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Infrastructure Projects – Alice Springs

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

My question is to the Chief Minister and assistant minister for a vibrant Todd Mall. You say you love Alice Springs, but after you slashed infrastructure in and around the town, the question is, is the feeling mutual? I seek leave to table this document currently being circulated around Alice Springs.

Leave granted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Chief Minister, can you please explain your definition of 'deferred', how long these projects have been deferred for and how you justify deferring storm rectification works and upgrading Ross Park Primary School, the Maryvale road and Larapinta headworks, to name a few?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker I thank the member for her question. Yes, I do love Alice Springs. As a government we have assessed the priorities of the infrastructure budget, and we put outcomes ahead of works that are non-essential. The advice we had from the Health department was that the \$11m for storm rectification works was not essential. There is \$3m of works that are, and they are happening.

We said that the women's shelter was a priority, and that is an outcome. The youth detention facilities in Owen Springs are a priority and an outcome. We are working towards outcomes for Alice Springs, not \$11m on works that are not needed. Let us get an outcome for the people of Alice Springs, which is what we are doing, and that will be our priority as a government.

When it comes to Ross Park, let us get this straight. A decision needed to be made by the school, as I mentioned yesterday, about expansion versus new facilities, and expansion was chosen. There was not a loss of funding to Ross Park; it was the decision that was made about the investment in Ross Park, and \$1m has been invested in Ross Park for the expansion of the facilities. That was simply a decision; it was not a deferral.

When it comes to our infrastructure budget, as has been explained many times, deferral is into the 2021 financial year. Works have come out of the four-year forward estimates and been pushed into that fifth year of 2021. We have made a decision, as a government, about the priorities of our government and delivering outcomes for Territorians. The women's shelter and the youth facilities in Alice Springs are important outcomes. The \$11m was for works that are not essential.

Unlike the CLP, we will not look for ways to waste taxpayers' money. We will make sure we are investing in things that deliver outcomes for the people of the Northern Territory, and, in this instance, the people of Alice Springs. That is what we will do and we have made it clear that we will do that. We were very public before the election in saying we would reprioritise the infrastructure budget.

Since the election we have made those tough decisions, and we have been open and transparent about it. We have released the details because we said we would be an open and transparent government. We are able to have this debate on what has been deferred because we released those details. We said we would be upfront with Territorians, make the hard decision and be good financial managers of the Northern Territory.

We are making sure our investment in infrastructure delivers outcomes for Territorians. That is what we will see with the women's shelter and the youth detentions facilities at Owen Springs. That is not what you would see with \$11m towards non-essential storm rectification works.

We love Alice Springs and, as a government, we are focusing on delivering outcomes for the people of Alice Springs.

Job Plans

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

Territorians are concerned about the looming jobs cliff. Territory businesses are concerned about the economy and your government's lack of leadership in response to the INPEX project. In Labor's Northern Territory jobs plan it states there will be an attempt to chase major projects. So far all we have heard about

is the Country Liberals' budget. You are happily claiming a raft of our major projects as your own. Can the Treasurer update the House on what new major projects the Gunner government is chasing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his important question. As we have often discussed in this House since the new term of government, the economy is an issue at the front of everyone's minds.

It would be remiss of me not to point out to the opposition that when it came to government in 2012 it was handed an economy on the up with the INPEX project, and economy that was growing. After four years of mishaps, chaos and dysfunction what did we see? We saw missed opportunity and a failure to plan.

We could see the end of the construction period of the INPEX project coming from a mile away. We just did not have a functional government doing the hard yards to ready us for this period. You have handed us an economy that is slowing. There is no doubt about that.

We have some challenges and we are determined to face them. We have hit the ground running with the infrastructure works we are fast-tracking to support jobs and businesses.

We had a very lopsided infrastructure program. We had to make sure we were getting more construction projects out there so there is a good spread across the Northern Territory. We have made that a priority to support jobs.

Our Chief Minister has been overseas selling the Northern Territory to our neighbours to the north. We have seen him rebuilding the relationships with Japan and entering into new markets like South Korea. We have seen him, with a huge delegation of Territory businesses, going into China, doing the hard yards there, opening doors and making business and trade connections. Fantastic work has been done. We look forward to seeing the opportunities that arise.

