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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS Standing Order 245 Breaches

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, it has come to my attention there have been a number of breaches to Standing Order 245. Please remind your staff and guests that non-members of the Assembly are not permitted on the floor of the Assembly, even when not sitting, without seeking and obtaining approval from my office.

The Chamber contains privileged information on members' desks; if you need your staff to retrieve items for you the Table Office attendants will assist you and your staff.

Parliament House Lifts – Use During Ringing of the Bells

It has also come to my attention from some members that lifts are being used by non-members during the ringing of the division bells. The lifts are for members use only during the ringing of the bells so they can get back to the Chamber in time. Please advise your staff and guests that members take priority to get to the Chamber when the bells are ringing. Non-members may finish a lift journey but should not call a lift if the bells are ringing and should not assume all members are already in the Chamber.

Legislative Assembly Facebook Page

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I am pleased to advise of the launch of the Legislative Assembly's Facebook page today. This page will help keep Territorians in touch with events and information about the Assembly. I encourage you all to 'Like' the page. Member for Nelson, do you have a Facebook page?

Mr Higgins: He doesn't have a phone.

Mr Wood: There must be a point of order there somewhere.

MOTION Establishment of an Estimates Committee

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly appoints an Estimates Committee, and I seek leave to have the terms of the motion as circulated yesterday incorporated. They are on the Notice Paper, but there will be a slight amendment, which will be circulated soon. We have discussed that amendment with the opposition and Independent members; it is just to clarify that proxy members to the Estimates Committee will make a quorum.

From time to time this becomes an issue during the estimates process. We want to be as flexible as possible in allowing for the committee to keep going forward and to operate and provide scrutiny of government but be flexible to opposition, Independent and government members who may take ill or have different circumstances.

I move that an Estimates Committee and a committee on Government Owned Corporation Scrutiny be established with the terms of reference I just explained and set out in the Notice Paper. I seek leave of the Assembly to have those words incorporated into the Minutes of Proceedings. Those associated notes were circulated yesterday.

We have spoken at length in the Assembly about the need to improve openness and transparency as a response to the appalling behaviour we witnessed from the previous government over the last four years. We have already implemented reforms to Question Time, getting rid of Dorothy Dix questions on Wednesdays. We have allocated more time to the General Business day on Wednesdays and moved it to an earlier time so it is more accessible to those members of the community who wish to attend and provide scrutiny of the community, and the media. Previously GBD would go into the evening on a Wednesday and miss the opportunity for that evening's bulletin.

We are also proposing a number of changes to estimates this year. I look back to 2002, when the then Labor Clare Martin government established the estimates process. This process has been in place for 15 years, serving through Labor and CLP governments. It is an important part of our democracy.

We are making changes so we can be more open and transparent with Territorians. We will review these changes in 12 months to make sure they are workable. We want to see these changes stay in place for another 15 years or more so that we can look back, as an Assembly, and say we played a huge part in providing openness and transparency to our community.

The proposed changes to estimates have come about through a number of venues. Madam Speaker, you submitted a discussion paper on Assembly committee reform in February 2015. Whilst it did not specify and propose changes to the estimates process, it discussed the idea of establishing committees for the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

Prior to the election last year, in our trust and integrity reform discussion paper Territory Labor proposed changes to estimates to allow fuller scrutiny of government expenditure. It is proposed that consideration could be given to splitting estimates so there would be scrutiny of the budget allocations and how the money was expended through the annual reports scrutiny.

One of the first acts of this government was to establish the Select Committee on Opening Parliament to the People, which was invited to consider both these discussion papers. The committee members were the Member for Fong Lim, who chaired the committee; the Member for Araluen, who was the Deputy Chair; the Leader of the Opposition, Gary Higgins; the Member for Karama, Ngaree Ah Kit; the Member for Stuart, Scott McConnell; the Member for Sanderson, Kate Worden; the Member for Namatjira, Chansey Paech; and the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood.

The select committee reported to the Assembly, and its recommendations were considered earlier this week. The government accepted the majority of the recommendations from the select committee. A small number were referred back to the Standing Orders Committee to provide advice back to the Assembly on procedural matters. There were also some recommendations that the government was not able to support, and these were mostly due to budget constraints.

I note that the Leader of the Opposition raised some concerns in relation to the Estimates Committee this year in a media release, and I take the opportunity, as part of this debate, to respond to those comments. The Leader of the Opposition has claimed that this move will see budget scrutiny cut in half and that this government has halved the estimates hearings from 60 hours to 30 hours. He further said:

Without a shred of consultation with the Opposition or Independent members or the community, the Government has slashed the budget estimates in half—replacing it instead with a review of annual reports.

I take a moment to draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to page 17 of the select committee's Green Paper on Parliamentary Reform, which was issued in October 2016. I quote from section seven, Consideration of Estimates and Annual Reports:

To enable ministers to be questioned on their agencies' performance in a more timely manner, it is proposed that the two weeks of Estimates hearings be replaced by one week of Estimates hearings in June and one week of hearings Annual Reports later in the year.

That is from the Green Paper from the select committee in October 2016. Furthermore, on page six of the opposition's submission to the select committee Green Paper, signed by the Leader of the Opposition on 28 November 2016, he goes on to say, under the section entitled Consideration of Estimates and Annual Reports:

To enable ministers to be questioned on their agencies' performance in a more timely manner, it is proposed that the two weeks of Estimates hearings be replaced by one week of Estimates hearings in June and one week of Annual Reports later in the year.

The proposal was supported by the opposition members at that point. If that was not enough notice of their clear indication of support, I wrote to the committee in March confirming the government's continued support for one week of estimates in June and one week of scrutiny of the annual reports in November. The committee's draft recommendations detailed in Recommendation 18 state:

The Committee recommends that the portfolio scrutiny committees hold 60 hours of Estimates and Government Owned Corporations scrutiny hearings over two weeks in June and a week's Annual Reports hearings in November, with the two committees holding consecutive hearings.

At page seven of my response to the committee's draft recommendation I said:

Government does not support this recommendation.

This differs from previous recommendation of one week of Estimates in June and one week of Annual reports scrutiny in November. Proposed changes to Estimates committee will still need to operate within established Estimates timeframes and frameworks. There are currently two weeks assigned for Estimates committee in June—this will be separated into two separate weeks and it is not anticipated that there will be an additional allocation of hours for this to occur.

The Government supports one week of Estimates in June and one week of Annual reports scrutiny in November, as per previously supported recommendations in the SCOPP Green Paper.

I also want to speak about the level of communication and consultation between the committee members. The level of communication between the committee members and I was appropriate and it would appear from the report that the committee agreed on this matter. From page six of the Opening Parliament to the People Committee Report:

The Committee has also sought comment from the Leader of Government Business ...

Which is me:

... on its draft recommendations to give the Committee the opportunity to address any concerns the Government might raise before reporting to the Assembly. The Committee then met with the Minister to reconcile key differences of opinion. I thank the Minister for the assistance she gave the Committee and her open approach to improving how the Assembly works.

It goes on to say at page 16 of the select committee report that:

The Committee then developed 27 draft recommendations, which it referred to the Leader of Government Business for comment on 20 February 2017. The Leader of Government Business provided feedback on 10 March 2017. The Committee met with the Leader of Government Business on 22 March 2017 to discuss this feedback.

The Leader of the Opposition was seemingly so impressed with the level of communication between the committee and I that he moved to put our correspondence on the website.

From the consolidated minutes of the proceedings of the select committee on 28 March 2017, at item three, Publication of Correspondence:

Mr Higgins moved and Mr Wood seconded

That the Committee authorises the publication of its letters to the Leader of Government Business dated 20 February 2017 and 13 March 2017, and her reply received 10 March 2017.

Leader of the Opposition, you placed these on the website.

I have to say how surprised I was that the Leader of the Opposition raised concerns with, as he put out in his press release yesterday, 'the part-day public holidays for polities on Wednesday mornings', particularly because it was a recommendation from the select committee that he sat on. The committee report details that:

The Committee's Green Paper proposed that Wednesday mornings of sitting weeks be set aside for Committee meetings which, depending on the committees' needs, would allow up to five hours' time for meetings.

I get more surprised as I look through this correspondence and these reports. The Leader of the Opposition wanted every morning to be committee time. In his submission in response to the select committee's Green Paper, on page five under the section entitled Allocating Committee Time, the Leader of the Opposition proposed:

The Opposition proposes that two hours be allocated on each sitting day, i.e., Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1000 to noon for Committees to convene as required in accordance with the Assembly business awaiting its consideration.

If the Leader of the Opposition really thinks that Wednesday committee meetings are ‘part-day public holidays for polities’—he proposed that we have every day as a part-day public holiday for committees.

The recommendation by the committee, accepted by this Assembly on Tuesday, was, under Recommendation 5:

- (a) the Assembly commence sittings on Wednesdays at 2.00 pm to enable the portfolio scrutiny committees to conduct business on those mornings, and*
- (b) in addition to their Wednesday morning meetings, the portfolio scrutiny committees adopt the practice of holding public hearings on Bills on the Mondays of weeks in which the Assembly sits as far as practicable.*

This really shows why the establishment of these committees needs to be referred back to the Standing Orders Committee to report back to the Assembly. In this report there was no proposed routine of business for the Assembly.

There was no explanation of the process to determine whether the committee would need to meet every Wednesday that the House meets, and there is no process to detail whether the Assembly sits when the committees do not have a full morning of business.

I am not reflecting on the quality of the report. This detailed project and review was carried out over nearly six months. We recognise the massive amount of work that every committee member put in to prepare this report. You, Madam Speaker, more than anybody, know how important the standing orders are for the smooth running of our complex parliament.

We have standing orders that guide us as we go forward. They are the rule book for this parliament. They are complex and intersecting, and they need to be continuously reviewed. It is appropriate that the Standing Orders Committee would consider these recommendations for inquiry and report on procedural matters.

Even the Opposition Leader understood the appropriateness of referring these recommendations to the Standing Orders Committee. On Tuesday night, during consideration of the select committee report, the Leader of the Opposition said:

We will be interested to see which recommendations the government will not accept. I think it will probably accept most of them. Whether they end up being referred to the Standing Orders Committee, I think, is acceptable.

I had conversations with the Leader of the Opposition about this. I was surprised when we heard Independent members say there was no consultation. I had been very open with members, chatting to them, saying we accepted the majority of the recommendations of the report. Some recommendations had budgetary restraints around them that we were unable to accept, and there were a couple that we were going to refer to the Standing Orders Committee to make sure we have the procedures right, for the reasons that have now come up. What do we do on a Wednesday morning if there is no committee business? How do we provide for that?

We want to make sure we provide the allocation of times for these scrutiny committees, but there will be times, I imagine, having sat on past committees, when you plan to meet but have to wait on information and it will not have come in yet, so we need to provide the means for us to be back in the Chamber.

It is important that we make this clear; we are not cutting the estimates process in half. We are providing additional scrutiny for Territorians. Twice a year the government ministers will come together and provide information to the public and the committee. The first part will be on the budgets and the second part will be on annual reports. By the time we get to the estimates period we are going back to an annual report from September or October of the previous year, that is, from the full financial year before that. It is information that is potentially 18 months old.

This new process will provide that scrutiny within a short period of time of the annual reports being published. Are government agencies spending the appropriation on which it has been allocated, and what is the validity of those programs? This is very important.

Annual reports are very important documents and we need to scrutinise them in that short time frame after they are published. Apart from some questions and adjournment speeches, there is no real opportunity to scrutinise those reports and ask questions of ministers and government agency CEOs.

As I said from the outset, we were very open with these changes; we had published them before we were elected as a government. Looking back to 15 years ago, in 2002, when the then government made changes—I will take a moment to reflect on those changes.

The former Labor government first established estimates in its current format. The first Estimates Committee, incidentally, was a recommendation stemming from a Public Accounts Committee inquiry following some very serious allegations about the validity and accuracy of the budget data presented by the former CLP Treasurer, Mike Reed, to parliament—a slight segue, but quite interesting. The Member for Nelson would recollect this.

It was alleged that the then estimated expenditure of the Territory health services for 2000–01 was artificially reduced to show an increased expenditure equivalent to the CPI in 2001–02, which was, funnily enough, an election period. The then CEO of the Health department alleged that he had informed the minister, Stephen Dunham, of this proposed deception.

That is how we started with estimates, and since then there have been continual reviews to ensure best practice of the Estimates Committee in regard to its allocation and procedures.

We acknowledge the undertaking for the government departments to prepare information for estimates is considerable, but it is very important. A number of us on this side have previously worked in the public service and know how huge estimates preparation is for those agencies. But it is required to ensure proper scrutiny of the government's proposed expenditure is as complete as possible.

We are taking this forward to make sure we properly scrutinise annual reports so the allocation—was it spent on the programs and what was the outcome?

I acknowledge the Opposition Leader in his various roles as a minister in the previous government—Sport and Recreation, Senior Territorians, Young Territorians, Environment, Primary Industry, and Land Resource Management. The Opposition Leader was considered in his approach to estimates. I compliment him on that. I always felt, as a member of the Estimates Committee asking questions, that he was very respectful of the process.

Do not let me start on some of his colleagues—the CLP government and its disrespectful behaviour in the estimates period. We had a shocking display from the former Chief Minister when he deliberately wasted time and read slowly to avoid answering questions. Most of the former CLP Cabinet flat out refused to table their answers to written questions. They sat there, wasting time, reading them out. It was completely disrespectful of the estimates process. Sadly, that behaviour was indicative of the lack of respect the former CLP government had for Territorians.

We have been open and transparent with Territorians in bringing these changes forward. We talked about this before the election. The Chief Minister has been on the Public Accounts Committee for a number of years, both in government and opposition. These are well-thought-out changes to open our parliament to additional scrutiny. We are doubling the time periods—two different times of the year the government will be scrutinised.

This motion will have the effect of establishing the Estimates Committee going forward. We have been specific; the 60 hours will be split into two different parts of the year. The government owned corporations have always had two or three hours allocated to them. It is generally eight hours for the Chief Minister and the Treasurer, and seven hours for each additional minister.

Those time frames will still be there. There will still be scrutiny of the government-owned corporations and individual ministers' portfolios. The committee has the flexibility between the 30 hours in June and November to call the ministers when they see fit. They might like to speak to the Treasurer for five or six hours ahead of the Appropriation Bill.

For other ministers where budget allocation is clear, the intensity of scrutiny needs to be around the programs and delivering. That scrutiny will be provided within close proximity to the annual reports.

If in 2002 our parliament had not been brave enough to take on estimates as we see it now, where would we have been over the last 15 years? For the last four years we have been grateful for the estimates process, when ministers did not read slowly, for providing scrutiny. We believe this change, providing additional scrutiny of the annual reports—we have said clearly from the outset that we will review all this in 12 months' time to see how it has worked.

One must question why those opposite are so against these changes. I know, by human nature, people do not like change, but we need to step out of our comfort zone of how we have delivered estimates for the past 15 years and try something new to provide Territorians with the accountability, openness and transparency they are craving.

We have never seen such a dysfunctional government in the Northern Territory as we saw over the last four years. I want to remind Territorians that by this time in the previous CLP government we had already had two Chief Ministers, four Deputy Chief Minister, six ministries, two Police ministers, three Treasurers, three Business ministers, three Education ministers and three Housing ministers. We had a minister for Families and Children then we had a minister for Children and Families because, apparently, they accidentally renamed their government agency.

The CLP government was so appalling that a book was written about it. It was literally called 'An instruction manual on how not to run a government'. Cabinet members created insults for each other. We had to come back to parliament for an extra day, with all the associated costs of running this Assembly, because somebody went to lunch early. They could not do their numbers; they literally went to lunch early.

It seems every time we bring reforms of this nature, the opposition members complain we do not go far enough. They had four years to bring in reforms but were busy fighting about who got the tickets to the best events rather than doing their job. Madam Speaker, I am sure you have seen 50-year-old tractors run better than the CLP when it was in government.

We are getting on with the job of government. We are bringing openness and transparency. We have been elected by Territorians with a mandate to be open and transparent, and to govern. I encourage those opposite to embrace this process just for 12 months. Then we can review it to see how it worked and what it provided Territorians in terms of accountability.

Rather than be the pessimist and put out press releases criticising your own recommendations, let us embrace this, move forward and see how it works for 12 months. Then we can provide scrutiny. As a government we are very genuine in wanting scrutiny.

The slight amendment I need to move is about insisting that proxy members can be nominated, prior to the hearing, to the Chair and they can make a quorum. We want to see the Estimates Committee run. We do not want to have measures in place that will block it.

I encourage those opposite to stop whingeing and get on board with this openness and transparency.

I commend the motion to the House.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I was not going to talk initially, but I find that I have to, to refute a couple of the statements that have been made.

The opposition and the Independents have—they can talk for themselves—been co-operative and support changes to the process. The question we have is about cutting estimates to 30 hours.

Firstly I want to point out that the submission from the Country Liberals in response to the Green Paper is quite clear. I will give you one quote to start:

The new scrutiny committees ...

Emphasis on plural:

... would replace the former Subordinate Legislation and Publications, Public Accounts and Legal and Constitutional Affairs committees as the new committees will perform these committees' functions.

Note that it is plural. The Green Paper spoke of committees as plural. The response was in regard to committees plural. To clarify that even further, where the Attorney-General pointed out that we supported the split into two weeks—I will now read the second paragraph, which was deliberately omitted: 'Both the estimates and the annual reports hearings would be conducted by the two scrutiny committees and each committee would be asking questions relating to their allocated agencies.'

In other words, the response was on the basis that each of those committees would do a week each, and a week each on annual reports.

When we say we supported the recommendations—partially quoting our response is completely misleading. You need to look at the whole response.

The other issue I would like to raise is that when the Attorney-General came to that committee there was clear discussion that the 60 hours, when you have one committee, was satisfactory, but the option on how those hours should be split was based on the Independents and the opposition deciding on that split. That was the basis of the recommendation.

