

## CONTENTS

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS .....	65
Suggestion Box on Open Day .....	65
National Carers Week .....	65
MOTION .....	65
Formation of a Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People .....	65
Speaker's Statement .....	65
Footage of Maiden Speeches .....	65
MOTION .....	75
Adopt Committee of Members' Interests Report Recommendations .....	75
ADDRESS IN REPLY .....	79
PETITIONS .....	85
Petition No 1 – Transport for Coomalie District Residents to Attend Medical Appointments in Darwin ....	85
Petition No 2 – Access to Hospital Treatment in Darwin for Coomalie Residents .....	85
RESPONSES TO PETITIONS .....	86
Petitions No 60 and 64 .....	86
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR .....	87
Hon Roger Steele and Guests .....	87
ADDRESS IN REPLY .....	87
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT .....	94
Photography in the Chamber .....	94
PAPERS TABLED .....	120
Members' Travel Reports .....	120
Government Response to Committee Report on the Northern Territory's Energy Future .....	121
ADJOURNMENT .....	121

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

### **SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS** **Suggestion Box on Open Day**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise that on open day at Parliament House, held on 17 September this year, a suggestion box invited members of the public to propose new laws for the consideration of members of this Assembly. The suggestions included new cycling and traffic measures, transportation proposals, use of renewable energy sources, access to fresh produce, criminal matters and access to legal aid.

For the information of all members, I table the suggestions received and encourage honourable members to follow up these suggestions with Territorians.

### **National Carers Week**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, National Carers Week is from 16 to 22 October. National Carers Week acknowledges and says thank you for the significant contribution carers make to our community. A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are just frail.

There are a number of compelling statistics, including the fact that there are 2.8 million unpaid carers in Australia, including an estimated 30 000 in the Territory. I asked my office to circulate these statistics and make them available on your desks this morning. You also have a tag.

### **MOTION** **Formation of a Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People**

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that:

1. a select committee on the subject of opening parliament to the people be appointed comprising the Members for Fong Lim, Stuart, Sanderson, Karama, Daly, Nelson and Araluen.
2. The Committee is to inquire into options for parliamentary reform, particularly increased participation in the legislative process and policy debates, and improving the effectiveness of Question Time, having regard to, among other things, the *Parliamentary Reform: Opening Parliament to the People* Labor policy discussion paper, the *Restoring Integrity to Government: Trust and Integrity Reform Discussion Paper*, published by the then Opposition ahead of the Northern Territory election, the *Discussion Paper on Assembly Committee Reform*, tabled by the Speaker on 25 August 2015, and other proposals which the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly Standing Orders Committee deferred for consideration of the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly.
3. The Committee is to report to the Assembly by 31 March 2017.

As an incoming government, we take our responsibility to Territorians very seriously. Establishing this committee is an important part of being open and transparent to Territorians about the work taking place in this parliament.

Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the microphones are working.

---

### **SPEAKER'S STATEMENT** **Footage of Maiden Speeches**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, while we are waiting, I advise that there will be footage of everyone's maiden speech. Give us time to get them all compiled. We had a dedicated camera person in here and you will receive a copy of your speech, just give us a few days. There will be official photos too.

---

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Speaker, we propose the establishment of a select committee made up of members from the government, opposition and Independent benches. This committee will have seven members—

four government, two Independent, and one opposition—and will report back to the Assembly by 31 March 2017.

It is anticipated that the recommendations of the committee which are accepted by the Assembly will be implemented as soon as possible in 2017, although some may take some time to roll out. The committee will look at how we can do things better in this House, because the last four years have shown us that we must do better, we must give Territorians faith that their government will get on and do its job.

Almost two months ago Territorians placed an enormous amount of trust in this government. We are truly humbled to have the support and faith of Territorians that has been placed in our government. We have heard loud and clear from the community that Territorians expect open, transparent and accountable government, and that is exactly what the Gunner-led government will be. One of the first ways we will repay their faith and implement one of our key election promises of restoring integrity to government is to establish this select committee into parliamentary reform.

Before the election, Territory Labor released a discussion paper on reforming democracy. I table that document.

We wanted to hear from our community on ways we could open up the parliament to the people and how to make sure our parliament was relevant and reflective of people's expectations of their representatives.

We have seen, over the last four years, the damage a chaotic and dysfunctional government can cause. We have seen this Assembly descend into utter farce at times. We have seen our parliament become the laughing stock of the country, from midnight coups to personal attacks, threats of violence, and bungled and rushed legislation from a government which ignored expert advice and believed it knew best. In one sittings of the Assembly we would have no legislation, then in the next sittings we would be asked to rush through legislation on urgency. Madam Speaker, as you well know, urgency should be reserved for exactly that: an urgent matter, something to do with water supply, important issues like that, not because a government could not get its timing of legislation right.

As a local member I would often hear from my community, out on the doors, at the markets, at school drop offs—the questions were, what is going on in that place? What is wrong with our government? There have been times when I am sure each of us here has asked that, and we saw some reflection upon the Leader of the Opposition yesterday. But this place, this Assembly, should be a place where ideas are contested and we work positively together to achieve good outcomes for the people of the Northern Territory.

All 25 of us here today have been elected by our communities. We have been elected to represent them in this Assembly and this House, to provide a voice on legislation, to provide input from our community. Everyone deserves to be listened to, and as representatives of our communities, of the people of the Territory who have put their faith in each of us, we need to deliver on that. This motion will do that.

Throughout the last term, Territorians spoke out strongly on a number of concerns, such as the sale of TIO. We saw a number of rallies outside this parliament. We saw hundreds of people drive through the streets, tooting their support and calling on the government to hear their voices and not sell TIO. But as we know, TIO was sold, despite protests, debate in this Chamber and thousands of Territorians telling the CLP government they did not want TIO sold.

It seemed that in the way of scrutiny, very little occurred in that decision. Since the sale of TIO, we have seen people lose their jobs, branches shut down and insurance premiums increase sharply. We have seen people who were able to access discounts before because they were a Territory-owned company, based in the Territory, lose those discounts.

We knew it was a bad decision then, but the government would not listen to Territorians. The establishment of this committee will provide an avenue of input for Territorians, to make sure our process allows voices to be heard, which were not heard in the case of TIO being sold.

We saw rallies against cuts to teacher numbers and school budget cuts; we saw teachers and parents calling out to be heard, wanting to share their stories of the impact those cuts would have on our children and schools—students left without support in the classroom and dedicated teachers left without jobs. Schools had to decide which program they would cut simply to get by. We knew it was a bad decision, but the CLP government would not listen.

We saw rallies against the lease of Darwin port, but, sadly, we did not even have a chance to have our voice heard. It was ignored, and the lease happened—a 99-year lease that will never see the port in our hands for most of our generation. The first thing anyone knew about it was a media announcement. Apparently the Australian Government was in the same boat as Territorians on this issue. We knew it was a bad decision, but the government would not listen to Territorians.

Over the last four years we saw dozens of rallies against power price hikes and the split of Power and Water. We heard the Member for Port Darwin speak passionately yesterday about what privatisation meant for him, with his young family in a small town in country South Australia.

We need to hear those wide-reaching stories before decisions are made. We need to hear the voices and stories of Territorians through our local members, and that is what we will ask this committee to look into. How can we best ensure the voices of Territorians are heard as we consider legislation? Yesterday we heard from the Chief Minister that we need to think beyond four-year electoral cycles, because that is not how the world works.

We need to ensure the decisions being made in this House will genuinely benefit Territorians into the future. We must be an open and transparent government, because Territorians demand it. We know this; we saw it just a few months ago, but we are under no illusions about how Territorians treat poor behaviour from their elected representatives. We want to model best practice in the Territory, not be decades behind the rest of the country.

To tackle the problems facing the Northern Territory, we have to be so much better than the antics we have seen over the last four years. Territorians know this and they expect this, and we are under no illusions. They will remind us if we fall short of their expectations.

We heard strongly from Territorians in response to our *Reforming our Democracy* discussion paper, which this committee will be asked to consider. We want to make it clear that the government is very open in regard to this committee. We have appointed the committee and will be taking its recommendations and thoughts with an open mind. We know we do not have all the answers on this side of the House. We have ideas, but we want the committee to look into them and report back to us.

Every one of us in this House brings a lifetime of experience, and I am sure every one of us has ideas on how we can improve and promote the culture of inclusion in decision-making within this Legislative Assembly.

The committee will consider such options as changes to committees to provide a higher level of scrutiny on legislation. We saw bills repeatedly rushed through on urgency in the last Assembly, with little opportunity for genuine consultation or scrutiny. Our community expects better. We have a number of key stakeholders, groups and individuals in the Northern Territory who are passionate about the decisions we make in this House. We want to provide the opportunity for them to come into the committee and provide feedback. We need to rebuild that trust, and bringing Territorians on the journey is an important part of that.

We need to share information and work together with stakeholders, individuals, the opposition and the Independents so we can end up with the best legislation and outcome for Territorians. We want to be a government that listens to the voices of Territorians. We want to set up frameworks and establish a recognised process so we will not see again what we saw over the last four years, with rushed decisions and legislation not being appropriately scrutinised. We want a framework and a system in place that allows for consultation and input, not because it is the right thing to do, but because it is the smart thing to do.

What happens in this Assembly ripples out and impacts on the whole Territory. Questionable decisions were made left, right and centre. Public servants and their work were ignored and devalued. The chaos of the last four years has damaged confidence and the economy. We need to restore confidence and have some input, and this committee would look into how that would be possible. We have ideas, but we are open to the committee sharing its thoughts. We have to do a better job here, and this is the first step.

The committee will also consider the other options put forward in our *Reforming our Democracy* discussion paper; some of the options we have already acted on, including the election of an Independent Speaker, which this government is proud to have delivered in the Northern Territory.

During the last parliament we saw the extraordinary attempt to oust you from the role, Madam Speaker. We were only reminded of that yesterday when the Member for Nelson said it was your third election as Speaker. You lost that role for a few hours in the middle of the night. Sorry, I believe it was the Leader of

the Opposition who reminded us of that. Both of them would like credit! I am happy to share it. That is what this is about, working together and sharing thoughts.

During the last parliament we saw, time and time again, that this parliament was not respected. The government did not respect the valuable voices of members, who represent their communities. I saw that repeatedly with the local police issues in my community. The then minister for Police, the Chief Minister, refused to listen to me. He did not want that input. This committee would help change that. Members of this committee would look into options to make sure that, in the legislative process, all voices are heard.

Highly-partisan speakers can make a mockery of the rules of parliament. We have seen that in other parliaments, and probably in our own parliament. We believe that having you as an Independent Speaker, Madam Speaker, highlights the independence of the authority in this parliament. Territorians want assurances that, regardless of who is in government, both sides of the Chamber will be treated fairly and be allowed to have a fair say.

The committee will also be invited to consider reforms to Question Time. We have already indicated that we would like to make Question Time open and transparent. I will bring another motion to the House next week about making Question Time on Wednesdays purely for the opposition and Independent members; we will not have questions from government backbenchers. Questions from government backbenchers are important in sharing information on how the government is doing its job, but it is also important, with this government being open and transparent, that we allow extra time to the opposition and Independent members. I look forward to bringing that motion to the House next week.

Question Time is an opportunity for the non-government members to seek information on government decisions and the impact on their communities, then share that information with their communities. We need to ensure Question Time serves that purpose on behalf of the community, and we do not see it descend into a point-scoring episode.

The committee may also consider changes to the estimates process to increase the scrutiny and oversight of government spending. I am proud that it was a former Labor government that introduced the estimates process in the Northern Territory. It was one of the first acts of the new government in 2001 and of our then Deputy Chief Minister. He knew well that good government was not possible without scrutiny. Over the past 15 years we have seen the estimates process expand in both time and scope. It is now appropriate for this parliament, through this committee, to review those arrangements to ensure they continue to serve their purpose.

One possible reform, suggested in our *Reforming our Democracy* discussion paper is to split the Estimates Committee process into two separate one-week blocks. The first week would be timed soon after the annual Territory Budget, which is what happens now, in order to provide opposition and Independent MLAs the opportunity to scrutinise proposed government expenditure.

The second week would review what money was spent on, via the scrutiny of the departments' annual reports. This would also provide an opportunity to ensure program milestones are being met in line with community expectations. This is an important part of the process, rather than just doing it once when the Budget is being put in place, let us take the time—we put the Budget in place and scrutinise it, then when the annual reports come out, which are so often forgotten, let us use that information and scrutinise the government and government agencies once again.

The committee could also consider a review of the standing orders. We need to make sure our standing orders meet their intended purpose: to maintain order and facilitate debate. Madam Speaker, you certainly maintain order here, but we need to make sure the standing orders facilitate the debate as openly as possible. We need to make sure they keep up with modern best practice. It is widely recognised that it is best practice for parliaments to regularly review their standing orders, and we look forward to such a review occurring during this Thirteenth Legislative Assembly.

To ensure the parliament is accessible to Territorians, the committee will also be asked to consider options for opening up the parliament to the people. Options could include presentations to parliament through the committee process from community groups—bringing important, key stakeholders in here and letting them engage with our parliamentary process. We need to regain the trust of Territorians in our parliament, and what better way to do it than to provide key input from stakeholders. These are just some of the options that this committee, if established today, can look into.

Every day we are in this Assembly, we are asked to consider legislation that has the potential to impact on Territory businesses and Territorians in their day-to-day lives. As parliamentarians we should be consulting as widely as possible to assess the impacts before we make a decision on legislation. I am not being critical of previous governments or previous Assemblies in this House. I am reflecting on the last four years and the chaos and dysfunction that ensued within these walls. Now is an opportunity to stop, draw a line in the sand and work out how we can have a better process in this parliament to include Territorians.

Over the last four years we saw that when this consultation does not happen before legislation is passed, the unintended consequences can be profound. I have found that the groups which are most likely to be impacted by changes to legislation are very pleased to share their knowledge to ensure good outcomes for themselves, their businesses, their community groups and their members. As an opposition member with limited resources, in consulting on legislation when we were given the opportunity to do so, when legislation was introduced within the proper time frames, we were able to meet with community groups, get their feedback and provide recommendations to the government.

A good government listens to key stakeholders and Territorians. This committee would certainly provide opportunity for that to take place. We could have the option, if the committee recommends it, where legislation is introduced one sittings to have it reviewed by committees set up by this select committee, and then they can provide feedback. 'That legislation seems straight forward; the normal scrutiny process of 30 days is enough', or, 'This legislation is important; we believe we need to take it to Territorians.' It could sit on the Notice Paper for a sittings whilst the committees look into the detail of the legislation, and then come back into the House to be debated and, hopefully, passed.

There are lots of opportunities and establishing this select committee will allow it to look into them. The terms of reference are broad, but that is so this committee can provide recommendations. Madam Speaker, I know you have done a body of work looking into this over the past three years, and it is time that the government accepts that work, asks the committee to look into your work and our *Reforming our Democracy* discussion paper and come back to this House in a suitable time frame with some options.

The list I have spoken of today is certainly not exhaustive and is by no means intended to pre-empt—it is just some of the ideas we have come up with. It is intended to open up discussion and recognise how many opportunities we have for improvement that can be presented with in this Assembly.

The select committee will be asked to speak directly with experts to hear best-practice parliamentary processes. They will consider all the information from these experts and report back to the Assembly so we end up with the best-possible parliamentary reform model.

We would like to put this body of work in place as soon as practically possible so we can change that process within parliament, but if the committee says it needs a different time frame, we are open to listening to that.

There will always be differences of options between members of this House, but we all strive to do what is best for our community and the Northern Territory. We need to have a respectful culture and a robust, well-mannered debate, and we believe these committee reforms will help us achieve that. No single one of us here has the answers, but if we work together, hopefully this Thirteenth Legislative Assembly will create long-lasting, positive changes for Territorians. I hope that can truly be a legacy of this 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the comments from the opposition and Independent members on how best we can establish this committee.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, the opposition, at this point, is in favour of establishing this committee, and we will work with the committee to ensure it achieves the outcomes the Leader of Government Business outlined. We are concerned, however, that it does not become the only means of transparency and accountability of this parliament. It is not the be all and end all.

We support this motion and are happy to work with the committee. We think it has the potential to have some very positive outcomes for this Assembly.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of Government Business for bringing this motion forward. I also support the select committee on opening the parliament to the people. I had a quick read of the document on parliamentary reform and opening the parliament to the people. That document could be used as part of the committee's reference when it is looking at changes.

Many of the issues I agree with. I was frustrated, as an Independent in the last government, when we did not have any legislation and in the next sittings we had a whopping great heap of legislation being put through. It made it difficult to get briefings and understand what the legislation was about and who it would affect.

That sort of approach spoils what this parliament is about. Legislation is a central part of what we do in this parliament, and we want to make sure the best-quality legislation is passed. You get that is through good debate, and the way to get good debate is for members to have done the work beforehand, looking at all aspects of the legislation.

The minister mentioned the sale of TIO and the port. I was involved in some of those rallies and discussions. I was on the port committee, which recommended that the port be privatised. The issue with TIO was not so much about whether it should be sold; it was that the government did not talk to the people about it.

I received a blast from a constituent, which brings you back to earth. I was sitting on the corner in Knuckey Lagoon when the government announced that our port would be sold to a majority-Chinese company. It occurred to me that perhaps there was something wrong with the system, and maybe that is an area the committee could look at. This constituent said to me, 'What are you going to do about it?' I said that I could not do anything about it because it was a government decision, not a decision of the parliament.

Perhaps there would be an opportunity for discussion in this committee when there is a possibility that a government asset be sold—although I do not think there are many left, unless you want to sell the schools and hospitals—that it comes back to parliament for debate.

Long before the port and TIO were being discussed, there were two issues I raised in this parliament: the sale of the printing office and the sale of the Darwin bus service. Neither of those came back to parliament. They were announced by media releases, like the changes to pokies. There is an opportunity to discuss, if the government is looking at selling an asset—it has every right to consider that, but it would be healthy if it came back to parliament for a full and wholesome debate on the pros and cons.

There was no debate on whether it was a good idea to have a Chinese company as the majority stakeholder in our port. I raised the topic with the port committee, but when it came back to parliament there was no discussion about it at all. That is one area we can look at.

I agree with the Attorney-General about the parliament being adversarial. Your predecessor, the former Attorney-General, was a great fan of the table in front of us. The table is, by Westminster tradition, the length of two swords; the two-sword length was to keep the adversaries apart.

People are probably sick of me saying I made a trip to two territories in Canada where that table does not exist. On the floor of one there is a polar bear skin, and on the floor of the Nunavut Assembly is a sled with a traditional man and a drum, but there is no table. Personally, I do not like that table because it represents an adversarial parliament. You know I do not always agree with people in this place, but I try to do it in a proper and well-mannered way, and get my point across without abusing people. I was brought up by parents who said, 'Be nice to one another even when you do not agree. If you do, do not say anything.' I was never told to sort out problems by being adversarial.

That does not mean you cannot have a strong debate. The Member for Port Darwin—someone said they were not sure whether he was making a speech yesterday or talking at the local rally, but that does not matter. He was putting his point of view. You can put it firmly but you do not have to be abusive.

I have known this parliament to descend to the gutter at times. If we can change that you will start to bring our community along and create respect, not only for this parliament but for yourselves as politicians. If you number the occupations people respect from one to 100, we are at the bottom. I am not saying we are all to blame for that. Sometimes the media enjoys having a go at us. That is the fact. You do not often see articles praising the work of a member of parliament.

It is nearly an Australian thing to have a go at a politician. I say I am a member of parliament because the word 'politician' tends to invoke the response, 'Are you?' I will be at the football and be asked, 'What do you do?' I say, 'I am a member of parliament'.

That is unfortunately the way we are. Yet—I will not call it an occupation—our role is to encourage other people to take up this role and be part of the parliamentary process and making decisions for the Territory.

When people are complaining about the job I am doing or what the government is doing, I say, 'Why do you not put your hand up?' They say, 'Oh, no way'. They are happy to hit you over the head with a complaint but are not happy to say, 'Maybe I could do a better job than you'.

Getting back to reforming how our parliament operates, we need to let our community see that we are more than just a bunch of rabble rousers, that we are willing to discuss things in a civil way, regardless of which side of parliament we are on.

Other issues raised by the Attorney-General were changes to committees. I was hoping to get to Queensland to look at its committee system but I have not yet. In its committee system every piece of legislation goes to a committee, and I think they have portfolio committees. The Chief Minister would have a committee that looks at his legislation and other members of the Cabinet would have committees that look at their legislation.

The system in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in Canada is very similar. A minister brings in a piece of legislation. The committee calls the minister into a different room—it might be like the Litchfield Room—and questions the minister about the legislation. The committee might then go out into the countryside, in their case ice and snow, and in our case either wet or dry—go out bush if the legislation relates to remote communities and take it to the people. The committee would come back to the minister, who might look at adjusting the legislation, and the legislation would be brought back to parliament. There are other ways of doing things that we certainly need to look at.

I would like to see something I put forward a long time ago, which a previous Speaker would not even consider. In the first Clare Martin Assembly there was a business round table in this building. Two IT screens were put up so you could see who was talking and what the topic was. There are not many people in the galleries at the moment, but I have always felt that if you want to help people who come here to listen to a debate, there should be a screen that says 'the Member for Arafura is speaking' and the subject he is speaking on. It might even be something someone types in about a question that has been put forward and who put it forward—something so at least when a person walks in here they know what is going on. Unless they dig out the piece of paper down the bottom, they would not necessarily know who I am and they would not know what the topic is.

There is nothing wrong with using a bit of modern technology—and it is not that modern, just some screens—to help people who come into this Assembly to understand what is happening. I know there is text that goes along the bottom of the TV, but if you came in here you would not know what was happening. I do not think it would spoil the place if it was done properly.

The Attorney-General mentioned the Estimates Committee process. I certainly want to look carefully. I would like to know the practicalities of putting all portfolios into one week for the Budget discussion, and then all portfolios into another week to look at the annual reports. That is a lot of portfolios and annual reports. How that will work in a practical way, I do not know.

I am very much a fan of annual reports. That is where you find out, sometimes to your own surprise, that is what that department does, or about programs they had running through the year. Then you can ask about the effects of that program. Did it succeed? How much did it cost? It is really important that we look at budgets and annual reports. The departments that write annual reports might at least feel that someone is taking some interest in them and it is not just a report that gets stuck on a shelf or a webpage; it has been looked at.

There are probably other things. The Attorney-General discussed the Speaker's role, and there are three options here. We did not worry about the three options; we took the first option, which was to elect an Independent.

**Madam SPEAKER:** A mighty fine option too.

**Mr WOOD:** That is good, coming from one of my constituents.

You did mention standing orders. In the last sittings, as the Clerk would know, there was a lot of work done on amending standing orders. You are saying we will have another look at the standing orders, and that is the right of the government, but I hope that more about tweeting it—not that I use that word next to the Speaker here; she likes tweeting. Not that kind of tweeting—do the modified standing orders we have need a total revamp or just need some minor changes? It is worth doing but, again, the committee can look at that.



There are probably some other issues. I have mentioned to a number of people—this is why it is worth traveling—that sometimes in Nunavut and Northwest Territories, young high school students work as pages. In the federal parliament there are people who take water around to members of parliament. In Nunavut, high school students are selected to do that job, and they are selected on the basis of turning up to school on a regular basis. They come from all over those territories. They actually have a cloakroom, so as people come in they take their cloak. They have earpieces where the language is translated, because in Nunavut the people speak in Inuktitut. They also pass messages. If one of the ministers here wanted to get a message to the Speaker, they would put their hand up holding a little sticky paper and the page would take it to the Speaker. The pages bring water to the table, which involves young people in the parliamentary process. It also rewards them for going to school. I thought it was a great idea.

In Nunavut they dress up in a traditional costume like you see Inuit people wear. In the Northwest Territories it is a little more Western, but they also have their own style of dress. It is something we could look at to encourage young people to take an interest in this parliamentary process.

The committee will look into those issues I raised in more depth. It is good to hear that if the committee cannot get all the work done in the allocated time there is the ability to take it a little further. As the minister said, you do not want to rush things if you want to ensure you get a good outcome.

Madam Speaker, I welcome the setting up of this committee. I hope the people on it will participate and perhaps go into the community to ask people what they think about parliament. It might be good to get some feedback. A simple question is, 'What do you think about parliament?' I could guess what the answers would be in some cases. Our goal might be to change the public's view of what this place is about. Hopefully the committee will be the start of that.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak for the first time in the 13<sup>th</sup> Northern Territory parliament. I congratulate the Attorney-General for bringing on this motion to set up a select committee to reform the Northern Territory parliament. There is a need for reforms across many sectors of our parliament.