Ministers across this government are making connections with industry which are opening doors, looking for new opportunities. Yes, there are some challenges ahead in the next 12 to 18 months, but the future of the Northern Territory is bright.

I say to the CLP that I give the last government credit for the projects it chased down. As a new government we will not be irresponsible and throw them out just because the other team brought them in. That is not responsible management of the Northern Territory and not what people want to see. They want to see those projects continued responsibly and diligently for the benefit of the Territory, and that is exactly what we will do. There is a lot of work happening, but there is no doubt there are some challenges too.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Bilingual Schooling Program

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

Last sittings I misfired this question and it landed with the Minister for Education. I believe it lies within your portfolio. Over many years bilingual schooling programs have been the target of bad politics and various governments and the Northern Territory Education department. How will this government protect bilingual education options for Indigenous schools in line with Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for his question. I am happy to answer it, although the Minister for Education is the one who does the work on bilingual and homelands education, and other important areas of schooling in the Northern Territory.

Going into the last election we said we would increase the amount of funding going to education in the Northern Territory and go down the path of community-controlled schools, giving them the ability to make the decisions that are important to them in their school context around bilingual or other forms of education they might want to pursue. We said we would give them control of their school environment and make sure

there was extra money going into the global school budgeting system to make sure they had the capacity to make those decisions.

I have had good conversations with the Minister for Education about making sure that has been put in place and schools get that control in decision-making so we support choice in schools and make sure all children going to our schools have the best opportunity to succeed. We all want the best for our children.

We recognise that from place to place in the Northern Territory there are different contexts, and different decisions need to be made for schools. That is why we want decision-making to be as local as possible. It is not me dictating, from Darwin, the education context in a remote school. We are trying to provide community control to schools to make their own decisions on bilingual education and the timing of school terms, as some schools, such as Gunbalanya, have already done, so there is control at a local level of what is suitable. There is money going into the system to provide the flexibility for that decision-making. I will ask the Minister for Education to add some more to that.

Ms LAWLER (Education): Madam Speaker, in the last week or so I have received a draft from the NT Board of Studies, a document called the Indigenous language and culture policy, as well as a working paper. That will give some very clear directions to schools that want to revitalise a language or teach a bilingual program. There will be some clear directions from the department on that which can be instigated in schools.

As the Chief Minister said, these decisions are school based; that is the way of this government. Rather than the department mandating what needs to be done, it will be up to the school communities.

A document will be released; we will make an announcement and make sure you receive copies of it. There will be some clear directions for schools.

Infrastructure Projects – Central Australia

Mrs LAMBLEY to TREASURER

Yesterday the Member for Braitling was quoted in the *Centralian Advocate* and the *NT News* saying the electorate of Araluen would receive \$50m of infrastructure projects over the next two years, and that the Braitling electorate would receive \$70m of infrastructure projects over the next two years. Can you provide a list of the projects that are allocated funds in Araluen and Braitling over the next two years? If you cannot do it today, I am happy for you to take it on notice.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for her question. We will get you those lists. I will take you through some of the work that is happening, and I will touch on a question asked by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition on the Larapinta headworks, which have been deferred. We felt that they could be deferred because negotiations are still going on around native title and so forth. That is why the \$4.4m was deferred. There is still significant work happening around the Araluen and Braitling electorates. We will get you lists of those works.

The works we have coming up in the future for Alice Springs include the \$6m women's shelter and the \$7m Alice Springs youth facility, an important facility given the issues with youth there. There is still \$6.5m of works to go into Acacia special school. Next year there is still about \$13m of works for refurbishments and upgrades to the Alice Springs Hospital. There is another \$3m worth of works for Braitling Primary School, continued on from the \$1m in funding for upgrades in 2016–17. There is a range of works still to happen.

The other important thing to mention is the north Stuart Highway. There is still \$8m worth of works happening; about \$1.4m was deferred from that, so the project will be re-scoped, but there is still a significant amount of work happening.

Another important issue is to look at roads in the region. I should not be trying to tell you this. You are the member; it is your area. That type of economic activity in the remote communities does not just support those remote communities; it supports town as well. We know Alice Springs is the centre of activity there. It is where a lot of people are based and where they go to work.

