. The initiative will see Territory home owner-occupiers receive vouchers of up to \$2000 to go towards improvements on their home and property, on the condition those works are undertaken using local Territory small businesses and that the homeowner contributes at least the same amount.

We have stepped in to provide support in a slow time for our local construction and renovation industry. The Home Improvement Scheme is a double boost, also providing a helping hand for Territory homeowners to complete the jobs they

have been meaning to do around the home. The scheme will see an increase in small-scale residential work over the next 12 months.

It is not just about tradies and homeowners; it is about suppliers and retailers who will benefit from the purchase of supplies for these jobs in the renovation and maintenance sectors.

The bigger picture approach is part of the Northern Territory government's commitment to Territory small businesses and is why the \$2000 voucher can only be used with Northern Territory enterprises. Construction activities are expected to pick up in the longer term, but in the meantime businesses need to keep the work flowing. This scheme is a simple way to make a big difference for our building and construction small businesses and tradies.

The new Home Improvement Scheme complements the commitments we have made to local businesses through our Buy Local Plan. Under the Buy Local Plan introduced in January 2016, local businesses have greater opportunities to tender for and win government work. We have taken a further step in implementing this plan, applying a 30% weighting for local benefit for Department of Infrastructure tenders, including tenders in the Boosting our Economy stimulus package announced in March this year.

The Boosting our Economy package represents an immediate stimulus to small and medium businesses in the local construction sector with a \$100m package of works including \$68.5m for education projects, \$15m for sport and recreation projects and \$5m for tourism projects. Implementation of the Buy Local Plan provides Northern Territory enterprises with the best opportunity to participate in a range of infrastructure projects announced in Budget 2016-17.

There is \$100m for the shiplift facility; \$50m for the expansion of the Owen Springs Power Station and upgrades to the Tennant Creek Power Station; \$20m for a skywalk experience in national parks; \$16m over two years for the Arnhem Link Road; and \$16.5m over two years for the Maryvale Road.

Our investment goes beyond stimulus and infrastructure investment. We are investing in the knowledge and skills that the Territory needs to build our future workforce. Knowledge Territory initiatives support science and innovation, higher education, and vocational education and training, including apprenticeships and traineeships. These initiatives will position and build the Northern Territory as the knowledge Territory. They will be funded by reprioritising existing funding and through the establishment of an

education future fund, using royalties earned through onshore gas production.

The fund will ensure every Territorian has access to education and training that supports opportunities for a prosperous future. Other Knowledge Territory initiatives include monetary support for students and trainees, as well as employers engaging in training. These include a study voucher program, employer voucher support scheme, higher education scholarships and a new cadetship program helping young workers get experience in the private sector, and supporting businesses to provide that opportunity.

For example, from 2019-20 the Knowledge Territory study voucher program will see a \$500 voucher provided to students from 1 January each year during their study. The voucher can be used towards student administration or tuition fees, resources, training for tickets or licences, fees to obtain licences, and other expenses. The value of the voucher will be increased as onshore gas royalties flow.

Additionally, the higher education scholarship program will be continued as part of Knowledge Territory during 2016-17.

From 2020 the 40 higher education scholarships will be expanded and will increase the annual scholarship payments for students from \$5000 to \$10 000 for the duration of the degree. Twenty additional scholarships will be established for students from a low socioeconomic background, for example, students living in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory, students experiencing financial hardship and those in receipt of youth allowance. Students will be required to be Northern Territory residents studying in the Northern Territory at Charles Darwin University or the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Knowledge Territory will also introduce a new higher education cadetship program from 2016-17. This will allow students to undertake paid work experience with Northern Territory private sector employers during vacation breaks. Initially this program will be for students studying in priority areas as identified in the Northern Territory Skilled Occupation Priority List. It will see the NT government subsidising student wages for up to 12 weeks per calendar year, paying salary costs to the employer, excluding any oncosts. A total of 10 places per year will be offered. The number of cadetships will increase as royalties increase.

I move to the Department of Business's initiatives. These new initiatives complement the ongoing work already in place to support businesses in the Northern Territory to continue through the 2016-17

budget. Two of these are headline programs of business events offered by the Department of Business. Our recent October Business Month was the most successful yet, breaking attendance records with more than 9300 attending a total of 183 events, bringing a stellar line up of inspirational speakers and events to the Territory business audience.

This year's inaugural Open Territory was a resounding success, with 132 events delivered to date and more than 38 000 people taking advantage of the program put together by the Department of Business. I add sincere congratulations to them and the Chamber of Commerce for working together to make that happen.

The great news in this budget is that, based on the enormous uptake of this year's event, we have announced funding of \$180 000 to hold this event again in 2017. My Department of Business continues to support businesses around the Territory through a network of Territory Business Centres, one-stop shops in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, and pop-up services on the Tiwi Islands and in Borroloola and Maningrida.

These centres are complemented by a network of business development officers, whose sole job is to support businesses in their daily challenges and opportunities. I congratulate those 24 business development officers on the successes they are achieving day-in and day-out.

Business people can access them directly one on one. They can come to a place of business, engage personally with that enterprise and, based on the individual opportunities and balances facing that business, they will tailor support for them.

This team of business development officers has more than doubled in the past three years. They are active across all regions of the Territory from bases in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy. These officers provide access to a range of grants and assistance to start.run.grow, which includes the Business Growth program. The program offers financial assistance to engage suitably qualified consultants to deliver business improvement strategies.

As at 31 March 2016, 135 businesses have received \$803 818 in grant funding from the Business Growth program, and a further 120 businesses are committed to receive support valued at \$718 233.

Additionally, as at 31 March 2016, 30 businesses have received \$337 711 in grant funding under the

Smarter Business Solutions program, and 19 businesses are to receive \$203 328 in support of implementing efficiency improvements.

I am very proud of red tape reduction. Since releasing the Red Tape Reduction Strategy, developed by the Red Tape Abolition Squad in the Department of Business, we have been reducing paperwork and compliance costs by extending licence terms, moving transactions online and removing unnecessary red tape.

Across government, since September 2012 over 270 red tape initiatives have been completed or are under way.

Aboriginal business employment initiatives – the NT government, through the Department of Business, also provides vital assistance for Aboriginal Territorians through the Business in the Bush, Indigenous Business Development and Community Champions programs.

Additionally, more than 150 Aboriginal Territorians will be supported into jobs, thanks to more than \$860 000 funding through the Aboriginal employment initiatives, awarded to Territory organisations last month for programs to increase Aboriginal workforce participation.

We have also implemented additional incentives for employers who engage Aboriginal workers while continuing to upskill Aboriginal Territorians through 52 training programs across 23 communities up until April this year alone.

Budget 2016-17 is supporting more Aboriginal Territorians into jobs through a \$1.35m budget commitment over four years to deliver a variety of new initiatives designed to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians to gain employment within the public service. Since launching the NT public service Indigenous Employment and Career Development Strategy 2015-2020 in April last year, Aboriginal employment within the Northern Territory public service had increased from 8.9% to 9.7% as at March 2016.

The key new initiatives include the design, development and delivery of an all-of-government, cross-cultural awareness and competency program; an Indigenous employee mentoring program; training in managing performance conversations for managers and supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; and hosting an annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff forum aimed at enhancing Indigenous recruitment and retention strategies and professional development.

Funding these key new programs through Budget 2016-17 will work towards achieving our 16%

global target of Aboriginal employment and 10% participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in senior and executive roles.

In relation to the public service ICT area, Budget 2016-17 includes \$5.9m allocated over three years to replace the Northern Territory government's existing identity and access system, or ePASS, used by over 20 000 users, as well as \$1.4m to develop a whole-of-government system for grants management, with ongoing commitment of \$550 000 to support its operation across Northern Territory government agencies.

The Northern Territory government issues a total of around \$1bn in grants each year. This will create a single digital channel for grant applicants to deal with government and will significantly streamline the entering and processing of grants. It will be developed within the Territory using local ICT resources, and will take around two years to deliver.

The ICT health upgrade – Budget 2016-17 reinforces the Country Liberal government's commitment to families and health. This government's massive investment in the Royal Darwin Hospital and the Palmerston Regional Hospital are well documented. Territorians needing heart surgery will now no longer need to have to fly interstate. We will spend \$8.3m for cardiothoracic and neurosurgical services.

We are investing in innovation which will benefit all Territorians. The Country Liberal government will implement an Australian first in health initiatives with the allocation of \$186m over five years to further bolster the Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program and ensure high-quality care for Territorians.

In an Australian first the Northern Territory will lead the nation by introducing a Territory-wide, single integrated client-centric electronic health record system. This means that for the first time clinicians will be able to electronically access patient records from any public healthcare facility in the Northern Territory. It is a significant investment in our public health system and will improve efficiency, eliminate outdated manual systems of patient support and ultimately improve health outcomes. The program will support and transform our public healthcare network, meaning clinicians will no longer need to reassess a patient's history each time they visit a Territory public health service. Immediate access to patient records will improve the delivery of healthcare for Territorians through reduced readmissions, reduced department waiting times and improved patient safety.

I now turn my attention to the Seniors portfolio. In addition to the health sector, the Country Liberal

government is working hard to ensure a strong society and confident culture, and our seniors play a major role in forging a strong community. The Country Liberal government has the most generous pensioner concession scheme in Australia.

After much consultation with our older Territorians and seniors organisations and advocacy groups we have finalised our senior participation framework, which lays the foundation for future policies and initiatives to support the Northern Territory's ageing population. This includes initiatives such as identifying and removing legislation that discriminates on the basis of age, investigating incentives for businesses to retain and hire older workers and work collaboratively to provide greater education and training opportunities for seniors.

All Territorians have a role in creating an age-friendly community and this new plan is essential to support the Northern Territory's plan for a more socially inclusive society. We want our senior Territorians to be able to enjoy the golden years of their lives in the Territory, all the while enhancing the fabric of our society through meaningful participation in areas such as work, training, education and lifestyle activities.

I now turn members' attention to the review of retirement accommodation in the Northern Territory. By motion on 16 September 2015, parliament resolved to investigate the need for residential retirement facilities throughout the Territory. Accordingly, the Department of Housing appointed KPMG to undertake this investigation. KPMG provided a report entitled Review of Retirement Accommodation in the Northern Territory to the Department of Housing in April 2016.

Housing and the cost of living are of significant concern to many Territorians. Older people are often constrained by housing alternatives within their chosen community. The report provided by KPMG identified current supply and future needs of accommodation and aged care provisions for senior Territorians. Barriers identified include limited land availability, slow property markets, affordability and limited availability of aged and healthcare services in regional and remote communities. The report identified the following issues and barriers to increasing the supply and effectiveness of retirement accommodation solutions: limited accessibility to senior-appropriate housing; limited affordability for seniors for housing appropriate to their needs; and limited effectiveness of aged and healthcare services to allow for support for independent living in home communities.

The report identified four potential levers that the Northern Territory government can employ to close identified gaps and deliver improved outcomes for seniors across the Territory by attracting commercial development and strengthening local providers and community capability.

The first alternate delivery model is for seniors' public housing. The second is to incentivise new supply in targeted locations. The third is to incentivise supported living solutions. The fourth is to incentivise development of self-sustaining community hubs.

Stakeholders who were consulted in the formation of this report expressed concerns regarding the cost of accommodation, limited availability of land and resources, and difficulty in the provision of aged-care services due to geographical distance, resources and cost. This report provides a solid foundation for the government to continue exploring innovation options for the provision of retirement accommodation and aged care in the Territory as our population ages.

I table a copy of that report, which will be distributed to all members of this House.

In relation to the multicultural framework, the Country Liberal government is a proud supporter of the multicultural community and I am proud to be the minister responsible for that portfolio.

I was at the Timorese Independence Day celebrations on Saturday, where the government announced \$500 000 to upgrade the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club facilities.

Helping our multicultural community access government funding is and will continue to be a priority for me. That group of people have waited years, after lobbying both sides of government for support so they can be self-sustaining. It is empowering our multicultural community to be self-sufficient so it can earn an income from the premises it has worked hard to build over the years through sweat, tears and government grants. This was the final step for that club. It can now hire the venue out and earn an income, which will create less reliance on taxpayer dollars, and taxpayer dollars can go to other, new multicultural community groups, which are ever increasing in our community.

I have hosted a number of community funding information nights to provide guidance on how to access important funding. We are also in the final stages of approving a new multicultural participation framework after many months of consultation with the community.

Our long history of cultural and linguistic diversity has enriched our society economically, socially and culturally. Our plan will shape future policy to ensure our existing and growing migrant community is supported to participate in meaningful society activities.

In conclusion, this is great news for the Territory. Budget 2016-17 is a good news budget for Territorians. It is good news for Territory small businesses and tradies. It is good news for university students, trainees, primary and high school students, first home buyers, and Territory residents who are looking to improve their properties. It is good news for patients and health professionals. This is a budget of good news for the Territory.

Territorians have a very clear choice: responsible economic management by a Country Liberal government committed to stimulating activity and generating jobs, opportunities and a prosperous future, or Territory Labor, which has no plan, no idea, and is committed only to driving away investment and stifling prosperity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am excited about what this budget holds for Territory small- to medium-sized enterprises. Healthy Territory businesses are good for the entire community and all Territorians. I look forward to seeing these budget measures rolled out over the next year and the years to come.

I commend the budget to the House.

Mr CHANDLER (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support Budget 2016-17. This is the fourth budget handed down since the Country Liberal government came to power in 2012. I commend the Treasurer for a responsible budget. This government has worked hard over the past three-and-a-half years to fix the massive Labor debt by being smarter and more efficient with government spending.

It is clear this government has an economic plan for Territorians. This budget is about the community, jobs and growth.

Quality education is the key to ensure the best possible future for all Territorians. The Country Liberal government is committed to providing a strong education system which will set young Territorians up for a future of productivity, economic contribution and participation in a diversified workforce. The Country Liberal government recognises that a well-performing education system helps the government and non-government sectors, and will have the greatest positive impact on the prosperity and economic growth of the Northern Territory. We are

committed to preparing young Territorians to live in, work in and contribute to the Northern Territory.

I take this opportunity to thank the teachers, principals, support staff, parents, school councils and school boards across the Northern Territory for their outstanding efforts and commitment to improving the future for Northern Territory children.

This year I am proud to announce that this is the Northern Territory's largest ever education budget. Budget 2016-17 focuses on improving learning outcomes for young Territorians through the implementation of evidence-based practices, strategic reform and high-quality facilities. I reiterate that because it is not always about the dollar quantum.

We are focusing on what we know works. This budget will provide \$1.08bn to be invested in education, including \$164.1m for improving infrastructure across government and non-government schools. This education budget includes \$120m more than was allocated under the final education budget of the previous Labor government. This level of funding demonstrates the Country Liberal government's unwavering commitment to Northern Territory schools. The education budget for 2016-17 is \$970.2m, including repairs and maintenance, and Zuccoli. The overall increase includes the Department of Education's operating budget of \$77.4m. The increase across government school outputs is \$34.2m, and \$41.4m for non-government schools, including the Catholic primary school on a shared site in Zuccoli.

The Country Liberal government is committed to implementing evidence-based reform. We have spent this term of government identifying gaps and putting in place high-yield strategies that work and can be measured to ensure improved learning outcomes for young Territorians. This government will continue to close the gap between our Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Budget 2016-17 provides \$43.7m for the continued implementation of the Indigenous Education Strategy, including \$34.8m in Commonwealth funding, which I hope continues for the next decade.

Key initiatives include \$11.1m to continue and expand the Families as First Teachers program in very remote communities, and \$4.9m to support remote Indigenous students and their families to determine their secondary school pathways through the Transition Support Unit. Be it the local school, regional high school or boarding school, wherever families choose to go we will be there with them.

This Country Liberal government recognises the importance of providing the best possible start for all children and continues to invest in and provide quality early years education and care for children from birth to eight years.

A total of \$19m is being allocated for the early year's strategic plan, *Great Start Great Future*. This will improve services and outcomes for Territory children and their families from birth to eight years of age. *Great Start Great Future* ensures a strategic approach to integrated service delivery.

Key initiatives include \$1m in addition to the \$11.1m also included in the Indigenous Education Strategy to expand the Families as First Teachers program in five urban areas in the Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs and Palmerston regions, plus \$2.2m to operate six child and family centres, which includes \$300 000 to operate the new Larapinta centre. This government will invest \$6m to continue the early childhood services subsidy for long daycare, three-year-old kindergarten and family daycare services to offset the cost of childcare for parents and families. We will continue to fully fund preschools with \$5.4m allocated to provide universal access to 15 hours a week of preschool education in schools, including non-government schools.

To implement the key actions outlined in the Work Like the Best – Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016-2018, \$1.2m has been allocated to improve outcomes for our middle years students. A total of \$7m has been allocated to provide vocational education and training, job skills and employment pathways in schools, including pre-employment programs across the Territory.

We will continue to invest in developing our school leaders, with \$1m committed to the Centre for School Leadership at Charles Darwin University to deliver high-quality professional development for teachers, principals and aspiring education leaders across the Territory.

Global budgets in government schools will continue to ensure school budgets are distributed transparently and under a one-line budget, giving schools greater independence, flexibility and autonomy to allocate resources to deliver high-quality educational services tailored to the local school community's needs. We have committed \$388m for global school budgets in 2016-17, plus a further \$59m to meet the centralised school costs.

Budget 2016-17 allocates \$2m to continue to support independent public schools to develop and trial innovative programs that enhance

educational outcomes and lead the way of thinking across the system.

This strong initiative is seeing government schools lead the way in educational innovation and implementation programs targeted to meet the needs of their local community. Non-government schools across the Territory will receive \$242m in operational and capital subsidies, including \$166.5m in Commonwealth Students First funding.

This government will also continue to support families, with \$6.7m to continue the Back to School payment scheme, which provides \$150 per student each year to assist parents and families with back-to-school expenses.

International education is a fantastic opportunity for the Northern Territory to showcase high-quality education facilities, engage with Asian markets through the education sector and build deep and long-lasting relationships with our near neighbours. Budget 2016-17 provides \$1m for the 10-year Northern Territory International Education and Training Strategy 2014-2024 to strengthen and grow programs and partnerships within the Territory's international education and training sector.

This government continues to make significant investment into special education to meet the growing demands of students with special needs. Budget 2016-17 provides \$5.7m in 2016 to operate the new Henbury School for secondary students with high-support special needs, and \$2.1m in additional funding to establish and operate the new Palmerston Special School, which will cater for 84 preschool and primary school high-support special needs students.

Budget 2016-17 provides substantial investment in education infrastructure, totalling \$164.1m, including funding provided under the Boosting our Economy works package. This government is committed to ensuring education infrastructure is at a quality to help support a first-class education system.

A total of \$68.5m was provided in 2015-16 for the Boosting our Economy education works package as part of the Territory government's broader package, providing various infrastructure upgrades to schools across the Territory, including \$10m in works for the non-government sector.

The Boosting our Economy package and other infrastructure works create jobs for Territorians. This budget allocates \$33.1m for repairs and maintenance for government schools across the Territory.

We have committed to a capital grant of \$21.2m to support the construction of a Catholic primary school in Zuccoli on a site to be shared with a future government primary school with common-use facilities and spaces for community use. This is to help cater for the growing demand for enrolment places in the Palmerston area.

The budget provides \$1.4m to establish operations of the new 40-place regional boarding facility at Nhulunbuy High School from January 2017. This facility will provide remote students with improved access to high-quality secondary education in regional centres.

The new works in Budget 2016-17 totals \$36.4m and includes \$9.3m for minor new works and new major projects that will include \$10m for stage one of the Taminmin College master plan for a new state-of-the-art two-storey building with eight science classrooms and eight general learning areas, enhancing STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics – opportunities for students in the rural area, linked to real jobs.

There is \$3.1m for stage two of the Braitling Primary School master plan to complete the new early childhood precinct with repurposed areas for a community centre connected to outdoor play areas, a new preschool and a new café to replace the old canteen. I recently visited the school and it looks like it is coming along fantastically.

Other budget highlights include \$4.5m to replace infrastructure at Angurugu School, which was unfortunately destroyed by fire recently; \$4.5m for the Ramingining School for a multipurpose hall and cyclone shelter; \$2m to construct a synthetic athletics track at Centralian Middle School; \$1m to Ross Park Primary School to extend the hall facilities to provide flexible all-weather use for school assemblies and specialist learning programs; \$1m for Wagaman Primary School for a cooling upgrade of the assembly hall; and \$1m for the Wulagi Primary School to upgrade the cooling systems in the multipurpose assembly hall, the rooftop solar upgrade and the stage area, and for a new sports surface.

This government is committed to modernising the education infrastructure at Tennant Creek Primary School. This has already commenced through the Boosting our Economy package with funding for the school to be repainted. I am happy to report that the students are thrilled with their new red and blue furniture to match the school colours.

We are committed to building engaging and modern facilities to support students, especially regarding facilities for special and early childhood education. This is included on our forward works program and will be delivered by a re-elected Country Liberal government in our next term.

The Northern Territory government is investing in schools to cater for future growth in student numbers and providing students with revitalised learning environments to achieve high-quality outcomes. In the last three years we have undertaken a number of systematic reviews using the evidence-implemented recommendations backed by science to focus on student outcomes. This is what parents expect from a responsible government.

I look forward to seeing further growth in education in 2016. I am proud of this government's commitment to providing a strong education system for our students and improving the future for them.

I move to my portfolio of Transport. Transport is a key enabler of economic growth and ensuring prosperity for the Territory community. It supports the development of local industry and jobs, improves access to health and other essential services and enhances tourism traffic.

We need reliable roads, efficient ports, good rail service and effective logistics infrastructure to sustain business activity, attract new investment and expand our industries – all essential for growing the Territory's economy. That is why a total of \$589.6m is being invested in 2016-17 to deliver safer roads, better transport infrastructure and jobs for Territorians. This includes \$495.9m in capital works, including minor new works of \$10.7m for roads and \$9.4m for transport assets; \$10m to continue the regional economic infrastructure fund grants; \$81.5m in repairs and maintenance, which includes resealing of around 245 lane kilometres of Territory roads, gravel resheeting and reforming of around 980 km of unsealed roads, and maintenance grading of the Northern Territory's 15 400 km of unsealed roads; and \$2.25m for infrastructure-related expenses to plan for the future transport needs of Territorians.

It is anticipated that this program will support in excess of 900 jobs. This transport program means jobs for roller and grader operators, estimators, water cart operators and engineers. The indirect jobs created by the transport program in human resources, such as the local smoko job – or anyone who works in that industry.

This government has achieved success in securing commitments from the Australian government and has an election commitment to spend \$29.5m on a new road to link Tiger Brennan Drive to the Darwin CBD, the Barneson Boulevard link, and completing the duplication of Tiger Brennan Drive from Dinah Road to McMinn Street. The Northern Territory government has committed to providing \$5m to the Barneson Boulevard link with an additional \$5m being provided by the City of Darwin. The Barneson

Boulevard link will provide an important third arterial link into the Darwin CBD, reducing travel time for commuters, giving people more time for other activities, boosting productivity and opening up valuable vacant inner-city land.

Further to this commitment, I continue to lobby Australian government colleagues to secure funding under the \$600m northern Australia roads program and the \$100m beef roads program. Under these programs I have requested support for a number of transformational projects for not only the Northern Territory but Northern Australia, including upgrading Keep River Plains Road to support the \$1.5bn Project Sea Dragon and Ord Stage 3; upgrading the Tanami Road as a long-term rolling program to support remote jobs, tourism, agriculture and mining – the Tanami Road was listed in the national infrastructure plan by Infrastructure Australia as a nationally significant priority project – upgrading the Adelaide River floodplain on the Arnhem Highway to provide significantly improved Wet Season access for Defence, mining, tourism and Territorians; and four key beef roads, including the Buntine Highway, the Plenty Highway, the Barkly Stock Route and the Tablelands Highway, to support our cattle industry.