On 28 August, 25 people were elected to this 13<sup>th</sup> parliament. Looking around this honourable Chamber today, it is very different to the way it was years ago when this parliament was first formed. We have seen a dramatic change in the political environment in the Northern Territory. Two members of the CLP now form the opposition, which is unprecedented. Who would have thought, years ago, that could even happen? We got down to as low as a four-member opposition a few years ago, but to get down to a two-member opposition is bordering on the absurd. To have five Independent members of parliament within the seven non-government members ranks is, again, unprecedented.

We need to look at reforming all the things the Attorney-General mentioned. We need to look at every part of the processes of parliament to ensure we include people at every step. I agree that every piece of legislation that comes before the Northern Territory parliament should be scrutinised by a committee and the community. The Member for Nelson mentioned the Queensland Parliament; I think it has a much better system than we do, and I would embrace the opportunity to introduce that system in the Northern Territory. We do not have an upper house, which makes a big difference.

Over the last four years we have seen numerous pieces of legislation rammed through parliament very quickly, and I was responsible for at least one of those. A few years ago I was responsible for pushing through the *Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act*, which we concluded at about 2.30 am one morning, just before the beginning of the 2013 financial year. It seems like a century ago. The government has the vast majority in this Chamber, and it could choose to do that. I respect you for reflecting on this to allow proper scrutiny and democracy to play out. But you will find yourselves in situations, from time to time, where you want and need to rush things through. You will want to pass legislation to improve the lives of Territorians, or at least that is how you will see it. It will be interesting to see how you manage those situations.

Sometimes you have to move quickly as a government; you cannot drag your heels. The select committee will consider how that can be done on an as-needed basis. Including Territorians every step of the way can only be a good thing.

I have struggled, over the last six weeks, in coming to terms with how I will operate as an Independent in this Chamber. I realise there are probably far more significant things to talk about today, but we are at the beginning of this parliament, so these things have to be nussed out. We, the five Independents, waited six weeks for the Chief Minister to provide us with what he called 'adequate resourcing' to operate in this parliament. On Monday we were advised the adequate resourcing would comprise two additional librarians

to be employed by the Parliamentary Library to assist the five Independent members to undertake their parliamentary work. I have spoken to three of my Independent colleagues, and we all feel that that is not adequate resourcing for what we need to do, given that we have a two-member opposition.

I am a little disappointed with that decision made by the Chief Minister. He took his time in making that decision, as he said he would, and I feel it falls short of what we require. I cannot speak on behalf of Madam Speaker, but I have spoken to the other Independents, who generally play a more active role in this Chamber, of the needs they identified, and most of us feel that as Independents we need to be resourced independently from each other. A pool system simply does not work.

The Chief Minister has undertaken to review the decision in 12 months' time, so perhaps in the meantime we can look at how other jurisdictions resource their Independents, particularly under these very unique circumstances. As an Independent I will scrutinise government as best I can across all sectors of government. I will not be confined only to issues that affect my electorate. I think the Remuneration Tribunal felt our concerns should be limited to our electorates; I do not agree with that. As the seven-member non-government group that will be holding this large government to account, it is important that we all scrutinise government across the board, and that we act as a team to ensure, on behalf of Territorians, we look at what government does, ask questions and debate things in a very robust way. It is essential that we do that; that is part of how a good parliament functions.

I would like to see this select committee look at how this antiquated system of how we resource, and operate within, the Northern Territory parliament—how relevant it is, how it could be improved and how we consider scenarios that can eventuate, as we have seen over the last six weeks in this very parliament.

The select committee should consider what would have happened if no CLP members were elected to this parliament. If there were only Independents and no CLP members, how then would we be resourced? These absurd, but highly-likely, scenarios, given the situation we have in 2016, need to be considered. How relevant is a two-party Westminster system to our parliament today? How does that function? My opinion is that this system we have in place is struggling in this parliament today.

I would like to see this select committee look at how the parliament functions from a political perspective, with the two-party preferred system we have in place and the resourcing of Independents. We are all elected on the same premise; each of the 25 people in this Chamber were elected by our people in the same way. We should all be equal, to some extent, but the current system discriminates against Independents. We are, effectively, entitled to less, and that is not fair. It is not fair to our constituents, electorates and the people of the Northern Territory. Let us make this a fairer system. I recommend that the select committee looks at addressing this issue, which has not been resolved and will not be resolved for some time.

Once again, I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this on. I look forward to being a part of that select committee. I look forward to working collaboratively with all members of this parliament. It has been a tough road over the last four years for those of us who have been re-elected, both personally and professionally. I look forward to working in a very civilised fashion. I will not agree with some of the motions and positions put forward by this large Labor government; that is not my job. It is not my job to agree with you. It is my job to make sure I get the best possible outcomes for the people of Araluen and Alice Springs, and that is what I intend to do.

I have had the great pleasure, over the last 18 months, of getting to know many of the people in the Labor ranks, and I think you are a fantastic group of people. I became far more fond of you than I did of some of my former colleagues. Friendships aside—Gary, you have always remained a friend—we are all here to do a job. At times it may become adversarial, and that need not be a problem as long as it does not become personalised and abusive. I think we can celebrate this Chamber as being a safe place where we can debate issues for our people and, hopefully, get the best outcomes.

I look forward to the first meeting of the select committee. It can only bring good things for the people of the Northern Territory.

**Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development):** Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand in the parliament and support the Attorney-General on what is a positive motion to start a positive Thirteenth Legislative Assembly.

Open and transparent government—who would want to speak against that in this place? Is there anybody who would rise to speak against a motion to support open and transparent government? It was interesting

to hear the Leader of the Opposition's Address in Reply yesterday. It was a short but concise reply on what not to do in regard to democracy, the political process and the operations and behaviours as a member of parliament in this Assembly.

It was also interesting to hear how well the electorate of Daly did in the last Assembly. I went home and did some sums and a bit of geographic study, and I think Barkly is about three times the size of the electorate of Daly, yet the budget appropriations were nowhere near as generous over the last four years. It was good that the Leader of the Opposition put that on the table, but it is also important that we deconstruct the previous CLP government. There were some very hard times that were completely devoid of democracy. The electorate reflected that in the 2016 election.

The committee membership proposed in this motion is excellent. It is truly an opportunity for bipartisanship. In my opinion and the opinion of government, that gets a big tick. It will provide many opportunities for very clear and concise opinions, experiences and consultations.

Territory Labor took this concept to an election. This was known about before the election and has obviously been supported by Territorians because there was a resounding result in support of Territory Labor in the 2016 election. The member for Araluen quite rightly highlighted the challenges that brings to democracy. So what better motion today, on the second sitting day, from the Attorney-General to rationalise that situation, to provide real democracy, to look at open and transparent processes and assess, evaluate and research this Assembly and how it does its business and improve on it. That is a very honourable position, and I thank the Attorney-General, the Chief Minister and Labor colleagues on this side, because the formation and operation of this committee will represent truly coming together.

The Labor election campaign agenda was about listening to the people, and the people have spoken. I was recently at Alpururulam, and quite a robust discussion emerged about local government, with me in the middle of it. A community leader, in the context of replying to the regional services manager, said, 'I do not want to tell people how to do their job. I just want to be consulted.' He broadened that to the community he represented, which is the people of Alpururulam. I took that away as a resonating piece of advice from a respected elder—a man who lives in the bush, stands up and represents the community and works hard, and is honest and has integrity. That was very commonsense advice to anyone listening, but especially to me as a local member representing the people of Alpururulam and across the Barkly. People do not want to go to the lengths of telling me how to do my job, but they want to be consulted. This is, essentially, what this motion delivers.

The select committee has some good objectives in regard to improving scrutiny and hearing Territory voices. That is an honourable agenda. There are then opportunities to create terms of reference with some recommendations from the Attorney-General about reforms to Question Time and the estimates process, which I believe, from my experience as a previous minister and then in opposition—and now back in government—is a very important process in democracy. It is also a process that could be continually improved. It is important to remember that a Labor government implemented a real estimates process into this Assembly. It was a Labor government that said we needed to step up scrutiny, and we need to allow people to look closely at the operations and business of government.

We then had a challenging four years under the conservatives, the CLP. I will never forget the estimates process one year, where the then Chief Minister started speaking slowly to deliberately waste time. I think that was one of the most powerful messages that was sent to the people of the electorate, who do not necessarily comprehend the estimates process unless they are an insider or take an interest in it. It is a complex, unwieldy process. Anybody, any constituent, who understood that the process was scrutinising the expenditure of taxpayers' money—the first minister, the leader of the government, chose a strategy that was childish, arrogant and ignorant, and he started to speak slowly to waste time. If there is ever a time to revisit estimates and restore the trust and faith of the constituents in that process, it is now.

Once again, I commend the Attorney-General for bringing this motion to the House. When you consider what this place does—for our new members here today, it is a huge responsibility. You are on the front line of legislation, which is life-changing in many respects for many Territorians. It is such an important process. The Member for Nelson has already brought forward some interesting points about possible terms of reference for how that can be conducted better—the scrutiny of legislation, consultation about legislation, those important stakeholders, expert groups and constituents, who will have an opportunity to participate in the process, because it is such an important part of our job, which impacts on people's lives and Territory society.

If you want a good example of that, you do not have to look very far back. The Member for Drysdale made a heartfelt speech yesterday about two Territory firefighters, one of whom is her husband. I really started to reach into how personal this story was, and how that legislation that was passed in this House discriminated against our frontline firefighters, people who go out in the Territory and put their own lives at risk. I was on the other side. I was, as the Member for Araluen has alluded to, a member of this House who was scrutinising government legislation.

It was smashed through. The other thing about it was the arrogance it was done with. There was strong opposition; it was well researched and consulted and had the community behind it, yet a government which had no ears smashed it through. That is an example of how important our jobs are in this place. That is an example of how this committee will provide extra platforms to make sure we get legislation right.

The select committee will be able to speak to people, organisations and stakeholders to conduct research, with the objective being to deliver best-practice parliamentary processes. As the Member for Nelson has taught me many times, there are many other jurisdictions we can look to. There are many other good strategies and processes that can inform us in this House, and setting up a select committee is the process for parliamentarians to do that with support.

I have said many times that I really enjoyed my time in committees while in opposition. I did not get that opportunity for very long in government, but in opposition we were almost jostling to get on to committees—the things you wanted to do and research. The incredible support you get from the secretariat on select and sessional committees—this place has some great people who conduct some fantastic research and organise your professional development. They are imperative in this process, and they do a fantastic job. So for the members who get on to this select committee, I can guarantee you will have a resounding, high-level of professional support that will facilitate the findings and important deliberations.

Well done, Attorney-General. I look forward to this select committee, possibly the first one that will be established in this Assembly, and I really look forward to seeing the terms of reference, to hearing the reports of the work conducted and, most essentially, the outcomes for us, members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly, creating better, open and transparent processes for the parliament.

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I thank everyone for their feedback and thoughts in this debate. It is good that this parliament acknowledges that we need to reform. I acknowledge the self-reflection of some of the members in this debate today, and I look forward to using that in a positive sense in establishing this committee, looking at what this parliament can reform to provide openness and transparency to Territorians.

The comments honourable members made today show a positive frame of mind that we are starting with this committee, and I am very grateful for that. It will be good to have positive discussions about change.

I acknowledge the Members for Nelson, Araluen and Daly for their support in the debate today and their support and open minds in joining the committee and working through possible changes.

This committee is about structural reform for the parliament and the process of legislation. I acknowledge the Member for Araluen's comments on issues of resourcing. The independent Remuneration Tribunal provided the Independent members with a detailed letter. I understand there are some additional staff and there is an offer to review that in the future. I want to separate the issue—this is around the structural reform of committees' work in this parliament going forward.

I thank everyone for their comments. I will not take too long to wrap the debate; I do not think that is necessary. I look forward to the committee working and coming back with thoughts.

Motion agreed to.

#### **MOTION**

#### **Adopt Committee of Members' Interests Report Recommendations**

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly adopts the Committee of Members' Interest report recommendations to the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly so that an annual return of the Register of Members' Interests is placed on the Legislative Assembly website after tabling during the second sitting period each year, and that this practice commences in 2017.

I ask the House today to consider this motion to annually publish the Register of Members' Interests online.

Madam Speaker, as you are well aware, this is not a new motion. The Committee of Members' Interests of the last Assembly considered the question. Earlier this year the committee recommended this same motion that our register of interests be tabled in the House annually and made available online. That was presented to the House. The then Leader of Government Business tabled the report in March this year, but the motion was never debated, therefore it lapsed when the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly lapsed.

Members would still be required to consistently update their register of interest, something those who have been members previously are well aware of, and members who are new to the House have been inducted by your staff, Madam Speaker.

This is an important motion, as we enter this new Assembly, regarding openness and transparency, because the sharing of this information is vital to restoring Territorians' trust in this House. We heard the Member for Nelson talk about the lack of esteem that members of parliament are currently held in. It is important that we put in place mechanisms that show we are genuine and our actions are transparent.

This is done in other parliaments around Australia; it is something our federal government counterparts do. It was recommended to this House in March this year, but we never had the opportunity to debate it, so I am very pleased to bring it forward today. I look forward to comments from other members.

The people have to trust us to make decisions. They need to know there have not been any inappropriate influences on those decisions. We know that the Territory is a small place, but we can go a long way to mitigating any perceived conflicts of interest by fully registering the interests we have outside this House.

Trust was eroded to dangerously low levels over the last four years. Those scandals and doubts tainted all of us, which we have spoken of here. Putting the Register of Members' Interests online sends a signal to Territorians that we are genuine about trust and being open and accountable.

It is about modernising access to information of the Northern Territory parliament. Currently, to access members' interests you must make an appointment through the Clerk's office and physically visit Parliament House to view the register, which is cumbersome and old-fashioned; we need to get with the times. As it is only available in hard copy, people are only able to access it during business hours. No photos or photocopies are allowed to be taken, but notes can be taken.

We are proposing that, like other parliaments, our register of interests will be available on the Internet for everyone to see. We are not talking about the process of registering members' interests; that is a well-established process. When we put our hand up for parliament we acknowledge that we need to share that information and information about our partners, but we are not talking about that. We are talking about the process of it being available to Territorians. The Territory is large, as we all know, and most people have access to the Internet, so this would help with transparency.

People who view the register of interests—to assure members—have to disclose their name and address, and members of the Assembly will still have the right to inspect who has viewed their register of interests. Currently, we can go upstairs, as members, and see the names of the people who have come in over the last four years, in my case—longer for other members and a shorter period of time for newer members—and viewed our interests. That process will still take place. All of this ensures we have transparency.

The Committee of Members' Interests found that all other parliaments around the country make their registers of interests available online, and we would like to do so.

I do not think I need to speak in great detail. I look forward to hearing from other members, and I will answer questions if they are put. As members of this Assembly we are responsible for deciding the laws of the Northern Territory, and with that great responsibility comes a level of scrutiny. This is part of that process and the information should be available to the public, not just locked away in Parliament House.

Madam Speaker, I hope honourable members will support this motion today.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I will not talk for long because it is a pretty straightforward motion.

It makes good sense, when talking about open and transparent government, that matters that members of this House need to declare to avoid a conflict of interest are available to the public. That is perfectly in order. All we are doing now is taking away the difficulty of someone having to come to this building. You cannot currently take copies of the register, which will also disappear. I might be wrong there, but there was a restriction on what you could do when you visited level three.

This is a great improvement, and I think people will understand that the government is proposing open and transparent government. Can I presume if you have any new additions to the members' interests form you can add online, or do you have to come into parliament and physically add it to the list?

Madam Speaker, it is good and will make things easier, not only for members but for the public. It is a great improvement and I support it.

**Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development):** Madam Speaker, I also support the motion from the Attorney-General. It represents another layer of Territory Labor reforming our democracy—very simple and pragmatic.

I will say a couple of things for the benefit of new members. First of all, when I was first challenged with this concept I did not really understand it, so get some advice on how it works. I asked, 'What do you put on it?' Somebody asked me, 'Well, do you have a house?' I said, 'I do have a house'. 'Do you own that house?' I answered, 'I sort of own the house, but really the ANZ bank owns it and I have an agreement to pay it off over 25 years'. That had to be entered. So good old 5 Ambrose Street, Tennant Creek is on the Register of Members' Interests. I had to get some advice, so it is a good opportunity to make sure our new members are fully aware of what it means.

I remember receiving some correspondence from the Clerk that showed me half a dozen Territorians went to the office and looked at my details on the Register of Members' Interests. That was another interesting learning curve for me. All the addresses were in Darwin and I did not know all those people, but they obviously were very interested in me. They had to sign and record the time they looked at the life of Gerry McCarthy.

I have no problem with that, but my wife does. I have to put it on the public record because as parliamentarians we have close relatives, friends and spouses, and there are people who take a great interest in parliamentary process. My wife represents my loved one and spouse, and she takes a great interest in the parliamentary process. She does not agree with this at all, but I said to her, 'I will stand and put on the public record that I do support this'. It is about our policy platform of open and transparent government. It is an element of reforming democracy which makes sense in a technological age.

There was around 25 years where she never had a house, and she lived on riverbanks, in tents and all sorts of thing, serving communities we chose to serve. But she did finally get a house and, like I said, the ANZ bank and I have an agreement about that house, but it will remain on the register and will be available on the Internet.

The Member for Nelson's questions are always good. His question about whether you can update the register online was good. I probably cannot accomplish that anyway so I will be looking for a paper copy, Attorney-General. Could we add to that question, for those dinosaurs among us, can we still fill out a form and have some person who is tech savvy do it for us? That is what I will need.

I remember that a journalist tried to take photos of a member's information on the register, and all members of this House were advised of that. It was a breach of protocol and security, and it gave me a feeling that people will try to exploit a situation if they can. In an online context, are there any security safeguards for discussion? The Attorney-General can get that information and translate it to the parliament, and I am sure a very good answer will come back. It was of concern that a journalist was going down that road. We need to be guarded, in a sense, but this motion and what this government is doing is about increasing open and transparent government.

I support this motion and I thank the Attorney-General for bringing it to the House.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillet):** Madam Speaker, I, too, speak in support of the motion; I just have a few comments to make.

The new government was elected on a platform of transparency, and we understand this morning, in debate, it is taking a number of steps to deliver on that promise to Territorians, and that is to its credit. It obviously has a clear mandate to do so; it is good to see action being taken to achieve that.

As an opposition, we welcome the move towards keeping the register of interests on a publically-available website. It is a move that is being made right across the country and will bring the Northern Territory in line with best practice, which is obviously very important to all of us. To give that clear leadership in the parliament is very important.

It is important to put some clarity around this. Obviously the development of guidelines will be really important. Like anything, everything is open to interpretation, and the assessment of whether or not something is registerable in the register of interests can at times be very subjective. It is not always malicious or malintent when something is left off the register, or submitted to the register well after the fact. A set of concrete guidelines that are very explicit and clear to members of parliament, particularly new members, who are not as familiar with the system, will be very important in ensuring the integrity of the register.

Perhaps the Attorney-General could clarify, in her concluding remarks, how often the website would be updated. I have the *Hansard* in front of me from when the former Attorney-General, on 17 March this year, tabled a report of the Members' Interests committee, which said:

*The committee therefore recommends to the Assembly that an annual return of registered members' interests be placed on the Legislative Assembly's website after tabling during the second sitting period in each year, commencing 2017.*

I am seeking clarification on whether the website would be constantly updated as members update their register of interests, or whether there would be an annual update? I am looking forward to the concluding remarks, but I urge the Attorney-General to pay some careful consideration to the guidelines and perhaps hold some extensive briefings with all members of parliament so we are all on the same page and can ensure integrity of the register.

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments.

In the motion I have moved I am simply saying that the Assembly adopts the Committee of Members' Interests' report recommendations from the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly so an annual return of the Register of Members' Interests is placed on the Legislative Assembly website after tabling during the second sitting period each year, and that the practice commences next year.

I was on the Committee of Members' Interests, which is a subcommittee of the Committee of Privileges. A detailed body of work was undertaken. As I mentioned in my opening comments, under the previous Attorney-General the changes were not progressed. It was not debated in parliament.

I will answer the question from the Member for Nelson. This is not proposing that you go online and make regular updates. The process will continue where we make written declarations to the Clerk. It will still be available during business hours. But once a year, after tabling it, it will be placed on a website.

I suggest that we pass the motion today, and if the committee would like to convene again—there was a great deal of work done. Different states and territories have different processes. For example, in Victoria a report is tabled each year in parliament, but for any changes to the register since the most recent report, a summary can be obtained from the Parliamentary Library. Queensland also has an update system. Others just do it once a year.

We could pass the motion today, which is simply accepting that body of work that was done but never debated, therefore it was never passed. It would place the Register of Members' Interests online. We could then, if the Assembly wishes, reconvene and look at the body of work that has been done with an open mind to see if people are willing to share this information more regularly and come up with a process around that.

I agree with the members opposite, particularly the Member for—not Drysdale ...

**Mrs Finocchiaro:** Spillett.

**Ms FYLES:** Spillett. I apologise. The first ever Member for Spillett. We would need quite strict guidelines if it was to be regularly updated. There would need to be quality controls et cetera. The intent of this motion today is simply to place it on the Internet annually, after it is tabled in this House. All the other processes take place.

The Clerk and the Speaker would have inducted new members to the House and spoken of the Register of Members' Interests. The Member for Barkly has shared about his home loan. That is something I have to declare—that the bank still owns my house. I encourage members to pay particular interest to and care

with the Register of Members' Interests and, if they do not feel comfortable, to seek support. The staff of the Legislative Assembly will be more than happy to provide that at any time.

There are two issues here. There is the motion before the House, which is simply to place the annual return on the Internet after it has been tabled. Changes to updating the register would need to go back to the Committee of Members' Interests.

I will read the motion once again so members are clear. I move that this Assembly adopts the Committee of Members' Interests' report recommendations to the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly so an annual return of the Register of Members' Interests is placed on the Legislative Assembly's website after tabling during the second sitting period each year, and that this practice commences in 2017.

Motion agreed to.

### ADDRESS IN REPLY

Continued from 18 October 2016.

**Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand here and address you as the Member for Johnston for a second term.

I firstly pay my respects to the Larrakia people for allowing me to speak on their land and for welcoming me. It was a proud moment yesterday to be walked into the Chamber with the new Member for Arafura, Lawrence Costa; my mother; and Tiwi Island dancers and elders. I have strong links to the Tiwi through my family, after the removal of my grandmother and aunty from the Waramungu lands near the Member for Barkly's area. Waramungu and Warlpiri lands, and right up to the Tiwi Islands, were part of the Stolen Generations, so it was very emotional for me and my family. I was very proud to share that moment with the Member for Arafura.

I also take the opportunity to thank the people of Johnston, who for the second time have put their trust in me to be their local member. It was a great campaign and I thank everybody who assisted me with the day-to-day stuff. Everybody in this Chamber acknowledges and respects the hard work and commitment people put in for you; it is quite humbling and hard to comprehend how people go out letterboxing and doorknocking just to support you. People from various areas around the Territory and interstate flew up to help with my campaign—family, friends, close friends and new friends as well.

I also thank Aaron Early and United Voice for doing some roadsides with me at 7 am. It is a tough gig to support somebody without coffee, so I made sure there was coffee available every Wednesday when they helped.

I also want to do something a bit different and thank my opponents: Steven Klose from the CLP and Melanie Ross from the Greens. They both ran fantastic campaigns and we all shared in the vision of making Johnston a better place, and I respect that. We had a fantastic campaign. Steven and I caught up after the election to debrief. I will always respect people who put their hands up to represent. Just because they are running for different parties does not mean you cannot take their advice and some of their direction. We shared a lot in common, so I wanted to thank them also.

I have been fortunate enough to be nominated as a Cabinet minister with the portfolio of Primary Industry and Resources, and I would also like to thank the people of Johnston again, because without being their local member I would not have the opportunity to serve the rest of the Territory. Thank you.

In regard to my portfolio, I have been very fortunate, over the last few years, to be the shadow minister for Primary Industry and Resources. It has allowed me to develop strong relationships and links to all stakeholders across the Territory, interstate and even internationally. They are important industries, and I am very fortunate to have a seat at the Cabinet table with my colleagues and be part of a Labor Caucus team that is without doubt the strongest representation we have had in this Chamber.

I have said many times already that the next four years will be a fantastic opportunity for this Chamber to show how parliament can work. We have a diverse range of beliefs, cultures and policies within a 25-member team. I say 'team' because I do believe it will be a lot more cohesive, less adversarial and more productive than the last four years. We have done our job as an opposition. I am sure all the opposition and Independent members will do their job in holding us to account.



We have started fantastically as a government under Michael Gunner as Chief Minister. He has stressed the importance of doing what we said we would do, and we started that from day one. We are more accountable with the select committees and we will have a few more changes coming in.

Territorians are sick of politicians pushing their own agendas when it is not the agenda of the people. We will make sure, as a government—and it is stressed through all our 18 party members—we take people for the ride with us. We have to consult and consult again. While we understand we might have to make tough decisions, and at some stage we will have to make them as a government, we will ensure we tell Territorians why we have had to make those decisions. We are accountable to Territorians.