There are still some massive roads programs happening in and around Alice Springs. For example, there is still \$5m committed to Maryvale Road. There is \$28m worth of work to complete the sealing of the

Mereenie Loop, a project from the previous government that is continuing. We have another \$28m for the Outback Way, with works happening there. We have works programmed for 2017-18 as well.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I have asked for lists. I just want to clarify, will you provide those lists on notice?

Ms MANISON: Yes, Member for Araluen. We will get you those lists.

It is important to think about the housing. The \$1.1bn housing program we are putting across the Territory will benefit remote communities. We have other works happening around the Plenty Highway and Docker River Road, more sealing, and about \$3.5m worth on Lasseter Highway and \$6m for the Sandover Highway.

There is a lot of work still happening in Alice Springs and Central Australia.

Housing and Community Development

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Yesterday the Chief Minister gave your past performance as Lands minister a very frank assessment when he said:

We should never again go through the housing crunch we had under the last Labor government when we did not get land release quite right.

You are now in charge of delivering on Labor's key election platform, tackling the housing deficit in remote communities. The assistant minister for remote housing delivery knows this stuff back to front and he has his eye on you. He has the energy and the passion. You tell a wonderful story, minister, but are you sure you are up to the task?

ANSWER

Yes.

China Visit

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

Given the importance of getting the big rocks rolling in China and that primary industries and resources employ more Territorians than any other industries, why did the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources not think it worth his time to attend? Why did the CEO and senior staff of the department go when the minister stayed home?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is an interesting question. I have full faith that the Chief Minister can positively represent the Northern Territory on behalf of the NT Government and Territorians. I have full faith, something your government did not have, in my department representing me as well.

School-Aged Offenders

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

The NT education policy describes the compulsory school ages as being from six to 17 years. The three juveniles arrested for their reckless rampage through Palmerston on Monday were aged 12, 13 and 15. I assume you have been briefed on this matter involving these school-aged offenders. What did you learn from these briefings? What measures will you, as minister, seek to attend to in light of this serious matter?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I have not had a formal briefing from the department about those children. Two of those children are under the care of Territory children, so that minister has

been appropriately briefed. There is a heap of things happening in that space around disengaged children. Some of those things will come out in the new year because the best time to start new programs is in the beginning of a school year rather than with four weeks to go until the end of the school year.

One of the things we are establishing is a re-engagement centre in Palmerston. We had the Malak Re-engagement Centre, which was an initiative under the previous government. I am loathe to make too many announcements about it now, but in the new year there will be a Palmerston re-engagement centre, which will cater for children who may be disengaged from school. We know kids are disengaged from school for a heap of reasons. Some of them are to do with the dysfunction of their families. Some kids are transient between detention and getting back into school.

There will be a Palmerston re-engagement centre in the new year which will cater for those students, and probably those students we are talking about. I do not know the background of those students, but we need to do a better job catering for those types of children. As you say, none of us want to see children in cars; it is inappropriate, that is for sure.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION School-Aged Offenders

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Were the three young offenders enrolled at school?

ANSWER

I have not asked whether they were enrolled in school. They would more than likely be enrolled at school. Sometimes those students are actively enrolled in school, which means they are attending regularly, or they could be passively enrolled, which means they are enrolled but may not have attended school for over four weeks. I do not have that information at hand.

Those issues are part of a broader issue for government. In the last four years, as far as I am concerned, the eye was taken off the ball with those things. When you pull \$114m out of the Education budget, the additional programs are cut. Rosebery Middle School lost some of the great programs that would engage those kids. It is part of an issue I am having to work hard on to resolve.

Signage on Highways

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

If you travel along the Stuart and Arnhem Highways you will see a plethora of business signs which do not fit within your department's guidelines for signs along highways. These signs are so prolific that they are now an eyesore. The Member for Goyder and I receive complaints from many people saying the same thing. When I raised this with the previous minister he was to look into it, but nothing happened. When will your department enforce its own sign rules? When will you sit down with local businesses and design an alternative way of advertising that supports business but does not turn our highways into Parramatta Road?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his question. I have had the wonderful opportunity to spend a bit more time in the rural area recently. I drove down the Stuart and Arnhem Highways and got out amongst it. I can understand what you are describing with regard to signage—commercial, small business and some pretty random signage. You can see the odd corflutes from elections too.