The issue we have with the 30 hours is that the government says it wants to open the parliament to the public. The bill that is produced is a piece of legislation. If we want to consult further on the legislation we have a government that says, 'You can only ask questions for 30 hours and then, furthermore, you can only debate it in this parliament for five'. Where else are you restricting the debate on a piece of legislation?

I want to go back to some of the things I would have said. We have a government which, prior to the election, said, 'We are "gunner" open up the parliament; we are "gunner" be open and transparent; we are "gunner" pick solutions that are based on evidence.' The one thing this government did not do was say it was 'gunner' be honest. Territorians assumed it would be, and the debate in this House this morning and yesterday lets me, as a Territorian, know that we have a government that is not willing to be honest.

If we go back to the beginning—how open and transparent was it when the first thing they did in this parliament was introduce a piece of legislation that gave us two half-day holidays? Where was the open, transparent consulting and evidence base? The pathetic excuse that it would increase the population of the Territory was compounded yesterday when our Chief Minister said, 'We needed it to be competitive'. Where is the evidence around any of that? How did the population increase? He cannot have it.

The excuse that constantly comes from the government is, 'We are doing it differently to what you did'. If people cannot justify their policies on the basis of the performance of those policies, and stoop to gutter politics and pick on individuals, it shows that they cannot back their words. They have to get into the gutter and accuse people of things falsely.

Let us go to the next one, Dan Murphy's; how many furrphies have there been about Dan Murphy's? Heaps. A private business wants to come here. No evidence has been produced when we asked for it that says floor space ...

Mr Gunner: What will you base your policy on then? Base your policy on evidence; we based ours on evidence.

Mr HIGGINS: I will get to that, Chief Minister—that says floor space will restrict the effects of alcohol. I have said in the House before, and I will repeat it—people on the other side say that it was our policy. I have said it here and in the media, and I will say it again. There was never a submission put to Cabinet; it was never a decision made by Cabinet; it was never a proposal put to the parliamentary wing; it was never a decision that we made; it was never a motion put to Central Council; and it has never been approved as party policy.

You say it was our policy; it was not. We did not receive the \$50 000 that you should now refer to the ICAC. We did not receive any donation. I have seen that sprouted around, but if that is being open, honest, accountable and transparent—I do not know what is. We can continue on from there—this whole sham around the estimates. We had a report produced by a committee that had a majority Labor membership; it made recommendations and you are not accepting some of them.

You want to open it up and be transparent; how are we having an inquiry? Let us look at the alcohol inquiry. You said, 'We will ban Dan Murphy's and kill private industry, the people we want to support'. Yesterday our Chief Minister accused me of consulting with the retailers for petrol, to get an opinion. Who did he get his opinion from when he came up with his 400 square metres? He got his opinion from the bank cheque from the AHA!

Mr GUNNER: A point of order, Madam Speaker. He needs to withdraw that.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, please withdraw.

Mr HIGGINS: I withdraw.

He got his opinion from the AHA. They wrote to him and asked him if he would support the 400 square metres, and he did. I think the question needs to be answered, when was the money received? I will be making it the pride of my life to submit that to the ICAC.

Mr GUNNER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! That has all been publicly released by the party; we have been open and transparent about all of that.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, it is not a point of order; please be seated.

Mr HIGGINS: We have a Chief Minister who says we cannot speak to the petrol companies, but he can talk to the AHA. The petrol companies did not give us money, but I will speak to them. The AHA did not give us money, and I will speak to them too.

It does not stop there. Not only did they say, 'We will not have this 400 square metres', but they then said, 'We will not have lockout laws or minimum prices in bottle shops'. Then they announced an inquiry that excludes some of these things. They bring in the Banned Drinker Register and carry on as if they have evidence on that.

I support a Banned Drinker Register, but I question the evidence around it. You cannot say everything else is rubbish, point fingers, say there is evidence that shows they are rubbish and never produce it, and then introduce a policy by an evidence-based government when there is no evidence.

Territorians deserve a lot better than a Gunner government and that title will stay around well past our current Chief Minister. The move to restrict the number of hours of estimates, which is an investigation into a bill, is outrageous. In the past we have always had the 60 hours and we should continue with it. We on this side do not accept the split of 30 hours and 30 hours with one committee, and I do not think it will be accepted by any of the Independents. It will not be accepted by Territorians as a way in which a government would be open and accountable.

We object to the motion.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, the Leader of Government Business referenced an amendment but did not move the amendment, so I move that the terms of reference as circulated be amended to delete all words in paragraph two after 'proxy members can', and insert 'also make up the quorum if previously nominated to the Chair in writing'.

Mrs Finnochiaro: Madam Speaker, that will be circulated.

Mrs Lambley: We have not seen the amendment though.

Mr GUNNER: I will pick up on some of the points the Leader of the Opposition made.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, please pause. I want to have a quick look at the amendment. Are you saying to number two?

Ms Fyles: It is what I talked about, but I forgot to formally move the motion.

Madam SPEAKER: Okay, it is coming. Chief Minister, could you just explain what the amendment does.

Mr GUNNER: The Leader of Government Business spoke to the amendment and described it, but she did not formally move the amendment. It is about the proxy to allow better maintenance of quorum during the

Estimates Committee hearings. This is what the Leader of Government Business discussed with the opposition and Independents prior to moving the motion.

Mrs Finocchiaro: We cannot move the amendment until members have seen it.

Madam SPEAKER: If you would like to get your members back in the Chamber. It is in regard to, from what I can ascertain, allowing proxies for members of the committee.

Mr GUNNER: The Leader of Government Business spoke to the amendment in her comments but did not formally move it; I am now formally moving the amendment.

Mr Wood: Just as long as we are not voting on it at the moment.

Mr GUNNER: No, I am not putting the question; I am moving an amendment to the original motion. I will speak to the motion and the amendment. Any future speakers from here will speak to the motion and amendment. Any past speakers can speak to the amendment only. Are we all up to speed?

Talking to some of the points the Leader of the Opposition made, as a person who has sat on the Public Accounts Committee and the Estimates Committee for many years, and chairing the Estimates Committee for four years, I know it is an important vehicle for the scrutiny of the budget. The budget bill is the most heavily scrutinised bill in parliament.

What often happens at the Estimates Committee is this mishmash of how the money will be spent. That is the point of estimates, to discuss the estimates in the budget and how the money will be spent. A lot of time is spent discussing how the money was spent, and often that information is out of date. The annual reports come in the September/October period, six months down the track. If departments have information it is around the 31 March mark. It is not a timely examination of how the money was spent.

Our conversation in opposition, and now in government, is that better, timelier scrutiny needs to be applied to annual reports and how the money was spent. The Estimates Committee has evolved along the journey, from 2002 to having 60 hours to cover how the money will be spent and how it was spent.

Let us make this neat and clear; let us split that time. Ministers are held to account twice a year instead of once. They are held to account in how we say we will spend the money, the purpose of estimates, and how the money was spent. As this goes forward over time it will become the most important part of the examination, the second period of scrutiny. 'That is what you said you would do; did you do it?' That is the importance of the annual report process.

I want, beyond our time in this Chamber, for future ministers, CEOs and public servants to know we will be scrutinising how the money was spent. That is where the accounting will be. The estimates is one thing, how you intend to spend the money, but it is crucial to examine performance. Too many annual reports remain unread or read by too few. The Member for Nelson probably reads every annual report every year; I think he deserves a gold star for that.

As the former Chair of the Public Accounts Committee I know we used to have the annual reports (inaudible) process to celebrate annual reports. Frank, the former Auditor-General, and I often had chats about the importance of annual reports and how too few people really scrutinise them. There is a lot of information in annual reports.

When I first entered the estimates period as an opposition member, as opposed to government, following the Member for Nelson's path of reading all the annual reports in my patch, I wrote many questions based on those reports for the estimates process and most of them did not work; they were too old, too dated. I was frustrated by that, and the longer I was involved in estimates—as important as annual reports are, they became less relevant as a source of the questions in the estimates process, because time had moved on from those annual reports being tabled.

I found that all very frustrating, and I think this is a much better way to apply scrutiny to a very important part of what government does. This is what government does. Scrutiny should be applied fresh after the annual reports have been tabled; that is the importance of the November session and why we think it should be evenly split.

As ministers we will be held to account twice a year in that format, instead of once a year. This is a very important reform, ongoing to how we operate as a parliament beyond this term. It is applying scrutiny at a very important point in the year, the November sittings, as to how the money was spent.

We did not start with 60 hours for estimates; it has grown as we tried to cover these two things, and now we are moving into the 30/30 format, applying scrutiny twice a year. I think this is an important reform, and I thank the committee for its work in getting to this point. The opposition debates what level of support it gives. My reading of the committee report is that the opposition supports it. It wants its politics of convenience, but I believe this is a very important reform that goes to how we scrutinise the behaviour of government.

I was surprised by the attack from the opposition on the idea of committees on Wednesday mornings. This is literally opening parliament to the people. I hope they will choose the opportunity to meet on the floor of parliament, and they will be able to invite people in. That is something the former Clerk was big on. He used to argue for estimates to be conducted on the floor of parliament. That would have been very difficult, with all the people involved in estimates.

We want people outside this Chamber to have the opportunity to speak in the Chamber. That is important reform. The opposition put forward three days a week that it should happen, not one, and then criticised that it is happening one day a week. I found that surprising. I thought the Leader of Government Business was rather forensic in her approach to what has gone on to get to this point. We think these are important reforms that go to scrutiny and making sure we do our job better.

As the Chief Minister, I know that come November I will be questioned by the opposition and Independents about whether I have done what I said I would do. My CEOs will be quizzed by the opposition and Independents about whether we have done what we said we would do. All the public servants who work under us will be answering questions on whether we have done what we said we would do.

In June—here is your estimate. In November—here is the delivery. Questions and answers will be much more timely, and this is a better, more fitting acknowledgement of the importance of annual reports. A lot of work goes into the drafting of an annual report—a CEO usually signs off on it—just as a lot of work goes into the estimates process.

We welcome the work you have done on preparing your annual reports. We will be able to fully acknowledge that work and put you in a public space where we can discuss the work that has been done, and we can report on our delivery. That is critical; we are here to deliver for Territorians. In estimates we talk about what we will do, and in the annual reports hearing we will talk about what we have done. This is a very important evolution of how we examine the work of ministers.

I commend this motion to the House.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I oppose the motion moved by the Leader of Government Business.

This motion is symptomatic of a Chief Minister and government that are running scared from Territorians. They are running from scrutiny and are scared by their own budget, which was only handed down last week. They are running scared from Territorians, who might just see the truth behind this Chief Minister and how evasive he is, how chaotic his Labor government is, and that the budget is well and truly not up to the scrutiny that ought to be applied fairly by the opposition and the cross bench through a well-established, legitimate estimates process that has served this parliament for 15 years. The parliament has watched a Labor government come in and slice the heart out of it, cut the guts out of it and halve it.

This is rubbish that we are hearing from the Gunner Labor government to try to justify what is only a cut. It is a 50% cut in the hours to an estimates process. Estimates is the process of scrutinising the bill. Annual reports are a whole other story. I will get to that.

Regardless of the outcome of this motion—we know the government has the numbers and will ram it through like it does with all its other thought bubbles in this House. I say to the Gunner government, it does not matter how much you try to hide from questioning, scrutiny and being up front with Territorians; in the end you will be exposed and Territorians will see you for what you really are.

This government came to the election making an outright commitment to put people before politics, and what we are seeing with this motion is 100% politics before people.

The Labor Party, when in opposition, crowed about bringing trust, transparency and openness back to the people, parliament and government.

Territorians watching this now, reading about it tomorrow or watching it on tonight's news will see from this motion that those promises made last year, in the lead-up to the election, and which continue to be made in this Chamber were farcical rubbish. You are not true to your word whatsoever. Those opposite who take part in Labor's Caucus and sit around to debate this matter—you are all complicit in this decision. It is a decision to cut the scrutiny, to cut Territorians out of a process they have been a part of for well over a decade.

As I have explained, this motion seeks to cut the estimates process from the five-and-a-half days proposed in the sittings calendar to just two-and-a-half. What should have been 60 hours of opposition and cross bench scrutiny time of the government's budget has been cut down to 30. This drastically reduces our ability on this side of the Chamber to do our job on behalf of Territorians, which is to scrutinise the budget. It astounds me that you have gone to this level to protect your ministry.

Not only has the time for estimates been shamelessly halved, but we are also expected to squeeze questions into that time frame not only on the budget, but also on the performance of the government-owned corporations. That has been squeezed into that time allocation as one and the same, when traditionally they have been separate. The time allocated by the government in this motion does not even come close to what is required to properly scrutinise a budget that is spending in excess of \$7bn. That is a lot of money. It takes a lot of time to go through those numbers.

As a former Chair of the Estimates Committee during the 12th Assembly I have experience in how estimates has operated in the past and what is required structurally for the process to offer the opposition and Independent members the time they need to go through the process. It is a framework in which estimates operates to allow Independent members and the opposition, whoever they are at whatever point in time in political cycles, the opportunity to scrutinise the budget. It is distinct from an opportunity to scrutinise annual reports later in the year. The decision the government is making here today guts the estimates process and prevents those on that side of the House from doing their job. It makes our job extremely difficult.

It is a disgrace that estimates will be halved in this parliament today; it is shameful. In the previous Assembly, Estimates Committees often sat from 8.30 am to 10 pm and sometimes even after that. Under the previous Labor government in 2012 the estimates committee sat for a total of 60 hours before it put the Appropriation Bill to the House. This was changed in 2013 under the Country Liberal government when estimates was opened right up, and on one occasion we sat until 2 am, which was well in excess of 70 hours of scrutiny during the estimates process.

This is where I come back to speaking about structure. The timetable set by the Estimates Committee allows for a structure, for opposition and Independent members to say, 'We need the Chief Minister for this long and the Primary Industry and Resources minister for this long', and allocate time to go through the budget estimates.

Often, as the Member for Nelson may add in his contribution, the annual reports are used in informing one's questions during that process. It is a long-time practice that annual reports are read, analysed, looked at and used to inform one's questioning along with the budget—they go together—when asking questions of ministers.

The timetable allows the opposition and cross bench members the opportunity to fully scrutinise the budget. Time and again we hear the Attorney-General use this excuse of the appalling behaviour of ministers—yadda yadda yadda. The estimates process is a framework; how individual ministers behave on any given day is fortunately, and unfortunately, entirely a matter for them. It is the framework that is important. Ultimately, if a minister answers or does not answer questions very well, it is entirely in their hands, and no one can stop that.

There are rules of procedure, just like in the Chamber, that a Chair can enforce regarding codes of conduct, behaviour and time limits. Other than that, the quality, whether it is there or not, of a minister contributing to estimates is entirely up to the minister. What is important is the framework so the opposition and Independents can do their job and say to the parliament, 'We need this long to scrutinise the budget for this department'.

The process the government has put in place by splitting estimates in half and allocating it to annual reports in November is unbelievable, because in November the budget has already passed. We have two weeks of estimates, go into parliament, debate it and then the bill is passed or not passed. It is usually passed because the government has the numbers.

By splitting estimates in half you are halving the ability to scrutinise the budget before it is passed. By scrutinising annual reports later in the year—that is a worthy process in itself. If this government was fair dinkum in openness, transparency and accountability, why would it not maintain the traditional 60 hours of estimates for scrutiny of the budget, as unequivocally distinct from annual reports in November? You could easily have the two weeks for estimates and, later in the year, create a new week for scrutiny of annual reports. That would be welcomed; that is a legitimate way of questioning annual reports, but not at the expense of an estimates process, which is a separate process and must be done prior to the passing of the budget. There is no escaping that.

Falling short of that, will the government hold over the passing of its bill until after the annual reports process? I do not think so. This proposal does not make any logical sense whatsoever, and Territorians understand that. Why would you, as a government, try to usurp Territorians' right to have the actions of their government scrutinised?

This is taxpayers' money; it is not the Labor Party's money; it is Territorians' money. Our job, the responsibility beholden on all of us, is to ask questions about the expenditure of taxpayers' money. Many Territorians tune in to estimates to see and hear that process. Many Territorians come in, and it is wonderful to see people attending the public hearings. It is an open process; it is a lengthy, extensive and exhaustive process, and it is necessary and valuable, distinct from any new process of scrutinising annual reports separately.

Everything we have seen from the Chief Minister over the past eight months has indicated that this government cannot hack it. It does not trust its ministers to answer questions in estimates. It is now saying to us, 'You can have the Chief Minister and the Treasurer for eight hours, but not in one go; you have to split it up into some in the middle of the year and some at the end.' How do you put a price on breaking up that time? It is ridiculous.

The Chief Minister has often in this House been unable to handle scrutiny or criticism of his actions and of government policy. We are now hearing these unhinged rants by the Chief Minister in Question Time, attacks on the opposition and cross bench members—talk about playing the man, not the ball. When in opposition this government would stand here and say, 'Play the ball, not the man'. Now we are seeing this unhinged attack on members of the opposition and the cross bench, with a hefty 18-strong government flexing its muscles and showing its real might, covering up for one another and hiding behind things.

If you have a good policy, stand up and argue it. This morning, in contribution to this debate, the Attorney-General shamelessly quoted from the opposition's submission to the committee, misquoting and selecting little pieces that suited her argument to misinform Territorians. The Opposition Leader very eloquently restated and reread for the record—which is available on the Legislative Assembly's website for all Territorians to read.

When she commented about supporting a one-week estimates hearing, that was based on two scrutiny committees, which was the proposal at the time. Each committee would be sitting at the same time for a week, so you would have ministers fronting two separate committees. That still equates to a total of 60 hours because it is two separate committees. We are seeing the old one-committee version sliced in half, completely gutted. It is very different.