With that in mind, I move on to my Address in Reply speech for His Honour the Administrator.

My portfolio encompasses several of the largest industry sectors in the Northern Territory. These include the pastoral, agricultural, horticultural, commercial and recreational fishing, and the mining and petroleum industries. Together, these industries were worth more than \$5bn in 2014-15. They comprise about one-fifth of the Territory economy.

Following considerable consultation and community engagement the Territory Labor government has developed a number of strategic policies in my portfolio area. In this speech I will advise both the parliament and Territorians what those key strategic priorities are and how we plan to deliver them.

Honourable members would be aware that Territory Labor made a commitment to implement a moratorium on fracking that will continue until the completion of a scientific inquiry, to be conducted by an independent expert advisory panel, and a thorough community consultation process during and following the panel report. At the end of this process the government will decide to either ban hydraulic fracturing or allow hydraulic fracturing in highly-regulated and tightly-prescribed areas. Acting on this commitment was one of the first actions of our government. We have confirmed the moratorium and released the terms of reference for public comment. That process has recently been closed and over 340 submissions were received.

It is important that there is an actual and perceived separation between regulators and the industry in any sector. For this reason another priority of our government is to transfer environmental regulation powers to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, under the auspices of a new Environment Protection Act. This will ensure the removal of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

We will put in place a strong, consistent and transparent regulation of industry that has an impact on the environment. My colleague, the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, and I will be working closely to implement this priority. To do this we will ensure the relevant industry stakeholders are fully consulted.

This government is focused on supporting and advancing the growth of the mining and gas industry in a responsible way that engages regularly with industry and which advocates on behalf of the industry within government and with key overseas investors. A strong mining and gas sector means more jobs for Territorians.

Honourable members would be aware that the commodities sector has been through some difficult times in recent years, but there are now positive signs emerging in the minerals sector. The Creating Opportunities for Resource Exploration Program focuses on generating new information about the Territory's prospectively that will open up new areas for exploration and increase the likelihood of identifying previously unrecognised resources.

These potential developments will be critical to the Territory's long-term job creation and economic future. My government and staff will work closely with Geoscience Australia and CSIRO to maximise delivery for industry. This year activities will include providing more detailed datasets that will enable industry to direct more funds to well-targeted drilling programs; increased drilling and geophysical surveys in greenfield areas through co-funding of innovative exploration projects; the continued effort to attract large-scale investments in exploration; and resource development from key international markets.

Importantly, as part of our government's commitment to restoring trust in government, all mining management plans and annual performance reports for all mines will be made available to the public for the first time. We have recently published our first environmental management plan. An environmental management plan details what environmental management practices will be followed during the very early stages of the project and how the environmental risks associated with the projects will be mitigated.

The first full environmental management plan was published on the department's website on 11 October this year, detailing Origin Energy's exploration activity at its Amungee Mungee well. Previously only the summaries of an environmental plan were made public. A full environmental plan, as opposed to a summary, provides the Territory community with a greater picture of a project's activities and operations. It is through the publishing and sharing of this type of information that we will be able to provide the transparency that was promised to Territorians.

Honourable members, none more so than the Member for Barkly, would be aware of Tennant Creek's rich history as a centre for mining in the NT. We want to make sure Tennant Creek continues to grow and develop as a vibrant town. This means attracting more people to the town by providing more jobs and getting more families in that fantastic region of the NT.

It is the aim of this government to support Tennant Creek's progression as the mining and mining services capital of the NT. The best way to do this is to leverage off some of the existing and planned mining and gas initiatives as a means of creating a growing critical mass, thereby attracting other private investment to the region. We have identified a number of ways to support the same.

We will, as a government, develop a plan to ensure 70% of the value of all contracts is awarded to local companies. The estimated value of contracts around Tennant Creek over the next three years is between \$3m and \$5m. Based on feedback from traditional owners, impacts on sacred sites from historical mining will be remediated where appropriate. We will develop a plan to ensure 40% Indigenous employment for contracts associated with legacy mines programs in the Tennant Creek region.

We will also produce a new range of precompetitive geoscientific datasets and reports to attract mineral and petroleum exploration in the Tennant Creek region. These include providing a range of innovative new geophysical datasets to access regional prospectivity and support targeted exploration. We will develop updated geological maps, new 3D geological models and reports that provide an interpretation of the buried geology, mineral and petroleum potential of the Barkly Tablelands. We will undertake new geological studies and mapping of outcropping geology adjacent to the Barkly Tablelands, and we will undertake regional drilling and seismic surveys. These initiatives will support a substantial increase in mining-related activity that will lead to jobs in and around Tennant Creek.

Honourable members, especially the new Member for Katherine—how good is it to see a Labor Member for Katherine in this Chamber—would be aware of the Katherine region's strong and proud history as a major centre supporting the pastoral sector. In recent years there has been a strong development of horticulture and mixed farming in the surrounding regions.

I will support the work of my colleague, the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, to plan for significant investment in transport and logistic links into the region. This planning will support the government's proposal to develop Katherine as an inland port focused on agribusiness, and fits into our other logistical master plan, which will identify rail, port, coal storage and other required facilities. The logistics master plan will also support the expansion of the mining industry across the Northern Territory.

To provide this support our government will identify the production and market opportunities in the agricultural sector and develop plans to bring them to reality. We will identify regional transport infrastructure that is required to get product to market all year round. We will recommend key areas of work for the NT government to unlock agribusiness supply chains, delivering produce quickly and profitably to markets intrastate, interstate or international. We will try to develop, and encourage development of, our produce to be on every shelf in every shop in the world.

We will support appropriate research. The Territory government will have a clear view as to which infrastructure is required in the next five, 10 and 20 years to unlock investment in the agricultural, minerals and energy sectors, and we will have a developed funding strategy to attract investors.

I have a key role in supporting work of the Chief Minister, who is also the Minister for Trade, Business and Innovation, in the implementation of the Asian relation and engagement policies and strategies. The capital-raising environment for junior exploration companies in Australia is very difficult. I will ensure strategies to raise the profile of the Northern Territory in international markets identify likely investors and assist companies with NT projects to connect with these investors and develop their projects.

On the minerals and energy front, investment promotional activities are held overseas and within Australia, at which exploration companies with Territory projects have the opportunity to present their projects to potential investors. We will have an active presence at strategically selected events. We will continue to

host inbound visitor investor delegations, and investment introductions will continue to be arranged for exploration companies with Territory projects. We will also continue to hold meetings with overseas counterparts, industry associations and other organisations with the potential to significantly influence the flow of investment capital into the Northern Territory.

In the agribusiness sector it is recognised that we need to take a strategic approach to the rigorous analysis of which market should be targeted for development if agribusiness industries are to be key drivers of the Territory economy and creators of jobs. We will work with the agricultural industry across the Northern Territory to reduce overall costs and identify and grow markets, particularly in Asia.

Another key part of developing the agricultural sector across the NT will be to train and skill Territory workers for agribusiness industries. We will also, as a government, research individual commodities and demand and supply trends through Asia, and identify and exploit our competitive advantage. We will identify the policy, protocols and logistic hurdles that will need to be addressed to participate in identified markets of interest. In partnership with industry we will implement a market development plans across various commodity groups in identified markets.

A key initiative is to work with industry to increase support on the ground to deliver greater on-farm impact of the research work undertaken. In doing this it is essential to increase the number of officers dedicated to extension work with both industry groups and primary producers. Extension officers play an essential role in supporting the development of our pastoral and agribusiness sectors.

Our targets include developing the livestock industry through focused pastoral production, providing education around sound security practices and advising about animal welfare standards and guidelines for road transport and taking an educational approach to broader animal welfare issues. To further support the livestock industry we will provide a \$4.1m grant to the NT Livestock Export Association to upgrade the Berrimah export yards. Following recent meetings, I know the NT Livestock Export Association is excited about this commitment.

To finish on a really positive note, the last of my strategic priorities is to lead the delivery of the \$50m recreational fishing infrastructure program over the next four years in a timely and consultative way. In addition to this commitment, this government will complete the Dundee boat ramp, something the CLP government could not do over its four-year term. This infrastructure program is all about providing better access to our recreational fishing spots. In addition to providing \$50m worth of infrastructure over the next four years, we will build on the framework, with land councils, to continue long-term access to areas affected by the Blue Mud Bay decision. We will continue to listen to and negotiate with traditional owners on the Blue Mud Bay access agreement.

While further extensive community engagement will be required to finalise priority projects under this program, there are a number of clear priority projects resulting from consultation that has already occurred which will be considered in the first year.

Our government will upgrade the car park at Middle Arm boat ramp. We will commence the upgrade of the Channel Island boat ramp. We will install new security cameras at Dinah Beach as well as a new toilet block. We will commence a study to identify land-based fishing platform opportunities and a study on artificial reef design for NT waters. We are developing a fishing NT remote community prospectus. We will also construct a range of prioritised artificial reefs and fishing aggregating devices to enhance productivity and fishing opportunities. My department will be developing a new fishing NT remote community prospectus and a well-designed grants program that will create Indigenous business opportunities through the provision of funding to purchase capital infrastructure and receive essential business support, training and mentoring. We will also ensure we stock water bodies with at least 10 000 juvenile barramundi per year to improve land-based recreational fishing in the Darwin region.

This is a brief outline of the priorities, projects and initiatives within my portfolio areas. I am proud to say these initiatives will make a strong contribution towards the future prosperity of the Northern Territory, the maintenance and creation of jobs, and the restoration of trust in government.

**Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the Administrator's Address, outlining the key priorities of this new government.

Firstly, I acknowledge that it is wonderful to be here as part of the Thirteenth Assembly, and I acknowledge the Larrakia people. It is wonderful to be on their country, and I pay my respect to their elders past and present, and the emerging leaders of the future.

I thank the people of Wanguri. It is such an honour to be re-elected as the member for Wanguri. It is the electorate I grew up in; where I had most of my schooling, where I had my first weekend job, at Hibiscus, on the checkouts at Woolworths; where I still live with my husband and son; and where we are raising our family because we love it. It has given me so much in my life, which is why it is such an honour and privilege to feel you can go to work every day, make a difference and give back to the community that has given you so much. Thank you to the people of Wanguri. It is an honour to be here serving you again for another four years in this parliament.

It is so exciting to be in the new parliament, to be part of an amazing, dynamic, diverse team of Territorians who are all in it for the right reasons, which is to make a change for the better in the Northern Territory. I look across this Chamber at my colleagues sitting in government, but I also see some very good Territorians when I look at the opposition and the cross benches. People here want to drive positive change and make a real difference in the Northern Territory. I am looking forward to working with you all over the next four years because we can do a better job in this place. I am 100% sure already that the next four years will be more constructive than the last four years.

It is also an honour to be the Deputy Chief Minister of the Northern Territory and a minister within the Cabinet. That comes with great responsibility and a lot of work to do, but we have a team of fantastic people, and already I have found that Cabinet is working very effectively. We are focused. We made our plans and commitments to the Territory so clear before the election and we have been fortunate enough to be elected to deliver those plans and commitments. We are looking forward to doing it and determined to do the very best job.

I turn to my portfolio as Minister for Children. I am proud that the most significant investment this government will make is an investment in the Territory's children. Territory children are at the heart of our agenda and are the key to a thriving community and society. We will care for, nurture and protect the youngest members of our community. We will invest in our children and families to encourage and support healthy development. The economic, social and environmental benefit this will bring to all Territorians cannot be overstated.

I am delighted to be the Territory's first ever Minister for Children. The Children's portfolio has been placed with the Deputy Chief Minister to ensure children are, and will remain, at the core of government policy and direction. I will be reporting annually to this parliament on the progress of early childhood development plans, and all submissions that go to Cabinet will now have an early childhood impact assessment component to them.

Our goal was put very plainly as part of our early childhood development discussion paper that we did a great range of consultation on in the lead-up to the last Territory election. We want to ensure all Territory children on day one, Term 1, Year 1 of school are reaching their key developmental milestones so they are starting their schooling on the right footing. We will make sure they are being nurtured and cared for, and that they are healthy and ready to start their schooling. Sadly, in the Northern Territory too many children do not meet those critical developmental milestones on their first day of school, and too many children have bigger gaps to catch up on from that first day of school.

We are looking to make one of the key legacies we leave as a government the difference we make in the early lives of children in the Northern Territory. We believe this is at the heart of driving the generational change we so desperately need to see. Too many kids in the Northern Territory do not get the opportunities they so deserve, and we are committed to making a difference here. That is why we will be working very hard on developing our early childhood development strategic plan, which we intend to have completed next year.

We will be coordinating and bringing together all of government's efforts across the early childhood policy space and programs to create a whole-of-government response to the issues facing, and the opportunities, for Territory children. We will align government and non-government services with community needs and we will seek and listen to advice on research and best practice. We are looking for an evidence-based approach to the delivery of this work. We will be undertaking a new and holistic approach to the design, delivery and collaboration that we need to drive this change.

There are many positive programs in the early childhood space within the Northern Territory community already. We have some amazing NGOs doing some terrific work. We have some very dedicated public servants in the Northern Territory and Australian governments doing a lot of work in this space. It is about ensuring we bring all these parties together, that we are all working together and working collaboratively. It

is really important. Another focus of this is making sure we break down the silos of government agencies to ensure they are working together strategically and effectively.

Our work to deliver the strategic plan will consider existing programs and new initiatives around the areas of antenatal and maternity services; nurse-led home visiting programs; intensive parenting support; community health services; integrated child and family centres; and the fabulous Families as First Teachers program, which has demonstrated the bipartisan support it received from the CLP government and the Labor government before that, which introduced it. It was lovely to hear the new member for Drysdale speaking about her involvement in and passion for that very important Families as First Teachers program. We will also be looking at working to support vulnerable families—and the workforce planning that is required to deliver these high-quality services.

We know there is no short-term solution. This is not a policy just for this political cycle. We will not see the full benefit of it in this term of government. We heard the Chief Minister speaking about that yesterday. This will take a number of governments to see the full effect. It will take time, but we must be patient, focused, determined and strategic. We must push forward and do everything we can to make a difference for our children and the future of the Northern Territory. It is worth it.

An early childhood subcommittee of Cabinet has been established, which I will lead in partnership with my ministerial colleagues. The Ministers for Health, Housing and Community Development, Education and Territory Families and I will work together in this very important area.

The Department of the Chief Minister is the Northern Territory's key central agency with broad oversight across all government policies and programs. It will be responsible for coordinating the development of the plan. As I said before, it is about ensuring we have government agencies working together in partnership in this critical space.

We want non-government organisations to be full partners and an integral part of the delivery of change for children. We will establish mechanisms that bind non-government and government sectors closely together to work on this plan. We will establish an early childhood reference panel made up of members of non-government organisations, specialists and experts who will oversee the development of this plan. We will establish a working group and have experts, particularly those from NGOs, working day to day, delivering important programs across the Northern Territory. Territory and Australian government public servants will be working together to build the plan and ensure we see the implementation.

It is nice to have plans, but what is really important is the implementation of them, to make sure that work and strategic thinking results in outcomes. That is what we are dedicated to doing. We recognise that place-based and local solutions are the only way to go and the only way we will make this plan work. We are committed to ensuring communities play an integral role in the development of this plan and its implementation, and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Investing in kids in the early years is not just the right thing to do for Territorians, it is the smart thing to do, and I am looking to the work we will do in this space. At the end of this term of government, we will be judging ourselves on the difference we made in that space. What difference did we make for children in those early years of their life to improve their outcomes going forward? We must change. If we are to make those changes we so desperately need to see in our education system—more kids at school and finishing school so they have more opportunities ahead of them in life. We need to get this right. We have many experts on the ground, working in this space already. We are looking forward to continuing to work with them and seeing what difference we can all make together.

I will now turn to the Treasury portfolio to outline the fiscal and economic position we inherited on coming into office, and the challenges we face in bringing the Budget back to surplus and driving the Territory economy forward. Looking at the fiscal position it is no secret that the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook document produced by Treasury highlights ongoing deficits and rising debt.

The fiscal deficit is projected to peak at \$876m in 2016-17 and not return to a balanced position until 2019-20. The addition of net debt is set to rise from \$1.85bn to \$3.1bn over the forward years. These worsening fiscal projections are supported by the recent downgrade by Moody's of the Territory's credit rating from double Aa1-negative to double Aa2-stable. That was due to the weakening financial position, the result of increased government spending and continuing issues with the financial performance of the Power and Water Corporation, which we heard so much about from the previous government and which drove their structural separation agenda. Following on from their structural separation agenda they managed to structurally separate the Power and Water Corporation, but that is not without its issues. We

could not see a financial statement in the annual report for the Power and Water Corporation for some time. It has been able to produce one this year, but in the first year that was quite a task.

We have seen significant employee growth across the three government owned corporations when this was meant to be about streamlining. It seems there has been some duplication on many fronts. A \$40m cash injection was required for the Power and Water Corporation to make sure its cash could keep flowing. I do not think the previous government quite anticipated that when it ventured down the structural separation path.

The fiscal projections will also be supported by the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, the TAFR, which will be tabled later this sittings. That will highlight the deficit fiscal position from the 2015-16 outcome.

It is clear that, in the short term at least, we face some headwinds. The previous government knew the economy was riding the wave of a once-in-a-lifetime project, the \$34bn INPEX project. In an economy of this size it makes a huge difference. In a small place like the Northern Territory it has a significant impact.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

### PETITIONS

#### **Petition No 1 – Transport for Coomalie District Residents to Attend Medical Appointments in Darwin**

**Mr HIGGINS (Daly):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 354 petitioners praying that transport be provided for Coomalie district residents to attend medical treatments in Darwin. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

*We the undersigned respectfully sheweth that the 1000-plus residents of the Coomalie district are severely disadvantaged regarding access to Royal Darwin Hospital, specialist clinics and other medical treatment due to the lack of public or government-funded transport between Coomalie—including the townships of Adelaide River, Batchelor and Lake Bennett—and Darwin.*

*At the moment, in order to qualify for the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme, or PATS, patients must travel at least 200km, one way, to an approved medical service. The Coomalie region is approximately 110km from central Darwin, which means that its residents do not qualify for PATS. There are no public transport services for these residents and therefore they are significantly disadvantaged with regard to access to hospital and medical treatment. The lack of transport can result in delays to treatment which means that conditions worsen before hospitalisation and prolong hospital stays.*

*Your petitions therefore humbly pray that the NT Government assists the communities of Adelaide River and Bachelor by gifting a suitable vehicle and financial aid that will provide much-needed transport for older members of the communities and surrounding areas to reach medical appointments and treatments in Darwin.*

#### **Petition No 2 – Access to Hospital Treatment in Darwin for Coomalie Residents**

**Mr HIGGINS (Daly) (by leave):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 32 petitioners relating to access to hospital treatment in Darwin for Coomalie residents. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

*Greetings*

*Provide fair access to hospital treatment in Darwin for Coomalie residents.*

**RESPONSES TO PETITIONS**  
**Petitions No 60 and 64**

**The CLERK:** I advise honourable members that responses to Petitions Nos 60 and 64, presented on 24 May 2016 and 23 June 2016 respectively, have been received and circulated to honourable members. A copy of the responses has been provided to the members who tabled the petition, for distribution to the petitioners.

*Petition No 60*  
*Hospice for People of Central Australia*  
*Date presented: 24 May 2016*  
*Presented by: Ms Walker*  
*Referred to: Minister for Health*  
*Date response due: 20 October 2016*  
*Date response received: 12 August 2016*

*As required by Standing Order 123, I am responding to Petition No 60 regarding a call for a purpose-built hospice to be built in Alice Springs. I note the petitions was signed by 17 Alice Springs residents and was presented to the Legislative Assembly by the Member for Nhulunbuy, Ms Lynne Walker, on 24 May 2016.*

*I wish to advise that there is currently a project under way for the building of a multipurpose facility on the Alice Springs Hospital campus. Whilst this is not exclusively for the use of palliative care patients, they will certainly be prioritised and the facility will provide a much-improved and more homely environment for both the patient and their loved ones. The design of the facility has been undertaken in consultation with the community and has resulted in a building which provides 24-hour access for family and loved ones, as well as access to outdoor space and kitchen and living facilities.*

*The design provides for 10 bedrooms, communal day/living spaces and associated support spaces, and also offers families the option of rooming in with the patient on foldout sofas. Because it is anticipated the number of bedrooms will provide more accommodation than is currently required by palliative care patients in Alice Springs, it has been determined that patients needing maintenance care in a subacute setting will also be accommodated according to available capacity. The building work is expected to be completed in April 2017.*

*The location and access to the facility on the Alice Springs Hospital campus will optimise the potential to utilise existing clinical expertise, clinical support and non-clinical support services that are already established with the Alice Springs Hospital. The location will also enable efficient transition of care away from the acute environment in a less clinical setting when appropriate.*

*Currently in Alice Springs the Central Australia Health Service palliative care team operates out of Eurilpa House and provides specialist care and support to both inpatients and outpatients. There is also a palliative care respite house in Spicer Street which provides respite for palliative care patients and their families.*

*I am confident this new facility will more than adequately provide the 'centre of excellence in palliative care' called for in the petition.*

*Petition No 64*  
*Reticulated Water Required for Darwin River, Southport and Berry Springs*  
*Date presented: 23 June 2016*  
*Presented by: Mr Higgins*  
*Referred to: Minister for Land Resource Management*  
*Date response due: 16 November 2016*  
*Date response received: 11 August 2016*

*I write in response to Petition No 64 read in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday 23 June 2016. The petition requests that the Northern Territory Government provides a reticulated water supply to Darwin River, Southport and Berry Springs. On 1 June 2016 I introduced Interim Development Control Order (IDCO) No 22 to restrict new development that would use ground water from the Berry Springs Dolostone Aquifer. This IDCO allows government two years to establish a framework for the sustainable use of ground water from the aquifer that will also protect viable flows to the environment.*

*While the new framework for sustainable groundwater usage may include the long-term provision of reticulated water to the Berry Springs activity centre, I advise that the most cost effective way to deliver urban services to Berry Springs would be in association with the future development of urban and peri-urban areas south of the Elizabeth River identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015.*

*To provide, in isolation, the water pumping station, storage tank and water main along Cox Peninsula Road necessary to deliver town water to Berry Springs would be prohibitively expensive at this time.*

*I recommend that the matters raised in Petition No 64 be reviewed once government has adopted a framework for the sustainable use of the Berry Springs Dolostone Aquifer.*

**DISTINGUISHED VISITOR**  
**Hon Roger Steele and Guests**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the Speaker's gallery of Mr John Lucas, General Manager of Hilton Hotels Darwin, as well as Mr Shanaka Perera, Manager of Hilton Hotel, accompanied by a former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Hon Roger Steele. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**ADDRESS IN REPLY**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, returning to my Address in Reply, I had been speaking about the current economic conditions and looking at—we are going off growth of about 10.5% in 2014–15, but that is forecast to slow to 2.1% in 2015–16 and is expected to be just 1.5% in 2016–17.

Looking at the figures in the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook, the PEFO, you see the budget deficit jumps significantly in 2016–17 to \$876m, which is up from \$93m. That is a significant leap indeed. Also, Territory debt is projected to be \$2.7bn, up from \$1.85bn in 2015–16, and in the forward years it is set to grow to \$3.1bn. These figures are a great concern. They tell a story that shows we have ballooning debt and deficit despite the sale of significant Territory assets like TIO, the port and the Darwin bus service.

We saw our credit rating downgraded by Moody's. We are in a period where there are economic challenges, as there is transition from a big project, and we are looking forward to seeing some other big-ticket items come on in future years, such as increased Defence investment in the Territory. But, on the ground, businesses and jobs need to be supported, and we need to keep people in the Northern Territory. I cannot stress enough how critical it is that we keep people here. That is why we have a strong plan to support jobs, the economy and more people calling the Northern Territory home.

We have committed to getting the Budget on a sustainable footing and to returning to surplus by 2019–20. That was part of our election commitment. We will balance the need to target investment in critical areas so our economy can prosper, at the same time ensuring demand for critical services can be met. It will be challenging but we will do our utmost to get that balance right.

Independent analysis from Treasury supported the fact that we can contain all our commitments within the current forward estimates. As with all incoming governments, as we just outlined in Question Time when we received an important question about reprioritisation of infrastructure investment, we are looking at what fits in with the priorities, making sure any changes to infrastructure are thought about very carefully, in a very considered and measured way, and making sure they support jobs, critical service delivery and the infrastructure we need in the Northern Territory. That is the process we are working through and we will do everything we can to ensure it is very thorough, strategic and well thought through, and ensuring we are transparent about it.