There seems to be a bit of free rein happening there. I share your concerns, because, as we all know, when driving on the roads you expect that, when signage is put up, safety is considered to ensure it is not overwhelmingly visually distracting or obstructive, creating traffic issues. It is important to get it right.

I have asked the department about what is going on with that. The department informs me that it will develop a range of policies and review the issue. You clearly asked the previous minister about it, and I do not think much has progressed since then. My commitment to you, Member for Nelson, is that I will take it up, look at the issue and get back to you. It is important, however, that we ensure members, such as you and the Members for Daly and Goyder, are part of that process, given your access to constituents, local businesses and so forth. They clearly will have a say.

People are doing these things because they are trying to get more business and more customers going through. Businesses are agile; they do what they need to do to move their business forward. It is important to engage you as part of those discussions, but I will get back to you, Member for Nelson, in regard to this. The area from the side road on is starting to look pretty interesting. I agree and share your concerns, so let us sit down and work through this matter.

Tourism Infrastructure – Investment

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

The Tourism Infrastructure Development Fund has been a huge success throughout the Northern Territory with over \$5m of funds given to tourism vendors to upgrade their facilities, products and services. Will you continue this fund and continue to build tourism infrastructure throughout the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for her question. I have been lucky enough to go to Alice Springs a couple of times since the election. The first time was for the 10th anniversary of the Tourism Central Australia Awards. It was a fantastic opportunity to catch up with the hard-working tourism operators in the Centre.

You asked a very important question about investment in tourism infrastructure. That investment in product and attractions and making sure we are refreshing our offering in the Northern Territory is a focus for this government. It is important that we make sure we are well positioned to promote, not only nationally but internationally, the beautiful offerings we have in the Territory. We are doing that in the best way we can. The infrastructure fund was one way of refreshing that product. As I understand it, it is a grants program that has been fully expended in different ways to a range of businesses across the Northern Territory which operate in tourism.

We have put \$5m into the budget to target the Chinese and Indian markets. We are looking at how that money will be best positioned. We need to look at the future of our grants programs and how they fit in with the broader agenda and priorities for government. In this case we have a focus on attracting those markets from China and India. It is something we are doing an incredible amount of work on, and I will continue to inform the House about that.

We are looking at the programs that are in place and how we can ensure the grants programs are delivering on the government's priorities. There is a range of priorities in tourism, and I understand there is an important focus on this.

We are also investing hugely, particularly in Alice Springs tourism infrastructure, in collaboration with the arts, which I am also responsible for. We are investing in the arts trails up the Centre, the galleries in East Arnhem, Katherine and Tennant Creek, and the iconic art gallery and cultural centre in Alice Springs with \$50m and \$20m respectively ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I do not think you have quite answered the question, minister. Will you be continuing this tourism infrastructure fund? Yes or no?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

Ms MOSS: That infrastructure fund has been fully expended, so we are looking at putting the case forward on the best way we can utilise the tourism budget to make sure we are fully supporting the tourism sector. I will keep you informed.

Jobs Plan – Omission of Extractive Industries

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

The ministerial statement on jobs made no reference to primary industry or resources. Are you concerned about this glaring omission? Given that mining's contribution to the Territory economy is over \$2.75bn, 12% of the Territory's gross state product for financial year 2014–15, and generates \$656 000 for the economy for every worker employed, why was there no mention of extractive industries in the jobs plan? Should we tell the people in the mining industry that instead of a jobs plan the Gunner government has a jobs ban?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Opposition Leader for the question. We are proud of the way we support primary industry and resources. I am very lucky to have the portfolios I have.

You are right; thank you for those figures. Primary industry and resources contribute over \$5bn into the economy every year.

There is a fracking moratorium at the moment. There are other activities in the mining sector that have continued to go on and thrive already over the last few months.

We fast-tracked \$4.1m to the Berrimah export yards last Friday. That was to encourage and support the industry, and to grow the industry, as I said yesterday during Question Time. We are supporting the industry by fast-tracking money out, especially for the Berrimah export yard, which will allow full access all year round. Instead of having 2000 cattle and buffalo during the Wet Season we can now have 5000. The Michael Gunner government supports and respects the industry.