We are told by the Leader of Government Business that all is not lost, and from the motion we will get three days in November to examine these annual reports. Why? Where did this idea come from? If you are legitimate about opening the parliament to the people, have a two-week estimates process and a separate week at the end of the year. The impression that was given to the opposition and the crossbenchers was that the global 60 hours would be, rightly so, split by the opposition and crossbenchers for them to decide where to allocate their time.

From my discussions I know there was a general consensus that a 50/10 split was about right. This 30/30 split is outrageous. It is not accepted by the opposition. It flies in the face of the process and the intent—the whole reason the committee was set up. It is meant to increase openness and transparency not take it away and swap it for something else. It is astonishing and disappointing. I cannot understand why this government continues to stand in this House and make these politically coward moves to avoid proper

scrutiny and stop the inner workings of this government from being on public display. That must be what this decision is about. It is not about openness and transparency; it is about trying to be clever with words and trick people into believing they are trying to be something they are not.

As I have said, annual reports are very important. If this government was legitimate about them it would not do them in isolation or at the sacrifice of the estimates process. Estimates are about scrutinising the budget so it can be passed; annual reports are entirely different. It is within the scope of members to use previous year's annual reports in informing their questions during the estimates process.

If you are so proud of this government and of this budget, why are you not confident and willing enough to test it through the rigorous estimates scrutiny? Why will you not let it be seen for what it is through processes that have worked in the past, which you have availed yourselves of? Why are you going to this extent to deprive Territorians of the process?

Some of this was highlighted by my colleague, the Opposition Leader. We have seen this type of behaviour before, but today really takes the cake. I remind Territorians and government members of the snap decision to institute part-day public holidays on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, dressed up as a way to increase population. I cannot wait to see how that is going.

It showed that this is not a government that is about consultation. No one in the business or any other community was consulted. It was a snap decision and it had the reverse effect of what they wanted. They talk about evidence-based approaches. Where is the evidence that two part-day public holidays will increase population growth? It starved Territorians of work. Businesses closed their doors because of this impost on them.

Mr Paech: It supported workers of the Northern Territory.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: People could not go to work, Member for Namatjira. The whole point is for a government to support jobs, but it cut jobs for Territorians at the most difficult, vulnerable and expensive time of the year without any consultation whatsoever. It was disgusting.

We have also seen this government, in an astonishing move, gag ministers from answering two questions in a row on Wednesdays. On Tuesdays and Thursdays it is fine. On Tuesdays and Thursdays you often have the Treasurer answering five questions in a row, or the Chief Minister answering four questions in a row. They are happy to do it on Tuesdays and Thursdays, but on Wednesdays something weird happens and the Attorney-General gags everyone and you cannot ask two questions in a row. This flies in the face of the intention to have only cross bench and opposition Question Time.

Why would you not allow your ministers to answer two questions in a row? It shows what little confidence you have in their ability. It is much like only allowing them to front up to estimates for one week because you have no faith in their ability to be scrutinised for the time it takes to scrutinise departmental budgets.

We are seeing a government ramming through a decision today to protect its own interests and not advance the interests of Territorians. Where is the openness and transparency? There is none. We participated in this process in good faith. We want to make this parliament a better place. We welcomed with open arms the aspiration of this government to open the parliament.

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request an extension of time for the Deputy Opposition Leader, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FINOCCHIARO: We have seen the opposite result of the intention of the process. That is damaging accountability and Territorians' opportunity to see the budget for what it is.

The opposition has attempted numerous times to raise these concerns with the government. It has fallen on deaf ears. Ultimately we will see this government ram it through today. Make no mistake, the Territory will be worse off for it.

The opposition's position on this motion is that it is an attempt by the government to avoid scrutiny and usurp their duty to Territorians. Shame on you for that. You have failed the test set by Territorians based on your own promises at the last election to be open, fair and transparent when in government.

What you are doing now could not be in starker contrast to that promise. This motion is a disgrace and it should be treated by the Assembly as such. I call on honourable members to join the opposition in opposing this motion and trying to restore faith to Territorians in our institutions.

Remember, each and every one of you will be forever attributed to this disastrous change to the estimates process. I condemn this motion to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed listening to the various opinions on this motion.

It is interesting, looking back at the history, as the Leader of Government Business did—putting all the blame on the CLP. I sat on every Estimates Committee when Labor was in government. Many ministers would conveniently talk for so long that they could only get a couple questions in before time would run out. There were tactics that might seem on the surface as being proper, but in many cases a minister filibustered on both sides. There is no doubt about that.

Questions were sent to every department about how many square metres of carpet they had. You would get that question answered. Hopefully, with the changes being recommended in this paper, those questions will have gone out and been answered before the Estimates Committee so that whomever asked those questions can then ask the minister about the answers if they so desire.

There were times we could have been more efficient. There were many times we did not cover many of the portfolios ministers had, and that was disappointing.

I have been wondering about where we are going with this. I see some practicalities that I have not thought of until—I was speaking to a couple people earlier in the debate about some technical problems as to why I am tempted not to support this. It is not necessarily because I do not believe in some of the changes. I am not sure these changes are correct from a technical perspective. I am not sure they fulfil the role the committee spoke about in relation to the setting up of the estimates.

It says in the committee's report at point 3.95:

Submissions generally expressed support for having hearings on Annual Reports in addition to the annual Estimates hearings and it was recognised that this would enhance transparency and provide a more effective review of Agency performance than what is possible through the Estimates hearings alone.

Contrary to what the Chief Minister said, I do not read every annual report from cover to cover; you could not do it. There are many annual reports because there are smaller departments that put out annual reports. I try to look at the annual reports to get an indication of what different departments do.

When I read the previous annual report—it is part of the Estimates Committee. The Estimates Committee is basically—I hope the Clerk does not go crook at me—a committee-of-the-whole stage of debating the nuts and bolts of the budget.

When we finished debating the budget there was a report, then we voted on it. The minister would give a response in reply and we would vote on it. That was a vote about the budget, which included debate on the annual reports. They have now decided to cut the system in half, and arbitrarily said that the half of the estimates hearing that would look at the budget will be the debate on the bill. We are not debating the annual reports; they might be used as part of the debate, but they are not the debate.

The minister has not introduced annual reports as part of her Treasurer's report, so we need to debate the bill fully. We now have the idea that we will talk about the annual reports, but what standing does that have other than to question the annual reports? Where will that sit in the processes of this parliament? It will not. It will be a nice day speaking to ministers or CEOs about what is in the annual report, but it will not be part of what we are here for in the next couple of weeks. We will be debating a bill that allows the government to have a budget for the next financial year.

We were doing that in a way that included the past annual report. I think there is a technical fault in what we are doing. You might say, 'I have been on the committee'. Fair enough, but I am a moveable feast as well. We had many discussions about this.

I am not comfortable with the process; I would prefer the two committees being set up to do something like what is done in Canada. They will ask the minister responsible for that annual report to come to one of their meetings, a public hearing, and that will be part of scrutiny. It is not part of the budget discussions.

That, to me, would be a healthier and more sensible way to approach this. What we are doing now is cutting back the debate on the bill. That bill is very important and I have supported it. I was on the original Estimates Committee; I went to Tasmania with a bipartisan group that looked at the Tasmanian system. Some people even looked at the New South Wales system. We, more or less, copied the Tasmanian system, and it has developed over time. I think they were much shorter hours and we found that to be hopeless. That is where we are today because we needed the 60 hours to have a fair go at questioning all the ministers.

Technically, I am being asked today to support a change. The change has come from the Leader of Government Business, which goes against her own—this is the committee the government set up, with a majority of government people on it. The committee's report said, under Recommendation 19, which was supported by Labor members of the committee:

The Committee recommends that the Estimates Committee:

(a) holds a total of 60 hours of hearings

(b) determine the proportion of those hours to occur on the Appropriation Bill and Government owned corporations in June and on Annual Reports in November during the days allocated in the Assembly's meeting schedule.

We have not even established the Estimates Committee yet, so why are we overriding a recommendation in this report that says the Estimates Committee should work out the hours? We are being asked to move a motion against a recommendation on a committee that I belong to, that members of the Labor Party had the majority on. You are also asking them to overturn their own recommendation, which they agreed to. That is crazy.

I could have said in the Estimates Committee, 'I think we should just have 60 hours for the bill and we will worry about the annual reports at another time'. I think we have gone haywire.

Technically, we have left ourselves in a bit of a mess if we agree with this. Not only will we be shorting ourselves adequate time to debate the bill, the budget, which is one of the most important bills to ever come before this parliament, but we will be debating annual reports in a vacuum. What will that do? I do not know.

The annual reports fit perfectly into portfolio committees. When those reports come out they can make a time and ask the minister to come in for a day, and they will question the minister on his or her report. That would make sense. This motion is in opposition to the government's committee. The government's committee did not recommend this; it recommended that the Estimates Committee set the hours.

The Leader of Government Business, or Cabinet, or whoever, has decided, 'Blow that! We will ignore our committee and set our rules'.

If that is the case this process is a sham. Because it is a sham, I do not support it.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, we are beginning to observe the character of this government through its actions, particularly in recent times.

We have been watching and waiting, forming our own views. It is clear what is going on. It is obvious; the numbers are what they are and government will get what government wants. Irrespective of the process it established and the words it uses to try to establish some kind of view in the community, the reality is that government will get what it wants.

I have not read in detail, but I have gone through the recommendations of the report on opening parliament to the people. The first issue, as the Member for Nelson identified, is that on this committee of the parliament the majority of members are also members of the government. You would assume, therefore, that to allow a parliament to operate properly, the decisions of the committee—properly debated and considered extensively—would have greater value and respect in the parliament than they have at the moment.

It appears this is a functionary role, and the brutal reality is that politics are at play here and that the Labor government's political agenda is to ensure it maximises its hold on power. We have evidence of this, even in the question asked yesterday, which was directed to the explanation of an account provided to the Territory community over a course of action being justified as a measure to increase population. There were many ways of dealing with that, but we simply saw personal abuse.

Further on, we had a personal attack on a person who has a different view. This is quite disturbing. We all know, and you speak about this in every debate—I think you have teams upstairs who are living in this zone, but they write all the stories about how terrible and atrocious the past was. You recount certain events; we all know about those events. There was an election and we now have a new government. Good on you. But you ought to consider an aspect that is overlooked in your ramping up of how terrible the last administration was in your own narrative.

The community wholeheartedly rejected the previous administration, except for the two members who are here with us today. When it came to an election the decision of the community was to reject certain members, not choose their replacements. Their action was to get rid of people, so by default many of you are here. I know you might get upset by that but it is a logical extension of your position.

Members interjecting.

Mr MILLS: I knew you would be defensive about this because it becomes an emotional issue. It is just following the logic. The Chief Minister could not handle a line of logic yesterday. If you are to run that argument constantly you have to be aware it has another aspect to it. Nonetheless, you are now the government.

I think it would be a better idea to focus on governing than trying to establish a narrative to justify yourself. Justify yourself by your actions and behaviour rather than defining yourself against what you are not. Do something.

I assume government gets what government wants. What does government want? I assume government wants to gain traction. I do not think you are gaining the necessary traction. Why would you want to gain traction? You want to lead and inspire our community to get through difficult times. It seems to be that you want that in a shortcut to gaining that power, and we have evidence of it.

For example, the Independents had an assurance. The Chief Minister said on a number of occasions there would be adequate support for the Independents. We thought, and the community expected, this would be quite a different parliament. There were certain expectations. I did not expect, nor did the other Independents, what we received. It revealed a lot about the nature of this government and its desire to maximise its control. In the face of trying to establish confidence in the Territory community you are displaying an absence of confidence by overreaching, closing down and disrespecting the processes of the parliament.

This is a committee of the parliament. We have spoken, not so much in recent times, of the Westminster system. It is a system, in its pure form, where you have the government, which is the Cabinet, and all the other members of the parliament hold the government to account.

At the moment we have 18 members, a Cabinet, and the majority of this parliament are following the dictates of the Cabinet. They are supporters of the Cabinet and therefore the parliament does not effectively work. If you want to take a step in the right direction you would have had a greater respect for and engagement of the recommendations of the committee. But you have not.

You have done your work. I wonder if the other members of the committee, the government members, will get up and speak honestly about what they want. Do they want a better parliament and better processes? I doubt that, because there would be those who are jostling for positions. They want to appease the masters. They want to get it right so they get some kind of political or personal reward rather than advance the interests of the Northern Territory, improve the parliament and match the rhetoric with reality.

Openness, honesty, transparency, opening the parliament to the people—all those things will ring false if it is not matched by genuine action. We are only a few months in and we are seeing disturbing trends, particularly for a government that has such a majority.

When it comes to annual reports I completely agree with the Member for Nelson. Who asked for this measure? It was referred to—and annual reports are important—but who asked for it to be given such

importance that it now sits in a category all of its own at the expense of the true estimates process? Who designed it in such a way that it looks as though you are increasing something, but in fact you are decreasing it? Who wanted that? Was it the committee? No it was not.

There are people on the fifth floor who are being paid to advance the political interests of the government. It is to reduce the capacity of the parliament to operate and hold a government to account. What are they trying to hide, their own insecurity? I do not know.

They do not have any trouble with the numbers, but they are tampering with the system, ramping up the rhetoric, and the reality does not match the fact you are changing things to your own advantage, to conceal yourselves from adequate scrutiny in the parliament.

Annual reports are important, but not that important. Anyone can spot a three-card trick like this; we know what you are up to. That is what has happened. Annual reports form a natural part of the estimates process, albeit retrospectively, during the genuine estimates process, as has been practice of the parliament for some time.

I agree with the Member for Nelson; the annual reports that come out later in the year are very important, and that would naturally fit within the new committees you have described. If you are genuine it would extend into that process. I have been a member of the PAC in times past where that occurred at the PAC level. But why take away half of the estimates process? It does not make sense to confect this process to investigate annual reports and not allow it to come back to the parliament in any substantive way that responds to the budget. What makes sense is that you are doing everything you can to maximise your hold on power, which displays your lack of confidence.

Why do you not want to be open to Territorians? Why do you not take up the opportunity to genuinely acknowledge the challenges of the past, which we all suffered, and build a stronger and more robust parliament? You have done the opposite. You have the best opportunity since self-government and you have chosen not to do it. Shame on you!

You had a wonderful opportunity and, step by step, you are eroding the expectation that people placed in you. I would support a genuine process; I would work with people. I came back to try to help improve that which was damaged.

But we are shut out. There are members on the government side, who are beginning to think the game is up—'This is not what I signed up for.' Happy chappies. Charge off into Labor land to become legends in your own lifetime, within your little club.

That will not advance the true interest of the Northern Territory, nor will it leave a legacy. I do not accept the agenda being placed before us by the government. Government gets what government wants.

I do not support it.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I do not support this motion either. I think it is a great shame, what has transpired from this report on opening parliament to the people.

It seemed like an exciting prospect when we first came into parliament. It was put on the table that a select committee would be formed to look at opening our parliament to the people. I put my hand up to be on that committee. I thought, 'How exciting. What a great opportunity to change and improve things', certainly not to reduce scrutiny of government, which is essentially what we have.

The government was referred 31 recommendations from this report, and it scrapped 30% of them, dumped them, which leaves me wondering, as a member of that select committee, why was a committee formed in the first place when you dumped 30% of what was recommended? It was a waste of time and money in hindsight.

You have the numbers. The Member for Blain articulated the frustrations some of us feel on this side of the Chamber. We are not in government; we do not expect to have the final say, but we do expect to be respected if we are part of a parliamentary process. The Member for Nelson and I were a part of what we thought was a robust process. It was nice to work with the new members of government who were also a part of that select committee. We all went into that process with an open mind on how we could literally open parliament to the people to make this great parliament of ours more accessible to people and strengthen the democratic process.

We are a part of that. As non-government members we are an important part of that democratic process. Just like everyone else in this room, we were elected by the people in our electorates to represent their views. My view is just as important as your view, sitting in the government ranks. To be a part of a select committee in which 30% of the recommendations were unceremoniously scrapped by the government says to me that it is a waste of time.

This is a government that does not respect democracy, a parliamentary process or the outcomes of a parliamentary inquiry. I will be considering my future involvement in any such committees. It has dampened my spirit and that of the other members who have spoken from this side of the Chamber today. It is very disappointing.

Cutting estimates in half does not improve opening parliament to the people. It does not allow proper scrutiny of government. There will not be time to scrutinise all the departments within the Appropriation Bill. I have had discussions with some of my Independent colleagues. They will not be the time to scrutinise every government department. That is a design of this government. Allowing only 30 hours is saying to the Northern Territory, 'We do not want to be scrutinised. We do not want our government departments to be scrutinised; we do not want every aspect of this Appropriation Bill scrutinised; we want to get out of it lightly.' You will.

You have the numbers and this will happen today. Estimates will be reduced from 60 hours to 30 hours. The people of the Northern Territory will go without the knowledge and the important information that is gleaned through the estimates process that informs them and makes our democracy strong.

It is a sad day and a poor indictment of a very strong majority government that it would want to do that. It is silly, dumb and unfair. It does not make a lot of sense. In a conversation I had with the Leader of Government Business a few days ago I asked her, 'Why are you frightened? What are you fearful of? You have no reason to be fearful of scrutiny.' It is irrational.

The Deputy Opposition Leader spoke earlier today about this ridiculous situation on a Wednesday afternoon in Question Time, where you cannot ask the same minister two questions in a row. That does not make sense. You are all reasonably experienced and more than capable of handling an estimates process or two questions in a row. There seems to be some fear and concern that the ceiling will cave in if you are overly scrutinised. That is a great shame. It limits your ability to expand and extend yourselves into your roles. It will happen automatically, but through the estimates process you learn and grow.

It is an impost on every government department to prepare for estimates. It takes a lot of time and effort. I argue that it is good for government departments to reflect on where they are and what they are doing, and to be prepared for some of those difficult questions on what they do and how they do it. It is such a great way to test our democracy and make it open and transparent. It is one of the key recommendations of this report. Recommendation 19 was to retain the 60 hours of estimates, but it was unceremoniously scrapped by this government.