This government continues to invest heavily in our transport services in 2016-17, including \$1m to continue the trial air service between Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. This important service being run by Airnorth opens up links for local businesses and residents to benefit from improved air connections, providing far better access to health and other essential services, while opening up tourism opportunities for visitors and residents to travel to regional centres. Since its launch in mid-October 2015 almost 3800 people have flown on the services, of which two thirds were non-government users. That is fantastic and it shows strong community support for the service. The service operates Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week, primarily using a 30-seat Embraer 120 Brasilia aircraft and offering a full airline service.

The budget includes \$28.18m to continue providing public transport services across the Territory, including supporting a ferry service to Mandorah and the Tiwi Islands; and \$20.71m to continue providing schools transport services across the Territory, including \$3.7m for the transport of students with special needs.

Expanding regional bus services across the Territory includes \$410 000 for the regional bus service to begin next month on the Tiwi Islands; \$760 000 to continue other regional services; a trial of new intra-town passenger services in priority regional and remote areas; and \$1.62m for bus network safety and security, including the

provision of a security presence at bus interchanges.

In addition this government is continuing to build on the reforms introduced to the Motor Vehicle Registry, which have kicked goals in transforming Territory motorists' experience of registering a vehicle or getting a licence into a positive one. Territorians no longer need to attend an MVR service centre because they can now conduct transactions just about anywhere through various online portals, including the NT Rego app, or at over 20 Australia Post retail outlets across the Northern Territory. This government will continue to roll out more services with Australia Post in 2016-17.

Modernising the registration and licensing database has allowed MVR to halve its staff training time. Significant reduction in customer waiting times across MVR service centres, a lowering of staff turnover and processing of fewer renewal transactions has given MVR shopfronts more capacity to deal with complex front counter transactions. Outsourcing of heavy and light vehicle licence assessments is continuing to deliver the DriveSafe NT Remote program across remote communities.

The 2016-17 Department of Transport capital works program continues to support and build on the achievements already made by the Country Liberal government. The development of infrastructure, especially roads, is of great importance to business, industry and the community. It unlocks the potential of the Northern Territory by developing and maintaining a network that supports job creation, economic development and growth.

A number of large projects announced in last year's budget will continue to be delivered, including completing the seal of the Litchfield Park Road and bridging the lower Finnis River; completing the seal of Larapinta Drive and the inner Mereenie tourist drive; improving barge landings across the Top End, including Maningrida, Gapuwiyak, Galiwinku and Ramingining; completing repairs work on Nightcliff jetty; continuing to upgrade the Roper Highway and Port Keats Road through various projects; upgrading the Outback Way roads, including the Plenty Highway and other roads; as a proud member for Palmerston, I believe the \$57m Palmerston roads upgrades will continue and will support economic growth; duplication of Vanderlin Drive from the water park to the McMillans Road roundabout; and completing the \$103m duplication works on Tiger Brennan Drive. The most recent 9.14 km section in stage four of Tiger Brennan Drive is expected to be finished by July.

A total of 360 workers have been involved in that construction, which includes 101 Indigenous employees, of which eight completed certificates in various civil construction disciplines. I think that is a fantastic effort.

This brings me to the new investment the Country Liberal government is making in 2016-17 to support our vision of a prosperous economy under the *Framing the Future* blueprint. In Darwin the budget includes \$8m to undertake dredging of the Cullen Bay navigational channel around the pontoon.

This work will remove navigational hazards obstructing vessels' access to the entrance channel as it has become very shallow due to a natural build-up of silt. The Cullen Bay ferry service, which is operated by SeaLink, provides an essential economical method of transport for Mandorah and Tiwi residents. The dredging work will ensure the safe passage of this ferry and any other boats moving through this area.

There is \$6m to provide better heavy vehicle access into Pinelands through an intersection upgrade at McKinnon Road.

Cycling enthusiasts, and the member for Nelson, I am sure, will be pleased there is \$1.5m in the budget to construct a new cycle path link from Howard Springs to Coolalinga along the north Australia rail corridor.

A total of \$2m has been allocated for hardstands and goods handling areas at the Wadeye barge landing, which will ensure the secure supply of goods in the area. There are locals who have lobbied hard for these upgrades all along Fog Bay Road. I am pleased that this budget will allow for the construction of the Rocky Creek bridge, which will complete upgrades on Fog Bay Road. This investment will improve road safety, increase flood immunity and facilitate community engagement and regional development.

Corroboree Billabong access will receive \$1m in upgrades to provide better access through targeted works. This process will benefit tourists and local tourism operators, including local wetlands cruise operators, fishing tour operators and recreational fishers.

Budget 2016-17 includes \$27m to seal the road to Port Melville to support the new timber export industry and the Tiwi Islands communities on Melville Island.

We will upgrade and seal selected sections of the Gunn Point Road with \$15m allocated over two years, including \$5m in 2016-17. This is an identified priority of the Amateur Fishermen's

Association of the NT, recreational hunting groups, local tourist operators and other residents.

In the Katherine region we are constructing new high-level bridges over Little Horse Creek and Big Horse Creek under the National Highway Upgrade Programme's \$34.5m. This project is jointly funded by the Northern Territory and Australian governments.

There is \$5m to seal selected priority sections to improve access on the Lajamanu Road between Kalkarindji and Lajamanu. The budget includes upgrades and seal works on selected sections of the Roper Highway between Fizzer Creek and Ngukurr, part of a \$13.5m program over four years, including \$4m in 2016-17.

The Central Australian selected upgrade of Maryvale Road will occur with \$16.5m over two years, including \$5m in 2016-17 to improve the level of access for local communities and increase the potential for growth in the pastoral and tourism industries in the region.

This government will continue its investment in the Tanami Road with \$3m allocated for upgrade and sealing works to targeted sections as part of an ongoing program to improve access and reliability of the road to support mining operations in the Tanami region, and to enhance the regional economy by productivity improvements.

The budget includes \$6m over two years for the Sandover Highway upgrade. The works include extending the seal to the Utopia health clinic, including \$1m in 2016-17 for stage one.

There is \$1m for extending the open speed section of the Stuart Highway, north of Ali Curung turnoff towards Tennant Creek.

There are programs with benefits across the regions. Government is supporting transport and infrastructure initiatives at the local level, with \$10m available for a third round of the regional economic infrastructure fund. These grants enable local governments and organisations to invest in local jobs and growth throughout the Northern Territory, with \$20m invested to date over the last two years through the Country Liberals initiative.

There is \$4.25m allocated to the regional aviation access program for upgrades to address critical issues across a number of aerodromes. The program is jointly funded by the Northern Territory and Australian governments. Aerodromes provide access to some of the most remote parts of the Northern Territory. The Australian government has provided funding for programs, including strengthening and widening, as part of the Northern Territory roads package, and \$6m

funded by the Australian government as part of the \$77m Northern Territory roads package. I thank the Commonwealth government for its ongoing contribution.

The popular Black Spot Programme, for road safety projects at targeted locations on Territory and local government roads, includes \$2.67m in funding by the Australian government under the Infrastructure Investment Programme.

The budget includes \$2.25m for planning studies, including the continuation of the rail link studies from Mount Isa to Tennant Creek, and the duplication of the Stuart Highway through Heavitree Gap in Alice Springs. I am pleased to advise that after lobbying our federal colleagues we have recently secured \$1.5m to extend the Mount Isa to Tennant Creek work to consider the broader transport and supply chain corridor, reaching from Darwin to Townsville. This has huge economic potential for the Northern Territory.

All this work sits within the framework of the Integrated Transport Planning and Investment Roadmap, which this government announced in December 2013. The road map has guided the development of the Territory's transport infrastructure and services through the creation of a suite of planning strategies and reforms which the Department of Transport has been leading. These are well on the way or nearing completion, and they set the platform for how investment in transport and its associated infrastructure will drive economic growth in the Territory for years to come. Our delivery of the roadmap and our ongoing investment in transport and its associated infrastructure are proof that this government has a commitment to transport, given it is a key enabler of economic growth and a key to unlocking the potential of the Northern Territory.

As part of Budget 2016-17 the Northern Territory government will provide total infrastructure payments of \$1.68bn, delivering and investing in public infrastructure across the Northern Territory to encourage growth and jobs. Budget 2016-17 strategically invests \$200m from proceeds of the TIO sale and \$100m from the lease of the Port of Darwin to establish the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund. This investment is to attract a further \$1.2bn from external investors, creating a \$1.5bn investment pool, which is expected to generate up to \$4.5bn in infrastructure investment.

This government is committed to jobs, community and prosperity. That is why we are investing over \$1.4bn into capital works, including \$78m for minor new works and \$216m for repairs and maintenance. The infrastructure program continues its investment in education. As I said

earlier, there is \$164.1m allocated in Budget 2016-17. We are continuing to deliver stronger health facilities to continue to provide quality health services for all Territorians. As a proud Palmerston member – we are building the Palmerston Regional Hospital. I was there yesterday; it is coming along very well. More than 20 trade packages have already been awarded to local businesses. It is anticipated that 300 people will be employed on the Palmerston Regional Hospital project at its peak construction period; then there will then be ongoing employment opportunities when operational.

The year ahead will see the Department of Infrastructure deliver a high proportion of the housing program. Budget 2016-17 invests over \$400m in housing and related works to provide upgrades to new houses in remote communities. This includes employee housing to support service delivery in the bush, and a refresh of public housing stock in urban areas as part of the Northern Territory's housing strategy.

The police program includes \$10m to upgrade police facilities in Alyangula and Angurugu. There is \$2m to construct a multipurpose conference facility at the Peter McAulay Centre and a \$700 000 investment to the Peter McAulay Centre for the forensics laboratory.

To enhance sporting facilities the Country Liberal government will invest in TIO stadium, which will receive \$2.3m for lighting and change rooms. The Hidden Valley motor vehicle complex will receive \$9m for water reticulation, and \$2m has been allocated for athletics track and field upgrades at Centralian Middle School.

In essential services we have contributed \$50m towards expansion of the Owen Springs Power Station and the Tennant Creek Power Station upgrades.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr CHANDLER: The provision of essential services in the bush is paramount. There is \$36.2m over two years to upgrade power, water and sewerage services.

We are driving tourism growth and increasing Indigenous employment opportunities with \$20m to build skywalk experiences in Territory parks to create world-class visitor attractions.

On top of the infrastructure program there are future building opportunities with the luxury hotel development. The assessment of proposals is

under way with an announcement scheduled for July.

There is a shiplift facility. At full capacity our marine industries are projected to support up to 4500 full-time jobs and inject around \$3.5bn into the Northern Territory economy. This is world-changing stuff.

The Northern Territory government is prepared to invest up to \$100m towards the project costs, and has commenced consultation with Defence, Australian Border Force and industry to secure local marine maintenance commitments to underpin the shiplift.

The expression of interest process recently closed for the new health headquarters office accommodation, which could see the construction of a new 1200 m² office accommodation building within the Palmerston area.

A community services enterprise is set to transform the landscape for Territorians with a disability. Carpentaria Disability Services received a \$10m grant from the Northern Territory government's \$100m Boosting our Economy package to help build the Community 360: Top End Community Hub. Carpentaria Disability Services has committed an additional \$10m into the project. Community 360 will provide purpose-built, integrated community infrastructure.

The Territory is also set to benefit from the federal government's *2016 Defence White Paper*, which highlights significant job and business opportunities for the Northern Territory, with \$20bn to be spent on new and improved infrastructure over the next two decades. This type of expenditure commitment does not happen by luck. Behind the scenes this government has been working with the federal government.

I also commend the work that the Master Builders Association has undertaken, working with an economic model to demonstrate Territory capability.

To conclude, the future is bright. The Country Liberal government has a plan to deliver prosperity to the Territory. We have a consistent and strategic approach to education. The Country Liberal government recognises that our children are our future. We will foster a strong community and create jobs and prosperity for the Territory.

Being the minister responsible for a sector of the budget is massive when you combine the education, infrastructure, transport and essential services budgets. It is a huge responsibility, but we have passion and we know what we can do with a focused Territory government on a balanced budget.

The budget will provide prosperity for the children in our schools now by modernising and improving our education system, and by ensuring we have systems in place – a solid education system followed through with a very strong VET sector and higher education sector, as well as a strong economy that is as diverse as possible and provides every opportunity for Territory kids today to have jobs in the future.

There is a clear choice come August this year – a government with a real plan, which has worked damn hard over the last three-and-a-half years using the science behind reviews and recommendations, using science to dictate how we should run our economy and our system of government, and developing a solid plan for the future.

There is a clear choice: a government with a plan; or go back to the dark old ages of large bureaucracies and scattering money around like confetti.

Mrs PRICE (Local Government and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the Treasurer, the Chief Minister and the rest of my Cabinet colleagues for their hard work on this bill. This budget, more than others, recognises the need to put community prosperity and the Territory at the centre of everything we do.

I will turn to the fantastic opportunities provided by Budget 2016-17 in my portfolio areas, which are heavily focused on the bush.

In the portfolio area of Local Government and Community Services we have delivered on a number of election commitments, such as reforms to local government which gave the voice back to the bush. Local government was one area that those on the Labor benches totally destroyed – super shires, super mess. Territorians cannot risk a Labor government in power.

I am pleased that in Budget 2016-17 there will be \$26m in Territory money for councils from the Northern Territory operational subsidy grants pool. These funds are untied and are only provided to non-municipal councils. They are integral to service provision and a key source of funding to regional councils.

Local government continues to be supported by the Commonwealth. There will be over \$32m in Commonwealth financial assistance grants for general purpose and local road grants. These grants are critical, particularly for regional councils that are restricted in their ability to raise own-source revenue.

As part of the Country Liberals' prosperous economy for the Territory, I am proud that \$7.9m

will continue for regional council Indigenous jobs development funding. This program supports local government service delivery and allows for the engagement of approximately 500 Indigenous employees.

Only the Country Liberals can deliver jobs, growth and prosperity for the Territory. In Budget 2016-17, I am proud to say, an ongoing \$5m has been allocated to local authority priority projects. Before the Country Liberals established local authorities, Territorians in remote communities had experienced a loss in decision-making power, control over local service delivery and local priorities. Labor took away their voice and opportunities.

Local authorities have been critical in filling the void that has been created. There are 500 local authority members now bringing the voices of thousands to local government. I was recently in Amanbidji and the people there are eager to get on, which is good to see for a small community near the WA border. A recent review has estimated that more than 350 local authority projects have been supported by this funding. Budget 2016-17 will also provide \$2.5m of budget assistance grants to Vic Daly and West Daly Regional Councils. These councils are advancing after the restructure and I am pleased this assistance will shore them up into the future.

Flowing on from the recent agreement of councils to take responsibility for street lights, \$2.2m will be provided in Budget 2016-17 as part of a \$5.5m, three-year program to assist local government councils with street light repair and maintenance costs.

I am proud to say the Country Liberals are delivering on our *Cemeteries Act* review, which will lead the way in Australia and provide a variety of options that a diverse place like the Territory should have. Budget 2016-17 is allocating \$300 000 for application-based grant funding to regional councils to assist in establishing policies and processes for managing remote cemeteries. This is important because the grant funding will assist regional councils to establish and develop each cemetery within their council area, as well as policies, processes, cemetery plans, signage and burial registers for the first time.

That is right; the Country Liberals are delivering for the regions and not just governing for Darwin, like the former Labor government did. The Country Liberals are also committed to annually continuing \$3m worth of special purpose grants to support local governments in funding distinct projects or essential infrastructure for Territorians in local communities. Last month I had the pleasure of granting \$2.4m to local governments at LGANT's annual conference.

In Budget 2016-17 the Country Liberals will continue to fund a Family Safe Environment Fund, offering \$250 000 per annum to assist local government councils in addressing issues around antisocial behaviour and to discourage acts of vandalism and graffiti in parks and other open spaces. Territorians and councils know the Country Liberal government will remain committed to delivering a strong local government sector. We have delivered in the bush for local government and we will continue to do so.

I now turn to my portfolio of Community Services. Indigenous Essential Services – I am very pleased with the Country Liberal government's budget for 2016-17 and what it is delivering in the bush. The Country Liberal government has invested in our remote communities and continues to provide an enabling environment that will support economic development, home ownership and Indigenous employment. The wellbeing of remote Territorians will be significantly improved through the delivery of critical infrastructure and service delivery outlined in this budget, from sewerage upgrades to the redevelopment of a remote housing development authority. That is exciting news; it is a first for the Territory.

Let me highlight some of the exciting initiatives this government is delivering. A total of \$75bn will be delivered under the Indigenous Essential Services program to continue providing electricity, water and sewerage services in 72 remote Indigenous communities. In addition, a further \$36m over two years will be delivered for capital projects in 13 remote communities under the IES program.

With regard to homelands and outstations, the Country Liberal government remains committed to service delivery for Territorians in some of our most remote locations. An amount of \$21.3m has been committed to the provision of municipal and essential services.

The Homelands Extra Allowance program, which the Territory did not have while Labor was in government, has been hugely successful. We will continue to deliver the Homelands Extra Allowance program, committing \$5.3m to improve existing houses in homelands. There is \$7.3m committed to continue provision of housing maintenance assistance to homelands residents, and \$7.1m is allocated for land administration, township leasing, Pirlangimpi subdivision, and registration and publication of land information in the Territory.

This government is making a real difference to Territorians residing in remote communities. We are building an environment that supports much-needed economic development and increased

employment opportunities, and land administration is crucial to enabling that environment.

The Chief Minister and I have been working together on initiatives and ways of building remote communities from the ground up. It is through this working relationship that we have announced many great initiatives, such as remote morgues, community bakeries, policies like the remote engagement strategy, and the remote procurement policy that will provide real jobs, as well as community and Territory empowerment that will lead to prosperity. This is great because it is what we want to see. I want to see my people be part of that. I want to see Aboriginal people in remote communities be empowered, and we are giving them that opportunity.

The budget includes \$1m to establish the Remote Housing Development Authority to develop and implement housing and asset management policies in remote communities, town camps and homelands. This is an exciting new way of addressing housing out bush. It has never been done before in the Northern Territory and I am proud to have an Aboriginal Chief Minister to work alongside in developing the bush.

We have been listening to the voices of the bush and this is what they want – community control, not somebody who comes in for a couple of hours and goes again.

I turn to my portfolio responsibilities for the Department of Housing and NT Home Ownership, which is a government business division. The Country Liberal government aims to create a strong society to provide an affordable, accessible and place-based housing system for eligible Territorians, with options that are appropriate to their housing needs.

Since taking this portfolio over a year ago I have been actively working at improving all aspects of housing, and I am pleased with the Country Liberal budget announcements that will enable us to continue to support all Territorians on the housing continuum. Safe, secure and affordable housing is fundamental to Territorians' wellbeing. It helps people raise healthy families, undertake work and social activities, and engage with their community.

The budget provides \$329m in operational funding for the delivery of social housing across the Territory, allowing this government to provide the right house in the right place at the right time for eligible Territorians. The budget further provides \$181m in new capital works programs in 2016-17. This is a major commitment to our social housing future and to building communities and building the Territory.

The housing strategy – members will be aware that funding was provided in Budget 2015-16 to develop a five-year strategy for housing in the Northern Territory. They will also be aware of the extensive community consultations that were undertaken. I am pleased to announce \$140m, including \$27m in 2016-17, is provided by the Adam Giles Country Liberal government to fund initiatives to support those in our community who need it the most to build communities and the Territory.

Following the consideration of feedback from the non-government and community sector during the consultation process, Budget 2016-17 provides \$2m over two years, including \$1m in 2016-17 for a homelessness and housing support innovation fund. Through this fund, grants will be made available for non-government organisations for them to test innovative ideas and build an evidence base about what works in the Northern Territory. The Country Liberals have listened to our NGO sector and provided this opportunity to further support the good work they do in our community. With this fund, service providers will be able to explore new models in such areas as service integration, exit from crisis and support accommodation, early intervention and prevention responses, and private rental support programs. Each project will be evaluated so results can be included in wider system reform. This is an exciting new initiative and I look forward to working with this sector to hear of the results of the programs.

The housing strategy consultation process revealed a shortage of suitable and affordable short-term accommodation in the Northern Territory's regional centres for Aboriginal people visiting from remote areas to see family, access services, seek employment or housing, or meet commitments and conduct general business. The Apmere Mwerre Visitor Park in Alice Springs is considered a model that can be used to address these issues. Budget 2016-17 provides \$250 000 in funding to develop a project scope for similar visitor parks in Darwin and Katherine. This will inform potential sites and the projected cost of developing these facilities, and form a starting point for further community consultation and project development. Visitors cause issues in Darwin and Katherine, and the Country Liberals are working to get the response right.

The average age of public housing stock is now in excess of 30 years, and this is reflected in increasing maintenance and minor works budgets over recent years. There has been little funding for the renewal of housing stock in urban areas for many years. It seems reasonable, therefore, that the government, through this housing strategy, should seek to address this issue.

The Country Liberals are the only people here with a plan for housing into the future. Only the Country Liberals can reduce the waiting list and refresh public housing. Recognising that ageing stock means increasing maintenance needs, the strategy provides an additional \$13.5m over five years and \$3m in 2016-17 for maintenance of urban stock. The total budget for repairs and maintenance will increase to \$29.3m, an amount that also includes some \$5m for the maintenance of government employee housing in remote communities.

In recognition of ageing urban public housing stock, Budget 2016-17 provides for an increase of \$2.5m for a total minor new works program of \$16.3m. Of the minor new works program, \$3.1m is allocated to upgrade dwellings that house essential government employees, such as teachers and nurses, in remote communities. The increase in the minor new works program in Budget 2016-17 provides \$1m for targeted upgrades of public housing dwellings across the Territory, and a further \$1.5m for the rejuvenation of housing complexes in greater Darwin and Alice Springs.

Building on the work completed for the housing strategy, this budget provides for the beginning of the process of renewing housing stock. The budget provides funding of \$20m in 2016-17 to commence this program of renewal. In total, this funding will deliver 270 new dwellings to my department over five years. The program will generate jobs and ensure there is continuity of work for small businesses and tradespeople across the Territory, and provide confidence that the economy of the Northern Territory will continue to thrive.

Older housing stock will be sold to provide funds for the construction of new houses, and the demolition and rebuilding of dwellings will occur on selected sites across the Territory. There will also be a program of infill development on larger inner suburban sites in Darwin. Some 60 sites have been identified and, with appropriate planning approval, the government will work in partnership with the private sector to provide a high standard of public housing stock to match demand and align with public housing and planning principles.

The government recognises this renewal process needs to be managed carefully to ensure there is no adverse impact on public housing waitlists as we vacate dwellings to allow for the renewal process. To ensure we do not place our tenants under hardship, the budget provides \$17.6m of recurrent funding over five years and \$1.2m in 2016-17 for new social housing and head lease dwellings. This will provide 15 new social housing

dwellings in 2016-17 and 250 new dwellings over the five-year life of the housing strategy.

By leasing dwellings through long-term head leases the government is introducing more flexibility into public housing systems and is better able to match the needs of tenants with available housing stock. The cost of repairs and maintenance is reduced; Territorians, particularly seniors and those with disabilities, are provided with appropriate housing; and the government has flexibility to provide new properties at a lower cost to government.

I am proud to announce that Budget 2016-17 has not forgotten regional Territorians. To that end, the budget includes \$2m in funding for the construction of two new public housing dwellings in Elliott and a further two in Kalkarindji.

Housing in the bush – this government is committed to delivering services to the bush and supporting remote Aboriginal Territorians to live in their communities. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and the National Partnership Agreement on NT Remote Aboriginal Investment have recently been signed. This will see \$350m invested into more than 380 new houses and over 1000 upgrades to houses in remote communities across the Northern Territory over the next two years. The Country Liberals will deliver the houses using local businesses to build prosperity in communities, just as we are building communities and building the Territory.

Budget 2016-17 provides \$131m for remote housing to deliver 120 new houses and 425 upgrades in support of the national partnership. Scheduling of works is advanced and is currently being finalised so works can get under way. Importantly, the agreement provides for Indigenous employment opportunities to build prosperity.