We have made some significant commitments to the Territory, and the development of the 10-year infrastructure plan is one of them. It will be fundamental to the creation of a clear pipeline of opportunities for local businesses and job creation—the \$1.1bn investment in remote housing over 10 years, the \$100m infrastructure stimulus package, and investing in our children. That also includes a \$124m commitment over four years to improve education outcomes through Territory schools, through education, and the introduction of an independent commission against corruption.



We have already begun implementing our commitments and we are looking to increase all the components of the Buy Local plan to make it stronger and see more jobs supported. We have already introduced the home incentive scheme for first home buyers, including the stamp duty discount of up to around \$24 000 for eligible first home buyers, opening up the existing property market for people.

We also have the \$10 000 home renovation package to really encourage money being spent to support local businesses, and as another incentive to encourage people to make the commitment to buy their slice of the Territory, make their family home here and stay here forever. That is what we want them to do. We want them to call the Territory their home forever and raise their families—kids and grandkids—because we need more Territorians.

I will soon be attending my first Council on federal Financial Relations, which is the treasurers' meeting, in early December to ensure the Territory receives its fair share of funding from the Commonwealth. Seventy per cent of our revenue and funding comes from the Commonwealth; 50% of that is through GST.

The principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation is vital to the Territory because Territorians deserve the same access to health, education and good services as people in the big cities. We know you simply cannot deliver a school or health clinic in Wadeye or Yuendumu at the same price as what you would in Sydney or Melbourne. It is important that the Commonwealth recognises that and we get the funding we deserve and need. We also know the level of disadvantage too many Territorians suffer, and it is important that is recognised too.

There are concerns with funding agreements with the Commonwealth ending, on health and education for example. On a national basis there is not much certainty about where they are going after about 2018—19. Also, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is set to expire in the next year, which is a concern. It is important that Canberra fully understands, in the clearest terms, that every dollar it invests in the Territory makes a difference. As the new Treasurer for the Northern Territory, I am looking forward to working with the Treasurer, Hon Scott Morrison, and doing what I can to ensure Canberra recognises that the Territory must be supported and it is very important to ensure we get every dollar we can. I pledge to do what I can as the Treasurer to ensure that is recognised.

We understand there are some challenges to achieving some of our goals. It is a tight budget, especially with the current debt and the deficit, and where we need to go. Containing recurrent expenditure growth will always be an issue for any government, ensuring it keeps a cap on those costs.

We also spoke in Question Time about the Royal Commission process that is occurring, of which the Northern Territory has agreed to fund 50%. We know there will be findings from that. That was mentioned in the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook as well.

It is important to look at the government owned corporations and their financial performance. As we described, there is uncertainty about some of those Commonwealth funding agreements. Over the past few years, driven off the INPEX project, there has been significant growth at times. We are seeing that transition and moderate, and local businesses need our support. It is important that we see that infrastructure money flow through.

We know there have been issues with population growth in the Northern Territory. That impacted things such as the GST slice we received. That was quite a concern. If it was not for natural population increase through births, we would not have positive figures at the moment. In net terms, we have lost over 11 000 people from the Territory to other jurisdictions in the last five years. It is important that we get people to come to the Territory. To do that we need to create opportunities for them to want to live here. Most importantly, we need to create jobs. It is an important job we have ahead.

We have also seen what is happening within the property market with the decline of house prices and rents.

We are determined, as the new government—we have always said there will be no handbrakes on the economy; we will make sure those dollars go out to support local jobs and businesses, but there is a challenge for this government to ensure we diversify economic drivers to ensure sustainability for all Territorians. That is why part of this important work—and it is not a talk fest—is ensuring we do have economic summits, that we sit down and listen to business, sectors and key stakeholders about where these economic growth opportunities are and where the priorities of this government need to be, particularly in shaping and forming our first budget. It is very important that we get that right and ensure our

priorities are right going forward. There will be a very good, solid process through those economic summits, and we are looking forward to going through that.

In addition, this government will continue to build on key trade relationships; particularly with the Asian region. These relationships focus on our existing partners, like China and Japan, and we will continue to work on the progress made by the previous government; I pay my respects to them for their work. We will look to open new doors to emerging economic powerhouses, for example, India, and developing new markets there.

This government has a clear commitment to bringing the Budget back to surplus in 2019, but it will take some hard decisions in some cases, and it is very important that we get the balance right between creating jobs, supporting local businesses and services, and making sure we stick to commitments we put on the public record and made very firmly to Territorians. There is a big job to do but I look forward to the opportunity of doing it.

Turning to my portfolio of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, people would know we have brought the former Departments of Lands and Planning, Infrastructure and Transport into one agency through our machinery of government changes. This restructure will synergize and improve the delivery of government projects from planning through to construction, and it is a good and appropriate mix of departments to have together.

Our economic summit will commence late this year, and we will shape our short- and long-term actions to further create jobs and invest in our infrastructure. As I said, an important part of that, an important body of work that will be managed through the department, will be the delivery of the 10-year infrastructure plan so we have a clear plan of where the infrastructure priority will be and where businesses can look for future infrastructure investment, tenders and contracts, and make appropriate plans for their workforce.

We will also develop a logistics master plan—which is very important—that will set out the vision, objectives and priorities of the infrastructure investment to support the logistics industry through that plan. It will be very important to focus on improving freight efficiencies and building and identifying strategic areas for investment in roads, rail, ports and aerodromes. Master planning the supply chain across the Northern Territory is the key to ensuring the Territory's financial resources are spent where the best value for money is achieved and where government investment unlocks the potential for economic growth. That will also be a very important body of work.

We have made no secret that we have decided to listen to the doctors, nurses, paramedics, surgeons and emergency services workers, and we will remove the open speed limits by the end of the year. I have asked the department to do a body of work to ensure there is a very clear message to the car testing industry that we are still open for business and to make an easy-access permit system for it. That body of work is being done. When I am satisfied that we are there, we will announce the when we remove the open speed limits. We have the worst road toll per capita in the nation and it is very important that we listen to the experts when it comes to safety on our roads.

We are working towards introducing ride sharing in the Northern Territory, and we will soon have a steering committee set up that will ensure we can get the balance right of having appropriate regulations to allow that to occur in the Northern Territory. But I have spoken to many taxi licence holders, and of course they are greatly concerned about this. I am determined to listen to their voices in this process and do everything we can to get the playing field right—to level it out as much as possible to ensure we have appropriate regulations in place. I want to see a thriving taxi industry in the Northern Territory, but also allow the opportunity for those consumers who would like to see ride sharing in the Northern Territory.

I have also seen many people who are not owners of taxi licence plates—drivers, for example—who would really like to see ride sharing. It is about getting the balance right. I want to see the thriving taxi industry continue into the future and I will certainly make sure their voices are heard through that process. Our commitment was to ensure we had ride sharing in place in 2017, but it will be a consultative process, listening to the stakeholders to make sure we get the best system in place.

In the lead-up to the change of government we put out a body of work around integrity and transparency of government. As part of that work we said we will introduce planning reform to create a system that provides certainty and balances competing interests, which is simple, transparent, accessible ...

**Ms FYLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms MANISON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and Member for Nightcliff.

... and provides opportunities for community participation and effective appeals processes. We will deliver a more transparent planned approach to lands and planning process.

We have committed to looking at the six principles outlined in Labor's restoring trust and integrity to government discussion paper to see how we can improve our planning systems and processes. These principles are:

- certainty—providing certainty to the community and developers through strategic planning with the clear criterion to guide decisions and a consistent decision-making framework
- balance—ensuring we get the balance between environmental, social and economic outcomes right
- transparency—an improved transparent planning system provides meaningful accessible information about planning decision-making, including the basis for decisions
- reducing complexity—a straightforward, clearly defined regulatory structure makes it easier to detect corrupt conduct and reduce the incidence of error
- meaningful community participation and consultation—we will foster meaningful community participation and planning processes and ensure adequate weight is given to submissions
- third-party merit appeals—improve the merit appeal to provide a safeguard against biased decision-making by consent authorities and enhance the accountability of the authorities.

This is a body of work that is happening and that we will continue in this early term of the government to look at how we can make improvements to that system. We will also be looking at a broader-reaching master plan of the Darwin region, which will seek to support urban growth, including the development of Weddell, Berrimah Farm and infill development, and supporting growth of Cox Peninsula.

I have to stress that we too, like the Member for Nelson and Madam Speaker, believe the rural area needs to stay rural. It is a very important part of the greater Darwin area. It is a part that people love and appreciate. It is rural for a reason and we want to ensure it stays that way.

There will be more bodies of work happening under the planning commission. There are a couple of pieces of work I am really looking forward to seeing progress, including looking at area plans, particularly around the Darwin CBD and Palmerston. I understand they have engaged quite closely with the councils on that and will be speaking more broadly to the community. It is really import to look at that work to support the future development of those key, critical, central business districts and surrounding areas, making sure we get it right.

As the Planning minister I have put forward an interim development control order on dual occupancy. It was a decision when I saw the first application come through—in opposition we made it clear we had concerns that the process was rushed towards the end of the last government. We decided we want to review that and have further discussion with the community about dual occupancy across the Northern Territory. That body of work is under way. It is important that—because decisions on planning can change the face of this city and the Territory—you take the time to get it right and have those discussions. I want to see a bit more work done around that, which is why I have asked for that to be in place.

There is no doubt that the Planning portfolio has plenty of complexities. There are many opposing views, but it is important that we are measured, we respect due process and we are clear and transparent on decision-making. The body of work we will do on planning, around the six guiding principles, will be important during this term of government.

There is a lot of work to do. I am really excited about the team we have in this parliament, not only my colleagues sitting on the government side but also the Independents and opposition. I am really looking forward to a constructive period over the next four years as we work to do a good job in helping people right across the Northern Territory. I can feel there is a lot of goodwill and some passionate people in this Chamber. We will debate ideas and ways of going about things, but this will be a wonderful Thirteenth Assembly of the Northern Territory.

In my last speech in the 12<sup>th</sup> Assembly I said, 'My goodness, what a ride that was for a first term in parliament. I hope we never see a period like that in this parliament again.' Territorians clearly felt the same way. We have a huge responsibility, but there is a great group of people here, from diverse backgrounds, who love this place and want to make a difference. I look forward to working with you all as we strive to do that.

**Mr COSTA (Arafura):** Madam Speaker, fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly and members of the public, I first acknowledge and pay respect to the first people of this country, the Larrakia.

I am a proud Tiwi man from Manupi. My homeland/outstation community is at Pitjarmirra, on the top north coast of Melville Island. I have inherited and learnt custodial responsibility for this land from my father, Urban Costa. I attended the Pularumpi School in the mid-1980s, and then went to boarding school at St Bede's College in Mentone, Melbourne. I was there for five long years and completed my VCE/HSC in 1988, the bicentennial year, in which Australia commemorated modern Australia's beginnings as a British colony. However, my own Tiwi people, many years before Cook's arrival, had meaningful engagement with another European people, the Dutch, at a place called Karslake Island, just off the Melville Island coast. That was in 1644.

After finishing my schooling I started a course at Melbourne University, which I deferred. I will be forever grateful to my father for sending me down south to get an education. It taught me who I was as a young Aboriginal man by experiencing racism for the first time. It taught me to be respectful towards other ethnic groups, many of whom were represented amongst the students enrolled at my school. I also learnt about discipline and perseverance.

I met my wife, Ebony, at Melbourne University. After a while we moved back to the Northern Territory to be with family. Nine months later my daughter Juanita was born. I continued to work in Darwin for two years, then we moved to Tweed Heads so my daughter could get to know my wife's family.

I found work in Tweed Heads as the Student Support Officer with New South Wales TAFE. I worked and studied there for three-and-a-half years. I learnt to communicate and solve problems in government and NGO contexts. One day I heard there was a job advertised for a CDEP Coordinator in Pirlangimpi. I successfully applied for the position in 1996. It now seems hard to believe that was 20 years ago.

Since then I have had various jobs in local government, ATSIC and the health sector in the Northern Territory. I have held elected positions on various local government and other community-controlled boards.

In regard to my local government background, I have been employed as the CEO of the local government entity responsible for the Tiwi Islands, which at the time was called Tiwi Islands Local Government. I have also been the Director of Community Development and Engagement for the Tiwi Islands Shire council.

In my previous elected positions with ATSIC, I first served as the Deputy Chair of the Jabiru Regional Council, a role which was responsible for a significant part of the Top End of the Northern Territory. After that I became Chairperson of the Northwest Regional Council until ATSIC was abolished under the Howard government.

My most recent work before entering politics was as a Health Services Development and Engagement Officer and AOD worker for Territory Health Services, based on the Tiwi Islands. My political and working experience has involved extensive interactions with communities and government at various levels.

I will briefly talk about five previous Tiwi Islands elected members, individuals who have inspired me to follow in their footsteps. The first is the late Hyacinth Tungatalum, who in Tiwi way I refer to as my father, and I can see his son Richard sitting in here today. Even though he was with the CLP, he demonstrated to the Tiwi that we could aspire to take a seat and have a voice in the highest decision-making forum in the Northern Territory, which, in those pre-self-government days, was the Legislative Council.

The second is the late Stanley Tipiloura, a large and imposing man, former police officer, someone who commanded respect and radiated confidence and authority. He was a man I strongly respected and saw as a role model in my younger years growing up on the Tiwi Islands. His son is also in the gallery.

The third is the late, great Maurice Rioli, my friend, my brother and mentor over many years. Regardless of his fame and status as a VFL star, and then an elected member of parliament, I will always remember

Maurice as the most humble and dignified person in any gathering. I never once heard him brag about his considerable achievements. He was a great example for us all.

The fourth person I would like to thank is the current CEO of the Tiwi Islands Regional Council, Marion Scrymgour. She has shown me and many other Indigenous men and women that if you work hard you can be anything you want to be. She has shown the way in leadership in Aboriginal affairs in a number of important areas, including building better health services, being a strong voice for women and standing up for the people of Arafura against the federal government of the day in relation to the Intervention.

The fifth person I would like to mention is my uncle, Francis, who I have always had the utmost respect for. I want to thank him for all his hard work over the past four years. Over the past two decades I have seen communities embrace self-determination and self-management. There is a desire for greater autonomy and a sense of urgency about committing to the core values of community life. Some communities are travelling better than others, but there is a one-size-fits-all approach that will fix all the problems across the board.

During my time in remote health I have seen many things happen, both good and bad. Chronic disease is a major concern in many communities across the Territory. We need to actively engage with communities in regard to providing adequate primary health care services. In doing this there needs to be more educational programs. It needs to be resourced so Indigenous people can take control by being skilled and trained so they can go back to their communities to provide this education in a more culturally-appropriate way.

I am passionate about Indigenous Men's Health. I have seen and experienced first hand the hardship Indigenous men face in remote communities. They feel they are disengaged from family and kinship. Depression plays a big role in why these men feel the way they do. Suicide is very high amongst Indigenous men, especially our youth. We need to look at solutions to how we engage and make them the strong family men they were once.

What I would like to see during my term in government is that we develop a strong men's committee across the NT to tackle issues around drugs and alcohol, depression and domestic violence, and to employ Indigenous male health workers and engagement officers remotely so they have control.

Homelands/Outstations—we need to protect and develop country. We need to look at economic development, but the key is to consult and make sure clans are happy.

My electorate covers the Tiwi Islands, Maningrida, Gunbalanya, Minjilang, Waruwi and many outstations spread throughout the electorate. Each place has its own unique identity and needs to be treated with sensitivity and respect.

I am looking forward to working hard for all my constituents and doing my best to make our fresh new Labor government understand their needs and concerns.

I would like to thank Kent Rowe, Ryan Neve, Anna Goode and Ella McGuire for all their hard work throughout our campaign. I make special mention of Peter Wellings, who I have the utmost respect for in his understanding of Aboriginal people, not only in my electorate but across the NT. He has taught me a lot in regard to government policies, and his extensive knowledge of Aboriginal affairs is unbelievable.

I personally thank my cousin Leon Puruntatameri for travelling and helping campaign in the West Arnhem area. I also thank Stanley and Gawin Tupaloura, and the list goes on as there are many more I would like to thank, but I will do that in person.

Throughout the endeavour I will be relying on the support of my own close family members, and I take this opportunity to thank them for the support they have given me over the years, especially my dad, who is not only my father but my best mate.

A special thanks goes to my wife, my daughter and my granddaughter. Without them I would not be standing here today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Mana.

**Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson):** Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address the House today. I begin by acknowledging, as so many of my colleagues have today, the traditional owners of this land, the Larrakia, and pay my deepest respect to their elders, both past and present. I am truly grateful to them for

the care they have always taken of this magnificent country that gives me and my family, who are here today, the chance to live in such a beautiful place.

I also take the opportunity to acknowledge up front the people of Sanderson for the faith and trust they placed in me on 27 August. It is without doubt a great life honour for me to stand here today—a privilege to hold the office of the member for Sanderson, a privilege I never dreamt may be a reality for me, and one I intend to pay the utmost respect to over the coming four years.

I understand that the electorate of Sanderson is named after Frederick James Sanderson, who was the President of the Marine Board from 1878 to 1894. When first created, the electorate took in Wanguri, Leanyer and the land to the north of Tiwi, a great change to now where it covers the residents of Marrara, Anula, Wulagi and Wagaman. The electorate of Sanderson hosts some of our city's finest parks and a great diversity of local and migrant families. In fact, Sanderson is home to a perfect example of the diversity of people across the Territory.

Over the past 11 months I have regularly been asked why I have chosen politics as my path, and that is not an easy question for me to answer.

I am a proud Territorian, a person who, like the member for Port Darwin, is part of a working-class British immigrant family, which, in 1981, chose Australia as its home. While I have lived in many places, I have lived well over half my lifetime in the Territory.

I never had a plan in life. I have never been one of those people. I am not book smart, but I consider myself life smart, and I know how hard it can be just to get by.

As a child I did not desire to be a doctor or a lawyer. In fact, for years, as a teenager, I regularly told people, when they asked me that question, that I wanted to be a helicopter pilot. I just had not answered that very important question. It was not until I was around 20 that I actually rode in a helicopter and realised it was very noisy and not much fun at all.

Like many other young people my first job was at McDonald's, and it was there that I not only learnt about customer service, but about the minimum wage, gender inequality and sexual harassment in the workplace.

In 1985 I had the opportunity to travel to the Territory for the first time, and ended up living in a tin shed welding security screens on the local council offices during the Wet Season, catching barra and cherrabun prawns on the Roper River, relocating rogue snakes and frogs out of the toilet block, and throwing the dogs into the Roper River first so we could swim, the horror of which has only dawned on me in recent years.

This was a time when local law was very strong, when old men prowled the community at night-time keeping the young ones in line and the occasional public spearing was not unusual. While there, every day a young girl my age would come past, and over time we actually spoke. It became apparent that our lives were in stark contrast.

While I was annoyed to not have the same home for more than three years, she was grateful for a piece of tin over her head to keep the rain out. I could choose my life path, but she only had a very few choices ahead. Her culture dictated that she marry a man older than her father and stay on her traditional homelands. It is experiences like that which give us all a sense of relativity. While her name is sadly long forgotten, and I blame my father for that part of my memory, her stories have stayed in my heart. She will never know how much she has influenced my life's path.

I was perplexed, but it dawned on me later that this was the first time I realised that life is not really the same or fair for everyone, and that equality, equity and access to opportunities was very much about where and when you are born, and the family you are born into.

Following my stint in Ngukurr I still had no life plan, and getting married and having two kids by the time I was 19 seemed like a good idea at the time. Battling to look after two small children on the minimum wage meant long hours and making my way through a truckload of jobs, which made me realise what I did not want to do, and I did not want to do any of them. I did not want to work on a factory assembly line; I did not want to deliver pizzas or wait tables; and I definitely did not want to work in a typing pool in the basement of the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Fortunately, in the late 1980s I returned to the Territory and again spent some time in Arnhem Land. That is when I realised that I only knew British history; that is what I had learnt in the UK and in Australian high schools.

I had a growing need to learn more about our first Australians, particularly as my two young Indigenous daughters would need to know the same thing as they grew older. Our kids spend so many years in our education system, and we, as a country, have a real opportunity and obligation to shape their thinking and unite Australians through shared knowledge.

After gaining employment with the Australian government, via the radio telephone under the old council offices in Bulman, I started a couple of years of administrative work at the Tindal RAAF Base.

---

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENT**  
**Photography in the Chamber**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Sanderson, could I ask you to pause. Excuse me, you cannot photograph inside the parliament or take videos. Member for Sanderson, please continue.

---

**Mrs WORDEN:** As with so many women, I realised at that time that my life was not a happy one. This is not something I regularly speak about, but it was one marked with domestic violence. I felt trapped, powerless to make decisions, and, having two small children, obligated to stay. I hated my life and, probably worse, I hated myself for not leaving, and at times I thought I was as worthless as I was told I was. But something I did not know I was capable of happened, and I walked away.

I look around me now and see the trademark of this in the eyes of other women in our community, and that is the reason I am choosing to speak on the record. That is why I champion White Ribbon Day and the work of Ruby Gaea and Dawn House—to support victims so they have the tools and opportunities to build their lives, as I have done. I also note it here today because in the next four years I want to ensure I can be part of a bigger solution, and drive down the rate of domestic violence in the Territory. I want to stand shoulder to shoulder with women, particularly Indigenous women, and say, 'Enough!' It is time.

But, of course, this is a much more complex issue than that, and I strongly support this government's commitment to reduce the supply of alcohol in our community, and to other harm reduction measures that will support the reintroduction of the Banned Drinker Register.

I do not raise this today to smear others, particularly those who are no longer here to speak for themselves, as we each have our own demons to deal with in life. I raise it so the people I now represent know I have an understanding of the issues that count.

It is not a matter of blaming men, as they live in a complex and changing world, often a difficult place and a long way from when many were raised to be the breadwinners, or saw their parents doing that. We need to walk together and change perspectives, and build a better place for our future generations.

I returned to Adelaide as a single mum and enrolled in university as a mature-aged student. I took on some part-time work as a cleaner, and I umpired netball at my local indoor stadium, having my two older girls sleep on a mattress next to the court, so I could afford to live in a good area and put them into good care and the local school.

I had no time, like other students, to hang around the university bars, and this enabled me to stay focused on making sure I finished my degree in Indigenous Affairs the first time around—no disrespect to the Member for Arnhem.

That was two more jobs I realised I did not want to do long term, but hard times called for hard decisions, and I truly gained an appreciation for all those people who work day-in and day-out to put food on the table for their kids, to get ahead or, as so often is the case in the Territory, just to stay afloat.

I met my husband, Wayne, who is here today, as an apprentice, and together we decided to move north, like so many others on a five-year plan, in search of a better life. Clearly I am not good at making or sticking to plans, because we are still here.

In those days the Territory was well-known for offering adventure and opportunity, but I felt the Territory had already charmed me and clawed its way into my heart. What is it about the Territory? I constantly ask myself that, but I have a good sense that it chooses us; we do not choose it.

I was fortunate. I scored a job and a six-week contract became six months, and that led to my first job in the public service. This job gave me so many experiences, so much friendship and so many shared stories that I cannot start to describe them here today. I have travelled locally, rurally and back to Arnhem Land again, and I have advocated for Indigenous people with consumer affairs and in education, health and mining. I have sat with elders in our remotest regions and changed tyres on a four-wheel drive on desolate roads, all while six-months pregnant. That is nearly fifteen-and-a-half years ago.

I have sat with CEOs and ministers at national meetings, and consulted and formulated major government policies.

My work with Indigenous people is unfinished, and I am looking forward to being part of the slow but critically necessary change in Indigenous empowerment in the Territory in the next four years.

Life in the Territory has not been all easy sailing. We started a small business and were lured into bigger business, and, unfortunately, like so many other Territory businesses, we nearly lost everything we had worked hard for: our home and our kids' futures. But those tough years made us resilient. Being part of sporting teams made it natural for us to stick together, and we fought back. It was a tough road, but we learnt so many lessons along the way. We know first hand how tough it is to try to succeed in business in the Territory. It is a fickle business, sometimes coming down to who you know and sometimes to how the economy is faring overall.

For those who know me well, playing and volunteering with local sporting teams has been my passion, and that was made easy. Getting into school councils has always seemed the right thing to do. Darwin is the easiest community I know to be part of. The unplanned advantage of that was that I got to meet new people, share new experiences and hear a community view.

Life was too busy for a plan and, strangely, a plan no longer mattered. What was important that three young women in my life were watching on. It was my responsibility to show them what hard work and giving something back looked like. Little did I realise that these experiences and opportunities were the foundation for my time to come as an alderman, and I guess these were the early foundations of me wanting to be involved in change that benefitted Territorians.

Our older girls kept us busy. My stepson thankfully came into our lives and we had another small child to raise, and a first home to buy, one that has now been our family home for 18 years.

