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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS**  
**Elimination of Violence against Women**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, although the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is to be held on 25 November 2016, there are many important awareness events leading up to the day. Ribbons have been placed on each member's desk in order to promote the theme of:

*Together, let's build a future free from violence and abuse. Support White Ribbon's vital prevention work in schools, workplaces and communities.*

**Address in Reply**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I will present the Address In Reply to His Honour the Administrator at 11 am today. I invite all members to accompany me to Government House, leaving at approximately 10.50 am from Parliament House.

The Serjeant will go with the mace first, then the Clerks, me, the Chief Minister, the Opposition Leader, the Deputy Chief Minister, the opposition deputy, then ministers pairing up with other ministers or backbenchers.

**VISITORS**  
**Rosebery Primary School**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 3 students from Rosebery Primary School, accompanied by their teachers, Lindsay Clarke and Sarah Pearce. Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**MOTION**  
**Select Committee to Review Planning Decisions**

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that:

1. a select committee to review planning decisions by Planning ministers, comprising two members nominated by the Chief Minister, two members nominated by the Leader of the Opposition and two Independent members, be appointed.
2. The committee is to inquire into and report on the decisions of Planning ministers between August 2012 and August 2016:
  - a. regarding all major rezoning, exceptional development permit and special purpose use applications
  - b. where extraordinary powers were exercised by the minister.
3. In examining these decisions the committee is to have regard to:
  - a. what external stakeholders were consulted in the decision-making
  - b. what property owners and proponents associated with applications met with the Planning minister prior to a decision being made
  - c. what consultants were paid by the government in relation to any of the decisions
  - d. the aggregated concerns of the community on key planning decisions, including, but not limited to, Lowther Road, Gardens Hill, Dundee Beach shop, Freds Pass Road, Bayview expansion and the subregional Litchfield plan being declared into the NT Planning Scheme prematurely.

4. The committee may proceed to the dispatch of business notwithstanding that all members have not been appointed and notwithstanding any vacancy.
5. The committee is to report within four months of the committee's first meeting.
6. The foregoing provisions of this resolution have effect notwithstanding anything contained in the standing orders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, before and during the election campaign I spoke with many residents across the rural area, and elsewhere, who collectively and individually expressed complete dismay at the planning processes and decisions of the past Country Liberal government. In addition to this dismay, many residents also expressed anger and, at times, frustration and absolute distrust in the last minister responsible for planning. There was no comfort to be given to anyone that decisions had been made with honesty, integrity and professionalism, and with no conflict of interest, perceived or real. There was a serious trust deficit, as I have said previously.

In all my time in the Territory, which is a very long time, as many members would know, I have never witnessed such angst towards individual ministers and a government. Sure, in the past, governments, ministers and elected members have been unpopular for a variety of reasons, but what existed over the last three to four years was unprecedented in my view and experience.

Most people accept that at times government has to make tough and unpopular decisions for the betterment of the whole community. However, this was not about that; this was about crashing through; this was about, 'We are in government and we can do what we like', and they were the exact words of a former minister for Planning. Another Planning minister said, 'If a developer buys land he is entitled to develop it for whatever he wishes'.

With that attitude from past ministers the result on 27 August this year should not have been a surprise. It also should not have been a surprise that, given that attitude, any planning announcement was met with a high level of distrust and scepticism, and the community did not believe decisions were made in the best interests of the community and businesses together; rather, the interests of a select few were looked after. That was the perception—real or perceived.

It seemed that each time a planning matter arose there was strong community backlash and pushback—not the run-of-the-mill planning applications for change and development, such as planning to build a granny flat or chop 10 acres into two five-acre blocks, which is all quite legal and acceptable, but the large-scale proposed developments—specific and key location rezoning applications on large parcels of land—and the ones that involved substantial upheaval in the community, for example, the proposed Richardson Park redevelopment, which saw the announcement made without any consultation with Ludmilla Primary School or the surrounding community.

Thankfully that illogical proposal and grab for commercial and personal gain at all costs was dumped, mostly due to public pressure because the proposal was seen for what it was: favouritism and a cosy relationship between the Planning minister and some individuals interested in the game itself. The rort was exposed, and rightly so.

The Gardens Hill multistorey spot rezoning was also met with a large community backlash, and the Planning minister did not appear to recognise the deep concerns of the surrounding community. Yes, there was a small concession with the level of storeys; however, this did not take away from the overwhelming opposition to the development proposal and the potential impact on the nearby Botanic Gardens, plus the enormous impact on the amenity of the surrounding neighbourhood. There were key issues of traffic management, parking, waste management, the building being out of context with the surrounding neighbourhood, the prospect of commercial tenancies included and the general aesthetics of a large building smack bang in the middle of a quiet neighbourhood.

Submissions were sent in and letters to the minister, and public meetings and a DCA hearing were held, but all seemed to fall on the deaf cloth ears of the Planning minister. I am not even sure if a significant development impact report was prepared. If there was, did the minister ignore the report or read it? Again, these are questions with no sound and believable answers.

I reckon most people in the world are reasonable people who just want the opportunity to consider change in a timely and open manner. Change happens all around us, but when people are taken for granted and dismissed as not knowing diddysquat, then they will react strongly.

We should not overlook the scandalous illegal clearing of vegetation on Boulter Road and the past government's inability to prosecute the alleged offender. Then, on the eve of the government going into caretaker mode, the Planning minister approved the rezoning of the land. I thought it would have been pretty easy to ascertain who did the clearing, who instructed the driver to do the work. For the government to sit on its collective hands and do nothing is nothing more than incompetence at best and, at worst, collusion with either the property owner or developer.

The landowner had submitted an application for rezoning and it was not approved by the DCA. The land was then cleared. The contractor and the chain of command were known, yet the government said it did not have enough evidence to prosecute. Did the past government really try to prosecute or did it do nothing? Then a second rezoning application was approved by the Planning minister on the eve of going into caretaker mode.

The land in question is at the headwaters of Rapid Creek, and is environmentally unwise to develop into a multiple dwellings estate due to being the headwaters and being low-lying and water-inundated land. It is very questionable, and I wonder what discussions took place between the landowner and the minister. What work did police or DPP do in regard to building a case against the person or persons who did the illegal clearing? These are serious questions, and I believe a select committee is the proper way to get answers to this matter and all other serious matters involving planning and planning approvals.

In the rural area there was a rezoning application for a couple of large blocks to allow for small urban-sized blocks. The land was zoned rural living, which covers five to 10 acres. The application to the DCA was rejected on very sound and solid grounds, which were: lack of infrastructure—power, water and sewerage—water inundation issues in the area; and traffic management, given it is located on Freds Pass Road, which is a busy road already, with three large schools, a daycare centre and a shopping precinct all using the roads and the intersection onto the Arnhem Highway.

I wrote to the Essential Services minister, who advised me that the power and water infrastructure was not sufficient to support such a development, and the government had no plans to upgrade either component of infrastructure. Yet the Planning minister said, 'We need more affordable land', and overrode the DCA and approved the rezoning application.

That was nearly three-and-a-half years ago and nothing has happened on that parcel of land. Perhaps the developer has no money or there are issues with soil contamination, as it was once a mango orchard; perhaps the cost of developing it is prohibitive. I do not know, just as I do not know what the Planning minister had at his disposal to allow him to overturn the DCA recommendation not to rezone and develop the land into small, urban-sized blocks.

Therein lies a serious problem with the current planning processes. When the minister receives a report from the Development Consent Authority, that report is not public. We do not know what material the minister uses to make a decision that is contrary to a DCA report. We do not know who the minister may talk to in making a decision contrary to a DCA report. It is my view that the current situation leaves the minister for Planning vulnerable to outside influences.

I wrote a brief submission along those lines in response to the call for submissions on how and when to set up an ICAC in the Territory, and my letter is a public document. I am not suggesting that past Planning ministers acted inappropriately or received favours from anyone; however, what comfort do I have that something did not occur, based on the lack of transparency and decisions made on the fly.

Let me outline a scenario of what could happen. This is what I put in my letter to the ICAC people:

A property is listed for \$500 000. The person exchanges contracts with the developer, and the sale price is \$500 000. Stamp duty is paid on the \$500 000 sale, yet the person only borrows \$300 000 from the bank—a discount of \$200 000. Could it happen? Yes. Has it happened? Yes.

In the rural area there was the Lowther Road rezoning application—controversial—the Stow Road rezoning, contrary to four DCA knockbacks—very controversial—the Noonamah Ridge proposal—outrageously controversial—which say over 300 people attend a public meeting, which I organised, to express their collective objections. The Bees Creek workers camp—did not get too far but somewhat controversial. The Litchfield subregional plan, which the past Planning minister signed off on unilaterally, not endorsed by Cabinet, just the minister—is it a good plan? Not really. I know many rural residents are not happy with the processes and the plan itself. I am sure there will be more on that in the near future.

Minister for Planning, I do not envy you one little bit. Apart from your other ministerial responsibilities, I think planning is going to cause you the most headaches and work as you attempt to come to grips with just what has gone before you and what has been done well and what has been done badly. I think the latter is by far the biggest pile of mess. I cannot stress enough the importance of unravelling the mess made by the past government when it comes to planning decisions and announcements. It may be that it takes some time to get to the bottom, if not the truth, and I believe it is important.

I know I will make no friends in the Country Liberal Party by this motion as I am casting a pretty wide and damaging net on past Planning ministers, their judgements and decisions. However, just as I stood up and called the past government to account for printing misleading and factually incorrect advertisements over the ice legislation, I am prepared today to stand up and say I do not believe everything that went on in planning over the past two years in particular, if not three years, was proper, honest, ethical and above board when it involved serious and major matters.

If the select committee finds that we do live in a utopian world of planning, I will be pleased, as will many people in the community, but I doubt that will be the case.

I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms MANISON (Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Goyder for bringing this important motion to the House.

She raised some concerns about planning decisions that have been expressed to me by many people across the Northern Territory. She mentioned, towards the end, that it is not an envious position to be the Planning minister of the Northern Territory, which I am quickly learning. There is no doubt that planning is a very difficult space, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no perfect win-win situation. I have found that planning decisions are often highly compromised; there is somebody who tends to be a bigger winner than someone else. Planning is highly emotive because it drives significant change in people's lives. It is important that we make every effort to get the system and decisions right as best we can.

In saying that, the classic example I use with people at the moment is that being the Planning minister is like sitting in the middle, with the developers very upset on one side and the residents upset on the other side. It is a really complex space. Nevertheless, we must do our utmost to work towards finding the right pathways forward for structured planning.

It is important that we plan our cities, suburbs and areas to make sure they are liveable, enable economic development, support Territorians and deliver the lifestyle that is so precious to people. It is quite a complex portfolio to hold and the situation is made all the more difficult as an incoming Planning minister, given there was much controversy in the last term of government.

There were many decisions which spurred on great community debate and concern, and as a new Planning minister I have been trying to speak to and listen to as many people as possible so I can understand where the concerns lie and where people think the future priorities need to be. It has been quite a task, trying to listen to as many people as possible in the planning space. That is a job I intend to keep doing because one of the valid criticisms of the previous government was that it failed to listen.

I welcome this motion before the House. Politically it would be advantageous for me to go down this path and do this; however, I am reluctant to support the motion for a few reasons. It would be advantageous for me to go to a select committee process and have four months to have a crack at the previous government; however, the pragmatist in me is concerned about what that would mean to overall investment and certainty, and people's decisions to invest right across the Northern Territory.

That said, I am very open to sitting down with the Member for Goyder and, for that matter, any member of this Chamber who has concerns about planning decisions that have been made, to make sure they get a full briefing from the department and can access as much information as they would like. By all means, if you believe further discussions on individual cases are warranted, I am willing to sit down with you and listen to those cases and see if there are legitimate concerns.

One thing that was a legitimate concern with the previous government was that it did not listen. Its consultation was very poor, and the previous Planning minister went in hard in many situations. That did not give people confidence. It raised many questions and there were some deep concerns. Please be assured, Member for Goyder and other members who are concerned about planning, this government will embark on significant discussion, consultation and reform.

We made it very clear in our *Restoring Integrity to Government* discussion paper that we will go down the line of adopting the six principles outlined by the 2012 New South Wales ICAC report on anti-corruption safeguards for the New South Wales planning system, and we will release a discussion paper very soon that will look at those very important areas and get more feedback.

I, too, share some concerns about the system. The frequent point of contention that people keep coming to me with is that they feel the planning system lacks transparency; they do not have a line of sight to the decision-making and rationale behind it. They feel that community concern is not taken on as thoroughly as it could be, and that their voice gets lost in the planning system. That is deeply concerning because it is very important that the community has a say. They are some of the issues, and we will be exploring them through the work we will do with Territorians to look at what planning reforms we need to put in place to make sure the system is more transparent, more people have a say and that we listen to the community more.

The six principles are: providing certainty; balancing competing public interests; ensuring transparency; reducing complexity; meaningful community participation and consultation, which is very important; and expanding the scope of third-party merit appeals, because it seems very restrictive that when a planning decision goes away—there are deep community concerns that options to appeal are very limited, unless a minister steps in.

We have some concerns. From the first day to the last day of the previous government, there were many questionable planning decisions made. It is very important that we make sure legislative work is done to ensure we have a planning system we have more confidence in. Under the previous government, decisions to implement planning policy approvals, rezone land, issue exceptional development permits and exercise powers under section 85(3) of the *Planning Act* to call on development applications, at times, raised those concerns. There were also legislative changes that have attracted heightened community commentary and, in some cases, nothing short of outrage; that is for sure. We believe they are real issues, and that is why we are embarking on looking at how we can improve our planning system.

It is important that we are having this debate and that many members get the opportunity to have their say and put their concerns on the record. We welcome the important scrutiny and debate around the former government's decision; however, I have some concerns. Reviewing all the previous decisions is the last thing our economy needs at the moment. If we were to review and threaten the last four years of planning decisions it would create chaos and uncertainty in the business and development community. Now more than ever, it is important we do everything we can to restore certainty, stability and confidence in planning.

Many Territory businesses and families are feeling changes in our economy at present. Our economy has been slowing after record growth, driven by the INPEX project. The risks to the economy are well documented. The previous CLP government failed to plan for jobs past the construction phase of INPEX. During the last term the government sold important public assets, like the port and TIO, and still left the Territory with a deficit of \$900m. We have had to make significant readjustments to the infrastructure program to ensure we are supporting jobs, the economy and investment.

We have listened to Territory businesses in the construction and investment sectors, which is why we are bringing forward work to improve certainty in the economy, supporting jobs, the economy and industry. Yesterday we released those plans.

We will have economic summits, which the government is committed to, to help shape future budgets and some of these investments. We are consulting with Territorians on the matters that directly affect them, and listening to their concerns. This will provide the certainty we need to move forward. But, if we call into question every planning decision made over the last four years, there is no doubt—and I share the concerns raised by the Member for Goyder and voiced by Territorians time and time again. I have put on the record concerns about some of the previous government's decisions on rezoning, for example, the community purpose land in Blake Street. However, it is important that the government allows planning processes to go forward in a structured manner. At the moment it would send the wrong signals to the development community if we were to question all the planning decisions made over the last four years. We are at a time where we need to give people certainty, and confidence to invest.

It is not the intention of the government to undertake the wholesale review of all the planning decisions made over the last four years, through the select committee process. We do not want to immobilise the development industry or stifle activities that have been undertaken in good faith. The government will deal with existing proposals on a case-by-case basis and provide the opportunity for additional consultation if required, and for additional weight to be given to submissions in the decision-making process. But that

does not mean that we should not take the time to debate the issues of recent planning decisions and look at ways to ensure transparency in the decision-making of government. The planning controversies of the precious government raised many serious questions.

Nightcliff island is a perfect example. The CLP granted a five-year Crown lease to explore the technical feasibility of building an island off the Nightcliff foreshore, a lease that included drilling tests just 200 metres offshore. There was little or no community consultation and no approval from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority prior to issuing the lease. What if it had been found that building an island off Nightcliff foreshore was technically feasible? You have to ask that.

What about the impact on the environment and the pressures on social infrastructure in Nightcliff: road and traffic congestion; the loss of amenity for existing Nightcliff residents; and the implications for house prices. It was an example of the cart being put before the horse, and it sent a high level of deep concern throughout the community, and the community could not have been any louder or clearer on their concerns.

It also stood to dramatically change the face of Darwin as a city. This debate had not been entered into. It had the potential to change this from a pristine harbour city into something very different, and the community had not been consulted as part of that.

I applaud the Member for Nightcliff for her strong work in advocating for her community with the concerns it raised. It was deeply concerning how dismissive the former government and Planning minister were of those concerns. I will never forget the night in this Chamber, during General Business, where we heard an opposition motion about Nightcliff island, and the former Planning minister ranted and raved for 20 minutes about Peter Pan, and Tinker Bell phones. We thought, 'Seriously, this guy is our Planning minister?' It was complete arrogance; it was laughing in the face of genuine community concern. It is little wonder people had no confidence in the previous government when that is how it treated a very serious community issue on planning, ranting and raving about Peter Pan and Tinker Bell. It was appalling.

Another example, which the Member for Goyder mentioned in the debate, is Richardson Park. That came out of the blue; it was a surprise to many people. The details of how it came to be were very murky, and it did not appear that there was much consideration given to some of the community issues around access, noise, parking and amenities. The government announced it in the middle of its own planning processes in that area.

The Planning Commission had spent months in consultation with the community on the final stages of developing the Darwin inner suburbs area plan, and while assuring the community that strategic planning would provide much-needed certainty for future development, out of the blue we saw the former government announce the major redevelopment of Richardson Park. It made a mockery of the Planning Commission it had set up. The former government did that without listening to the overwhelming community protest but, eventually, it was good to see, it finally submitted to the community concern about the lack of consultation and realised it would not proceed.

We saw a similar situation at Stow Road. The former CLP minister approved a noncompliant subdivision on the grounds of special circumstances, even though the Planning Commission was working with the community to stop ad hoc rezonings and subdivisions in the rural area, through the development of the *Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan*. Worse still, the former CLP minister showed even more disregard for the established planning principles by calling in the application from the DCA not once, but twice.

Boulter Road, which the member mentioned—the DCA did not prosecute an alleged illegal clearing of the native vegetation on the site, despite the then Lands and Planning minister describing the land clearing as a clear breach of government process. So we had a situation where five hectares of the 7.5 hectares had been cleared illegally without so much as an application for consent. Despite his rhetoric, and reasonable expectations from the community, the previous Planning minister could not bring the responsible parties to account.

You would like to give the minister the benefit of the doubt, but it raises more concerns about the system. It brings home why we need to look at the planning system and address some of its shortcomings.

There are plenty more examples of decisions made under the former government that were seen as controversial, like Lowther Road, Freds Pass Road and the Dundee shop, as the minister mentioned. But planning is not straightforward. There is controversy behind every planning application because they are emotive; they make dramatic changes to people's lives, and there are many points of view.

There is more to be gained by looking at some of the recent planning that has caused so much angst in the community, especially in the Darwin rural area, and there is no doubt that the work we have seen, particularly around the *Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan*, has attracted much debate and concern, and those questions are still there. As an incoming minister—I will continue to do this; I am trying to speak and listen to as many people as possible. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to start that process. As the Member for Nelson knows, the door is always open, and he has some very firm views.

There is a body of work the Planning Commission is undertaking around the activity centres. It goes to show that we need to make improvements when it comes to communication and consultation. There seems to be so much angst and concern around those areas, and in some of my engagements I have found there has been a lot of misunderstanding as well. That is why we have to look at how we can do things better to communicate with people so they are part of the process and have more of a say.

With the further work happening around the activity centres, I see it as an opportunity to make sure we keep the rural area rural. That is such an important principle. If we are to have a wonderful greater Darwin area, the rural area must stay rural. It is a very special place. People have chosen to live there because they love the rural lifestyle. In Alice Springs there are similar issues. It is important to keep the rural area rural. People love the rural lifestyle; they are passionate about it, but so often people are feeling the pressures of urban creep. You can see, along the Stuart Highway—my goodness! It is a very different place to what it used to be. The Coolalinga shops could not be any more different.

You can see why people are concerned about protecting their rural lifestyle. I feel confident that the work on the activity centres work and the further work the Planning Commission is doing will ensure that future planning is very targeted and that where densification is allowed will be very clear. Then we will not see the spot rezonings and the start of densification further out in the rural area, which leads to more densification and so forth. It will be very intentional and purposeful so we give the rural area more certainty.

That consultation needs to be done well and people have to be genuinely listened to as part of that process. I am glad the Planning Commission is going down that pathway again. It is important that it listens and works with people on the ground to make sure they have a genuine say in the process, and to get it right.

I have also called for a review of dual occupancy, because it has the potential to really change the face of our cities and suburbs. That process, towards the end of the last government's term, was rushed. It is a big discussion for a city or town, and the government managed to push through in about four months. I do not think Territorians had enough time to have a say. We will have a deeper level of conversation throughout the towns and Darwin to make sure we look at that issue again. That is an example of where we have put an interim development consent order in to make sure we take the time to get it right.

Let us look at the facts of how the economy is going at the moment, the housing demand and where our population growth is. We have breathing room where we can do that body of work and get it right. It also means we can work to ensure we get the planning decisions right through conversations and listening to people on the ground. It is important to continue that.

There is no doubt there was a heightened distrust of the previous government's way of going about its job when it came to planning. That is why the Labor government recognises that planning processes need to be open and transparent, and the NT community expects the Planning minister to listen to both sides of the situation and take a considered, careful and consistent approach.

The government will move to create a better and more transparent and accessible planning system that will be true to our commitment of restoring integrity to planning. As I said before, that is why we will ensure our planning system is guided by the six principles of the ICAC's 2012 report into anti-corruption safeguards in the New South Wales planning scheme. The six principles are: providing certainty; balancing competing public interests; ensuring transparency; reducing complexity; meaningful community participation and consultation; and expanding the scope of third-party merit appeals. This government is close to finalising its discussion papers for reforming the NT planning system, based on these six New South Wales principles.

Of course, we need to get it right for the Territory. We will not just rip out a New South Wales system, because we know the Territory is a very different place, but they are good, sound fundamental principles. We will look at them and discuss how to incorporate them in the Territory.

The discussion paper will be the start of a process of engaging with the public and the development community to ensure concerns are addressed to build trust in planning processes, which is so lacking at



the moment. Our intention, in the next 18 months, is to deliver planning reforms and implement a more transparent and less complex approach to planning policy in the Territory.

At the same time, it is important to remember that we are establishing an independent commission against corruption, which will investigate corruption in public administration in the NT, and planning decisions, both past and present, will be within the scope of retrospective powers. If there are serious questions or allegations, it will have the capacity to look at them retrospectively.

Another important body of work we are undertaking is the strategic master plan for the greater Darwin area, to ensure we have clear purposes of place to guide growth and development in the Territory, looking at places like Darwin city, Palmerston, Casuarina, Weddell, the rural area and the Cox Peninsula to make sure there is a very clear purpose for those places and the lifestyles we expect to see.

As Darwin's population grows in step with continuing regional development, services will be expanded and business, trade and other opportunities will increase. This will reinforce the status and the important role of the region and our city on the national and global front. For Darwin this is particularly important, as Australia's closest capital city to Asia and the only capital in northern Australia.

We already have the *Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015*, which identifies essential characteristics and needs that will shape future development. For example, it makes it clear that a rural lifestyle is the land use that should happen—but it is important that we look at a high-level document which drills down into community-guided discussion about the purpose of those places. It is really important to get that right and to help guide future government planning decisions. We are looking forward to working with as many Territorians as possible and going forward with this important body of planning work.