The budget also includes \$16m towards local government rate payments and the payment of tenancy management contractors. An amount of \$39m has been allocated for repairs and maintenance.

We are also committed to supporting key workers, who deliver important services in these communities. The Budget 2016-17 capital works program outlines this government's strong commitment to the bush, with \$11.7m allocated for government employee housing capital works, \$3.1m for minor new works and \$5m for repairs and maintenance on these dwellings in remote communities.

The capital works program provides \$11.7m in 2016-17 to build 11 new government employee

houses and upgrade more than 60 existing government employee houses. This program allows government to meet the growing need for GEH, or government employee housing, in remote communities to support agencies like the Departments of Health; Correctional Services; Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Education; and Parks and Wildlife.

Overall, this Country Liberal government is providing over \$232.8m in Budget 2016-17 for people in the bush to construct new housing, upgrade existing housing and provide repairs and maintenance to existing houses for Aboriginal people living in remote communities.

I have seen how Aboriginal people do their own repairs and maintenance to houses and it makes them feel proud to take part in that. Budget 2016-17 also provides \$1.5m as part of a \$4.5m multiyear program to continue the implementation of the Remote Home Ownership Program.

I am passionate about people in our remote Territory communities having the ability to become homeowners in the future. This is an important investment by the Adam Giles Country Liberal government. It proves that only the Country Liberals are supporting prosperity in the remote communities with remote home ownership.

I will move on to property management. A further \$1m is provided in Budget 2016-17 in an ongoing effort to fund property management expenses, such as rates, power and water, and ground maintenance in complexes for public and government employee housing.

The NT Home Ownership division helps Territorians buy their own home by providing a range of services to assist them, including home loan products, grants and subsidies. The government's strategies in this area have seen significant increases in the number of loans issued under the HomeBuild Access product in 2015-16. This has resulted from product management being shifted from TIO to People's Choice Credit Union and a more aggressive marketing plan from PCCU as well as new land leases, such as Zuccoli, providing access to affordable housing opportunities for Territorians. Funding to support NT Home Ownership remains.

Social housing, crisis housing and homelessness – the government recognises the increasing complexities of our community social housing needs and the requirement to provide services that help people move from homelessness and supported accommodation to social housing, private rentals and affordable home ownership.

Budget 2016-17 reinforces the Northern Territory government's commitment to society's most

vulnerable with total funding for homelessness services and crisis accommodation of \$22.7m. This represents an overall increase of \$3.9m in 2015-16 funding. The Country Liberals are supporting the Territory's most vulnerable, increasing funding to homelessness services by more than 10% from the previous year.

In addition to the \$1m innovation fund available for non-government community organisations, which I have already mentioned, and following extensive consultation with the community of Alice Springs, Budget 2016-17 reinstates funding for critical accommodation services in Alice Springs, including \$1.2m for the operation of Apmere Mwerre and a further \$1.2m to continue the operation of Stuart Lodge. Both facilities are highly valued by the Alice Springs community and they help to reduce short-term homelessness for visitors and new arrivals in town. They also serve to reduce the impact of overcrowding in the town camps and in urban social housing.

Stuart Lodge fulfils an additional need by providing accommodation for people visiting Alice Springs who would otherwise be homeless whilst receiving medical treatment. As part of this funding proposal we plan to transition the services provided by Mission Australia at Stuart Lodge to include holistic case management services to assist clients in accessing special services in areas such as alcohol and drug rehabilitation, mental health, relationship counselling, domestic and family violence, and financial counselling. Through partnership with the community services sector, these facilities provide local employment opportunities and serve to increase the capacity of this sector in Alice Springs, which is much needed.

I am proud of this budget – an investment of vital funding that will let the Country Liberal government continue its hard work in providing housing and housing services to Territorians who are in need by building prosperity, the community and the Territory.

I turn to my portfolio area of Parks and Wildlife. Budget 2016-17 continues the Country Liberals' record investment into our parks and reserves. The Country Liberals are committed to opening up our parks and enhancing the experiences available to visitors. Parks are for the people and the community, and when the parks and reserves prosper the Territory prospers.

The Country Liberals' centrepiece of Budget 2016-17 investment in parks is \$20m for aerial skywalks in the Territory's national parks. These skywalks will showcase the natural beauty of the Territory's popular visitor destinations. It is expected the skywalks will operate all year round, providing a spectacular drawcard for visitors to

these parks. As already announced, the first skywalk will be for the iconic Nitmiluk National Park. It will provide an opportunity to enhance visitors' experience and value of Nitmiluk National Park and allow traditional owners to share their country and stories more widely. Development at Nitmiluk will have benefits for increasing visitor numbers during the Wet Season.

The Country Liberals are also upgrading visitor experience through Budget 2016-17 with a two-year investment of over \$1.3m in mountain bike trails in our parks. Under the Country Liberals, Territorians and visitors alike can enjoy Northern Territory parks, with more than 28 km of mountain bike track established at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station, as well as 3 km at Charles Darwin National Park and 4 km at Casuarina Coastal Reserve being developed.

Over the next two years the Country Liberals will invest \$300 000 in Litchfield and Nitmiluk trails; \$150 000 for Darwin regional trail upgrades; \$180 000 for multiday West Macs; \$250 000 for Watarrka trails; and \$450 000 for upgrades to the telegraph station and East Side trails. Along with these, a master plan for mountain biking in the Northern Territory has been developed, which sets the direction for developing mountain biking in the Territory with maximum benefits to tourism, the economy and the community. The master plan was in collaboration between Tourism NT, the Department of Sport and Recreation – thank you minister for sports – the Parks and Wildlife Commission and other key stakeholders. Mountain biking has experienced enormous growth.

Territorians love hearing about how in the last financial year the Country Liberal government provided over \$10m in capital works funding to Casuarina Coastal Reserve and Litchfield National Park. Of that \$10m there is \$7.9m in works to be spent this financial year. Works for the Litchfield National Park comprises the redesign of the Buley Rockhole, upgrades to Florence Falls site, a redesign of the Tjaynera Falls – Sandy Creek – camp ground, enhancing Tolmer Falls and upgrading the termite mounds area. These contracts are supporting the employment of approximately 172 Territorians, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous apprentices.

Work at the Casuarina Coastal Reserve includes works to the Dripstone Cliffs; a network of shared paths and tracks, plus erosion works; Dripstone Park upgrade, including toilet block and picnic facilities; Rapid Creek opportunities; Lee Point enhancement; Buffalo Creek upgrade; a reserve refresh; and free beach car park improvements. These contracts are supporting the employment of approximately 96 Territorians, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Budget 2016-17 will deliver better facilities and infrastructure upgrades to our parks and reserves that will no doubt boost tourism and local economies across the Territory.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr HIGGINS (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, this budget is one for jobs and growth. This budget will ensure skilled, sustainable growth for the Territory. In my portfolios there is good news for Territorians.

Agriculture is a key to unlocking sustainable growth going forward. Investment in agribusiness, agri-research and innovation makes sense. This farsighted, future-focused policy is part of the plan to secure our prosperity in the Territory.

We announced today that we will allocate an extra \$1.2m to the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to invest in our research farms. This money will be used to update existing infrastructure on research farms, but will also go toward ways to commercialise innovation originating on departmental research farms.

As a Territory we need to become better at innovation. Our government has a strategy with the Knowledge Territory policy to align our policy settings to make maximum gain from the national science and innovation agenda.

Today's \$1.2m investment will ensure DPIF research farms are research and investment-ready to support development of the NT agricultural industry, harness opportunities that build on the region's strength, increase business resilience and diversity of economic output, and capitalise on the market demands from the Asia Pacific region. This is terrific news as this investment lays the cornerstone for future jobs, opportunities and growth for the Territory.

One of the most exciting things about this new package is the creation of an expertise based farm research advisory board. This board will set the strategic direction for the department's research farms and identify ways to create more direct links to industry.

This \$1.2m initiative provides operational funding support to the research farms while a new strategic direction is developed for future operations. It provides the facilities with increased commercial focus and encourages private investment.

DPIF research farm facilities have declined in condition over time due to Labor myopia, indolence and ignorance.

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from Shepherdson College in Galiwinku, who are visiting as part of their week at the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr HIGGINS: This has limited the ability of DPIF to conduct innovative and contemporary research and attract new investment partners. The research farms are an essential element in maximising opportunities to expand agricultural production and develop north Australia. By Australian standards agriculture in the Northern Territory, valued at around \$600m per year, is in the early stage of development. This is a targeted approach that invests in science and innovation, and puts agriculture and agribusiness on the front foot into the future.

Having a market-ready, high-value product is essential if Territorians are to make maximum gain from recently finalised free trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea. On the subject of exporting produce and growing markets in Southeast Asia, this government is investing \$2m for the development of a vapour heat treatment facility to be built in the Northern Territory.

This facility will be of enormous importance to many mango farmers across the Territory, especially in my electorate of Daly. As a former mango grower, I speak with some authority on this subject. Fruit fly susceptible fruits require a range of post-harvest treatments to meet access requirements for a range of international markets. By establishing a VHT facility NT mangoes will be able to be sent to export in a timely manner in better condition, creating market advantage for our product.

Australian mangoes have approved access to China, Korea and Japan utilising VHT, with the closest treatment facility being in Queensland.

There has never been a better time to be a Territorian. Today's announcement enables local growers to produce and export from the Northern Territory. This will keep more jobs and money in the Territory. The government's budget is all about delivering for communities, securing prosperity and building the Territory.

As I travel around my electorate and across the Territory, and when I speak with farmers and growers in rural and remote regions, I realise communications is a critical issue. This Country Liberal government understands the needs of the bush and today we are making an \$800 000 investment to continue and expand free community Wi-Fi hotspots. This will benefit 46 remote Indigenous communities; support online government services; reduce cost of living pressures; and have impacts in employment, education, health and youth empowerment. This will have a direct impact on many families in my electorate. Getting online is key to getting ahead, and the people living in our remote communities should have the same opportunities of basic access that other Territorians enjoy.

The Northern Territory Library currently provides free community Wi-Fi Internet access to 34 remote Indigenous communities. The additional funding announced today will extend the current service from the existing 34 communities to 46 and will involve a significant upgrade of services to take advantage of new NBN Internet plans, particularly the new satellite service, which is expected to become commercially available later this year. Extensive consultation will be undertaken with communities about the most appropriate locations for the Wi-Fi hotspots.

Clearly the government is listening and delivering for people in the bush. It is also clear that only the Country Liberals have a plan for jobs and growth, and to manage upcoming economic transitions. Labor prescribed policies amount to nothing. Labor's only interest is Labor and not the Territory, sustainable economy or the working families in the Daly.

As Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries I am proud of this government's commitment to our commercial and recreational fishers. We have invested in world-class fishing infrastructure, which is making the NT the place for recreational fishing. The NT Barramundi Classic, in my electorate of Daly, is a world-class event, and I enjoyed being there last week. We will continue to make recreational fishing more attractive and accessible by continuing investment of over \$4m in the Dundee boat ramp, with money for the Mary River and Shady Camp roads.

It is right, however, that we take stock of how we use and protect our valuable water resources. This is why I have set about rolling out the Territory-wide program of water advisory committees. The Katherine and Berry Springs Water Advisory Committees have already submitted their water plans. We have advertised Howard East and West Davenport to establish those water plans. The Rapid Creek and Ti Tree committees are now calling for expressions of

interest. This week I will advertise the Ooloo water allocation plan committee to be established, and one for Mataranka in the future.

This government is not satisfied with a passive engagement approach. We will not put an advertisement in the paper; we will adopt new media and adapt to feedback. We are proactive not reactive. Territorians will have the opportunity to have a real and meaningful say about strategic allocation decisions. This budget delivers in a big way for Daly with \$13.4m allocated for the upgrade of Saddle Rail Creek on Port Keats Road; \$10.3m to construct the lower Finnis River Bridge; \$6m secured to upgrade 60 dwellings in Wadeye; \$400 000 for Nauiyu and \$200 000 for Palumpa; \$4m for upgrades to the Rocky Creek Crossing on Fog Bay Road; \$1.93m to Litchfield National Park to enhance the visitor experience with upgrades to the Sandy Creek camp ground sites, Florence Falls site and carparks; \$1.93m to upgrades on the Jungawa Road; \$1.4m to seal the Ringwood Road; and \$490 000 for the Bynoe Haven Road upgrade in front of Sandpalms pub. People may not realise, but that is where you get the cheapest fuel in the Territory.

Batchelor school is receiving \$900 000 to upgrade fire and potable water pipes and irrigation. Today's budget is about framing the future for the Territory, framing your future and asking the questions, 'Who is best able to manage the economy, keep crime under control and do what they say?' Every day our Country Liberal government is getting on with the job of securing prosperity and creating a confident culture.

We are investing in arts and culture initiatives and enterprises. Tomorrow I will present our flagship arts and cultural policy. This budget will inject millions into the Alcoota fossil beds site in a major win for the region and ecotourism in the NT. The eight-million-year-old fossil remains of giant wombats, crocodiles and flightless birds – known collectively as megafauna – will have a new lease on life with \$3.97m in new funding. The existing facilities at the Alcoota fossil beds are limited to the basic necessities to support the current level of scientific excavation. The fossilised bones are so abundant and tightly packed that it is sometimes difficult to excavate one bone without breaking the one below it.

This government is investing in infrastructure to deliver growth and opportunity in all industries across the Territory. Art and cultural tourism would become ever important, and with an ever expanding middle-class in Asia it presents an incredible opportunity for the Territory. We need to be ready to capitalise on that boom.

I acknowledge the vigour and vision of the Chief Minister in this area. He has personally driven this

project from the start and has been instrumental in negotiations with traditional owners in the area. The additional investment as part of Budget 2016-17 will fund facilities such as a moveable scaffold walkway, a raised boardwalk track, an interpretive shelter for a shaded rest stop, and picnic facilities. This will enable visitors to observe the digging during the scientific excavation program each year and learn about the significance of fossils located at the site.

The new funding will provide opportunities in the tourism, education, employment and science sectors. This investment will also provide job opportunities for Aboriginal people in the area and broader economic opportunities for the region.

The government is committed to getting it right on the big and the small. The smallest, at times, can be the most annoying and destructive – weeds. I draw the attention of the House to two programs, namely the cabomba eradication program and gamba grass mitigation in the Darwin rural area.

On the cabomba eradication program, the government is providing \$0.85m in 2016-17 for an intensive focus on eradicating cabomba from Darwin River. The funding will be used to implement new approaches to chemical and physical control methods, weed monitoring, water quality monitoring, quarantine zone enforcement and public awareness. We will rid cabomba from the Territory. The funding will allow new approaches to be developed and implemented, including the use of new herbicides, bund wall constructions, benthic blankets and dredging to remove cabomba plants, seed banks and silt.

An extensive public awareness program will seek to re-engage members of the public, encourage support to report suspected cabomba outbreaks and avoid the quarantine zone. Spread prevention is critical to the success of any eradication program. Eradication will also prevent the possibility of the aquatic weed spreading to Darwin River Dam, and the cumulative impact this would have on Darwin's water source and treatment of the weeds. If the weed was located in Darwin River Dam it would taint water quality. Treatment of the weed with herbicide would also likely require water treatment infrastructure for Darwin's water source.

Eradication will protect other freshwater systems from being infested with the weed, such as Hardys and Corroboree Billabongs.

The other significant weed management program, especially in my rural electorate of Daly, is targeted at gamba grass. There is \$4.45m provided for 2016-17 which will primarily be used to provide additional herbicide for the free gamba grass assistance program, which provides

herbicide and spray equipment to treat gamba grass from November to April to reduce fire risk.

Money will also be used to conduct landholder extension and awareness that will enhance weed mitigation efforts, address community safety and environmental risk related to gamba grass, and enforce landholder obligations under the *Weeds Management Act*.

The project will also finance enhanced property inspections in the rural area to ensure landholder compliance and manage gamba grass in the rural area in general.

The approach will assist in addressing the challenges associated with managing the highly-invasive fire-tolerant weed that already affects thousands of properties. It builds on past successes and learning while also proposing much-needed cost-effective and innovative approaches to weed management and fire management models.

As the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, I believe we have a very good story.

It is evident to all visitors to the Territory that we have a confident culture. This year, when we mark 30 years since Mick Dundee put Kakadu on the map, we recognise the stellar performance of Screen Territory time after time, most recently with financial and critical successes such as *Last Cab to Darwin*. In recognition of the good work Screen Territory continues to produce I am announcing an additional grant funding of \$500 000 in 2016-17. Likewise, in recognition of the good work of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, this government is awarding additional grant funding of \$1m in 2016-17.

Arts and cultural tourism will become more important, and with an ever-expanding middle class in Asia it presents an incredible opportunity for the Territory. We need to be ready to capitalise on that boom. The investment will also provide job opportunities for Aboriginal people in the area and deliver broad economic benefit.

The above announcements all fit into the bigger picture plan. This plan is the Northern Territory's art and culture policy. A total of \$250 000 has been set aside to develop a strategic plan for arts and culture in the Territory. All the above examples highlight that the Country Liberals have a plan to build not only a confident culture, but a strong economy.

This team has the vision and ability to deliver for all Territorians; we are building a strong, prosperous economy and a safe, secure Territory. Let us not wonder what we could have done. Let us be bold and resolute in our service. Let us

continue to build a better community, prosperity and Territory.

I congratulate the Treasurer for his forward-thinking budget.

Mr BARRETT (Sport and Recreation): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, today I commend the Treasurer's bill to the House, and I do so with much joy and excitement. This is the first budget I have had the ability to take part in putting together with the team in Cabinet, and it has been a great experience for me to see the level of conversation when we talk about the future of the Northern Territory and where we want the Territory to be.

To put this into context, we need to look at where we came from. Whilst other people looked at their departments and the economy as a whole when they were speaking about the legacy issues we had from Labor, I will also talk about some of the legacy issues this government inherited when it came to power.

The opposition left expenditure in the sport and recreation space in a very ineffective and hotchpotch way. All we had were a few ticket items of expenditure that went into big infrastructure projects and were then handed over to the mum and dad clubs, which have struggled over the last four years to create a sustainable model going forward to run their clubs effectively. In Palmerston there are two good examples of this where clubs cannot operate effectively because of the size and scope of what was built for them. They have been put into a situation where their volunteers are getting flogged and then leaving.

That is important for local clubs; every time I go to a sporting event as minister for Sport, I hear of the necessity for these clubs to have effective volunteers to officiate games, organise teams, coach or umpire. We now see volunteers having to move more and more to the space of running raffles or selling meat trays at local restaurants to pay their bills because their facilities were not built effectively or with sustainability in mind.

When this government came to power it had a few legacy issues to deal with. In the area of sport and recreation – in a word, it was ineffective. We looked at what needed to be done. The first thing was that sport and recreation needed to get back down to the grassroots. With sport and rec, we find that every time we spend money to get young people involved in sports we are creating a lifestyle of activity in those young people that should last them throughout their life. That pays dividends for our health system later on if we can ensure kids will be running around playing soccer, basketball, baseball, doing gymnastics and all those sport and recreation activities.

One of the first things this government did was implement sport vouchers. This reduced the cost of living for mums and dads. Coming into this government we found the cost of living was very high and one of the promises we have delivered on over the last four years was to decrease the cost of living. The sport vouchers give mums and dads a choice and the ability to put money towards clubs, and it takes away the burden of trying to come up with all this money.

We have \$200 a year going towards sport and recreation activities for each child enrolled in school. This has been a boom for clubs because we have found that clubs with good junior development programs now have the ability to access the sport vouchers. The sport vouchers have made a big difference to the funding models they have developed to run their clubs, sports and recreational activities effectively. We also put grassroots grants in place, which provides local clubs that rely on volunteers with essential equipment to grow their participation. It also helped them develop in certain areas to get more juniors involved and to access the sport vouchers.

These sport vouchers have been the source of much funding for this. Different sporting groups, recreational activities and peak bodies have been able to take advantage of these to build a junior base which can access the sport vouchers. This is all about sustainability and going forward for sport and rec in the future.

This government also instituted Learn to Swim vouchers, ensuring our kids learn the critical lifesaving skill of swimming. In the Northern Territory we are very close to water, and lots of people enjoy the fact we live around the water and that the weather is excellent for swimming. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory also has a record of tragedies, one of which is very close to my heart, as I had a big brother who drowned in a back yard pool. We made sure these Learn to Swim vouchers were going to families, and they had the choice of where they wanted to spend them. They also supported the organisations that deliver those skills. It took the cost of living off parents because they did not have to come up with hundreds of dollars for swimming skills courses.

When we came to government our local sport industry was struggling. One of the first things we did was increase peak sporting bodies' funding by 50%. There are approximately 60 sport and active recreation organisations which receive annual funding to employ staff to develop pathways and increase participation across the Territory. The 50% increase in funding has led to more grassroots development and enabled them to employ development officers to go to other schools and access other communities,

particularly in regional and remote areas, and to give people access to sports they otherwise would not have access to.

Linking in with our remote sport program – funding is provided to regional councils and non-government organisations to enhance the capacity of regional and remote communities. This means regular sport is in remote communities, which was not there previously. In the regional and remote areas where young people had few options for sport – many may play football or basketball, but they were the only options available – they can now access rugby league development officers or baseball, softball or netball development officers. People operating the remote sport programs are excited about the changes that have occurred in communities.

When I was last in Alice Springs speaking to people who run this they said it was fantastic and that the penetration of sports into regional remote areas has been great.

The Northern Territory Institute of Sport has been a key ingredient in the pathway to get kids from club level to elite level. This government continues to support the institute strongly. Scholarships for athletes and coaches to access high-performance training programs, elite competition and support are a key plank in delivering quality sport and recreation projects in the Territory. The Institute of Sport has been very successful. If you look at the list of athletes and coaches that access this, you will see sports where the Northern Territory punches well above its weight, such as hockey, which has a lot of representation at the Institute of Sport. The representation at the institute moves towards representation at events like the Olympics, where, for the first time, we might have two Olympians playing hockey at the games in Rio.

There is a total of \$17.6m for grants to sporting and active recreational organisations, including the delivery of the Sport Voucher Scheme, peak body funding, active remote communities, active recreation organisations, grassroots developments and facility and equipment grants.

In regard to infrastructure, which goes to the heart of the prosperity, community and jobs this government will put forward for the future – the Country Liberals have an unprecedented record in investing in sport and recreational infrastructure in a sustainable way. This focus has a direct impact on the local economy, creating work for local businesses.

I will go through some highlights. There is \$8m additional funding to support the construction of an international competition-standard regional tennis centre in Darwin, for a total Territory

contribution of \$16m dollars to the \$16.7m project. There is \$3m for a grant to fund utilities, roads and lighting upgrades at Freds Pass Reserve because, as we know, the population in Palmerston and the rural area is exploding, and we need to make our sporting facilities in the rural area adequate for people in those areas.

There is \$6.25m, including \$4.25m from the Territory government, \$1.5m from Alice Springs Town Council and \$0.5m from a private contributor, for the Alice Springs netball facility redevelopment. That is a fantastic project, which I particularly like, because we have multiple levels of government working together, and the private sector is working with the government and council to introduce something the Northern Territory really needs.

They are very excited about netball in Alice Springs. They believe that all the best players from the Northern Territory will come from Alice Springs, which puts the acid on people in Darwin to try to keep up with the fantastic athletes coming out of Alice Springs.

We have \$5m for a capital grant to redevelop the pool at the Parap Leisure and Sports Centre. We can see this government working across multiple levels of government. The federal, Territory and local governments are working together to deliver a FINA-accredited pool that will bring Australian and international standard events to the Northern Territory. When we look at the return on investment of that \$5m we see positive, sustainable development. The amount of money we will get back from hosting these big events in the Northern Territory for swimming will more than pay back the \$5m we have contributed.

This highlights the sustainable nature of the things we are trying to do in the Northern Territory from a sport's perspective, as opposed to our opposition, which built unsustainable infrastructure for the mum and dad clubs.