A good friend and I started our own netball club, the Waratah Netball Club. That gave me opportunities to play, coach and, later, take on representative duties and opportunities with the Territory, a chapter of my life I am very grateful to have been afforded, one where I could pass on my love of netball and watch good young players grow into good young people. This is the club in which I first met the Member for Wanguri. Next year we will both proudly celebrate 20 years of our club in the Darwin netball competition.

I guess it did not stop there. Wayne played football and I fell into club administration, becoming the secretary of the Waratah Football Club and, in later years, the president of the Pints Football Club. I can proudly say that over eight years of our collective involvement, our family was involved in winning four flags. This year will be a great conflict for me. He is not here, but for my esteemed colleague, the Member for Arafura, and in support of my husband in his new coaching role, I have to say, go the Bombers! My apologies to the Chief Minister.

Being a female president amongst a group of male presidents made me realise that the world had come a long way since my days at McDonald's. The world had changed and gender was no longer the barrier it was. I am grateful that I was treated as an equal, a liberating experience, and I am grateful for those ongoing connections today.

I finally made my first actual career decision, to get onto the City of Darwin Council, a decision taken to represent others and use all the skills I had learnt along the way: compassion and bravery, and resilience. And I would need that because it took me two attempts to get on the council.

When I was first elected, I recall, a fellow alderman, the wonderful late Robyn Lesley, declaring that, due to the voting system changes, I was part of a new group of upstarts who were over their heads and had



robbed others of their rightful place on council. I did realise, reflecting later, that in some ways she was probably right. I was an upstart, but I am proud that I had a way to make my fellow council members roll their eyes when I stood up to ask the hard questions. But that is how I have always been.

My dad once said that nothing worth having came without a fight. Over time Robyn became one of my closest allies, often calling me to plot a new attack at lunchtime over a long-standing issue to gain a change with council.

Being on council, like my colleague the Member for Namatjira, allowed me to be involved in some big things. I am incredibly proud of outcomes like the Nightcliff cafe, the Jingili orchard, the city master plan and the Safer City project.

Council connected me to people, groups and new opportunities, advocating for others or giving them the knowledge on how to advocate for themselves. It is rewarding, but you cannot please everyone all the time. Where there are groups, no matter the size, that have a passion and belief in their cause, you have to listen, look for compromise and explain your reasons. The responsibility for decision-making means there will always be people who are not happy with you. But if not me, then who?

It is very clear to me that people care about their local community. They care if their footpath is broken or their street light is not working. They want basic reliable power, good schools for their kids and good local services, and, most importantly, opportunities to choose their own path or, like me, opportunities to take if they want them.

Being on council gave me an opportunity to make a difference, just like the one I have before me now. Life has some interesting twists and turns, and I do not believe we truly know what we are capable of until we face the difficult times. Some of you know that in late 2004 my husband, Wayne, fell off a roof and did some pretty bad damage to himself. He found himself in the care of the Royal Darwin Hospital, and I do not believe he was a very good patient. I realised then that we have no idea of just how good our emergency services are until we need them. The doctors and nurses at the Royal Darwin Hospital, including my good friend Leanne, are truly brilliant and caring. Becoming a carer for a short time made me realise just how amazing all those Territorians who care for their families day-in and day-out are. It is poignant that we are wearing the badges today for National Carers Week.

While life will never be quite the same, we are lucky. We were able to adjust and keep going, enjoying living in this wonderful place. I know others are not so lucky and need a champion. I finally had a plan that would allow me to continue to be a person who speaks up and empowers others. It is not often in life that your passion and work can come together, but I can say that I now have that. While politics is not for everyone, I find the unpredictability of it all is something I love. I like the characters, the process of decision-making is fascinating and the community consultation is challenging but rewarding.

My life so far has filled me with the experience and knowledge that will allow me to give back in a way that I could never have dreamt of. Standing at the front counter of McDonald's in 1984, who knew I would be here today? I am proof that you do not need a good life plan. It is okay to seek new experiences, follow opportunities, enjoy what you do, give back more than you take and, more importantly, follow your heart. The last 10 months have been the most challenging but the most enjoyable part of my life. The campaign was physically and mentally taxing but at the same time exhilarating, and it made me a better, more accepting and stronger person.

The support I received was unexpected and overwhelming. Without it I would not be here today as the new member for Sanderson. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge those who supported me. A special thank you goes to my dad, Ken who came up to support me and stayed to see me standing here today. I look forward to you becoming a Territorian in the coming year.

While my mum is looking on from afar in cold country Victoria, I acknowledge her support of my dream and her advice, both good and bad—although I think she would say it was all good—over the years. Thank you. She also allowed me to ignore her advice, make my own mistakes and then just move forward.

Thank you to my campaign manager, Rebecca Want de Rowe, and my electorate office, Sue Condon, who are both here. You ladies are nothing short of amazing and know what you have done for me will not be forgotten, although my waistline would like to forget all those amazing cakes on a Friday, bought on the roadside.

To my extensive campaign team, including the former Member for Johnston, Chris Burns; Luke; Cathy; Anna; all my doorknockers and letterboxers; the Sandkar Branch members; and my oldest friends, Leanne and Lisa, thank you for the countless hours hitting the doors with me, keeping me sane and on the right path. I cannot name everyone here today but that does not take away from the gratitude I have and the significance of your help. Your success is my success and my success is yours.

I note that I am very grateful for the support of the Lord Mayor, Katrina Fong Lim, as I took on this new venture.

To my ALP running partners, each one of you inspired me every step of the way. I love the competitiveness, Tony; I miss it. I look forward to working with many of you over the next four years as we strive as a team to do the absolute best for the Territory.

I also wish to pay my respect to our leader, Michael Gunner, and the Labor Party, who supported me and trusted me to give my best in contesting the seat of Sanderson. I am grateful for the opportunity and would like to think that I paid that trust back in full.

I also want to say that over the last 20 years I have lived in a place where being part of a political party has been like muttering a dirty word. I want to take this moment to let people know that it is not the case. If you belong to any club it shows people your values and what you care about. Belonging to the Labor Party is no different. It tells people what you believe in and care about: trust, fairness, opportunity, diversity, hard work, family, honesty, democracy, compassion and equality. Those are the values the people of Sanderson can expect from me over my term, and those are the values I believe in.

To my children, Tarris, Sarrita, Russell and Alekna, thank you for letting me be me. Thank you for giving me the space and time to give to our community, knowing that takes from our time together. I make this public pledge that over the next four years our time together is ours, and I will ensure I become a better mother and grandmother through this journey.

I am proud of each of you, and I remind you that I still have no favourites—it is a running joke in our house about who is the favourite. It is important. You are all amazing human beings in your own way, and I will continue to support your own private life journeys.

I thank my colleague, the Member for Karama, for reminding me just yesterday, that I too have an impressionable 14-year-old watching on. I know how important it is to be a role model to her in the next four years. And if she is anything like you, Member for Karama, have that conversation. It would be great.

In a few weeks' time we will welcome our sixth grandchild, in New Zealand, and our seventh in Darwin in January. Looking back, perhaps having two kids by the time I was 19 was not such a bad idea after all.

Finally, I thank my husband, Wayne. We have been through a lot together, and it has not always been easy, but I know we are a great team and I thank him for his encouragement, unconditional love and support, now and in the future. I am banking on it.

Thanks again to the people of Sanderson for their trust. I know I am a rookie in this place, but I will work tirelessly to ensure they are heard. I look forward to the next four years representing them.

**Mr SIEVERS (Brennan):** Mr Deputy Speaker, first and foremost I pay my respects to the Larrakia people both past and present, and I thank them for sharing their motherland with us today.

Territorians may know me as the bloke who wears the footy shorts, drives the Aussie ute and sits with my early morning roadside companion, Hiccup.

I wish to congratulate every member here today, as their community has put its faith in them. Together, in this Thirteenth Assembly, I strongly believe we will make a positive difference over the next four years. I pay my respect to my colleagues and every candidate who ran in this election. Many worked very hard over days, weeks and months. Well done to you and to your supporters and families; you should all be very proud of your hard work.

Today I stand here as a proud and extremely honoured Territorian, and I sincerely thank the people and families of the Brennan community, which includes Farrar, Gunn, Bakewell and a section of Rosebery. The people have entrusted me with a great privilege, which is to represent them all over the next four years in this parliament.

The Brennan community is a well-developed and established electorate with good, hard-working people from many backgrounds, including Defence, justice, police, emergency services, health, education, small businesses and many other important services to the NT. I have visited many families in the Brennan community over the past 12 months, some six times. I know how hard they work. Many work from sun-up to sun-down, some even seven days a week. All do it to make this country a better place for their families to live in. I am very honoured and proud to now represent the people of Brennan and give them a strong voice in this parliament, a voice that stands up for their needs and concerns and, most importantly, their families.

My family has a long history in Australia, and the Sievers name dates back to the 1930s, when my great-uncle, Morris William Sievers, played cricket for Australia and played in the Bradman Ashes series. His baggy green cap number is 157.

I was born in Chelsea, Victoria. My father, John William Sievers, was a plumber, and I came from a broken home, with my mum, Dianne Allen, working every day and night to make ends meet. I grew up with my beautiful sisters, Debbie and Lisa, and my two younger, loving brothers, Jason and Shawn, in a small country town named Euroa, which is located in North East Victoria. I also have two older and very supportive stepbrothers, Johnny and Mark.

I grew up in an environment where you had to work hard and stand up to survive. Nothing was a given; everything was earned. I learnt to apply this analogy to whatever I did, whether that be day-to-day issues, family, sport, my employment or my recent campaign.

I moved to Alice Springs in the late 1980s after completing a four-year apprenticeship as a mechanic in the police workshops in Dandenong, Victoria. Another mechanic in the House, Kirbs; you will be happy.

Through playing sport in the NT, including AFL, rugby and boxing, I made a lot of lifetime friends and joined the NT Correctional Services as an officer in 1992. I worked in the Alice Springs Old Gaol, being the last officer to sign off on the official ledger when it closed in 1996. Then I worked in the new Alice Springs prison; then in 1999 I moved to Bakewell, Palmerston, to work at the Darwin prison.

I studied hard as an adult and completed a range of qualifications in psychology, executive management, training, and alcohol and other drugs. In 2002 I joined the Department of Health and I have worked as a senior manager and director in the alcohol and other drugs section for the last 14 years. I have seen and experienced a lot in my working life in key frontline services, and I know how difficult it can be, either as the first responding person or as the person who must take control of a difficult situation given a few seconds' notice.

I therefore have a lot of time and respect for the people who do these jobs, day-in and day-out, and I know the toll it takes on them and their families. That is one of the reasons I stood up and am here today, as I know a lot of the families in Brennan work in these areas and they need a government that looks after them and their families.

I am a very fortunate father with five children—Corey, Aaron, Mathew, Jordan and Savannah—all of whom were born in the Territory and whom I love very dearly. They all have their own personalities and have grown up to be caring and giving people. My older boys are working in various occupations and some are running their own businesses or studying at college. My youngest is my Larrakia daughter, Savannah, who is still in middle school studying her passion in life, which is art and craft.

I strongly believe children are our future and every child is so important in this world. I say to every child and teenager, 'Do not let anyone tell you any different, you are the most important'.

Quality education, sport, local business and the NT healthy lifestyle are also very important to me and the people of Brennan. The NT has given our families so many opportunities in these areas over many years, and it is important to ensure we are able to give all our children the same lifestyle and more opportunities to the people who live in the NT.

Schools are essential to our community; education is the key to success. It is a fundamental requirement that our education systems are well resourced with good teachers, support and special needs staff, as they are the frontline people who make the difference. I will always strive to give our children the best possible chance in this world to receive the best education, facilities and support that is available. Nothing pleases me more than to see a child smile and enjoy life. I was so pleased to give out merit awards to the children of Bakewell school some weeks ago, and even more pleased to see the large number of local parents

attending the ceremony. I will work hard with the Brennan electorate to continue to improve our schools and education systems to support our children of the future.

Sport and recreation is dear to my heart. I have been involved in sport all of my life as a player, coach and president of some very successful clubs in Alice Springs and Darwin. The late and great AFL coach, Allan Jeans, played an enormous part in my family and in my playing and coaching career in Aussie Rules. Allan had a special gift. When he spoke, people listened. Allan could turn a game on his words in the locker room, as he did in the 1989 AFL grand final between Hawthorn and Geelong. His words were inspirational. He kept asking, 'Will you pay the price?' Everyone in this room has paid the price and is willing to pay the price. Those words are embedded in my mind and in the AFL Hall of Fame.

I am a passionate advocate of many sport and recreation programs and I understand the benefits to our children, families and the community. Territorians love this lifestyle and it is important to ensure it continues.

The natural environment, local parks, communication towers, parking areas, traffic management, public safety, pedestrian pathways, bus shelters and roads are concerns in the Brennan community and Palmerston as a whole. All are instrumental in our community's daily life and it is important to me that the Brennan community continues to be consulted and get a say on these issues. We can get it right for the lifestyle and get the best possible outcome in our environment.

I am a local and I always listen, consult and advocate for our community and families to ensure we can achieve the best possible result and have a good working relationship with government and our local councils.

To our wonderful seniors and veterans who live in Brennan, I thank them for giving me so much of their time over the last 12 months and sharing so many important stories with me. They have brought many fond memories of my grandparents back to me and reinforced my values of respecting our elders and ensuring they are listened to and cared for in our community.

Supporting and growing local businesses, tourism and local jobs for our families is fundamental to sustaining and building our local economy. I am a strong believer in keeping Territorians here and giving a fair platform to local business to gain local work contracts and develop our own. As a father of five it is essential to me to ensure all our children have jobs, a future and opportunities in the Northern Territory.

The cost of living is a concern to the families of Brennan. Many I visited were leaving the Territory. Many others were pleased to hear that the first home buyers scheme for pre-owned housing was being reinstated with incentives, giving people opportunities to stay in the Territory. Many local businesses were also very happy, saying it would help their organisations to grow again and give them stability and confidence to employ more local people in their services.

There is more to do in this space, and I will be working further with my electorate to ensure Territorians have a light at the end of the tunnel, and local businesses are an integral part of that future.

Health and police services are critical to everyone in Palmerston and the Brennan community. With the development of the Palmerston hospital now under way, and a new resourced police station planned, it is very refreshing to Eva Lawler and me to know Palmerston is now being considered, developed and resourced as its own city.

I also take this time to pay tribute to Hon Luke Gosling, our federal Member for Solomon, who has not only advocated and supported Palmerston in his initiatives, he has also pushed hard for our Territory's PET scanner. He also promoted tourism and the NT in a positive way, by recently holding up a barramundi in Canberra. Luke, great work, mate.

I thank the members of the Australian and Territory Labor Party for all their support. It is a party that believes in a fair go for everyone, no matter where you come from. I acknowledge and thank so many people who helped me along the way. They are the true believers of Tony Sievers.

There were so many who did so much and more, supporting me through the process. These people include our Chief Minister, Michael Gunner; the federal Opposition Labor Leader, Hon Bill Shorten, who gave me some good words at the start of my campaign; the Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon; Alf Leonardi; Ryan Neve; Luke Gosling; Mano; Tash; Mossy; Hendo; Syd, Lynne; Vim; Cameron; Kerry; Sharon; Gino; Helen; Kieran; Jamie—bear with me, there are a few—Dennis; Josh; Matt; Damian; Maria; Kent; Anna;

Ella; Rick; Shoey, who are in the gallery today; Nicole; Paige; Tiele; Mikaela; Chaney; Andrew; Bayley-Rose; Jacks; the Flash, who will remain anonymous; Billy; Eva; Tommy; Kirbs; Bec; Kate; Wayne; Tania; Angela; Phil; Paula; Kay; Merrick; Aide; Elise; David; Juvy; Simon; Robbie; Jeremy; John; Daryl; Anthony; Meks; Steve; Bob and Bev; Kirsty; Mick; Maurice; Paul; Mark, who is here today as well; Rob; Ray; Olga; Allana and Glennon; Stephen and Carmel; Mike; Peter; Julie and, of course, our young campaign volunteers from interstate, Joe; Rebeka; Liam; Julijana; Marcus; Ryan and all the Palmerston branch members.

Also, to the fantastic members of the Brennan community, including David, Viv, Jarrod, Stokesy, Smithy, Scott, Kay, Mary Anne, Lindsay, Amelia, Chris, Carly, Sharon, Feroz, Sophia, Raol, Andy, Daryl, Frank, William, Ken, Roger, Bruce—I cannot miss anyone—Tim, Kylie, Jody, Tammy, Marie, Ted, Ora, Ngahua, Charlie, Marissa, Lloyd, Leah, Mark, Karen, Chibs, Nigel, Nikki and many more on my Facebook and through our catch ups, I thank you all for being leaders in our community and standing up for what is right when it counts.

To all of my lifelong friends through sport, fishing and work I have made across the Territory and beyond, I thank you for always being there for me and I always look forward to the next catch up.

Of course, to all my family and my dearest and closest supporters in Melbourne, Euroa, Perth and Queensland, I want you all to know how special you are to me and that you are always in my heart.

To my loving sister Debbie, who flew up two weeks before the election, my uncle Reg, aunty Dorothy and the Reynolds family, for all of their well wishes throughout my campaign; my little sister Lisa, and Trent, for their special unexpected visit; to all my children; and most of all to my number one supporter and campaign manager, and who I owe the most to, Ms Aimee Riley and Hiccup—thank you, Aimee—I want you all to know that I could not have done this without you, so from my heart, I love you all. For everything you did and sacrificed for me, I am in debt to you all.

I want the people and families of Brennan to know I will never take this privilege and opportunity for granted. The election was exhilarating, as Kate said. It had its highs and lows, and I received a lot of support from so many great people. I thank you all and appreciate those who stood by me, gave me words of wisdom and made me laugh during the campaign. It was an amazing and humbling experience.

Finally, I intend to work hard for all the people and families of Brennan in a Michael Gunner-led government that supports integrity, trust, jobs and families. I will support all our people and honour our commitments to the people and families of the Territory first.

**Mr MILLS (Blain):** Mr Deputy Speaker, congratulations to the Member for Brennan. I listened very carefully to the list of names and I did not hear a Tezza on it. You do know I sold you the winning meat tray ticket? What do I have to do to get on that list? Perhaps you make an amendment.

Honourable members, this is an unusual situation for me because in late 1999, last century, a by-election was held after the retirement of Barry Coulter and John Bailey, and two new members entered this Chamber. There was Paul Henderson, who sat in this seat, and where the Member for Namatjira sits now is where I sat.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The Member for Stuart.

**Mr MILLS:** Yes, the Member for Stuart. My apologies. It will not happen again.

In front of me was the Member for Arnhem, who also went by the name of Ah Kit, and I kept a close eye on him. Across the other side was the Member for Port Darwin, which was Shane Stone. We had a new Chief Minister, who was Denis Burke. At that time I gave my first speech, and 17 years later I make my second first speech.

In my first speech I spoke about volunteerism. The spirit of volunteerism is the most valuable asset in our communities—what makes people volunteer and do something to the benefit of others. I will revisit that theme again in this, my second first speech.

First I acknowledge those who have gone before me. It is very good to bear in mind those who have gone before. I do not practise the words of acknowledging the Larrakia just as a matter of form; I genuinely mean it, because I think about those who have gone before us. I know them and I want to know their stories and

how they see the world, so rather than a form of words, there must be meaning in it. I try not to follow form because it has to be the essence of it that is the power.

In talking about those who precede us I want to use the words of a 12<sup>th</sup> century theologian. I did not know crafting these words was attributed to him, which were sometimes attributed to Sir Isaac Newton. They are the words of John of Salisbury. He said:

*We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours.*

We sit in a parliament. We have institutions and work that has preceded us, and we work with what we have. I know that I too am like—if many of us would consider—that we are like dwarfs that sit on the shoulders of a giant. What we see and work with today has come from those who have come before us. This Westminster system of government did not happen by accident; it was created and established for a purpose at a point in time, and it has served us well. It can be adjusted and modified, but it is a fine system of government.

The Australian Constitution was crafted at a point in time by those who had a view of the situation as it was, and they foresaw as far as they could.

Self-government for the Northern Territory was developed at a time when there was certain recognition of the challenges of the Northern Territory at that point in time—and foresaw as far as we possibly could. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act was crafted at a point in time for a specific purpose. These are the things we sit upon—the work of these people. They are not just words; they embody a vision, an idea, a principle, created by people. We sit on that and it helps us be lifted to a higher place. But we can see further, so we have an obligation to reflect and to adjust where necessary. It is therefore our responsibility to assess, review and adjust to ensure that, as far as we can foresee, our systems of government are fit for purpose and meet current challenges.

Yesterday a maiden speech was made by a new Independent member, the Member for Nhulunbuy. What he represents and what he said placed a question before us. What will we do with that question? Ignore it and hope it goes away? It will not. That question has been asked again and again, and now it has been placed before us for us to consider.

I will not go much further with this topic today, but I will revisit it later. I want to set the scene for what I believe is a topic whose time has come. To illustrate it, recently I had a conversation with Daryl Manzie. He shared with me a story that is attributed to Paul Everingham in the very early days of self-government. Those of you who are familiar with Territory political history will know there were 27 years of a CLP government before there was a change of government. The CLP then became the opposition and the ALP became government. I was here for that. I seem to have been here for all the exciting bits.

In those earliest of days many could not envisage or conceive that the CLP would ever be in opposition. Hard to believe? Perhaps not. But that was 27 years. In those early days Everingham made it clear that full, adequate and respectful provision needed to be made for the opposition. When asked why he said, 'One day we will be in opposition'. That was the basis of his decision. It took 27 years, but it came to pass. I tell you that because today we have five Independent members. As responsible stewards it would be shortsighted of us not to give serious consideration to a threshold question. Just how would this parliament work, and government operate, if at some future election electors choose a majority of Independent members?

We can take that as a question to consider. If it does not happen, that is not bad. If we reject it today, and it does happen, it is not good. It is a legitimate threshold question that we need to consider. I acknowledge that there are considerations of how will we change our operation in the parliament, but there are matters bigger than the parliament. It is the question of governance of the Northern Territory. Is it fit for purpose? Is it time to ask questions about what works and what does not? How does the Aboriginal Land Rights Act compete with the self-government of the Northern Territory? Is it time for a review? It is time to put these questions. How would it work if there were a majority of Independent members? The Member for Nelson has offered a number of scenarios, but it is something we should put at the back of our mind and begin that conversation. It will start small but it will not go away.

In referring to giants, I am talking about the systems we have and the responsibility to ask questions to provide good leadership and look ahead and be visionary. There are many in my life who have been giants

to me, who have shaped and supported me and made me who I am today. I will mention a few. If you really want to know you can read my speech of 17 years ago. The same people are still there, who shaped me from earliest days. But I will mention some—some of significance that has occurred in those 17 years. One, however, is a constant, mentioned 17 years ago and—ladies first—today: Ros. My wife, Roslyn—her support, love and patience are legendary. We exchanged vows nearly 35 years ago, and Ros knows what for better or for worse means. Ros met me when I had just left farming to go into education. We met as mature-age students studying education. The decision to leave education after 17 years and enter politics inflicted greater pain on my wife and family than it did me, which added to my personal burden.

For some of you it will be hard to believe—some of our friends find this almost impossible to believe—that Ros supported my decision to re-enter the parliament. It was Ros who recognised that the intent of my service was incomplete. She saw through the great cost of that public service and, in spite of the unusually difficult career path I have had to walk—while some of that trauma has been public, too much of it has been borne privately.

Upon my return from Tokyo in March 2013 my 15 years of service to the Territory community and the Country Liberal Party ended callously and publicly. I thought it was, and wanted it to be, the end. Enough was enough, but it was Ros who, in spite of the enormous personal cost to her and our family, held the selfless belief that her husband's work was not complete. That belief annoyed me at first, but it sustained me. It helped me to recover and then respond to the call of the community to return. This time I have returned as an Independent. Hence this is my second first speech.

I thank you, Ros, for that support. I hope, in time, the community thanks you for that support. I pray that together we complete the task and leave a legacy of benefit to others.

Ros is that giant in my life, but like many whose lives and example has allowed me to see further—they do not consider themselves giants, nor significant. Their humility, dignity, endurance and suffering is what makes them great. They may not be well-known people, but to me they are great, and in the broader scheme of things and the fullness of time, they will be recognised as great.

There is a select list, and I will name some of them—they help tell a story. Dr Daniel Kelly—I call him my annoying brother, because at a time I did not expect it, he asked me a question. He asked me whether I would seriously consider re-entering the Northern Territory parliament, not long before the election. It was a question I could not dismiss, and when I looked at it honestly, I was drawn to answer as I have. Thank you for the question, Daniel.

Donna Ellice, Fiona Lynch and Ben Dawson, who dropped everything they were doing—they had jobs; they stopped, stood alongside me and led a growing team of the best volunteers I have ever had in any of my six campaigns. They genuinely wanted to support—it was community support. That was enough for me and it propelled me forward.