Larrakia Nation Organisation

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

Given the 11 important, if not essential, social services delivered by the Larakia Nation, and acknowledging that the Nation is the only single organisation in Darwin to provide such an integrated program—one program in particular, given the coming Wet Season, is the need to return to country the growing number of itinerants we have in our community. What does your government plan to do to help save this much-valued organisation to get back on its feet and avoid going into liquidation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for his question. It is an important one about a valuable organisation that does really important work in the Northern Territory.

Through my department we are working with and trying to be the conduit between Larakia Nation and the Commonwealth Government about the position it is in. There is an issue with debt involving Centrelink, which it is trying to resolve. Considering that is the final hurdle, it is really important that we have a proactive, positive conversation with the federal government about seeking a resolution to these matters so we can continue to have Larrakia Nation operating in the Northern Territory, delivering these valuable services.

We are happy to keep working with Larrakia Nation on those services—Territory Connect, Return to Country, Aged Care, Night Patrol and a range of other things that Larrakia Nation does—and work with it to make sure the issue is resolved and it can continue delivering those services.

We are also open to having the conversation with Larrakia Nation about whether it wants to rejig itself. There is fluid conversation at the moment about the shape Larrakia Nation takes, which is a decision for Larrakia Nation, not the Territory government. We are happy to work with and support Larrakia Nation in delivering its services, but, obviously, while it is in administration those conversations are delicate. My department has been responsible in how it manages that with Larrakia Nation, and, critically, the conversation with the federal government. I think we all acknowledge, as parliamentarians in the Northern Territory, that there is a role and responsibility that lies with the federal government. It is important that we make sure we get a resolution through the federal government.

Larrakia Nation was placed in special administration on 6 June 2016 by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations. The crunch date was to be 6 December. That has been pushed out to the new year for the final decision for Larrakia Nation. We were able to help negotiate that to get some more time for the survival of Larrakia Nation as it is. There is a chance for Larrakia Nation to reboot to a different format. The Department of Housing and Community Development has been doing some work with it as well. I acknowledge the work the minister has been doing in conversation with them.

We are trying to manage this very carefully to make sure we get a resolution, because these are valuable services. They are very important for the Territory, particularly at this time of year, which is a point the Member for Blain made. In the Wet Season, Return to Country has its most important use.

We are trying to save Larrakia Nation. We are working positively with the Commonwealth Government to make sure we get a resolution for this issue.

Strategic Indigenous Reserves

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

What time frame does your government have to reintroduce the strategic Indigenous reserves for water? Will the government take any water off any licence holders to meet this commitment? What benefits will hard-pressed Territorians get out of an independent review of water licences granted since August 2012? What is the time frame for this inquiry and when will it be implemented?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am relatively surprised to receive this question from the Leader of the Opposition. Water policy is exceptionally important, as we all know. This issue got the CLP government into hot water from time to time; excuse the pun.

We are doing a range of work in relation to water issues. One of the first things we started doing, very quickly, was the reinstatement of the Water Advisory Committees. We have been progressively reinstating those committees, which form an important role in advising on water allocation and working with local councils and land councils.

There are a lot of interesting parts to this question. A range of things were scrapped under the CLP, such as strategic Indigenous reserves and Water Advisory Committees. It is incredibly important for us to return to scientific, evidence-based policy when it comes to water. The water review is being worked through in the Chief Minister's department, and work is being done to look at how we will go about reviewing the licences that were issued under the Country Liberal government, which many members of the community were concerned about.

The strategic reserves provide a good opportunity for us to work with the NLC and other land councils. They provide economic opportunities for the Northern Territory, and we are working through that. We will not do this without consulting with local communities. We will not do this in isolation; that is not the way we do business. We are looking at our water policy and how we can get it right. We have started by reinstating the Water Advisory Committees, and I look forward to continuing to update the House.

Property Identification Code Brochure

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

One of my constituents recently received a brochure on the Northern Territory Property Identification Code, or PIC. The brochure had little explanation to go with it except that if you own even one chook you need a PIC. I might add that chooks only need a PIC in South Australia if they are part of a commercial flock.