There is another \$2m for a grant for Motor Sports Northern Territory to upgrade various facilities across the Territory. As part of that \$2m grant we see the government not just working for motor sports, but for innovation in the Northern Territory. One of the great things to come out of the funding for motor sports is that a local company has come up with the idea of making air fences – the new barricades that work well in motor sports complexes. We were able to provide funding and give them the chance they needed to get a contract to build one. That Northern Territory business, which is an innovative leader, has won other contracts as a result, creating employment for people in the Northern Territory from something that was just a sports grant.

A \$2m upgrade to sporting facilities in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory is very important. In the future we want good playing surfaces in remote communities and to ensure they have functional court facilities for basketball and netball, and a good playing surface on a football, soccer, rugby or other field sport ground.

We have \$4m sports infrastructure grant packages as part of the Boosting our Economy package put together by government as a response to some sectors in our economy that were lagging a little. It has been fantastic to see the results that have quickly come out of that. I am very proud of the people in the Department of Sport and Recreation, who were able to come up with projects, execute them quickly and get things moving on the ground for local businesses. This helps active sport and recreation teams in the Northern Territory, and it adds to the sense of community and prosperity of the people of the Northern Territory by creating jobs.

We have heard from numerous departments today about the mountain bike paths being developed. Mountain biking is becoming one of the rec activities that is taking precedence in the Northern Territory. There are some great competitions near Alice Springs as they have some of the best mountain bike tracks in Australia, and it is great to see Australian-level competitions starting to take place there.

The Country Liberal government has an unprecedented record of investing in sport and recreational infrastructure. The focus has a direct impact on the local economy, creating work for local businesses, creating jobs and providing Territorians with the best possible facilities to play sport and be active.

The Country Liberals continue to bring first-class sporting events to the Territory by directly injecting millions of dollars into the hospitality industry, while exposing our local peak bodies and clubs to the national and international scene. Highlights of this include motorsports. The Australian national drag racing series came to Darwin. The 2016 Desert Nationals are to feature a round in the Summit Racing Equipment Sportsman Series and Top Doorslammers in Alice Springs. There is \$1m to continue to hold national rugby league games in the Northern Territory. Other events include Australian rules football continuing in the Northern Territory; an international hockey series, with the Hockeyroos and Kookaburras locked in to play in Darwin over the next three years; the Mitchell Street Mile, which continues to attract elite runners from around Australia and Asia; the 2016 <http://www.worldsquash.org/ws/news/26331> World International Doubles Squash Championships; the Hottest 7s in the World Rugby Union tournament; the Imparja Cup, incorporating the National

Indigenous Cricket Championships in Alice Springs; the Pro Tour tennis tournament in Alice Springs; and the Alice Springs Masters Games.

From these events we see the ability to inspire our young people. In sport and rec it is great for our young people to play and be healthy and active, but the kids who want to go further can see the skills of the elite athletes at the top level when these games come to town. They are able to see their heroes play and it inspires them to try harder, train harder and continue to develop. We like to see an aspirational Northern Territory. We like to see people in the Northern Territory aspiring to greater and better things.

Sport plays a big part in that because as young people learn to aspire in a sporting field, it impresses upon them at an early age to be the hero on a sporting field. That translates later in life to wanting to be a high achiever in other areas such as their professional careers. We encourage that because we want a Northern Territory workforce that is aspiring to be the best it can. Sport plays a major role in that.

Part of what we are doing for the future includes looking at a master plan. The sport and rec department has been working hard on this for a long time. We have a saying: we do not walk at sport and rec. We have already actioned a number of key recommendations highlighted in the master plan. These investments include \$250 000 to promote women and girls in sport; \$250 000 to improve sport and rec facilities in remote areas; and \$100 000 to develop our volunteers. These are three key areas that were identified in the sport and rec master plan, which we need to work on to ensure opportunities are available to everyone, no matter where they live or what gender they are. If they want to play sport we need to ensure the opportunities are there for our young people to succeed.

When I look at what the future holds, and when I look at the master plan – it sets the stage and the policy framework for years to come. It sets some well-consulted strategic directions that will become part of the strategic direction of sport and rec as it moves into the next strategic planning process.

The work we have done in sport and rec over the last four years has been effective. We need to stop looking at things that will simply make some people happy in the short term by giving noisy people what they want. It is not about that but about looking at what the community needs to move forward. What does our community need to make sure it is active and healthy? That is why we are looking at things across the board where we can re-balance into the active rec space. How many Territorians go to the gym? How many like

to walk their dog? How many like to ride their bike along the Nightcliff foreshore? Those are the kinds of activities we need to cater for. Sport and rec is heading towards creating an aspirational Northern Territory that looks at the sport and rec space as being a healthy lifestyle, not just premised around building a ridiculously huge sport facility and then giving it to a mum and dad club to operate. That is unsustainable.

Sport and rec cannot risk a Labor government that has no leadership, no understanding of developing grassroots participation and no plan to take our industry to the next level. We are a sporting Territory. It is vital to have a thriving industry that encourages our kids to be active and provides opportunities for men and women to reach their full potential, no matter what discipline they choose.

I am proud to be the Minister for Sport and Recreation in the Country Liberal government, led by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Adam Giles. It was great to listen to the Treasurer deliver the budget and see how this all ties together, to see how it all dovetails and how we are working across every space, because it is all working towards the same strategic plan.

The strategic plan is looking at a prosperous Northern Territory, which focuses on a community that builds team spirit and connections between groups of people across the Northern Territory to create a sense of community. That creates jobs for people in the Territory.

We want to create an aspirational Northern Territory, not one that wants to go back in time by many years to the bad old days of the Labor government. We need to always remember that sport and recreation focuses on this: a kid with a cricket bat or a tennis racquet, who watches television or goes to one of our major events, and sees their hero playing sport beautifully and wants to take that on and be the best in their field.

That is the Northern Territory that we want to develop; they are the young people we want to develop, with vision and drive. That is why I congratulate the Treasurer on another responsible budget that delivers prosperity for all Territorians, enhances our Territory lifestyle by investing in the community, and ensures that we are on the right path to create jobs well into the future.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the Treasurer on bringing forward a fine budget for the people of the Northern Territory. It is the necessary balance that one has to strike in difficult fiscal times between expenditure and restraint.

We, as a government, have worked extremely hard to find ourselves in a position of surplus, and last year we did so. However, we now find ourselves with a lower income because of Western Australia being back on the GST nipple.

As a consequence of that, the projections forward mean that after the surplus was achieved – mission accomplished – we had to step, sadly, back into deficit. But, ultimately, we have a surplus on the horizon unless a Labor government is elected, in which case the word ‘surplus’ would simply evaporate like a snowflake in a blast furnace.

I not only support the health budget, but illuminate the House on a number of our measures in that domain. The health budget is not that far shy of the infrastructure budget for the Northern Territory. The infrastructure budget is \$1.7bn and the health budget is \$1.52bn. The budget seeks to cast a wide net. There is no doubt health continues to be a major challenge not only for the Northern Territory government, but for governments throughout the OECD and beyond.

There are a number of major announcements in this budget, not least of which I referred to earlier today, which was the \$8.3m commitment to cardio and thoracic services, as well as neurological services in the Northern Territory. We have a limited capacity to do things in the cardio environment. Whilst we can do valve work in the same way we do stents – which I find absolutely remarkable, but apparently it is possible – we will step forward to do things like valve replacements. This takes us through the Tier 5 system of the hospital and places the Tier 6 environment on the horizon, which is the position I am trying to put the Royal Darwin Hospital in.

We have some 600 patients who travel interstate for either neurological or cardiothoracic services every year. As a consequence, it averages out at about \$11 000 per patient to the tune of \$6.6m. It does not take a great deal to top up to the \$8.3m to be able to improve cardiothoracic services at the Royal Darwin Hospital, as well as neurological services. For all the reasons I described during Question Time today, the ability for people to get these services in Darwin will lead to better services for the people of the Northern Territory, as well as better opportunities to be surrounded by family and friends when undergoing various procedures.

I also wish to touch on something I spoke about today in Question Time, which is the \$186m commitment over five years for the Core Clinical Systems Renewal Program. Health services around Australia have a similar problem and we are no exception. Our core clinical systems are a series of databases – one major one and a series

of loosely attached ones – which are old and reaching the end of their use-by date. Moreover, it has gotten to the stage where the people who support our databases, especially our major one, will soon withdraw their services from Australia.

You have the double whammy of a database that needs attention because it is old, and the support service on the verge of being removed from Australia. On top of that, if you wanted to speak to the programmers of some of these systems you would need a seance or Ouija board to speak to them, because they have passed on in every sense of the word. Rather than try to bolt something onto the side in a piecemeal fashion, which is how the systems have evolved over the last decade, we intend to pull the whole thing down and rebuild it from scratch. The cost is \$186m, but we will have a system which other jurisdictions will look upon with envious eyes and say, 'We wish we had that'.

The Northern Territory has a good and strong track record in this space. The Commonwealth eHealth system is essentially a straight lift of the Northern Territory eHealth system. My congratulations go to Stephen Moo from the Health department's IT division for his work in this area. Now that we have seen some statistical measures of the uptake of eHealth, clearly doctors were slow to pick this up, but once they picked up the ball and ran with it, it almost became a stampede. I presume the Commonwealth's experience will be similar as its eHealth system goes forward. The Commonwealth has not changed the name of the record system because of the similarities between it and the Northern Territory system.

For the first time, clinicians will be able to electronically access patient records from any public healthcare facility in the Territory. Ultimately this means an X-ray taken in Darwin can be viewed in Docker River. It means an examination done in Alpuurulam can be examined in Alice Springs, and somebody who goes to Yulara for treatment can have their records checked in Yirrkala. These are the advantages of the system.

The problem with IT systems is they are very expensive and you cannot see them. It is not like a new hospital or a nice new clinic, where you cut a ribbon out the front or turn a sod. You are condemned to announce you will do it and the best you can hope to show the media is a flashing LED light on the back of a modem hoping it will make sufficiently good footage for the media to be interested in the story. In truth, it is one of the excellent stories we have to tell in this year's budget.

There is a \$3m investment in a second CT scanner for Royal Darwin Hospital, which is always welcome. We also welcome the Commonwealth's commitment in relation to the PET scanner which will be attached to the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre.

We continue the upgrade of \$64m in Royal Darwin Hospital, and I have outlined these things to the House in the past. Nevertheless, they are worth revisiting today. They include the refurbishment of the paediatric ward to the tune of \$4m; the upgrade and addition of two negative isolation rooms at \$6.4m; new allied health clinics, including physio, occupational and speech therapies, which is complete; the refurbishment of outpatient clinics, including the new eye and preadmission clinics, worth \$40m; and the front entrance and foyer access at \$13.6. I was at the hospital on the weekend and noticed the construction fences are up. These are all much-needed upgrades to the Royal Darwin Hospital.

As a minister, in my various roles I have tried to bring infrastructure work forward, whether I am talking about Attorney-General, Health and Mental Health Services or Disability Services. This includes building the Palmerston hospital, and I will touch upon that later; the upgrades to the Royal Darwin Hospital; in the case of the Attorney-General's role, the new Supreme Court in Alice Springs and the extension of the Children's Court here in Darwin; work on the Alice Springs Hospital through the Health department; and, in regard to Mental Health Services, the opening of new beds attached to the Cowdy Ward in Darwin.

We also announced the \$149m five-year agreement with St John, which will improve ambulance services in the Northern Territory. I was at the launch of the new Humpty Doo facility, and I congratulate Ross Coburn on the work he is doing in ensuring that ambulance services will be commensurate with public expectations going forward.

We are pleased to do this deal, and ensure that St John continues to do its excellent work in the community, with \$6.9m to continue works on the construction of the relocation of the St John Ambulance centre in Katherine, which is a total project cost of \$7.6m.

I see that the member for Nhulunbuy is in the House. There is \$4.9m taking up the Gove hospital infrastructure program to \$10.7m, which deals with the fire system upgrade as well.

Whilst I am sure the member for Nhulunbuy was aware of the \$13m that was originally offered and then taken away, there is a restoration, in part, of some of that expenditure. I expect that the people

of Nhulunbuy, and perhaps even the member for Nhulunbuy, will be gratified by that expenditure.

A total of \$5.3m was removed by the former Health minister from the Gove facility to be spent in Alice Springs on a multipurpose facility. I note the petition that was read into the *Hansard* record earlier today in relation to palliative care services, and, clearly, one of the primary functions of the multipurpose facility is palliative care services. They are not excluded.

No other palliative services that exist currently in Alice Springs will be diminished. The Spicer Crescent facility will continue to receive support. The reason the multipurpose facility continues to operate is twofold; one is that the former Health minister committed to a multipurpose facility in spite of public utterances to the contrary; and two, we will still have a focus on palliative care, but if those beds are vacant because they are not required for palliation then they should be available for other purposes. We will leave it up to the managers and clinicians of the Alice Springs Hospital to ensure that palliative care patients are effectively looked after and their treatment is in no way diminished in relation to clinical decisions for other people.

There is a further \$16.2m to continue remediation and upgrades at the Alice Springs Hospital, which, in total, is \$38m for the project. That is not insubstantial either.

As I said, we have already added further mental health beds for the first time for kids in the Cowdy Ward. It is unfortunate that you have to open a facility like that for them; nevertheless, it is a necessary facility. I am sure the noise of welcome around that facility at the time we launched it is indicative of the need for it.

There is \$900 000 to maintain additional capacity in crisis assessment teams for short case management and mobile assessments; \$900 000 to continue the operation of a five-bed youth inpatient program, to which I have just referred; and another \$500 000 to continue the mental health court liaison service. One of the great opportunities as the Minister for Mental Health Services, and as Attorney-General, is to bridge the two departments in important ways and provide court liaison services for mental health clinicians, which the chief magistrate at the time, now the chief judge, continues to welcome to this day.

There is also \$325 000 for Top End remote-based clinician positions, and Aboriginal mental health workers in Maningrida and on the Tiwi Islands. One of the first things I did when I became the first Minister for Mental Health Services in the Territory was pursue the suicide prevention strategic plan

and make sure it became operational. I recently attended one of its meetings to satisfy myself that it is continuing to do the work in the way I expect it to be done. I am grateful to all the departments that participated in the implementation of that plan, and for the work they continue to do. I am sure other Territorians feel the same way.

That brings us to Disability Services, which has been largely consumed by negotiating the trials and tribulations of the establishment of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, otherwise known as the NDIS. I have fronted Senate committees, negotiated with Christian Porter and made a number of appeals in relation to matters which are specific to the roll-out of the NDIS in the Northern Territory.

I have met with the head of the NDIA and a number of NGOs which have an interest in this space, not least of which is the NDA. I thank Vicki O'Halloran for her constant supply of information and judgment on how to navigate some of the issues in this space. I also met with Tony Burns, who runs HPA; he does a fantastic job and brings out his passion there.

We have already announced a \$10m commitment to Carpentaria Disability Services for a proposed multifunction facility, which is a good plan. The Commonwealth has already committed to another \$10m, and there is another \$10m to be sourced from within Carpentaria's capacity. The net result of that is a \$30m institution, which will be ready to take advantage of the NDIS to provide services to people in the Northern Territory. The challenges I have had with NDIS have been a result of the Barkly trial.

Part of my negotiation process on the final arrangement surrounding the NDIS, before the federal government went into caretaker mode, was to ensure that my concerns on its exposure to people in remote and regional areas is effectively covered by the industry support funding from the Commonwealth. We continue to bed down the last of those negotiations with the Commonwealth to ensure areas of equity and oversight are properly covered in the Northern Territory with the roll-out of the NDIS.

I also note there has been greater flexibility in relation to the Tier 3 recipients of the NDIS payments. I am grateful that we have managed to sort it out, because what happened initially in the Barkly trial made it clear there would be haves and have-nots in the Northern Territory with the roll-out of the NDIS. I think we have suitably been able to dispose of those issues, in a fashion, and we can comfortably commit to the NDIS operating in the Northern Territory.

Last year's budget for disability services was \$88m. Our commitment to the NDIS will be \$99m, when it becomes fully operational in the Territory, as our insurance premium, with the Commonwealth committing about \$105m, off the top of my head. We have gone from a \$90m budget to a \$200m budget for disability services, which you would have to embrace.

There is \$920 000 over four years to support the transition to the full scheme across the Territory. I have spoken with Christian Porter to ensure we have further assistance in the Territory to deal with the equity issues I raised with the Senate when it investigated the matter in the Territory. I am pleased to report that \$470 000 will assist with completion of the third and final stage of the Somerville centre in Palmerston. I place on the record again my thanks to Vicki O'Halloran, who, I swear, could sell ice to eskimos and put a hire purchase agreement in place at the same time. When it comes to negotiating these things, there are few advocates on behalf of the less fortunate in the Territory with the vigour and aplomb of Vicki. She is a formidable lobbyist. We spoke about \$5m to Menzies School of Health Research to fund research into delivering strong economic and health returns for the Northern Territory.

That brings us to the Palmerston Regional Hospital. When I became Health minister, if the original plan had been pursued for a PPP arrangement it would still be a land lot with a bush growing on it. Construction was not due to commence until later in 2016 with the partnership arrangement in place. I found a number of elements of those arrangements problematic. I took those matters to Cabinet – we recently saw footage of the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education on-site at the hospital. We are already putting up the second floor. The slab has been poured, construction continues and I understand the work is almost exclusively going to locals as part of the Lendlease commitment to the local community as it builds the hospital. As the Chief Minister said, the hospital is on time and on budget.

The facility includes 116 beds; increased floor space to 22 400m² from the previous 18 000m²; undercover parking, which was raised with me; and part of it is the investment into furniture fittings, ICT and hardware.

As we have the ICT system rolling out, which I referred to earlier, this ensures it is compatible with the system in the Palmerston hospital. I do not want to leave the Territory in a situation where it has to retrofit ICT systems into a new hospital when we are building a new one. That is part of the challenge we face as a government.

Whilst we have managed to retard the growth of prisoner numbers in the Northern Territory to be substantially lower than the former government expected in custody, the sad truth is raw prisoner numbers still continue to rise over the passage of time. They are currently much better than the former Labor government's very best predictions. The former Labor government's predicting model is now so redundant we will have to abandon it.

The current prisoner population is far beneath the number that was used to justify building the \$1.8bn commitment that currently sits at Holtze.

For that reason \$4.5m is needed to increase prisoner officer numbers. We have to escort prisoners to and from hospital, and similar things, which adds \$2.3m in medical escorts. Home detention is also covered by that.

There is \$2.5m to meet the demands of the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. There is \$2.2m for upgrades to the Alice Springs Correctional Centre – an announcement I made in Alice Springs – and \$4.2m was also announced to roll out and expand the electronic monitoring program in the Northern Territory.

It is no surprise that electronic monitoring is, in part, a way of managing the custodial models in the future. As a government we continue to be proud to not only have the notion operational in the Northern Territory, but to be seeking to expand it. The SCRAM systems, which are the alcohol monitoring systems, demonstrate the quality of technology that exists in the world. G4S is our contracting partner and continues to roll out and monitor these people on our behalf. In recent times we have enabled the passage of legislation so youth can be monitored, either in the bail or post-custodial environment. Sadly, some of the youth of the Northern Territory need to have an eye kept on them.

In relation to my role as the minister for child protection, I have been anxious to ensure the child protection system of the Northern Territory returns to its core functions. One of the things I found upon becoming the Minister for Children and Families is that the department was being asked to do too much. Unfortunately I was left with a clear sense that in many respects the department, in its message to its people, was not as crystal clear as it should have been. For that reason I have been working closely with the CEO, Anne Bradford, to make certain we are rolling out a system which keeps a very close eye on the department's fundamental function, which is the protection of children who are abused, neglected or sexually abused by either their family or the family which is unable to prevent these children from suffering some form of harm.

As I said during Question Time, the tendency is to open files rather than close them, which happens for good reason. Court orders often see these kids in the care of the CEO until they are 18, and they remain as open files until such time as the child turns 18, is adopted or is the subject of the permanent care orders we have in place in the Northern Territory, of which there are a number under application.

As we expand the services, we have to ensure there are funds available for the care and protection of children. These funds include making sure out-of-home care services are available – not necessarily foster care services – particularly for high-needs kids.

This budget would be difficult to control for any government because once you set yourself on the path of child protection in this fashion, you end up being driven by demand. In many respects it is like health; you do not know how many will come through the door, and when courts make orders you, as a government, respond.

It is anticipated that the department will need an additional \$10m going forward. That is a sad truth. Until the federal government is prepared to do things in the passive welfare space and make greater inroads in relation to how it manages passive welfare, there will be an overrepresentation of children in the Northern Territory who need to be taken into care because of some of the disastrous outcomes that passive welfare visits upon. That is not to say it is the only cause, but it is a substantial contributor. As a jurisdiction, whether we are left, right, somewhere in the middle or whatever, we need to continue pressing on and driving that message home.

I will very quickly touch on some other things I am doing as the Attorney-General. We announced a further \$2.5m to continue the support to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, or NTCAT. We are funding that because NTCAT is broadening its scope of operations now that it has the small claims jurisdiction, and we expect it will have a greater work load. As its work load increases, so will its source of funding.

This is a good, healthy budget for the people of the Northern Territory. It sets a clear point of difference between us and the Labor Party in the Northern Territory. Clearly, on the announcements of the Labor Party, it is good at spending, but it has no mechanism with which to pay for it.

I commend the budget to the House.

Debate adjourned.

MENZIES SCHOOL OF HEALTH RESEARCH AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 163)

Continued from 20 April 2016.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I will not be on my feet very long in relation to this bill.

Mr Elferink: It is hardly contentious.

Ms WALKER: No, it is not contentious at all. It is a very sensible bill which seeks to contemporise and modernise the makeup of the Menzies School of Health Research Board.

I thank the minister for organising the briefing in his office several weeks ago. I was briefed by Peter Plummer, Chair of the Menzies School of Health Research Board, along with the director, Professor Alan Cass.

These are sensible amendments about strategically ensuring the long-term future of the Menzies School of Health Research and the need to establish a partnership with the world of research and the work it does, in such a way that it lessens its reliance upon Territory and federal government funding. In order to achieve that the board wants to ensure it covers – this is in the bill – six key areas of skills, knowledge and experience. That includes commerce and financial management or accounting; law; marketing; philanthropy; scientific; and biomedical or clinical health research. All six of those skills areas at any one time must be evidenced on the board, which is eminently sensible.

We have no issue with this bill. I take this opportunity to congratulate Menzies School of Health Research for the fabulous work it does. Yesterday, by e-mail, I received a copy of its 2015 annual report, celebrating 30 years of Menzies School of Health Research. It was a pleasure and honour to accompany the Leader of the Opposition to the 30th anniversary dinner last year at the beautiful new facility on the campus at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Being a remote member, I come across quite a bit of the work Menzies School of Health Research does in improving the lives of Indigenous people and children. The holistic view it takes around health, wellbeing and dealing with preventable diseases is important.

This is a sensible bill and it can only enhance and improve the work Menzies does. It has the full support of opposition members.

Mr ELFERINK (Health): Madam Speaker, of course, this is common sense. Those at the

Menzies School of Health Research have done something recently that all organisations should do: review themselves. While they hold themselves up to the looking glass they should ask themselves some very serious questions about what they do, what their purpose is, what they intend to do going forward, etcetera.

That is precisely what the Menzies School of Health Research did. I recall 12 months ago, or perhaps longer, meeting with some of the board members and speaking about how the Menzies School of Health Research would step forward.

The government supports the Menzies School of Health Research. I am sure if Professor Cass were here today he would be heartened to hear of the \$5m announced in today's budget.

The Menzies School of Health Research is growing up; it is now 30 and needs to venture into the world, and the Territory should be very proud of it. I remember when it was first established 30 years ago, and I remember the announcements at the time, long before I entered this place. I remember thinking it was an ambitious thing for a small jurisdiction to pursue – an academic organisation of this calibre.