I stand on my feet for the second time in less than 24 hours to express my great disappointment in this government. You have nothing to fear, but I do not understand your agenda, nor do other members in this parliament.

It is a sad day for Territorians. I reject this motion.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, it is interesting hearing from those opposite. It is like the CLP knows what is best for the Territory. When you suggest a change they come up with every reason—when you try to do something new they do not like it. They go back to those old models.

It was interesting to hear people's comments. The Member for Nelson raised some technical questions, which we addressed by saying the 30 hours plus 30 hours—you can work out the combinations of the ministers between that.

We have just heard lots of rhetoric that we have cut the estimates in half. We are only trying something new.

The CLP ruled for 27 years. I will never forget that before the 2005 election they reminded us they would get back on this side, where they belong. Do you know what? Clearly, by the numbers in this House,

Territorians do not think that. They are open to new ideas and transparency. That is what we are setting out to achieve through this process. Let us try it for 12 months. It might not work; it might be a complete debacle, but let us try it—30 hours and 30 hours; it is not that hard.

Do you not want to come back in November? Did you have a holiday planned? You would think from the outcry of those opposite—I never knew they loved estimates so much.

I was taken aback by the comments about gagging on a Wednesday. I am pretty sure we dropped what are commonly known in political circles as Dorothy Dixers—questions from government members. They have a full hour of scrutiny and they still complain. If you gave them everything they wanted they would still complain.

The Member for Blain said he has come back to try to help, and that a number of my colleagues are here by default, and I take great offence to that. My colleagues worked very hard; their communities have elected them. We have representation from communities that have never voted Labor before but did in the last election, and they have very hard-working members who continue to doorknock. I am very proud of every member on our side for how they engage with their community. That was a very unfair comment to imply they are here by default, especially from someone who, if you want to get technical, did not win on first preferences.

I clearly outlined the government's position. We received a report and were very thankful to the committee members who took the time to provide that information. We were quite clear in the lead-up to the election in regard to what we want to do to change the openness and transparency through the estimates process. I worked with the committee and it provided a number of recommendations. We have not accepted some, and we explained why. For the Member for Araluen to say we did not accept 30%—those were huge budgetary changes we could not accept.

We have treated this report with utmost respect, working with standing orders to make sure we can implement this report shows that we respect the report. We have received it and are now looking at how we can practically put that into this Chamber. It is important that we get our standing orders and sessional orders right.

The Member for Nelson asked what we would do once we spend 30 hours scrutinising annual reports. I am sure the media will show up for those 30 hours, so there is the start. We have asked for a report to come back in the February sittings, which will then be debated. In regard to spending 30 hours looking at those reports, it will be clearly scrutinised through openness and transparency, the public and media attending, and by bringing that report back to the House to be debated.

I think the government has made its point clear. We have provided an opportunity for change. If we did not have a Labor government in 2002 we would not have had an estimates process for the last 15 years.

We have heard rants from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition; we have heard implications that this will be a disastrous change. Let us try it and do something new in this parliament. We have done something new with the Wednesday questions by not providing questions from government members, and that seems to be working well.

It was interesting to hear the comments on taxpayer costs. When they were worried about cost to taxpayers with their previous ministers they did not pay attention. They did not care much about that.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment moved by the Chief Minister be agree to.

Amendment agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 17

Noes 5

Ms Ah Kit
Mr Collins
Mr Costa
Ms Fyles

Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Higgins
Mrs Lambley
Mr Mills

Mr Gunner
Mr Kirby
Ms Lawler
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Ms Nelson
Mr Paech
Mr Sievers
Ms Uiho
Mr Vowles
Ms Wakefield
Mrs Worden

Mr Wood

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing Order 124. The Member for Katherine called a division then went to the affirmative side when clearly she should have been on the negative side.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 131. You have to vote on your voice. She called the word 'division'; that is not a yes or no.

Madam SPEAKER: The Leader of Government Business is correct. What she calls out is her business, but she did say aye when the ayes were called.

MOTION **Estimates Committee Membership**

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, in accordance with the Assembly's resolution that we just passed, I move the following members be appointed to the Estimates Committee. I acknowledge that these people have put their hand up to be on this committee and I thank them ahead of the proceedings: the Member for Karama, Ms Ah Kit; the Member for Arnhem, Ms Uiho; the Member for Namatjira, Mr Paech; the Member for Katherine, Ms Nelson; the Member for Daly, Mr Higgins; the Member for Blain, Mr Mills; and the Member for Araluen, Mrs Lambley.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION **50th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum**

Mr GUNNER (Aboriginal Affairs): Madam Speaker, I will be moving a minor but important amendment to the motion. I will be adding after the word 'Aboriginal' the words 'and Torres Strait Islander'. I will read the motion with the amendment in full so we are all starting from the same spot regarding what we are speaking to. It does not change the substance of the motion.

I move that this Assembly:

1. notes the upcoming 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum leading to greater national recognition and attention to the issues of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians
2. acknowledges the importance of this referendum in underpinning recognition, reconciliation and respect for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and, in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians here in the Northern Territory
3. expresses its support for work being undertaken both by government and the wider Northern Territory community to advance respect, recognition and the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians in the Northern Territory.

I am very pleased to be able to move this motion as the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory in recognition of an important moment in our national history. The national referendum that took place on 27 May 1967 allowed for a change to our Constitution to remove explicit clauses of the Constitution that:

1. prevented the Commonwealth from making laws of peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth in relation to Aboriginal people
2. prevented Aboriginal Australians being counted in the national census.

The first change was not to infer that the Commonwealth would take over the role of the states in relation to Aboriginal affairs, but more to give the Commonwealth, with its capacity and access to national resources, the ability to work with and assist states in relation to policy and programs benefiting Aboriginal Australians.

The media reported at the time that the then Leader of the Opposition, Gough Whitlam, observed that it would clear the way for financial initiatives to improve the condition of Aboriginals and remove an impediment to the Commonwealth doing all they would like to do in the Northern Territory.

A key feature of the 1967 referendum was the strong support of the voting public. Ordinary Australians, more than 90% of voters, supported the changes. This is particularly telling, remembering that historically referendums in Australia have not enjoyed voter support. Indeed, only eight out of 44 referenda proposing change to the Constitution have attracted a 'yes' vote.

Regrettably, voters in the Northern Territory were not able to vote in the 1967 referendum, a consequence of the legislation at the time, but Territorians still expressed their views against that, including a protest held in Alice Springs.

The importance of the 1967 referendum is not so much that it gave the Commonwealth powers to involve itself in Aboriginal affairs, but it captured the mood of the country that the national government should be enabled to do more in terms of recognition of Aboriginal Australians, addressing Indigenous disadvantage and providing more opportunity to benefit from national development.

This was a time when policies of assimilation were clearly not leading to wellbeing and prosperity for Aboriginal Australians. There was a time when Aboriginal Australians were increasingly fringe dwellers, not benefiting as others were from national development and increasing prosperity. It was also a time of unity of purpose with the churches, media and mainstream political parties all supporting the proposed changes. Poor housing, unemployment, financial stress and poor health outcomes were all too familiar for most Aboriginal Australians. These matters and sensitivity to criticism of Australia were drawing national attention and calling for change.

This period of our history and growing national consciousness about Aboriginal disadvantage in the so-called lucky country also coincided with the New South Wales freedom rides challenging entrenched racial discrimination, including Aboriginal kids not being able to use public swimming pools in some New South Wales country towns.

In the Northern Territory 1966 marked the Wave Hill walk-off, as Gurindji stockmen and their families withdrew their labour for better pay, better living conditions and their land. This was also the time of the emergence of claims for recognition of Aboriginal land rights, notably the 1963 Yirrkala bark petition and the many steps towards land rights that arose from the walk-off at Wave Hill.

At the time the Australian nation saw the emergence of a new generation of articulate Aboriginal leaders speaking up for their people and demanding national attention to discriminatory government policies.

Fifty years on, it is timely to reflect where we are at nationally and in the Northern Territory in addressing those same issues that underpinned support for the referendum and the work we have yet to do. Today, we, as a nation continue to work on ways to better recognise Australia's first people in our Australian Constitution.

In July 2015 the then Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, and the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, met with Aboriginal leaders to discuss steps forward and further recognition of Aboriginal Australians in our Constitution. This meeting led to the establishment of a Referendum Council to lead national consultation and community engagement on new proposals for constitutional recognition.

I look forward to joining the Prime Minister in Yulara later this month to hear the results of discussions with Aboriginal Australians across the nation. The Northern Territory Government has been clear that it supports that consultation process, and I look forward to future consideration in this Assembly of proposals for change to the Constitution that come forward as a result of the work of the Referendum Council.

We have also been clear that our government is open to discussion with Aboriginal Territorians about addressing calls for treaty. This work is also being progressed in South Australia and Victoria, where it is being aligned with the development of regional authorities and more inclusion of Aboriginal Australians in regional decision-making.

In the Northern Territory we have established a subcommittee of the Cabinet to facilitate this work. We have also committed to supporting traditional owners in the development of their lands and seas, and the transition from government-led, top-down decision-making to local decision-making. Top-down decision-making has stifled the potential of the bush. In government we will lead transformational change over the next 10 years to move from government consultation and engagement to true collaboration and decision-making by local people and their service organisations. This is historic reform.

Fifty years on from the circumstances of the 1967 referendum we still have much to do to address the fundamental issues that inspired support for that referendum. I have made it clear that a key priority for me is to engage with the Prime Minister on the need for continuing Commonwealth support of remote housing, health and education to address Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory.

Our recent draft economic development framework and infrastructure strategy reminds us all that Aboriginal Territorians make up around one-third of our population, and of that number 80% live in remote and very remote areas of the Territory. Tellingly, about 40% of Aboriginal Territorians are under 20 years of age and need to be a major focus of our work in supporting access to education and economic development to sustain a strong, healthy future for them. That is why one of our priorities is to work with land councils and native title bodies to support economic development to benefit people in our remote regions. We will work with the Commonwealth to ensure it understands our priority and joins our work under the umbrella of the Developing the North policies.

Already we are working with the land councils to support Indigenous land and sea management programs. We are restating our commitment to strategic Indigenous water reserves to underpin local Aboriginal participation and agricultural production. We support development of the Northern and Central Land Councils' plans for a capital venture fund for agricultural development of Aboriginal land.

In the resources sector we will be working to ensure that existing and emerging projects maximise benefit to our bush communities through infrastructure development such as roads and communications infrastructure as well as local jobs.

A key priority for us will be to assist local Aboriginal land owners to develop or be key partners in new development projects, like the Gumatj are doing in relation to their mining training centre and bauxite mining business. We will continue to recognise and support the important part that Aboriginal Territorians play in our pastoral industry, both as landowners and skilled pastoral workers.

We have also committed to major infrastructure projects that celebrate the culture and history of Aboriginal Territorians to help them tell their story and celebrate the things that are important to them, but to also underpin the continuing growth of our important tourism industry.

The national Indigenous art gallery and Aboriginal cultural centre in Alice Springs, our investments in the Indigenous art trail network, and a major museum at the Kahlin Compound site in the Darwin heritage precinct will all support heritage-related tourism, recognise our shared history and provide a better understanding of the things that are important to Aboriginal Territorians.

We are committed to improving service delivery to people in the bush through initiatives like our new \$5m local government infrastructure fund and our transition to local decision-making. Already our transition to local decision-making is benefiting local organisations, building companies and delivering our Room to Breathe housing initiative, including our announcement earlier this week about new work at Maningrida, Milikapiti, Ramingining and Ntaria.

Over the next 12 months we will see more of our Northern Territory \$1.1bn investment in remote housing roll-out with more local participation in design, project management and construction. This is a key area where we will look to the Commonwealth for further financial support to work with us in addressing the pressing issue of overcrowding, poor housing and infrastructure deficits in our remote communities.

Safe, healthy housing is a key to any family's wellbeing, and the long-standing legacy issues are such that we cannot do this on our own. It is a key example of the principle of Commonwealth resources supporting state effort behind a key rationale. The 1967 referendum needs to be applied in the Northern Territory.

We have commenced work on the development of five-year contracts for government services, streamlining, reporting and maximising opportunity for service organisations to develop workforce plans to benefit local people and create more local jobs.

We have started work in partnership with the Aboriginal peak organisations in the Northern Territory to roll out this work, supporting all the partners, government and non-government, in this new way of doing business. We have committed to supporting local business and jobs through government procurement for goods and services and replacing value for money with value for the Territory. Indigenous employment outcomes are an important element of value to the Territory, particularly for our remote regions.

The wellbeing of Territory children is central to the work of this government. The 2011 Census recorded around 30 000 young Territorians, nearly all Aboriginal, under the age of 19 living in either remote or very remote regions of the Territory. The health, education and future employment of these Territorians is on our minds.

We are reinventing in remote schools and developing more decision-making to local school authorities so they can manage their school budgets, manage the core business of school attendance and better education outcomes for kids. We are including new investment in homeland schools to ensure kids on homelands are not disadvantaged.

We are expanding Families as First Teachers in our remote schools. It is a proven winner in connecting families to our schools and supporting the early years' development of our kids. Connecting families to health services is another key priority for us and is being advanced through activities like Families as First Teachers, Nurse-Family Partnerships and the expansion and roll-out of the regionalisation of health services under local management responding to local priorities.

A key focus for us is the wellbeing of youth. We will be working on this with local leaders, looking to support youth leadership and school-to-work transition, including the priority contained in our jobs plan to develop more opportunities for young Territorians to develop careers as police officers, nurses, Indigenous health practitioners, youth workers and teachers in our bush communities.

We are investing in our Healthy Life, Creative Life program to engage the sporting and creative talents of young Territorians in regional and remote towns as well as providing more support for sport and recreation activities in all our communities.

Preventing crime before it happens and supporting youth in staying on the right track is a key priority for our government, witnessed by our recent decisions and investment into 52 youth diversion workers based in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs, and a further \$6m a year for community organisation NGOs to deliver diversion programs that work.

We have taken action to improve our work in youth and child protection, to fix a broken system, and we will work positively with the Commonwealth on responding to the final report of the current Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

We have much to do to advance the wellbeing of Aboriginal Territorians in the Northern Territory. We firmly recognise the wellbeing of the Territory as a whole is linked to that task. We are focused on programs and policies across all spheres of government to create a prosperous and sound future for all Territorians. It is a task that requires combined commitment and focused effort across government, non-government and private sectors—in short, all Territorians.

In closing, I want to reflect on my trip to Katherine two weeks ago, which left me reflecting on the journey we have undertaken. I was reminded of the history of the Katherine Gorge land claim, which caused deep divisions in that community at the time and real fear about the future of the national park and the town should the land claim be successful. This invoked strong feelings amongst many, with marches in the street to protest the land claim.

It invoked the government of the day not only to contest the land claim, but to combat it. Thankfully, common sense prevailed. The land claim was heard; traditional owners were granted title to their ancestral lands; a scheme of Northern Territory joint management for the renamed Nitmiluk National Park was developed.

Today the traditional owners of the park are essential to the life and business of Katherine. They are key players in the Katherine region tourism industry, making key investment and management decisions to benefit us all, such as the award-winning investment Cicada Lodge and other business activities.

The fear of the unknown has dissipated, and the culture and history of all the traditional owners of the Katherine region are celebrated as part of the identity of Katherine. It is the kind of future that inspired support for the 1967 referendum. As Australians we have it in our hearts to celebrate Australia's first people, to recognise their history and the things that are important to them, and to do more as a nation to ensure they are central to our national identity and are fringe dwellers no more.

We must remember that history. I commend the motion to the Assembly.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

CONDOLENCES FOR SOLDIER WHO PASSED AWAY

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, we will take a moment before the start of Question Time to pay respect to the soldier who, tragically, passed away yesterday.

We are very much a Defence community in the Northern Territory. We have long connections with the Defence community. In recent months we commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin. The Defence Forces are part of the Northern Territory. They are a part of our sporting groups and charity sector, and they are in our schools, so when a member of a Defence Force dies, especially in such circumstances, it is like a death in the family. On behalf of the parliament we send our support and condolences to the Australian Defence Forces.

I thank the Opposition Leader for the conversation we had earlier and the message he sent. Our thoughts, as a parliament, are with the soldier's family and friends, who will be going through a difficult period having lost, so suddenly and unexpectedly, a brother and son.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for his words on behalf of this parliament. The opposition fully appreciates that and also extends its sincere and heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the member of the Defence Forces who was tragically killed.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I pass on condolences on behalf of the Independents. Robertson Barracks is in my electorate, and I have contact with the Defence Forces fairly regularly. It was a tragic event, and I support what the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have said in sending our sympathy to the family of the soldier.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable members. We will send a letter to the Defence Forces so we can pass on our sincere condolences to the family of this soldier who lost his life in the service of his country.

We pass on our deepest sympathies to his loved ones, family and colleagues.

Members: Hear, hear!

RESPONSE TO PETITION **Petition No 7 – Change Gazette S119 to Bring Dan Murphy's to Darwin**

The CLERK: Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 123 I inform honourable members that a response from the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to Petition No 7 has been received and circulated to honourable members. The text of the response will be included in the *Parliamentary Record* and placed on the Legislative Assembly's website. A copy of the response will be provided to the Member for Daly for distribution to the petitioners.

Petition No 7
Change Gazette S119 to bring Dan Murphy's to Darwin
Date presented: 15 February 2017
Presented by: Mr Higgins
Referred to: Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Date response due: 10 May 2017

Date response received: 10 May 2017

Date response presented: 11 May 2017

Response

Thank you for your letter dated 15 February 2017 regarding a petition read in the Legislative Assembly—Petition No. 7.

Pursuant to Standing Order 123, I am hereby responding to the petition regarding Changing Gazette S119 to bring Dan Murphy's to Darwin for presentation to the Assembly.