I need to come back to the fact that this is an important debate. The Member for Goyder has introduced an important motion. There are concerns, but I do not believe that a select committee of parliament is the way to go about the process. I am deeply concerned about the uncertainty it sends out. We are at a time where we need to ensure we have certainty in the economy going forward, to guide investment. We will work to make sure we are a more consultative government which has a better planning system that gives people more confidence and the ability to trust in the decisions of government in planning.

As I have said many times, planning will always be controversial. There cannot be a win for everyone in this system. Nevertheless, we need to strive to make sure we have the very best systems in place. An important component of that is making sure people have trust in the system and how the government goes about utilising it. A good way of doing that is ensuring it is more transparent and people have a line of sight into the rationale and the decision-making process of planning. That is sorely lacking, and it was exacerbated by the conduct of the previous government; there is no doubt about it.

The Member for Goyder has brought a very important motion to the House. We will be open to full briefings, having further conversations on this and providing whatever information you need for what you would like to pursue. However, at the moment, the economy is slowing and we have a very challenging 12 to 18 months ahead. It is important that all shoulders are to the wheel to support jobs, investment, business and the Northern Territory at this time. I am deeply concerned that this may not be the right tool to getting to the bottom of some of these decisions, as it may send messages of uncertainty.

I assure you we are looking to make a better, transparent planning system where people have more of a say. I assure you we will be a much better government than the previous one, which will help with people's confidence in the decision-making processes that government pursues.

Thank you again, Member for Goyder. It is an important motion and debate. We welcome it but we will not be supporting that a select committee be established, for the reasons I have outlined.

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**VISITORS**  
**Marrara Christian College**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I draw honourable members' attention to the public gallery, where we have the pleasure of having the Year 8 students from the Marrara Christian College, accompanied by their teachers, Darrell Leng and Chantelle Hunt. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome and hope you enjoy observing the session this morning.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for Goyder for bringing this motion forward. I have said before that the previous government lacked finesse in consultation, and I think I was the first to admit that, after being re-elected. I remind the government that it needs to make sure it does not fall into the same trap, when we speak about half day public holidays and consultation.

Planning is often a hot topic for debate. It often generates a great deal of vocal community interest, and it is invaluable for good reason. Decisions about what type of development is allowable on a given parcel of land have a substantial impact, not just on the respective land owner but also on the neighbours, the neighbouring land owners or occupiers and, in some instances, the broader community. They are often very sensitive issues, and any planner will tell you that they will never please everyone. Any type of development means change, and people are often very cautious about change, but it is inevitable and necessary. The challenge lies in managing the change over time to ensure the overall benefit to the community. Inherent in this is the real value of long-term, strategic land use planning.

As stated so succinctly in the building a better Territory report produced by the Construction and Development Advisory Council, it is pretty straightforward:

*Stronger long-term strategic planning brings about certainty. This, in turn, allows businesses to manage risks more effectively. Indeed, it also gets rid of some of the unnecessary red tape and duplication boggling both businesses and the public sector.*

That is this basic principle that sat behind the establishment of the Northern Territory Planning Commission, an independent statutory authority to set the strategic framework for integrated land use, transport and infrastructure planning.

We understand the value of establishing a hierarchy of land use plans for the Northern Territory that would set in place the overall strategic framework for future developments over time. One of the key mandates of the Planning Commission was to ensure an appropriate level of community consultation in the development of these land use plans. In the development of the *Litchfield Subregional Land Use* plan alone, the Planning Commission distributed 7000 flyers throughout the Darwin rural area in each stage of the consultation process to try to ensure people were informed about the process and could be involved. The commission spoke to more than 1000 people directly, at shops, markets, briefing sessions and a community workshop, and it received a total of 200 written submissions from the public. There is now a strategic land use plan in place which exists as part of the NT Planning Scheme that covers the whole of the Darwin rural area.

The Planning Commission is now working on the development of area plans for each of the identified rural activity centres contained in the plans. This should provide residents, landowners and businesses the certainty required to develop in an appropriate way into the future.

In the three-and-a-half years since it was first established the Planning Commission has produced the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan; the *Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan*; the *Holtze Area Plan*; the *Katherine Land Use Plan*; the *Tennant Creek Land Use Framework*; the *Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan*; the *Alice Springs CBD Review*; the *Darwin Mid Suburbs Area Plan*; the *Darwin Inner Suburbs Area Plans*; the *Berrimah Farm Area Plan*; the *Berrimah North Area Plan*; the Kahlin Compound and Old Hospital Site and Flagstaff Park concept plans, as well as working on NT-wide planning reforms, such as the dual occupancy provisions on single-dwelling lots.

Ultimately, the work produced by the Planning Commission does not have any official authority on its own. It forms the basis of recommendations that are provided to the minister, as the designated authority under the *Planning Act*, to inform their decisions regarding what plans are incorporated into the planning schemes and other decisions they may be required to make regarding matters of land use.

According to the legislative framework we have in place, any decisions regarding land use are—I remind people that there is a lot of this legislative framework, not only around land use planning, but many other issues, such as water—the prerogative of the government of the day, and its Planning minister, who has the responsibility of making determinations and decisions under that framework.

Where strategic land use plans are in place, they are very useful documents, but there will always be circumstances where they are unable to anticipate a potential future land use that is suitable and appropriate. In these cases it should be for the government of the day, or its minister, to determine whether

a proposed change to land use should be permissible or not. Likewise, where strategic land use plans are not in place, it should be for the government of the day and its minister to make decisions about changes to land use.

I am very cautious about undertaking any kind of wholesale review of previous decisions of the Planning ministers because it would create exactly the kind of uncertainty that strategic land use planning is designed to avoid, something the Deputy Chief Minister mentioned. This would be a particular concern for the land owners who have made investment decisions regarding the future development of land holdings. We have raised the same issue in regard to the government's plan to review all water licences issued in the future and the uncertainty that would create.

This is also true of government investment infrastructure. Land use planning is often regarded as chiefly concerned with what happens on top of the ground. This misses where the real money gets spent, especially where government is concerned. The reality is that without essential services, being power, water, sewage and roads, any parcel of land, whatever it happens to be zoned, is just a piece of dirt. It is what happens below the ground that creates the potential for development, and this requires investment in hard infrastructure.

The pipes and wires that provide essential utilities cost substantial amounts of money, and are often only delivered through a committed investment in infrastructure over the long term. They are often delivered through a combined effort between government and the private sector, but there is no short cut. There is no way around spending the money, and works are often delivered over several years, not months. Large projects like the Gardens and Bayview do not happen overnight. They are years in the making and are built on a series of investment decisions over the long term.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

#### **SPEAKER'S STATEMENT** **Presentation of Address in Reply to Administrator**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Today, accompanied by honourable members, I attended upon His Honour the Administrator and there presented to him the Address in Reply to the speech His Honour delivered on the occasion of the opening of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly, and his honour had been pleased to make the following reply:

*Madam Speaker, thank you for your Address in Reply which you have presented to me*

*It will afford me pleasure to convey to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, through the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, the message of loyalty of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory of Australia to which the address gives expression.*

#### **PETITION** **Petition No 3 – Review of Seniors Concession Scheme**

**Ms AH KIT (Karama):** Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 615 petitioners, including 293 e-petitioners, praying that the Northern Territory Government launches an immediate and urgent review of the seniors concession scheme. 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.

*There are over 55 970 seniors residing in the Northern Territory, and the current population of 16 411 seniors over 65 years and over is set to more than double by 2041.*

*Before 2014, all Territory male residents over 65 years and Territory female residents over 60 years were eligible for the Seniors Concession Scheme. In the May 2014 Budget, eligibility restrictions for the scheme were announced without warning or consultation, meaning that concessions were restricted to holders of Pensioner Concession and Commonwealth Seniors Health Cards only. Effectively, there is no recognition or financial support for any Territory senior who does not meet the criteria of a Centrelink assessment.*

*YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY THAT*

*The Northern Territory Government launch an immediate and urgent review of the Seniors Concession Scheme.*

*AND YOUR PETITIONERS, AS IN DUTY BOUND, WILL EVER PRAY.*

#### **MOTION**

#### **Select Committee to Review Planning Decisions**

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I will pick up where I left off.

If we introduce any kind of uncertainty that would come with a wholesale review of government decisions around planning and water matters, it would be at the cost of business, and a cost to government to find a review sum. Our focus from here should be on strengthening strategic land use plans and continuing with the work of the Planning Commission to develop area plans and other land use planning documents, but, more than that, government needs to back these plans with real money. It must partner land use plans with infrastructure plans, and fund these plans over the longer term.

Businesses, particularly in the development sector, are crying out for certainty. As highlighted in the building a better Territory report, uncertainty is the Achilles heel of any organisation; it brings about risks but means more costs in terms of time and valuable resources. Let us get this right moving forward; let us continue to support the role of the Planning Commission, with real money to support development in the long term.

Problems associated with the planning process and the Planning minister have other mechanisms to be referred to. These include NTCAT or the Supreme Court, if there is an administrative error in introducing the legislation.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the motion. I listened to the minister's response and was encouraged by her comments in relation to opening up access to some of the reasons behind some of the planning decisions made by the previous government. That is what this is all about.

I recognise that the minister has probably one of the most difficult portfolios. After many years of being involved in planning, either in local government or in this job—it is a very complex job because of all the ideas and plans that come forward, as well as the difficulties government has in balancing the growth of the economy, protecting the environment and sticking to the rules of planning.

One of the big problems that has got us into trouble with planning is that ministers have refused to stick to the plans. Litchfield is a classic example. Darwin has its issues as well. There was a document, which can still be referred to, called the Litchfield land use planning objectives. It has been taken over by the subregional plan, put forward by the Planning Commission.

Once you have a plan, you basically know what areas can be developed for what. You do that by zoning parcels of land for various purposes. The Member for Goyder is highlighting that we need to look at the fact that in the last four years some atrocious planning decisions were made which were way outside the plan the CLP put into place in 2000. They then had the hide to say, 'The reason we are changing things is because of spot rezoning'. I can give you three examples of spot rezoning that should never have been approved, where land was already available within the plan for that type of development.

The Member for Goyder mentioned land at Humpty Doo, a classic example. It was rural land outside the district centre. There was land within the district centre marked for residential development, and there still is. The Development Consent Authority, when it heard the application, said no—one, it was outside the district centre; two, it had problems with drainage; three, it was not connected to any infrastructure.

The minister at the time overruled that. We had to go through freedom of information to find out what his reason was for overriding the Development Consent Authority's decision, which was that it would make a better choice and more affordable housing. It had nothing to do with the reasons the Development Consent Authority gave, which were drainage, being outside the district centre and not being connected to infrastructure. The minister did not even suggest alternatives to the DCA's reasons. He just gave out the standard answer for all development at that stage, which was that we needed more affordable housing and choice of housing. It was absolutely irrelevant to the reasons the DCA had given.

Another classic example is the development on the corner of the Arnhem and Stuart Highways. People would have seen it. There used to be a big sign up there for people standing for government in the

elections. That block of land was rural. It had some tourist development on it, but it was rural. It now has a development on it, which is fine; I am not blaming the company. It has an agricultural supplies development.

The plan says that kind of development should go in the Humpty Doo commercial area. There are at least two similar companies in that area already. Why did the minister approve spot rezoning of that sight when, if he stuck to the plan, it should have been where all the other people have gone in the commercial area of Humpty Doo? That is planning; that is what planning is about.

Another block of land on the other side of the Stuart Highway, near Sayer Road, was rural. It has now been approved as industrial. Where is the industrial land meant to go in the rural area? It is meant to go in the Humpty Doo district centre.

Why did governments not promote that as the proper place for industrial development? I know we have a shortage of industrial land, but why was rural land developed into industrial land? Three spot rezonings—ministers approved them outside of their own plan. They used the backward logic, ‘We needed to change the plan because of all the spot rezoning’. The spot rezoning was entirely in their hands, and it was done without telling developers there was land available and they should do it according to the plan. That is why we ended up with a debacle in planning, and that is why people get concerned about why these decisions were made. I take note of what the minister said. We would love to see all correspondence in relation to how the ministers came up with the answers that allowed spot rezoning.

The Member for Goyder made a couple of other mentions of classic cases of land that has been developed, one in the rural area and one in the city—Richardson Park. Some of you might remember that, thankfully, when the government was a bit on the nose—it was not sure if it had the balance of power—we were able to change the Public Accounts Committee to have two Independents, two CLP members and two Labor members. We were then able to move our own motions, and we moved to investigate Richardson Park.

No matter what you heard from people at the time, this is what the findings were—I will give you some of the findings on how Richardson Park was approved by the minister:

1. *The Government did not undertake any consultation with sporting bodies, residents or other interested groups or have any public discussions on upgrading Richardson Park before deciding to do so.*

Although the minister at the time claimed that it did:

2. *The Government did not ask for or receive any advice or analysis on upgrading Richardson Park from any of its Agencies.*

...

4. *The decision to fund a \$20 million upgrade of Richardson Park was approved by the Treasurer following discussion with ‘relevant ministers’ and did not appear to go to a Cabinet meeting.*

It goes on. It also mentions whether the code of conduct for ministers had been adhered to in making those decisions, which, I believe, shows that decisions made by previous ministers were not up to standard. The code of conduct, under number 7, Ethical Principles for Ministers, talks about integrity, honesty, diligence and transparency:

*Ministers must make their decisions and actions as open to scrutiny as is possible consistent with the conventions of responsible government.*

They have never been transparent. That is why I have had to apply for freedom of information a number of times to get basic information, which you would think a member of parliament could get, to see what correspondence a minister had with various parties and whether the decision-making process was accountable and transparent.

In many cases I have had to go through freedom of information, which is a pain. Not only do you have to pay for it—information which should at least be available to members of parliament—but large sections are crossed out if you are not careful. It is as if there is some secret squirrel business going on. This is what I think the Member for Goyder was getting at.

There is the classic example of the subdivision of a block of land in Howard Springs. For those who might not know, most of Howard Springs is zoned RL, which is five acres—minimum size, two hectares. There was a person, who was a member of the same party, who applied to cut his block of land in two. That is okay. You do that through the Development Consent Authority and you ask for a waiver. The Development Consent Authority knocked it back twice, for very good reasons, which it gave.

The then minister had some correspondence with the owner of the land. Unbeknownst to residents who had objected to the original applications, a matter went before the Development Consent Authority, which heard it on behalf of the minister. The minister was using section 85, which is rarely used in the planning process, and decided, because the DCA had knocked it back twice, to take over the decision-making process.

I stood in this parliament late one night and said to the minister—I know the minister and have nothing personal against him; he and I get on pretty well—‘You have a straight out conflict of interest. The person is in the same branch of the same party as you. You have to declare a conflict of interest if you are to make the decision.’ He was not happy with me, but, to his credit, he pulled the pin on it.

That is where it sat, but not too long after there was another advertisement in the paper asking to subdivide the block again, unbeknownst to us. We thought, ‘Oh well, another Development Consent Authority meeting’. No. Part way through the process I got a letter from the minister’s office saying, ‘This will be heard on behalf of the minister’, again using part of the act which is rarely used. It would possibly be used on something that was highly important, something strategically important for the Territory, but this was to cut a two hectare block in half, while all other people in the area did not have the right to do so.

What made it worse was that I wrote a letter of complaint and went to the media and said the minister should not be doing it; he had a conflict of interest as well—a member of the same party. We have a Development Consent Authority so decisions are made independently of the minister.

However, the Thursday before the Development Consent Authority had its hearing—the Development Consent Authority hears the application, passes all the hearing notes to the minister and the minister reads it all and makes a decision. What was so crook about this was that the minister sent me a letter the day before the Development Consent Authority heard the matter, saying he supported the subdivision of the land.

How can anyone say that was fair? How can anyone say that was proper? I do not know. It is a form of maladministration, where a minister can tell you the decision he will make before the body he is responsible for hears the application and reports back to him. In the end the minister approved that block being cut in half.

The Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Daly, and I sat with that minister late one night, at 11 pm, and said to him, ‘Do not do it. If you would like to do it then at least rezone a section of land in that area so all the people in the area have a chance to do the same thing. I am not saying it is ideal to rezone that land, but at least you will not look like you are giving a favour to one person.’ The minister rejected that, and that is where we are today. That is why I am concerned about the state we are in now.

I also have concerns about the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was set up by the CLP, and I honestly believe it was political at the time. I understand why it was done. I opposed the legislation because I believed there was a conflict of interest between the Chair of the EPA, who was on the Planning Commission, and the Chair of the Planning Commission, who was on the EPA board. I felt that should not happen if the two bodies were independent. I also objected to the Planning Commission because in its requirements it did not need to have one qualified person on the board, and when I say ‘qualified’, I mean someone who was a town planner under the association of town planners. The only person with those qualifications who has ever been on it was someone who was invited. There were five people invited. It was Graham Bailey, who did the original Darwin regional land use structure plans.

I do not want to get into an argument with the Planning Commission. We have had the debate about whether he is a planner or not. He is the boss of the Planning Commission. I accept that he has planning experience. I will not go down that path; I accept that as the case. I know he has a good background in this area, and I accept that.

However, I believe the Planning Commission had its own agenda and did not represent, by the way it was made up, the people who would be affected by the decisions it made. There is no representative on the Planning Commission from Litchfield, Palmerston or Darwin. The Planning Commission is simply a group of

people—as far as I know, they are all from Darwin—who make decisions after consultation. I have long been a critic of the lack of good consultation in the previous government's process for changing Litchfield.

I say to the Planning Commission and the minister that I feel there is a little fresh air going through the Planning Commission at the moment, because it is going back to the rural people and talking about their activity centres. It will be at the shopping centre for five days, not one four-hour day. It is also having two community meetings, next Tuesday and Wednesday, at 6 pm at the Howard reserve, and it is having a workshop, mainly for people whose land will be affected by this. Congratulations to the minister and the Planning Commission. That is how we should be doing this. I have heard they will be giving people options. Wow! Before you felt we were getting a fait accompli. Now at least there will be some real discussions.

There have been improvements, but the Planning Commission—and this was a change made by the previous minister—should not be the body which hears decisions about rezoning. They should go back to the Development Consent Authority, which has representatives from each council. The Planning Commission does not have representatives, yet it will be giving advice to the minister about rezoning changes, and no one on the Planning Commission is local. That is one of the negatives. But that decision was made by the previous minister. He made that decision at the last minute. He decided to change the role of the Planning Commission into a hearing body, which was wrong.

The Member for Daly has raised some important issues. One of the big issues we will need to look at in the future is water for the rural area. I am pleased that the minister recognises the importance of the rural area, not only in Darwin but also in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. People do love that lifestyle, and it is a legitimate lifestyle, but if it is to continue then we have issues that have to be looked at and worked through. One of the key issues in the Darwin area will definitely be water.

The minister also mentioned appeals. No government has ever been a supporter of third-party appeals in the rural area. If you live in a suburb in Alice Springs, Katherine or Darwin and there is a development decision you do not like, you have the opportunity for a third-party appeal. But if you live on a small block, the same size as there are in Palmerston near the top water tower on Lambrick Avenue, or in the Humpty Doo district centre, for instance, you cannot appeal because it does not apply to the rural area. People in the rural area should be on equal footing with everyone else and have those appeal rights.

**Ms FYLES:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I seek an extension of time for the Member for Nelson.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you, Attorney-General.

The issue of election donations is an important area that needs to be looked at. I have said time and again that we need to look at the whole election process with donations. People who were here in the last Assembly would know there was a motion on the Notice Paper to restrict donations from the alcohol, gambling, and tobacco industry, and land developers, similar to what happens in New South Wales. Unfortunately, as you know, in this process sometimes motions can hang around for half a year before they see the light of day. That is the process in this place, but we need to look at whether donations from land developers are appropriate.

The minister also talked about a review of the planning process, and I am interested in seeing what the government is looking at.

The minister spoke about openness and transparency. The whole issue of me, as a member of parliament, having to go through FOI to find out who contacted the minister about a development that got the minister all excited—it is hard to find out. That needs to be open and transparent to protect the minister and make sure the minister is not tempted to do something under cover, where no one will find out. 'I will make a decision and hope no one knows.'

If you have a system where correspondence in relation to—I am not saying it needs to include the dollar figures, but at least you know who made the first move to develop the area and what the correspondence was between the minister and the developer. If that is out in the open, there is less chance for these things to eventuate. If they do eventuate, the minister says, 'I have told you up front why I am doing it'. You might not accept it. I accept that being the minister for Planning is not always a pleasant job. You have to make some tough decisions, but at least you have the backing to say, 'I have been open and transparent; I have shown you the logic behind what I have done and the people I have spoken to, and that is why I made that decision.' The more open you are the better off you will be.

One of the reasons I support the matter before us, which the Member for Goyder has introduced, is that if you let it go too long, I have a feeling we will forget about it. I did not agree with the minister when she said, 'I am concerned that if we go down this path it could send a bad message to developers'. This is not about development; it is about an inquiry into how some of this development occurred.

These developments are ongoing. I do not have a problem with them. They have been approved and are developing, but this is not about that. There is no way I would say to stop the boat. We need to look at the processes, because this is the only opportunity, to some extent, for us to do that. When the previous government ran the show, it would not have helped in this area.

As the Treasurer said, when the Attorney-General was in opposition and asked about Nightcliff island—the Tinker Bell and Peter Pan-type response was probably reflective of much of the attitude to the way the government handled criticism about its approach to planning. Every time I was concerned about a development I was told I was anti-development. There was only black and white; you were either for or against them. You could not say, 'We would like some proper planning done in a way that would be open and sustainable, that would make sense and that has good reasoning behind it'. I was told time and time and again that I was anti-development. That gets pretty hard when you know that, believe it or not, the rural area has had many developments and subdivisions, and I would be pushing to tell you of one that I have not supported. A couple I did not support because I thought they needed some changes, and sometimes those changes occurred. Except for the Bandias subdivision in Bees Creek, which I thought was well below the minimum lot size—I have always supported rural lots in the rural area—I cannot tell you of any subdivisions I did not support.

Coolalinga—even though I get criticized for it sometimes—people say, 'Look at those flats', and I say, 'Yes, but that is exactly how it was planned'. It is a big village, but that is what it is meant to be, a business area with some support from a residential development behind it, which, in this case, is flats, duplexes and single dwellings. That is how it was designed and that is how I hope most of our villages are designed in the rural area. We have gotten away from it; we have a subregional plan which now has urban and peri-urban areas in it. I say to the minister, let us drop those peri-urban and urban areas, because they were not supported. Some of those areas were preordained by previous developers and automatically put into the subregional plan without any discussion with the local people.

Noonamah Ridge—I do not know where that is at the moment, and I do not know whether the minister can give us an indication of whether that is will be scrapped. From the point of view of locals—the survey shows that 95% of people do not want Noonamah Ridge. It is simply there because some landowner put a good case to the developer, the developer got his people to put a good case to the government, the government said, 'We will call this a special project', and it got a tick of approval, even though the majority of people said no.

The issue about the areas around the hospital—you would not understand how difficult it was for people in Wallaby Holtze Road to find out what was going to happen in their area. It was not until a notice of intent literally fell off the back of a truck that people in that area knew of the government's intention to develop that area. The main road was to be about 50 metres from back yards and the whole area was to be suburbs.

Anyone with a memory would remember the then Chief Minister and the then minister for Planning, Mr Chandler, stood in front of a television camera on the weekend before the Freds Pass Show—that is why I remember it so well—and showed a picture of all the land between the hospital and the prison—all suburb, with 9900 dwellings. There was no consultation and no one knew about it. It was then taken up by the Planning Commission and given the tick. Luckily we had a number of public meetings—organised by the local member, not the government—and eventually the government attended so we could say that was not the way we wanted the land developed. It was not about being against development.

These are the things we had to put up with. We had to fight, and, I admit, I am nearly worn out by going to meetings about planning in the rural area. We have had to fight, not because we are against planning or development, but because of the way it was done, and because they just walked over us and presumed we were Palmerston East; they call it Palmerston North. They were going to call the area around Holtze Palmerston East. There was no discussion with the local member or the local people.