Not only has it demonstrated that it has earned every right to exist, but it has a number of world firsts chalked up to it, and it has ambition. I love that about organisations, when they demonstrate ambition, courage and heart, and when they have the courage to look at themselves and ask how they can step forward. When they come to us and say they need some legislative change to ensure we can do all of the above, as ministers, as a House and as a community we are compelled to say, 'Absolutely. We will back you every step of the way.'

I thank Professor Alan Cass and the board for their contribution to the Menzies School of Health Research. I also thank members opposite for their support of this commonsense legislation.

I also thank the people who have worked on the bill to bring it before the House, as well as the review team, Deloitte, which did the impact review of Menzies. It was a selected panel of people, and I thank them for their efforts.

I wish Menzies all the very best going into the future. I thank Professor Alan Cass, who was here in the Chamber, in the adviser's box, advising me from his perspective. I wish the Menzies School of Health Research all health into the future.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr ELFERINK (Health) (by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**GUARDIANSHIP OF ADULTS BILL
(Serial 160)
ADVANCE PERSONAL PLANNING
AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 161)**

Continued from 20 April 2016.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araruen): Madam Speaker, the Guardianship of Adults Bill 2016 (Serial 160) is a very important bill which is long overdue.

I remember when the CLP government first came to power in August 2012, and we very quickly undertook to rewrite this legislation pertaining to adult guardianship and decision-making. It has been a long time coming over the last four years.

I was the Health minister from the beginning of 2013 through to December 2014. By the time I was removed as the Health minister this bill was, for the most part, written. It had not gone to community consultation in December 2014, but looking back through my notes, even at that point we were intending to put it out for community consultation in the new year, which would have been early 2015.

I was rather disappointed that it took well over 12 months after I was removed as the Minister for Health for it to go out to the community for consultation. A whole year was essentially lost, from my perspective. It eventually came to the attention of the community. The current Health minister was able to organise his department and it went out for community consultation.

People in Alice Springs, which is my main geographical area of interest these days, attended an information session for this new bill on 18 February 2016. Notice of this meeting was provided to a fairly limited group of people, and the way in which I found out was by doorknocking that day. I happened to knock on the door of a gentleman who worked within an organisation involved in caring for people with impaired decision-making abilities. He said to me, 'Robyn, are you going to the information session tonight?' And I said to him, 'I'm not aware of what you're talking about'. Thankfully, I was informed by this gentleman and I attended the information session in Alice Springs.

At that information session – it was not what I would call a consultation – we were told we had approximately two weeks in which the government would accept feedback from the community.

Things got pretty tight for the government to give notice of this bill and for the minister to give the second reading speech in April to be debated tonight.

Ironically, I recall a similar situation happening for the former Labor government. They tried to get through their adult decision-making bill at the eleventh hour before the 2012 election and failed to do so, which was a great shame. In hindsight, it was a good piece of legislation. We have lost four years and, during that time, people with impaired decision-making abilities and their carers have been stuck with what can only be described as an old, antiquated piece of legislation which has governed a significant part of their lives.

That is the history of how we got here today. The good news is we have a modern piece of legislation in line with the national approach to guardianship, adult decision-making and contemporary best practice. For the most part it is good legislation.

I have contacted several people who are affected by this legislation and who look after offspring with impaired decision-making abilities, and some who care for someone special under guardianship. Most of those people have been complimentary about this new legislation. I do not have too many concerns, but I will talk through some of the concerns that have been raised with me.

This bill seeks to recognise the overall wellbeing, human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with impaired decision-making capacity, and it aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation and includes not only people with intellectual disability, which the current act is confined to, but people who, for whatever reason, have impaired decision-making abilities. This is a wonderful advancement in the new bill.

There are certain features of this bill that I will talk through and which are outlined in the explanatory paper on the draft Guardianship of Adults Bill. The bill proposes a set of comprehensive guardianship principles to guide decision-makers in the exercise of their authority, and ensure consistency and accountability in undertaking this important role. The guardianship principles are fundamental to maximise participation in decision-making in everyday life by adults with impaired decision-making capacity.

The bill proposed that the decision-maker's authority must be exercised in a way that is least restrictive of the adult's freedom of decision and action to the greatest extent practicable.

One of the features of this new bill is creation of an independent statutory officer as the Public Guardian. There was some consternation and concern about how independent this statutory officer, as the Public Guardian, would be. The creation of this independent statutory officer is an essential element of the new legislation and aligns the Northern Territory with models used in other jurisdictions. The independence of the Public Guardian is prescribed by the bill. However, if the Public Guardian is a guardian for an adult, in that capacity the Public Guardian is subject to the supervision or direction of NTCAT, the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The creation of the independent guardian will remove the current conflict of interest whereby the Minister for Health is responsible for overall guardianship, health and disability policy directions and, as the Public Guardian, is also required to make decisions in the best interests of individual concerns.

This is a very positive step, taking the Health minister out of the Public Guardianship role and putting in place an independent statutory officer as the Public Guardian. The concerns raised with me around this new position, as I said – how independent is this Public Guardian? Reading through these explanatory notes, the Public Guardian is or will be appointed by the Administrator on the recommendations of the Minister for Health. The recommendation by the minister must be made on the basis that the person has qualifications or experience relating to the Public Guardian's functions and is committed to advancing the interests of persons with impaired decision-making capacity and to promoting guardianship principles.

Some people have communicated to me their concerns, given that the Public Guardian will be appointed by the Administrator on the recommendation of the minister. What sort of separation will there be? Continuing through the description – it says the bill prescribes that a report must be given to the minister by 31 October each year and the minister must table a copy of the report in the Legislative Assembly within six days of receiving it.

There is still a strong relationship between the minister and the Public Guardian. In practice that independence will be respected to allow the full effectiveness of this new model to operate.

Concerns were raised with me about the reality that we are such a small jurisdiction; we know each other as neighbours, friends and acquaintances. How independently will this person function? This concern was raised about all independent positions and bodies throughout the Northern Territory. It will not be confined to

just the Public Guardian's position. It is a concern throughout the Northern Territory.

The other issue is the staff for this new independent body. A question was raised in the information session I attended in Alice Springs about how the office will be staffed. The question was about who will make up the staff of this new office, and whether the current staff of the Guardianship Office will transfer over to the new independent Public Guardian's Office. I recall the answer being, 'Yes. That could happen and obviously the positions would be advertised'. It was assumed that at least some of the staff in the current office would be transferred over to the new independent office.

Concerns were generally raised with me around whether it would be an independent office in name but not in nature. Working on separation and independence will be worked out over time, I guess. By transferring staff from the old office to the new office, to some extent the advantage would be that you are not losing all that corporate knowledge, which is so critical in such a small jurisdiction as the Northern Territory.

The NTCAT, Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, plays a very important role in this new model of guardianship of adults. The bill proposes for jurisdiction of all adult guardianship matters to be transferred from the Local Court to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, known as the tribunal. The tribunal is established by the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act*, or the NTCAT Act. The interaction of the draft bill and the NTCAT will allow guardianship proceedings to be determined more quickly, with less technicality and formality than through the court system. It is anticipated that this approach will reduce delays in hearing and determining guardianship applications.

There were concerns that this is a dramatic change. One couple I spoke to, who are very well-informed and familiar with the current system, were concerned with the NTCAT being the ultimate body that presides over guardianship matters, and that there would be a loss and NTCAT may not be as responsive to the personal needs, circumstances, concerns and peculiarity of cases. Listening to these people and others – every case is different.

These people with special needs and limited decision-making capacities are very unique, and they have complicated conditions and disabilities. To make decisions about these people is to understand how complex their circumstances and conditions are. There are also the carers, networks and families that work with and help these people. They live their lives day-by-day with

this special person in the centre who they are providing guardianship for. These people told me in great detail how complex their circumstances were over many years, and how they felt comfortable with the Local Court presiding over decisions regarding their relative who was on a guardianship order.

Some people are anxious about moving from a system they know, trust and have learnt to work with into a new system which is unproven. Some of these people's concerns were about the expertise on the NTCAT. They wanted to be reassured that the people sitting on that tribunal have special skills and expertise that will enable them to fully understand the circumstances of the person under guardianship and their carers.

I have read about an effort being made to ensure there will be people on the tribunal who fit the criteria and have special skills and knowledge in the area of disabilities, which is essential. The other issue is about having people on a tribunal who know you to some extent, who have come across you before and whom you have a relationship with. That is difficult in the Territory *per se*. The turnover of professional staff in all areas is generally high, so that may not be realistic.

I wanted to register those concerns tonight, that people will need to build a relationship with the NTCAT and be convinced that this is a better system which will be responsive to them and their relatives, especially the person they are caring for or the person under guardianship. This is a sensitive, emotional area – people who are unable to make decisions for themselves. It is life-changing and life-dominating for all involved. I think you will find that people who are involved in caring for or being a guardian for someone are usually very committed to that, have strong views and are emotionally involved in the area, which is not difficult to understand.

One of the positive changes this bill will bring is making healthcare decisions more easily through the tribunal. Under the current act a guardian with authority for healthcare cannot provide consent for major medical procedures, which include procedures relating to contraception and those requiring general anaesthetic. These procedures require an application to the Local Court for a consent decision, which can result in treatment delays.

This bill allows guardians to have greater authority for decisions relating to healthcare. Healthcare has been widely defined in the bill, and it means that, subject to the specific terms of the guardianship order, guardians with authority for healthcare matters will be able to consent to treatments that require the use of general

anaesthetic, similar substantial sedation or the administration of central nervous system-affecting drugs, treatments that require a doctor or dentist prescription, treatment carried out by or under the supervision of a doctor or dentist, and ongoing treatment where treatment occurs regularly or as part of a treatment plan for the time of the order.

This legislation gives more flexibility. Guardians will be allowed to make decisions about medical procedures under those criteria, which is a great thing. I think that is one of the more ridiculous parts of current legislation, guardians not being able to make those fairly straightforward medical decisions that most parents are able to make without much difficulty.

The other very positive thing about this legislation is that orders can be made in advance for a young person. If a young person is about to turn 18, the parents or carers do not have to wait until the person turns 18 before they make an application for guardianship for that person. This was another one of the great gaps in the current legislation. People could not apply until the person was 18, from what I recall. This legislation allows for carers to apply so it is a seamless move from a child under the care of an adult to a guardian.

The inclusion of this provision overcomes any gap in decision-making authority for persons turning 18 and thereby ensures the smooth transition of decision-making authority from childhood to adulthood.

That was a huge worry for carers. I was asked to assist several people who were concerned about transitioning their children into the different category as an adult.

Another positive aspect of this is the flexibility of these new guardianship orders. The bill has been drafted to accommodate different levels of decision-making abilities so the tribunal may give guardians the specific authority necessary in the adult's individual circumstances.

The flexibility of the tribunal's authority to make individualised guardianship orders is reflected in a number of specific areas, which I will not go into.

The point I am making is that this is good legislation and has been well considered – over many years, I have to say, but we are finally here and that is all that matters at the end of the day. Much work will need to be done with the transition from one antiquated piece of legislation to the other. I am sure the Department of Health and the new Public Guardian office will be prepared for that transition.

As I said, very special people are affected by this legislation. I am telling you something you already

know, but every one of the people currently on a guardianship order in the Northern Territory is very special and vulnerable. Their carers have often been through a pretty rough time in one way or another. I ask all involved to be very mindful and sensitive to this transition.

I commend the Minister for Health for bringing this new bill to the parliament and I unequivocally support it.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I wish to contribute to the debate on the bill and the amendments that flow from that to the *Advance Personal Planning Act*.

I thank the Minister for Health for bringing forward this incredibly important legislation to many Territorians who may be subject to a guardianship order at some point in their lives, and those who act as guardians and advocates for them. It replaces the *Adult Guardianship Act 1988*, which has been described tonight as antiquated legislation. It is well and truly time we look at how we can make sure people's rights are better protected.

The principle that the Office of the Public Guardian should be independent is supported by Territory Labor. We acknowledge the need for this to occur to align our practices with other jurisdictions. It is acknowledged and appreciated that the new bill provides for a broader definition of impaired decision-making and the circumstances under which an adult, for a range of reasons, may require a guardianship order.

At this point, I also acknowledge the commitment and dedication of guardians who advocate for adults with impaired decision-making. I have spoken to many of them since this legislation was introduced and I am struck by what they do. This legislation is incredibly important to the Territory as a whole.

The main focus for all of us is the protection of the individual's rights and to ensure decisions are made with the person's best interests in mind, even when that individual may not be able to make these decisions for themselves. As the shadow minister for Mental Health and Disability Services, and as a member of this parliament who truly believes this office should be independent, I attended the Darwin consultation session for this piece of legislation, as did a number of guardians and interested parties. I have also attended two briefings in relation to the legislation. Other colleagues on this side of the house have also availed themselves of those briefings. I thank the minister's office and departmental staff for being available to do that. It is a very complex piece of legislation.

As was referred to by the minister in the first reading of this bill, the idea that the Office of the Public Guardian should move to an independent model is not a new one. The recommendations of the 2005 WestWood Spice review aimed at aligning the Northern Territory to other jurisdictions in this regard. It is also important to note – it has been raised this evening – work was undertaken in drafting the Adult Decision Making Bill in 2012, and the member for Araluen is correct that it would have been good to see this happen much earlier because it is important to many Territorians.

I understand that some of the feedback gathered through the previous drafting process has also formed the basis for the drafting of this bill and the subsequent amendments. With this in mind, it can be noted that there is bipartisan support of the principle that the office should act independently and provide the utmost confidence to the community that they can expect independent advocacy for themselves and others if required.

There are many positive aspects to this bill, including the change in jurisdiction to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal; the inclusion of the ability to allow a represented person to be removed from situations where they may be subject to abuse, exploitation or neglect, as referred to be the minister; the broader authority around health decision-making, such as treatment by a doctor or dentist; and provision of contraception and general anaesthetic. Under the bill, guardianship orders can be made in advance for young people aged 17 years, before they reach the age of 18, to ease the transition for families where an order is deemed necessary.

Through the process of consultation there have been some definition changes in relation to things like the definition of 'relatives' to make it more appropriate and accurate for the Northern Territory context in which this legislation needs to be implemented and be effective.

It would be remiss of me to not highlight some of the concerns that exist amongst interested stakeholders, some of which have already been raised tonight. I invite the minister to provide some clarification and comment in relation to those issues in his wrap-up, and to discuss that in further detail. I have raised some of the questions before, but I will place them on the record tonight.

It is appreciated that the staff of the independent statutory body, which would be the office of the Public Guardian, would not report to the Department of Health, hence the independence of such an office. However, some interested parties have raised concerns that staff may still be technically employed and able to have their employment terminated by the Department of

Health, and that there is a perceived conflict of interest around some of their roles as independent advocates. It is important for us to be aware of that in monitoring and talking about this tonight.

In many other jurisdictions the parent body, for want of a better word, is not the Department of Health. I believe in New South Wales and Tasmania it is the Department of Justice that undertakes this role. In Queensland the Office of the Public Guardian reports to parliament through the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General. I hope the minister can talk about that tonight and provide some information on whether that has been considered and why it is not occurring through the work currently being undertaken.

A second concern is the appointment of the statutory officer who is the Public Guardian, who under this legislation is appointed by the Administrator on the recommendation of the minister. It has been raised through the consultation process that on top of what has been provided for in this bill – that qualifications, knowledge and experience are at the forefront of this decision – a competitive and transparent process is important to the NT community, legal stakeholders and guardians.

The independent statutory officer positions are tasked with advocating without fear or favour in the best interests of Territorians. Given the lack of process that has previously occurred under the CLP government, it is not surprising that attention has been paid, especially to this aspect of the implementation of the bill. I seek assurance that this process will be transparent.

Another issue that will probably not surprise the minister is in section 91, relating to disclosure of information. I want to make it explicitly clear that the protection, rights and best interests of the individual are paramount, as they should be. This area of the bill demonstrates the complexity of what we are talking about tonight. It truly is a reality that, as a last result, there have been cases in which advocates have gone public to highlight the needs of the adult under their guardianship. This is especially relevant where those adults may be in the justice system.

There are Territorians who, for lack of appropriate supported accommodation and alternatives, remain in the justice system without conviction. This debate should serve as a reminder to all of us of the work that needs to be done towards such alternatives for Territorians who are in these situations, and the guardians who so tirelessly advocate for them. I am sure they have advocated as much to the government as they have to other members of the Chamber.

There have been some high-profile cases in this regard over the years, where advocacy led by legal guardians has shone a light on the experiences and needs of Territorians. I hope there is will from all that this is a step in the right direction towards providing a robust system, but it certainly is not a full stop. So much other work needs to sit around this, including ensuring that there are alternatives for people under guardianship who are currently in the justice system without conviction.

I am interested to hear from the minister on his views about this section and its interaction with – I think it is sections 73 and 43E of the Criminal Code about the scenarios ...

Mr Elferink: Are you talking about Part IIAA?

Ms MOSS: I am interested to hear from you about the scenarios under which you believe the criminal penalties would be enacted.

I am interested in hearing the minister clarify the scenarios in which he sees criminal liability being enacted under section 91, which is of interest to a number of advocates.

There are also concerns about the removal of mandated legal representation. It is acknowledged that the right to legal representation and/or a litigation guardian under the NTCAT legislation – sections 104 and 130, but it is not mandated. Therefore I am also requesting the minister to provide further information about why this is the case.

An example has been provided by a legal stakeholder in the Territory about the importance of this involvement in ensuring the applications submitted to the tribunal are adequate and meet the threshold for issuing a guardianship order. This is a matter under which they have served clients within the current framework, and applications that have been made to the court were made on inadequate reports.

It is also important to ensure that clients across the Territory have access to independent advocacy, verbal explanations of the proceedings, the opportunity to ask questions about what is happening, and can have someone who is able to advocate for them, or an interpreter if that is needed throughout the proceedings.

An additional concern that I still hold is the adequate resourcing of the independent office, how many staff members will be allocated to the office and what is planned by way of communicating these changes across the Northern Territory in our regional and remote areas, which is vital.

I will touch on the consultation period. I acknowledge the hard work of the departmental representatives who undertook a number of sessions around the Northern Territory in February and, over that same period, invited written submissions to the consultation draft of this bill.

It was very interesting to hear the member for Araluen talk about how long it has taken for this bill to be drafted, in light of what I think of the consultation period. The session I attended was in depth. I thought the departmental representatives were exceptionally generous with their time, allowing questions and provision of feedback.

I have a comment about the period of time – the initial media release about public consultation for this bill was issued on 2 February and the first consultation was held on 7 February. I understand there were some issues with getting notice to guardians. They went out by mail. Many of them missed the first session, so the Palmerston session was added. I appreciate that being done, but many people did not know this was happening until around 7, 8 or 9 February, and they did not have an opportunity to attend a public information session until two weeks before the end of February.

All feedback and submissions were due on 29 February, only three weeks from the first consultation session and a month from the first media release being issued.

The people fulfilling guardianship roles are already under a lot of pressure, taking on many commitments in addition to their other responsibilities, such as family, work and other commitments they may have. They are often not from a legal background. They had less than four weeks to digest the proposed legislation and, if they were so inclined, attend a public session and write a submission to provide feedback, as well as talk to other members of parliament. I feel that this was unrealistic for many people, let alone people who are caring and helping to make decisions for others.

It is also noted that many of the questions that arose from the Darwin consultation were about the qualifications, knowledge and understanding of NTCAT regarding the context in which it would now be working, which is a new area of issuing a different kind of order. There were many questions about what training would be provided. No one from NTCAT was at that consultation and there was no information about NTCAT at the session.

I am taken aback now that I realise it could have happened much sooner and had a much better

consultation period, but this is the situation we are in. I asked departmental staff about the training and expertise of NTCAT. They said that a range of things is being looked at. I hope we can get some more information about that, whether it is that someone is seconded from the Office of the Public Guardian to help provide that expertise or ensuring that the panel has the expertise. We are looking for more assurance on that.

I want to reiterate some of the things I would like more information about from the minister:

- that there will be a competitive and transparent process for the selection of the independent statutory officer, that is, the Public Guardian
- the rationale behind keeping them employed by the Department of Health in regard to taking up employment and the termination of employment
- whether there is an acknowledgement of the perceived potential conflict of interest for some interested parties within this arrangement
- assurances that the office will be resourced adequately not only in the establishment phase of an independent office, but in an ongoing manner, and what the commitment to that is
- assurances that resources have been allocated and committed to, ensuring a widespread education campaign across the Northern Territory about the changes to legislation
- what the rights and responsibilities of adults under guardianships and their guardians would look like
- whether current arrangements will remain in place in working with local legal stakeholders and funding representation for clients where an application has been lodged
- scenarios under which the minister sees section 91 giving rise to criminal liability
- any additional plans the government has in conjunction with this legislation to review services available for adults in the justice system without conviction, for a range of reasons such as cognitive impairment.

I hope some more information will be available.

I thank the minister for bringing this to the House. It is, as we all acknowledge, very important and complex. I support the move to make the Office of the Public Guardian an independent one.

Mr KURRUPUWU (Arafura): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to support the minister and this bill. Adult guardianship is an important matter to me. Over the last 12 months or so I have assisted some family members in navigating their way through adult guardianship laws. This bill will provide a new model to manage adult guardianship in the Northern Territory which includes guardianship principles and creates an Office of the Public Guardian that is independent of government.

A significant change will be for the ability of an order to be made for someone when they are 17 which only comes into effect when they turn 18. This will make for a smooth transition of decision-making powers from childhood to adulthood.

The Guardianship of Adults Bill will replace an act that has been in place for the last 28 years. This will allow for the updating and modernising of the way we protect adults with impaired decision-making abilities.

The bill will also change the strict requirement for adults who have an intellectual disability and broaden it to include an adult with impaired decision-making ability. The Guardianship of Adults Bill also includes a set of guardianship principles to guide authorised people through the roles and requirements of guardians, and to ensure consistent and accountable behaviour when acting in this role.

The most important of these principles is guardians must at all times act in the adult's best interests, and they must take into consideration the adult's wishes and views when they make decisions. The principle also states that the views and wishes of interested persons to the adults are considered and taken into account.

The guardian must act in a way that limits restrictions on the adult's freedom of decisions and with as much responsibility as possible. These principles are there to ensure the adult has maximum participation in everyday life and the decision-making that goes with it.

This bill allows for creating flexibility in the creation of a guardianship order. It allows for an order to be made for a specific area of an adult's life. For example, an adult may be able to make appropriate decisions about their finances, but may not have the ability to make decisions about complex medical issues.

As I mentioned earlier, the Guardianship of Adults Bill allows for a guardianship order to be made for a young person who has reached the age of 17 with it only taking effect when that person turns 18. This order can only be made if the young person will have impaired decision-making ability

when they reach 18 years of age. This allows for a smooth transition.

I enjoyed being involved in the guardianship area and I take this opportunity to thank the minister and the staff for their assistance. I also commend this bill to the House and encourage all members to support it.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I support this bill. It has been a long time coming. In one of the many papers I have it says the object of the new act is to modernise the existing act. I will say, tongue in cheek, that as it started in 2005 I hope it has not become outdated already. Be that as it may, I think it is a great improvement on the previous act.

This act includes the recommendations in the WestWood Spice review of 2005, most of which have aligned the Territory with the rest of the country.

Whilst I realise the act has taken a long time to come to parliament, I think the final copy, which we have today, is reflective of a process which has been inclusive of the community.

I have not been in touch with people in other parts of the Territory, and I did not have an opportunity to go to the community consultation in other parts of the Territory. Thankfully the government held community consultation in Palmerston. From a layperson's point of view, a person who has not been involved with carers or guardians, although I know people who have – it was not until I attended that meeting that I realised the complexities. The members for Araluen and Casuarina both touched on that. I met people who, from a religious point of view, you would call saints because of the work they do in looking after people for long hours over many days and years. I call them heroes, but in religious terms they are saints because of the fantastic work they do. It is not easy; it is very stressful, but they do it out of love and compassion for the person they care for. We should ensure in this debate that we recognise the terrific work they do.