According to the brochure, if you own an alpaca, a llama, a bison—I am not sure we have too many of those here—buffalo, camel, cow, emu, ostrich, goat, horse, mule, donkey, pig, pigeon, chook or Damara sheep you must have a PIC. I do not know whether magpie geese are included. The constituent knew nothing about a PIC. With the banana freckle issues and now water licensing issues, rural residents are getting a bit worried and nervous about what is coming next from the government. Minister, can you say if this program is new? Why do we need this code and what preliminary work has the department done to explain this to rural residents?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question because it is a very serious question. Biosecurity in the Northern Territory is very serious. We have had issues with the green mottle mosaic virus, or, melon virus, and banana freckle. Biosecurity is an issue we deal with every day in the Northern Territory, especially in primary industry. A PIC, or Property Identification Code, for those who do not know—I have been researching very intently—is an eight-character code to identify where livestock is kept.

As the Member for Nelson already said—alpacas, buffalo, camels, cattle, deer, goats, horses, mules and donkeys, llamas, pigs, poultry, pigeons, sheep and beehives. There you go. There are no exemptions in the Northern Territory, and why do we have Property Identification Codes? It is for biosecurity. If there is

some outbreak of something, every property that has one of these animals is identified so we can try to find the source of the biosecurity issue.

In regard to South Australia, there are the same requirements, apart from only one difference, which is that properties with a small number of chickens—I am sure the Member for Nelson is listening very intently here—do not require a Property Identification Code. A single horse, pig, sheep, goat et cetera, as per the list, must have a PIC. It is about the biosecurity of the Northern Territory. If something happens we can go to those people and properties and hopefully find the source of any issues.

We have already seen what issues we can have in biosecurity. Examples are the Hendra virus in horses and a highly pathogenic avian influenza in poultry, which do not differentiate between commercial properties and hobby farmers. It is important that we look after our biosecurity. It was simply a letter reminding people that we need to look after biosecurity and they need to register.

I table this document for the Assembly, 'What's a PIC, and do you need one?' It is about community education and the requirements regarding Property Identification Codes. It is free to register. Go online; it is really simple. Please do the right thing by biosecurity in the Northern Territory.

Housing – Government's Plan

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Your previous answer showed a lot of confidence, but can you tell us exactly what your plan is for allowing communities to decide what to build, where to build, who will build it and how many houses will be built next year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. If you look at the policy document you will see the components of new housing. Then there is repairs and maintenance, government employee housing and the Room to Breathe program. It will be done in consultation with the community on a place-based system. We will speak about this in opposition business time later today.

It is new, and it is a game changer. This time around the policy is about engaging local people in every aspect of housing, from tenancy management through to cyclical repairs and maintenance programs, and the Room to Breathe program, which will add extra living spaces and innovations in housing that will support better health, education and employment outcomes.

There will be new government employee housing for the first time ever. Let us use this Question Time to quote the previous Minister for Housing in the CLP government, my predecessor—what did the CLP ever do about government employee housing in the bush? We have introduced a major initiative offering local recruits, for the first time ever, government housing in the bush.

We will also deliver new houses. This is a 10-year program. In benchmark milestones—because we are keen on rolling out five-year programs and contracts to give sustainability to industry, Aboriginal organisations and regional government councils—we will be able to demonstrate this policy achieving its outcomes for the first time. It will be totally focused on including local people in every aspect of housing in their lives.

I am proud of it; it is a great policy. It is worthy of bipartisan support. As I said yesterday, on your travel to Canberra, we would appreciate your bipartisan support. An investment of \$1.1bn of Territory money, an historical investment never seen before, hopefully will be seen by the Commonwealth as an honourable and good policy.

Minister Scullion's recent media release was about consultation engagement which is place based, and doing things in partnership with local people, not telling people what to do, which we had to suffer for the last four years, then the Commonwealth will match that funding, if not better.

You can spend your time in this place trying to make mischief. We will working with Territorians on how to do it with them, together.

Aboriginal Treaty

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

When will our committee considering a treaty begin work?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member. I have had conversations with my department about getting the subcommittee set up, and with my two co-chairs, the Members for Namatjira and Arnhem, about the terms of reference for the committee. We have set the agenda around treaty—land, sea and local decision-making, which is really important.

I expect the committee to be up and running in the new year. I believe there has been a very strong message sent about treaty, not just through you, Member for Nhulunbuy, though I recognise and respect the work you have done in that space.