That is what annoys us, and that is why it is important that the Member for Goyder has brought this forward. She and I understand the absolute frustration we have felt over the last four years, trying to convince the government to leave the rural area rural, build Weddell and if it wants to change things in the rural area, then do it under a plan that says the rural area will be a series of villages. We support the rural



area. The plan the government had was to suburbanise most of the rural area and leave the rest of us as museum pieces living on rural blocks. Unfortunately, that is where it was heading.

What the minister said today gives me confidence that things will change. The Planning Commission is doing good things, and I congratulate it on that, regardless of my criticism before. It is going down the right path. Let us hope the outcomes are good.

I support the motion that has been brought forward by the Member for Goyder.

**Mr MILLS (Blain):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Member for Goyder for bringing this important motion before the House.

I was in two minds about this motion and how we should proceed, but after hearing the response from government, I am quite clear now in my support of the motion. It is quite clear that the expectation of our community is that we deal with some very challenging matters so we can move on and build confidence in the systems we have.

We all know that the electorate expressed its concern about the way government was operating. The electorate passed judgement and, as a result, a new government was formed. The community made its decision in its reaction to the former government, which delivered a new government to deal with some of the underlying issues that have caused deep concern in the community.

Our task is to restore confidence in the systems and processes of government, as well as to deal with any underlying problems and make sure they are addressed. I expected that to be the very clear response from government, but it seemed to be more focused on attention to the procedural matters and, 'Stick with us; we will iron these wrinkles out and move on.' It is quite plain, hearing both members who have dealt at length with some of the underlying concerns behind what could be passed off as procedural matters—there may be questions that need to be addressed.

Where there is smoke there may be fire. We seem to be dealing with it in two ways. One is, 'Stick with us; we will deal with the procedural matters. There might have been some unusual decisions made by a Planning minister in the previous government. That has all changed now; we are just going to move on. We do not want to unsettle the business community, those who are developers.'

I think the community wants to be assured that things have been properly assessed, analysed and responded to. That requires some courage and conviction that if there is a question that must be answered and responded to, that question needs to be asked and followed through so we can resolve it. Otherwise we cover it up and move on.

The Member for Goyder did not bring this forward lightly. She brought this forward because every member in this House, particularly those in the Top End, knows there are some deep concerns about the activities of the previous government in regard to decisions made around planning. There may be nothing to it, but here is an opportunity for it to be properly assessed so we can move on. I commend the Member for Goyder for making such a motion available for us to respond to.

I expected to acknowledge what I just said, that there are two aspects of this—a reassessment of decisions made and making sure we get the procedures right and everyone is happy. If there are issues that need to be attended to, as the Member for Nelson quite rightly said, we need to understand some of the reasons for the unusual outcomes. I think the community needs that closure.

I expected a stronger and more explicit response from government, such as, 'If there are underlying issues, we have the ICAC', but it was very light. I think the community expects more than a faint reference. There needs to be a more explicit reference. I am not suggesting that there is corruption, but the question needs to be assessed maturely. I respect the sensitivity of government saying, 'There is political opportunity here, but I am a pragmatist', but there is also a moral obligation to clarify these matters so we can move on. There are many good Territorians who would expect us to take that bold step. I, for one, would support it.

I was not going to support the motion on the basis that I expected the response from government to be, 'We understand what you are saying. We understand there needs to be some stability and security going forward; however, if there are specific issues, they need to be properly addressed and they will have the full strength of the support of the inquiry from government.' We did not get that.

As a consequence, I do support the motion, unless I hear from government that it understands what is being said and will deal with those underlying problems, not to get someone, but to clarify and make sure people understand we are taking seriously matters that are of concern to a number of Territorians. As the Member for Nelson said, we need to understand the reasons for some of these decisions. It is not to be a kangaroo court, it is that there are questions that need to be answered. I do not think just moving on will be satisfactory. I hope that if a government member speaks they will be more explicit in their response so we can understand what our task is, which is to seriously restore confidence and move on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, if any further member of the government were to speak and satisfy me on that point and be more explicit about it, then I might change my mind. As it stands now, I will not be supporting the motion.

**Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the members who have spoken on this extremely important motion before us in the House today. Everyone who has spoken on this issue today has spoken with passion. It is an issue that was very prevalent in the last parliament. We could all name issues within our electorates ...

**Mr Wood:** I can remember you in this seat.

**Ms FYLES:** The good old days, hey? This motion before the House is important, and I will explain a little about what the government is doing to address these issues.

We were left with some very special messes to clean up by the previous government, none more so than planning. It really mucked up planning. Planning is an essential issue in our community; it is the heart of our community. I have spoken of our communities in the rural area, where I lived for a whopping four days in the 1990s. I am much more of a seaside person.

**Mr Wood:** The chooks have never recovered.

**Ms FYLES:** What I am getting at is that we all choose a unique lifestyle. Some of us want the rural space, with acreage to look after and to pick up palm fronds. Others prefer inner-city living. We need to make sure there is certainty in our planning system so people can have confidence in the area in which they live. It is an issue we have dealt with in my community. People want to buy a house and have confidence they are buying into a neighbourhood which will keep its amenity into the future.

Under the previous government we saw many decisions that were questioned by the community. The Member for Blain picked up on a point about the community's concern, which the Member for Nelson also acknowledged, and there was none of more concern than the Nightcliff island proposal. That a government could think it was appropriate to lease 98 hectares of a pristine harbour without any consultation with the community highlighted the way the previous government treated planning. When we raised that important issue in the House, it was laughed at, and we had the now infamous Tinker Bell and Peter Pan conversations. For anyone who was not in the House then, when we raised this issue the then Planning minister basically said, 'There is nothing to look at; there is no island there', even though there was a lease in place to explore the options.

We understand the concerns that have been raised in the House today, and we, on this side, share those concerns. I spoke in the last parliament about an ICAC, an independent commission against corruption, and I put a statement before the House so people could see our plans to address these issues. I am not saying there are issues of corruption—I should temper my words—but there are questions; we have heard them in the House today, and they have been asked time and time again.

In regard to dealing with planning issues, as well as having the strong plans which the Planning minister outlined, we will have an independent commission against corruption. There is no time frame on that; we are working as efficiently as we can to get it in place. We have been guided by the Martin report and we are putting those recommendations in place.

That is something the Northern Territory will have. Sadly, we need it going forward. There is a lot of community angst and there are many questions. We need the community to have confidence in our processes in this House and the decisions made—that there is no ulterior motive.

In regard to the specific issues within the motion, we feel that by putting an independent commission against corruption in place—and it will not have a time frame; it will be retrospective. We imagine it will be a bit like an onion in that you will peel one layer off and then find another layer. We will have the mechanisms

in place to allow for that. I assure those on the other side, especially the Member for Goyder, who brought this motion to the House, that we will have that in place and it will be able to go look at any questionable decision of government. If people have concerns, there will be powers to refer them. The minister spoke about the principles of the New South Wales ICAC report and how we will take those forward.

In regard to the select committee in the motion in the House today, we feel that other mechanisms, such as the ICAC being put in place and being more open and accountable around planning decisions going forward, will help address those.

I know the Member for Goyder cares deeply about her rural community, as do other members of the parliament who represent rural areas. Mr Deputy Speaker, you, in the Alice Springs community, represent a rural area. It is about amenity of lifestyle. Each one of us in this House represents electorates that are unique and people want to have confidence in planning decisions.

With the previous government we saw a lack of consultation and genuine planning, certainly around the lease in the community of Nightcliff. The Planning Commission provided a submission to the Planning minister on the development of Nightcliff island off the foreshore. It was interesting how it all came about. In estimates the Member for Barkly asked a question. It was something along the lines of special major projects. It was almost like a way to deviate from the planning process. We were concerned that the government chose to ignore the community when making decisions, and that is just one example.

The previous government was not open to discussing issues or to criticism. If anyone raised valid concerns, the ministers would almost write the organisation off. It was an interesting four years that we had under the previous government, particularly around planning. We did not have confidence in the government. That stemmed from the chaos right through the government—18 reshuffles, two-and-a-half Chief Ministers, eight Deputy Chief Ministers, and the list goes on.

One of the big issues in planning is certainty. We need to provide certainty around planning so people can choose an amenity of lifestyle with confidence, and so developers, and those willing to engage and be involved in the planning process through building, can have confidence in government decisions. A point the Deputy Chief Minister raised is that we feel the motion today may not provide that certainty and may restrict planning and development going forward. We want to encourage that, with the appropriate precautions, processes and community engagement in place. It is something this government, through the ICAC proposal and a stronger process of integrity and planning going forward, will deliver on.

Specific situations within electorates have been raised in the House today. The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics will provide briefings on specific concerns about decisions made under the former government. There were questionable decisions made within my electorate. The community engaged with the planning process, but the process did take place and came up with that decision. We have to respect that. However, going forward, we need the community to have confidence in that planning process, and that is something this government will achieve.

One of the issues the minister spoke about today was third-party appeals. It has been an area of concern with questionable decisions, and that is also something an independent commission against corruption can look at. We can feel comfortable going forward that there will be more process around planning and more accountability. In regard to decisions made in the past, the ICAC the government will be introducing legislation into the House next year for will have retrospective powers; it will be able to take the time to review decisions, which, I hope, Member for Goyder, will help you with this motion, knowing that thoroughness will take place.

In regard to the ICAC legislation, we will certainly consult widely with Territorians. We want to make sure their voices are heard in establishing an ICAC that they see as fit and proper. We need to restore trust and integrity into the government. During the previous Assembly we had a situation where this parliament passed a motion to look into political donations and then it was overturned. There were questionable decisions that affected the whole scope of government in regard to accountability.

I thank the Member for Goyder for bringing this motion before the House today. We, on this side of the House, agree with the intention of the motion. It is a well-intentioned motion, but we are concerned that there might be unintended consequences that will impact on investments and confidence. That does not mean we are ignoring the planning issues or what happened over the last four years; we want to put parameters in place going forward so people have confidence in planning decisions, the community can be involved in planning decisions, and we do not see members, as we saw in the previous government,

putting in FOI requests to try to find information. That is not how you do government; you consult with Territorians and listen to the community.

As we have all mentioned, none of us envy the minister's Planning portfolio, but it is an important portfolio that drives our communities. Good planning can impact lives and lifestyles for a long time. Bad decisions can impact the hearts of communities, and we need to make sure we are planning for what people want in their communities. If we want rural areas, we need to keep them rural. If people want to live in highly-designed suburbs with low maintenance gardens, we need to make sure that amenity of lifestyle is there into the future.

We believe that, through mechanisms in government with the ICAC and changes to the planning system, we will see changes that benefit Territorians. They will be involved in those processes. We will consult with Territorians so they can have confidence in the planning process.

I thank the Member for Goyder for bringing this motion before the House. We welcome opportunities to speak on planning issues, which will be brought to the community. We talked about a lot of issues during the period of the CLP government, and we will not be turning our backs on those decisions, but we need to strike a balance between providing confidence for development in our community while listening to the community and the people who live there. That is something we will strive to achieve.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me pleasure to speak to this motion to form a select committee to review planning decisions, brought forward by the member for Goyder. This motion is specifically worded to address the problems within the rural areas of the Top End. That is how I interpret it.

As the Member for Araluen, based in Alice Springs, although these issues are important and commonly debated in Alice Springs, I suspect we have not had the same degree of problems people in the Top End have experienced through questionable government planning processes.

I am a rural resident of Alice Springs. I have lived in the rural area of Alice Springs for about 16 years and, up until recently, as the Member for Araluen I represented a portion of the Alice Springs rural area. A lot of the work generated by the Araluen electorate office, up until recently, came from disgruntled, emotional, upset rural residents regarding planning issues, rezoning issues and people using their rural block for purposes that were not strictly legal or permitted. This used to take up a lot of my time.

Just before the last election, in August this year, I had up to a dozen cases from the rural area where groups of residents were feeling very unhappy with what was happening on adjacent blocks. This mostly involved people carrying out business on rural properties, and the associated business activity offending the adjacent neighbours.

This is a big issue in Alice Springs, but with a slightly different emphasis and bent. I raised this issue in parliament just before the election with the then Minister for Lands and Planning, David Tollner, regarding what the government could do about this problem to ensure people adhered to the zoning requirements of their properties. The response I received was reasonably sympathetic, but he gave no solutions as to how we should proceed.

In addressing this motion today, I do not have a strong feeling about whether or not this is a good thing, from my perspective as the Member for Araluen. It does not pertain to the experience of people in Alice Springs. I respect the fact the Member for Goyder has put this forward. I have been listening, for the last six years, to the planning problems and controversies in the Top End, specifically in the Darwin rural area, and I have a reasonable understanding of those challenges.

I respect this motion that has been brought forward for debate. Although I do not have a personal position on it, I would be prepared to support the motion. I am not particularly one to look back. You can waste a lot of time and energy doing post mortems and trying to work out what went wrong, but I heard the Member for Blain articulate very well the need to understand what has happened historically to resolve those issues in order to truly proceed into the future, uninhibited by the past. I understand that there is value in reflection, but I have also listened to the debate from the government members. They are concerned that this might stifle development, and that is a reasonable position to take.

For the purposes of the vote this evening, I will support the Member for Goyder to form a select committee to review planning decisions. I support development throughout the Northern Territory. Towns must grow and, inevitably, they tend to grow into the rural areas, which is a problem. It is met by fierce emotion.

Several years ago my husband and I heard about a development planned down the road from us. We erected a very big brick fence at the front of our property, which we felt was the only way to cope with the emotional threat of having 2000 residents living down the road and passing our property every day. In typical Alice Springs style, nothing eventuated. After many years of looking at the bare bricks we rendered our fence and painted it, and life went on as usual.

I support this motion. I thank the Member for Goyder. There is a very strong need to reform the planning system in the Northern Territory. I would like to see a review of the functions of the Development Consent Authority and the roles and powers of the planning bureaucrats. One thing that deeply disturbs me is that in Alice Springs neighbours are pitted against each other—people claiming that their adjoining neighbour is contravening the zoning requirements—and the responsibility is put back onto the people making the complaint to provide the evidence, record on a daily basis what is happening and report back to the DCA. The DCA and the planning authorities may or may not act on that.

I know of one family in the Alice Springs rural area that has been recording meticulously, for years, the comings and goings of the business operation that is illegally set up next door to them. They record people and trucks moving in and out, night and the day. It is excruciating and wrong. It should not happen. It needs to change. There needs to be a review, and if anything comes of this I would fully support that. I would support the minister for Infrastructure and Planning reviewing the planning system of the Northern Territory.

**Mr PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members who have spoken to this motion. The minister for Planning spoke and the Attorney-General, the Opposition Leader and the Members for Nelson, Blain and Araluen. I thank you for your the comments; they have been most useful.

The intention of this motion was never to overturn any decision that had been made validly and according to the laws of the land. I was attempting to look at what was used, who was spoken to, what papers were prepared, or not prepared, as the case may be, that allowed the Planning minister, particularly over the last couple of years, to make the decisions that were made. Part of that involves Development Consent Authority reports that went from the Development Consent Authority to the minister's office.

I take heart from the minister's comments that she and her government are very prepared to not only hear particular cases or issues of concern, but also to be open and transparent, which the last government was not.

I agree that the last government did not listen. Their ears may have been open but they were not listening very well. Their consultation process was clearly not good either.

It has never been my intention to impact on investment or create uncertainty. That is not what this is about. This was to try to ascertain what processes, procedures or protocols were used, or should have been used, to make the decisions the ministers made. As I mentioned in my speech, a past Planning minister received a report from the DCA saying, 'Do not approve this application', yet the minister ignored all the recommendations of the experts. By 'experts' I mean that it would have gone to water resources, Power and Water, schools and education planning.

What did that Planning minister have that he could overlook all the expert opinions and documentation that said, 'Do not do it', and do it? It still presents a problem to this day, and that was three years ago. I did overlook, Member for Nightcliff, the Nightcliff island saga. I also did not mention Kulaluk and what the residents of that community wanted to do, and the minister went contrary, surprisingly, to his what his electorate wanted to do.

I agree with the Opposition Leader about the lack of finesse in the past in all things planning. The Member for Blain said there are many questions we still do not have answers for; that was what the select committee was about. A select committee looks at a particular target. The terms of reference could be fine-tuned to reflect more of the concerns that have been raised by members, and perhaps to reflect some of the issues in Central Australia. This was about trying to unravel a lot of what was hidden, and, let us be honest, it was hidden because we never knew what the minister was thinking, what documentation he was using or who he was talking to.

We do need to rebuild the community's confidence in planning, and if this government has a path forward I will be more than pleased to receive information. I will seek briefings on various items, either myself or with some of my Independent colleagues. We have to rebuild confidence in the Development Consent Authority. I do not know if it was formalised, but I was not happy when the past Planning minister wanted to move the DCA to within the Planning Commission. Did it go through, Member for Nelson?

**Mr Wood:** Yes.

**Ms PURICK:** I do not think that was a good move, and that was probably a last minute, knee-jerk reaction by the past Planning minister which was completely lacking in transparency. Again, there was no consultation with anyone. If things come out of this motion, apart from government not supporting it—if the government can take it on board to look at the functions of the Development Consent Authority, and perhaps the planning scheme and the fact that people in rural areas do not have a right to third-party appeals whilst people in urban areas do—perhaps we could have the DCA reports to the minister, particularly on major rezoning or exceptional development permits; perhaps they could be made public in some shape or form, or be made public upon request.

I understand there could be commercial-in-confidence issues, but we can get all manner of reports out of the mines department about what goes on in mining projects—the mine management plans. The government is quite keen for those to become public documents, and I know what is in those documents; they are extensive. So why could something from the DCA not also be made a public document for those who are interested in how a minister makes his or her decisions.

I commend the motion to the House and I ask if all members could support the motion.

Motion not agreed to.

### **MOTION** **Note Statement – Jobs**

Continued from 26 October 2016.

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I thank every member who contributed to the debate we had during the last sittings, and I welcome the opportunity this sittings to talk to their contributions and wrap up the debate.

The government was elected with the key goals of investing in children, growing the economy and restoring trust. This government has moved rapidly to pursue our jobs agenda. We have reintroduced first home buyers stamp duty relief, which has resulted in a surge of first home owners in the market, and we have introduced a renovation grant. We have heard the Treasurer talk a lot about that.

I am very excited that more Territorians are choosing to buy and stay in the Territory. If you own a little piece of the Territory—this magic place—you are more likely to stay. It is fantastic to see that increase in first home buyers. Alice Springs is benefiting from that; it really suffered when that relief was taken away by the CLP, and we are seeing a return in Alice Springs. It is good across the Territory, but there was a massive impact on places outside Darwin and Palmerston, as they did not have as much access to new stock.

Yesterday the Treasurer announced our infrastructure priorities, designed to create and sustain jobs, a pipeline of work to build industry confidence and keep skills in the Territory. It was really important to get the timing of the projects coming through that pipeline right—a mixture of sizes and packages across the Territory—to make sure we keep people in work in the Territory.

We have fast-tracked the PET scanner, which was not on the works list at all. Despite both sides, federally, promising it, it was not actually on the works list, so that is sorted. You need a room to put the PET scanner in—job commenced.

The Royal Darwin Hospital car park—there was much aggravation and grievance about decisions made by the previous government, which we will now fix. We will get enough car parks in there, make them free and take the aggravation away.

Today we had the pleasure of announcing the Palmerston police station, as well as the early childhood works in Tennant Creek, which I thank my great-grandmother for starting in the 1950s—and the remote housing upgrades, just to name a few initiatives.

The Treasurer has touched upon this: stimulus projects that will also deliver a long-term return for Territorians are really important, not just to stimulate the economy but to make sure there is a return to the taxpayer so you are still getting that benefit. You have to be very careful about how you spend taxpayers' money, and we are doing that.

Since the last sittings I have also undertaken a critical international trade and investment mission. International trade and investment is key to a prosperous, growing and employed Northern Territory, and we are confident about the future of the Northern Territory. There are some challenging budget circumstances, which we were aware of before the election. We saw the CLP's budgets year after year and the worsening budget position caused by how it managed the budget. We have inherited that difficult set of numbers, and we are aware the economy is in challenging times, but the Territory has a bright future. I am confident about the future of the Northern Territory, especially after having come back from Korea, Japan and China.

I intend to report to the House today about the 10-day team NT mission to those three countries, from 27 October to 6 November. I will begin at the end, with a conversation about the NT-Rizhao economic summit we had in China, where we had close to 100 people from 75 Territory businesses, the Territory's largest trade delegation. All in that summit looked upon a map linking Darwin into China's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road. We are on the road. I use the word 'road' but it is almost a misnomer, as it has an historical significance. It is actually a trade superhighway. It links the great ports of China to Indonesia, Singapore, India, Africa and Europe as part of China's One Belt, One Road initiative. They definitely see the Developing the North agenda lining up with their One Belt, One Road agenda, and we have complementary national strategies. They see Darwin as the capital of northern Australia.

If we manage this right, what a future awaits the Northern Territory, not just in our time but for generations to come. Darwin is Asia's entry point to Australia, and Darwin is Australia's entry point to Asia. China, Japan and Korea believe this, as do we. They believe in the Developing the North philosophy, as do we.

Among the summit delegation were the Chief Executives of the Departments of Trade, Business and Innovation; Tourism and Culture; and Primary Industry and Resources. We were joined by 120 representatives from China, including 40 government officials. We took this seriously and so did they. All of these impressive people were very pleased we called in so soon after winning government. It sent a strong message that we were there two months after the change of government.

It was a statement from my government that this is where we put the trade relationship. It is not just that we are open for business, it is that we value them and our relationships. It is that we are here; we do not want to wait. We do not want to spin our wheels in party politics. We are serious about the future of the Northern Territory, confident in our place in our country and in the region, and we want them to be part of that. We are open for business.

The companies we deal with have big boardrooms and big budgets. They have investments all over the globe. We need them. We are now considering investment options to say, 'We know and like the Territory, and we know we can do business there'. We need that point of difference to the other investment opportunities they may be considering around the globe, and I believe we have that.

Our reception in the oceanside city of Rizhao was sincere, and they spared nothing to make us feel welcome. I quote an agribusiness representative. 'There was a warmth between Rizhao and the NT delegation. There was a real sense of, we're partners now. That this link was now really valued.'

This from a prominent Darwin builder, 'Just exceptional bloody will to grow our relationship. We were treated like kings, no ifs or buts about it. We were thinking, "How the hell are we going to top this when they come to Darwin?"'

I know the value and charm of Territory hospitality, and I have no doubt we can equal the welcome we received in Rizhao, but it is fair to say they took it very seriously. It was an impressive set up, and we will have to be at the top of our Territory game when they come here.

The Territory and our businesses need to make sure we are China-ready, because China wants to be here. The Territory can expect reciprocal delegations from as early as December, flowing from relationships made or affirmed on the summit floor. Many on either side, from education, primary industry, tourism, mining, construction and property, are already old friends.

The entirety of our trip was covered by local media. We were even given edit rights to a story in a Hong Kong newspaper. It is a great initiative, and I urge the local media to give it consideration. I have never had edit rights to a story before.

Shandong Vice-Governor Xia Geng and I had a memorable conversation about direct flights on my first evening in Rizhao. He said to me, 'We should be able to fly to Darwin. I should be able to fly to you and you

should be able to fly direct to me. Let's just do this.' We were in a room. His tourism CEO was there and my tourism CEO was there—sorry, Lauren, our tourism CEO was there—and they are now having direct conversations about how to make that happen. We are already in negotiations with the airlines. He was talking about the prospect of charters until we get that sorted, and we are having those conversations. Direct access is important. We are connected by sea; we now need to be connected by air.