While the petitioner's concerns are noted, at this time, the matter is currently before the Federal Court and it is necessary to await the outcome of proceedings.

The Northern Territory Government remains focused on combating alcohol-fuelled crime and tackling alcohol abuse in our community.

MOTION
50th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the 1967 referendum indeed made history. Australians voted overwhelmingly to amend the Constitution to include Aboriginal people in the census and allow the Commonwealth to create laws for Aboriginal people.

It is frequently stated that the 1967 referendum gave Aboriginal people Australian citizenship and the right to vote in federal elections, but neither of these statements is correct. All Australians, including Aboriginal people, became Australian citizens in 1949 when Australian citizenship was created. Before that time all Australians were British subjects.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1949 gave Aboriginal people the right to vote in federal elections if they were able to vote in their state elections. They were disqualified from voting altogether in Queensland, while in Western Australia and the Northern Territory the right was conditional if they had served in the Defence Force.

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962 gave all Aboriginal people the option of enrolling to vote in federal elections. It was not until the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment Act 1983 that voting became compulsory for Aboriginal people as it was for other Australians. The outcome of the 1967 referendum was that 90% of voters voted yes, and the overwhelming support gave the federal government a clear mandate to implement policies to benefit Australian Aboriginal people.

A lot of misconceptions have arisen as to the outcomes of the referendum, some as a result of it taking on a symbolic meaning during a period of increasing Aboriginal self-confidence. It was five years before any real change occurred as a result of the referendum, but federal legislation has since been enacted covering land rights, discriminatory practices, financial assistance and preservation of cultural heritage.

The referendum had two main outcomes. The first was to alter the legal boundaries within which the federal government could act. The federal parliament was given a constitutional head of power under which it could make special laws for Aboriginal people. The Australian Constitution states that federal law prevails over state law where they are inconsistent, so the federal parliament could, if it so chooses, enact legislation that would end the discrimination against Aboriginal people by state governments. However, during the first five years following the referendum the federal government did not use this new power.

The other key outcome of the referendum was to provide Aboriginal people with a symbol of their political and moral rights. The referendum occurred at a time when Aboriginal activism was accelerating, and it was used as an historical beacon for all the relevant political events at the time, such as the demands for land rights for the Gurindji people and the equal pay case for pastoral workers.

On 26 January 1972 Aboriginal people erected the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns of the federal parliament building in Canberra to express their frustration at the lack of progress on land rights and racial

discrimination issues. This became a major confrontation that raised Aboriginal affairs high on the political agenda in the federal election later that year.

One week after gaining office, the Whitlam government established a Royal Commission into land rights for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory under Justice Woodward. Its principal recommendations were delivered in May 1974. They were that:

- Aboriginal people should have an inalienable title to reserve lands
- regional land councils should be established to establish a fund to purchase land, with which Aboriginal people have a traditional connection or that would provide economic or other benefits
- prospecting or mineral exploration on Aboriginal land should only occur with their consent or that of the federal government if the national interest required it
- entry onto Aboriginal land should require a permit issued by the regional land council.

The federal government agreed to implement the principal recommendation, and in 1975 the House of Representatives passed the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Bill, and the Aboriginal Land (Northern Territory) Bill, but the Senate did not consider them by the time parliament was dissolved in 1975.

The following year, 1976, the Fraser government amended the Aboriginal Land (Northern Territory) Bill by introducing the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Bill. Today over 50% of the Northern Territory land and 80% of its coast are owned communally by Aboriginal people.

The opposition supports work being done to advance, respect, recognise and improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal Territorians. The recognition of the role Aboriginal people play in our community is a vital one. In order to do this we need to empower Aboriginal people and communities to be involved and make decisions that are theirs to make. Empowerment is in itself a process that respects, values and enhances people's ability to have control over their lives. This process encourages people to meet their needs and aspirations in a self-aware and informed way which takes advantage of their skills, experience and potential.

Change and growth occur through informing and empowering individuals and communities.

I call on the government to ensure its plans and activities are based on commitment to the following principles:

- Empowerment: increase the ability of individuals and Aboriginal organisations to influence issues that affect them and their communities.
- Participation: support Aboriginal people to take part in decision-making that affects them.
- Inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination: recognise that Aboriginal people need additional support to overcome the barriers they face.
- Partnership: recognise that Aboriginal people and organisations have a significant contribution to make and ensure we work in partnership with them.

We support work being done to improve the lives of Aboriginal Territorians. Economic development on terms determined by Aboriginal people is key to their future. Going forward we need to:

- promote active and representative participation to enable all community to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives
- engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues and the economic, social, environmental, psychological and other impacts associated with an alternative course of action
- incorporate the diverse interests and culture of the community and disengage from support of any efforts that are likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged members of a community
- work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders and groups within the community

- be open to using the full range of action strategies to work towards the long-term sustainability and well-being of the community.

I support the motion put forward by the Chief Minister.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I move that the motion be amended to insert after each occurrence of the word 'Aboriginal' the words 'and Torres Strait Islander', as the Chief Minister alluded to.

There is no more appropriate time for me to acknowledge that this parliament is on Larrakia country, a stunning place that has sustained and nurtured Larrakia people for thousands of years. I also pay my respects to elders, past and present, as traditional owners of this country. I thank them for allowing me to represent Larrakia people from my electorate in this Chamber.

I will start by telling a little of my background, providing a context for why celebrating the 50th anniversary of this historic referendum is personally important.

This motion is close to my heart, as an Aboriginal Territorian. Whilst I was not alive in 1967, my beautiful mother was. Her mother, my grandmother, was part of the Stolen Generation. My grandmother was a Warramunga woman born on Alroy Downs Station, which is 200 kilometres from Tennant Creek, and was taken from there to the Tiwi Islands.

A few years later on this island a young girl was seen drinking the sea water, and everyone was screaming at her not to do that. She screamed back at them that she was from different country, that water is water, and she was thirsty. My nanna looked closely at her and said, 'I think you are my sister'. They hugged and cried and never left each other's side until my nanna returned to Darwin to the Bagot Reserve. My aunty stayed on the Tiwi Islands.

Nanna said she also had other siblings but never got to see them again. I now know why my mother held us so tight and was, and still is, fiercely protective of me, my brothers, my sisters and all our families. Fortunately, over time we have been lucky to be able to re-establish strong links back to the family in the Barkly region. We have been welcomed back into the fold. Family and connection to country, regardless of where you are living or were raised, must remain strong. They show the strength of our culture.

In 1967 Aboriginal children were still being taken away from their families. Thankfully this practice as formal policy generally ceased shortly afterwards. Unless you have been affected, either yourself or a family member being involuntarily taken away from your family, it is almost impossible to understand the personal and intergenerational trauma that this has caused.

This is one of the reasons that Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generation on 13 February 2008 had such a high impact for those affected by this terrible, heartless practice of taking children away from their families for no other reason than the colour of their skin.

To celebrate both National Sorry Day and the 20-year anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report we will be holding a parliamentary function on 29 May at Parliament House. I thank my colleagues, especially the Chief Minister, for allowing me to host this event on behalf of our government. No doubt it will be a highly emotional function, but it will provide important recognition and healing for those affected.

I am so proud of and inspired by my mother for coming from that background and succeeding in life as a mother, and professionally as an Aboriginal health practitioner. She went from being a primary school dropout, due to her family commitments as the youngest daughter, to doing her Aboriginal health worker training and graduating at Bagot community to achieving a masters in primary healthcare.

I am very proud to be an Indigenous member of this parliament and to have a strong family. I believe that in the history of this country, including all the states and territories, 41 Indigenous Australians have been elected to parliament, and many of those only in recent times. Very few of us have been appointed as ministers and members of their government's Cabinet. I am very pleased and honoured to be one of those ministers and that the majority of Indigenous parliamentarians have sat in this parliament. I am also pleased that there are six of us in the current parliament, including the Member for Nhulunbuy.

However, to truly represent the Northern Territory's demographic, I believe we should have eight Indigenous parliamentarians. With a population forecast where Indigenous people will comprise 50% of the

Territory's population in the next 25 years or so, we will need to strive for 12 or 13 members in order to have a parliament that properly represents the Territory's population.

The 1967 referendum was just one step in the long journey for Indigenous Australians who facilitated Indigenous Australia's ability to achieve not only these sorts of things, but also make some broader social and economic progress. Notwithstanding that, the results and powers that have been used in more controversial circumstances such as the intervention, the successful referendum allowed the federal government to be involved in Indigenous affairs and make specific laws and policies for the betterment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Importantly, the referendum also allowed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be counted as humans for the first time in the census, not only a critical component of people's self-worth and belonging, but also a vital ingredient of a government's ability to develop good, sensible policy with respect and recognition. In a practical sense it allowed for the introduction of positive discrimination and the development of federal programs that can specifically address Indigenous disadvantage in healthcare, for example.

It also allowed for the enactment of very important legislation including the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* in 1976, which still has a massive impact on the Northern Territory, the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act* of 1976 and the *Native Title Act* in 1993. The Chief Minister outlined the great work that this government is doing to improve the lives of Indigenous Territorians, focusing on improving local decision-making, land and sea management and matters that might be addressed in the form of a treaty.

These are important, tangible areas that this government can work with—I stress work with—Indigenous Territorians to improve social and economic outcomes. I am proud of our government's Room to Breathe program, spearheaded by my colleague, the Member for Barkly. The Room to Breathe program will fast-track the building of rooms or granny flats and spaces designed to provide more living and sleeping spaces and shelter for remote Territorians.

The program will include outdoor living and cooking areas; \$20m per year will be provided from 2017–18 onwards. This program has already started and is expected to provide around 200 more living areas and sleeping spaces each year. What really excites me about this program is not only that the critical housing needs for remote Aboriginal Territorians will be improved in a more culturally appropriate way, but also that local jobs will be created by this policy.

Local workers will finally be properly trained and engaged to do significant parts of this work. Creating sustainable and culturally appropriate job opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians is something I am extremely passionate about. I have said this before; jobs and economic opportunities are critical components of improving people's lives. As the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, I am committed to doing all I can to create job opportunities for Indigenous Territorians.

Having a job is important on so many levels. It is about bringing home a way to support yourself and your family. It is about the multiplier effect of money that is earned here and spent in the local economy at local businesses. Having a job gives a sense of purpose, a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Having a job promotes self-esteem and allows you to hold your head up high in your community. Having a job makes you a role model for your family and friends.

Initiatives that make a difference do not have to be major, grant-scale projects. A great example of this is what can be done to create jobs at a local level. I remind you of Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation in the Member for Arafura's electorate, at Maningrida, which is using its Aboriginal coastal licences to sell approximately 70 kilograms of fish a week to the local community.

Not only has an Aboriginal business started and jobs been created, but affordable, accessible and healthy food is being made available to the community. This can only be described as a win for everyone. We need many of these types of success stories if we are to close the gap.

We are now in our own journey to close the gap. There are many positives in the Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2017; however, the report indicates there is still significant work to be done in all areas, including employment. The Closing the Gap employment target is to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians within a decade, which is by 2018.

The Prime Minister's 2017 report states the target is not on track and the non-CDEP Indigenous employment rate was flat at 48.4% in 2014–15, compared to 48.2% in 2008. The NT data, sadly, is much worse. The report tells us in 2014–15, in the Northern Territory, the non-CDEP employment rate was a low 36.7% for people of working age, between 15 and 64.

You can see we have a long way to go to meet the already low national rates, let alone to meet the Closing the Gap target. That is why I am so committed, as a member of this parliament, a minister and a Cabinet member, to do what I can to contribute to more employment opportunities for Aboriginal Territorians.

There are many other Closing the Gap targets and it is easy to gloss over them. Let me remind you of the following Closing the Gap targets:

- close the gap in life expectancy by 2031
- halve the gap in child mortality by 2018
- 95% of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025
- close the gap in school attendance by the end of 2018
- halve the gap in reading and numeracy for Indigenous students by 2018
- halve the gap in year 12 attainment by 2018.

There have been many varying rates of progress in all these targets and many are not on track. There is much more work to be done to make dents in these gaps.

This government is doing a lot of work in this area; however, we rely on the federal government to use the powers it gained after the 1967 referendum to also do a lot of the heavy lifting.

I want to touch on the RECOGNISE movement and a proposed referendum. RECOGNISE is a movement to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution and to ensure there is no place in it for racial discrimination. The Australian Constitution does not mention Australia's first people, and we need this to change.

You may ask why this is important, and I could not put it better than the words of a few prominent Australians. Senator Patrick Dodson said:

Recognition of the first peoples in the Constitution sends a message that you are valued, you are important, that we want to respect you, and we want to deal with the things that have caused us division and discord in the past.

Shirley Peisley, a 1967 referendum campaigner, said:

A lot of Aboriginal people have missed out because they were excluded – they weren't included – in some parts of our history. How can you feel like a citizen if you are not written up in the Constitution as being here?

Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said:

The Apology was about getting it right for the past. Constitutional recognition is about getting it right for tomorrow.

These are the consistent, passionate and highly personal thoughts expressed by a large range of Australians supporting the view that the Constitution needs to change to recognise Aboriginal people as Australia's first people.

I cannot advocate any harder for constitutional recognition than the above words. The Constitution also contains sections that allow for discrimination based on a person's race. This can give governments the power to make laws that apply only to a particular race and would allow people to be banned from voting based on race.

Prominent Australians have spoken out about the need to ensure there is no place in the Constitution for racial discrimination.

Consider the following quotes.

Mr Collins-Yunupingu said:

As long as the so-called race clauses remain in the pages of our official rulebook – for that's what the Constitution is – we will be giving our silent approval for racism and discrimination to continue in the community.

Northern Land Council CEO Joe Morrison said:

It gives no clarity nor commitment that we will never again face the many discriminations and exclusions that we have faced in the past – and that we continue to face now.

On a personal level I therefore strongly endorse the need for constitutional change in this area. The only way the Constitution can be changed is via referendum, which takes me full circle in this statement, back to the 1967 referendum.

The 1967 referendum was a real turning point for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The referendum finally enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be counted in the national census and be subject to Commonwealth laws rather than only state laws.

To use the words of another great Australian, Charlie Perkins, regarding the 'yes' vote, referred to the referendum as:

... the moment of truth whether the white people really are interested in our welfare or rights.

I could not put it any better myself.

I proudly commend the motion to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I am married to a very proud Wadjigan woman, who speaks a language which will eventually fade away, unfortunately, simply because of the number of people who speak Batjimal, which is a very localised language that my wife would say is not connected to any other language. Some languages in the Daly River region have some connection with one another, but Batjimal seems to stand out by itself.

My wife was born in 1947 at Channel Point. She was born in the bush. Her country is between the Finniss River and the other side of the Daly River mouth. Her mother's country is Banakula. Her father was Chinese Aboriginal and she has many relatives. When they get together—unfortunately, sometimes it is for funerals. That is not only applicable to Aboriginal people. When my father died I met cousins I had not seen for years. When there is a get-together there are many cousins, nannas aunties and all sorts.

It is interesting that the debate today is about the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. I am one of those who always says that was the year we gave Aboriginal people the right to vote, but that is incorrect. I was just reading from the National Archives of Australia. It says:

On 27 May 1967 a Federal referendum was held. The first question, referred to as the 'nexus question' was an attempt to alter the balance of numbers in the Senate and the House of Representatives. The second question was to determine whether two references in the Australian Constitution, which discriminated against Aboriginal people, should be removed. This fact sheet addresses the second question.

The sections of the Constitution under scrutiny were:

*51. The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to:-
...(xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.*

127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted.

The removal of the words '... other than the aboriginal people in any State...' in section 51(xxvi) and the whole of section 127 were considered by many to be representative of the prevailing movement for political change within Indigenous affairs. As a result of the political climate, this referendum saw the highest YES vote ever recorded in a Federal referendum, with 90.77 per cent voting for change.

It is interesting to note ...

And I note that the Member for Johnston spoke about the changes to the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal people in the Constitution:

... that because the majority of parliamentarians supported the proposed amendment, a NO case was never formulated for presentation as part of the referendum campaign. Copies of the YES case can be located on files identified below.

That is, the files of the National Archives:

The Constitution was changed, giving formal effect to the referendum result, by the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginals) 1967 (Act No 55 of 1967), which received assent on 10 August 1967.

...

The 1967 referendum did not give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the right to vote. This right had been legislated for Commonwealth elections in 1962, with the last State to provide Indigenous enfranchisement being Queensland in 1965.

It is interesting that a lot of people believe Aboriginal people got the right to vote then. I was given another page on the history, which might be interesting. This was from the Australian Electoral Commission, which put out a fact sheet for students. It said:

Ask Australians when Aborigines got the vote and most of them will say 1967. The referendum in that year is remembered as marking a turning point in attitudes to Aboriginal rights. In one of the few 'yes' votes since federation, 90.77 per cent of Australians voted to change the Constitution to allow the Commonwealth to make laws for Aborigines and to include them in the census.

But the referendum didn't give Aborigines the right to vote. They already had it. Legally their rights go back to colonial times. When Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia framed their constitutions in the 1850s they gave voting rights to all male British subjects over 21, which of course included Aboriginal men. And in 1895 when South Australia gave women the right to vote and sit in Parliament, Aboriginal women shared the right. Only Queensland and Western Australia barred Aborigines from voting.

I presume then Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory had the right to vote because South Australia and the Northern Territory were one. It is a strange fact of history that there was a stage in the life of Aboriginal people where they had equal rights when it came to voting in the 1800s. It goes on to say:

Very few Aborigines knew their rights so very few voted.

That is probably the case:

But some eventually did. Point McLeay, a mission station near the mouth of the Murray, got a polling station in the 1890s. Aboriginal men and women voted there in South Australian elections and voted for the first Commonwealth Parliament in 1901.