As the notes in the bill say, the act basically provides the legal work for substituting the decision-making process for adults with an intellectual disability and who, because of that, cannot make informed decisions and reasonable judgments relevant to daily living. What is just as important is that it aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The principles of the present convention are:

- (a) *Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to*

make one's own choices, and independence of persons

- (b) *Non-discrimination*
- (c) *Full and effective participation and inclusion in society*
- (d) *Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity*
- (e) *Equality of opportunity*
- (f) *Accessibility*
- (g) *Equality between men and women*
- (h) *Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.*

It also includes Article 10, 'Right to life', which states:

... Parties reaffirm that every human being has the inherent right to life and shall take all necessary measures to ensure its effective enjoyment by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.

In Article 14, 'Liberty and security of the person', section 1 states:

Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others:

- (a) *Enjoy the right to liberty and security of person;*
- (b) *Are not deprived of their liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily, and that any deprivation of liberty is in conformity with the law, and that the existence of a disability shall in no case justify a deprivation of liberty.*

I have been reading a book series, *About Bioethics*, by Nicholas Tonti-Filippini, who was an ethicist and a professor at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family in Melbourne. He has passed away; I do not think he was very old. He had an illness which unfortunately ended his life. He wrote books on ethics, one of which is called *About Ethics*. I looked up the section on guardianship and there is a chapter in there which relates to changes to the *Guardianship and Administration Act* in Victoria.

After reading that I realised that one of the things missing from this bill is an object. This is a very important bill and I think an object is needed. It is

not just about having a few nice lines at the beginning of a bill. When you need to assess how this bill is working, you need to compare it to something. You need a set of objectives; some people might call it the mission statement. I presume the government will review this legislation at some stage. It needs to check whether this legislation is meeting those objectives. Not just the guiding principles, but the objective of this bill.

I will read what Professor Nicholas Tonti-Filippini said in his discussions about the Victorian act:

The purpose of this Act is to protect and promote the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable human rights of people with impaired decision-making capacity and those who through disability are vulnerable because they depend on others. To this end, the Act establishes the mechanisms to:

- *support and assist people to participate in decisions that affect their lives as far as their disability permits,*
- *appoint and guide their representatives, and*
- *revise representation when it fails to protect them, especially their life, health, freedom and security.*

It was too late to bring in this change to the legislation, and I take my advice from the Attorney-General. It has given me time to think. The Office of Parliamentary Counsel drew up an object of the act. There is nothing simple when you decide to give something to the Parliamentary Counsel. There are things a lay person might not think of, so the wording in the object has to fit in with words within the act. What came out was slightly different to what I put in. It said:

1. The object of this act is to protect and promote the dignity of adults with impaired decision-making capacity, whether or not because of disability, illness or other medical condition.
2. This object is achieved by:
 - (a) the appointment of guardians for adults who are required to exercise authority in a way that permits adults to participate in decisions to the greatest extent practicable and in accordance with the other guardianship principles
 - (b) periodic reassessments of orders appointing guardians for adults to ensure the orders remain appropriate.

That is fine, and what you read in that is how it fits in with the existing act. For me several things have been left out, especially the word 'inherent' – not just 'dignity', but 'inherent dignity' – which is important.

It is probably better that I leave this for the time being. I am happy to bring it back at another time, but one thing missing with this bill is a good object.

Be that as it may, the bill sets out principles which are in line with what I just quoted, principles fundamental to maximising participation in decision-making in everyday life by adults with impaired decision-making capacity. These principles include taking into account the adult's wishes as far as practicable, the views of interested persons of the adult, and protection from harm or neglect in the promotion of the person's wellbeing and happiness. These principles are the guiding principles for the rest of the bill.

One matter mentioned in the guiding principles is the phrase 'best interests'. I will come to that soon. Division 3 of the bill concerns the authority of the guardian. The decisions of a guardian can be broken down into two areas: financial and health. It could be, if there were two guardians – you can have more – each one dealing with either of these matters.

Concerning health matters, this area has the potential to cause a bit of discussion.

What does best interests mean? A guardian must act in accordance with 22(1)(a), which refers to the guardianship principles in section 4, which says under subsection (2):

The decision maker must exercise the decision maker's authority in the way that the decision maker reasonably believes is in the adult's best interests.

I received a letter this afternoon from those at the Law Society NT. They had a number of concerns and in the first paragraph they mentioned this area. They noted that the Law Society was not a fan of the phrase 'best interests' and that they repeatedly demonstrated it to be an unsatisfactory and arbitrary benchmark for decision-making. The Law Society says the bill should be consistent with respecting the will, preferences and rights of the individual.

It is interesting, using the book from Nicholas Tonti-Filippini – he wrote a chapter on this headed, 'Best interests versus substituted judgement'. He was commenting on changes to the Victorian legislation, but it is relevant to why we are here today.

He says, in relation to the Victorian act:

The major problem with this approach is found in the Commission's desire to remove best interests as the basis of represented decisions and adopt substituted consent. The current laws require represented decisions to be in the best interests of the represented person. The G&A Act states for the purposes of determining whether any special procedure or any medical or dental treatment would be in the best interests of a patient, the following matters must be taken into account:

- (a) *the wishes of the patient, so far as they can be ascertained*
- (b) *the wishes of any nearest relative or any other family members of the patient*
- (c) *the consequences to the patient if the treatment is not carried out*
- (d) *any alternative treatment available*
- (e) *the nature and degree of any significant risks associated with the treatment or any alternative treatment*
- (f) *whether the treatment to be carried out is only to promote and maintain the health and wellbeing of the patient*
- (g) *any other matters prescribed by the regulations.*

This, then, is the 'best interests principle' and reflects the necessary balance involved in making a decision for someone else. It is a mixture of factors that goes beyond whether the decision would be chosen by the represented person. Importantly, the Act permits a concerned person to seek to have the representation reviewed on the grounds that the decision might not be in the best interests of the patient, even if he or she had never articulated concerns of these kinds.

I raise the question, minister, as to whether another person can ask for a review of a decision by a guardian in relation to what could happen to the person. It goes on to say:

The current law recognises that representation is more than just autonomy and in that way recognises the essentially complex nature of the position that a representative is in. He or she must take into account a mixture of factors that are

involved in ensuring that the person receives adequate care including the person's values and wishes, but also the relationship to and the goodwill of others, often family members, and the effects of the decision on the person and those others.

I realise that this is long, but I think it is important to be read into *Hansard* because the Law Society raises it. It is in our legislation, and it is important to see why it should be left as it is.

It continues:

In the reality ...

And it is reflected in the current law:

...a person's representative ...

In our case we are talking about a guardian:

... is guided by the represented person's wishes but also recognises that he or she is not that person's robot or slave, but has his or her own conscience and thus a right and obligation to make a practical moral judgment about what is the right course of action to pursue, taking into account also the context and relationship to others and other community obligations. To disregard all of that and demand instead, that the representative must do as the person would have wanted, lacks perspective and ultimately would not protect the interests of the represented person. It would often place the representative in an impossible position of conflict between what is in the best interests of the person and their past wishes.

There would also be difficulties for health practitioners and their duty of care. It is one thing to have a person who can speak to him or herself refuse to comply with reasonable life-saving care. They are unlikely to be forced to accept what is in their best interests because of the harm done by so forcing them. But when a patient is frail, incapable and perhaps unaware and someone else is making a harmful, even homicidal, decision on their behalf, the situation is quite different because no harm is done by intervening in their best interests.

I will not go through that entire section, but I will read the conclusion:

The move towards substituted consent is not to the advantage of people with disabilities. The most dangerous aspect of

it is that it would narrow the scope of the capacity to have representation reviewed. In aged care facilities it is not uncommon for a representative to have a conflict of interest. The spouse of a person with dementia may enter into a new relationship, or the children of someone with dementia may want to move on with their inheritance. As the representative, either by appointment or by being the senior available next of kin, they have the power to deny that person ordinary life-preserving treatment such as the flu vaccine, antibiotics and even feeding, as well as more invasive treatments. Currently, the facility can challenge such a decision on best interest grounds and seek review of the representation, or threaten to do so, which is often all that is needed.

Under substituted consent the representative can claim that the person would not have wanted to live with dementia and there would be less scope to challenge what is, in effect, a homicidal decision.

I raise that because this is an important part of the debate. It is an area that moves onto the grounds of ethics and why 'best interests' is the best term to use. I disagree with the Law Society saying it is not an adequate term. After reading what Nicholas Tonti-Filippini said, I think we have made the wise decision to leave that there.

There will be times, even for mundane things, where someone could – if they knew the family, or on religious grounds or for blood transfusions – have an objection to that. It might appear to be minor, but you may have an issue between the guardian making the decision and what could be seen as not what the person being looked after would want.

It is an area that needs some discussion. I ask the minister to look up section 23, 'Consent decisions about health care action'. I have heard other members say at least this has made it a lot easier for relatively minor matters, but if there is a clash between what the guardian wants and what the person being cared for wants, is there room for appeal? Can other people be involved in the care of a person when they are not the guardian and feel that the guardian is doing something they believe to be incorrect? Is there room to appeal under section 23? I do not see any appeal but thought I would ask the question.

The bill deals with many other issues, and most people would agree with all the changes and improvements. This is a far better act than what we had previously. The new bill deals with applications for guardianship; when the tribunal

can make an order, including all the matters that can be taken into account; a new order for a person who is 17 years old so there can be smooth transition when the person turns 18; who may be appointed; the number of guardians; and the eligibility for appointment. It mentions the scope of the authority, what the tribunal may do in a guardianship order and the effect of an advance personal plan when making a guardianship order.

There is a section specifically on the powers and duties of a guardian – not the Public Guardian – which deals with important things such as rights to documents and information, things that may be given to a guardian, record keeping, property to be managed as if trust property, maintenance of dependants and asset management planning.

There is also a section on the power of the tribunal. The new bill sets up an independent statutory officer as the Public Guardian, which removes the present system where the Public Guardian is also the Minister for Health, which can create a conflict of interest.

The functions of the Public Guardian are clearly identified in the act. The Public Guardian, like any other guardian, is subject to the direction of the tribunal. The section also deals with the powers of the Public Guardian; the appointment of the Public Guardian, including the terms and conditions of employment; delegation powers; and the requirement to provide an annual report.

Members have asked questions about where staff fit in and if they are subject to the powers of the Public Guardian or public service requirements.

There will be a move from the Local Court to the new Civil and Administrative Tribunal for all guardian matters.

Under clause 24, 'Excluded matters', there is a list of things a guardian is not authorised to do, for instance, exercise the adult's right to vote, make a decision about the care and wellbeing of a child, adoption of a child, etcetera. The little note says that the guardian may apply to the Local Court under the *Advance Personal Planning Act*. Is that correct or should it be the tribunal? Does the Local Court still exist? Can you clarify that, because I read 'tribunal' and then read that if you are dealing with this issue you have to go through the Local Court.

Mr Elferink: What is the clause number?

Mr WOOD: It comes under section 23(2). It says:

If health care action needs to be taken, and there is no advance consent decision and no guardian or decision maker with authority to make a consent decision, the

guardian may apply to the Local Court under the Advance Personal Planning Act for the Local Court to make the consent decision.

Mr Elferink: That is residual from advance personal planning. That was the system imposed.

Mr WOOD: Who makes the powers, and where do those powers come from for excluded matters? The guardian cannot make a decision about marriage or divorce. Is there anyone who can? If so, how is that process put in place and are there any appeals?

Mr Elferink: It is directed to the Local Court in that instance.

Mr WOOD: I could not see anything in the second reading of the bill or the explanatory statement, so I thought I would ask.

There has been some discussion about the tribunal, and the Law Society raised this issue. My understanding is that it was being changed from the Local Court to the new Civil and Administrative Tribunal so that matters would be heard more quickly, with less formality and, to some extent, less cost. It was hoped that the new system would be more user friendly so people would be comfortable appearing before the tribunal.

There has been some discussion as to whether there should be a requirement for lawyers to be involved. I was scratching my head about this before because I am fairly sure I asked the minister if the tribunal excludes lawyers. I think the point being discussed is that it does not exclude lawyers. The Law Society says that individuals are entitled to legal representation in legal proceedings, and the bill should ensure that legal representation is obtained, but the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act* under section 130, 'Representation', says:

- (1) *A party to a proceeding before the Tribunal is entitled to appear:*
 - (a) *personally; or*
 - (b) *by a legal practitioner; or*
 - (c) *with the leave of the Tribunal and subject to the rules – by another representative.*

I am not a lawyer, but that looks like you can have a lawyer. I wonder if there is a conflict of interest as the Law Society is asking for lawyers. This section says you can have a lawyer. Whether there should be a requirement in the act that you must have a lawyer – there is a person in charge

of the tribunal, usually a magistrate or someone with judicial authority. You would hope they would make a decision if they felt someone needed a legal practitioner. I will see what the minister comes back with on that.

The member for Araluen was reasonably concerned about what sort of people will be on the tribunal. Obviously this is an area where there would be many different cases. I opened the annual report – you would not think I would use modern equipment these days – which, I presume, was from last year. It says:

The following people were appointed as sessional members of NTCAT during the reporting period:

Legally qualified members ...

...

*Ms Sonia Brownhill SC
Ms Nardine Collier
Mr Terence Coulehan (former Master of the Supreme Court)
Ms Sally Gearin
Ms Gabrielle Martin
Prof. Les McCrimmon
Mr Alasdair McGregor (former Stipendiary Magistrate)
Mr Ben O'Loughlin
His Honour Mr Tom Paulin AO QC (former Solicitor-General for the Northern Territory, former Administrator of the Northern Territory)
Mr John Stewart
Mr John Stirk
Her Honour Ms Sally Thomas (former Judge of the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory and former Administrator of the Northern Territory)
Mr Anthony Whitelum.*

Other members under a different section are:

*Kathleen Blair
Dr Timothy Carey
Dr Kerry Eupene
Dr Dana Fitzsimmons
Dr Rodney Omond
Louise O'Riordan
Dr Diane Szarkowicz
Dr Anita Toth.*

I do not know their backgrounds, but you can see this is meant to be a fluid tribunal which you would expect to include people who have a background in these areas when they hear these cases.

Member for Araluen, it is a good point. We want to ensure the magistrate is not someone who is

good in primary industry matters dealing with matters about guardianship. That is a good point.

The new bill sets up an independent statutory officer as the Public Guardian, which I have mentioned. Advocacy and support functions of the Public Guardian have been included. My understanding is that they were not included in the old act. The bill allows more flexibility in the decisions of the tribunal so individual guardianship orders can be made.

That is about as far as I got. It is a very complex bill. To some extent I have to rely on the good word of the officers of the department. I had a good briefing recently. But I will go back to talking about the community consultation.

I thought it was one of the best consultation evenings I have been to – I have been to some planning consultations. There were people there who were willing to go the extra mile. We were there for at least two hours. There were many questions and many things to understand. To some extent I had to have faith that the people putting this forward genuinely want change for the benefit of the people we look after, and the people looking after them.

I would not call anything in here political. As I said in the beginning, we are looking after the inherent dignity and equal, inalienable human rights of people with impaired decision-making capacity.

I saw exactly that from the people running the show. People at that consultation were genuinely trying to make sure the legislation gives the best outcome for the carers and the people they care for.

I thank the minister and the department for those consultations. Even though there may be a few little bumps in this legislation, with time it may be reviewed and fixed. I might even bring some objects to this legislation if I am re-elected.

This legislation is well worth supporting. I definitely support it.

Mrs PRICE (Local Government and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Guardianship of Adults Bill and Advance Personal Planning Amendment Bill 2016.

I thank the Attorney-General for introducing the legislation and modernising adult guardianship. In my portfolio of Housing there are tenants under guardianship orders, so I am pleased to see this bill modernising and streamlining the process.

It is important that we support the Territory's most vulnerable. Today the Northern Territory

government announced more funding for homelessness support by establishing a housing and homelessness innovation fund. It is appropriate that this House focuses on those who need the most support in the community.

This bill continues to ensure there are legal mechanisms to ensure adults with impaired decision-making capacity can have decisions made for them while recognising the overall wellbeing, human rights and freedoms of persons with impaired decision-making capacity. To support this, the bill provides the assumption that someone has the capacity to make their own decisions and the guardianship orders are only for the matters that need assistance. It also looks at whether less restrictive ways can be implemented before introducing a guardianship order.

I recognise guardianship orders can be restrictive towards people and that they are necessary. However, we should encourage people to have autonomy as much as possible and this bill does that.

The guardian principles implemented in this bill create a foundation to overcome the challenges facing adult guardianship, but are underpinned by the fundamental principles supporting the wellbeing and human rights of the people under guardianship. This bill will help support those with impaired decision-making capacity, their guardians, their families and their carers.

As a result of the Guardianship of Adults Bill an independent Office of the Public Guardian will be created. This is an essential element of the new legislation and aligns the Northern Territory with guardianship models used in other jurisdictions. The bill outlines specific and general functions of the independent Public Guardian and deals with specific and general powers of the Public Guardian necessary to perform the functions of this position.

The bill will help streamline the process, allows for guardianship orders to be made for a person from the age of 17 years of age and transfers jurisdiction of adult guardianship matters from the Local Court to the NTCAT. This has many important benefits for those requiring guardianship orders. Guardians, families and carers – there is a seamless transition in decision-making for those with impaired decision-making ability. This also provides certainty for guardians, those with impaired decision-making capacity and their families and carers.

This bill enables recognition of interstate guardianship orders by the registration of an interstate order and removes the need to apply for guardianship in the Territory when an interstate order is already in place. This will streamline

administrative processes for people involved with adult guardianship who move between jurisdictions. The bill makes complementary changes to the *Advance Personal Planning Act* to ensure the frameworks are aligned.

The bill is a transition to best practice, and is evidence-based legislation that will help support some of the Territory's most vulnerable. The Country Liberals are framing the future for a strong society and this bill demonstrates the Adam Giles Country Liberal government's continued commitment to the Territory's most vulnerable.

I thank the Attorney-General for introducing the bill and commend the bill to the House.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Casuarina provided the main opposition response, and I thank her for that as our shadow minister for Disability Services and Senior Territorians. She researched hard on this bill, attended more than a couple of the consultation sessions that were offered and is in close contact with stakeholders affected under this legislation.

I think everybody here agrees this bill will have passage into an act that is better than what we have had previously. We all understand it has been some time in coming and, by and large, people welcome this legislation which provides a good degree of protection for some of our most vulnerable Territorians.

I thank the minister's office for the briefings that were provided. The member for Casuarina and I were briefed early on in the year when there was a draft exposure bill. We sought a briefing then and we returned to the minister's office. I thank the officials for the briefing we received a couple of weeks ago.

I would like to raise a couple of things that some other people have already raised. Most of us have been contacted by key stakeholders, particularly legal stakeholders, such as the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Services and the Northern Territory Law Society.

We welcome the principle that an independent statutory office will be the Public Guardian. We have asked what degree of confidence we can have in the independence of this office, starting with the recruitment process. I understand that through this process the minister will appoint this new statutory role. When we asked about the process, and other stakeholders have raised this need for transparency around a process, we were advised that it could involve an expression of interest. I have not seen anything publicly around an expression of interest, unless I have missed it.

Given the time frame in which this office needs to be running and for the new Public Guardian to be appointed, by 1 July, we are keen to understand what level of transparency and assurance there will be in the appointment of that individual.

The minister will not like me raising it, but I will. We saw the appointment last year of a new Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner. There were raised eyebrows about that appointment, given that the appointee was the former chief of staff for the minister and a former CLP member of this parliament. There was a degree of concern across the sector that it was difficult to see how there could be an independent Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner given the nature of the appointment I just described.

We need assurance that whoever takes on this position as an independent statutory officer needs to be experienced in working with people with a disability, as well as understanding and having experience in working with the disability sector. Whoever is in that role must demonstrate a commitment to upholding the rights of people with impaired decision-making capacity, as well as understand disability service standards. I put it to the minister – about the community having confidence in the independent process of the appointment of the Public Guardian.

I welcome the move of the jurisdiction from the Local Court to the NTCAT. I understand that this is the case in other jurisdictions and is a less formal process and is flexible with applications heard before the NTCAT as opposed to the Local Court. We asked what training would be available to tribunal members who are hearing these applications and making decisions. It was suggested at our briefing that there could be a process in the Northern Territory similar to what occurred in Victoria, where a member of the Office of the Public Guardian was outposted to the tribunal to assist as it took on this new responsibility. We are keen to know if that is occurring in the Northern Territory and what level of support and training is available for tribunal members to support it in making decisions.

One of the difficulties it will potentially face – and this goes to the heart of a few of the things CAALAS has raised with us. I will quote from some correspondence I received from CAALAS yesterday. It also goes to the heart of the matter about legal representation, and this is a contention across legal stakeholders. Before I go to CAALAS, I will just quote from the Law Society who raised this point as well:

Seeing s.13 of the Current Act provides that the Executive Officer must ensure that in any proceeding, the person in respect of

whom the application is made is legally represented there is no similar provision in the Bill. The Society acknowledges that in proceedings before NTCAT there is provision that lawyers may be appointed under s.130 or a litigation guardian under s.104; however, it is not mandated. The provisions in NTCAT are inadequate to meet the needs of adults with impaired decision-making capacity.

Following on from that theme, CAALAS raised concern that without the involvement of a lawyer, there will not be adequate checks and balances to the adequacy of material before the tribunal and whether the threshold for a guardianship order has been met. For example, we are aware of applications that have been based on a brief report from a GP indicating a view that the client has dementia without an actual cognitive assessment having been conducted.

I also want to place on the record some concerns from stakeholders about the importance of legal representation and having assurance under NTCAT that there is accessibility to legal representation. I will provide another example from CAALAS regarding concerns about how accessible these proceedings will be to respondents in remote communities. 'We understand that respondents in remote communities are served with formal paperwork briefly setting out the application and court listing date. In the absence of a lawyer we do not believe respondents have the benefit of a verbal explanation of the proceedings in which they may ask questions and build a better understanding of the nature of the proceedings and what their options are within it.

'We do not believe that service of written documents is sufficient to ensure that someone is aware of the proceedings, able to understand the nature of them and has an opportunity to attend given the cognitive, literacy, language and cultural barriers that these client experience. CAALAS has been involved in applications relating to clients across Central Australia and query what ability these clients would have had to participate without the help of a lawyer who can conduct outreach, explain the proceedings face to face using an interpreter if needed, and answer questions and take their instructions.'

I heard the remark from the member for Nelson in relation to the Law Society advocating a similar point about the need for legal representation and wondering if the Law Society is interested in promoting legal work for lawyers ...

Mr Elferink: You reckon?

Ms WALKER: I do not think so, but the member for Nelson is a little suspicious.

The scenario I have put on the record from CAALAS provides an example. To be honest, this may be a situation that existed previously, before we saw a change to the act about people in remote or urban areas having access to legal representation to understand their rights. Whether we are talking about the old or new act, it comes down to resourcing. As I represent a remote area, from time to time guardianship matters are raised with me. I am asked for information about guardianship, for instance, from somebody who might work for the aged and disability program in the East Arnhem Regional Council, in one of the eight or nine communities it serves. I have advised people to question the Office of the Public Guardian because I am not an expert in that area.

If we are serious about representing the interests of these people and providing them with access to information, including legal information, the Office of the Public Guardian needs to be sufficiently funded to enable staff to do their job. That includes travelling to remote communities and ensuring those who work in the office have realistic caseloads.

The minister has also represented remote areas of the Territory and he would know, as do those of us who represent remote areas, that the best communication is face to face. Somebody on the ground, providing information in a culturally appropriate manner for somebody who potentially has high needs and is cognitively impaired – supporting those individuals' guardians, who are not legal experts but have responsibilities to look after that person.