His representatives are lobbying behind the scenes to make it happen, and we hope there could be good news in this space in the not-too-distant future. The best thing about this is that both sides are hungry for it. It is not only Darwin saying, 'We want this'. There are people, actively, at the other end, in China, at senior levels, saying, 'We want this too'.

I will long cherish the tour of Rizhao with our excellent guides, none other than Mr Liu Xingtai, the Rizhao Municipal Party Secretary, and Mr Qi Jiabin, the Vice Secretary and Acting Mayor of the Rizhao Municipal Government. It is a beautiful city of beaches and business. Some Territorians may not realise this, but Rizhao is very much a tourist town.

Also in Rizhao, we were honoured to meet with the Landbridge Group and its generous chairman, Mr Ye, who is a friend of the Territory and is very enthusiastic in his support for our growth and development. Landbridge was the successful bidder for the 99-year lease of the Port of Darwin. Earlier this year Landbridge added the largest port in Panama to its growing portfolio. We are now part of the company's strategic triangle of Rizhao, Panama and Darwin. I think you could say we are in good company there.

I was blown away by the Rizhao port. Landbridge is a very serious company when it comes to ports. I feel a responsibility, as Chief Minister and with the port deal having been done, to make sure I leverage the most out of this relationship I can in return to Territorians. I have a responsibility to make the most of this port deal. I will be a responsible Chief Minister.

Mr Ye is an unequivocal Territory barracker. He is also putting his priceless contacts book to work on our behalf to help extend our reach through China and to tap into new opportunities. Mr Ye and Landbridge are Territory partners. What benefits one benefits the other; it is quite simple. The more international business we do the more volume moves through the Darwin port, as we were repeatedly reminded. Scripted all over their signage was, 'We are looking for a win-win', an official message from the Chinese government.

Mr Ye and I announced during my visit that Landbridge would develop the Landbridge Industry and Logistics Park for port- and trade-related logistics activities, within the East Arm Logistics Precinct. The park will be located at a 34 hectare site along Berrimah Road, purchased by Landbridge from the Land Development Corporation. It will contain cold storage and warehouse facilities, and will help Landbridge drive more business through the port, which is good for everyone.

Since my return I have also caught up with Genesee and Wyoming, which has the railway. We spoke about this 34 hectare site as well. I think there are some very good synergies forming with all the people involved in our logistics.

We have Landbridge's new Industry and Logistics Park development, and its \$250m investment in a luxury hotel development at the Darwin waterfront. It shows what can come of strong relationships tendered correctly, and I pay tribute to the previous government for beginning this process with the Rizhao team. It is important for me to build on that investment. You have to keep building. It is a friendship that is now bigger than any one political party, and will continue to be so. I will not sacrifice this relationship to the fate of something done by the CLP. I feel a responsibility for the smooth continuum—the handing over of the baton to make sure we build on this relationship and make it Territory strong.

I have said before that the Territory's gift to Australia is our relationship with Asia. That has benefited from government to government and party to party. We have built on each other's work. We are not only a gateway for trade; we are also a gateway for friendship.

Our visit to Beijing was facilitated by Australia's exceptional Ambassador to China, Ms Jan Adams. I met and had lunch with officials from State Grid, including Executive Vice President Mr Yang Qing.

Like Landbridge, State Grid is a friend of the Territory. It has a 60% stake in the Jemena pipeline, yet this is merely a drop in the ocean for this remarkable organisation. State Grid is huge. To give some perspective, State Grid has 1.8 million employees. It is the second-largest company in the world. It has a USD\$50 trillion plan to power the entire world with renewable energy, solar on the equator and wind at the poles. It is quite



an endorsement for renewables, but perhaps that is a conversation for another day. It has briefed the United Nations on it. I think it was too big for the United Nations to handle. It is an extraordinary vision.

Mr Yang told me he wants to improve people-to-people ties—how we work together as nations. It is one thing for me, as Chief Minister, to meet him at that high level, but grass roots—we want to see people-to-people connections. State Grid asked, 'How can we connect at a people-to-people level? We see this as important', and we would all be aware of the recent decision on Ausgrid. They want to break down barriers between China and Australia.

I asked how many employees they have and they said 1.8 million. I asked what sports they were good at. They said badminton and ping pong. I said, 'There is every chance, with your 1.8 million employees, of getting a pretty good badminton side and ping pong team together, but we will give you a good show. I will back the Territory and we will have a crack. There's no doubt that the best way for you to get to know Australia and for Australians to get to know you is to come and play and sport with us. Come to the Arafura Games.' They were dead keen. They loved the idea. I will write to them formally to follow up on that, but it is important that we map—this is a conversation I have had with many in my team, and I know some on the cross benches are comfortable with this idea of mapping the Arafura Games to the connections we are forming, to Rizhao and the Shandong province, with INPEX and State Grid, with where we do business and where we have strong community connections from our very strong multicultural base. It will be great idea if State Grid comes, and I am sure it will have a very strong badminton team.

As the meeting warmed I was also given some advice from State Grid. Mr Yang said that if I wanted to be a brave man then I had to visit the Great Wall of China. I did not have time for tourism on my trip, but I said maybe on my next trip. The State Grid team was ready to drop everything and take me to the Great Wall and back. Apparently, if you want to be a brave man that is what you have to do.

I did say to them, via translators, that I had a condition. I said, 'In the Territory you are not a great man until you swim with the crocodiles, and we have the glass cage at Crocosaurus Cove. We have a deal; I will go to the Great Wall if you swim with the crocodiles.' They are keen to visit the Territory, and we will see what happens. I am unsure if they thought I was serious.

Representatives from the education sector also had extremely productive engagements in China. There are more than 650 000 international students in Australia, and, at this stage, 1500 of them are in the NT. This is something we can do well and can grow. We have competitive advantages when you look at our weather, proximity and culture. We offer a great product, and it is capable of growing. There are clearly opportunities in this space. Our world-class facilities and our proximity to Asia should rank us higher in international education. I am pleased to note the hard work happening on the ground in this area from government and the private sector.

VET outfit, BCA National Training Group, signed an MOU with Shangdong Foreign Languages Vocational College to get more students to Darwin for training—a bridging program to higher study, hopefully at Charles Darwin University. This could be a few dozen students from next year, which will be a great start, but possibly hundreds in years hence. It is about getting those relationships going.

Such meetings would be incredibly difficult to facilitate without the help of government. That is one of the benefits of going over as Chief Minister, the doors you open.

I announced the Study in Australia's Northern Territory scholarship program, which will increase awareness of the Territory as a quality study and research destination. The scholarships will contribute to students' first semester or year of tuition fees and are worth up to \$12 000.

Going into the election I talked about agriculture being one of the big five industries of the Northern Territory. I have had many conversations with my Primary Industry minister, Ken Vowles, about that. It is sustainable, it creates a lot of local labour and it has room to grow. I am very optimistic about the future of agribusiness in the Northern Territory. I am exceptionally excited about the Katherine and Douglas Daly regions. I have always been optimistic; it was part of our election promises going into the election, and something we always saw as a big thing. After speaking with people in Japan, Korea and China, it is clear—I almost had too small a scale of what I thought could be done there. They are very hungry for Territory food. My expectation has gone up a level in what I think we can deliver. We have to take our time to get the processes right, and they want to work with us in doing that. They want to make investments with us. For example, in Japan it is about being made with Japan—partnerships, win-win, very much like the China ethos. There are win-wins that can be had.

We had some very experienced people on this trip with us when it comes to agribusiness, and I thank them for coming. In Japan they want the Territory barramundi as a sashimi fish. They love the mighty Territory barra. Humpty Doo Barramundi has irons in the fire, and my government will continue to support it and others to scale up and turn opportunities into real deals and real money. There is great opportunity for investment into the supply chain and growth, and there could be room for more barra. What Humpty Doo Barramundi does is excellent; however, the quantities they want in China are mind-blowing, they want the scale of Sea Dragon; it is an incredible opportunity that we have.

In meetings with Mr Masakazu, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries in Tokyo, we heard that Japan also likes barra, but it also sees the Territory as fertile ground for soya beans and asparagus. The sticking point is infrastructure, which is an obstacle we can overcome. While Chinese investors are more comfortable with and prefer the concept of greenfield sites, starting from scratch and working from the ground up, Japanese investors are interested in seeing existing developments, scaling them up and working on brownfield areas. They like the idea of the logistics chain around the Katherine/Douglas Daly region.

The very first meeting with MAFF was an amazing affirmation of the policy setting we took into the last election about our commitment to boost infrastructure, that \$100m, and our commitment to having a long-term infrastructure plan and a summits process. They raised our infrastructure deficits and the lack of a plan they could see, touch and believe to address those deficits.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr GUNNER:** I was so excited I did not realise I had gone 20 minutes in. They have already done an analysis of our infrastructure deficit; they have been here, kicked our dirt and looked at what they think would be barriers to private sector investment. I said, 'Would you share?' They said, 'Of course!' They are happy to contribute privately, officer to officer, as part of our summits process to make sure we have a fully informed infrastructure plan going forward.

It was a very important meeting. They support and were excited by our summits process. They are very excited by our long-term infrastructure plan, and it works for them to help them address an investment in the Territory with confidence. We will soon see their research about what we need to do to unlock private sector investment from Japan. They are selling the Territory as a place to come to. They know the Territory is a place they want to come to. It is about removing those obstacles to investment. For example, the Japanese government is talking to private sector companies, so it is about proofing something up and realising it as a commercial opportunity. It is very exciting.

People are wild about Territory mangoes as well. I note my Primary Industry minister Ken Vowles' very noble and timely campaign to have the mango represented in emoji form—#mangoemojiplease. We will get the mango.

They love it in Korea. In Seoul, in a meeting with Mr Lee Inho, the Korean Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy, I gave an example from discussions in Japan about soya beans and how we will work with the Japanese government on soya beans. He said there are a few products they are interested in. He asked, 'What products do you have in mind? What do you think we could do there?'. I said 'What about mangoes?' He kept a straight face but one of his delegation nearly jumped off her chair in excitement at the idea of mangoes. They are a premium product in Korea. They love the Territory mango. We have a competitive advantage with our reputation for a clean and safe product. It is what the market wants, and Korea is very interested in our mangoes.

In regard to beef, the enthusiasm was encouraging. Distilled into a single line, the overwhelming question was, how do we get our hands on your cattle? For the Rizhao leg we had Ms Tracey Hayes from the NT Cattlemen's Association with us, and it was good to have her there. In 2014–15 the Darwin port was the busiest live export port in the world, and the demand is growing. The burgeoning Asian middle class wants Australia's clean and green beef, both boxed and live.

As an example of the sort of opportunities available to Territory beef growers, take a look at China's very special and brilliantly-marketed annual spendfest called Singles' Day, a kind of anti-Valentine's day of self-pampering. Revenue this year was close to \$24bn in a single day of trade. When you consider anything in

China, the numbers are mind-boggling. It was bigger than just about any other day of celebrated sales worldwide. Last year singles bought themselves 17 million steaks on Singles' Day.

In Rizhao, members of our delegation talked with Sino-Australia Top Beef, old friends of the Territory, about getting Territory product on the menu next year and for years after. How could you ever feel lonely with a fat Territory steak on your plate?

Japan and China respectively are the NT's first- and second-largest trading partners. In 2014–15 the two-way trade relationship with Japan was worth \$4.1bn. With China it was worth \$2.2bn. Korea is in the Territory's top 10 trading partners, with two-way trade worth \$302m, a figure that has more than doubled over the past 10 years. Without doubt, we can grow our relationship with Korea, and it is very interested in our food.

As with Japan and China, this starts with relationships. Like Japan and China, the Koreans were thrilled that we visited so early in the piece. I visited the southern port of Geoje, where INPEX and Shell Prelude offshore facilities are being constructed. It is an impressive place. The Prelude plant will be nearly half a kilometre long and will weigh about 600 000 tonnes. About 260 of those tonnes will be steel, about five times more than the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It will be the largest floating vessel ever. Once completed, both facilities will be located in the Browse Basin, west of Darwin, and will create new business opportunities in the Territory. Importantly, the Shell and Ichthys facilities will be serviced out of Darwin, as we make ourselves a world-class oil and gas offshore service centre.

I had an opportunity to talk to the operations staff there who are working on those boats, although they are not in operation yet, to make sure when they are in operation they know exactly what they are doing. I spoke with the operations staff about how we will service them out of Darwin. They were really productive meetings.

I also met with SK E&S and its impressive Executive Vice President, Harry Park, and Vice President Kyu Bong Lee about offshore opportunities. I came away from that meeting optimistic about a shared future in Darwin. Darwin is a critical emerging hub in the multimillion dollar oil and gas service and supply industry. I am determined to leverage for good effect the \$110m investment that has been made in the Darwin Marine Supply Base so these companies think of Darwin first when it comes to resupply logistics and maintenance support. More stuff will happen offshore, and we will make sure we are seen as the go-to place for servicing them.

While discussing Korea, I can also reveal exclusively today for members present and those on the web stream that I asked for the first ever run of stuffed Cheeky Dog toys to be made—very unique characters, and now an apparel line, designed by Tennant Creek's own Dion Beasley. I discussed this with the Tourism minister before, because it is part of something we have done with Tourism Australia on K-Pop legends 2PM. The Cheeky Dogs were presented to the K-Pop legends, 2PM, at Uluru as part of the group's world comeback tour. Apparently it is a very big outfit in Korea. I do not have a huge knowledge of K-Pop—maybe I am showing my age—but 2PM is a big deal in Korea, and you can check them out on YouTube.

They were presented with the first ever stuffed Cheeky Dog, which is fantastic. Cheeky Dog was strongly considering producing these animals. It was very good timing of a visit to be able to promote something to Korea as a kicking-off point. I thank Cheeky Dog for its cooperation in making sure we were able to work with Tourism Australia and Tourism NT on doing that with them.

More specifically about our visit to Japan, one of the Territory's oldest trading friends and our number one export destination, the first set of meetings in Tokyo was about repairing and restoring the relationship. There was no doubt as to their concern following the CLP coup on the then Chief Minister, Terry Mills, while he was in that country in 2013, attempting to forge relationships. That was not the wisest of moves during an international delegation. Meetings had to be cancelled and business ministers were left hanging. It was offensive to the Japanese and embarrassing to us. It is important we repair that relationship. Our visit represented continuity to the Japanese from the happier days of Labor Chief Ministers Clare Martin and Paul Henderson.

The Deputy Head of Mission to Japan, Ms Clare Walsh, and Australian Embassy staff—excellent all over Asia—hosted a memorable round table with us and some of Japan's biggest businesses. We were also fortunate enough to welcome Mr Naoki Kuroda, who is the former INPEX chairman and known to many in the Territory as the man who signed the Ichthys LNG deal with us all of those years ago. It was an excellent business lunch.

That day we signed two agreements with INPEX, with Kitamura-san and Ito-san. The first was the recognition of and recommitment to industry participation. INPEX has agreed to follow our buy local principles. Breaking it down, INPEX will give local Territory businesses the best crack possible at its predicted annual spend of about \$500m a year for the life of the project. This is a project that will go for decades. We often talk about the construction phase and neglect to mention that this project will be around for at least 40 years. It is something INPEX is aware of but not something we talk about enough in the Territory. A lot of focus has been on the construction phase, and INPEX made the decision to engineer its equipment for 40 years rather than 20. It is a very big commitment it has made to the Territory.

Last week we proudly announced—I thank the member for Port Darwin, Paul Kirby for being part of this—a three-year contract to deliver general facilities maintenance at the onshore processing facility. INPEX has awarded that to Darwin business, RAM Services. RAM is expected to put on another 10 staff, and more opportunities will be available for local subcontractors.

The second agreement—the optional development lease—allows INPEX to expand its Bladin Point footprint as market conditions change. This is an investment in the future of Darwin, making sure we can move at the right time, manner and pace.

Kitamura San is one of those wonderfully urbane, sophisticated and cultured gentlemen, and we shared a beautiful dinner with him in Tokyo. The importance of these relationships cannot be underestimated.

The Ichthys LNG Project is Japan's biggest ever investment outside of Japan. It has the backing, money and eyes of Japan's biggest businesses.

We travelled south to Osaka and met with Osaka Gas Chairman Yasuo Ryoki, who flew from Singapore for our meeting and then flew back again. We talked about his offshore developments off the Territory coast, which he calls his sleeping beauties. Osaka Gas is a receiving terminal for our gas. We were honoured with a tour of those facilities and the company's incredible innovations, namely one of the first cryogenic power stations—energy derived from the coldness of the gas.

The importance of this trade mission, conducted so quickly after coming to office, comes back to strengthening relationships and demonstrating to our hosts that we mean business. They are important signals to send. With investment comes jobs; with jobs comes population and a better economic future. Asia is clearly part of the Territory's future. Darwin is Australia's gateway to Asia, and vice versa. It was an excellent trip and I thank all the public servants and other staff who helped make it a reality. Thank you for the time you took to make it work.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Infrastructure**

**Ms MANISON (Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics):** Madam Speaker, I wish to update the Legislative Assembly on the importance of infrastructure projects to the Northern Territory, and the approach this government is taking in choosing what, where, when and how much we invest in infrastructure for the future development and growth of the Northern Territory.

Investing in infrastructure is essential to the Northern Territory economy. It underpins our capacity to create jobs, increase productivity and stimulate growth. Maintaining and expanding infrastructure is also vital, and it is one of the biggest challenges we face today. We do not have infinite resources, so our decisions on selecting, constructing and utilising infrastructure must be clear and efficient.

The Northern Territory's economy is unique. Our population is small and dispersed. Our size and remoteness present different challenges than any other state or territory has. Our human resources within our relatively large public sector, and our strong Defence sector, are matched with our rich reserves of natural resources.

Government is a big contributor to infrastructure investment within a small jurisdiction like this, and we will continue to be. As with any type of government expenditure, however, infrastructure prioritisation investment involves making trade-offs at times. Tough decisions have to be made to support what we want to achieve and what investments are critical and necessary to deliver the Northern Territory's short-, medium- and long-term objectives.

The challenge for government is planning, funding and delivering infrastructure for growth and change in a timely manner. Governments across the world invest in infrastructure to support outcomes for the community which align with their policy agenda. For example, governments build schools to educate the community, police stations to maintain law and order, and roads and bridges to connect people and support economic growth. The construction and maintenance of this infrastructure also supports the construction industry, helps to develop economies in remote communities and provides training for young and Indigenous Territorians.

Last week the International Monetary Fund, in its concluding statement following a mission to Australia, put forward the case for quality infrastructure spending to boost long-term growth potential, particularly as we transition from the mining boom.

At the recent annual Committee for Economic Development of Australia dinner the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia also talked of the merit of government infrastructure spending, especially when there is a strong business case to support the investment, support the economy and generate the productive assets a prosperous economy needs.

Infrastructure has never been more important to the Territory than it is today, as we try to clean up the mess left by the previous government's lack of planning and short-term thinking.

The previous Labor government identified, targeted and secured the \$34bn INPEX gas project. This was a once-in-a-generation opportunity which should have set up the Territory for decades to come, but the CLP blew it big time. This project drove growth at 15.8% in 2012–13; however, that growth has moderated over recent years to the point where it slowed to 2.7% in 2015–16 and is forecast to slow even farther to 1.5% in 2016–17. It is clear that the former CLP government dropped the ball. It failed to plan for the downturn which will so obviously come when the INPEX project moves from construction to the operational phase.

In the same period that INPEX was driving growth, we also saw the CLP sell many of our major assets, including the port and TIO. Despite that, the budget deficit jumped significantly to \$876m in the last year of the former government. That was up from \$78m in 2015–16. The budget is now expected to return to a balanced position in 2019–20.

The addition of net debt is set to increase from \$1.85bn to \$3.1bn over the forward years. The worsening fiscal position that the former CLP government left us with is evidenced by the recent downgrade by Moody's of the Territory's credit rating from Aa1 negative to Aa2 stable.

The deteriorated financial position has been exacerbated by the significant population drain we saw during the CLP's four years in government. It is clear that the CLP not only killed the golden goose by squandering the INPEX opportunity of a lifetime, it also sold the rest of the farm and still left Territorians with the challenges of deficit, debt and a slowing economy.

We have been elected to be a government that makes decisions to move the Territory forward. It will take financial discipline, strategic planning and decision-making, and targeted investment in infrastructure. That is why we have maintained the \$1.7bn infrastructure program, the former CLP government's belated attempt to try to fix the issues it created. We have made sure projects have continued to roll out the door. That is what governments should do when private infrastructure investment starts to slow.

There are around 1830 infrastructure projects currently under way in the Territory. We said we would get money flowing into the community, and that is exactly what we have done. In October, expenditure on infrastructure projects hit a record \$81m, which compares to \$64m in October 2015 and \$50m in October 2014.

As well as getting those projects out the door quickly to keep our economy moving, we have also been making some tough decisions. We have listened to the business community, understood its concerns and found ways to reprioritise the infrastructure program to get better bang for our buck, provide greater balance for industry and deliver what Territorians voted for.

Yesterday I announced a comprehensive package of changes to help us start steering the ship back on course after it was nearly run aground by the former government. It will take time to turn around, but we are now heading in a better direction.

The Labor government's new infrastructure and investment plan includes 37 new and fast-tracked programs to support and create local jobs across Territory industries. The strategic changes to the former

CLP government's capital works program will see projects worth \$120m brought forward, including a number of projects to commence this financial year and other projects delivered over five-plus years rather than the current four.

The overall \$1.7bn infrastructure spend for 2016–17 remains the same, but, importantly, key projects have been fast-tracked to stimulate different sectors of the slowing local economy and create more jobs. Business has been telling us what it needs and we have listened. These are tough decisions to make, but they are the right ones.

We have acted decisively to fast-track key projects across the Territory. This will support jobs now and into the medium and long term. This is a clear strategic infrastructure plan which will provide a better balance of government contracts across a greater range of industries.

This is in stark contrast to the former government's ad hoc thought bubble-inspired and lopsided works program, which focused heavily on some sectors to the detriment of others. This is also a plan which helps us start to roll out our election commitments for the people of the Northern Territory.

We have added, and brought forward, 37 significant construction projects, and some will start this financial year. Among them are:

- the Palmerston police station, \$15m from 2019–20 to 2017–18
- the Katherine police station, \$5m from 2020–21 to 2017–18
- the Royal Darwin Hospital multistorey carpark, \$12m from 2019–20 to 2017–18
- the new home for rugby league at Warren Park, \$25m from 2020–21 to 2017–18
- the new indoor netball stadium for Darwin, \$10m from 2018–19, being brought forward to 2016–17, with the design work proceeding
- the national iconic arts trails in East Arnhem, \$10m from 2020–21 to 2018–19
- Katherine art extensions, \$10m from 2020–21 to 2018–19
- Tennant Creek art gallery extensions, \$10m from 2020–21 to 2018–19
- tourism entrance statements, Tennant Creek, \$2m, up from \$1m, from 2018–19 to 2017–18
- very importantly, the Tennant Creek integrated school project targeting early childhood development, \$6.5m from 2018–19 to 2017–18
- work to replace the Don Dale detention centre from 2019–20 to 2017–18
- \$7m for the Alice Springs youth facility
- remote Indigenous housing, Room to Breathe, \$10m from 2017–18 to 2016–17 and \$5m for repairs and maintenance being brought forward from 2017–18 to 2016–17.

I am very proud to confirm that funding this financial year will begin to deliver the PET scanner and the largest ever housing package for remote Territorians. Both of these were key election commitments.