That first Commonwealth Parliament was elected by State voters but when it met it had to decide who should be entitled to vote for it in future. Three groups attracted debate. Women had votes in some States but not in others, so had Aborigines. And there were some Chinese, Indian and other non-white people who had become permanent residents before the introduction of the White Australia immigration policy.

The debates reflected the racist temper of the times ...

...

The Senate voted to let Aborigines vote but the House of Representatives defeated them. The 1902 Franchise Act gave women a Commonwealth vote but Aborigines and other 'coloured' people were excluded unless entitled under section 41 of the Constitution.

Section 41 said that anyone with a State vote must be allowed a Commonwealth vote. South Australia got that clause into the Constitution to ensure that South Australian women would have Commonwealth votes whether or not the Commonwealth Parliament decided to enfranchise all Australian women. The Commonwealth did enfranchise all women so they did not need section 41. But that section did seem to guarantee that, except in Queensland and Western Australia, Aborigines would be able to vote for the Commonwealth because of their State rights.

If you thought they would get the right to vote—the Commonwealth changed the legislation, so you had to be previously enrolled before 1902, otherwise you could not enrol. They thought that people would just die out and would not have the vote.

It is also interesting that there is a time line which regards Indigenous voting rights at electoral events, and this was produced by the AEC in conjunction with a number of Aboriginal people. It is interesting to see that in 1949, when the Northern Territory went back to being part of the Commonwealth, Aboriginal people were denied being able to vote except if they were on state rolls. In the case of the Northern Territory, once it left South Australia it became part of the Commonwealth.

It says on the AEC website that in 1922:

Regulations in the Northern Territory excluded Indigenous people from voting. Officials had the power to decide who was Indigenous.

It was funny when I read that, because my wife has a certificate—and I do not know if many people in the House would have this—signed by the native affairs person at Delissaville, now Belyuen, which says she is Aboriginal. I am proudly married to a certified Aboriginal person. Whether that gave her the right to vote—she was not born in 1922, but it is interesting how officials had the power to decide who was Indigenous.

It says that in 1949:

The right to vote in federal elections was extended to Indigenous people who had served in the armed forces, or were enrolled to vote in state elections. Indigenous people in Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory still could not vote in their own state/territory elections.

In 1957:

Under the Northern Territory Welfare Ordinance, almost all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were declared to be 'wards of the state' and denied the vote

In 1962:

Commonwealth Electoral Act provided that Indigenous Australians should have the right to enrol and vote at federal elections, including Northern Territory elections, but enrolment was not compulsory ... Voter education for Aborigines began in the Northern Territory.

In 1974, and this is interesting:

Hyacinth Tungutalum (Country Liberal Party), from Bathurst Island was elected to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, representing the electorate of Arafura.

This is when the change came, I suppose. In 1984:

Compulsory enrolment and voting in Commonwealth elections for Indigenous people comes into effect. Mobile polling first used in federal elections.

Although we are talking about 1967 and changes to the Constitution, in the Northern Territory, although voting was allowed for Aboriginal people, it was never compulsory until 1984. That is a period when

Aboriginal people came to prominence. Hyacinth Tungutalum was the first Indigenous member of this Assembly:

Wesley Lanhupuy (Australian Labor Party), from central coastal Arnhem land, elected to Northern Territory Legislative Assembly representing the electorate of Arnhem.

Stanley Tipiloura (Australian Labor Party), from Bathurst Island, elected to Northern Territory Legislative Assembly ...

Maurice Rioli (Australian Labor Party), from Melville Island, elected to Northern Territory Legislative Assembly ...

John Ah Kit (Australian Labor Party), from Darwin, elected to Northern Territory Legislative Assembly ...

That was in 1995.

There are other people from other areas but in 2001—and I was in that parliament when it was elected—there was Matthew Bonson, Elliot McAdam and Marion Scrymgour. In 2005 we also had Barbara McCarthy—the name she used then—and Alison Anderson become members of the House.

As much as we are talking about the 50th anniversary of changes to the Constitution, it is an opportune time to look at the shameful, crazy and mixed up attitudes towards Aboriginal people when it came to their right to vote.

You can look back and say it was terrible or good, but we need to look to the future. Aboriginal people have had the right to vote in their own local government elections, Territory elections and Commonwealth elections.

For all the things that may have occurred in the past, we are doing pretty well. We have to look at the bright future. I will quote a newspaper in 1967:

... yesterday, Mr G. M. Bryant ... senior vice-president of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders said constitutional changes affecting aborigines must be immediately supplemented by an attack upon the material conditions ...

'It is essential that the Commonwealth takes immediate action in a number of fields, particularly housing', he said.

'Thousands of Aboriginal families live in miserable conditions. The Commonwealth Government should make provision for this in the next budget.'

Here we are, 50 years on, and there is still plenty of work to be done, especially in housing. It is nice that Aboriginal people are recognised officially, but that is just a piece of paper. The real recognition is helping Aboriginal people carve their own destiny and improve their lot in life, not only with a good education but with good housing and good employment. They are the tangible changes that would come from recognition.

I also support the change to the Constitution. It is important. It may be symbolic, and we need more than symbolism, but if we do not recognise the first peoples of this country in the Constitution we are making a mistake.

It is an opportunity to pull people together, because Aboriginal people are not just Aboriginal people, they are a mixed bunch as well. My wife is Wadjigan, another group I was brought up with at Daly River are Ngangikurunggurr and over here we have a Tiwi, and we have different people in Sydney and Melbourne. To some extent it is an opportunity to bring those different groups together as first nations.

The reconciliation process has taken a long time and has a long way to go. We know there are people who have trouble accepting that Aboriginal people are equal and take their place in our society as equals. A good example of that is in this House of Assembly.

Thank you, Chief Minister, for bringing this forward. I am sure there are people who have a better understanding of the Constitution than I have, but it gave me an opportunity to fix up a bit of my history.

I had always believed these changes related to the right of Aboriginal people to vote. It was the right of Aboriginal people to be looked after by the Commonwealth, and the right of Aboriginal people to be counted in a census. That second amendment at least recognised that Aboriginal people are human beings that are part of this nation, and that was a big change.

There was not a 'no' campaign for those amendments, and it is a pity we could not do the same with the amendments being put forward now, because if that happened I am sure it would pass a referendum.

Mr COSTA (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the Larrakia people, on whose land we stand today. I also acknowledge all Aboriginal nations across Australia. As a proud Aboriginal Tiwi man, it gives me great pleasure to speak on this motion.

I recognise that the referendum passed on 27 May 1967 as we approach its 50th anniversary. The referendum made two changes to the Australian Constitution. The first allowed the Commonwealth government to create laws for all Australians, including Aboriginal people. Prior to this, different states had different laws impacting Aboriginal people, creating a minefield of confusion and anxiety when they travelled across state borders.

The second change directed the Commonwealth to include Aboriginal people in any population count. This amendment allowed the Aboriginal population to affect the Commonwealth grant determinations provided to states and territories.

Before this change Aboriginal people suffered from invisibility at a national level. We could not access federally-funded services such as housing, social security or education. Most states would only offer a limited service to Aboriginal people due to the fact they did not receive federal funding for an entire segment of the population.

It is worthwhile to note that this referendum passed with an overwhelming 90.8% of the vote nationally. The public support for this referendum was especially significant when you realise that only eight out of 44 separately proposed constitutional amendments have ever successfully passed by referendum.

Such a high level of public support influenced the government to create a number of new acts and policies to benefit Aboriginal people following the referendum. This legislation included the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989* and the *Native Title Act 1993* to name a few.

It was not an easy road to achieve this referendum's success. It took bravery and leadership to promote these changes. Numerous campaigners worked for many years to raise public understanding and awareness of the need for change. The formal campaign for a referendum launched in 1962. The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement and the Aboriginal Australian Fellowship were among the leading organisations.

Noteworthy individuals' efforts included Jessie Street, Faith Bandler, Joe McGinniss, Chicka Dixon, Charles Perkins and pastor Sir Doug Nicholls, and many others worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

The Yirrkala bark petition in 1963, the Freedom Ride in 1965 and the Wave Hill walk-off in 1966 all helped the movement for Aboriginal civil rights, land rights and working rights to gain momentum.

This was a movement of optimism and hope for Aboriginal people where democracy could be made to include us too. The movement also involved the hard work of gathering millions of signatures to petitions and repeatedly presenting these petitions to the Commonwealth calling for constitutional change.

The movement recognised that federal resources were required to lift Aboriginal people from their position of poverty and social exclusion. The leaders of the referendum movement saw that the Commonwealth had the resources to truly make a change for Aboriginal people and also that the Commonwealth must be forced to take responsibility for the welfare of all Australians, including Aboriginal peoples.

From that vision to its realisation there was a vast amount of highly organised effort on both a community and a political level.

Progress is not always a straight line and, 50 years later, not all is perfect in Aboriginal affairs. Governments must, at all times, still be forced to listen to the people working on the ground to close the gap in health, education, housing and employment.

Fifty years on, we must remember the optimism, hope and determination that brought about change. We must not let our frustrations, with the often slow pace of public policy, cause our defeat. We must remember the feeling that will continue to push us forward, making progress for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people are part of this nation and we make democracy work for us. We can affect public opinion; we are part of government. We will continue to make positive change.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I support the motion from the Chief Minister. I also acknowledge that we are on Larrakia country, and I pay my respects to the elders, past and present, and wish all the best to the future Larrakia leaders.

I want to speak to each part of the motion and share my insight from the various identities I hold in being young, female, Aboriginal, a Territorian, an Australian, an ex-teacher and a newly-elected member of parliament.

Part one of the motion was that the Assembly:

... notes the upcoming 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum leading to greater national recognition and attention to the issues of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

I want to step back in time to 50 years ago, when Australians would have been preparing to vote on the changes to the Australian Constitution. As the National Archives of Australia's 1967 referendum fact sheet 150 explains, two questions were asked during the referendum. One was the nexus question to do with balancing the numbers in the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the second was the more publicised and well-known question relating to the changes to sections 51 and 127 of the Australian Constitution.

According to the NAA fact sheet:

The 1967 referendum did not give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the right to vote.

What it did was remove discriminatory sections of the Constitution. When the 1967 federal election was held, an astounding 90.77% of the votes were 'yes' votes, in favour of the constitutional changes. As the Chief Minister stated this morning:

The national referendum that took place on 27 May 1967 allowed for a change to our Constitution to remove explicit clauses of the Constitution that:

- 1. prevented the Commonwealth from making laws of peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth in relation to Aboriginal people*
- 2. prevented Aboriginal Australians being counted in the national census.*

From my understanding of the academic research on this significant historical event, as stated by Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus:

The 1967 referendum to alter Australia's Constitution is now seen as an event that marked a major turning point in Aboriginal–European relations in Australia.

By 1967 the Australian population was a diverse community despite the Immigration Act of 1901, more commonly referred to now as the White Australia Policy.

The 1967 referendum was a precursor of changing times, making way for such acts as the 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act*.

I am concerned by the federal government and its push to change section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*, and I sincerely hope that no such changes proposed by the federal Liberal government are passed now or into the future regarding this section.

This brings me to part two of the motion, which is that the Assembly:

... acknowledges the importance of this referendum in underpinning recognition, reconciliation and respect for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and, in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians here in the Northern Territory.

I would probably consider myself an idealist, but I have trained myself hard to become more of a realist. I used to be naive when I was younger in thinking our country was not racist. I grew up in Batchelor and Darwin and my life experiences were filled with meeting people and having friends from diverse backgrounds.

I did not think racism was an issue in Australia until I moved to Brisbane in 2003 for university when I was 17 years old. Over my time at university I realised, through conversations, people did not have the same exposure or appreciation of diversity as I did. I had constructive conversations with people, and I observed and reflected on my time living in Brisbane each time I returned to Darwin for my university holidays.

I share this personal story with the House, as it speaks to the motion's importance of the historic 1967 referendum in underpinning recognition, reconciliation and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, specifically in our Territory contexts.

My idealism is coming out. I am positive that, in the future, race relations in our nation will move forward in a positive direction despite our historical and social segregation.

Part three of the motion is that the Assembly:

... expresses its support for work being undertaken both by government and the wider Northern Territory community to advance respect, recognition and the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians in the Northern Territory.

I will use this part of the motion to point out that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in our own Legislative Assembly is in the numbers. We have six Indigenous representatives of the 25 members of parliament: Minister Ken Vowles; Deputy Speaker, the Member for Namatjira, Mr Chansey Paech; the Member for Karama, Ngaree Ah Kit; the Member for Arafura, Lawrence Costa; and the Member for Nhulunbuy, Yingiya Mark Guyula.

We are only just short of our 30% representation to be truly reflective of the Northern Territory population here in the Legislative Assembly. But we are pretty close, which is great.

Ten years ago, on the 40th anniversary of the referendum, Tom Calma, the then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Race Discrimination Commissioner, made a speech entitled '40 years on: what does the 'yes' vote mean for Indigenous Australians?'

The speech was made at the Tasmanian annual Social Justice Lecture on 22 August 2007. I want to quote part of his speech which made reference to his Social Justice Report 2006 regarding the government's approach to Indigenous affairs. Mr Calma said:

First and foremost amongst these is the lack of engagement with, and participation of, Indigenous peoples. This most basic of human rights – the right to have a say in decisions that impact directly on your life – is not apparent in the Government's approach to Indigenous affairs. Rather, there is a consistent trend towards top-down approaches that dis-empower Indigenous organisations and communities.

Just to be clear, Mr Calma was talking about the Liberal federal government of the day.

Many successive Australian federal governments have held paternalistic views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In stark contrast to the federal government 10 years ago, I am proud our Northern Territory Labor government is committed to involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians in local decision-making and is working to build local capacity in our remote communities.

I am proud our Northern Territory Labor government, under the direction and leadership of Chief Minister Michael Gunner MLA, has established an Aboriginal affairs subcommittee of Cabinet. The three standing agenda items are treaty, land and sea, and local decision-making. The Chief Minister is chairing this committee, alongside the Member for Namatjira and me as co-chairs. I look forward to working with my colleagues and our independent advisers as this subcommittee is developed further.

We have come a long way since the 1967 referendum; however, we still have a long way to go. Many issues plague Aboriginal Territorians in the areas of remote housing, education, employment and health. In regard to health, I want to share this statement with the House:

One of the best measures of health status is life expectancy. Indeed, life expectancy can be argued to be one of the most robust indicators of overall socioeconomic circumstances, especially in the presence of the substantial cultural differences that exist between Indigenous and other Australians.

It is our job, as a government, to work with Aboriginal people to address Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory. Local people often have local solutions, and we must listen and work with people to tackle the big issues.

Our Territory Labor government went to the Northern Territory election last year on the platform of committing a record \$1.1bn over a 10-year plan in remote housing. This is truly an investment in the Territory's future and, in particular, it seeks to address closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, as many issues stem from the problem of inadequate or insufficient housing.

Complementary to some of the essential issues we are working to improve is our support of Indigenous arts and culture in the Northern Territory. One of the initiatives of our Labor government is investing in an iconic national Indigenous art gallery in Alice Springs. We are also investing in an Indigenous arts trail network across the Northern Territory.

I am particularly excited about the arts trail as there are several wonderful art centres already operating in communities within the Arnhem electorate. These wonderful art centres include Djilpin Arts in Wugularr, also known as Beswick community; the Gapuwiyak Cultural and Arts Centre in the Gapuwiyak community; the art shop and gallery at the Kakadu Visitor Centre, in the iconic Kakadu National Park, just outside of Jabiru township; the Ngukurr Arts Centre in Ngukurr community; and the ASAC Art Gallery in Alyangula, on Groote Eylandt. Hopefully on this list soon will be an art shop in Numbulwar community for the Numburindi Arts business—fingers crossed that will be later this year.

As the Chief Minister mentioned in his speech, our Labor government has been working in partnership with the Jawoyn Association, which is based on Katherine. It is a key player in the Katherine region's tourism industry. Jawoyn specifically cares for the country of the Nitmiluk National Park, surrounding the iconic Katherine Gorge, which is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Northern Territory.

I am now a resident of Katherine, sitting next to my local member, the Member for Katherine, in the Chamber. I am fortunate to have my office so close to such beautiful natural heritage.

The NT Government will be rolling out a collection of stories and information which will be shared through radio, print and social media. It is important to note that the strong history of activism is highlighted in the Territory with some of the most historic events.

One of these events was the emergence of claims to recognition of Aboriginal land rights with the 1963 Yirrkala bark petition. Also significant in the Northern Territory, 1966 marked the Wave Hill walk-off as Gurindji stockmen and their families withdrew their labour for better pay and living conditions. This is amazing history and it really paved the way for workers' rights, particularly for Indigenous Australians.

The well-known freedom rides, mentioned by the Chief Minister and the Member for Arafura, happened in New South Wales, where the very famous Territorian Charles Perkins was a leader amongst his fellow University of Sydney peers and travelled around country New South Wales in a bus to protest and demonstrate against the segregation in Australia.

I read Charlie Perkins' autobiography many years ago when I was still at university. The book, cheekily entitled *A Bastard Like Me*, shows a great insight into Charles' life, where he started and where he continued his advocacy as a young man into becoming an elder.

Born in Alice Springs on the table of the old Alice Springs Telegraph Station, he was a fierce character who spoke his mind, and was the first Aboriginal Australian to attend a university. He was also a deadly soccer player, like I used to be back in my heyday, and he was scouted by clubs in England. Unfortunately I was not.

Sadly, in 2000 Mr Perkins passed away from renal failure, another devastating health issue that is running at extremely high levels in our remote, regional and urban parts of Australia, particularly with Indigenous Australians.

I was in Grade 10 at the time and I was devastated, as Mr Perkins was one of my role models and I really wanted to meet him. I do not often like to use the term 'role model'; however, I thought it very fitting for him. I like that he was smart, fiery, observant and outspoken.