When I was at the full land council meeting for the Central and Northern Land Councils, plus a representation from the Anindilyakwa Land Council, on Freedom Day, at the end of all the speeches, on a very hot day, they said, 'Will you, Leader of the Opposition'—as I was at the time—'support us in a conversation around treaty and moving towards a treaty?' I said, 'Yes, we will do that'.

We are creating a subcommittee of Cabinet, which will place it very seriously at the centre of government to make sure we are actively listening around what to do.

That is the stage I am at as Chief and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. It is not for me to dictate terms of a treaty or anything like that. It is a listening stage at the moment for the different forms of treaty that people around the Territory are advocating for and how we work together to advance that.

Other people around the country are discussing treaty as well, and there is also the debate about constitutional recognition. I have said very strongly that I see no reason why we cannot have two conversations. Some people say it should be one or the other; I think we can have conversations around constitutional recognition and treaty. One does not prevent the other in any way, shape or form.

Constitutional recognition is happening federally, and I am supportive of that. At a local level, how can we advance treaty? That is something we can do as a jurisdiction, rather than tying ourselves into a potential federal national debate about treaty. Let us lead by example; that is what we can do.

The subcommittee will be up and running in the new year and will actively listen to how we reach a treaty in the Northern Territory.

Darwin Festival

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

Over the 88 days of the Gunner government we have seen inertia, inexperience and indecision. Next month real action and a real decision on the future of the Darwin Festival will be required because the money will run out. What will the future of the Darwin Festival look like and where will the money come from?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her important question about the future of the Darwin Festival. This government supports the Darwin Festival. It is an incredible event in the Top End and right across the Territory, where we have seen local, national and international acts take the stage.

I put on record that we do support it. I have had a number of meetings about the future of the Darwin Festival; it is something the Chief Minister is also very passionate about. On 20 October 2016 we committed funding of \$1m per annum for the Darwin Festival.

Work is occurring; meetings are going on and we are making sure we can get Darwin Festival back on track. It has had a difficult time, and we are looking forward to working together to make sure there is a Darwin Festival next year and for many years to come.

It has gone through many phases over its decades of life in the Territory, and this is a good opportunity not only to continue it but to grow it and for the Darwin Festival to identify as one of the premier events of our region. I am looking forward to continuing that work.

The government has committed funding of \$1m per annum for the festival. We support the work that has been done by the statutory manager of the Darwin Festival Association on a number of issues that occurred, putting in place governance arrangements, working with the festival on its policy and looking at the new board to make sure we have a good community-based board that has the skills and knowledge to propel the Darwin Festival forward over its life.

It will be managed with a new funding agreement and a new board, based on an agreed plan. I look forward to seeing it. August is a big time of the year for us. I enjoyed going to Festival Park when I could during the campaign. It is a great opportunity for us to foster local talent, and it is great for visitors and locals.

Alice Springs Hospital – Upgrade and Refurbishment

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for HEALTH

Are you really undertaking a total refurbishment of the Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department, as the Member for Braitling told the media yesterday, given that it is only four years old? Will you honour the previous CLP government's commitment to upgrading the birth suites at the Alice Springs Hospital to the tune of around \$10m?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Araluen for her questions. I can confirm that \$3.19m has been allocated to upgrade the old emergency department. I think the media release said 'emergency department' and did not clarify; I apologise for that miscommunication. That money is for the upgrade of the old ED area—I am sure you are familiar with that space—which will provide important clinical space for cancer and cardiac patients.

There is significant work taking place at the Alice Springs Hospital. There are over \$32m worth of health infrastructure projects taking place right now in Alice Springs and Central Australia—a very significant amount. I do not think it is fair to accuse this government of turning its back on health infrastructure projects in Alice Springs.

I will go through the list. There is \$15m for fire protection, air conditioning and remediation works; \$2.1m to upgrade the emergency and power electrical systems; \$2.5m for a teaching and training facility at the Alice Springs Hospital campus and \$5m for a new facility for palliative care. As we have discussed, we are still consulting with the local community on the final makeup of that, but it is something we are committed to. There is \$2m to construct and upgrade renal clinics around Alice Spring; \$3.3m for ward and corridor rectification works within the hospital; and \$2.3m for remote health centres within the Central Australian area.