To Andrew and Lyn Woods, and family, to the Frakking family—for their generous hospitality and friendship. I acknowledge Damien Hale and his family, and the team that worked so hard and for such a long time.

To Marie-Clare Boothby, her family and her team, who worked very hard, I salute you. I sincerely wish you well and hope that over time your desire to serve will continue to bear fruit in our community for the benefit of others.

To the people in the community of Blain—I disappeared from Facebook for a couple of weeks after talking about the things I was doing to build education links between Australia and Indonesia and food security. I would like to talk to the Chief Minister about these things at some stage; they are very important works. Those works will continue, I trust.

But I disappeared and I came quietly to the Territory to see if it was true that the people wanted me to return. It was not an ambition; it was a desire to serve. I walked around and people asked if I would. I had to report to Ros that we needed to.

I acknowledge those quiet people. I will not mention them by name. I could probably use your list, Member for Brennan. There are many people I ran into who said they would like to come, but I will tell you this one thing that really shaped my thinking and got my attention. I have friends all over the world, people who are in very influential positions and very modest people and poor people.

I received a WhatsApp message from the centre of Java from someone who is in a very poor family and who said they had just seen the Northern Territory on mainstream television. They had seen what had happened in our juvenile detention facility, Don Dale. They reported to me that it was a shock for them to see it. They never expected that this is what they would see of Australia. That was just one little household. There are satellite dishes all over Indonesia, all through ASEAN. It formed a view.

Many of them, because they know me, were also looking at the news and asking what on earth was going on in the Northern Territory. A picture was being formed. One of the reasons I moved to Indonesia was to assist, effectively, Australians to understand that we have a an adjustment to make in engagement and providing assistance to make that connection.

That was one thing that got my attention, the impact of those images and stories on the reputation of Australia and the Northern Territory, within our immediate region. Then I saw and experienced how people felt in the community. I felt somehow responsible; I felt that I had an obligation to respond and render some assistance, and that is why I did.

So to the people of Blain and those quiet people who asked if I would, thank you. I hope I fulfil your expectations.

There are a couple of other giants who would never think of themselves as giants, though one of them is reasonably well known. I will mention them because each of them has helped me see things a little differently.

One of them is Nico Daryanto, who was the Secretary General of PDIP when Megawati was the President. He has been a very good counsel and friend for a very long time. We have had such good conversations and encouragement, talking about deep matters of cross-cultural concerns between two jurisdictions politically and culturally.

Agus Pribadi, who has been a friend and confidante for many years—I had to come back and it was his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, so Ros stayed to celebrate that with him. He has shown me the story from the point of view of Chinese Indonesians, a minority group in Indonesia, and the challenges they have faced through moving from the Dutch, being under the rule of the Japanese and then self-government, or the formation of the republic.

Some people who work in the Northern Territory—the Grimes family, Chuck and Barbara, and Ben and Emma. Ben and Emma work in translation and literacy work in West Timor, where I have done quite a lot of work. Chuck and Barbara work here in translation and literacy with Aboriginal dialects. They have given me unique insights into how we conduct business across culture.

I will mention one I would like to speak about more. There is a local farmer who has been a friend of my family since I was a lad. His name is John Rowe. There is a story in our community that people here probably do not know. When I was very young I was caught in a flood and it was presumed that I had lost my life, but I did not, obviously. I was five. All the farmers came out to look for me. It has been written about a lot; it was in *Reader's Digest* and there are many stories still alive in the community about the little boy who came back from the flood.

The opportunity I had when I was no longer carrying the responsibility of being the Opposition Leader or Chief Minister was to revisit the place that event occurred when I was only five. I had a picture in my mind of where it occurred. It did not quite fit my memory. When I went back I found exactly where it was, where the car I was in at the time had stopped. It led me to see a set of graves that I did not know much about. It was in a farming community in mid-west Western Australia—the Wudjari and Yamatji people. I grew up in that community. We grew up experiencing racism both ways. I was bullied and teased at school; it was very difficult, and some of my uncles were very hard and extremely racist. There was hatred flowing both ways in our community.

I remember sitting on the school bus, pointing down the creek and saying, 'That is where some of the local farmers who are related to this mob on the bus were speared by Aboriginals'. We knew that story; it had actually happened, and there were those who had living memory of it occurring. I only knew the story, but when I went there two years ago I realised that was where the car had stopped, and there were these graves. For the first time I saw the whole story.

The whole story is this, and I bring this with me today too. There were two farmers who were speared. It was during the expansion of the pastoral industry. They had taken control of the waterholes; there are still



good waterholes there today. They had interfered with the inhabitants, who had been there for a very long time, and created conflict. They retaliated by pushing back and stealing some food.

The white settlers then retaliated, disrupted some of their camps and shot one of them. They further retaliated and speared two of the farmers. There had been other allegations of atrocities which had occurred, including the stealing of women and other things. They sent out the constabulary and arrested the Aboriginals concerned, took them to Geraldton and tried them, sent them to Fremantle on a ship, found them guilty of murder, brought them all the way back in chains to the very place where they had speared the farmers, gathered the whole two tribes, and hanged them in full view of their families.

Now I know why there is so much anger in that community today. Now I know why, when I go to the Royal Commission public hearings, there is such anger that cannot be resolved with recommendations. Now I know we have to go deeper to resolve these things if you want to unlock the problems we face. That community of Mullewa is still in the grips of the pain of that event. Those families absorbed that and could not quite understand it. It affects them to this very day. That is why an inquiry and investigation has its work cut out to go further than those previously have gone.

I have begun to see these things from different perspectives. I heard, yesterday, the speeches that were made here. As someone of my age, I have heard many of these speeches before in the new Burke, Martin and Henderson eras. Then there was the Mills era and the Giles era, and everyone said the same things. 'It is all pretty exciting.' I have made many new year resolutions, and I am sure you have too. That excitement of a new year. 'We will get fit.' 'We are going to lose weight.' 'The year is going to be great.' But reality kicks in.

On both counts I have been disappointed, because the reality of the challenges we face are enormous. I hope we are able to remove the scales of partisanship from our eyes to see beyond ideology to the people we are endeavouring to genuinely lead and to make a difference to. That is the challenge I apply to myself. After going to the hearing the other day I thought, 'That is all squared away. We have been able to describe what the problem is. It is the system, the government, the parliament, the legislation and the lack of funding. Off we go; we are fine.' I had to ask myself what the one thing I can do is that would make a small difference. Unless we personally buy in there will be no real difference.

The decision to leave the Country Liberal Party—I have been part of a number of organisations, and some of them have admirable core beliefs and the most up-to-date constitutions, but they are controlled by people of ill-will and clever and selfish agendas. The outcome, despite the quality of the constitution and the admirable core beliefs, is devastatingly heartbreaking.

Conversely, I have been part of apparently chaotic organisations that have incomplete, incoherent mission statements and constitutions, but they are filled with humble people of goodwill with a desire to serve, and their achievements are monumental. The point is that people make the difference. It is not parties, politics or ideology. At the end of the day it is people. We have talked about self-government, constitutions, different Acts of Parliament, parliamentary systems and so on. People created them all for a particular reason.

I made a decision to leave the Country Liberal Party not because I am against parties but, in its case, I could give no more. Many have asked me since whether I would return. Those on the other benches ask whether I will or not. I will not. Many from the Country Liberals, the conservative side, have asked me if I would. To them I say no.

**Ms FYLES:** 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 MILLS:** Thank you. I will not overindulge. I am getting towards the end.

My message to the Country Liberal Party is that rather than seeking me to assist or be part of something—my involvement will be directly with my community and providing practical assistance in this parliament where I can. For those who have an interest in the party, your job first is to do some deep soul-searching to answer the question, 'How did it get to that?' What are the underlying cultural issues that have shaped the organisation? What role can you play in bringing about change? Give yourselves at least six months of serious soul-searching before you even think about asking such questions of other people. Those

questions must be asked internally. My work will be focused on those bigger questions of reform and how communities can be renovated and have a sense of connection.

There is much I would like to say but this will not be the last time I speak. I want to try to answer the question of why I have come back. It is about completeness. I do not know what it is but I will know when I am finished. For my community, I hope I know that before they do. I want to leave something in place.

I remember my father, sitting on a verandah, wishing he was on the farm and feeling he had not quite finished his work there. He would get so agitated he would get out of the chair, get in the ute and drive to the farm. When he got to the farm, he would say, 'Bugger this. I'm going back to Geraldton.' He was not happy on the farm and he was not happy in retirement.

I determined, 'Ros, this is probably what it is all about; together we will sit on a veranda and know it is complete—we are happy to sit on that verandah and do not want to run backwards and forwards, not being sure.'

Dad is one of the giants of my life. On a personal note, it is an indulgence and something I probably should not say, but I will—in the toughest times, in 2011 I think it was, dad passed away. I was under enormous political pressure, as some of you would probably know, not from without, but from within. I never had time to properly mourn my father. At that time, an opportunity was taken to apply renewed pressure on me through the *NT News* and some activities of branches. That was one of the hardest things, to see they would stop at nothing to advance their own personal agenda. But I stood my ground and continued to until I went to Japan. And I thought, ultimately, I need to return and complete the task, whatever that be. But the task will ultimately result in Ros and I being able to relax, knowing our job is done.

Our service is firstly to our community, to leave something that is lasting. I look for the opportunity to provide practical, genuine support for government and scrutiny as required. I am tired of finding 90% of something agreeable and spending my resources and talents on amplifying the 10% I do not agree with—but find out how we can make things better.

Once again, I commend myself to you. I acknowledge Ros, sitting up there watching again. I look forward to these next four years and hope what we have at the end of this is something better than it is today, going beyond recommendations to practical outcomes that make a difference to families and children.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, now for something a little different, although I say at the outset that I look forward to the day I can sit on the beach at Bulgul with my wife, look across to the Peron Islands and not worry about some of the issues we have to worry about today, although I have a feeling I will worry about some of them until the day I die; that seems to be built into me.

This speech is not a speech to reminisce. I will do that another time. I have notes here about that. My concentration will be more on the Administrator's address yesterday. There will be plenty of time to talk on some of those big issues the Member for Blain spoke about.

I first welcome all the new members to parliament and congratulate them on their success at the recent election. This place has many different faces than two months ago, and it is funny sitting here; I used to sit there, and I know all the faces I used to look at. I will be truthful, I am glad some of them are not here. I do not think they did this parliament any good at all. They might have achieved things that were, for them, the most important things in life, which might have been economic and material gains, but from a personal point of view, I do not think they did this place any good at all.

Yesterday there were some very impressive maiden speeches from very impressive members of parliament. Of course, that does not mean I agree with everything they said, but that is what parliament is about. I was in and out a bit trying to get my speeches ready while you were making yours. My only advice for new members—and do not take this as a grandfather giving advice to the children—is the advice I gave myself when I first came here because I was as nervous as anything and I had no idea why I was standing here. Put the L-plates on the front so you give yourself a little time to understand what this strange place is all about so you can adjust to it, because it is different to normal life. Then when you are right, you just go for it. It does take a little adjustment. Unfortunately some of you have been thrown into the deep end of being ministers straight off the streets of Alice Springs. That really is the deep end. That is an extra challenge you will have, but I wish you all well. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with me during these sittings—I have my views on certain matters, but I give those views with a lot of thought.

We all have aspirations when we come here, otherwise we would not be here. Part of the challenge is to keep the fire burning as time goes by. That might be a bit easier when you are in government, but it can be a bit harder when you are an Independent as you are not part of government. Governments, as you might have heard the Member for Daly say, tend to confer favours on their own members and electorates rather than on non-government electorates, but hopefully that will not be the case with this government. As the Chief Minister said, hopefully we will work together, which is good.

Sometimes governments have worked with me when they needed me, and they have needed me from time to time in my life in here. When they do not need me it is a different story.

**Ms Fyles:** We always need you, Gerry.

**Mr WOOD:** Thanks very much. I feel better now, Attorney-General. I will not break down.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, please cease interjecting.

**Mr WOOD:** Mr Deputy Speaker, that was a kind remark rather than an interjection. We will get into proper interjections as the years go by.

When I heard the Administrator's speech it stoked the fire in me because many of the issues he spoke of are issues I am concerned about, and have been for a long time. They are still on the agenda, and that reflects the complexity of some of these issues, which is something the Member for Blain also highlighted. Any government trying to find solutions has to be prepared for the long haul.

I have gone through the Administrator's speech so I will try to pick out some of the things I agree with and those I have a different view of.

All governments say they will be open and accountable. For the moment the government has got off to a good start with details of travel costs and itineraries, but I have concerns about whether the sideways removal of Dr Freeland quite fits into the category of being open and transparent. It is my job to ask those questions.

One way to assist with openness and transparency is the development of an ICAC, which is something that, would you believe, both sides of this parliament agreed to in a previous Assembly. For me it was one of the most remarkable evenings in this parliament when we both sides, which were both debating exactly the same thing, except for one clause—we got them in my room and said, 'If you can get rid of that you will all end up on the same page', and they came in here and all agreed we would start the process to set up an ICAC. That shows that you can work together.

The establishment of an integrity commissioner is a great move. This was one of the recommendations of the Stella Maris Inquiry. I know it is a sore point with Labor. It is strange how of all the recommendations to come out of the Stella Maris Inquiry—I know it is a sore point with the Labor Party—the one I believe to be most important was that we have an integrity commissioner, and the CLP did not have one. That showed me that there was more about the Stella Maris Inquiry than good governance. There was also a lot of politics, because one thing that would have been a great recommendation to take on was having an integrity commissioner. The government has said it will do that.

Perhaps look at the Canadian model—I will refer to Canada time and time again. In Nunavut they have an integrity commissioner who is a retired judge. I do not think he works there all the time, but he gives advice to members of parliament.

For instance, if you are a minister and you are unsure about something you are going to do, you can go to the integrity commissioner and he will give you advice. He will tell you whether it is the proper thing to do. That is open to any member of parliament. He also looks at things the government is doing and gives it advice as to whether that is proper. That is really important.

I very much support a judicial inquiry into political donations; it is something I had on the Notice Paper at the last Assembly. Of course, it was put back further and further with debates until it eventually disappeared with the change of government.

It brings back memories of an inquiry that was agreed to by the previous parliament but was changed by Mr Giles so the inquiry became impotent. I hope the Member for Spillett does not give me a funny look, but it was a funny evening in this parliament. As an Independent I can put motions forward, and one motion

forward was to have an inquiry into political donations, including looking at Foundation 51 and Harold Nelson Holdings. Due to some circumstances a division was not called and that motion was passed in parliament, which meant we on this side—the minority—passed a motion to have an inquiry into political donations.

Unfortunately, even though the Chief Minister said he would do it, two or three days after the Sanderson by-election he sent one of his people into my office. They said, 'This is the inquiry you will have', and took out all references to Foundation 51 and Harold Nelson Holdings. We had what I call an impotent inquiry, which anybody could have done, but the real guts of the inquiry was removed on purpose. It is good to see we may have a judicial inquiry.

The statement mentions electoral reform, and I would be happy to see that occur, including scrapping optional preferential voting, which I think backfired on the government. There is room for discussion about other things, like proportional representation and reviewing the 100 m rule. I am a fan of that rule, but it was done in a way that was not practical. The purpose was to allow people to walk into a polling booth without being harassed. If people can find another way of doing that without being harassed I would possibly support it. There was a fair bit of stuff about false advertising, but I will get into that another time.

It is good to see planning reforms on the agenda, and I hope the government scraps the new Litchfield subregional plan, including the urban and peri-urban areas and the oversized activity centres. That does not mean we do not relook at them; it just seems that in many cases they were done without proper community consultation, and in some cases without any consultation, except with the people who owned the land.

We need to grow in the rural area, but that does not mean it becomes a suburb. The Chief Minister has spoken about putting Weddell back on the cards, and with the slow growth at the moment it is an opportune time to start planning that so when the time comes it can commence.

Our previous Planning annoyed me when he said, 'You are anti-development'. It seems that if you do not fit in with the government's viewpoint of development then you are anti-development, but if you have a different view it is ignored. My view of development is that rural areas can develop small villages which support the rural area, and Weddell is an urban area. The two can sit comfortably side by side as forms of development, but I have always been opposed to the rural area becoming the spread of Palmerston or having suburbs in areas that should be rural.

One issue that has come up of late is water. It is a key component to future development in the rural area. I hope that with the new Planning minister we can place a high priority on making sure that, whatever we do, there is the ability to make those new developments sustainable by making sure there is enough water, either from the town supply, aquifers or rainwater tanks if feasible.

Noonamah Ridge should be put in the dustbin or sent to Weddell. It was always proposed in the wrong place. It is like a sore thumb in the rural area. It might have been a lovely design, but it is in the wrong place.

The Member for Blain will probably disagree with me, but I disagreed with the Planning Commission from day one, not necessarily because it is a Planning Commission but because its make-up is wrong. There were conflicts of interests. The Planning Commissioner was on the EPA and the EPA chair was on the Planning Commission. They have to people devoid of any possibility of conflict of interest, yet the government of the day passed an Act which exempted them from challenges to conflict of interest. That is wrong.

A qualified planner should manage the Planning Commission. The present commissioner does have planning qualifications through his major qualification, but he is not a qualified town planner as you would expect to head the Planning Commission. That is not to say he could not be on the Planning Commission, but the government made a mistake. The Planning Commission Act does not include any reference to a qualified planner. A planner has been on the Planning Commission only by invitation. That was Graham Bailey, the designer of the original Greater Darwin regional plan of 1990.

The Planning Commission should also include community representatives. If it is dealing with issues in Alice Springs, people representing Alice Springs should be on the commission. The present Planning Commission is composed of people from Darwin. They do not represent the rural area. The local government representative is the city clerk of Darwin. He is a nice bloke, but he does not represent the rural area and does not have the knowledge of the rural area to give good input into planning decisions.

Community consultation needs to commence on planning for the future of the INPEX village. There are about 8000 people, on shifts, in and out of that village. It will pretty much come to an end this time next year. This time next year they will all have left. It is a great facility, with basketball and tennis courts, a swimming pool, a gym, a tavern and a laundry. It is to be handed over to the community. There is a large area that needs to be developed. The community only accepted the INPEX village being built where it was based on the premise that the facilities would belong to the community and there would be discussions about how the rest of the land should be used. I hope to talk to the Planning minister about it in the new year. We should have some consultation with the community, the government, Litchfield Shire and various NGOs about possibilities for using that area of land. I do not make any promises about what the land should be used for; we need to bring the community in. Consultation is really important.

The economy is probably one of the biggest challenges this government will have in this term, with the departure of most of the INPEX works next year. Consideration should be given to smaller projects, instead of the big ones like Tiger Brennan Drive, so smaller companies have an opportunity to win the work.

It was a mistake to bring a big Queensland company in, BMD, to do the whole of Tiger Brennan Drive. There were many companies there that came from Queensland. They may have set up an office in Darwin and a place to store their equipment, but they were not genuinely NT companies.

King was there, but I struggle to see how local companies had a great benefit. I am not saying they did not have some benefit, but we have try to retain our small companies because they have families, and the social impact of those companies leaving the Territory needs to be taken into account when governments are trying to keep those companies operating. That social capital is important.

Some of the issues that came out of the business round tables—it is mentioned in this document. One of the questions raised with me is whether contractors are paying subcontractors or suppliers on time. One of the complaints I am getting is that normally it is a 30-day turnover for your bills; some companies are waiting 60 to 90 days, maybe even longer. Companies can go broke when they have to wait for bigger companies to pay them. I hope that is one of the questions that might be asked at the round table. Are businesses paying their subcontractors and their suppliers on time and not extending the time period?

The government says it will expand agribusiness, the resource industry, tourism, international education, construction, Defence and boutique industries. It will have to grapple with the onshore gas industry, and whilst it might have a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, we know if it is done properly, hydraulic fracturing can be done safely. I have been through a lot of this work, and I know if we do it right it can be done for the benefit of the Territory. If Labor says, as it does in this document, it supports the gas pipeline, and we do not have onshore gas, then we have about 685 km of a white elephant.

Controversy about hydraulic fracturing is not necessarily about the environment. I am not saying it is not, and from my point of view protection of the environment is the number one matter when it comes to hydraulic fracturing. I have asked a lot of people why this industry is being picked on? You drill a hole in the ground for magnesium, gold or water in the rural area you do not have to go through the processes some of these companies have to go through. You can do as much damage to the aquifers in standard drilling of holes in the ground. Chemicals are used. Take stockfeed bores. Are they capped? Are they protected with concrete so manure does not get down the side into the aquifer? There is nowhere near the amount of work required to protect the aquifer as there is for a hydraulic fracturing well.

I say to people if they have this intense concern about the aquifer, then they should apply it to all other forms of drilling and digging holes in the ground. Our mines dig into the aquifer. They spray water out at McArthur River and Jabiru because they are in the water table. It is a matter of good science and how you do it; that is the key. The key for me, as it was in this debate with the last government, is that we have to make sure there are strict controls, enforcement and an independent inspectorate. I have worked with the independent Environmental Defenders Office, which is good to talk to about these issues. They are qualified to give good, hard science advice on these issues.

I have no problem with people talking about the environment with this issue, but I have a problem if people are simply anti-gas because they want the world to be run on 100% renewables—that would be fine—and to do that they do not want anything to do with gas at all. They oppose gas being mined because they see that as a contribution to greenhouse gas and those things.

Unfortunately, that is not the way of the world. If you live in Alice Springs or Tennant Creek where it gets cold and you want to warm your house, you need gas. If you want to cook the roast lamb, you need gas. You will not do it on batteries, solar or wind, because at the moment they do not have sufficient power to do

it. My family has solar batteries at Bulgul. Try to boil the jug. That is the end of the lights for the night because that is the power you need. So gas is important.

Gas is important for industry. Part of the reason we are looking at the pipeline to go to Mount Isa is for that fertiliser company to use the gas to produce fertiliser. I am interested whether the gas can be used for the phosphate mines near Tennant Creek. The minister can probably give an indication of where that mine is at the moment. It is one of the biggest phosphate mines in Australia, and if we can use gas to produce a product in the Barkly that can be used for agriculture and export it for our own agricultural industry, it would be great for the Territory and for employment.

Renewables are great. You will not hear me say they are not, but they are not the be all and end all. I was heading home to Melbourne to see my mum last Christmas and I went past Port Augusta. I thought, 'Wow, what's happened to the big tower on the coal power station?' There was another tower there, and I did not know what it was. If anyone saw the recent *Landline* episode they would know that in Port Augusta a thermal power plant has been put in—which I saw when I studied these systems in Spain two years ago—where you send all the light from the sun to a point on a tower, which creates super-hot steam. That steam is used to produce electricity.

This company uses the electricity to desalinate water and grow tomatoes. It is \$200m worth of greenhouse. It also heats the glasshouse with the extra heat left over from the generator. But at the end they said, 'We cannot guarantee 100% power; we need at least 15% to 20% of base load sitting somewhere when it is cloudy and we do not produce any electricity.' It is interesting to hear that discussion. I raise that because the government has said it will try to have 50% renewables in the NT by a certain time. It is part of the mix of the debate we need to have.

I noticed in today's paper one of the better articles I have seen in regard to the issue of hydraulic fracturing. It is by a gentleman named Don McMillan, a petroleum engineer with more than 30 years' experience, who has designed and implemented fracture stimulation projects. It is worth reading. You do not have to agree with it, but it is one of the better articles you see in the paper. I will give you a summary. He talks about our moratorium and how a group of experts will look at the issue of hydraulic fracturing:

*This inquiry's website, ...*

That is the inquiry the government is putting forward:

*... terms of reference and panel composition needs to be rewritten. The word 'Fracking' needs to be removed from the website to prevent the perception of bias. Based on the oil and gas industry's definition of 'Unconventional resources' this inquiry is pointless. A HFS ...*

That is, hydraulic fracture stimulation:

*... inquiry should include conventional (tight) reservoirs if the goal is to understand the HFS impact on aquifers. If the concern is the protection of shallow (groundwater) aquifers then the terms of reference should also include well-bore construction of petroleum, mining, agricultural and government boreholes.*

I have said this to people before. Why are we only aiming at this one issue when there are lots of bore holes put down through aquifers across the Territory?

*Finally, the panel must comprise at least one Hydraulic Fracture Stimulation Petroleum engineer to have scientific credibility.*

It is an article that is worth reading, whether you agree or not. I say to the Chief Minister, please look at it, and if we need one of those engineers on the inquiry, then we should have one. It is meant to be an expert panel. There are not many of these people around. That is something we should look at.

There are plenty of other matters, which I will raise quickly because I know time is running out. I notice that there is some emphasis on agriculture. I did not hear all of the minister for Primary Industry's speech, but I was wondering if he talked about Ord River Stage 3. The previous government was very much pushing to develop Ord River Stage 3. We know there is the possibility of a big prawn farm there, but the Northern Land Council said it is not going to happen.