In 2014 at the Garma Festival I met his daughter, Rachel Perkins, who is a film and television director, producer and screenwriter. As soon as I spoke to Rachel I said, 'Your father was one of my heroes'.

I support the Chief Minister's amendment to the motion in order to be specifically inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders, as they are a minority within a minority group. The Torres Strait Islands lay claim to an historical landmark event which recognised native title in Australia.

In 1982 Eddie Koiki Mabo, a Meriam man from Murray Island, in the Torres Straits, along with Reverend David Passi, Celuia Mapoo Salee, Sam Passi and James Rice started a long and drawn-out process to change history in Australia. On 3 June 1992 the High Court of Australia decided in favour of Eddie Koiki Mabo and his fellow plaintiffs. Sadly, Mr Mabo died six months before the historic High Court decision. However, his family and relatives from Queensland were there to hear the final findings of the High Court.

On 3 June it is Mabo Day, commemorating the landmark High Court decision which overturned the notion of terra nullius and acknowledged that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people indeed have connection to country, and have so for hundreds of thousands of years, and many generations, predating any European settlement in Australia.

The Australian history of Aboriginal people who have been fierce warriors, nomads and naturalists can be simplified as enduring decades and decades of changes from stages of extermination to examination to assimilation to discrimination, and now slowly are on the path to self-determination.

We must remember that history. So many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have experienced generational trauma because of it. For those people who say, 'Forget it, move on, it's in the past', that is simply something we cannot and should not do.

I use the example that it has been over 100 years since the Anzacs landed at Gallipoli in Turkey. We solemnly remember, as a nation, this catastrophic event in history, and as a proud nation we use it as a time of reflection every year on 25 April at beautiful monuments and ceremonies around the country. So why is it hard for people to acknowledge and reflect on the history of Australia, sometimes a very dark history, and the atrocities that Indigenous Australians have endured for decades?

Despite the years of social, economic and environmental changes, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have survived and remained resilient. They are the oldest living and surviving cultures in the world. I am proud to say we are now seeing examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders thriving, but there is still a long way to go.

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: In the areas of housing, health, employment and education—these are the cornerstones of our society. These are the areas we need to put time, effort, money and compassion into in order to create different pathways for people to be able to follow and determine for themselves how to run their communities, families, schools and health clinics in the remote, regional and urban parts of the Territory.

I want to make special mention of and thank Kaye Henderson, Manager of the Parliamentary Library Service, for her assistance in providing research material in order for me to shape my speech today.

In my role as the Member for Arnhem I also carry several assistant minister portfolios. I am extremely fortunate to be working with the Minister for Education, Hon Eva Lawler, in the areas of remote education and Families as First Teachers. I feel very lucky to be working with the Minister in these areas. Education is not my only passion, but the two areas relate very deeply to Indigenous Territorians. We know that

education is the key to learning and growing for young people so they have a good chance of growing and being able to contribute positively to our society.

The other two portfolios I hold, one I have already mentioned—I am co-chair of Aboriginal Affairs, with the Chief Minister. I hold that position alongside the Member for Namatjira, Chansey Paech. This is an area that I feel passionate about and having the opportunity to work with the Chief Minister, who holds the portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs, is extremely valuable. It shows that the weighting of that portfolio is extremely important, and I thank the Chief Minister for his consultation processes and for making sure that the Member for Namatjira and I pave way for the Aboriginal affairs subcommittee of Cabinet. The direction it is taking with its three standing agenda items is also helping to shape the discussions we have with the Chief Minister in regard to Aboriginal affairs. I thank the Chief Minister for providing me with the opportunity to learn, grow and contribute with my experience and knowledge.

Finally, another assistant minister portfolio I hold is statehood, which has been talked about in the Territory for many years. It is in an area I am learning very keenly about. The previous Labor government was at the forefront of focusing the question of the Territory becoming a state. I feel very honoured to be entrusted with this assistant minister portfolio to learn and grow, and to contribute not only as a member of parliament, but as a young Territorian looking towards the future of the Territory and making sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians are included in conversations regarding statehood.

I thank the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education for allowing me those opportunities.

I thank the Chief Minister for his motion and I support the amendment. I fully commend the amended motion to the Assembly.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, live and learn, and I recognise their continuing connection to the land, water and community. I pay respect to the elders, past, present and emerging.

I acknowledge the upcoming 50th anniversary, on 27 May, of the 1967 referendum, a watershed moment in Australia's history. Remembered as changing forever the social and political relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, the referendum initiated the provision of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by the Commonwealth Government.

This referendum changed our Constitution to allow the Commonwealth Government greater involvement in Aboriginal affairs and was part of a decade of change between the 1960s and 1970s. The 1967 referendum changed the Constitution from 1901 by removing the sections which:

1. prevented the Commonwealth Government from making special laws with respect to Aboriginal people
2. excluded Aboriginal people from being counted in the census.

All six states in Australia voted an overwhelming yes for the referendum; however, the Northern Territory and ACT did not have the right at this stage to vote in the referendum.

This referendum is one of the many historical events weaved into the fabric of Australia's history that shaped our nation. In the early 1960s a movement began, driven by a growing international interest from policy makers on human rights and towards decolonisation.

It was the time of the decolonisation of many African and Pacific nations; the time of massacres in Sharpeville and Soweto in South Africa, and the growing resistance to apartheid; and a time of change in the urban middle classes of Europe, America and Australia, with a call for liberation and universal human rights.

For Australia's Aboriginal people there was a growing demand to stop the inequitable and unjust treatment imposed upon them. Aboriginal people and their advocates found their voice and began to draw attention to the poor socioeconomic conditions they faced. As more people became vocal more Australians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, became interested in Aboriginal affairs. People were starting to pay attention to the denial of civil rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the nation began to gain an understanding of the unacceptable conditions they lived in.

Born in Alice Springs in 1936, Charles Nelson Perkins AO was an Australian Aboriginal activist and the first Aboriginal man in Australia to graduate from university. Charlie led a famous campaign in 1965 in NSW. Charlie and other leaders went on the famous 3200 kilometre Freedom Ride to expose the discrimination towards the Aboriginal population, including Aboriginal people being barred from public places, such as swimming pools and pubs.

Kumajay Perkins put this discrimination into the consciousness of the nation, first with the students of the University of Sydney who accompanied him, and eventually to the broader community, who were appalled by what they saw in Moree and other parts of NSW.

In the Northern Territory, on 23 August 1966, Gurindji spokesman Vincent Lingiari led the Wave Hill walk-off. Wave Hill Station had been bought by British pastoral company Vestey's in 1914. Mr Lingiari led Aboriginal stockmen and women in a protest against their poor working conditions and wages, and to demand the return of some of their traditional land. It was not until 1975 that the Labor government of Gough Whitlam finally negotiated a deal with Vestey's to return part of the traditional lands to the Gurindji people.

Prime Minister Gough Whitlam symbolically poured sand into Vincent Lingiari's hands to present the deeds and symbolise the return of country.

These significant historical events contributed to the first steps to recognise and include Aboriginal people in Australian society. Perkins and Lingiari were both makers of change. Among other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates, they fought for better human rights for their people and the traditional owners.

The 1967 referendum, the most successful and strongly supported referendum in Australia's history, enabled the Commonwealth Government to make finance available for state projects, such as Aboriginal housing and vocational training.

More importantly, in the national consciousness, it gave the Commonwealth the ultimate responsibility for Aboriginal wellbeing. No longer would the nation be able to hide behind the confusion of responsibilities between jurisdictions, or the dubious policies of state governments which had accepted failure and, it appeared, the slow demise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The chronology across our nation is interesting.

- 1968, the Aboriginal Enterprises Assistance Act and the State Grants (Aboriginal Advancement) Act
- 1972, the Whitlam Labor government established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- 1973, the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee was elected
- 1976, Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act under the Fraser coalition
- 1977, the NAC became the National Aboriginal Conference, and Community Development Employment Projects, or CDEP schemes, commenced
- 1985, the NAC is abolished in opposition to Hawke's national land rights back down
- 1986, Aboriginal employment development policy was enacted
- from 1987 to 1990, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
- 1989, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act*
- 1990, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act
- 1995, ATSIC received NGO status at the United Nations, and worked with others for the draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- 1997, the HREOC Bringing them Home report.

If we fast forward to 2017, as we all know, we still face many challenges. As the Northern Territory Minister for Housing and Community Development and local government, I am in a privileged position that I take

seriously. This job entails the carriage of a large investment into the remote regions of the Northern Territory by the Labor government.

We have heard much about Labor's record \$1.1bn housing program, but importantly, this represents the working partnership with Aboriginal people to roll out the program, build capacity and deliver better outcomes.

To continue the legacy of Lingiari, Perkins and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates, we are working to be the first Territory government to hand back control and decision-making to Australia's first people. For too long, governments have directed Indigenous communities. This investment and policy will help people achieve the goals they set for themselves.

We are determined to work with Aboriginal people to improve housing. Families will guide improvements to the amenity of their personal living spaces, and we will work with communities to improve the community infrastructure and housing options. Good housing is a right for all Territorians, and it is critical if we are to provide the opportunity for a good education, good health and community outcomes.

You cannot pay attention and perform well at school if you have not been able to sleep well the night before. For these reasons, this initiative, our \$1.1bn remote housing program, is the largest and most important investment we are making as a government.

There has been a lot of talk about the budget over the past fortnight, and a lot of great initiatives announced by Michael Gunner's Labor government to support regional and remote Indigenous communities and all Territorians. It has seen increased funding for housing, community development, local governments and addressing the disadvantage and the need for change.

We will empower the bush and ensure we work in partnership with Aboriginal people. We have invested considerably in this budget, and we have a plan to continue that investment over the next 10 years.

The local decision-making policy is a significant initiative of the Michael Gunner Labor government. We want to ensure we work with the regional councils and local authorities to ensure all government consultation is coordinated and constructive. We want to deliver jobs and be engaged at all levels with Indigenous Territorians.

The Territory Labor government supports a treaty and wants to have a conversation with Aboriginal Territorians. The government's Cabinet subcommittee on Aboriginal affairs and the Department of the Chief Minister is doing a body of work in preparation for this consultation. All Territorians are entitled to control their lives and access high-quality services, from Ali Curung to Areyonga, Borroloola to Belyuen, Ngukurr to Numbulwar, and Waruwi to Wurrumiyanga. The core concept in the work done by Professor Sir Michael Marmot on the social determinants of health is that people's lives are healthier and happier the greater control they have over their own circumstance.

We want to ensure Aboriginal Territorians have greater control of their lives, personal circumstances, housing and living spaces, greater certainty for their organisations through longer-term funding, and greater opportunity to engage with the broader community in education and work in expanding the economic opportunities and the social and cultural life of the Northern Territory.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, I am privileged to be a minister of the Northern Territory Labor government, the Member for Barkly and a proud Territorian in a government on the right path to improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We will be guided by what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people tell us they need and we will support them to improve their livelihoods. We are determined to restore local decision-making to remote communities and support people in achieving the goals they set for themselves.

The 50th anniversary is significant. We are very cognisant of the challenges we have towards closing the gap. There is a huge deficit of housing in remote Indigenous communities. The Territory has significant housing problems that have severely impacted on many Territorians for far too long.

In remote Indigenous communities housing has been inadequate and overcrowded, and has resulted in poor health and social outcomes. This government has plans and programs to improve housing, health, education and important social outcomes. In addition to the investments, we have fast-tracked the start of

things moving this financial year, and Labor's first budget will see the rest of our programs start to take shape from 1 July.

We will support people living in remote communities and Indigenous businesses and organisations to ensure local people drive local solutions to improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

I thank the Chief Minister for bringing the motion on the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum to the House, and I stand proud to be a member of Michael Gunner's Labor team with the courage and determination to make sure we deliver improved outcomes and a better future for all Territorians.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I wish to kick off by paying my respects to the Larrakia people, past, present and future. Without their care of this country for thousands of years before us we would not have the opportunity to meet in the beautiful place we call home.

I support the motion on the recognition of the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. I am proud to stand alongside my Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues and Territorians in the House to talk about such a significant event. Since the late 1930s Indigenous Australians have been protesting for equal rights within and outside the legal system.

This country has a very long history of that kind of fight. I will not dwell on much of our real Australian history today because, like others in this place, I could go on for hours. It is a history marred by tremendous sadness, stamped with a great resilience, and includes a litany of well-intended acts that have left a very profound and lasting mark on our first peoples. The 1967 referendum sits amongst those things as a landmark event that changed the thinking of Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

Sadly, our history of colonisation was based on a fight for resources with a burgeoning pastoral industry on our eastern borders, which took more and more land away from our first people. Traditional boundaries were destroyed and our first people were pushed further to the fringes of developing frontier towns. But, in one small town, one small protest against being barred from standing outside a town hall was the beginning of the Indigenous rights movement and the long road to equality. Some people might say that fight continues.

These small campaigns evolved through the 1940s and 1950s, and came to focus on citizenship rights as an important part of Indigenous equality. Campaigners' names such as William Cooper and Fred Maynard became synonymous with the fight for equal rights. They were men who spent many years working in the pastoral industry but were denied the right to own land.

It is important to remind ourselves that prior to the 1967 referendum, section 127 of the Constitution actually stated, in relation to the counting of citizens of this country:

In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.

This is a sad statement which subliminally also states that if our first people did not count, they did not need to be counted. That is sad.

In addition, silences in the Constitution prior to 1967 had a lot to answer for in respect to this inequality. The omission of Indigenous people from the drafting process and from within the content of the Constitution is a reminder of the thinking about our first people at the time. Sadly, it was a time when there was a strong belief in white racial superiority and the idea that our first people were a dying race and, if ignored, would simply fade away. Gladly we no longer live in such a time nor entertain such thinking, and I would go so far as to say that, collectively, we find such thinking distasteful.

History tells us that with this backdrop of subliminal activism in the 1950s the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement emerged. I consider that the first genesis of ATSIC, which we all know only too well. It was a formal body, the first of its kind, formed to represent the interests of our first people. The council represented that voice right through to the 1960s and it took up the mantle to campaign citizenship rights for Indigenous people.

Prominent leaders, many of whom we have heard about today, such as Doug Nicholls, Joe McGinniss and Kath Walker all emerged. It was also a time that saw what is probably my favourite parts—I hear from the Members for Arnhem and Johnston that it is also one of their favourite parts—of Australian history, for no

other reason than it was an act that pulled Indigenous and non-Indigenous students together in relatively peaceful uprising. I speak of the Freedom Rides, led notably by Mr Charles Perkins.

Charlie is also one of my heroes, and he became that after I read his book, which has already been mentioned, *A Bastard Like Me*, whilst in university. If members of this House have not read it, you really should. It is a fascinating and true story of resilience and an unlikely, sometimes unwilling, champion of his people.

The Freedom Rides brought together students of every colour through northwest New South Wales, and brought to the attention of people in the cities just how marginalised our first people had become. We have heard plenty today about how poor their access was to basic rights, such as education and health. It really highlighted how racist some areas of Australia were.

At that time, Charlie stated that the Freedom Rides were to:

... expose the deplorable living conditions not only to white people and the nation, but to black people too ...

Aboriginal people were excluded from places like hotels and social clubs and they had to hold separate church services.

At that time most Indigenous people in New South Wales lived in the fringes of town camps with no fresh water or sanitation. I read only yesterday in some of the research provided by our Parliamentary Library Service that some non-Indigenous called for special towns to be created where 'they would not bother us'. I have done an awful lot of research on Indigenous history and I had never heard that quoted before; it stopped me in my tracks.

The Freedom Rides exposed these views and highlighted our racial shame. It is unimaginable that that would go on.

The rides galvanised public opinion on the plight of our first Australians, particularly in areas such as NSW, where there had been such a brutal history of first contact on contest over resources. It is possible that because of the focus on citizenship rights, which I spoke about before, in the years leading up to the referendum, and because of the rhetoric of equality for Aboriginal people that was used in the 'yes' campaigns at the time, it was inevitable there would be a mistaken perception that the constitutional change had landed Indigenous people to become citizens or obtain the right to vote.

It will surprise many that the actual changes to the referendum did neither of those. In reality, the 1967 referendum did two things: it allowed Indigenous people to be included in the census; and it gave the federal parliament the power to make laws in relation to Indigenous people.

Therefore, the 1967 referendum did not create an even playing field or herald an era of non-discrimination, but it was a significant milestone in how Australians started to think about each other. It bore a new consciousness.

History has shown that Australians do not like to meddle with the Constitution. The referendum in 1967 became one of only eight successful changes out of 44, as mentioned by the Member for Ararua. It recorded the largest winning percentage with over 90% of voters voting yes. Shame on the remaining 10%, I say. I wish I had the chance to vote at that time.

Given that segregation was alive and well in most parts of Australia, it was an extraordinary event. It can be inferred that the relatively uncontested nature of the changes of including Indigenous people in the census and increasing federal government power over them assisted in obtaining that bipartisan support.

Despite that, the 1967 referendum is a time in our history that we can look at with some pride. The foundations were laid for a change of views and path. We were all one class of citizen, not a nation divided about whether our first people even existed—a change for the better.

We were, despite the Mabo decision later, no longer a terra nullius—an episode of greatness alongside Whitlam's historic act of handing back the land to the Gurindji people, who are my children's ancestors. It was fantastic to see them both in the Territory last year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wave Hill walk-off and to walk alongside their people.

I believe Australians have an inherent sense of right and wrong, and this act 50 years ago proved that. Following the referendum, regardless of the change in the words, the Labor government of the day seized hold of that tide and implemented sweeping changes in Indigenous affairs.

It is strange for me to think that this event, in the collective living memory, took place only the year before I was born. Even in the Northern Territory there was a long history of segregation. I remember one of my first visits to the Territory in the mid-1980s; there were still two sides to many public bars. In Katherine it was always the case that the back bar was for Indigenous people.