The reprioritisation meant that some projects had to be deferred, and these have been mostly in the roads program. Let me assure you, many more significant roads projects will soon be programmed through our successful bids to the Australian Government under the Developing the North and the Beef Roads funding. This is almost \$234m in Australian Government funding to continue upgrading and improving our road network in the Territory, including:

- \$25m for the Plenty Highway upgrade and seal to Harts Range in 2017–18 to further support tourism, mining and agricultural industries

- \$9.98m for the Docker River road upgrade and seal in 2017–18, which will give reliable, safe road access to allow current tourism development investment in the campground and potential mining development in the region
- \$39.53m for the Barneson Boulevard and Tiger Brennan Drive final duplication; this will complete the final stage of the Tiger Brennan Drive duplication project and will provide an opportunity to better manage the distribution of commuter traffic into and out of the Darwin CBD and cater for expected increased traffic demands along Tiger Brennan Drive
- \$80m for the Keep River Plains Road upgrade to enable the \$1.5bn prawn farm to be realised for Seafarms, creating around 1500 direct, sustainable, full-time jobs for northern Australia
- \$77.88m for the Adelaide River floodplains upgrade on the Arnhem Highway in 2017–18 to provide better Wet Season accessibility for the community, extractive industries, tourism, mining and Defence
- \$19.3m for a road train assembly area and a new heavy vehicle testing facility to achieve safety and productivity gains for the transport industry
- \$25m for strengthening and widening of the Tablelands Highway to improve safety and reduce the number of closures and road restrictions imposed on the road during the Wet Season
- \$12.5m for upgrades to the Barkly stock route, a high profile cattle route, to improve safety and reduce the number of closures during the Wet Season.

While some roads have been deferred, many more will be coming through the pipeline.

This reprioritisation process has also allowed the Territory to pop some of the previous government's thought bubbles. Projects like the two pedestrian skywalks, which were conceptual, underfunded and in national parks and have not been endorsed by traditional owners. The Watarrka and Nitmiluk skywalk concepts had not considered the engineering required to install suspended walkways in the respective geological conditions, and I have been advised that the budget allocated by the former government was insufficient by a factor of at least 100%. Those two projects alone have delivered \$20m of savings to Territory taxpayers.

Another example of an ill-conceived project is the Darwin Esplanade boardwalk. This would have required a considerable amount of further funding, beyond what was first forecast, and this has saved \$4.4m.

We have publicly released the details of the deferred projects as part of our commitment to Territorians to be open and accountable.

The next 12 to 18 months will be challenging for our economy and Territorians, simply because the former government failed us in many ways. The INPEX construction project is expected to transition to an operational phase in 2017, resulting in a wind-down of job numbers. This is the time when construction work will be most needed.

The Territory's construction industry, including steel manufacturers, has told us quite clearly that a pipeline of work needs to be in place for the next 12 months to support local jobs. The government has listened to those on the coal face, that is why we are fast-tracking these projects and we will get more projects out into the economy for 2017.

We have committed to getting the budget on a sustainable footing and returning to surplus by 2019–20. That is our commitment to Territorians. We will balance targeted investment in critical areas so our economy can grow and Territorians can prosper, while ensuring demand for important services can be met. It is not easy, but we will get the balance right.

It is 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 stimulus package; investing in our children with the \$124m commitment over four years to improve education outcomes through Territory schools; and the introduction of an independent commission against corruption.

We have already begun implementing our election commitments, and we are looking to increase components around the Buy Local plan to make it stronger and to see more local jobs supported.

This financial year more than 100 contracts have been awarded to local contractors, worth more than \$122m, with \$22m worth in the last two weeks of October alone. We want these numbers to continue to grow as a result of ramping up the buy local components of our tendering processes.

We have already introduced the incentive scheme for first home buyers. This includes the stamp duty discount of up to \$24 000 for eligible first home buyers, opening up the existing property market for people, with more than 80 applications approved as at 17 November 2016. We also have the \$10 000 home renovation package to encourage money to be spent supporting local business and as another incentive to encourage people to make the commitment to buy their slice of the Territory.

We are committed to listening to Territorians from all sectors to hear their views on job creation, innovation, population growth and growing our economy. That is why we are holding our very important regional and sectoral economic summits. The summits will deliver a Territory economic development framework that will drive economic and social development for the benefit of all Territorians. Targeted stakeholder consultations have already occurred, and industry-based forums are planned for the very near future.

A key consideration in the economic development framework is infrastructure and the vital role it plays in the Northern Territory economy. The Northern Territory Government proposes a new strategic approach to the planning, prioritisation and delivery of infrastructure through the development of two documents which will be informed by the summit process. The Northern Territory infrastructure strategy will outline the government's objectives for infrastructure delivery and the rationale behind government infrastructure prioritisation and investment. It will include detail on the sectors we target for infrastructure investment, and outline how the government will make those tough decisions on competing options going forward, as well as ways to engage private sector infrastructure delivery.

The Northern Territory 10-year infrastructure plan will detail the key sectors to target for infrastructure investment, along with the options available to best meet the future needs and capacity for private sector investment. It will provide a point-in-time snapshot of prospective Northern Territory infrastructure projects for the public and private sectors, and incorporate infrastructure initiatives across all industry sectors and across regional and remote Northern Territory.

In addition, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics will continue to work to deliver a Territory-wide logistics master plan. This detailed strategic planning means businesses will have a clear line of sight to future investment, tenders and contracts, and they can make appropriate plans for their workforce, creating stability, certainty and opportunities for growth.

We also recognise the importance of encouraging private investment in our economy to try to maintain the Northern Territory's ranking as seventh in the world for investment attractiveness.

This government will continue to pursue the development of the Darwin luxury hotel, injecting \$250m into the Territory and becoming a drawcard for high-end business and leisure visitors, making Darwin a more attractive option for lucrative business and conference markets. It is a project of the former government that we will continue. Construction is expected to begin in 2017 and projected to generate over 500 construction jobs, and many more once it opens in 2020.

We remain committed to cultivating a partnership with the private sector to develop a shiplift in the Port of Darwin. We expect an increase in demand for the shiplift to help service the vessels of the Defence forces, the Australian Border Force and the oil and gas industry, generating further future employment opportunities. This is another body of work of the former government which we will continue.

In addition, Seafarms' \$1.5bn aquaculture farm is expected to begin operating in 2018, and at full capacity it will have the ability to cultivate up to 100 000 tonnes of prawns each year. It is expected to create up to 1500 jobs in northern Australia, with many of them in the Territory and many being based remotely, increasing Indigenous employment and benefitting local economies.

We will continue to support the ongoing development of the offshore gas industry and the conventional onshore industry. This government looks forward to the development of the Northern Gas Pipeline. Jemena Northern Gas Pipeline Proprietary Limited has been selected to design, construct and operate the pipeline. It will run for 623 kilometres, connecting Tennant Creek to Mount Isa. This \$800m project will create over 900 jobs, with more than 60% to be filled by Territorians, and offer up to \$112m in contracts to local businesses. Modelling shows that in 2018, the eastern states will have issues with supply, and the pipeline is on track to open in 2018, providing the Northern Territory's gas producers with a new market.



In the medium and long term, there is much to be positive about, with spending in Defence set to ramp up. The 2016 Defence White Paper estimated that Commonwealth Defence spending in the Territory would be valued at around \$8bn over the next decade, and a further \$12.2bn between 2025–26 and 2035–36. These projects include the \$500m redevelopment of the Larrakeyah Barracks and the HMAS Coonawarra in Darwin, and the \$470m New Air Combat Capability Facilities Project at RAAF Base Tindal, near Katherine.

In conclusion, this government has continued to roll out infrastructure projects at record levels. We have reprioritised the infrastructure program to provide the best value for the Territory and to stimulate the economy in all sectors. This task is much harder than it should be due to some of the management issues of the previous government, but it is a job that this government is willing to take on with full vigor. This government's vision for the Northern Territory is for an efficient and resilient infrastructure network which links people to jobs and services, and businesses to markets, and, in the process, secures our economic future. This week we took another big step towards achieving that goal.

Madam Speaker, I move that the statement be noted.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, this ministerial statement on infrastructure is extraordinary in its audacity. On one hand the minister referred to the CLP's:

*... ad hoc thought bubble-inspired and lopsided works program, which focused heavily on some sectors to the detriment of others.*

On the other hand the minister tried to claim credit for the 1830 infrastructure projects currently on the go across the Territory. Not one of them was a new initiative from this government; not one of them is a result of new money generated by this government. Every last one of them is a project set in motion by the previous government. This minister has shamelessly tried to claim credit for the record infrastructure spend in October, a record infrastructure spend as a result of a record budget put in place by the Country Liberals.

The minister spoke about encouraging private investment but did not mention even one new project. Where is the imagination? Where is the vision? We heard about the Darwin luxury hotel project, a project that was conceived, marketed and facilitated by the Country Liberals.

We heard about the shiplift facility in the Darwin port, a project that was initiated and was being brokered under the Country Liberals. The Country Liberals committed \$100m to develop the shiplift facility. I will be very interested to hear the minister provide details on exactly what action the government has initiated with the Commonwealth government to facilitate the construction of the Darwin shiplift facility. Has it secured a commitment from the Commonwealth government to service its naval and border protection fleet in Darwin? Is this all spin and nonsense or has the government actually put its shoulder to the wheel to get this project off the ground?

The minister spoke about the Northern Gas Pipeline, another project conceived, marketed, facilitated and brought to life by the Country Liberals.

This statement contains no good news and it gives business no confidence. The minister's announcement of projects to be scrapped under their watch sent shudders through the business community. We are talking about significant land development in regional centres like Timber Creek, Mataranka and Ti Tree. We are talking about regional roads in the Roper, on the Tiwis, in the Arnhem region and in Central Australia. We are talking about real economic infrastructure, the kind of investment that builds on economic potential.

The projects the government has chosen to substitute them with are premature at best and expose the government's inexperience. There is no mention of a government business centre at Wadeye or a flood centre or school at Daly.

Let us look at the upgrade of Warren Park as an example. The government has flagged this spend for the next budget. It plans on getting the money out the door in the next financial year. They have to be kidding. Minister, do you have any finalised concepts you can begin producing construction drawings from? Probably not. Have you done any costings for the project? No. How can you when you have not even begun the construction design process. I know from my time as the Sports minister that the estimated cost for a rectangular facility of this standard at Marrara was more than \$43m.

Let us go back a step. Have you even consulted all the rugby league clubs and NRL NT about this proposal? I am not talking about the personal phone call informing them of a decision you have already

made, like what happened to the Chamber of Commerce and the Australian Hotels Association with the public holidays. Have you worked out the relevant issues beforehand to ensure this project can go ahead? Are the other clubs happy? Do you have a shared use agreement in place or are you just sinking \$25m into a private facility and hoping for the best? At present, the facility—the land et cetera—is all owned by a single private sporting club. This is supposed to be the Territory's premiere rugby league facility, and it should be available to all clubs on a shared basis.

The south Darwin sporting leagues recently wrote to their members. That letter states that in its announcement the government failed to address the new infrastructure and playing fields the south Darwin sporting league had as part of the deal arrangement. Perhaps the minister would like to tell us more about this deal arrangement. I am sure all the rugby league clubs around Darwin would like to get a better understanding of what has been promised.

In short, I do not think the government has done any due diligence on this project before stumping up this half-baked announcement. One thing I know for certain is that there is zero chance that, without these most basic issues being resolved, the government will be able to get any of the \$25m it has promised out the door in 2017–18 financial year. It is not possible; it is an announcement with no foundation. If the money does not get out the door it will have no positive impact on the economic stimulus.

Let us look at another half-baked project on the governments so called fast track, the Palmerston police station, a pet of my colleague, the Member for Spillet. In Labor's preselection costings they flagged this project to be half funded at \$15m in the 2019–20 financial year, with the remaining \$15m, plain as day—unless the government is planning on opening half a police station, this meant Palmerston would not get a new police station until sometime after the next Territory election. We called the Chief Minister on this, and, on the fly, he committed to bring that funding forward to ensure Palmerston would get its new police station sometime this term.

Out of the blue we had yesterday's announcement that the project will now be half funded in 2017–18. Again, minister, do you have a site identified for the police station? If so, where is it? Is the site serviced? Is it Crown land or private land? Is it vacant Crown land? How and when will you provide services to the parcel and how much will it cost? When will the second half of the police station be funded? Is that commitment still waiting for the 2020–21 budget? Do you have construction drawings for the police station, or even a finalised concept? I suspect that the minister has no answers to any of these questions, which means there is zero chance of this funding commitment going out the door next year.

The same will be true of the Katherine police station and the multistorey carpark. These promises are not real, and the industry knows it. This is a haphazard approach to setting in place an infrastructure program, and it prejudices the whole Budget Cabinet process.

I would be really interested to see how this will actually work. I can see it already, ministers putting forward well-thought-out budget proposals, shovel ready, and the Treasurer will be sitting there with her arms crossed saying, 'Sorry, we have spent all that money already'.

I am interested to hear from the backbench on the other side, because I know you are getting pressure from the electorates on this issue. You need to make yourselves heard; you need to get your voice in the Cabinet. This is the party that went to the election priding itself on consultation, openness, transparency and trust. Here we are, under the first bit of real pressure, and it opts for an ill-thought-out, chaotic reorganisation of the whole infrastructure program with no consultation, no economic summit and no well-thought-out plans.

The minister mentioned two initiatives worth commending. These are the Northern Territory infrastructure strategy and the 10-year infrastructure plan. This is a sensible approach, in principle. Businesses are looking for certainty. They need to be able to plan for the future, and it helps if a real pipeline of work is put in place over the medium to long term. This is sound thinking and I have no problem with it.

As with the Sport and Active Recreation Master Plan, let us see what comes out in the wash, because already we can see there is a gulf between what this government says and what it does. I hope the government regroup, does not get spooked by its backbench, which is obviously putting it under a lot of pressure, and gets it right.

**Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources):** Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to contribute to this ministerial statement on infrastructure. It would be remiss of me not to respond to that effort to inspire people and tell his new master, Shane Stone, that he will be stronger and he has a plan.

Let us break it down. We have a plan; we have put out our plan. We will be judged on what we deliver from that plan, just as the former government was judged on 27 August. We have been given government by the people and we are held accountable. We have said many times that whatever we say we will do, we will do. We will be judged on what we deliver.

We all know, in this Chamber and outside it, that the economy is buggered. We need a stimulus. We need to fast-track some of our commitments so families do not leave—they do not go for a Christmas holiday and not come back because they have found jobs somewhere else or decided the cost of living in the Territory is so high and there is not much work around and not much stability.

We saw that over the last four years. You were judged on 27 August. We have a plan. The minister for Infrastructure and Treasurer has introduced a package for infrastructure, and I think it is a great story so far, but we will be judged on what we deliver.

I went back to my cricket days—I thought I had better not have a crack at the Member for Daly for having a go at us about lack of consultation. I have to draw the line somewhere. Having a crack at us about due diligence and lack of consultation 87 days into government—I will leave it there. Territorians have spoken.

I am very thankful to stand here as a minister of the Crown for Primary Industry and Resources, which includes fisheries and mines and energy—a different title but the same job with the same commitments and responsibilities. It is our responsibility to manage the economy. That is something we will be judged on. We knew we had to tell Territorians that we will manage the economy and do good job, and make tough decisions when we need to. That is what we are doing.

Over the years the media, governments and oppositions have done a great job. 'The Liberals save the money and the Labor Party comes in and spends it all.' We have a responsibility to the people and the economy of the Northern Territory. We got into government, and we need to do a good job. We make tough decisions in government, but let us bring people along for the journey. We are saying, 'This is our plan and we will be judged on it'. It is as simple as that.

In my portfolios I have two major election commitments—the \$4.1m export yards, which I spoke about today in Question Time. It was a fantastic announcement. There is a significant difference between the Wet Season and the Dry Season. You can only hold 2000 cattle and buffalo in the Wet Season in that facility, and putting in a roof will give 10 extra new export yards. Once it is finished will have the capability to have 4000 to 5000 cattle going through at any one time. That means more jobs and keeping people in the Territory.

We always speak about the Berrimah livestock export yards, but we are speaking about the people who drive the trucks, the people put the new tyres on them and service the trucks, people employed in the offices. We are speaking about a billion dollar industry across northern Australia, and with this \$4.1m for the export yards, it makes us the headquarters. We already are the headquarters of live exports out of the port. I think a few years ago we had the busiest export port in the world. We are still very close, but this \$4.1m commitment we have fast-tracked out the door will make us the headquarters of north Australia. It will give everybody an opportunity to grow the industry in a sustainable way where we have a premium product.

We have a lot of issues coming out of Indonesia around getting buffalo beef out of other countries and things like that, but the Northern Territory and northern Australia have a premium product. As the minister I need to do everything I can to entice, encourage and grow that industry, as I do in the portfolio of farming. Farming is very important in the rural area, as Madam Speaker knows, and what that means for jobs and keeping families in the Territory.

Everyone knows the economy is struggling. I was in opposition for four years, and it gave me a great opportunity to learn what it is to be a member of parliament. It gave me a lack of scrutiny by media and others—you just meet everybody, talk to people and establish great relationships, where people are comfortable to tell you what they think. It is very interesting that, being in government now and being a minister, people who were bagging out government are now bagging me out, but that is all right; it is part of the job. Sometimes people just do not like people in government. Being in opposition gave me a great opportunity to learn my trade and to speak to people.

Many businesspeople spoke to me about the economy. Sadly, if you did not know the former Chief Minister you never got a contract. There were people who got contracts, but it really had a significant impact on local business and business in the Northern Territory. If you did not have a relationship with the former

Chief Minister, if you did not know him and he did not think you were a good bloke, you never got a contract. We need a process to be open and accountable. If you apply for a tender and you are the best company for it you should win the tender; it is as simple as that. That is something I and many of my colleagues heard. I acknowledge all the new members here as well, and I am in sure in their time before being a candidate and while being a candidate they heard the same things—that it was a bit of a closed shop. Some businesses really thrived and others nearly collapsed. I think some did.

We want to be an open and transparent government. We keep saying that, but we need to prove to Territorians that we will be. We will be judged on that.

In all the conversations we had with businesses they kept saying, 'You have to get money out'. That is what we are doing. We are getting money out to stimulate the economy and look after small and medium businesses, and some big businesses, to keep people employed and create new jobs. The Buy Local campaign—to encourage Territorians to stay here. We all know that over the Christmas period some jobs go quiet, but if we are stimulating the economy now, getting money out the door, and projects, people will keep their jobs. People will get money over Christmas and buy their children or husbands nice presents. A nice present would be great, Danielle. People are keeping others employed by shopping and keeping the economy going.

I need to talk about the former CLP government. Where do I start? This gives me a great opportunity. The former CLP government—no consultation, often did not stick to proper process, many preferred tenders. One of the first questions we asked in every estimates process was who had been given preferred tenders, who did not go through the process. I understand that happens sometimes because there might only be some companies in the Territory that are capable of doing a particular job.

Big business is important to the Territory, and so are medium and small businesses. We need to keep the money flowing from government into construction and infrastructure. The flow-down effects are felt by everybody.

We have a buy local campaign. We are really focused on this campaign, because many contracts of the CLP government were given to interstate firms which may have had a small Territory presence. It was important for the Michael Gunner government, and as a Labor Party hoping to win the election, that we developed a buy local policy that looked after locals and gave them a foot in the door to win jobs.

Often at the Rapid Creek markets on Sundays contractors said to me, 'We can't get in the door here. People are getting the contracts and bringing 5, 6, 10, 15 people in from down south. They are getting an NT licence and there are 10 people living in a house with interstate number plates, and no one is from here. They are being classed as local people working in the industry, which is not correct or fair.'

We developed a buy local campaign. For those listening and wanting to know a bit more, there is a minimum weighting of 30% for all contracts. Our Buy Local policy will ensure local content and commitments are included in the tender. Responses are then carried through to contract terms and are monitored throughout the contract.

However, there is no point in having a buy local policy if there are no projects for local companies to bid on. There is also no point in putting construction projects out there just for the sake of it. Projects need to be properly planned, prioritised and delivered. For this reason I commend my colleague, the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, for her commitment to the Northern Territory infrastructure strategy and the Northern Territory infrastructure plan. To stimulate the economy we are fast-tracking projects that are both needed and ready to start.

An example of this in my portfolios, as I have mentioned, is the \$4.1m to the Territory Livestock Export Association to upgrade the Berrimah export yards. I announced that last Friday. It will ensure best-practice standards for livestock handling and the construction of two significant shed structures—186 metres long and 46 metres wide—10 new yards and associated feed and water troughs under the two roofed areas. As I said in Question Time, there will be a massive roof over the whole structure. We were there on Friday, and after they loaded up 16 head of cattle and buffalo there was a massive storm. The covered area was good but all of the uncovered area was about 10 to 15 centimetres under water. The TV crew and media thought it would be a great idea if I got in there and they took some footage. I am still cleaning my boots.

The facility will hold 4000 cattle and will address concerns around mud and shade. The upgrade will enable the facility to be fully utilised throughout the year. The current situation is that things have to be scaled back significantly in the West Season. This is a key election commitment. These upgrades will generate jobs for

the building industry, from engineers to steel workers, and provide an important economic stimulus in the process. The facility upgrades will boost animal welfare and support sustainable development of the live export trade while allowing cattle to be processed all year round.

Cattle production is the largest primary industry sector in the Territory, contributing \$360m annually to the Territory economy. With add-ons such as road transport, loading and handling, it is estimated that this is a \$1bn industry in north Australia, and Darwin is the capital and headquarters of north Australia. The facility will be state of the art, raising pre-export standards, showing our trade partners that the Territory produces premium product.

In December I will be heading over to Indonesia to meet the relevant stakeholders in the live export trade. I will also be having meetings about the Arafura Games on behalf of the minister for sport, Minister Moss, and about Asian engagement, on behalf of the Chief Minister. This is part of our Asian engagement strategy. I will be in Indonesia and able to meet Arafura stakeholders about bringing the Arafura Games back. That is an important part of our ...

**Ms Fyles:** Are you going to compete, Kenny?

**Mr VOWLES:** No, I am not going to compete. My competing days are over; I couldn't see a beach ball at the moment.

Another series of projects in my portfolio that I am very excited about is the \$50m for recreational fishing infrastructure. There are a lot of very happy fisherpeople because of this. As part of the stimulus package, in 2016–17, contrary to the Opposition Leader's comments that nothing is out the door, we are bringing forward \$6m this year and another \$5m next year to get the projects rolling out the door.

With extensive consultation, which a number of members and I had in opposition in the lead-up to the election—we have our initial priorities list and we are installing new security cameras at Dinah Beach as well as a new toilet block. We will upgrade the car park at Middle Arm boat ramp. We are commencing the Channel Island boat ramp upgrade and conducting a study to identify land-based fishing platform opportunities, which I know the Member for Spillett will support. That is a great initiative, allowing more people to have the opportunity to fish, with more of our youth and children being encouraged to participate.

We will also conduct a study on artificial reefs and fish aggregating devices in NT waters to enhance productivity and fishing opportunities, and commence planning for the design and construction of resultant artificial reefs and aggregation devices. We are talking about something we put in the water so fish come to eat there, and then people can fish and hopefully catch something.

Further consultation with industry and key stakeholders will occur in order to identify strategic priorities for the balance of the funding. We need to help Territory businesses and families that are doing it tough. These are just two of the projects in my portfolio that will stimulate work for local businesses and contractors, and assist key industry and provide jobs for all Territorians.

It has been a privilege to contribute to this ministerial statement from the minister for Infrastructure. I look forward to advancing these fast-tracked election commitments in my portfolio. I look forward to updating the Chamber and Territorians every step of the way on this fast-tracking of infrastructure and the package we need to stimulate the economy because of the train wreck that was left to us. We will get on and do the job. We will get money out the door. We will make things happen. We are confident this will be planned and achieved. I have full faith that the Michael Gunner-led government will be good to go on this.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I suppose there are some advantages to having been around parliament for a long time. Every time there is a new government, the previous government gets bagged and the new government has sparks in its eyes and the world is all beautiful. To some extent, we have to keep our feet in reality. I can read through all the political argy bargy in here.