I was surprised at the speed at which the government was looking at it. Some years ago I went to look at Ord River Stage 2 and had discussions with the people who were running it. When you consider the time that was required to reach an agreement with the native title holders, which was considerable and complicated, I could not believe the Northern Territory Government had done that in about half the time. I am not sure they actually had done it. I think they might have been one step ahead of the discussion. I am interested in the minister for Primary Industry giving us an update on Ord River Stage 3.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics—it is funny, we have used the word ‘logistics’ and now we are going to set up a transport supply chain infrastructure master plan. I like the word ‘transport’. It sounds nice, but I always wonder if we have done this before. I always become worried that governments come in and say, ‘Let’s look at this!’ Can someone dig under the shelves and check if some of it has been done before. There is nothing worse than repeating yourself; you waste time if it has already been done. I notice air was not part of the vision, but then I heard the minister speaking today and she did mention aerodromes, which is good. I would also throw in boat ramps. They are very much an important part of transport. That is an area we have to look at, and which I have raised before.

If the government is going to spend public money on Aboriginal land, it has to sort out the issue of whose road is whose. If I had the government do my driveway, I would end up on the front page of the *NT News* because you spent public money on private land.

The issue of whether the government needs to sort out access roads to communities, either leased or bought, needs to be sorted out. I do not believe public money should be spent on private roads. It is not to say they should not have money spent on them, but the bases of why we are doing it is incorrect. That is an area that needs to be looked at.

I know there is talk about Katherine and Tennant Creek and I will not go into that.

The government talked about the Alice Springs Indigenous art gallery. It sounds like a great idea. It was one of your promises. I notice it also talks about solar excellence. When I was in Alice Springs for the Masters Games, I noted that Alice Springs is no longer a solar city, which is a pity. By having it as a solar city you put out there that you are interested in solar, but that is gone. I am not 100% sure why, but it seems that funding has dropped off. That is something we have to concentrate on.

Let us not forget Tennant Creek when it comes to solar. If you look at the maps for solar, from Tennant Creek across to Western Australia is the top area for solar power. The Member for Barkly and I have discussed the possibility of using solar energy to produce hydrogen, and with hydrogen you can produce fuel for cars.

This talks about lots of jobs for local businesses and repairs and upgrades for local schools. This sounds a bit like the education revolution of days gone by. What concerns me is that the department has too much control over what is built. The most successful cases were where the school was given the money. It could get advice from the department, but it could also source its own local contractors to do that work.

Last time there were two lots of money. The first lot the schools had a say in how they spent the money; the second lot was top down and you were told how to spend the money. No matter what criticism has occurred in New South Wales, one of the best programs—look at my schools and they have facilities that they would never have otherwise. If you can continue doing that, that is fantastic.

Regarding sporting upgrades, I would love some regular money for Freds Pass. You may say that is local, but Freds Pass has never received much money from government; it received a little money in the last dying days of the CLP. It needs a regular dose of money; it is probably one of the biggest sporting facilities in the Northern Territory, yet it is never recognised as that.

It is great to bring back the Arafura Games. Getting rid of them was the biggest mistake. There may have been problems, but the benefits to our area—the Member for Blain was talking about our connections to Asia—are worth more than whether we made a dollar or not. People will welcome it back. We may have to promote it more.

**Ms FYLES:** 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 WOOD:** I will ask about the future of 24HR Art in Question Time.

The \$1.1bn for infrastructure for remote housing is, I presume, separate from the \$1.1bn for houses. It sounds like a lot of money, but divided into 10 years and by nearly \$0.5m for each house it is not many houses. Living on Bathurst Island I saw the houses there, and I saw the houses at Daly River, where people built them out of their own materials. In Daly River they did not build them all; they came in packages. They had a breezeway; they were simple houses. They were all that was needed. People enjoyed sitting in the the breezeway.

We have built suburban-style houses that look they are from the back end of Palmerston for an enormous amount of money and have not done much to overcome overcrowding. We have only replaced the houses that are falling down. Sometimes you might need to have a house that is not flash, but it is a government house that has been given to you so you have a place to have a shower, cook your food and have a good night's sleep.

Come and look and my house. It has a demountable down the middle and brick on the outside. Snakes, cockroaches and rats live underneath, and they come out to watch you watching television. I do not live in a flash place. I am not saying people have to live in a dump, but we need to ask what the goal is. People need to have a healthy lifestyle in a house that is not crowded. If we are not achieving that because we are trying to build five-star houses when a three-star house would be sufficient, we have to renew our thinking.

There are some great things here. Investing in children—read the *Little Children are Sacred* and the other reports that come through. I had a lot to do with Commissioner Bath in the days when these reports were being put together. One of the issue is parenting. If you do not get these children in the first three years you have a problem.

We need programs in schools too. There was a trial in Queensland some years ago where teachers were trained to identify kids who had a problem at home. It got them early, and they worked with the family because the dollar spent there was a lot cheaper than \$20 picking them up in gaol later. We need those type of programs.

Health family and communities, alcohol, BDR, TBL, FASD, AMT—I am starting to get good at acronyms. FASD—very disappointing. I know I had some different points of view from other people on the FASD committee, but that document sat and nothing was done. It needs to come out.

You do not have to talk to be about alcohol. I have seen tragedies in my life. I have been in the Territory longer than people who say they were born and bred here. I say, 'That is good, but I have been here longer than that'. I have seen the tragedies.

The BDR and TBL—the one for me is AMT, Alcohol Mandatory Treatment. I know the government is looking at a review, and its does not want AMT. I support it because I believe you should have compassion for people who cannot help themselves. If they are in the gutter and alcohol has them to the stage in their life where they cannot take responsibility for themselves, it is up to the Good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan has to be the government—it can be others, such as NGOs—to help those people, even if it does not make a long-term difference. You must help them and give them the opportunity.

I visited Saltbush Mob three weeks ago and CAAAPU when I was down there. CAAAPU has had its problems, but I met the people there and they are passionate about what they do. I understand it costs a lot of money and it is good the review will look at that. I know you will look at ways the BDR can be involved. Get the money out of the poker machines. The previous government doubled the number of poker machines in pubs. My understanding is in the last financial year pubs and clubs made \$89m profit out of pokies. Lord knows what the casinos made.

Some of that money goes into sporting and community things, but if hotels and pubs and making that sort of money, it should go into helping those people who cannot help themselves anymore. That is a passion of mine. I ask the government to not be rushed in getting rid of AMT. Talk to the nurses and the people who work in AMT.

When I was at Saltbush I saw the ladies sitting around a table doing some reading and writing—they were all there—and some of the blokes doing some woodwork. The man who looks after woodwork there said these blokes, after dinner, which is at 5.30 pm, come knocking on the door and ask him to open up the place again because they want to keep working. They enjoy it and have a little meaning in life. A bloke was out on the ride-on mower. He was trained and was running around the lawn. He was doing something. At



the same time they are getting treatment for their health issues that have probably not been treated for many years of their life. I do get passionate about that.

Education—I have been getting some information, minister, on the issue of boarding. I gather there is a KPMG review soon to be released on the cost of boarding. I may have some more questions on the matter, but Kormilda is not the only problem when it comes to boarding. Other places are struggling with the amount of money received.

The question the minister might look at later—she does not have to give me an answer now—is how much does it cost the government to run the Nhulunbuy site per student? Tell me how much that is compared to what the private schools receive, and the school in Katherine, because I think it is vastly more than the private schools receive. That is the problem, but I will talk about that another time.

Employment—we talk about a lot of things, and I am told, ‘Here you go again’. Employment is one of the major things to reduce the problems we have with people going to gaol. Alcohol is a major problem; unemployment has to be a major problem. If you do not have a vision in life you have no pride in your place or in yourself, and you will end up breaking in to places, doing nothing or getting into trouble.

I was the work supervisor at Nguui Shire Council—it was probably the first Aboriginal local government council in Australia; at least it was in the Territory—in 1974, just before the cyclone. My job was to employ 107 blokes, before unemployment benefits came in.

We employed everybody. Anyone that came, we worked. Old people collected firewood on the back of a trailer. They were not the fastest in the world—they would come back with a wallaby as well—but they supplied the pensioners with wood.

It gave them something to do. Two men went out with a chainsaw, got the wood, brought it in and went back out again. They were doing something. They were helping their own people. They were interacting with each other and getting a bit of food. It was not about whether you could bring in five tonne of firewood in an hour; you were doing something. That is what we are missing.

Councils and local governments have a role to play as a centrepiece for employment in communities. If government gave them the money they give to CDP and unemployment benefits, and topped it up, people could earn a good wage at a proper hourly rate, because the cost of food and drinks is much higher in those communities.

The council's role would be to find them work, and there is stacks of work. I hope he does not go crook at me, but I asked the CEO of Alice Springs council, ‘If you were the centrepiece for unemployment, could you find work for people?’ He said, ‘Absolutely’. You might have to get some equipment: backhoes, mowers and a few things. Why cannot Alice Springs council, which has a workforce and people who know about these things, be the centrepiece for unemployment and give people something to do. In Alice Springs I saw young people wasting their lives, just walking around. What a waste.

Once you get used to that work, you move up the scale. Some people say it is mundane work. Yes, but you have to start somewhere, then you move up the scale. You can get training in literacy and numeracy while you do that. Those are the issues I relate to.

Community leadership is great, but I am not sure how that and local decision-making will clash with existing local government. I am interested to see how that will work, because we do not want to end up with another big bureaucracy in the remote areas. You have local governments and advisory boards, and then you say we will have community leadership and local decision-making. I thought that is what it was, but it might be something else. I want to know how that works in reality.

Changes to the Environment Protection Authority—I will be asking the minister what that means. There is an issue about the change to the EPA and the department.

Water is an issue we need to look at, and I know you are reviewing some of the licences we are giving out.

I did not hear any mention of commercial fishing. The commercial fishers of Australia are getting together to form one big association. Governments love recreational fishing, which is fine, but they forget that the fish I eat—because I do not have a boat—are from Fisherman's Wharf. They came off a fishing boat. We need to encourage that, not put it to one side as if it is less than recreational fishing.

Arafura Games—great news. Warren Park—we need to talk about that. Putting the rugby league centre back in Marrara is a good move, whether it should be on the rugby union park or not—at least it is a better decision.

I would love to talk about the Westminster system, as the Member for Blain did, but that will be another day. All in all, it was a good report. Many of those things have to be fleshed out more, but I thank the government and the Administrator for bringing that forward.

**Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice):** Mr Deputy Speaker and members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Assembly, I acknowledge that we gather here today on Larrakia land, and I pay my respects to the Larrakia people, past, present and future.

I welcome everyone back to the Chamber. To the new members, welcome to our Chamber. I have very much enjoyed listening to the maiden speeches from my colleagues over the past day or so. It has inspired me as to why we are all here and the job we have ahead of us. I am very much looking forward to working together.

I am deeply honoured by the trust my community, the electorate of Nightcliff, has placed in me in re-electing me as its local member. I will continue, over this term of government, to dedicate my efforts to represent the people of my electorate and the broader Northern Territory.

It is a privilege to be the Attorney-General, Minister for Health and Leader of Government Business, a role I am very much looking forward to. I undertake these responsibilities with a new appreciation of how these portfolios affect the everyday lives of Territorians. I will do my utmost to deliver for the benefit of the Territory.

Throughout the past four years we have listened to Territorians, and we have formed a government with a clear, positive agenda. Over the next four years we will continue to listen and consult widely with the community. That is a very important point.

It was very clear early on with the last government that it had stopped listening to Territorians. We saw that with the significant power price hikes. I remember being at Casuarina Square collecting signatures. People who had never engaged with politicians and could not care less about politics were being impacted on so greatly in their everyday life, and they were being completely ignored by the government. We must never forget that we are here to represent the community of the Northern Territory.

What has been impressed upon me everywhere I have visited and from everyone I have spoken to is that this government has an even higher responsibility than most governments. We have an obligation to all Territorians from all corners and all walks of life to have a better government, a government that serves Territorians.

This government was elected on a platform of restoring trust, accountability and integrity to government in the Northern Territory. Restoring trust in government is more than just a saying. The need to restore trust and operate from a firm foundation of integrity will inform every decision this government makes in the years ahead. We have immediately begun this work by implementing reforms to give Territorians the accountability they deserve. We saw that this morning with the motions passing through the House to allow the Register of Members' interests to be available online and to set up a select committee to review the process of legislation and the work of this Assembly.

Those measures of reforming how parliament operates demonstrate the start of bringing openness and accountability to this House. I look forward to continuing to work with every member of this House, whether they are from the government benches, they are Independents or in opposition, on making these changes.

From how we as members behave in this House during debates, to how decisions are made and accounted for, our government is addressing the need for change on many approaches. The opening of this session marks the entry of a new Assembly with an attitude to be respectful, to accept that we need to listen to Territorians; we need to respect Territorians and bring that approach into the Assembly.

We welcome this scrutiny, and it is evidenced by the appointment of you, Madam Speaker, as an Independent Speaker. I congratulate you on your reappointment, and I look forward to working with you closely. In order to restore integrity to government and rebuild the trust in our community, we must deliver on major initiatives to prevent corruption. We have commenced working on the creation of the new public integrity framework, and we already have some of the functions to ensure the integrity of government, such

as an Ombudsman, an Auditor-General, an Information Commissioner, and a Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosures.

I am proud that our government will be the first in the Territory's history to create the position of an integrity commissioner. However, we know from the dissatisfaction expressed by the community that we need to do more than that to restore trust and confidence in the political process. We need to get out there as a government, work hard and show Territorians we mean what we say.

The Labor government has commenced the work to develop an independent commission against corruption with powers to investigate allegations of corruption in the public administration of the Northern Territory. The Member for Nelson mentioned in his speech that it was something he was passed in a previous Assembly, supported by government and opposition, but nothing happened. We must address the significant community concern that has arisen concerning the current regime's limitations.

There is wide community consensus underpinning our government's policy to deliver an ICAC. Territorians expect that we should have a truly independent body with strong powers to investigate corruption. We have been left behind by other states on this issue, and that is unacceptable. Our government has the benefit of the excellent work completed by Hon Brian Martin AO QC in his report, *Anti-Corruption, Integrity and Misconduct Commission Inquiry – Final Report* of May 2016.

Commissioner Martin's report recommended a similar model to the current South Australian integrity regime. Our government endorses that model. Our government provides in-principle support for 50 of the 52 recommendations made in that report. The adoption of Commissioner Martin's detailed recommendations will require a significant legislative program to reform the Northern Territory's current integrity regime. Our government is pleased to have already commenced on this endeavour.

The changes required include formulating new legislation to create and empower a new ICAC, as well as identifying and proposing consequential amendments to other legislation. We will consult widely and transparently in the delivery of those changes. It is important we get the set-up right.

We will also be required to ensure that when the ICAC legislation commences work can begin as soon as possible. That means a significant body of work is required to transition current bodies, staff and legislation into the new integrity regime. Our government is working with affected staff and departments, and listening to their advice on how we best transition to the new regime. I look forward to further updating the House on the progression and development of this commission and its supporting legislating processes.

Another crucial part of restoring trust in government is to ensure our government upholds the highest values in the way appointments are made. As Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, I will move to ensure there is a fair and impartial process of assessment of judicial appointments in the Northern Territory. Our government intends to formalise the proper process early in 2017 after consultation with the legal profession and the judiciary.

Before going further into the government's agenda, as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice I would be remiss in not acknowledging the gravity of the matters being considered at the Royal Commission. The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory has our government's complete support. We made it quite clear when the Royal Commission was first outlined, when we were in opposition, that we would support the process and participate openly in it. We need to make sure that at the end of this Royal Commission we have a road map for youth justice and youth detention in the Northern Territory.

It would not be helpful for me to provide a running commentary on the matters discussed, or even considered, during the Royal Commission hearings. However, I acknowledge the opening remarks of counsel assisting the commission, Peter Callaghan SC. He noted that the Royal Commission had identified over 50 previous reports on the issues being investigated at the Royal Commission. He queried this inquiry mentality where investigations are used in place of action and reform.

On this point, let it be clear that this government will work hard to make the decisions required to improve the Territory's justice system. We look forward to receiving the full report and will respond accordingly to deliver a better pathway for our vulnerable youth. It is something we have to do.

We know our justice system as a whole requires a root and branch reform. It is not possible for us to keep doing what we are doing. To that end, our whole-of-government justice framework will be delivered by the end of 2017. This allows time for the Royal Commission to do its work and, at the same time, allows the

government to build multiagency cooperation for solving entrenched problems that do not neatly fit into portfolio categories.

Our government will not accept blame shifting. The justice framework will be the way Territorians can hold our government accountable for the future direction of our justice system. A key principle underpinning the justice framework will be our government's commitment to reasserting local power and increased role for traditional leadership in our justice system. Our government will consult widely on implementing this principle with a view to empowering local communities and partnering with non-government agencies to ensure the cultural component of delivery of justice across the Northern Territory.

This will help our government deliver on another commitment: an Aboriginal justice agreement. The Aboriginal justice agreement should complement and enforce our government's commitment to a 10-year road map for returning local decision-making and control to communities in many areas, including justice. The Aboriginal justice agreement must be driven by the Territory's Aboriginal community, not preconceived government or political priorities.

Our government is prepared for what must be the first step in this process: listening to Aboriginal Territorians. To the Territory's Aboriginal community, our government will listen to you and we want you to be involved in the process. We will not be a government that forces top-down agreements onto you, your families, your communities or your traditional lands. We want you to be involved in the process.

A critical part of what our government has heard so far, particularly from Aboriginal Territorians, is that there must be a better way for our justice system to operate. There must be, in one phrase, more justice in the justice system.

Our government does not accept that gaoling more and more people for longer and longer is a solution to society's problems. The Territory has gone down that path, and it is a path of failure. Our government is also aware of the grave incarceration and recidivism rates and statistics in the Northern Territory. Our challenge will be to work with the community on creating expert-driven evidence-based strategies that will reduce incarceration and recidivism by offenders. We must, and will, develop specialised justice responses and best-practice diversionary and rehabilitation programs. Our government will focus on grassroots programs to break the cycle of offending.

Our government will do all these things because, in the reality of crime, better solutions are the only way forward to protect Territorians from becoming victims, or to protect victims from their perpetrators. Our government has immediately begun work on such reforms to fight the scourge of domestic and family violence. And I acknowledge our Minister for Territory Families. I see that she is someone with outstanding skills and expertise in this area, and I look forward to working with Minister Wakefield on these challenges.

Our government will move to legislate changes to evidence laws to support information captured by body-worn police cameras being tendered in court as evidence in chief prosecutions. This reform will help police with their prosecutions of serious domestic violence offences, and will help mitigate the trauma victims feel when entering our justice system.

Our government will also trial a specialised approach to domestic and family offenders in the Alice Springs Local Court. Pending the outcomes of the trial, the government will strongly consider implementing Territory-wide Local Court reforms. As we develop a domestic violence register so police in our agencies can better target the worst of the worst recidivist violent offenders we will also implement reforms to encourage the automatic recognition of domestic violence orders across state and territory borders.

Our government will consult widely, listen to the experts and talk to the community about how best to implement future reforms in each of these areas. Listening to experts and the community, and ensuring government decisions are understood is what good governments do. Dodgy decisions behind closed doors undermine the integrity of government. We will be a different government.

As the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice my portfolio now includes Licensing Northern Territory. I am excited at the prospect of working with the business community to ensure we get the regulation mix right for their industries. As Minister for Health, I am mindful that we must also get this balance right for our community so it feels safe and strong.

Our government will therefore halt the explosion of poker machines in the Territory. In 18 months there has been an increase of over 50% in the number of poker machines located in community venues. We will cap the 1852 community poker machines. This equates to the maximum number of existing machines and

applications in the system. We will implement this cap via regulation as soon as possible to meet our election commitment of doing so. What we saw under the previous government was unacceptable to our community.

Alcohol abuse is one of the biggest challenges we face in the Northern Territory. It has been made clear to us that, no matter where we go, we must urgently and sensibly address the problem of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. Our government will not continue the irresponsible handing out of takeaway alcohol licences. One of my first actions has been to immediately approve new guidelines so that no new takeaway alcohol licences will be considered. This is the first step in fulfilling our election commitment to restrict new takeaway licences to greenfield sites, new restaurants, hotels and bespoke industries, such as mango beer.

Our government is adopting a health-based approach to reducing alcohol harm across the Northern Territory. Having said that, we recognise that alcohol abuse is a serious and complex problem requiring a multifaceted approach. To effectively address the problem we must implement integrated strategies so we can simultaneously reduce alcohol demand, supplies and harms.

We recognise that we must employ an evidence-based strategy and, importantly, these strategies must be cost effective. The CLP government failed Territorians in this space. The new government will not throw measures out simply to do so. We will make sure that when we stop one measure another measure is in place so we do not have a policy vacuum, which is what we saw under the CLP. Those new policies will be supported by evidence to tackle this important issue.

We will repeal the *Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act* and work with the Departments of Health and Attorney-General and Justice, together with stakeholders, to reintroduce the Banned Drinker Register. An evaluation of Alcohol Mandatory Treatment is currently under way, and we will wait for that evidence before we can put appropriate alternative treatments in place. Our decision to reintroduce the BDR is consistent with our intention to adopt an evidence-based approach to dealing with alcohol and its many challenges.

Temporary beat locations will continue; however, they will be at the discretion of police. The police will decide where and when police resources will be used.

Following its introduction in 2011, the BDR began by banning 2500 problem drinkers. They lost the right to purchase alcohol. When the BDR was removed we saw immediate effects. In my community of Nightcliff we saw the impact every day, and people are sick and tired of it. We are working hard to reintroduce the Banned Drinker Register as soon as possible. We need to make sure we have the technology. Four years have passed since the BDR was in place, and we need to make sure we use technology to the best of our ability. We are working as efficiently as possible, and we are doing it with expert advice.

The effectiveness of the BDR can also be gauged by its support from key stakeholders, including the Northern Territory Police Association. However, we will not rely solely on the reintroduction of the BDR. We will consider a range of evidence-based alcohol health-focused harm strategies. These will include specialist assessments and detoxification services, comprehensive healthcare, reintegration and transition back into the community, secure and supportive accommodation options. As a government we do not for one minute believe that we alone have all the answers to the huge, deep-rooted problem of alcohol in the Northern Territory. We must work together with the community. That is why our approach will be consultative and we will be working together.

We will continue to work with key stakeholders in this area to assist us in developing a broad range of strategies to succeed in minimising alcohol harm. We will make a strong start by creating a whole-of-government response to readdress the whole-of-life issue arising from foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. I picked up on the comments from the Member for Nelson when he talked about the work done by the Select Committee on Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. I note that work and we will be building on it as we tackle this issue.

We will lead the development of a holistic framework to address prevention, diagnosis, support services and community education. FSAD encompasses the individual from infancy for their entire life, and we need to engage with the community. It needs an approach with a cohesive support network to provide the necessary integrated care and support for a better chance in life. We also need to work on prevention.

In his opening address, His Honour talked about the place of children in this government. They are genuinely the heart of this government. We believe that children are our most valuable assets and the future of the Northern Territory, but too many Territory children are not being provided with the start in life

they deserve. I have two beautiful boys who have been given every opportunity. As the Member for Braitling spoke of yesterday, by the time our children hit five years of age and start school, some are already behind the eight ball and they will never catch up. We need to ensure we support families and children in early childhood development. We plan to address this challenge.

Failing to provide the essential building blocks in those critical first five years of life has long-term consequences on our families and our children. Research shows that a child's earliest years provide a window of opportunity to address inequality and improve outcomes in later life. The potential benefits from supporting the early years range from improved growth and development to better schooling outcomes and increased economic participation.

If we can help raise the birth weight of a child they will have better outcomes in their life. It is as simple as that. We need to support mothers when they are pregnant and support families through those early years. We also know the environment where a child spends their early years strongly helps shape whether or not they have the foundations for future health, wellbeing and development.

This government, through its early childhood strategic plan, aims to promote a good start in life for every Territory child. We aim to do this by strengthening the services and supports available for children, women and families. The focus of early childhood development starts with a strategy from 20 weeks of pregnancy through to five years of age.

Our early childhood development strategy will ensure a continuum of coordinated services and programs that will benefit a child's growth and development as well as the community's economic activity and development. We will develop a more harmonious and coherent society where a healthy child enters adulthood. We will support Territory children right through.

Our plan is for all Territory children, not just the children in our major urban centres, but also those thousands of Territory kids born in remote areas each year. This requires a collaborative effort across government, led by the Children and Families cluster. We have the Minister for Children and the Ministers for Education, Territory Families, Police and Housing working alongside me with my portfolio of Health. We are consulting and engaging with key stakeholders, including Aboriginal-controlled health organisations, consumers and non-government health services.