The last point I want to make relates to some of the fears I have about the meaning behind section 91, regarding 'Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information', and what that means for advocates who will go public when somebody under guardianship is not being treated well, when things are going wrong, when they feel that nobody else will advocate for that person, and that under this section they will be silenced and the role of advocates will be squashed under that clause of the bill. We raised this during the briefing, but we want to hear from the minister and have it on the record so we can allay the fears of those who believe their advocacy is at risk of being silenced.

I thank the minister, once again, for bringing the bill forward. As I said, it has been many years in the making. I think some people would have liked a longer period of consultation. I know you cannot keep everybody happy, but this legislation goes a long way forward. There are a number of things that, in the transition from the old act to the new,

people will look to. Given some of the matters we have raised – it has moved to a new jurisdiction under NTCAT – it would make a lot of sense to review it within 12 to 18 months of its operations to see how successful it is and if there is room for improvement.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):

Mr Deputy Speaker, a number of issues has been raised tonight. I will start with the issue that seems to have come up the most frequently, which is section 91.

There seems to be some concern that we have inserted an offence into this legislation. The insertion of such an offence is there to provide protection to the guarded person. This is the *Adult Guardianship Act*. Somewhere else in the legislation it says that the role of the guardian is, *inter alia*, to provide advocacy for the person who is protected. In essence, the legislative instrument is drafted and says you must advocate for the person of whom you are the guardian. On first blush to the uninitiated, that would then give the flavour of being self-contradictory when you read section 91 of the legislation.

Having made that observation, it is important to point out a specific word in section 91 – the nature of criminality in this section turns on this word – which is ‘reckless’. The word ‘reckless’ has a very long legal history. Indeed, it even has a legislative definition. I draw members’ attention to Part IIAA of the *Criminal Code Act*, section 43AK, which deals with recklessness. It is very important to understand that recklessness, as defined in section 43AK, will be applied – because it is part of the Model Criminal Code, not the Griffith Criminal Code – to Part IIAA-compliant legislation or bills, one of which is before the House now. It says:

- (1) *A person is reckless in relation to a result if:*
 - (a) *the person is aware of a substantial risk that the result will happen; and*
 - (b) *having regard to the circumstances known to the person, it is unjustifiable to take the risk.*

Let us pause there – ‘unjustifiable’:

- (2) *A person is reckless in relation to a circumstance if:*
 - (a) *the person is aware of a substantial risk that the circumstance exists or will exist; and*

(b) *having regard to the circumstances known to the person, it is unjustifiable to take the risk.*

(3) *The question whether taking a risk is unjustifiable is one of fact.*

(4) *If recklessness is a fault element for a physical element of an offence, proof of intention, knowledge or recklessness satisfies the fault element.*

The problem with the Model Criminal Code is that, unless you have had legal training, it is often a very difficult thing to navigate. Frankly, many lawyers have difficulty navigating the Model Criminal Code. The former government asserted that it is the path we should go down. On becoming the Attorney-General I said, ‘Do we go back to the old Griffith model or continue developing the Model Criminal Code?’ The profession, on one of those rare occasions, almost universally agreed, ‘No, we go down the path of the Model Criminal Code’. That means for the layperson – but even lawyers, when they open the Model Criminal Code, end up dealing with the Part IIAA components and it is a navigation nightmare. Unless you have some understanding or training in the background of the operation of section 43 in its various forms, of which there are many, it is a difficult piece of legislation to navigate.

However, the section 43AK component rests on the notion of unjustifiable conduct. There is much case law around this notion of recklessness and unjustifiable conduct. I was going through my law books when the issue was first raised, trying to find the simplest way to navigate the notion of recklessness. The Model Criminal Code notes things like physical elements and fault elements. It then talks about things like strict liability and absolute liability. Bear in mind section 91 is a strict liability offence, which means certain physical elements do not have to be proven to make out the charge.

Getting back to the notion of the fault elements, there are essentially four. I turn to *Hayes and Eburn Criminal Law and Procedure in New South Wales*, Butterworths edition, 2002, which deals with fault elements. One is intention, which, more often than not, is known as *mens rea*. Two is knowledge, where you know or believe something to be of a particular truth. Three is negligence:

... although the accused did not realise that the illegal consequences of his or her action would occur, a reasonable person would have – for example to be guilty of manslaughter, it is sufficient that a

reasonable person would have realised that death would occur as a result of the accused's actions, even when the accused did not realise that ...

And four is recklessness, where the accused realised the consequence and proceeded to do the thing anyway. Curiously, *Hayes and Eburn Criminal Law and Procedure in New South Wales* refers to a very famous Northern Territory case in the development of the notion of recklessness. There is a very useful footnote in relation to recklessness at the bottom of the page. It is worth quoting, and it reads as follows:

Wilful blindness has been suggested as a further category of fault, that is, where the accused deliberately refrains from making inquiries in order to avoid finding out some essential facts. For example, in The Queen v Crabbe ...

That is the Territory case; I will fill members in on the facts:

... the accused deliberately failed to determine if there were people in a hotel before he drove his truck into the building. In Crown v Dykyj (1993) 29 NSWLR 672 the accused was alleged to have wilfully closed his eyes to facts from which an ordinary person might clearly or would clearly realise that the property was stolen.

In this instance it was a theft issue:

It is clear, however, that wilful blindness is not a separate category of mens rea but may be evidence that the jury may use to decide if the accused had the necessary knowledge, intention or foresight to be guilty of the crime.

If we go to the facts in Crabbe, which are when Douglas Crabbe – bless his cotton socks – got boozed and drugged up at the Ayers Rock hotel and, for some reason, was ejected and jumped into his prime mover and, in a fit of anger, drove it into the hotel, killing five or six people. Did he intend to kill anybody? No, he did not. This is one of the elements of reckless indifference, which is a category of murder. His wilful blindness or callousness in relation to his conduct meant that any person reasonably circumstanced would look upon that and say, 'If that moron drove his truck into the side of hotel full of people, the chances were he would kill somebody'. It was five or six people. The fact in Crabbe is there was no formation of intent to kill, but he was so wilfully indifferent to his actions that any reasonable person similarly circumstanced would have said, 'Of course you will kill people. You are driving a prime mover into a hotel full of people. Of course

people will die.' That is the nature of recklessness, which can be explored in much greater detail but I do not have time to do that now.

Let us go back to the nature of the offence and the comparison between the two different operations of advocacy I just outlined. The bill before the House says we expect guardians to advocate. They have to do their job. We will not make a criminal out of a person, and the legislation will never be interpreted by a court – particularly if you pay attention to the nature of recklessness, as I described – as being criminal in nature. In fact, in essence, the other part of the bill which says we expect advocacy constructs a defence. Reasonableness in advocacy is automatically a defence against a breach of section 91. That is how it would be read. Common sense would dictate that would be the case.

Consequently, the question needs to be asked; what is the nature of the conduct that section 91 contemplates if advocacy is encouraged by the legislation? The nature of that sort of conduct would probably be best described by way of example.

Perhaps the advocate is so enormously engaged in a frolic of their own, to borrow a language from tort law, that they are not advocating on behalf of the person they are the guardian of. They may be advocating on an entirely different issue. At which point they will have abandoned their responsibility as a guardian, which is fiduciary in nature, and simply pursued some other frolic. At that point you are not even advocating on behalf of the person of whom you are the guardian. You are doing something else entirely. It would be at the detriment of the very person you are the guardian of. That then engenders the nature of recklessness in Crabbe's case. That is the importance of the appearance of that word in section 91.

A person who is out there saying, 'I am fighting for the person of whom I am the guardian', even in the public domain, has a defence. The legislation says that is your job. It is when the nature of your conduct so far departs from your responsibilities and duties as a guardian that you can no longer embrace the notion of being a guardian any further that you have then become reckless.

Why insert the offence in the first place? In the absence of such an offence, a person who is subject to a guardianship order may not even have the cognitive abilities to be able to defend themselves. Who becomes the proponent in a circumstance like that? A person whose human rights we are seeking to defend, as the member for Nelson quite rightly describes, needs a champion in the absence of a guardian.

It might well be that the Public Guardian can commence civil action on behalf of a person who is protected under this legislation. A civil action would have to at least demonstrate some sort of damage to be worthwhile. In these circumstances you would possibly be looking after exemplary damages. However, from a commonsense point of view, the correct person to protect the guarded person at law is the Crown. That is why we create the criminal offence, because it enlivens the Crown to become the protector of the guarded person when their guardian fails.

It is still within the boundaries of the Public Guardian to say to people, 'You are stepping outside the boundaries of the law; we think you are getting very close to the edge of what the law is.' But it is nice to give them a tool with which to say to a guardian, 'You must comply with the legislation'. Other than that, you have this more nebulous environment within the common law and you would look for some form of exemplary damages.

I can well understand why the drafters in the department said, 'No, no. The best place to do this is when a person is engaging in such a frolic as to be no longer advocating for their guarded person, but are now engaging in something quite different.' Then we have to enliven the criminal notion of recklessness, which is why this is constructed into the legislation.

When I read the legislation this did not leap out at me as an issue at all because it is a protection for the people we are seeking to protect with this legislation: the guarded.

I hope that makes sense to members in the House. That is the rationale behind the insertion of a criminal offence. But please read the legislation in tandem with section 21(b), which says, 'Go out and advocate'. So long as you can demonstrate clearly that you are working for the interests of the person who is guarded, you are on the right side of the criminal law – no problems at all. A court would uphold that easily and comfortably.

I understand what the member for Nelson was doing today when he forwarded some comments about the objects of the legislation. From my perspective as the Attorney-General, I unilaterally cannot insert, or even agree to insert, an amendment without my Cabinet colleagues' approval. Therefore, I could not accept it. I believe the member for Nelson understands that notion. That is not to say it is not necessarily a good idea; however, I remind the member for Nelson of an exchange in the past. When we debated the Advance Personal Planning Bill, the member for Nelson raised the issue of objects of the act. I will quote myself in relation to this:

... the answer is basically this: an objects clause is where the bill contains a statement of the purpose of the act. In Australia, it is now generally accepted that, in most cases, the appropriate place to set out the background and political aims of an act is in the second reading speech and explanatory statement. The practice in all Australian jurisdictions, except Victoria, is to have a long title which sets out the scope of the act.

That is actually the purpose of the long title of an act. What we hear when we do the first, second and third readings is the long title being read out. In the old days – when I was originally dealing with legislation – the long title was often very long, and was a descriptor of the objects of the act. Familiarity breeds legislative contempt, and we have somewhat forgotten the nature of the long title.

Victoria and New Zealand have dispensed with long titles and use purposes and objectives clauses instead.

We are not Victoria or New Zealand, thank goodness:

The current practice in the Northern Territory is that objects clauses are not included as a matter of course ...

They do exist in some legislation, but they are not included as a matter of course:

... but can be included if doing so serves some useful purpose. For example, in very complex legislation, an overview or explanation of the act might be helpful to assist the reader in understanding the act. For example, the Commonwealth Income Tax Assessment Act has such provisions, not just for the act as a whole, but for each division ...

It goes on and on. You get the thrust of the comment.

Having made that observation, I am not satisfied that the act is sufficiently complex. I understand that some members have had some issues navigating it, but it is not the *Income Tax Assessment Act*. The notions and philosophies behind this sort of legislation have a pretty consistent thread, and you can capture the notions of these legislative instruments in things like alcohol mandatory treatment and mental health legislation, all of which are intrusive in a person's liberty in circumstances where they are not convicted of a criminal offence.

That raises the issue of Part IIA, which the member for Casuarina raised when she was talking about section 43 of the Criminal Code. What she referred to is people who have conducted themselves in such a fashion that, but for their mental impairment, would have satisfied the completion of a criminal offence, that is, they did something. For argument's sake, they may have stabbed another person, either injuring them or killing them. In circumstances like that an element of the offence is *mens rea* – the intent. 'I wanted to kill them.' You can only form the requisite *mens rea* in circumstances where you are sane enough to form the mental element of the crime. If you are, in the old language, insane, mentally impaired – whatever is the new language – and you stab somebody else, the prosecution has to demonstrate that all the elements of the offence have been made out. One element of any indictable offence is *mens rea*, the mental element. 'I wanted this to happen. I intended to do this to the other person.'

When that is not made out, the offence has not been committed. The facts of a person having stabbed another person may well still be proved, but if you cannot prove the mental intent because the person was mad, insane or mentally deficient at the time, then you have not made out the crime. It does not necessarily follow that the person who had done the stabbing is any less dangerous to the community. In those circumstances the state can limit a person's liberty. There are a number of ways it can do it. The court can make orders in relation to a person's management and they would be placed under some form of guardianship.

It is not unusual in the Northern Territory. There are about 30 people who are in the custodial environment because they represent a danger to the community, but they are not convicted of any crime; therefore, they are under some form of guardianship. In this case it would be the guardianship of the Administrator, in the old language, but they are in the custodial environment of Northern Territory prisons and are managed accordingly.

The majority of these people are in Darwin. I think the number is closer to 10, but if the House is interested I can get the exact number of Part IIAA cases we have in the custodial environment.

In those circumstances, when guardianship orders are made, we have a duty to make sure we manage those people. There are people not in the custodial environment but subject to guardianship orders, and from time to time those people make the news. Guardians are duty bound to look after the interests of those persons, which is why they advocate on their part. I do not think there is anything in this bill before the House

that in any way diminishes those arrangements here in the Northern Territory.

I argue that this bill substantially enhances those arrangements in the Northern Territory, particularly with the notion of an independent officer. Ultimately, until the Administrator signs off on this bill, should it pass in the House tonight, I remain the Public Guardian.

I have people who do that work on my behalf through delegations I make, but I am the Public Guardian and will be for the next week or so until the Administrator signs the assent of this legislation.

I understand the need for people who are in the position to make rulings on behalf of these people. That is what an independent office is about. Oddly enough, I am probably least aggressive in the space of saying we need independence. I think that the Office of the Public Guardian, as attached to the Health Department, has been very effective over the years. It has done the job well and I think that we should be proud of those people. I place on the record my thanks for the hard work and decisions those people had to make.

However, there are practices that have now become operational in all jurisdictions except for this one. For the sake of consistency we should try to emulate that, hence the legislation which is before the House today. Should it have been here sooner? Absolutely. I pick up from the member for Araluen's comments on this issue; she said that this was a long time coming. Yes, it was. I probably would have had this here six months ago if it had not been bounced out of Cabinet at one point for an issue that happened in the Cabinet room, so I cannot talk about it. But it bounced out of Cabinet and I had to bring it back before we could bring it before the House here today. Finally I got it sorted – deep sigh – and here we are, almost ready to pass it.

We are passing something that brings us into an environment that is much more consistent with the practice on a national scheme. In relation to staff, I am advised – and will take this under advisement – that most will be transferred to the new office. No, they will not be employees of the Health department; they will be public employees, but similar to employees in the Ombudsman's office, Children's Commissioner's office, Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner's office, and the Public Interest Disclosure office. Those are the sorts of independence offices where the staff are still independent.

If someone does not want to go into the Office of the Public Guardian, we will make other arrangements; no one will be sacked or

retrenched. I am happy to give those assurances today because that is the intention of the department.

That pretty much covers the field. I note the reference to the Local Court that the member for Nelson picked up in one of the notes. I am double-checking that now. I understand there might be a glitch there; however, I can reassure the member for Nelson that those notes do not carry a legal interpretive quality to them. If there is an error, in the next round of statute law revision bills we will pick that up and change it to the word 'tribunal', if that gives you the comfort you require. No court will read that and place any weight against it. I suspect if it has fallen through the cracks it is because of the advance personal planning legislation. If you are right, we will pick it up.

Having made all those observations, I think I have covered the field. I heard what people said about the consultation process. I am pretty satisfied that the 350-odd people who received letters, and the many submissions that have been received, was sufficient consultation to cover the field.

I do not necessarily agree with the conclusions reached by CAALAS, in relation to the best interests argument, which the member for Nelson raised. As far as I am concerned, the best interests argument is still legitimate. I say that because sometimes we have to do the paternalistic thing and make decisions in someone's best interests because of the nature of people under guardianship in the Northern Territory, understanding that we have a much broader class of people who are captured by this. I am talking particularly about people who live in remote and regional areas.

Having contemplated the argument, nevertheless, I have fallen on the side of the best interests argument. Whilst that is intrusive and may not accord with other people's opinions, sooner or later you have to make a decision. So we made the decision and that is the one we have come to.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their attention and, may I say, support for what is overdue but important legislation. I look forward to seeing this bill now pass from this place into law.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

TABLED PAPERS

Travel Reports – Members for Katherine, Arafura, Barkly and Wanguri

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table travel reports received from the members for Katherine, Arafura, Barkly and Wanguri.

Public Accounts Committee Report on Repairs and Maintenance of Housing on Town Camps

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Public Accounts Committee's Report on Repairs and Maintenance of Housing on Town Camps, together with the committee's related minutes of proceedings.

Housing on town camps has been an issue in the Northern Territory regarding the condition of housing and the critical housing shortage. The committee initiated this inquiry in February in response to growing concerns about the condition of housing on town camps and repairs not being completed in a reasonable period of time, which, in some instances, has left houses vacant for a significant period.

The committee understood from the outset that there would not be sufficient time to undertake a full and rigorous inquiry before this final full sitting week. However, the committee considered there would be value in doing an initial investigation to highlight key issues that warrant further consideration. This assessment was affirmed on the day of the committee's public hearings, when the government announced it would be commissioning an independent review of the administration of town camps. This review is expected to report to the next Assembly by the end of the year. The committee welcomes that review as it provides an opportunity for the issues raised in the report to be given more detailed consideration.

Access to adequate housing is a fundamental human right, enshrined by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Housing provides the foundation for a person's physical, social and economic wellbeing. Without adequate housing it is difficult to get a good education, maintain employment or keep healthy. Addressing the problem with housing on town camps needs to be a matter of priority for the government. One of the challenges in addressing town camps is the differing land tenure and administration.

The committee found there are two distinct housing systems operating in the Northern Territory, which are characterised by their funding models and administrative arrangements.

The Department of Housing provides full housing services in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, and has complete administrative responsibility for them. The remainder of the town camps across the Northern Territory receive grant funding through the Department of Local Government and Community Services, which provides a contribution only to the maintenance of houses, and the government has no direct administrative responsibility for these town camps.

The different housing models that have evolved are directly linked to land tenure arrangement, and the discussion of town camp housing repairs and maintenance cannot be separated from the broader issue of land tenure.

In brief, the Department of Housing's responsibilities in Alice Springs flow from housing management agreements, through which it has taken on the role of landlord. These housing management agreements are with the Aboriginal housing association, which holds the perpetual lease over the town camp, and also with the Commonwealth's Executive Director Township Leasing, who has entered into a 40-year lease with the Northern Territory government and the housing associations in exchange for funding for houses.

The department has similar landlord responsibilities but under different arrangements in Tennant Creek. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services became responsible for the Alice Springs town camps in 2010. The department has provided these housing services through three different contract periods to date. Initially the department provided services through a contract with a single organisation; however, in the second and third contract periods the tenancy management and property management functions were separated.

The committee found that the processes established by the department, particularly in the second contract period, were disjointed, confusing for tenants and contractors, required significant double handling, and failed to meet the needs of tenants.

The department had made significant improvements to the processes under the current model. It is imperative that this system is monitored to ensure it is delivered in a culturally appropriate manner and repairs are undertaken in an efficient and timely manner.

The Alice Springs subleases and housing management agreements outline the Department of Housing's obligations to deliver services and maintain the houses on town camps.

The department is required to undertake three-yearly reviews of housing and infrastructure. In August 2014, after complaints were made of no review having taken place, the department made a commitment to commence a review. This review has still not occurred. The department has alluded that it will meet the review obligations through the independent review of all town camps. If this is the case it will need to ensure the review meets the requirements outlined in the subleases.

The housing management agreements are now on a month-to-month basis as the department has not negotiated long-term agreements following the expiry of the initial three-year period.

It has been suggested that this may be restricting major works being undertaken on the town camps, although the department refutes this claim. The absence of long-term agreements has restricted long-term tenancy agreements and these now also exist on a month-to-month basis.

The department is required to repair or replace all housing on the Alice Springs town camps. The committee has found that they have been tardy in meeting this obligation for houses that have significant structural damage and have been sitting vacant for a number of years.

The shift to the public housing model was instigated by the government, not the town camp residents, and the government is well aware of its responsibilities under the subleases and housing management agreements. The government should not unilaterally decide which parts of the contract it chooses to implement. The committee recommends that the department properly meets its obligations as a matter of priority.

The housing model for the remaining town camps is that they receive grant funding from the Department of Local Government and Community Services, but the responsibilities and ownership remain with the relevant housing or Aboriginal housing association, or any organisation they contract with.

Unfortunately there is a lack of clarity around the roles and responsibilities of the Aboriginal housing association leaseholders and the town camp tenants. This creates uncertainty and casts doubt over the legal obligations and protections normally afforded under the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

The committee heard evidence that questions the adequacy of governance of housing associations. The committee recommends that the government works to clarify the rights and responsibilities of leaseholders and tenants, as well as ensuring that Aboriginal housing associations are meeting their minimum governance requirements.

The committee identified notable inconsistencies in the funding and administration of town camps which are directly linked to land tenure arrangements. While some Aboriginal housing associations have been offered financial incentives to increase and improve housing in exchange for the government gaining secure land tenure over the camps, other town camps have received little in terms of government investment in capital works. The complexities associated with Aboriginal housing cannot be used as an excuse to ignore the poor condition of some of that housing. The critical housing shortage has led to overcrowding and homelessness. Simplifying the management of housing services and promoting a consistency of approach is required to improve service delivery.

The issue of housing on town camps appears to have fallen into the too-hard basket for the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments. This is not good enough. It is time for the government to make a serious commitment and follow through on that commitment to improving housing outcomes for the residents of town camps. The committee trusts that the findings and recommendations within this report will assist the independent reviewer and the government to develop and deliver such a commitment.

MOTION

Note Paper – Public Accounts Committee Report on Repairs and Maintenance of Housing on Town Camps

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I know the member for Sanderson has some people here he would like to address. I do not want to hold that up, but can I get some clarification on when I can respond to this report in this sittings period? I am happy not to talk, but is there a point where I could follow up on this?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The advice is it will appear on the list tomorrow afternoon.

Mr WOOD: So it will not go to the bottom of the list, as sometimes happens?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, as you know, at the end of each night we run through this list, which we are doing now. When it comes to this tomorrow, you can stand up and proceed.

Mr WOOD: All right. I am happy to delay my response until tomorrow night.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Research Material

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that, pursuant to Standing Order 188, subsection 3, the Speaker has given permission for Ms Carien McGuin to examine and take extracts from evidence submitted to, and documents and records of, the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House Site, 2nd and 3rd Assemblies, and the Sessional Committee on the New Parliament House, 4th to 8th Assemblies, for research purposes.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS

Public Accounts Committee Report – Public Private Partnership Arrangements for the Darwin Correctional Precinct – consideration adjourned.

Public Accounts Committee Report into Structural Separation of Power and Water Corporation – consideration adjourned.

Northern Territory's Energy Future Committee Key Challenges and Opportunities Issues Paper – consideration adjourned.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's August 2015 Report to the Legislative Assembly – consideration adjourned.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory's February 2016 Report to the Legislative Assembly – consideration adjourned.

Standing Orders Committee Report to the Assembly March 2016 – Motion to Adopt Recommendations – consideration adjourned.

Committee of Members' Interests Report to the Assembly March 2016 – Motion to Adopt Recommendations – consideration adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr STYLES (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I rise to speak about a person who, during his lifetime, displayed a wonderful example of how multiculturalism contributes to our society, in conjunction with, and interwoven with, our Australian values of having a go and assisting our mates. He helped to immensely strengthen our community and showed us a better way to live when we look to each other for help.