The reality is that the Leader of the Opposition is correct in the sense that 1830 infrastructure projects are currently under way, and if you get on the webpage you will see that most of those contracts were brought in by the previous government. I am not saying that is good or bad, just that there are times where you get rid of all the political you-know-what—under building, quotations and tenders online, it says, 'Nhulunbuy – provision of responsive repairs and maintenance works to Department of Housing; Royal Darwin Hospital – provision of steam, compressed power and water drains and associated works; Alice Springs – Arunga Park, replace existing race power; Darwin region – Batchelor Area school canteen upgrade, Darwin High

School – new shade over the basketball court; Darwin region – Nightcliff Middle School, external painting of all buildings.’

There are infrastructure programs occurring all the time. They might be minor and they may not have been put there by this government, but it is a silly government that does not recognise that it is taking over an economy that has a large number of contracts turning over. You would be silly to cut those back because, regardless of what government is in, they are essential contracts to not only keep the economy going but to keep government facilities in good order.

It needs to be recognised that because you have taken over from a previous government you have taken over various infrastructure programs. The classic is what I call the Holtze hospital; that is its correct title. The contract for the Palmerston Regional Hospital was put out by the previous government. It is no good always carrying on about the politics of that side said this and that side said that; it is the reality.

We really need to look at what this government is doing looking forward. Do not look back to much. I can look back and say I spoke in this parliament a number of times about the state of the economy. I spoke about the steel companies and said 20 steel suppliers had a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and said they were going broke because people were not buying steel from local suppliers. Did I hear any fuss from anyone about where the steel came from for Gateway? That steel came from China. Where did the steel come from for the Jape expansion? It came from China. There are many issues in relation to keeping our local suppliers solvent. To some extent they go beyond government, because they were private contracts.

I would like the government to look at what is happening with business at the moment. I am getting feedback that many of our small businesses are being squeezed by big businesses, and big businesses are not paying the small businesses in time. If you are a supplier and need to pay your bills in 30 days, and the big suppliers are paying in 60 days—some of those small companies are struggling to stay alive.

We might be looking at a broader picture of infrastructure, but there are some smaller matters that can mean the life or death of some of these companies. The government needs to investigate and talk to small businesses to find out if they are being paid in a reasonable time so their risk of staying solvent is reduced.

Getting back to what the government has put forward in its infrastructure statement today, it said, ‘Let us bolster the economy by bringing forward a range of projects’. Some projects are on the list for this year, and a range of projects are being brought forward. That is fine, but the Leader of the Opposition raised a good point. Even if those projects are on the list now, it will take some time before you can do design work, and you cannot put out a contract unless people know what the design will look like.

I ask the minister to give us some more detail on some of the issues it has brought forward. I understand that the Katherine police station is coming on, but, looking at something a little closer to home—the Palmerston police station. I know that was discussed today, but, without getting parochial, the Palmerston police station does not just serve within the boundaries of Palmerston. It serves a good section of my electorate, so I do not regard it as being a police station purely for people who have a Palmerston ID. I saw the police outside our bakery at 6.30 am. I have not found out why they were there. There were about four carloads and a whole bunch of people waiting to do something. I was too scared to ask them what they were there for. They would have come from Palmerston, but they do not just serve Palmerston.

Where would you put the police station. I have my preferences. I think hospitals and police stations should be on major highways for quick access from both directions. If you have picked a site then you will need basic headworks and infrastructure, and you need a design. That has not occurred yet.

The Royal Darwin Hospital multistorey car park—a figure of \$12m has been given. Where did that figure come from and what sort of design are you looking at? I have spoken about this before. The idea of a multistorey car park is not just a Labor Party thought. It have raised it here because we had car parking problems long before Wilson car parking came into being. You could not get a car park at the Darwin hospital. You had to go past the helicopter landing area. It was an issue long before the Wilson car parking debacle occurred.

Here is an opportunity to use that building as a commercial premises. Westmead Hospital, in Sydney, has a food court and places for professionals to work. You should try to turn your car park into something that can produce an income to help pay for the cost of it. It would be good to see consultation and discussion around ways of making a plain, old, boring car park into something that could add something to the Royal Darwin Hospital precinct.

That precinct is a suburb within itself. There are many people working and living there. It has the hospice, the Menzies School of Health and the Cowdy Ward. It has a lot of facilities. It is a fair way from Casuarina shopping centre. The closest shopping centre is the Tiwi shopping centre, which is pretty small. To some extent it is a suburb in itself. Here is an opportunity to use a multistorey building for other things, not just car parking.

Remote housing repairs and maintenance—I am not sure where that money will go. The government is basically saying it will take \$5m from next year's budget of \$20m and move it into this year. We would have to know which areas will get the \$5m.

The minister for Primary Industry was speaking about local people getting employment. I have raised the issue with the minister for lands and planning. I have a letter here from a local company that has worked on the Tiwi Islands for a considerable length of time, especially Milikapiti. It has operated in the Territory for 20 years and has just lost its contract.

The minister said local content was 30%; I do not have that here. They have tender weightings: past performance 10%, timeliness 10%, capacity 10%, local content 20% and price 40%. They have just lost a contract, 'We have worked in many communities and outstations in East Arnhem shire and since 2013 we have been carrying on our work mainly in the Tiwi Islands. We have a memorandum of understanding with Tiwi Enterprises, for which we maintain an accommodation facility at their premises at Milikapiti Farm. We ensure we utilise Tiwi Enterprises labour hire services as well as procuring all of our accommodation, fuel, plant hire, cleaning and subcontracting requirements including landscaping and any other scopes the organisation has the capacity to fill.

'We completed the upgrade of 82 houses at Milikapiti in 2013, administered through the NPARIH scheme, we also upgraded the Milikapiti store, designed and constructed a three bedroom house, and completed the new police facility in the same year. Last year we designed and constructed two by two bedroom staff houses at Tiwi Enterprises at Wurrumiyanga.

'We have employed and trained over 20 local Indigenous workers at Milikapiti and Wurrumiyanga. This year we signed on two apprentices, one Indigenous. All of our money is reinvested, we have no interstate properties.'

They lost the tender. I think the tender process needs to be looked at. If we are going to employ locals and we want to keep families in the Territory, we want to keep people who work with Indigenous people. They put in a price for five three-bedroom dwellings at Wurrumiyanga.

*The original tender close was 5 October 2016 at 2pm. We received an addendum, number two, at 1pm 5 October 2016 advising that tender close was to be extended to 7 October. The e-mail notification was received after our tender had been submitted. We submitted another tender ...*

And they were unsuccessful. They also put in tender for upgrades of 49 houses at Wurrumiyanga, 'The original tender close was 19 October 2016 at 2 pm. We received an addendum, number one, at 10.40 am on 19 October advising there was a new schedule of rates and the tender close had been extended to 21 October.'

That is not the way to do business. I can see why these people are devastated. They will possibly be putting off staff now. They have worked for a long time in the Territory. I have asked the minister to find out why those tenders were changed at the last minute. Surely tenders, which people put a lot of money and effort into, should not be changed at the last minute. I am unsure, sometimes, about the tender system.

I may be speaking out of turn here. I will give you a rough idea—a person who spoke to me yesterday who put in a tender. It was cheaper, but everything else was the same. One person got it because they will be faster putting the job together. Where does faster come in if you fit within the guidelines of when it has to be finished? That sounded peculiar, and in the end the job was done no quicker than anyone else would have done it.

When we are talking about local jobs and infrastructure, we need to ensure our tender processes are transparent and have an emphasis on supporting local contractors. With contracts in Canada you get a weighting on whether you are Canadian, whether you come from the province or the Territory, or whether you come from the town. They weight those accordingly so people in the town have a better chance of getting it than someone from a long way off. If we are going to bring forward that remote housing repairs

and maintenance, I hope we do it in a way that makes sure contractors with a good track record are taken into account.

I am a supporter of rugby league being moved to Warren Park. There was a lot of discussion, and there was a meeting in this building on a Sunday night, which is probably one of the strangest meetings I have been to. How do you get the Litchfield Room full of people in Darwin on a Sunday night?

**A member:** Free grog.

**Mr WOOD:** Fortunately, people in Darwin sometimes see something as being more important than grog; they see a government conning people about spending good taxpayers' money in the wrong place. In that meeting just about everyone said it should not go to Richardson Park but to Warren Park.

Government, do not rush into this blindly. I always believed you would put in a rectangular park. There is rugby union right next door, and it already has some facilities, in the form of grandstands. The rugby union field is exactly the same and presently houses the rugby league grand finals. Rugby union has a terrible set of offices; they are old demountables, long past their time. Why are we not looking at a combination so we make the best out of what is there at present?

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about \$25m and \$43m, but I do know the original plans. I am not sure we will spend \$43m because the original plan was that we would not have permanent grandstands, except on one side of the grounds. We were to have temporary grandstands that could be taken anywhere so if the Davis Cup comes again they can be taken to the Davis Cup. If something happened at the TIO Stadium and they needed them, they could take them. If hockey needed them, it could have them. They would be a piece of infrastructure for all sports but could be housed at the rugby league stadium.

It requires a lot more work, but I hope, in its excitement to get this money, the government does not stuff up. It would be better to be cautious and make sure you have spoken to everybody. Talk to rugby union. The feelings between rugby union and league are not as bad as when I was in central Queensland a couple of weeks ago. You would think they were talking AFL. The rugby union people do not seem to be able to stand the rugby league people. In the Darwin area we are a bit more civil.

Do not forget we are mainly building this so Parramatta can come to Darwin and be on a you beaut rectangular sporting field with adequate lighting for television. We also get people who come from south to play the 7s and we get other things with the rugby union, but we need to make sure we get the best value for money. If it can be used for the best value for two sports then let us not get lost on what is there at present and whether we can improve and share it. I would not want us to do it for the sake of rugby league only when we have a sport next door that could share in some of that money as well.

Something that concerns me a bit is the replacement of Don Dale. We will probably discuss this later in the week because there are a couple of things coming up. I have visited Don Dale old and Don Dale new. I have visited the facilities in Alice Springs, the boot camps and Wildman River. There is a lot of discussion going on, especially regarding the Royal Commission. I would prefer a new facility, but I do not want to see an arrow pushing this from one date to today just because we want to get people jobs in the construction industry.

This issue is far more important. It relates to where we go with juvenile detention and rehabilitation. It is something we need to focus on, and we need to be careful what we do. We need to ensure we do something that will make a difference. It will either be the right place or the right design, or it might be several complexes. Who says we should have one complex?

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** 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 ask the government not to rush this issue. We have a Royal Commission, which, I presume, will come back with recommendations. We have recommendations from the Children's Commissioner and the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians in relation to a few issues. We have NGOs and people from youth justice who work there, and we should not leave them out. As much as people have condemned some of what they have seen about Don Dale—and I understand that it was appropriate to condemn that—there are good people working in that industry. There are people who really want to make a difference, and you need to involve them in this discussion.



Father Dan from Holy Spirit, who visits there once a month, was shocked by what he saw. He is someone you would ask for advice. Please do not rush Don Dale just for the sake of stimulating the economy. It is bigger than the economy; it is about how we deal with young kids.

A classic example of our problem is what you heard today and yesterday, with 12 year olds driving a car on a football ground and almost killing kids. Where do you draw the line between taking responsibility for your actions and trying to help that young person get out of the situation? If we are not careful they will continue that for the rest their lives if we cannot turn those lives around. I ask the government to go steady on that issue.

If you want to stimulate the economy in the rural area, release some land for retirement. I know so many people in my area who are doing one of two things: they are going to Pearl or going south. People in the rural area do not have retirement options. They do not want to go anywhere else because they have friends there, and they need a bit of room to have a chook and a few tomatoes. They need something suitable for that area. I have said millions of times, you have land in the rural area, please put it out for expressions of interest. Humpty Doo has land and Freds Pass district centre has land.

There is a way of stimulating the economy. Get someone to build a retirement development in the rural area. Do not lose our people who have been here for such a long time. You could even release rural land. I have said before that the land around the prison has water and electricity that could be used to develop rural blocks with town water, without having to worry about bores.

It would give people an opportunity for different options than Berrimah Farm, which is not my cup of tea. It might end up a very nice subdivision, but you will be living in suburbia, that is for sure. You need to give people some choice. Private land development in the rural area is too expensive because the market is held by a few people.

I am interested to know what has happened to the flood proofing project in Katherine. That would have been a substantial infrastructure plan. Will it happen? What is the story? It was part of the sale of TIO. There was supposed to be drainage work done in my area, but the big dollar figure was for the levee bank in Katherine. I would love to hear a report on whether the levee bank is feasible, or whether there have been reports to say it will not happen because it may not work.

The saddest thing for me is that it takes a long time, when you are an Independent, to get money from the government. When you lose it, it is even sadder. It has taken me a long time to get \$15m over two years to fix Gunn Point Road. Most of you probably do not drive up Gunn Point Road, but, believe it or not, it is quite heavily used by mining people who get sand and gravel from that area, and by Koolpinyah Station, which brings cattle through there. On weekends a lot of people camp at Shoal Bay beach, and I have something on the Notice Paper in regard to how that land should be managed. They also go to Leaders Creek and Salt Water Arm to get access to the Vernon Islands by boat.

It can be severely corrugated, to the point where it is dangerous. It requires continual maintenance. The trouble is that there is not enough maintenance to keep it in good order. The \$15m was to try to do something with it. I am not happy with that. I sometimes look at the Labor Party and say, 'I don't ask for a lot in life, and, to some extent, you spent a good number of years in this parliament thanks to me. It is too much to ask that occasionally you do something for my electorate?' I am sure members of the Labor Party who sit on the backbenches will be asking at the next election for the government to make sure there are some sweeteners for them to stay in power.

I am not interested in the sweeteners. I do not care. My job is not reliant on sweeteners, otherwise I would not be here. I have been around long enough to live with the bits and pieces they give my electorate, but I thought this was more important than my future, or your future. This is important because it is a safety issue. A number of people have been injured and cars have been destroyed on that road. It takes heavy traffic. Doing it up will encourage people to use facilities like Leaders Creek—tourism, fishing—and it is relatively close to Darwin and gives people another outlet.

If the government says, 'Oh dear, how sad', could it at least tell me when it will come back, because all this says is 'project deferred'. There is no second column. This could be one of the five-year plans. It may not come back.

Other people might speak on some of the other areas that have been put off—the Arnhem link road. I am not sure whether that is the Arnhem road, which probably needs work. Nhulunbuy was trying to create a tourism industry; if that is the road to Nhulunbuy—there are still issues with the ownership of the road, but if

you are trying to encourage industry, especially tourism, in that area then I would think the Arnhem link road would be a priority.

It is always good to get a statement from a minister. One little tricky thing I saw on the back was the government said it would support the onshore and offshore gas industries:

*We will continue to support the ongoing development of the offshore gas industry and the conventional onshore industry.*

Can you tell me where the conventional onshore industry is? I do not know. I thought we dealt with the unconventional onshore industry. I am interested to know where we find the conventional onshore industry.

I thank the minister for her statement. It is important that we crank up our local economy. It is definitely suffering. It was suffering under the CLP and if I had to make a comment on trying to give a \$2000 grant to people to fix their houses, to be honest with you, it came in far too late in that government's—it brought it in as an election thing. It had been told time and again that businesses were struggling, it brought it in at the last minute. It might have had some success; I am not arguing that, but it was a desperate move at a desperate time when the government knew it was in trouble with local businesses. We have to think a bit broader than that. It was band aid approach, and we have to think a little further than that.

I thank the minister for her statement, but please do not forget that when you make a statement do not bag the previous government entirely because if you lose the next election it will probably do the same to you. Those contracts were set in place by the previous government; do not get too excited about them. It is a reality of life and you will, as time goes on, produce your own contracts, so let us live with that.

**Ms LAWLER (Education):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of the Deputy Chief Minister's statement on infrastructure. For my electorate, having a strong economy that provides jobs for local people is important for hard-working families, jobs that mean they can afford to stay in the Northern Territory and enjoy the wonderful lifestyle it offers.

I was very pleased to hear the Deputy Chief Minister's announcement on bringing forward the construction of the Palmerston police station to 2017–18. As the Member for Drysdale I know that people in Palmerston will welcome this announcement. It will provide a greater opportunity for police to engage with the community and respond to community safety needs in a timely manner. Many of the other infrastructure announcements will also be of benefit to the people of Palmerston and across the Territory in different sectors.

As someone who has worked as an educator in Territory schools I am very aware of the benefits of having school facilities and infrastructure that meet the learning needs of students and that are safe and aesthetically pleasing for the school community.

When classrooms are small and too hot, when toilets are damaged or unhygienic, or when a school suffers from poor design, the learning process can be inhibited. Schools are a specialist type of public building. In our communities, schools are central locations for children and families. They not only provide a place for student learning, but are often used after school hours and on weekends by community groups. This makes schools a valuable community asset.

Education facilities provide a place where children, young people and adults work together, and search for and share knowledge and information as a part of a journey of lifelong learning. Education research indicates that the nature of school facilities—their condition; the configuration of rooms and spaces; the acoustics, especially for children with hearing problems, which is a big issue in the Northern Territory; heat; lighting; and air quality—are all factors which can impact on a student's learning.

All these factors can affect the performance, attitudes and behaviour of students—probably also the teachers—and how welcome parents and community members feel when they enter the school. We want our families to be welcomed and to find schools a welcoming place. Things like the front office configuration can influence how welcoming those schools are to families.

The Deputy Chief Minister's infrastructure plan is positive news for our school communities. Additionally, it is great news for our construction sector, for which it will provide a real shot in the arm. Sadly, despite the economic rhetoric, the former CLP government proved it was incapable of planning beyond the construction of the INPEX project. This government has a plan to support jobs now and into the medium- and long-term future, as announced by the Deputy Chief Minister.

Proper facilities at a school not only boost the physical environment but the learning environment too. This government, as we have heard recently, has committed to providing every Territory school with \$300 000 for upgrades and refurbishments. School councils and boards, in partnership with their school community, will determine how best to utilise these funds to improve their educational facilities. We believe the choice of where to spend this money is best left to the schools, as they understand their students' and community's needs.

This government is honouring the investment in capital works projects already planned for schools. The Member for Nelson was just talking about that. Of course we will honour those capital investments. We know how valuable they are to the school communities and we know the school communities are planning and looking forward to the upgrades and new infrastructure.

This construction will boost local jobs and support the economy. These projects include:

- Taminmin College, a new science, technology and maths centre, which will be a wonderful asset to the school
- Braitling Primary School, stage two of a new early childhood precinct and community centre
- Ramingining School, a multipurpose hall which will double as an emergency cyclone shelter—what a great asset
- Ross Park Primary School, an extension to the assembly hall. Ross Park's numbers are large and they cannot have all of their children at assembly at the same time. This extension will provide that for their concerts and weekly assemblies
- Wulagi Primary School, a much-needed assembly hall upgrade which includes a new sport surface
- Acacia Hill special school, new classrooms and flood mitigation works.

Last Friday I was in Nhulunbuy, where I visited a number of schools, including the Nhulunbuy boarding facility which is under construction. I was very impressed by the design and layout of the facility, which is nearing completion. It is a beautiful building. I give credit to the previous Territory government and the Australian Government for developing the boarding school, which will provide for 40 young people from communities across the Arnhem Land region, with central facilities suitable for future expansion to 80 places if required. That is a great thing. Let us see how well the boarding facility is taken up and, if need be, it can be expanded by another 40 places. Well done to the previous government for that decision.

It is expected that students from communities like Maningrida, Ramingining and Gapuwiyak will attend the facility, as well as from closer communities, such as Yirrkala. I will watch the outcome of this initiative with interest, in the genuine hope that this education model will provide remote area students and their families with choices and real educational benefits.

The facility is being constructed by a Territory company, Norbuilt, and I met many of its subcontractors while I was there the other day. There were about 30 people working on various facets of the construction. It was great to see some beautiful things. There is a lovely glass-front kitchen and dining area. It will be such an asset to the Nhulunbuy community as well, not just the school. I am sure it will be used for many functions. Handover for the facility is scheduled for 10 December 2016, in time for it to be operational from January 2017.

Early childhood is an important time in a person's life, and I spoke about that during Question Time. I talked about the vulnerability index and how significant some of the issues are in Tennant Creek. I look forward to working with the Member for Barkly to see the fruition of a \$6.5m early childhood integrated learning centre in Tennant Creek. It is one of 37 new and fast-tracked projects announced by the Treasurer to support more local jobs across the Territory. It is well and truly time that Tennant Creek received this type of facility. I acknowledge my colleague, the Member for Barkly, who put forward a logical and compelling case for the early childhood and integrated learning centre during the election campaign. It has been brought forward as part of our stimulus package.

As a former teacher, the Member for Barkly appreciates the benefits of an appropriately-designed facility, along with evidence-based programs which will be a benefit to the families of Tennant Creek. The centre aims to improve children's lifelong learning outcomes. It will do this through a physical environment which supports the delivery of quality early childhood education and care.

People who have recently been to the new Braitling preschool facility would have seen just how well the architects can now cater for young children and young learners—having windows at the eye height of children, and things we did not think about in years gone by, such as beds and chairs of smaller size. It is lovely to see facilities designed with little people in mind. I am genuinely excited about the initiative and what it means for Tennant Creek.

The new integrated early childhood centre will be located on the grounds of Tennant Creek Primary School, in close proximity to the childcare centre, promoting coordinated service delivery. The integration of services capitalises on existing infrastructure, and will involve the development of a master plan to inform planning in response to the future education and child and family needs of the community. People who know Tennant Creek well know that school site is landlocked and is fairly tight, so we need to look at the big picture for that site. The early childhood integrated learning centre will replace the old Tennant Creek preschool, but consideration is being given to retaining and repurposing the old preschool site. I am sure the Member for Barkly will have something to say about the best use of that facility.

Community consultation has commenced and design meetings will be under way later this month, in anticipation of construction starting in the second half of next year. Development of this centre will be good for local jobs and the economy by providing opportunities for the construction industry during its development and ongoing employment of early childhood educators in the region.

Integrated services like this for children and families become central hubs in the community. They provide a soft entry for families where there is no wrong door and where all children and families are welcome, which is vital when we have large numbers of Indigenous families. Infrastructure of the right kind also has the added ability to help stimulate children's curiosity and interest.

The government's \$5m commitment to fund solar power infrastructure for a wide range of school buildings across the NT is another example of this. Not only will it help grow Territory jobs and be an environmental plus, it will also be linked with programs to teach children about renewable energy. In addition to helping power our schools with clean energy, this program will also educate students about solar power, and giving them an awareness and sense of responsibility about energy usage. This program is expected to save schools up to 40% of their energy costs. Schools across the Territory will soon be invited to nominate for round one of the solar program.

There are other reasons why we believe schools are ideal platforms for the location of solar panels. School buildings are generally large and provide perfect roof scapes for solar panels. They operate during the day and the solar panels can generate power when it is needed most.

As a government we are under no illusions about how great an economic challenge our predecessors have left us. The next 12 to 18 months will be testing. We have to be imaginative in our response to this challenge. Investing in education infrastructure is an area which will assist in job creation across the Territory, and that includes investment in remote communities.

This government will direct \$5m to refurbish and upgrade homeland learning centres. I briefed the Member for Nhulunbuy yesterday. He is interested in the homelands in his electorate, the Lhanapuy homelands. I had an opportunity to visit them on Friday, and we had some conversations about how we can best refurbish and upgrade the homeland learning centres in his electorate.

Homeland learning centres deliver an education program administered by the hub school. The program is a form of delivery where a teacher based at the hub school supports a local community member employed as a teacher assistant, through regular visits and ongoing communication, to deliver educational services to the children living in the homeland or outstation.