In addition, we will develop a child and youth health plan by 2018. We want our children to grow and have a long, satisfying, productive life, supported by their community. Our plan will ensure accessible and age-appropriate healthcare for children and young people, incorporating a holistic approach to health and wellbeing, family, relationships, accommodation and education. To ensure it is relevant, we will take the input from those who are most important: young people and their families.

There are some initiatives we can and must embark on while we develop these plans. We know that to improve early childhood development for vulnerable populations we must start with families before a child's birth. The Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program is being operated in the Central Australian region by the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, and the preliminary evidence indicates that it is effective in improving outcomes in Indigenous communities, with more positive parent-child interactions, better-quality home environments and reduced post-natal depression. Here we have a strong pathway to making a better start in life for these babies.

The Australian Government is supporting the implementation of nurse-family partnerships in the Top End next year, and our government will expand this service further across East Arnhem Land and Central Australia, and the Barkly and Katherine regions. This will be done in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled health services, the non-government sector and the Australian Government.

We are updating our robust child health program, Healthy Under 5 Kids, by strengthening the emphasis on partnering with families, and a trial program is being conducted in urban and remote centres.

Families are the key to providing good preventative health measures. Parents around Australia hold the child's health record to keep us up to date with the immunisations schedule and a track of the child's development milestones in the vital zero to five years.

The current NT child health record, the yellow book, lacks the functionality that other parent-held child health records have. We will update the yellow book and explore electronic capabilities to help families monitor and keep across important health services as they become due to help keep our children healthier and stronger. In other states the book is far more useable. It reminds parents when their child needs

immunisations and check-ups. We have fabulous child health nurses; we need to give parents the tools to engage with them.

Keeping our loved ones healthy and strong is a high priority, particularly when we look at the challenge we face with suicide prevention and the devastating impact suicide has on our families and communities. Tragically, the Northern Territory suicide rate is almost twice the national average. There were 54 deaths from suicide in the Northern Territory in 2014; 54 people taken from their families.

Sadly, people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage continue to be heavily overrepresented in those statistics. Our non-Aboriginal standardised suicide rate is 13.8 deaths per hundred thousand compared with 34.9 per hundred thousand among Territorians of Aboriginal heritage. We cannot let this continue. As a government we have a strong commitment to halving our high suicide rate within 10 years as part of our strengthening mental health strategy. I am pleased to have the assistant minister for suicide prevention, mental health and disability, the Member for Karama, assisting me to turn this tragic figure around.

The Member for Karama comes into this Chamber highly regarded for her tireless efforts in her community with community-based initiatives for suicide prevention. Her vast knowledge and association with pioneers in this area will assist our government greatly in our ability to achieve this goal.

The Department of Health will work with the assistant minister to lead the development of a whole-of-government response to suicide prevention. We need to engage across the Territory with the Mental Health Coalition, general practitioners and service providers. Without that engagement with the wider community the risk of suicide is too great for Territorians. We need to turn those statistics around.

We will actively seek the views of people within the community who have lived and experienced suicide, those who have lost people too soon. We will have a strategic and carefully planned way to prevent suicide and will deliver actions across that work.

One of the programs I am most excited about is \$3m over the next four years to help develop a mental health housing accommodation support initiative. It is well known that people at risk, or with mental illness, are far more likely to have insecure accommodation and experience homelessness. Recognising this, our government is working to provide linked clinical services and tenancy assistance, along with personal supports. We are hoping this new initiative will help break the cycle of homelessness and assist individuals to obtain and remain in stable accommodation. This is a very important issue and something I have been dealing with in my community. I know all members in this parliament will be dealing with it across their communities.

In turn, this program will help people access the required healthcare and prevent the exacerbation of their illness. It provides the best opportunity for progress along their recovery journey from mental illness or drug and alcohol problems.

I am also very fortunate to be working alongside the Member for Arafura, the assistant minister for remote health delivery, who brings a wealth of experience of both living and working in remote communities and delivering health outcomes. His knowledge and ability to strengthen our approach and inclusion of communities in our decision-making will greatly assist us in our plan to build local control. I am excited about that opportunity. We had the opportunity, prior to the election, to visit a community, and I could see the strengths of the assistant minister.

Our government will increase communities' control of their health services to engage and enable community management of local primary health services delivering culturally appropriate, responsive and safe healthcare. Aboriginal communities have the right to participate in the decision-making that affects their lives, health and wellbeing.

Not all communities will have the same aspirational capability to manage the planning and development of primary healthcare and family services for their community. However, all communities should be given an opportunity to make the choice and be supported in realising their aspirations. With the assistant minister's support, communities can start the process and make essential contributions through a health advisory group. Our government will continue to work with the Australian Government to identify funding opportunities for Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations to help implement this policy.

One of the major changes we will see impacting on the health sector is the ongoing rollout across the Territory and Australia of the National Disability Insurance Scheme for eligible Territorians with a disability.

It is planned to complete the NDIS rollout in the Territory by June 2019. The NDIS will change the face of the disability sector by increasing support for people with a disability. Once fully operational, a total of \$204m in joint Territory/Commonwealth funding will be available for support in the Northern Territory. As part of the full implementation of the scheme, existing legislation, including the *Disability Services Act*, will be reviewed and amended to reflect the changing role of the Territory government in relation to disability service provision. We will also work with the National Disability Insurance Agency and providers to implement a registration process for providers wanting to participate in NDIS support.

In addition to the landmark rollout of the NDIS, another initiative that will impact significantly on health service provision in the NT will be the commissioning of the new Palmerston hospital in 2018. This government is committed to delivering a hospital for the people of the rural area and Palmerston. We have already visited the site, and we are working as efficiently as we can to deliver this long-overdue and highly-anticipated project. We will closely monitor the project every step of the way to make sure there are no more delays. We have seen enough of those. I was involved with the Public Accounts Committee when it looked into the Palmerston hospital, and I have continued with the body of work from that role.

In responding to His Honour's address, I have focused on only a few key areas of the of the Health portfolio. There are significant challenges confronting Northern Territory health services as they strive to improve health and wellbeing within our community.

We have fabulous Department of Health staff and fabulous people on the front line, who provide essential services to our community. At some point in everyone's life, they or an immediate family member will need to access services within the Department of Health. I take this opportunity to thank all staff within Health for what they do in improving the lives and health of Territorians across the Territory, particularly at a time of crisis when we need them most.

There are a number of projects within Health. We will be planning for the future of Royal Darwin Hospital, developing a 10-year infrastructure plan, and determining future requirements to service mental health, rehabilitation and supported accommodation.

**Mr McCARTHY:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I request an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms FYLES:** We will be master planning the hospital campuses; there will be money to relocate the Katherine ambulance station, and I look forward to the opening of the new clinic at Ngukurr and clinics currently under construction at Robinson River, Galiwinku, Numbulwar and Umbakumba.

Another issue that has been in the media in the early days of me being the minister is the PET scanner. Thanks to the combined efforts of the federal and Territory governments, Territorians have been able to receive chemotherapy and oncology services at the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre, and that has expanded to other regions in the Territory. But the PET scanner has not been delivered for the Territory yet, and I am pleased to say I have already met with the federal minister and raised the issue with her. Both the federal and Northern Territory governments are committed to delivering the PET scanner for Royal Darwin Hospital.

The PET scanner is a crucial piece of equipment for the accurate diagnosis, treatment and monitoring of cancer patients, and it disappoints me every time a Territorian has to get on a plane to access that piece of equipment.

The federal government has committed a significant amount of \$15m to fund the PET scanner, and the Department of Health is working as quickly as possible in preparing the detailed proposal to ensure this funding is received. I am confident that, working with the federal government, it will be received and the Northern Territory Royal Darwin Hospital will have a PET scanner within the next 18 months to two years.

Turning around health outcomes, particularly those which continue to affect Indigenous Territorians, not only requires the best clinical care, but a properly considered strategy which must begin at every stage of a person's life. It is a fact of life that those on the front line of our health services deal with some of the sickest people in the nation, and statistics show that Indigenous Territorians are some of the sickest. But I am looking forward to being the Minister for Health. With an annual budget of more than \$1bn, I have been entrusted with a significant responsibility which impacts on the quality of life of Territorians every day. I look forward to the opportunity to address many more of these priority areas for Territory health into the future.



I am extremely proud to be the Attorney-General and Minister for Health, and I am very honoured to be the Leader of Government Business. I want to take a moment to thank everyone who supported me in the early days of our government. It has been a hectic time.

I acknowledge the work of the Speaker's Office and the Legislative Assembly in pulling together this first sittings. We had a spectacular opening of parliament yesterday. It was very moving and interesting watching members from around the Territory being welcomed into this Chamber.

To the community of Nightcliff, thank you very much for your support. To the residents of Coconut Grove, Rapid Creek and Nightcliff, I will continue to work tirelessly for our community. It is my home, where Paul and I are raising our children, and your issues are my issues. As well as taking on these new responsibilities, I am passionate about our community.

We have had a number of issues within the electorate, and I am looking forward to being in government and able to deliver on them. One of the huge issues was the CLP closing our police station. I have already begun discussions and I look forward to working with the Chief Minister and minister for Police in getting this police station reopened.

I am proud to be a patron of a number of clubs in Nightcliff, including the Nightcliff Bowls Club, Nightcliff Tigers Football Club and the Nightcliff Sports Club. I look forward to continuing this close relationship and delivering on my election commitment of lights on the club oval.

Schools are the heart of our community, and I look forward to working with our incoming Minister for Education, especially to deliver the \$300 000 commitment for each school across the Territory. Whether they are public, private or Catholic, our schools are the heart of our community; it is where our future is, with our young Territorians.

From a local member perspective, I also want to raise the planning issues. We saw chaos and dysfunction over the last four years, and my community, although affected in a different way to others, was impacted by this, especially the leasing of 98 hectares of our pristine Darwin Harbour to build a man-made island. Thankfully that plan never happened, but it raised with me the important issue of planning. I look forward to continuing work with the new minister and the government to ensure that in our suburbs we protect our beautiful way of life. In my situation it is about our beautiful tropical blocks, but in other areas it includes different issues.

This government has a strong, positive plan for the Northern Territory. We have many major reforms in hand to improve the lives of Territorians. I am looking forward to continuing the work I have started in meeting and consulting with many stakeholders. I have travelled to Alice Springs and have already met with a number of key stakeholders. I will continue that work. I will travel the Territory. I look forward to visiting you all in your communities.

We need to invest in Health and make sure we give our kids the best start in life. I certainly value the trust that has been placed in me and I will strive to deliver on the many major initiatives and restore the trust Territorians have placed in this government.

Debate adjourned.

#### **PAPERS TABLED Members' Travel Reports**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table two reports from the Member for Araluen relating to basic allowance expenditure under clause 6 of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination, dated 12 September 2016 and 10 October 2016.

I table a report from the Member for Johnston, pursuant to clause 6, dated 25 August 2016.

I table two reports from the Member for Nightcliff, both dated 24 August, for clause 6 travel.

I table a report from the former Member for Namatjira, pursuant to clause 6, for travel dated 23 August 2016.

I also table two reports from the former Member for Arafura, both dated 1 August 2016.

### Government Response to Committee Report on the Northern Territory's Energy Future

**The CLERK:** Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 201(3)(b) I report to the Assembly the receipt, on 19 July 2016, of a government response to the Report on the Northern Territory's Energy Future and lay on the table the minister's response to the report.

### ADJOURNMENT

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

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this evening to speak, albeit briefly, because there is much more you can put into an election campaign. I want to acknowledge people and thank them, and point out things in my Goyder electorate.

It was an interesting campaign. Leading up to the Northern Territory general election there was a huge amount of angst in my electorate, and the rural area generally. There were unhappy and cranky people, and it had nothing to do with the weather. They were very unhappy with the Country Liberal government and whilst not being Labor sympathisers, they did not want the CLP to retain government. That indicated to me that the CLP government did not really have its ear to the ground. It was not listening to people and did not really see, I believe, what was coming.

The changes to the *Electoral Act* did present some challenges. The 100 metre rule on polling days created a few issues, but not many. The 100 metre rule during prepolling created issues in my electorate because my electorate office was located 70 metres from the prepolling location. It was good for me, but bad for my opponents. The Electoral Commission sought advice in regard to that and it was all cleared.

Early polling was very well received in the electorate. About half of my electorate constituents voted before election day. That tells us something, and, collectively, we should pay attention to that. People vote early for many reasons. Lots of people work out bush or were going away on holidays, and lots of people just do not like going out on a Saturday to vote and run the gauntlet. I think that was well received.

I place on the record my thanks to Iain Loganathan and the people at the Northern Territory Electoral Commission, particularly those who were in my prepolling booth. They had a lot of issues to deal with—nothing to do with me, but some of my opponents—and they handled them diplomatically, professionally and very tactfully.

The boundaries of my electorate did change; Goyder now encompasses Manton and Acacia, down south. It has gone out east to the Kakadu park boundary. I have picked up the Marrakai, Point Stuart and Shady Camp areas. I now have six pubs in my electorate, which I think is pretty good—it has increased by three—plus a brewery, the Purple Mango Cafe and Brewery, which I think is called a bespoke brewery. I have been there and I recommend that people go there, but not too much because it is always booked out and I do not want you taking my space.

I have lots of resorts and retreats in my electorate now; there is the Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge, the Mary River Wilderness Retreat, Wildman River, Terry Halse's fishing place at the very end of Point Stuart Road, the Mary River Houseboats, Shady Camp—a very popular fishing place which I will talk about in my speech on the Administrator's Address—and Corroboree Billabong. Lots of fishing activity takes place in those areas. The main rivers in my electorate—Adelaide River has millions of crocodiles, which we do not really like.

Point Stuart, for those who are not aware, is where John McDouall Stuart reached the beach on his successful south to north traverse of the Australian continent. At another stage I will talk about the need to upgrade Point Stuart Road, not necessarily sealing it ...

**Mr Wood:** Mr Halse will be pleased.

**Ms PURICK:** Yes, Mr Halse will be pleased. I think he is your constituent but he is in my electorate. Terry Halse is one of the best pet shooters. That is shooting meat for pets, not shooting pets.

The whole area is a destination for fishing people from all around the country, if not overseas. We need to pay attention when things are referenced in regard to tourism and building employment and opportunities.

There are four pastoral properties in that area, one owned by the Brunei people. I will visit them.

I have picked up, in the south of my electorate, the Acacia Larrakia community at the end of Byers Road, which few people know about. It is home, at its peak, to about 50 people, including many of the old Darwin families, such as the Fejos. I went there a couple of times and found it to be a really nice, quiet little hamlet. They had a prepolling booth there, used by 10 people.

In the lead-up to the election there was a lot of talk about people being unhappy with how things were going. There were perhaps four main issues that came out in all conversations. One was planning. I will not go into the full details, but there is a huge amount of angst and raw anger at how the previous government went about making planning decisions, whether it was the subregional plan, Planning Commission consultations or the lack thereof, or decisions by the minister. It has created huge upset in our community.

The metering of bores was another issue. That will be discussed later. Water generally—water security, water management, ground water and the future of the water supply in the Top End of the Northern Territory is of huge concern to all of us, as it should be.

Education and rural schools was another issue. Some are very old. Humpty Doo Primary School is over 35 years old. The Member for Nelson's school, Howard Springs, is very old. I was very pleased to hear in the Administrator's Address on behalf of the government that the new Labor government will upgrade all schools. That is good news. Humpty Doo, Howard Springs and Taminmin need upgrades. Middle Point probably needs a little upgrade in some shape or form.

The other issue I was asked about constantly was my view on fracking. Without a doubt that was one of the top questions. I was honest and said to every person that I personally do not have an issue; however, if you have an issue, then that is my issue. Then we would talk it through. Many people thought I should or should not take a stand, but I explained my background and what I know and understand. I pointed out some of the failings of industry and the regulators. There is a lot more we could do in that space.

I want to put on the record my thanks to many people who helped in running as an Independent. As other Independents would know, past and present, it can be a bit difficult. I was pleasantly surprised at the number of people who offered to help with folding things and putting up signs. That was very encouraging.

One lovely fellow came in—I was not there—and gave Trish, my Electorate Officer, \$50. He said, 'This is to help in your campaign, but if you re-join the CLP I want my \$50 back'. I kept it in the envelope and rang him last week. His name is Bob; I will not give his surname. I said, 'Thank you for the \$50. I put it to good use; I think at some bottle shop somewhere.' I had a lovely chat with him and explained things. I was very appreciative. That is what he wanted to give to support me in running as an Independent, which I was really thankful for.

I thank my mother for having me, which is really useful, and my father, because I think he had some role in it as well, although he has passed away. My mother has always been a good support. Even when she was ringing me between 7 am and 7.30 am every morning, when I was tired, she still had some advice to give me, which is good. My family, one and all—my sisters Plaxy, Thisbe and Melissa, and my niece Briony, who came to town to especially with her partner, Anthony, to help me. To my close family—Vinnie, Zorro and Lisa—I could not have done this without you and the support you gave me, and all the meals you cooked for me.

To the many constituents who helped me—put up signs on their properties, up trees and all those sorts of things. Not with nails—binder twine, Member for Nelson. I heard the gasp of horror. I do not know what happens in the urban areas but in the rural area people's signs are watched very carefully. 'Did you nail them? Did you use binder twine? Did you use cable ties?' We used a combination of cable ties and bailing twine because you can just cut it and put it in the bin later. When you take your signs down they are good for target practice.

I thank the constituents and friends who helped me: Di Spicer; Anna Durbridge; Wes Fields; Felicity Middleton; Ian McDonald; Di Tynan; Barb Backers; Jenny Crumbeck; Beverly Ratihi, who was my guiding light in this campaign and a manager who helps me with my moral compass—'I would like to do this.' 'I do not think so, Member for Goyder; you are not doing that'—Carolyn and Glen Lynch—tremendous support. Carolyn is my EOA. Karen Duminski and her daughter, Emily, helped out; Ray Tandy helped with manly boy tasks like putting up signs on trees which we could not reach or were not strong enough to put up—Charlie Ryan; and Chris Nathaniel.

There were also some freeloaders who had come in from down south because it was the end of ...

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Goyder, your time has expired.

**Ms PURICK:** Ooh! Thank you one and all.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will share with the House some recent events in my electorate of Arnhem. Over the last two weekends there were two festivals held in two large remote communities. On the weekend of 7 to 9 October the first ever Numburindi Festival was held in Numbulwar community. The festival showcased the culture and community pride of the Numburindi people who, I am proud to say, are also my family. Yesterday morning I was danced into the Chamber by my family, the Red Flag Dancers. The recent Numburindi Festival was a wonderful platform for the Nundhirribala Reg Flag Dancers and other groups and families to practice, perform and showcase the strong family connections in the area.

I congratulate the festival coordinator, Ella Geia, who, in conjunction with Artback NT, planned, organised and executed a successful festival. I was unfortunately unable to attend the festival; however, in all feedback I received about the festival, it was clear that it was a fantastic event for the community. The photos and videos that were shared on social media were great to see, and I hope I am able to attend the festival in coming years, if it continues to run. I applaud the Numbulwar community on the success of its first Numburindi Festival, and I hope it will continue and be an annual event. I am also happy to support the event as the Member for Arnhem.

I also share with the House my recent attendance at the Yugal Mangi Festival in Ngukurr community. The festival ran from 14 to 16 October. I was privileged to be invited to speak at the opening on Saturday, and on Friday evening I presented prizes to the winners of the age group dance competition. This was a very fun aspect of the festival and the contestants were great. The crowd most enjoyed the final two dance contest categories, which were the female senior and the male senior competitions.

I congratulate Paul Amarant from the Roper Gulf Regional Council for organising the festival and the rest of the organisers for putting on such a welcoming, fun, relaxed and family-friendly festival. This was my second time to the Ngukurr festival and I hope over my term as the Member for Arnhem I am able to continue to support and attend future festivals and community events in Ngukurr.

Lastly, I want to inform the House of an event held on Monday 17 October. In the small community of Manyallaluk, also known as Eva Valley, the official opening of the new community-built church was celebrated. Congratulations to all the people involved in the construction, planning, furniture making, gardening and beautification of the new community church. I look forward to visiting the new church on my next community visit.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillet):** Madam Speaker, I want to put on the record my continuing admiration for the Palmerston Athletics Club and its staff and volunteers.

I was delighted to be informed recently of the success the Palmerston Athletics Club had at the NT championships 2016. The Palmerston Athletics Club is a terrific embodiment of all that is good in our community and in Palmerston—civic mindedness and self dedication.

Palmerston Athletics Club achieved 37 medals in the NT championships 2016, made up of 18 gold, 16 silver and three bronze. I further congratulate each category winner in no particular order. The good sportsmanship award went to Anuri Ruwansa Malavi Arachchi, who was a first-time participant; Senali Thiansa Malavi Arachchi, another first-time participant; Ewan Dixon, another first-time participant; and Holly Guymer.

The gold medal winners were as follows: for the Rolly Howard Memorial Handicap 100 metre sprint, Luke John Mayo; for the high jump in the nine-year-old boys category, Nelson Minogue, a first-time participant; for the 100 metres in the 12-year-old boys category, Chhitiz Maskey; 100 metre open, 200 metre open, high jump open, discus open and shot put open, Beau Black, a first-time participant; Beau is a very good athlete.

For the race walk in the nine-year-old boys category, Ji Fisher, a first-time participant; race walk in the 10-year-old girls category, Angelena Wickremasena; 1500 metre run in the 10-year-old boys category, Brody Walker; 1500 metre race walk masters, Anita Wickremasena, a first-time participant as a field athlete who survived breast cancer last year—she also won the javelin masters and hammer throw masters; 400 metre

masters, 200 metre masters, 60 metre masters, 100 metre masters and long jump masters, Priya Wickremasena.

The silver medal winners: for high jump 10-year-old boys, 800 metre run 10-year-old boys, and 60 metre hurdles 10-year-old boys, Brody Walker; 200 metre 12-year-old boys, Chhitiz Maskey; long jump open and javelin open, Beau Black, 400 metre masters, 60 metre masters, 200 metre masters and 100 metre masters, Luke John Mayo; 100 metre nine-year-old boys, 60 metre nine-year-old boys and 200 metre nine-year-old boys, Nelson Minogue; shotput nine-year-old girls, Taylar Guymer, who was a first time participant; discus masters and shotput masters, Anita Wickremasena.

Bronze medal winners: discus masters, Luke John Mayo; long jump nine-year-old boys, Nelson Minoque; 400 metre run 10-year-old boys, Brody Walker.

The total medal tally was 37 medals this year compared to 29 medals last year, which is a huge achievement and significant growth for the club.

I acknowledge the support provided to the Palmerston Athletics Club by NT Athletics President Kevin Mulvahil, and NT Athletics General Manager John Bowden, particularly during the 2016 championships.

Lastly, I thank Priya Wickremasena, who is the president and public officer, for her work and for making me aware of the wonderful achievements of the club. May they grow and continue to succeed.

**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Madam Speaker, this week is National Carers Week, and I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the unsung heroes of our communities.

Carers make an enormous contribution to our communities as well as our national economy. Should all of the carers decide to stop performing their caring role, it would cost the country \$6.3bn per year to replace those supports. That is over \$1m per week.

National Carers Week provides us all an opportunity to show our unpaid carers how much we appreciate their selflessness and dedication. It also helps highlight the issues our carers face and generate discussion about how we as a society can provide our support.

This year we are all encouraged to let our unpaid carers know how much they count, and to personally contribute towards creating a more carer-friendly community.

National Carers Week is an initiative of Carers Australia, with events celebrating our carers held across the country. The Northern Territory Government is proud to be a sponsor of Carers Week in the NT, through Carers NT, contributing \$20 000 to support the celebrations, which include a range of activities throughout this week.

Some of the activities planned and held to date are: last Saturday there was a community fun day held at Leanyer aquatic park. There was a jumping castle, pony rides, face painting, a DJ and a free sausage sizzle.

Yesterday we had a carers information stand at the Bakewell Shopping Centre. Today there was an invitation-only carers graduation ceremony held at the Darwin Sailing Club. Tomorrow there is a movie fundraiser, which will be held at the Deckchair Cinema, with a screening of *The Secret Life of Pets*. On Friday a carer information stand and free barbecue is planned to be held in Raintree Park from 11 am until 1.30 pm.

In my own electorate of Katherine we have had several events this week. Today a morning tea was hosted at Kalano Aged Care, and I hear that it was a resounding success. It is a great example of the dedication shown by carers, such as Sue Piscett, who organised it all. Also, on Friday the Carers NT Katherine office will be celebrating Carers Week and the opening of its new office, with a lunch from 11.30 am to 1 pm.

On a personal note, I acknowledge the organisations and associations in Katherine and the countless family members, the unsung heroes who selflessly and passionately give of themselves to care for others. NT Carers, Life Without Barriers, NT Friendship and Support, Red Cross, Kalano Aged Care, the Australian remote regional care services—we thank you very much for your contributions.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.