This government is committed to supporting not only Alice Springs in a broader sense but also health services within Alice Springs and Central Australia.

I will provide clarification on some questions asked earlier today. In regard to the \$11m for storm rectification works, we have spoken with the department and found that \$3m worth of those works is essential, and that is taking place immediately. There were significant savings found because the original estimates for the works included an allowance to relocate staff and patients during the significant construction phase, but they have been able to work through delivering those upgrades without relocating patients and staff.

We are committed to the Alice Springs health precinct and health services within Central Australia. I have just spoken about a significant investment of \$32m. Some of that was committed to under the former government and some is federal funds, but this government is committed ...

Ms LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. The second part of the question specifically asked the minister, 'Will you honour the former government's commitment to an upgrade of the birthing suites of the Alice Springs Hospital?'

Madam SPEAKER: The minster has time to answer.

Ms FYLES: The birthing suite upgrades are not on the forward works list that I have seen, but I will undertake to relook at that. I cannot see that there so I am happy to discuss that further. It is a measure of the CLP's commitment that it is not even on the forward works list.

Chan Building

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE referred to TREASURER

The Country Liberals committed \$18.3m towards the development of the Chan Building to create a magnificent new art space. The Chan Building was not on the list of scrapped projects put out by Treasury this week. Why has the project stalled? When will construction begin and when will money start flowing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I believe the Treasurer has carriage of this area.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. The Chan Building project was one of the projects that, when we came to government—a hangover from the previous government—I was informed there was no money in the budget for. The government had put it out to tender and found a preferred tenderer for the work. It was in the vicinity of about \$18m. The advice we had was that \$18m would not deliver what they were after. There had also been a heritage application put on the site.

We have not had overwhelming support for the building becoming an art gallery going forward. This government is committed to a museum master plan where we look at important gallery space and so forth.

I was stuck in the situation where we had a project without funding and a building with a heritage list application on it. There did not appear to be huge support for the project; there were lots of mixed views on it. In addition to that, the advice was that \$18m would not get it there and we did not have the \$18m anyway.

We all know what the Chan Building hosts. There are very important IT systems under that building which are critical to the Northern Territory Government. We have to ensure the government mainframes are supported. There will be the need for further rectification work on that building to protect those IT assets. We are working through that. Significant dollars will need to be spent on that building to protect the integrity of the government's IT systems.

The Chan Building, without the money allocated, and with the underestimation and the heritage listing, will not proceed as a project. It seems to be one of those projects that was not well thought through, and we have mixed views on. We have decided that rectification works are needed on the Chan Building. We will look at how we deliver that because it is important to ensure we maintain the integrity of the IT systems.

Kormilda College – Funding

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Can you confirm reports that the funding provided to Kormilda College by your government is tied to the school not actively encouraging enrolments? If that is the case, does it not prevent Kormilda from securing its own future and further confirm that your government supports the closure of the school?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Blain for the question. I do not know where you go that information from because it is incorrect.

The money we allocated—I have spoken before here of the \$5.1m; \$2m was to service a loan and \$3m was to keep the school going for the remainder of this school year. The federal government is bailing the school out in 2017.

A working group has been formed that has members from Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Department of Education, the Kormilda board and the parents' steering committee on it.

If you saw Saturday's paper you would have seen advertising promoting Kormilda College and chasing students.

I went to Kormilda recently and met with the principal. There is a strong marketing plan in place to promote the school next year to get students. One of the things we knew would happen—people who have been around education for a while would realise that parents would get nervous about the future of the school. The school has realised that as well. A strong marketing campaign has been put in place to get enrolments. One of the ads was a Facebook ad with Nigel Scullion on it. There has also been advertising in the *NT News* and things like that.

We do not want Kormilda to close at all. We know that Kormilda provides a vital place in the education system in the Northern Territory. Our concerns continue to be about the funding model. Today I released the non-government Indigenous boarding facility report, and there is some information in there that will be of benefit to Kormilda in the long term.

The Kormilda College board and parents' steering committee are working very hard to keep the school open in the long term. The funding for the next 12 months is from the Australian Government, and it is about recruiting and maintaining students. At no stage has there been anything about not encouraging families to stay there.

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