Homeland education centres are an important and growing part of our education system, and we need to make sure they are well supported. There are 26 active homeland centres across the Northern Territory. Each homeland centre will have particular infrastructure requirements, depending on the needs of the children and the location of the centre. Some of the centres in Arnhem Land are over 40 years old and have not had much money spent on them.

The student cohort at each homeland learning centre may include a mixture of children from across the education spectrum—from pre-school, primary, middle and senior years—and we need to cater and provide education for them in a quality learning environment.

Funding will be available for the 26 homeland learning centres for 2017–18 and will prioritise health and safety issues, and classroom space and capacity. It will involve the development of a master plan that links the homeland learning centres with the hub school—some have seven or eight learning centres—and will align the refurbishments and upgrades of homeland learning centres with the Roadmap to Renewables plan.

We are also investing \$39m over five years to improve the physical infrastructure of the educational facilities at the Bullocky Point Education Precinct. The Member for Fannie Bay and Chief Minister is very excited about that, and many of us who attended Darwin High know how old that school is. The precinct includes Darwin High, Darwin Middle and now the NT School of Distance Education. The investment will support the delivery of science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics and other programs, including residential programs for distance education students.

A Bullocky Point Education Precinct steering committee will be established to provide guidance and oversight of the project phase, which includes \$15m to Darwin High School to modernise Block A and B—I went to block A and B, so that shows you how old it is—with a new central library and fabrication laboratory, to be expended in 2017–18. There will be \$12m to Darwin Middle School for a multipurpose hall, primarily for performing arts and shared arrangements; that will be expended in 2018–19. I know how excited the principal, Marcus Dixon, is about that opportunity.

The projects I have outlined today will not only help schools and, as a result, flow on to improved outcomes for kids, they will also support the local economy and jobs in a period where our economy faces a real challenge. We are working to provide a greater level of support to the Northern Territory economy while, at the same time, improving education infrastructure for the benefit of our children. We are doing this in a targeted way, focusing on areas we know will give business and crucial sectors of our economy immediate support. We are also keeping faith with Territorians by delivering on our election commitments.

**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Katherine is definitely a big winner in this infrastructure fast-tracking that has been announced. Katherine's economy will benefit from more than \$15m in infrastructure spending fast-tracked by the Northern Territory Government. The projects in Katherine will be fast-tracked to ensure activity in the local economy, supporting jobs across more sectors in my electorate. These projects are part of the Labor government's broader infrastructure program, with projects being fast-tracked across the Territory to provide economic stimulus.

The projects in Katherine include \$10m for the Katherine art galleries as part of the national iconic art trail. This has been fast-tracked to 2018–19 from the 2020–21 financial year. I envision this to be the start of a sustainable and ecofriendly industry that will generate revenue for the town's economy and set up Katherine as a tourist gateway to the region. I am excited to work with the Katherine arts community and various stakeholders in collaboration with the Katherine Town Council, supporting its master plan. This will go towards realising the vision we all share, which is to showcase the incredible talent in Katherine and share with our fellow Territorians, Australians and overseas visitors the diverse culture of the many language groups within our region.

There is also \$5m for the expansion of the Katherine police station, which has been fast-tracked to 2017-18. As the town grows, so do its essential services. The new ambulance centre in Katherine is well on its way to being completed soon. The expansion to the Katherine police station is not only sorely needed, but will now be delivered much sooner than expected. The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics will now start working with police on the design so we can get the best possible facility to help improve safety for the people of Katherine, as well as support the police officers in Katherine. This sends the right message about this government's attitude towards crime prevention.

There is \$250 000 for the establishment of a Katherine community centre. This has been fast-tracked to 2016–17. This is an election commitment I campaigned for. The Katherine community needs a centre that brings everyone together and provides a space for community groups to meet, where mothers and babies can meet for playgroups and book clubs, sewing circles and craft groups can come together for their activities. I look forward to repurposing existing government infrastructure for this project to show that we can meet community demands without additional expenditure.

There is \$300 000 for every school in Katherine. This has been fast-tracked to start rolling out in the 2016-17 year. Our schools in Katherine will benefit immensely from this support, as well as our local businesses, as the schools will now have the opportunity to do the ground repairs they have been unable to do. These are major construction projects which will create jobs for locals in Katherine. Strategic infrastructure projects like the ones announced yesterday create jobs in electorates like mine.

In my inaugural speech I said it was time that Katherine was properly considered, and that a consultative and collaborative approach to funding, infrastructure, tourism and essential services was long overdue. I am very proud to be here today, with a government that has listened to the Katherine Town Council and the people of my electorate, and has delivered.

Mr Deputy Speaker and colleagues, I commend the Treasurer's statement.

**Ms LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to talk to the Deputy Chief Minister's statement on infrastructure in the Northern Territory.

From my perspective, an Alice Springs/Central Australian perspective, I will focus mainly on the new initiatives of this new government and its decision to defer certain projects. The government has, as the Member for Nelson outlined, taken on the bulk of the former government's infrastructure commitments, and obviously has endorsed them by doing so.

I was quite alarmed yesterday when I received the media release from the Treasurer outlining her plans to revise and reprioritise infrastructure projects. When I received the list of changes the Treasurer intends to make to the infrastructure schedule my mind immediately went to, how will this impact Central Australia? How will this impact on the Alice Springs and Central Australian economies?

For my own benefit, I put on the record that things have changed in Central Australia. We went from having four CLP members to three CLP members and one Independent, and now have gone to three Labor members and one Independent. I looked at the list of deferred projects yesterday and thought, does this really reflect a government that has just won three seats in Central Australia? No, it does not. It reflects a government that is concentrating on the Top End of the Northern Territory, that has chosen to defer \$40m worth of projects in Central Australia. By 'defer' I mean it has not given any time frame as to when these eight projects will happen, or if they will happen at all; they could be dumped.

Yesterday was a strange day, in the context of what we heard the Treasurer tell us in the first sittings of this parliament, just a few weeks ago. The Treasurer told us she did not intend to make any new decisions on infrastructure spending by the Northern Territory Government. She said she would not rush into any decisions until the government had completed its economic summits, which are due to be completed in March next year. Obviously between making that statement in this Chamber a few weeks ago and now, the Treasurer has had a rethink about how this government will proceed with its commitment to infrastructure expenditure. Thus we received the reprioritisation list yesterday.

It is good to hear that different regions of the Northern Territory have done well through this process. I was very pleased to hear the Member for Katherine say that Katherine has received \$15m of fast-track spending—new spending. That is great. I was surprised to see Katherine do so well. Usually the Berrimah line, for Labor, is alive and well. Katherine, with you being the new member, has had some positive pull, but it is not so for Central Australia.

As I said before, eight projects have been deferred by this government—they have been taken out of the forward estimates—worth a total of approximately \$40m. In place of those eight projects worth \$40m we see two projects valued at \$13m, which leaves a net loss to the Central Australian community of \$27m. Earlier I said \$30m. I apologise for that, Chief Minister. It is \$27m, to be more precise.

I did note that the Chief Minister, when I asked about his decision to remove \$30m from the Central Australian infrastructure budget, looked bewildered. He looked to the Treasurer for an explanation. He had no idea this had occurred, that his Cabinet had made such a decision. It was not about my clever mathematics. I was reasonably good at maths at school. It was just adding up the total of the deferred infrastructure projects for Central Australia and subtracting the two new projects that replaced them. It was a simple equation, nothing clever or untoward—\$27m taken from infrastructure spending for Central Australia over the forward estimates. For us in Central Australia, the infrastructure story of this new government is bad news.

I had to laugh at the member for Braitling and the press release she issued late last week that was printed in the paper today saying, 'Ho Ho Ho! A \$100m gift to Central Australia. Sandra is good to the Alice with job-creating money'. What this article and the press releases the Member for Braitling provided the media outlets did not include was the cuts to the infrastructure budget for Central Australia. As a government you try to put a positive spin on everything—I have been there and done it—but the truth is that it is spin.

This story I am telling tonight is based on the information I received yesterday, the list of deferred projects and projects brought forward that was provided by the Treasurer in her press release called 'New Infrastructure Plan to Support Territory Jobs'. Based on that information, which is now publicly available, the story for Central Australia is far from being a Christmas gift; it is far from being a present. It is more of a sad story of this new government not looking after Central Australia, which is quite surprising with three new members of parliament from the Labor government. They did not have enough pull within their Caucus and Cabinet to make sure infrastructure expenditure in Central Australia was sustained. We are already going backwards under this government.

Central Australians expected this; they knew it was highly likely. With 11 years under Labor, until 2012, we experienced 11 years of this. Being a little naive at times, I expected it would take a little more than three months to see this happen, but it is happening. The Treasurer has provided evidence that this is happening, that we are going backwards in the Territory. Under the CLP government we would have received more infrastructure funding. That is how I premise my contribution tonight, by putting that clearly on the table. It is not about clever mathematics or me dodging the figures to tell a bad story. That is the truth, and the evidence is in the documentation provided by the Treasurer.

In the article provided to the *NT News* and the *Centralian Advocate* by the Member for Braintree today, I note that some of the claims she makes contradict what is in the information provided by the Treasurer. There are some anomalies and some things I have never heard of. After ringing around today, it seems that no one has heard of any of the things the Member for Braintree put in her press release. She said the Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department will be totally refurbished, with new spaces for oncology and cardiology. After digging around and talking to people who should know about this, no one does. I assume this has not been formally announced.

I find it intriguing that the emergency department at the Alice Springs Hospital will be fully refurbished when it was only opened in March 2013. It is only three or four years old. It was built by the former Labor government, to the tune of \$24.5m, opened in March 2013 by me, the former Minister for Health, and in 2016 it is being fully refurbished. I want to know how much this refurbishment will cost and get some details. Perhaps the Minister for Health could provide me and the Alice Springs community with that information, because this is news to Central Australia.

Also within the Health portfolio, the \$11m to undertake storm rectification works on health service buildings in Alice Springs has been scrapped. We had a violent storm within the last 12 months which caused considerable damage throughout the town. I can only assume that this \$11m was allocated to fix damage to health buildings affected by that storm, and it has been deferred by this government. What exactly was that money allocated to be spent on? Exactly what are the works that should have been undertaken with that \$11m? I want the Health minister to provide a full explanation as to what will not be fixed, to the tune of \$11m, in our Alice Springs health services buildings because of this decision by your government to defer or scrap that funding.

I heard an exchange across the Chamber with the Chief Minister, who, once again, had no idea about what it meant, that \$4m will be spent but \$11m will not be. He was looking to his colleagues for information. I guess the person to go to is the Minister for Health. Please provide the people in Alice Springs with an explanation as to what work you will not be doing on our health services buildings because of this \$11m of deferred infrastructure expenditure.

It is intriguing, the notion that instead of fixing our buildings in Alice Springs, to the tune of \$11m—presumably storm rectification works—you will be spending \$12m on the Royal Darwin Hospital car park. I will take the criticism of the mistakes I made when I was Health minister with the Royal Darwin Hospital car parking situation. It proved to be a reasonably dysfunctional system that we put in place, but it charged people money, which paid for the extension of car parks right around Royal Darwin Hospital. From memory it was at least 300 extra car parks. The revenue we made from charging for parking at Royal Darwin Hospital paid for the additional car parks, extra signage, lighting and cameras, and security. We put in place a robust business model. It was an impost on people visiting the hospital and people did not like it; I understand that.

But what we have here is a government that, unlike any government, perhaps in the world, in the last 10 years—and I researched this—will provide a multistorey car park and charge absolutely nothing for the use of it, making it an extraordinary business decision. Did you know that car parking is an extremely lucrative industry throughout the world? Billions of dollars are made through the business of car parking. When we decided to charge people for car parking at the Royal Darwin Hospital, considerable research was done

and it was found that the Royal Darwin Hospital was the only metropolitan capital city hospital in Australia that did not charge for car parking.

I know we are different from other capital cities throughout Australia, but to go to the other extreme and have no business model, spending \$12m just on the building with no intention of generating any revenue from this investment—how much will the operational expenses be? Presumably you will have a lift and security. You will need to clean and monitor the building and keep lighting and cameras on in the building. What will the operational costs of this venture be?

You have no revenue or business model. I do not see a business bone in too many people's bodies on that side of the Chamber; there are a few exceptions, but for the most part none of you know how to run a business. This is a classic example; the only jurisdiction in Australia to build a multistorey car park and charges nothing for it, making the taxpayers of the Northern Territory pay for it eternally. I argue that there is probably enough parking at the Royal Darwin Hospital to not put this impost on taxpayers across the Northern Territory.

We in Alice Springs are losing our \$11m storm rectification works within our health services, but, in effect, we will pay for your free car park at Royal Darwin Hospital. That is what it has come down to, and I do not think that is a good decision for anyone. I am not trying to win votes in Darwin; I do not have to worry about being politically correct. I put on the record that it is a bad business decision. All you are doing it for is to get votes, to keep your seats in Darwin. It does not make any sense, and it is at the direct expense of Central Australia. I find it shocking and intolerable, and you should hang your heads in shame.

Bush roads have not done very well in these decisions. Maryvale Road—\$11.5m scrapped, off the schedule, out of the forward estimates for the government. Maryvale Road is an important connector road; a lot of people use it; I do not have to go on. It will be a deep disappointment to the constituents of the Namatjira electorate that they will not get their \$11.5m road upgrade. The Roper Highway—\$9.5m gone; Gunn Point Road upgrades—\$15m gone; seal the road to Port Melville, \$27m gone.

Where is your commitment to the bush? You are sounding like the CLP; this is where we went wrong. You forget about the bush and guess what? You will lose government in four years' time, guys. I suggest you have a rethink about this and put the bush back on your agenda. The Member for Stuart absolutely smashed it in August; he got the greatest majority out of any of you, and here you are taking away bush roads. This is not a good sign of things to come.

You have thrown your money at an expensive netball stadium. I know we just got one in Alice Springs, but you know what? That took years to negotiate. The Alice Springs Town Council, a private investor and the Northern Territory Government all threw in money. It was a joint effort done over the space of many years. Here we have a \$10m allocation—maybe that is where our \$10m for the storm rectification of our health service buildings has gone, to the Darwin netball courts. Is that not lovely? All the girls can play netball. Think of the poor people in Central Australia who are being treated in health services with a leaky roof.

These are the decisions you make as a government; you rob Peter to pay Paul constantly. I know this, but I am absolutely stunned that you would be so blatant in ripping off Central Australia to the tune of \$27m. You have just won three seats there; do you think you will win them again if you keep doing this? You are going down a track which will not be productive for you.

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

Motion adjourned.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

**Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay):** Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to speak solemnly on the passing of a great Territorian, and Aboriginal man of high degree, Dr Gawirrin Gumana AO, who passed away at his homeland, Gan Gan, in Northeast Arnhem Land last Saturday, 19 November.

Dr Gumana was a truly inspiring man whose life history traverses a huge period of change for the Yolngu of Northeast Arnhem Land. Born around 1930, his early childhood coincided with that period of our history



marked by his kin asserting their rights as traditional owners of lands and seas, and dealing with newcomers who came to occupy that same space and take resources from Yolngu lands and seas.

He was old enough to know the long history of negotiated exchange with the Makassan traders. He also lived at a time referred to by journalists in Darwin at the time as the period of the black wars of Arnhem Land, the time of a number of violent incidents involving Japanese and Europeans violating Aboriginal law and taking fish and trepang from the waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. It was also a time of other outrages, including his recollection of a historical massacre of up to 30 of his people around Gan Gan, his homeland.

Like many people in Arnhem Land at the time, Dr Gumana contracted Hansen's Disease and as a teenager was sent to the Channel Island Leprosarium for treatment. While this institution has its own dark history, it was also the place where Dr Gumana learned English and came to understand the things that are important to others—non-Indigenous people.

It was here at Channel Island that Dr Gumana also met and married his wife and became interested in Christian beliefs. After nine years at Channel Island he returned to his homeland and lived a life of moral guidance and leadership for his family and other Yolngu families.

He was a key participant in many moments in our history. In 1963 he was a signatory of the famous Yirrkala bark petitions that led, over time, to recognition of Aboriginal land and sea rights. In 1968 his cross-cultural skills led him to be a key interpreter and adviser assisting the Supreme Court in considering the history-making land claims of the Yolngu people. In 1988 he was a contributing artist to the Barunga statement or treaty, presented to Prime Minister Hawke. Most recently, he was a key witness in the Federal Court consideration of Aboriginal land rights of the inter-tidal zone—the Blue Mud Bay decision.

All these events were key moments in time when Yolngu people sought to help others understand their history and values, and to present a way forward in recognising Aboriginal land and sea rights, and their moral and legal obligations as stewards of their ancestral lands.

Dr Gumana was also an accomplished master artist, contributing to the famous Yirrkala church panels, awarded the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander award in 2002, and with his work represented in the Australian National Gallery and many other eminent collections here and overseas.

In 1992 he took his participation in the church to a new level, becoming ordained as a minister of the Uniting church. In 2003 his life work was recognised with the award of the Order of Australia. In 2007 he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Charles Darwin University in recognition of his scholarly contribution to the Northern Territory community.

While Dr Gumana lived in some violent times, he was a man of peace, goodwill and persuasion. As his friend and work colleague Will Stubbs said, he unfailingly resisted bullies, but never became one.

A special and lasting legacy will be his lifelong advocacy for homelands living—Yolngu staying on country to fulfil obligations to their land and seas, and to ensure continuity of knowledge and culture among their families. In 2009 he was a strong and loud voice for that movement, publishing a profound statement of the rights of the Yolngu to stay connected to their country.

Dr Gumana was a great Territorian, and I place on the record my respect for him as a man and a leader of his Yolngu families. He made a huge contribution to cross-cultural understanding and recognition of Yolngu history, values and culture. He was a treasure, and I express my deep condolences to his grieving family, friends and Yolngu more generally.

To conclude, I would like to record his words from his 2009 homelands statement:

*I am an Aboriginal from mud, red mud. I am black, I am red, I am yellow, and I will not take my people from here to be in these other places.*

He stayed true to his word to the end.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the contribution of a couple and the money they raise for the Leukaemia Foundation. Some of you may have heard of the Aussie Muscle Car Run held on Sunday night, so I will tell you about it.

They might come through Tennant Creek, Member for Barkly; I know you are interested.

The 1960s and 1970s provided an era for the most outstanding vehicle competition in the world. The cars that raced, you could buy. It spanned an era of famous and exciting drivers who became household names, and they remain so today—Moffat, Johnson, Brock, Goss, Firth, Grice et cetera. It sparked the era of what they call Aussie muscle cars, which are the most desirable to own in the country today: the Falcon GTHO; the Monaro; the Torana; the Charger and their many variations.

It was also a period when Bathurst accepted various vehicles, other than the great Aussie muscle machines, to compete in the races. That is, the Datsun 1600, the MINI Cooper S, Alfa Romeos, the Lotus, the Cortina and many others.

The Leukaemia Foundation organises these muscle runs, as they call them, in the different states. If you have one of these cars, then you compete. A couple from the Territory, based in the rural area, has done this Aussie Muscle Car Run, and they raise money for the Leukaemia Foundation.

Julie and Alan Stalker—their team is called Night Stalker—are some of these people. They have been on a few of these muscle runs, and over two years they have personally raised \$37 623.10. They love going on muscle runs.

For those who are interested, they have a Torana XU1 1972—it raced around Bathurst—202 cubic inches, six cylinders, triple carburettors, am I doing well so far? It has four wheels and is green. Apparently it is the same car—not the exact same car—that Brock won Bathurst in. His car plate was number 28. That was when Brock beat Moffat, who was driving one of those things called a Ford, which we do not talk about.

This is a lovely couple and they have raised a lot of money for leukaemia. I do not know what drives them other than that they are community minded. In 2016 the muscle run, collectively, with 43 muscle car fundraisers, raised over \$340 000, which is an awesome effort. Alan and Julie were the fourth-highest fundraisers, which is pretty good coming from the Territory with a small base. They have sponsors and collect money on the way. I am not sure how they do it.

I want to place on the record how people in the rural area, and elsewhere, have helped the Torana XU1 1972, raced around Bathurst, 202 cubic inches, six cylinders, four wheels, green car: Virginia Tavern, Damien O'Brien—a great sponsor; Byron Crosser and Lou Hazell from B&H Marine; Bree Hansell, Litchfield Veterinary Hospital, which is the one I half own because of my patronage; Bursons Coolalinga, Mark Creagh; me—I am a sponsor—Shenannigans Irish Pub, Steve Dugan; Shannon's Insurance, John Palamountain; Darwin International Airport, Ian Kew; Outback Jacks, Matt Johnson; and Kerry's Holden, Craig Robertson and Rachelle. I am not quite sure of her surname; I could not find it. Thank you to those people from the Territory

In South Australia, Middleton Securities, Nick Loxton; from Western Australia, Handle Property Group, Ruth Drewell; and from higher up, Peter Burke, Kevin Higgins and David Lewis. Thank you to all those people. They have contributed to something worthwhile.

Leukaemia is a dreadful disease that affects so many people across our community, from little tackers through to old people. Thank you to Julie and Alan Stalker. They are a lovely couple and their car looks really schmicko, but it does not have air conditioning so I am never driving in it. They are sticking true to form and will not air-condition it because cars did not have it in those days. Team Night Stalker, congratulations and well done. Do it again next year.

**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I stand today to speak about my wonderful electorate of Katherine and the people who call her home. We had an incredibly busy two weeks in Katherine, and I want to take a moment to mention some of the events that were held and the people who helped organise them.

After being away for a couple of weeks during sittings, it was an absolute joy for me to visit Mimi Arts and say hello to Dennis Stokes, who is the manager and curator at Mimi Arts. Dennis is one of only two art centre managers in the Northern Territory who is Aboriginal, and we are incredibly fortunate to have him in Katherine.

Mimi Arts is 100% owned and operated by Aboriginal people. Not only is it a space to display Aboriginal artwork, but under Dennis's creative eye and direction it has also become a place for artists to create, and for local people and tourists alike to connect to our region via projects like Cultural Story Time, which is held every Tuesday and hosted by Anglicare.

On my first day back in the office after being in sittings for two weeks I was pleasantly surprised to walk in and find a significant amount of artwork that had been submitted as entries for the Local Art by Local People – What Katherine Means to Me competition, which I am hosting. There are three categories for this competition, and a winner will be selected from each category. The winner will receive \$100 and their artwork will be displayed in the Member for Katherine's office in parliament. This artwork has to be submitted by 15 December, and the winners will be announced in January. I am looking forward to that.

I also want to take a moment to thank Clyde Fenton Primary School and Tindal Preschool for their beautiful self portraits, which are now proudly displayed in the reception area of our Katherine office. It is a fantastic way to decorate the office; it is very colourful and beautiful.

On my first Wednesday morning back in Katherine I hosted my weekly coffee and conversation event. It is an activity which I started during my campaign and continue to host as the Member for Katherine. This weekly event provides an opportunity for community members to meet with me outside of my office, during hours that are more convenient for them. That particular Wednesday I was fortunate to catch up with two women who are actively involved in our community, Melanie Usher and Andrea Wilson. Both are mothers who are working full-time and helping the local businesses they own.

I also had the pleasure of catching up with colleagues at Katherine Womens Information and Legal Service, as well as Warren Snowdon, who stopped by for a visit. Warren and I are committed to working with KWILS and supporting it in its lobbying efforts to secure funding that will provide it with flexibility to focus all its resources on providing advocacy and representation for its clients. KWILS has been operation in Katherine for over 18 years. It provides valuable and critical legal services for the women of Katherine and, like most non-government grassroots agencies, KWILS has maintained its operation on a minimum amount of funding, which in part has been because of the sheer dedication of its staff and board members.