I speak of Alvaro Mascarenhas Ingles who, with members of his family, was a migrant to Australia. They became a Territorian family, and during Alvaro's lifetime in his new country he did all he

could to bring people together. That was his calling in life and the legacy he left us. Nearly two years ago, sadly, Alvaro Ingles passed away.

My wife, Linda Fazldeen, and I were honoured to have known Alvaro as a friend and mentor, and to be taken into his family. His gentle nature and courage were an inspiration to everyone. We hold treasured memories of a great man.

Last Saturday night was an occasion to recognise Alvaro's contribution to our community. I attended the Timor-Leste Restoration of Independence Day celebration function at the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club. This was an occasion to recognise Alvaro's contribution to the foundation and development of this club. He would have been pleased, I am sure, that during that evening the government announced the funding of more than \$0.5m to upgrade the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club facilities.

Members of Alvaro's family, friends and executive members of the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club are here tonight, and this is an opportunity for us to reminisce about various aspects of his life.

Alvaro was born in a neighbouring country to the Northern Territory, now officially known as the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and more commonly known as Timor-Leste or East Timor. He was one of eight children to Horacio and Maria Ingles. During his lifetime he survived the invasion of East Timor by the Japanese during World War II. His family moved to Balibo, where his mother, Donna Lily, dedicated her time to nursing injured Australian soldiers. Later during the war his family spent time in two concentration camps. Following the end of the war in 1945 his family departed for Portugal, returning to East Timor in 1946.

At the age of 24 Alvaro married his sweetheart, Maria Lucitana De Castro Mascarenhas Ingles. They had seven children together, plus he had four children from a previous marriage. Lucitana is known affectionately to all of us as Lucy.

Together, these 11 children were lovingly raised and cared for by the couple. They also raised Lucy's sisters, who had already lost their father and, later, their mother. Their life in East Timor was a period of hard work, but also one of great happiness. Alvaro and his family owned a plantation which had coffee, guava and rice crops growing on it.

Alvaro was able to assist in sourcing funds for new schools, health centres, road construction, agricultural cooperatives and many other programs to aid the development of his local

community. His vehicle was used as an emergency vehicle to transport the ill to hospital.

In East Timor Alvaro and Lucy worked hard to develop and grow the community they loved, which loved them dearly in return.

During the Portuguese government's reign over East Timor, Alvaro became a member of that country's Legislative Assembly. His focus and efforts were on achieving a positive outcome in legislation that would best cater for the development of his native mother country.

Recognition of his community achievements included receiving an award from the International Committee of the Red Cross and a national award from the governor of the Portuguese government in Timor.

During the conflict in East Timor in 1975 the family sought refuge and eventually made its way to Atambua, located in Indonesia's western half of the Timor island. After 11 months they travelled to Portugal in the first plane sent by the Portuguese government to Indonesia to pick up refugees.

In 1977, when the family reunited with immigration assistance by the Australian-based sister, Alvaro, with his wife and children, arrived in Darwin from Portugal. From the first day the family arrived in Darwin – at 3 am – some family members started work. As new immigrants it really was a question of financial survival. There were also language difficulties for them all, with a new language to learn: English.

A hard worker, Alvaro began the reconstruction of his and his family's life here in the Northern Territory. His family had lost everything from their days in East Timor and needed to start again. Alvaro used his past work and community experiences, and memories of his family's losses, to help drive him to prosper and grow.

He worked with dignity to adapt to a new country, learn a new language and contribute to the wellbeing of his community in general, as well as with members of the Portuguese Timorese, Chinese Timorese and Timorese communities. He was very instrumental in bringing unity with other communities in connection with the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club, which formed from the previous Portuguese club.

Over the years he held a variety of executive positions in that club, including being in the roles of President and Vice President.

As with everything Alvaro did, he was dedicated to the club's growth, and his voluntary contribution to the club was ably assisted by members of his family, especially his wife, Lucy.

He continually encouraged members of the club to work together with each other and remain united for everyone's wellbeing. He worked hard with other members of his community to develop the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club. The success he achieved in working in collaboration with other members of the Portuguese and Timorese communities coming together was no doubt achieved due to his kind and polite manner in conjunction with his can-do attitude.

Over the years he was influential in supporting the coaches and players of the Casuarina Football Club, which is the soccer club of the Portuguese and Timorese Social Club. Alvaro was instrumental in negotiating for the Casuarina Football Club to travel to Dili to play an exhibition game before an estimated 50 000 in Indonesian-occupied Timor.

In 1999, when Timor had the first official vote for independence, conflict erupted and refugees had to flee from East Timor. During this period Alvaro and his wife worked hard as volunteers to assist Alvaro's sense of civic involvement and it saw him become a member of the Darwin branch of the Country Liberal Party. His wise counsel and sense of humour was especially valuable in this political environment.

Alvaro was one of the first former Timorese to visit his birthplace of East Timor during the Indonesian occupation. He accompanied the then Northern Territory Chief Minister, Ian Tuxworth. This visit helped to open the doors to allow the return of estranged East Timorese who had grieved from the outside to then be able to visit their home country and meet and catch up with relatives.

Alvaro, on this visit to East Timor, was able to have a joyful reunion with his sister, who was still living there. Both the Northern Territory government and the Darwin city council have recognised his contribution towards the development of multiculturalism in his new country.

During the commemoration of the centenary of the Federation of Australia, Alvaro was awarded a medal by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In his final years of his life in Darwin, Alvaro became unwell with several health complications and illnesses. He was cared for by his devoted and loving wife, Lucy, who sought to ensure his comfort. Lucy was by his side day and night, with the aid of their children. Together they sought to keep him as healthy as possible. Sadly, Alvaro passed away on 13 July 2014. He is obviously missed by all of us, especially his family. He left a legacy of wonderful memories and unmatched kindness, and was an inspiration to us all. Even

to me he was an inspiration – when the going get tough, the tough get going.

He was an incredible, gentle man of peace, an example of honesty at its best and a loyal friend. For all who knew him, and those who did not know him but saw him in action, he embraced life with passion. He was a wonderful example of a migrant to Australia who gave everything he could to his new country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Alvaro Mascarenhas Ingles will live forever in our memories and our hearts.

Mr CHANDLER (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, since our last sittings we have had the opportunity to celebrate Anzac Day. I was very fortunate to spend the dawn service in Palmerston, as well as the lovely morning ceremony at Nhulunbuy with my colleague, Lynne Walker. It was a marvellous ceremony.

Anzac Day is about people remembering people – not battles, victories or defeats. The trend of a growing participation, attendance and recognition of Anzac Day services across the Northern Territory and the nation, especially amongst young people, is an unexpected and increasingly evident phenomenon.

Anzac Day, 25 April, is a day of national remembrance. Originally this marked the anniversary of the first major military action fought by Australian and New Zealand forces during World War I. The actions of Australian and New Zealand forces during their campaign left a powerful legacy.

What became known as the Anzac legend became an important part of the identity of Australia, shaping the ways in which we view our past and future. As a people, we chose a day when the loss of a young generation at war first scarred the consciousness of a young nation. That loss was felt across the whole community and was a tragedy that still resonates with us.

The very name of the day, Anzac Day, is enlightening. Anzac Day is not a battle. Anzac is not a place. Anzac is not a description of a group of people. Anzac Day gives us, as a nation, the opportunity to think about ordinary Australians serving the nation in times when we, as a democracy, saw our land or interests threatened.

The fact that Anzac Day is a day for the people is evident in the way we mark it. It is not a day of military parades and power; it is a day of gatherings, veterans, reunions, memorial services, community involvement, reflection and honouring the men and women who went before us and are still among us. On Anzac Day we celebrate the human spirit, the spirit of Anzac. We promised to

never forget; we promised to remember. For a few hours each year we hush our busy lives and dedicate this day to those people. It is a small gesture for such a great sacrifice. It says something about us as Australians that though the numbers of veterans diminish, the number of Australians who participate and pay their respect grows.

Private Trooper Webb, of the 60th Battalion, was 26 when he was killed on 19 July 1916. His father wrote the words on his headstone in Bethlehem East Cemetery:

To live in the hearts of those we leave behind is not to die.

Each of them, like each of us, had only one life, only one chance to use life in a selfless way for others and our nation.

They chose us.

Each Anzac is remembered as an individual. The thousands who perished at Gallipoli, and many thousands on the Western Front who died, are listed on memorials. Each name is recorded; each individual is recorded so we can come and pay our respects and give our thanks. To reflect deeply on what their offering means, in promising 'lest we forget' we keep a sacred trust to acknowledge this legacy.

We keep right the memory of each of those lives. Australians express our continuing thanks to those who have helped preserve our nation and our way of life. We remember ordinary, decent young Australians. The character exemplified by the Anzacs is one Australians admire and aspire to today.

The Anzacs were ordinary people who carried themselves admirably in the most trying circumstances imaginable. In the face of adversity, the Anzacs demonstrated, beyond any doubt, the military virtues of duty, courage, teamwork, resolution and self-sacrifice. They also added a few unique qualities of their own: mateship; trust; a discipline based on earned respect and not assumed worth; initiative; resourcefulness; wry humour; and a respect for the courage and capability of a friend and foe alike. As they landed at Gallipoli it would have been starkly apparent that as a fighting force they had only their leaders and each other, and that each individual had only their courage.

This was the armour they wore ashore at the Gallipoli landing; this was the armour that sustained them unto death or disability, and for those who survived and continued to the awful bloodletting in Europe and the Middle East in the years that followed.

An increasing awareness grew that being an Australian or a New Zealander stood for something at Gallipoli, and on the later battlefields there was a growing realisation that being an Anzac among mates was far more important than the notions of a clash of empires. Their greatness was that they stayed together, stood shoulder to shoulder and clung to the idea of home, and they found that sustained them. The outcome was then revealed to the world that Australia and New Zealand were nations of men and women of the greatest of character.

The Anzacs and their deeds at Gallipoli, and throughout World War I, are considered to have shaped our national character. The national character the Anzacs revealed has been inspirational and has built a legacy for generations of Australians and New Zealanders who followed. The spirit of Anzac lies not just in a place you visit, a book you read or solely in the men and women of our armed forces today; the spirit of Anzac lives in all of us. We believe our national disposition is to stick together in adversity and support each other. The Anzacs went in a national uniform under the flag, in our nation's name and the name of the British Empire, but their lives were finally given in support of one another.

Why does Anzac Day resonate with young people and grow in profile? The Anzacs were young, enlisting at 18, sometimes younger. Maybe this is one of the reasons Anzac Day resonates so deeply with young people today.

It is extraordinary what these men, many of them barely adults, were able to do in the most relentless debilitating conditions, but stories abound regarding their individual and collective bravery, the hardships borne and the most generous acts of mateship and sacrifice.

Anzacs inspire the current and young generations to embrace the world as confident, compassionate people, imbued with the Anzacs' spiritual legacy of endurance, courage and selfless determination to help one another. For young people in search of meaning, purpose and values for the world, a surprising number find meaning in Anzac Day, and a desire to honour the values exemplified by the Anzacs. Young people in primary and secondary schools hear stories about the Anzacs through their teachers and volunteers who speak at their schools. Through the 100 years of Anzac, the spirit lives. The Commonwealth government commemorates the Anzac centenary by supporting a number of national commemorative educational and cultural initiatives.

The Northern Territory government commemorates the Anzacs each year through the Anzac Spirit Study Tour, which acknowledges the profound contribution made by the soldiers and

their families. It is an inspirational way of keeping their memory alive. The study tour provides an opportunity for three Territory students to visit a battlefield of significance to Australia and to the Anzacs.

On this year's study tour, three students, a teacher and a Defence chaperone attended the Anzac Day service at Villers-Bretonneux, France, and then toured the battlefields in the area.

The 2016 Anzac Spirit Study Tour students were Ava Wilmore, Albert Boeck and Maitane Oakford. Maitane read the poem at the tomb of the unknown Australian soldiers at Villers-Bretonneux. I want to read the poem today to the House. Maitane's poem was penned as if it were written by one of the Anzac soldiers, and it is a fitting way to conclude our reflections on the Anzac spirit and Anzac Day:

*Far from home, we sons were sent, To the
riven fields of Fromelles; Where poppies
grew once, Peaceful in the radiance of
summer's past.*

*But fragile is the poppy, Its youthful glow
short living, As battle taints its soil in sin,
And metal tears its crimson glory.*

*We, the fated two thousand, As did the
poppies beneath our feet, Felt the tempest
of gunfire plant us, Within the dark embrace
of earth below.*

*But in the barrage, there came a stillness;
One that fused my heart, my mind.
Seconds became unending and the
universe allowed for me – To pray in the
company of angels, to my God eternal.*

*My heavenly Father, I said unto Him; 'With
all this, I know that dusk is upon me, And
as I am led, I shall go, And your light shall
guide me.'*

*A prayer's tranquillity gave thoughts of kin
and home; Love, laughter, a magpie's call.
Kissing games and cricket fields, Picnics
under eucalypt shade.*

*But I am not alone, I do not fret, I am a
brother amongst brothers; Who fought
through that war, that dark, that death, For
Freedom's toll is never sated.*

*We were loved, we are loved, And eternity
grants us the vision to see – That to cherish
us, is to remember the path we trod. Lest
that path be chosen anew.*

*And as the poppies bloom once more,
Twi'xt Fromelles' white crosses, our place of*

*rest. Our spirits remain uplifted, By those
who shan't forget.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Lest We Forget.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I place on the record my best wishes and congratulations to the Holy Spirit Church in Wanguri on its 30th birthday.

On Sunday 15 May I attended the 30th birthday mass in celebration of the church, where there was a full turnout. It was wonderful to see so many people celebrating the anniversary.

The Holy Spirit church has been an important part of the community for 30 years, providing a place not only of worship, but for people to get support, make friendships and feel as if they are part of something enriching their lives. The church is also an important part of the Holy Spirit school community and a great place for students as they proceed through their young lives in their upbringing within the Catholic church.

I started at Holy Spirit school in 1985. Since the church opened in 1986 I have been fortunate to spend time there on many occasions. Some of the significant occasions in my life have been spent there.

Today the Holy Spirit church remains a place that opens its doors to the community and welcomes people to the church. The Holy Spirit Parish has a history that starts well before 1986 when the new church was built. I place that history on the *Hansard* record of the parliament. I will read the history the church has provided on its website:

*The Parish began in 1974 dividing off from
Nightcliff Parish. Sunday Mass was
celebrated at Wagaman Primary School.
After Cyclone Tracy, Mass eventually
resumed in early 1976 at the new Wanguri
Primary School. It was decided to build a
combined presbytery and Mass Centre in
such a way that when a church was
eventually built the Mass Centre could
become part of the presbytery. The Mass
Centre would be able to seat 140 people
inside, while the breezeway and verandas
would be able to accommodate more. The
building was opened in July 1977.*

*Holy Spirit School began in early 1979 with
434 pupils. The sisters of Mercy accepted
responsibility for the school. The sisters
lived in Wanguri Terrace and moved into
their convent during 1981 on the corner of
Gsell Street and Strele Crescent.*

*Built on the eastern side of the car park, the
current church was opened in May 1986.*

After the sisters completed their time at the school, the convent became the presbytery and parish office. St. Martin de Porres community, begun in 1988 by the Aboriginal Catholic community, now uses the original parish building. On 31st October, 2004, a Covenant was made between Casuarina parish, St. Martin de Porres Community and the Bishop of Darwin. A memorial wall (columbarium) has been built on the back wall of the church.

To celebrate the 30th birthday a wonderful community celebration was organised by the parish. The church opened its doors for those who wanted to join in the celebration. It was great to see a full church, with many old faces and many children in attendance. Father Joseph and Father Lenin from Holy Spirit Parish were joined by Father Dan from the neighbouring St Martin De Porres church. It was a lovely service to celebrate the history and contribution the church has made to our community.

Following on from mass, a celebration took place at Holy Spirit school. There was plenty of food to share and activities for all the children to enjoy.

We are fortunate to live in a community that is supported by some wonderful religious faiths. In the Wanguri electorate we are blessed with a range of churches and places of worship. Holy Spirit Church is a much-loved place and has had a huge impact on generations. It is a special place where many people have been baptised, taken their first holy communion, been confirmed and married, and the church has been there to support them in their times of loss.

Happy birthday to Holy Spirit Church, and well done to all those who volunteered their time to make the celebration possible. We all look forward to many good years ahead of the church and the parish community, and the support it gives our community.

I turn to another matter, which is one you have heard many times before in the last six months. Being budget day I thought it important that I, again, ask the government where on earth the Power and Water Corporation and Indigenous Essential Services annual reports are. I will quote from the Treasurer during Question Time today:

When we came to government we knew Power and Water was a financial basket case. We have taken measures to reform that corporation and structurally separate it to make it more accountable and transparent, and to introduce a utilities market. We are seeing the fruits of that.

Here we are, on budget day, and we are yet to see the annual reports for the Power and Water Corporation and Indigenous Essential Services for 2014-15. They should have been deemed months ago – last year. Power and Water Corporation should now be working on the 2015-16 annual reports and preparing to have them ready after 30 June.

There were some great issues with the financial statements provided in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, to the point where the Auditor-General made an extraordinary statement, which we saw late last year, where she was unable to form an opinion on the Power and Water Corporation. She stated that there were issues with inadequate books and records maintained at Power and Water Corporation, and that there were issues with property, plant and equipment valuations of the Power and Water Corporation. She was therefore unable to form an opinion on the Power and Water Corporation.

It was significant to see that disclaimer of opinion in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report. It is concerning that the budget was handed down today but we are yet to see the financial information.

The Treasurer said today that structural separation would make Power and Water Corporation more accountable and financially transparent. Given the public has not seen the financial statements for 2014-15 and we have a statement from the Auditor-General, who was unable to form an opinion on what she saw due to concerns around inadequate books and records maintained as well as property, plant and equipment valuation issues, the government has clearly failed to deliver financial transparency and accountability when it comes to the Power and Water Corporation.

It also raises questions about what impact this has on the budget books and papers today. We have not seen the Power and Water Corporation financial statements from 2014-15. What impact does that have on the public non-financial corporation sector information? When will we finally see the Power and Water Corporation annual report, and when will it be made available to the public and this parliament?

Providing annual reports is a legislative requirement under the *Government Owned Corporations Act*. It is clear there are some monumental issues here. One would think that by now we would have seen those financial statements and appropriate reporting from the Power and Water Corporation.

I ask the Treasurer, as the shareholding minister, as well as the Minister for Essential Services,

when will we see the 2014-15 annual report for the Power and Water Corporation? Can we expect to see the Statement of Corporate Intent in parliament, ready to be scrutinised at estimates in June?

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will do something a little different in my adjournment debate tonight. In the interests of putting the right message out about this very important event, I have taken the information directly from the website of the Australian Library and Information Association:

National Simultaneous Storytime is held annually by the Australian Library and Information Association. Every year a picture book, written and illustrated by an Australian author and illustrator is read simultaneously in libraries, schools, pre-schools, childcare centres, family homes, bookshops and many other places around the country.

By facilitating National Simultaneous Storytime, we aim to:

- promote the value of reading and literacy;*
- promote the value and fun of books;*
- promote an Australian writer and publisher;*
- promote storytime activities in public libraries and communities around the country;*
- provide opportunities to involve parents, grandparents, the media and others to participate in and enjoy the occasion.*

NSS receives positive media coverage, generates a great deal of community interest and is held annually as part of Library and Information Week.

*In 2015 over 500,000 children at over 3,100 locations across Australia took part in National Simultaneous Storytime, reading the book *The Brothers Quibble*, written and illustrated by Aaron Blabey, enjoying a range of supporting educational activities, songs, games, dress ups and lots of fun. Have a look at some of the highlights from 2015.*

To do that you can simply go to the website:

National Simultaneous Storytime is an annual campaign that aims to encourage more young Australians to read and enjoy

books. Now in its 16th successful year, it is a colourful, vibrant, fun event that aims to promote the value of reading and literacy, using an Australian children's book that explores age-appropriate themes, and addresses key learning areas of the National Curriculum for Grades 1 to 6 and the pre-school Early Learning Years Framework.

This year I was invited by the Katherine Town Council's public library to take part in the NSS. Reading to children is one of my favourite parts of my job, and I take every opportunity I can to go to schools in Katherine and read books to the children.

Unfortunately I am unavailable to read to the children in Katherine at 11 am tomorrow, 25 May, with parliament taking precedence. But, being the problem solver that I am, I thought I might read the book into the *Hansard* tonight in my adjournment, and ask that the audio and video be sent to the Katherine library staff to be played at 11 am tomorrow in my absence.

I thank Madam Speaker and the staff of the Legislative Assembly for facilitating this, and my parliamentary colleagues for indulging me.

In order to make this effective, I have to seek leave, Mr Deputy Speaker, to do something different with my attire tonight. This book is about hats, and as I am required by the NSS to participate in this fully, I seek leave to be able to wear a hat while I am reading this book.

Leave granted.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Knock yourself out.

Mr WESTRA VAN HOLTHE: Thank you; I appreciate it.

This book is called *I Got This Hat*. This is a fantastic book all about hats.

I got this hat in China.

You can see this is a straw hat. The Chinese people wear these. The farmers wear them when they are in their fields working as farmers.

I got this hat from a miner.

You can see it is yellow and is really hard to protect their heads, and it has a big light on it so the miners can see when they are working underground.

I got this hat from a deep-sea diver.

Isn't that a strange-looking hat? It is like a bell or dome. It is made of steel and it has glass. That is so the diver can breathe underwater.

I got this hat from a racing car driver.

I know why racing car drivers wear these types of hat. Do you? It is because they can protect their heads in case they have a crash. I know this comes from a racing car driver because it has the black and white checkers that run over the top of the hat.

I got this hat from a pilot.

This hat – I think they are made of leather, but he has goggles on here so he can protect his eyes while he is flying.

I got this hat from a pirate.

Pirates are a bit scary. I wonder if there are real pirates out there. Maybe they have a wooden leg and have a cockatoo on their shoulder, or something like that. I do not know. You tell me. What do you think?

I got this hat on a tropical island.

I wonder how many of you have been on a holiday to a tropical island. Wouldn't it be great to have a hat like that?

I got this hat from the Scottish Highlands.

Isn't it a strange looking hat? It has these checkered things on it and a little pom pom on the top. I guess you have to be Scottish to like a hat like that.

I got this hat for biking.

All of you should know about this hat. This is to wear while you are riding your bicycle to make sure you protect your head.

I hope every one of you wears a hat like this when you are on your bicycle.

I got this hat from a Viking.

What a funny looking hat. It is kind of hard and maybe made of steel or something like that, but then it has these big horns on it. That is bizarre. I wonder why they have horns on their hat. Maybe it is so we can recognise them as Vikings.

I got this hat from an Eskimo.

I think that Eskimos need to keep their heads warm. What do you think? Is it to keep their head warm? It looks like a furry hat.

I got this hat in Mexico.

Do any of you know the name of this hat, the Mexican hat? It is called a sombrero. It has lots of bright colours on it and is really wide to keep the Mexican sun off their heads.

But to bed – which one?

What hat would you wear to bed? What hat would you be wearing when you go to bed tonight? Got your answer?

None!

I reckon none. You do not need to wear a hat when you go off to sleep unless it is really cold and you might put a beanie on your head.

What a fantastic book all about hats. You might wonder about my hat. My hat is an Akubra. I might have gotten this hat from a farmer in the Northern Territory, but this is my hat. I use it when I work outside to keep the sun off my head. That is really important. Everybody has to understand how important it is to protect your skin, your face and your head from the bright sunshine we have up here.

That is a fantastic book – *I Got This Hat*. I hope you have all enjoyed reading this book with me today. I hope you have a fantastic time at the council offices tomorrow. I hope you do some great, fun things; maybe you will do some role-play. I think there is a really good chance you will wear some hats today, and have lots and lots of fun. Thank you so much for the opportunity to present this book to you tonight and read it for you. Well done to the Katherine Library staff for putting this on. They always do a fantastic job. I hope you guys have a great day. Bye! See you when I'm back in Katherine.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.