I also enjoyed being at the Katherine High School Year 12 graduation ceremonies. Some truly wonderful and inspirational speeches were delivered that night by the school captains and vice captains, and it reminded me of my own Year 12 graduation ceremony and that feeling of relief and excitement at having just finished high school and looking forward to the future. I particularly enjoyed hearing all the students who delivered speeches acknowledge their teachers and the countless hours the teachers give to their students after school. I want to say congratulations to the students, parents and faculty of Katherine High School.

We also held the Arnhem, Northern and Kimberley Artists, Aboriginal Corporation AGM in Katherine at the Charles Darwin University rural campus. My colleagues, Minister Lauren Moss, and the Member for Stuart, Scott McConnell, were there, and they held a Q and A session with stakeholders from a number of Aboriginal art galleries across the Northern Territory and Western Australia. There were a lot of good questions about our government's \$100m commitment to a national Indigenous arts centre and associated arts trail across the Northern Territory

It was also a huge privilege for me to be asked to give a speech at MacFarlane Primary School for its White Ribbon big breakfast and assembly. It had been focusing on a theme of celebrating safe, respectful communities by saying no to bullying and violence all week. This is an initiative it has been building in hand with White Ribbon. It was great to see other community leaders giving speeches that morning, and I commend everybody who participated for their contribution.

I did have one rare night off where I was able to enjoy a fantastic dinner at the Cicada Lodge, which is located in the magnificent Nitmiluk National Park, and I want to offer my congratulations to the chef for a truly delicious meal. The service was impeccable, the decor was beautiful and I understand now why it won the tourism award.

I also had the opportunity to watch *Crazy Days at the old Brumby Moon* at the Katherine Cinema. It is a Territory film made by Territorians. It is a great story best told in the way only Territorians tell stories. My favourite line in the movie was:

*Some days you're putting creamer in your tea, other days you're double dipping the tea bags.*

I got to meet Phil and Al, the two main characters of the story. The movie also featured quite a number of local people who acted in it. It was great to see that.

Phil is a bit of a Territory icon. He is an author, singer and songwriter, an actor and the NT's best campfire singer. I found out more about him that night, and it was a pleasure to meet him. It was also inspirational, and extremely motivating and reassuring.

I got to spend Wednesday with colleagues who are just as passionate about making a positive contribution to addressing domestic and family violence within our communities when I was invited to open the domestic and family violence forum on behalf of the Minister for Territory Families, Dale Wakefield.

I was thankful for the opportunity to meet with Lesley Taylor, who established the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, NAPCAN. It has made a significant contribution to the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children and young people by raising public awareness of child abuse and neglect, and its impacts, and by developing and promoting effective prevention strategies and programs. We were very lucky in Katherine that Lesley was able to stop by and say hello.

I also heard Charlie King, Desmond Campbell and Michael Torres speak when they led the men's panel discussion, working with and hearing the voices of men.

During that forum I had the incredible pleasure and honour of listening to Bettina Danganbarr. Bettina is a Yolngu woman from Galiwinku. She is an Aboriginal community police officer, and since 2008 her home has been serving as a women's shelter, providing shelter to women and children who are victims of domestic and family violence. Through her commitment and tireless lobbying, Galiwinku will now have its very first women's crisis centre.

During the forum Bettina talked about her personal commitment to addressing domestic and family violence in her community, and her own personal growth as a result of her work. She said this, which is fantastic, 'I have grown a lot and, especially, my leadership and public skills have been ignited like a bushfire. I am unstoppable now. It is my passion, my calling, to help these women and children.'

In addition to a full-time job and her tireless work in establishing the Galiwinku women's space, Bettina is mother to three children and two foster children. I am incredibly fortunate that I have the opportunity to meet people such as Bettina who quietly, determinedly and passionately do what they can to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in our communities. It is truly inspirational.

During the time I was at home we commemorated Armistice Day, or Remembrance Day. On 11 November we were also able to remember Lance Corporal Prentice. In 1957 an old Indigenous man was found dead and alone next to a camp fire in Katherine. He turned out to be decorated World War I veteran Frederick Prentice, who grew up in the Territory before enlisting in South Australia in 1915. Lance Corporal Prentice joined the Australian Army during a time when Aboriginal people were not allowed to join. He lied on his application and stated he was Maori.

It is through the commitment and tenacity of the Katherine Stolen Generation group and the support of Simone Croft, the manager of the Katherine Museum, that his unmarked grave site was found. The Stolen Generation group, along with members of the engineering brigade, members of the community and his great granddaughter were present. He was honoured and remembered on that day.

We had a couple of new businesses open in Katherine. Katherine tools opened while I was in Darwin for work commitments.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Katherine, your time has expired.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Madam Speaker, one of the great pleasures in my role as a Member of the Legislative Assembly is spending time with seniors in my new electorate of Spillett and, before that, in Drysdale.

Through the various seniors organisations I am fortunate to attend in Palmerston and Darwin I hear many stories about the lives of seniors, their children and grandchildren, what they enjoy and, more importantly, what concerns them. It is one of the ways I am able to stay in touch with my electorate and ensure I am doing what is right for the people I represent.

One issue I recently raised in this parliament concerned the future of the community support works program, which is better known as the prisoner mowing scheme. For more than 20 years low-security Darwin prisoners have been mowing lawns and tidying gardens for seniors across the Top End as part of this program, which is highly valued and widely utilised by hundreds of seniors.

Teams of prisoners, under the watchful eye of prison guards, drop in to the homes of seniors and mow their lawns, cut back overgrown foliage and generally do a tidy up on the property before taking away the refuse. Most of the work is done within an hour at most, and then it is off to the next property to do the same thing. During the Wet Season, seniors can expect to be visited by a crew every few weeks. As well as being a fantastic service for seniors, it also gives the prisoners an opportunity to contribute to the community and be rewarded for good behaviour. You can understand why the scheme is so popular.

Recently my electorate office received an email from Northern Territory Correctional Services which stated, 'The community support work program will not be accepting any further applications or placing them on the waiting list. There are now approximately 160 applications on the waiting list and the time frame on the list is now indefinite.' In other words, no new applications are being considered under the scheme. The program's success contributed to its popularity and that is why it is under pressure at the moment.

In October I visited long-time Moulden resident Lucy Aylett, 86, who is one of almost 400 seniors who welcome the prison crews into their yards. She told me how wonderful the scheme is and how important it is in helping her manage the many demands of home occupancy. Lucy is like so many seniors in my electorate who rely on the scheme and do not want it to end.

I raised the scheme during the last parliamentary sittings, and am raising it again today to let the government know the opposition will do all it can to work together to ensure the scheme continues to operate and, hopefully, expands. As more seniors choose to stay in Darwin, demand is increasing and instead of rolling the program back it should be expanded and invested in.

This is a program that should be resourced, and I am happy to work with the Northern Territory Government to ensure our seniors continue to have access to the service, and our prisoners have this opportunity to contribute to our community.

**Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling):** Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate a great Centralian, Andrea Mason, CEO of NPY Women's Council, on not only being announced the NT Australian of the Year, but also the national Telstra Business Woman of the Year, an extraordinary achievement. All Territorians should be proud of Andrea. As a previous finalist of the Telstra Business Women's Awards, I know how rigorous that process is, and how competitive and well regarded the award is. For someone from Central Australia to take out the national award says a lot about the work Andrea is doing.

I have had the pleasure of working alongside Andrea for many years. She is an inspirational leader. As CEO of the NPY Women's Council she has taken that organisation to be an innovative national leader as an organisation run by Aboriginal women.

The organisation provides advocacy and a voice for some of our most remote and marginalised communities. Under the leadership of Andrea it has come up with some amazing innovations, particularly some social enterprise projects. The colouring book the women from NPY designed is a great stocking filler and I recommend it to anyone if they are thinking of a small but important give, because all proceeds go back to NPY Women's Council to continue its great work.

It has developed strong partnerships with corporate organisations such as Westpac. It has increasingly active fundraising activities such as the Larapinta Extreme Walk, which, last year, raised nearly \$100 000, which will go straight back into supporting women's cultural practice on the land—grass roots on the ground, a fantastic organisation that does a lot of service delivery: aged care; youth programs; and domestic violence. It has an innovative and leading domestic violence service that is over 25 years old and would be the oldest domestic violence service of its kind by far.

These are some of that led to Andrea's national recognition. She is an inspiring woman and one of the most intellectually rigorous and clear communicators in Central Australia. To see an Aboriginal woman take such a leadership role nationally is really important, and I think we should all be proud, particularly in Central Australia, but also in the whole Territory, of her achievements.

**Ms LAWLER (Drysdale):** Madam Speaker, I would like to recognise and celebrate our amazing teachers, principals and school support workers in the Northern Territory. I know firsthand the joy, satisfaction and challenges of delivering education here in the Territory. I gave some of the best years of my life to being a classroom teacher and I have great respect for the job our educators do.

On Friday 28 October I had the pleasure of hosting the World Teachers' Day event at Parliament House. Each year the Department of Education holds events in Darwin, Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Tennant Creek and

Alice Springs. World Teachers' Day was introduced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in 1994, and the day is celebrated in over 100 countries. I thank the Member for Arnhem for hosting the function in Nhulunbuy this year. Because the day is usually celebrated on 5 October, when many Australian Schools are on term break, our celebrations are held annually on the last Friday of October.

World Teachers' Day recognises the important role our educators play in our community. Teachers are the most important part of the learning equation, and their expertise and commitment is essential in achieving positive education outcomes for our students.

Each year the Teaching in the Territory Excellence Awards winners are announced at World Teachers' Day events, for each region and then for the Northern Territory. The awards recognise the contribution of government school teachers, principals and support staff to quality education. Nominations can be submitted by school staff, students, parents and the general public. I am pleased to share with you tonight the individuals who were recognised at the 2016 awards. There is a fair number but I would like to read them out to put them in the public record.

Support Staff Member of the year—schools cannot function without support staff, so I acknowledge the outstanding work of our support staff: Carmy McLean, Sadadeen Primary School, someone I know well and admire; Naomi Barba, Nhulunbuy Primary School; Edward Jones, Arlparra School, in the Barkly; Fiona Wheatley, Namarluk School, in Darwin; Pennie Archie, Bulla Camp School, in the Katherine region; and Melissa Mullen, Berry Springs Primary School, in the Palmerston and rural region. The overall winner was Carmy McLean from Sadadeen Primary School.

The Indigenous Educators of the Year were as follows: from the Alice Springs region, Yvette Pengilly from Rona Glynn Preschool; in the Arnhem region, Alice Eather from Maningrida College; in the Barkly, Sharon Larkins, who I have known for a long time, from Alpururulam School; from Darwin, Katina Winsley from Karama Primary School; from Katherine, Renee Lammon from Casuarina Street Primary School; and from the Palmerston and rural region, Josie Wickham from Batchelor Area School. The overall winner for Indigenous Educator of the Year was Renee Lammon from Casuarina Street Primary School, in the Katherine region.

The Vocational Education Trainers of the Year were as follows: from Alice Springs, Rebecca Toll from Yuendumu School—I am going to Yuendumu on 8 December for the opening of the trade training centre, so I am sure I will get to meet Rebecca and congratulate her personally on her award; from Darwin, Maria Albion—who I have known for a long time and respect greatly—at the SenaiNT Language Centre in Timor-Leste; and from Palmerston and rural, Trudie Clarke from Taminmin College, whose children I taught at Humpty Doo Primary School many years ago. The overall winner was Trudie Clarke from Taminmin College. Madam Speaker, you probably know her as well.

**Madam SPEAKER:** I do know her. She is a lovely lady.

**Ms LAWLER:** Teacher of the Year in a Special School—this is a wonderful category as some of the hardest work is done by the teachers in special schools: from Alice Springs, Jen Guzman from Acacia Hill School; from the Barkly, Pauline Hughes from Tennant Creek Primary School; from Darwin, Jonathan Graham from Namarluk School; from Katherine, Janette Thomson from Casuarina Street Primary School; and from Palmerston and rural, Michele Sheahan from Taminmin College. The overall winner was Jen Guzman from Acacia Hill School.

Early Childhood Teacher of the Year: from Alice Springs, Gaby Bennett from Walungurru School; from Arnhem, Edith Helend from Shepherdson College; from the Barkly, Michelle Leonard from Alekarenge School; from Darwin, Carla Hayes from Stuart Park Primary School, which invited me to its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations recently, which was a pleasure; from Katherine, Lis Jones from Clyde Fenton School; and from Palmerston and rural, Meg Hewett from Nganmarriyanga School. The overall winner was Meg Hewett from Nganmarriyanga School.

Primary Teacher of the Year: from Alice Springs, Genevieve Fabijan from Sadadeen Primary School; from Arnhem, April Sage from Yirrkala School; from Barkly, Colin Kiel from Alekarenge School; Darwin, Judith Grills from Jingili Primary School, a school I have a great deal of pleasure in working with; Katherine, Georgia Croad from Ngukurr School; and Palmerston and rural, Aristotle Banaga from Gray Primary School, a school in my electorate. The overall winner for the Northern Territory was Georgia Croad, from Ngukurr School, one of our remote schools, which is the member for Arnhem's electorate.

Middle Years Teacher of the Year: from Alice Springs, Wellington Pasi from Centralian Middle School; from Barkly, William Lutwyche from Tennant Creek School; Darwin, Julie Morton from Darwin Middle School; Katherine, Charleen Conroy from Katherine High School; and Palmerston and rural, Narelle Panjer from Rosebery Middle School. The overall winner for the Northern Territory was Julie Morton from Darwin Middle School.

Senior Secondary Teacher of the Year: from Alice Springs, Judith Coverdale from Centralian Senior College; Arnhem, Heather Waugh from Nhulunbuy High School; Barkly, Claire Thorpe from Tennant Creek High School; Darwin, Yashadora Pridham from Darwin High School, who taught both of my children, a wonderful teacher; Katherine, Adrienne McMahon from Katherine High School; and Palmerston and rural, Rebekkah Crawford from Palmerston Senior College. The overall winner for the Northern Territory was Heather Waugh from Nhulunbuy High School, and the Member for Arnhem got to hand out that award. It is nice when they win the overall award and you are handing out the awards.

The Principal of the Year is a hard fought one and is held in high regard by all of our principals: from Alice Springs, Brenda Jolley from Larapinta Primary School; Arnhem, Sue McAvoy from Ramininging School; Barkly, Maisie Floyd from Tennant Creek High School; Darwin, Bernie Bree from the Stuart Park Primary School; Katherine, Marg Chamberlain from Kintore Street School; and Palmerston and rural, Helen Chatto from Girraween Primary School. The overall winner was Maisie Floyd from Tennant Creek High School, and that was very well received.

It is important to remember to recognise our amazing educators for the work they do every day with students, families and their colleagues to shape the Territory's future.

**Mr PAECH (Namitjira):** Madam Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of this Assembly some important work which is occurring at home, in my electorate, over the next few days.

Utopia has become one of the most diverse and independently operating groups of artists in the Central Australian community. Some may say it is home to some of the most well-known Indigenous artists and our nation's most important arts movement.

Utopia, or Arlparra, as it is referred to by the local people, is about three hours' drive northwest of Alice Springs and is home to the Alyawarre people. It is home to some of the Territory's most well-known and predominant Indigenous artists. It is also a place of many interests; one of those being batiks.

In 1978 the women of the local area learned the art of batik as a means to establish a source of income in preparation for their land claim hearing, demonstrating the economic viability of outstations through their batik work.

Some of the Utopia homeland's most famous artists will be holding and attending an historic meeting in Alice Springs on 24 and 25 November to discuss the plans to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1988 Utopia Batiks, and the possible revival of batiks in the region.

The 1988 Utopia batiks, along with the Albert Namatjira watercolours and the Papunya Tula boards, are considered a national treasure, since they sparked the Utopia women's art movement.

Over the last six months, with the support of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the Community Champions program, key batik artists from the Utopia homelands and the Alice Spring's region have been meeting with an independent curator in preparation for the planning workshop in Alice Springs in November.

The 1988 batiks are currently in the Janet Holmes a Court collection. Ms Holmes a Court has kindly agreed, in principle, to lend the 1988 batiks for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative exhibition at the Araluen Arts Centre early next year.

The meetings scheduled for Thursday and Friday of this week will provide an exciting and rare opportunity for all the artists to meet and talk about the history, the movement and the exciting prospect of the exhibition to showcase the wonderful and invaluable work of the Utopia batiks.

I encourage you all to find out more about the significant volume of work that is beginning to be undertaken, as it will present enormous potential to attract tourists to the area and revitalise this art style in Central Australia. I have no doubt the proposed exhibition will boost cultural engagement in Central Australia, and that it has the potential to draw tourists from interstate. Many people in the region are excited at the prospect of seeing the work their relatives designed.

For those interested, I am happy to provide more detail, and I encourage people to see the work. I hope this initiative continues to be supported by the Northern Territory Government as it is a wonderful example of culture revival and a mechanism for people to express themselves through the role of culture and art.

I look forward to seeing the batiks for the first time and sharing in the important celebrations with the people. I will continue to work with the local people and the independent curator to make sure the batiks are brought to the Territory and the exhibition is shown at the Araluen Arts Centre, which has offered in-kind support to hold the exhibition.

Last week, before heading to Darwin for sittings, I had a wonderful opportunity to sit down with some of the women. They are all in my electorate so I have had the opportunity, over the last few years, to build a relationship with them. I am very excited by the prospect of them seeing the batiks that were made by many of their relatives, who, unfortunately, passed on due to conditions which were preventable.

They are very excited to see the work and to see how we can continue the revitalisation so members can look at batik again becoming a specialist type of art in the area. I am looking forward to seeing the work. I have seen the work in a collection booklet that was distributed to members in Central Australia. The work is very beautiful and quite large, and shows varying styles and techniques. It has reunited many women across Central Australia to come together for this event and share their stories and the role of shaping a bright future for cultural and art revitalisation in the Utopia region.

I look forward to working with the women, the curator and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs to ensure we can put together a robust exhibition that members across the Northern Territory will have the opportunity to see and to share in its enjoyment.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, I would like to update the House about my recent travels in and around the Arnhem electorate since the last sittings. In the last three-and-a-half-weeks I have been Groote Eylandt; Bickerton Island; Mataranka and Mulgan town camp; Barunga; Beswick; Weemol; Bulman; Gapuwiyak; Balma; Jabiru and its town camp, Manaburduma; the homelands of Mudginberri; Djurrbiyuk, which is also known as Whistle Duck; and the communities of Urapunga, Ngukurr and Numbulwar.

First I will start with the day after the last sitting, when, on Friday 28 October, I had the privilege to travel to Nhulunbuy and attend the Arnhem region World Teachers' Day awards ceremony. In the morning I was privileged to visit Yirrkala School and share in the staff morning tea and talk about the Families as First Teachers, or FaFT, program, which I am hoping to visit in the future in my capacity as the assistant minister to the Education minister.

In the evening of that Friday it was a pleasure to attend the World Teachers' Day award ceremony, and I must thank the Minister for Education for the opportunity to represent her in the beautiful electorate of Nhulunbuy with the beautiful people of the Arnhem region celebrating the awards.

There were some wonderful teachers recognised across the Arnhem region, and I must make special mention of the Primary Teacher of the Year overall category winner, Ms Georgia Croad from Ngukurr School. Ms Croad is an exceptional teacher working hard in the Arnhem electorate to give students the best quality of education possible. Well done, Georgia. Ngukurr School is lucky to have her, and I hope she continues her exceptional work as a teacher in the Arnhem electorate.

On Monday 31 October I travelled from Katherine to Darwin in order to fly to Groote Eylandt. On the next day, Tuesday 1 December, I had my first visit to the GEMCO mine site on Groote, and was kindly hosted by the South32 staff. One of the highlights of the mine tour was visiting the rehabilitation and maintenance service crew, which is made up of over 85% Indigenous staff from the island. I also spent time visiting the township of Alyangula that same day.

The next day I visited the community of Angurugu and then took a charter flight across to beautiful Bickerton Island, which is where my grandmother is from, to visit the small community of Milyakburra for several hours with my Groote Eylandt liaison officer, Ms Kara Burgoyne. I love Bickerton, and, sadly, that same afternoon we had to fly back to Groote in time to catch my flight to Darwin. I did not get to visit Umbakumba on this trip; however, I will make it my first priority on my next trip to Groote.

The next day, I travelled back to Katherine from Darwin and spent half the day in my electorate office, which is now truly up and running thanks to my Electorate Officer, Brooke Brenner.



On Friday 4 November I travelled with my EO to Mataranka to meet with the CEO of the Roper Gulf Regional Council, Mr Michael Berto, and the Deputy Mayor, Ms Judy McFarlane. I met with Mr Berto and Ms McFarlane for several hours, discussing the many complex issues facing the Mataranka township and the town camp of Mulggan, and discussed the Mataranka region as a whole, which is home to the amazingly beautiful Elsey National Park.

That afternoon I hosted a general meet and greet with the residents at the very delightful Stockyard Cafe. I must recommend that if you are visiting or traveling through Mataranka that you visit the Stockyard Cafe, which supports a great, local small business and the wonderful staff at the cafe. I thank the residents of Mataranka and Mulggan who attended the cafe catch up and, despite the 38 degree heat, shared their concerns about their much-loved region and offered their ideas for resolutions to problems.

On the next week, Tuesday 8 November, I started a road trip from Katherine to Weemol and Bulman. I spent a night there visiting people in both communities and then travelled to Gapuwiyak the next day for three nights. I was accompanied by my Electorate Officer Assistant, Ms Helen Lee, and my father, Mick Uiobo, the retired campaign manager. We travelled around Gapuwiyak and then I got to fly to Balma homelands for the first time, where I visited for a few hours. I was a bit nervous because I had not visited the community during the campaign period; however, I was happily surprised when I rocked up and there was Numbulwar family there.

My team and I spent a few hours chatting with residents, underneath a shady tree out of the hot sun, who live in the small but peaceful homelands of Balma. We flew back to Gapuwiyak where the next day we drove the 10-odd hours back to Katherine. The following week, Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 November saw the township of Jabiru in the Arnhem electorate host the community Cabinet and regional community Caucus meeting. It was an exciting few days for Jabiru and neighbouring Gunbalanya in the Arafura electorate to have the eight Cabinet ministers from our government and 17 of the 18 government Caucus members be able to visit stakeholders and meet with community members.

From Jabiru, I spent a night at home in Katherine and then had the honour of dining with Member for Braitling, Minister Wakefield, to discuss some issues in my electorate. Then the next morning I travelled with my EO and her three-year-old son—it is very testing, on this long trip, to have a three-year-old in the back of the car—to Urapunga, Ngukurr and Numbulwar. In Urapunga we visited the school and were welcomed by the teaching principal, Kerry Searle, and her students, who were very proud to show me they are learning in their traditional language as well as English, which is very impressive as most of these students speak Kriol as their first language. They are able to sing in several different languages too.

After the Urapunga school visit, I spent some time talking to families about the issue of housing, which is something I will follow up with the minister for Housing, Gerry McCarthy.

No time to rest for us, and we were off for a quick drive through the Ngukurr community to leave a congratulatory card at Ngukurr school for NT Primary Teacher of the Year, Ms Georgia Croad.

That afternoon, the last of the Arnhem travel in that packed day, it was off to Numbulwar. It was a short homecoming for me, with a lot of community stakeholder meetings over the two days, but I got to spend time sitting with family and dig my feet into the sand at the beach one evening. As a bonus, I got to collect my two camp dogs, who will now be town dogs in their new home of Katherine.

Despite only spending a total of 11 nights in my new home of Katherine over the past six weeks, I thoroughly enjoyed the first two weeks of parliamentary sittings in October, and I have enjoyed my travel around the Arnhem electorate. I feel so incredibly humbled and privileged to represent a large and diverse electorate, and I look forward to my next travel within the electorate and reminding my constituents that if ever they are in Katherine they are welcome to visit the Arnhem electorate office, or they can always contact me, which many people do at all hours of the day, as you can imagine.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.