It is important for us to take stock of how much has changed in the past 50 years, celebrate this historic milestone and start a new debate on where we are heading and how we can get there in the true spirit of reconciliation.

Let us not forget the lessons of the past; let us focus on a future that includes real equality. There is much more to do. Facing the real challenges is how we honour those early and current trailblazers and champions of change.

I commend the motion to the House.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I support the motion. As a Timorese woman whose family and country spent 27 years fighting for independence in East Timor, commemorations like this are very touching. They get me a bit emotional.

For many Indigenous Australians 27 May marks the 75th anniversary in the fight for Aboriginal rights and recognition.

In 1938 a large group of Aboriginal people gathered in Sydney at a protest to mark 150 years since European settlement. The Indigenous demonstrators demanded full citizens' rights and equality. The protest was the beginning of the organised Aboriginal civil rights movements in Australia.

In the era following the Second World War, the majority of Australians lived in a world of houses that were serviced with water and power and where laws ensured social order. In general, people had jobs and enough to eat, and if they did not, government benefits and services helped them through hard times. Most people lived in or near the cities. They were proud to be subjects of the Queen and believed they lived in a fair and just democracy, unhindered by problems such as class distinctions in Britain or racial tensions in the United States or South Africa of that time.

The other world was inhabited by people whose ancestors had lived in Australia for more than 40 000 years. By the 1950s, having lost land and livelihood, many were poor, living in humpies on the edge of town rubbish dumps and earning occasional money as fruit pickers or wherever they could find a cash-in-hand job. They were not eligible for the dole or other state benefits that white people received because of the laws of that time.

State laws also told Indigenous people where they were allowed to live, where they could and could not move to, when they could move in some cases and who they could marry. They were often not the legal guardians of their own children. Local police controlled their earnings, doling out small amounts according to the individual judgement or whim, calling it pocket money. Wow! Doesn't that sound familiar in this day and age of the cashless card? In Queensland the law even allowed mission managers to open and censor mission dwellers' letters. It was not that long ago, when you think about it.

There was little contact between the people of these two worlds. The majority either did not know or did not care about the suffering of the minority. However, in the late 1950s events brought the sufferings of the few into the living rooms of many. Some were aware of Aboriginal disadvantage and were doing what they could to address it. They recognised the potential to form a grassroots reform movement to bring the rights and protections of Australian citizenship to the dispossessed Aboriginal population.

Thus began the movement that led to the referendum that changed our Constitution, to a certain extent. Throughout my life I have heard and I still hear people talk about the past in this country as if the past was far better than the present. For some that might ring true. We all need to believe that Australia's better days are still ahead. We need to acknowledge and respect the past, but our want for a better future must always be greater than our want to return to yesteryear.

We have a lot to be proud of and a lot to be thankful for, but for so many first Australians this day can be a stark reminder of past injustices. As compassionate, honest, humble people we need to accept the reality and acknowledge their pain and trauma.

All Australians, especially on anniversaries such as the one we will be commemorating on 27 May, should recall our nation's history and acknowledge where we have come from. We live in an extraordinary country and are the envy of the world in so many respects, but in regard to this country's First Nations people, we cannot claim to be the envy of the world. The life expectancy of our First Nations people remains low. High rates of infant mortality, illiteracy, homelessness—I could go on. What we have failed to do is recognise our First Nations people in our Constitution. I cannot believe that 50 years later we are still having this conversation.

I look forward to supporting my colleagues, friends, family and Katherine constituents of Aboriginal descent in the decision they will make when the time comes to either accept recognition or treaty. In that way we will be honouring what happened on 27 May, 50 years ago.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this important motion before the House. I acknowledge the Larrakia people as the traditional owners of this land, and pay my respect to elders past and present.

I stand before the House today as a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorian to talk about the importance of the 1967 referendum, which stands out as one of the most important dates in Australia's history.

On 27 May 1967, just over 90% of Australians voted in favour of repealing sections 51 and 127 of the Australian Constitution. Section 51 stated:

The parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to ...

...

... the people of any race, other than the Aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws ...

As a result of the 1967 referendum, the words 'other than the Aboriginal people in any state' were removed from Australia's Constitution.

Section 127 stated:

In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted.

As a result of the 1967 referendum, the entire section 127 was removed from the Constitution.

Changing the Constitution was no easy feat. It took 10 long years of campaigning by a team of passionate, committed and determined advocates who wanted to ensure Aboriginal people were treated fairly and as equals. I thank every person who contributed to the outcome of the 1967 referendum and congratulate them on achieving the highest ever 'yes' vote recorded at a referendum.

I had a tough time reading historical documents that helped me draft my speech. With each document I uncovered and read, I experienced a rollercoaster of emotions. I felt confused, angry, sad and hopeful. I felt confused because I cannot understand why white settlers would not only invade a country that was already occupied, but treat the original inhabitants as less than human. I felt angry about the treatment of Aboriginal people. I felt sad when I thought about what it must have been like to be an Aboriginal person at that time.

And then I felt hopeful that Australia would never return to that dark time in our collective history, a history that resonates, that shaped Australia's future, and that a lot of us are still paying for today.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the Bringing them Home report, which was produced from the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.

An excerpt from the introduction of the Bringing them Home report resonated with me, and it reads:

Grief and loss are the predominant themes of this report. Tenacity and survival are also acknowledged. It is no ordinary report. Much of its subject matter is so personal and intimate that ordinarily it would not be discussed. These matters have only been discussed with the Inquiry with great difficulty and much personal distress. The suffering and the courage of those who have told their stories inspire sensitivity and respect.

The histories we trace are complex and pervasive. Most significantly the actions of the past resonate in the present and will continue to do so in the future. The laws, policies and practices which separated Indigenous children from their families have contributed directly to the alienation of Indigenous societies today.

For individuals, their removal as children and the abuse they experienced at the hands of the authorities or their delegates have permanently scarred their lives. The harm continues in later generations, affecting their children and grandchildren.

In no sense has the Inquiry been 'raking over the past' for its own sake. The truth is that the past is very much with us today, in the continuing devastation of the lives of Indigenous Australians. That devastation cannot be addressed unless the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what has happened in the past and, having listened and understood, commits itself to reconciliation.

Although many children found their way home to their mothers and families, a number of children did not. Subsequently, these children were stolen and never returned. The Northern Territory Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation was formally incorporated in 1998 to respond directly to the needs and concerns of members of the Stolen Generations, their families and communities.

The corporation is funded to support members of the Stolen Generations, their families and communities through the Link-Up program, where counsellors provide counselling and support to those who are tracing and/or locating their families and/or planning a reunion. The counselling includes intergenerational grief, trauma and family and relationships counselling. I congratulate all NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation board members and staff for all their hard work in providing a much-needed service to members of the Stolen Generations and their families.

Territorians who are members of the Stolen Generations continue to fight for compensation for the injustices that were bestowed upon them and their families. I believe they are valid in their want, and urge the federal government to do its job, hear these matters directly from the representative organisations and impacted individuals, and pave a way forward for appropriate compensation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 30% of the Territory's population, yet we make up a disproportionate share of a number of statistics, including the Territory's rates of suicide, incarceration and children in care. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians need continued and concerted support to close the gap. I am proud to be part of a government that understands this and has allocated funds to make sustainable generational changes in the 2017 budget.

To those who have paved the way before me, thank you. To my elders, who I had the privilege of working alongside as a director of the Danila Dilba Health Service to deliver a high standard of primary healthcare to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Yilli Rreung region of Darwin, thank you.

To my colleagues and other volunteers of the annual Darwin and Palmerston NAIDOC committees, who dedicated their time to promote and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and achievement, thank you. To all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of parliament around the country, who play their part in legislating for a brighter future for all citizens, thank you.

To all our current and emerging leaders, particularly those who are playing their part to improve their community and our Territory as a whole, thank you.

My parents, Gail and John, raised my siblings and me to be aware of the struggles that my ancestors were subjected to, but more importantly, they raised us to be resilient, respectful and understanding. I have them to thank for my glass-half-full approach, which has helped me to pick myself up, dust myself off and move forward each time I get knocked down.

I stand today to acknowledge the unforgivable behaviour of the government which endorsed the removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers. I acknowledge the government that introduced the 1967

referendum. I also stand to ask my fellow parliamentarians to stand with me in acknowledging the impact on the Stolen Generations and the intergenerational trauma that has resulted from our dark past prior to the 1967 referendum. Let us use this year, the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum, to work as a united parliament to address the state of affairs that we face in the Territory today.

Let us bring more empathy into our approach, and remember that we have been trusted by Territorians to deliver all we can and build a better Territory. Let us work together to make a real difference for all Territorians.

I thank the Chief Minister for bringing the motion to the House.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I pay respect to my fellow parliamentary colleagues who have taken the opportunity to speak about this very important motion before the House. Firstly, I feel it is very important to pay my deepest respects to the traditional owners on whose land we meet today and whose land we meet on every day during our parliamentary sittings. I also pay respects to the First Nations people right across this great country of ours.

I am very pleased to be able to speak in support of this motion as the Member for Namatjira, a first Australian and a person who will always be a fierce advocate for the advancement of my people, the First Nations people, the Territory people.

The national referendum that took place on 27 May 1967 allowed for change to our Constitution to remove explicit clauses of the Constitution that prevented the Commonwealth from making laws for peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth in relation to Aboriginal people, and prevented Aboriginal Australians from being counted in the national census.

It is not to rule out that much discussion has occurred on whether allowing Aboriginal people to be counted in the census had a positive role for Aboriginal people or whether it simply allowed successive federal governments to tell us just how much we were failing.

The 1967 referendum had strong support from the voting public, ordinary Australians. Over 90% of voters supported these changes in how we treat our First Nations people and how we shape the future.

In the Northern Territory the count of Aboriginal Territorians has become a key influence on our share of GST revenues, a consequence of the Grants Commission's equalisation that seeks to disperse Commonwealth GST income equitably, including the factors relating to remoteness of population, cost of delivery of services to those living in remote areas and, of course, Indigenous disadvantage.

This is telling and important, remembering that historically referendums in Australia have not enjoyed such strong voter support. Indeed, eight of the 44 referenda proposing change to the Constitution have attracted a 'yes' vote. Voters in the Northern Territory were not able to vote in the 1967 referendum, a consequence of legislation at that time. But as the resilient bunch we are, that never stopped us from making sure our voices were heard and our views were passed on to Canberra and the rest of the country.

I am very proud to talk about the protests that happened in Alice Springs on this very matter. My community protested at the lack of opportunity for them to vote in this referendum. Alice Springs is the heartland of Aboriginal Australia, the land of enchantment. Alice Springs is a place of strong cultural and spiritual significance to our First Nations people.

On any given day you can see and feel the strength and resilience, the beating heart of our nation's first people's home, my home, Alice Springs. It is the magic lands that have produced some of our greatest Aboriginal leaders. Charlie Perkins, who was instrumental in the 1967 referendum and one of the key members of the freedom rides, led a bus tour through New South Wales by activists protesting discrimination against Aboriginal people in small towns across New South Wales. The Australian Freedom Rides aimed to expose discrepancies in living, education and health conditions amongst Aboriginal people.

Pat Turner was born and raised in Alice Springs. Pat was one Australia's most, if not the most, senior Aboriginal government officials to date. Her advocacy on the advancement of her people, our people, has been nothing shy of amazing. I am very fortunate to have been mentored by this outstanding woman. The world would be a better place with more people like Pat Turner.

I move on to Albert Namatjira. I have the honour of representing an electorate which shares his name. Albert Namatjira was the first Aboriginal person, along with his wife, to become an internationally-renowned

artist. His first exhibition went on show in Melbourne in 1937, where his paintings sold out. In some ways Namatjira's life reflects the times. He was a senior Aboriginal man who sought to straddle two worlds using western artistic styles to celebrate his country, our country, to all Australians. Proud of family and country, he showcased his country through his works.

In a new way artistic innovation proudly continues the work done by his family today. His success continued, and many of his paintings have become highly valuable. Although they have become highly valuable and he was very successful and made a great deal of money, Namatjira still had to follow strict laws placed on Aboriginal people during that time. He was not allowed to buy a home or land, nor could he rent a property.

In 1957 Namatjira became the first Aboriginal to become an Australian citizen. His art and his life made governments aware of how Aboriginal people were being treated in Australia during that period, and the long path ahead to full citizenship rights and opportunities.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the strong voice that people from Central Australia have had in this Chamber over many years: Neville Perkins; Jack Ah Kit; Alison Anderson; Elliot McAdam; and Karl Hampton. These are just a few of the outstanding Central Australians that I look to as inspiring Aboriginal people—standing up and stepping out to be the voice of their people—Aboriginal people of high degree.

While the road ahead may, at times, look bumpy and challenging, Central Australia will always be a place of strong people with desires to see and invoke positive change.

Much has changed over the last 50 years for Aboriginal people; much has also remained the same in some instances. Much has become the responsibility of no one. We only have to look at the federal government's position on outstations and homelands. Clearly many Aboriginal people across Australia still do not have access to life's opportunities that other Australians enjoy or, indeed, take as an entitlement, a right of citizenship.

Anyone who has walked a mile in the shoes of people from disadvantaged communities, often with English as a second or third language, knows the struggle of navigating a busy and remote world. We only have to look at the expectations we put on people living in remote communities when we ask them to comply with the tough reporting compliance mechanisms with the CDP and Centrelink. Quite often it is a tragic approach when someone misses an appointment due to family issues such as a death or illness, and they are cut off for anywhere up to six weeks with no income or support.

It is clear to me and many others that much-needed reform and leadership is still needed to make substantial change to ensure that my people, our people, our first peoples, are able to take opportunities like other Australians to succeed in every aspect of their life.

Today, in 2017, it is an international shame job that health, housing and economic development of Aboriginal people still lags far behind that of our non-Aboriginal populations. You have to ask if the federal government is actually committed to closing the gap, or whether it just wants to close its wallet.

Australian people voted overwhelmingly to allow the Commonwealth to bring its organisational and financial muscle to address disadvantage, not in a ham-fisted way, but thoughtful investment in things that make a difference. Sometimes I question whether that is the case.

Ironically, the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, which is a current federal government initiative, was a disaster, drawing 150 funding streams into a single agency with a \$500m reduction overall. I fought hard in my community in Central Australia for the many organisations that received devastating funding cuts. I thought and hoped to myself that the federal budget might have delivered some investment for Territorians, but like we all know, unsurprisingly, the Liberals delivered very little for Territorians.

You only have to read the media release from the Member for Lingiari, which was agreed to by Northern Territory Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, and Luke Gosling:

There are no real funding commitments in this Budget to Close the Gap of Indigenous disadvantage. This is a disgrace. In fact there is a decrease of \$16 million in National Partnership for Remote Housing funding to the NT.

A matter close to my heart is that of constitutional recognition. Many non-Aboriginal people will reject the view that constitutional recognition will advance the Aboriginal state. There are Aboriginal Australians that

remain sceptical, but I dispute that viewpoint. I and many other First Nations people right across the Northern Territory, and the country for that matter, believe that constitutional recognition and proper reconciliation for our place in the world, our ancient existence, will have significant impact on addressing disadvantage and helping commence the pathway to true reconciliation.

As a side note, I am reminded this week of the 2006 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It has up-front affirmation of recognising the right of all people to be different, to consider themselves different and to respect and be respected by others. I am not sure where that sentiment might fit in around here. It has some baggage, being part of a UN declaration, but it is a great principle that may underpin and inform future treaties right across this country.

I also understand that the Referendum Council will be meeting at Uluru very soon to discuss many topics of great significance, no doubt. However, I have my reservations about the process in which people in the electorate of Namatjira are being engaged, and importantly, who is engaged. Will every community get a visit from the Referendum Council or a representative? Will it only be the communities that have bitumen roads and larger populations? There are a number of questions which I would welcome answers to. Will people in communities like Docker River, Utopia, Finke and Ampilatwatja be engaged in that conversation to be talked with and not to?

I will be looking with interest to see what is presented to the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at Yulara, and listening to what the Prime Minister has to say about the next steps in the wider community discussion about constitutional reform.

As Australians we should not wait and continue to be an international shame. We are one of the only developed nations that do not have a treaty with our First Nations people. The time has come; we can no longer wait for our federal government to act and we must act now. Here in the Northern Territory we are commencing our journey to ensure the road to treaty is productive and creates outcomes for all Territorians.

I can confidently say that the government I am a part of will reach a time when we will be in a position to enter into treaties with our First Nations, our first Territorians, to ensure that the road to self-determination, reconciliation and inclusive economic development is achieved. By 'treaty' I mean nothing more and nothing less than agreements between governments and Aboriginal peoples. Such agreements could involve things like a starting point of acknowledgement of our Territory's First Nations people, their rich and deep connection to this ancient land, and the significant contributions our first peoples contribute to society socially and economically, a process of negotiation through which we are able to better understand the way in which First Nations people and our first Australians see the future for themselves and our future generations.

Remaining strong and having a strong voice that is heard—outcomes in the form of rights, obligations, opportunities and involvement in economic development, continuing stewardship of the land and the culture and real input into policy relating to Aboriginal people. Whilst some people may stand on a soap box and profess that little is being done to overcome disadvantage and that a treaty will do nothing, I challenge them to articulate a way forward that will ensure that our First Nations people are equally invested and involved.

I am a long-term advocate for treaties and constitutional recognition. That is why I will continue to be a strong voice in my Labor team and a passionate advocate for treaties. A treaty process could allow or also be a means of negotiating redress for the grievances and strengths and a path forward based on mutual goals of recognition rather than the ones imposed on Aboriginal people without them having a say. Our government will make sure that forums and conversations are held across the Northern Territory at every level, looking at strategic issues, service delivery, recognition and opportunity for the Territory.

For the future of Aboriginal people to be strong and remain strong, and to make real progress in tackling entrenched disadvantage, mechanisms such as treaties, and potentially agreements at regional levels, can be vital instruments for change. They will need to be discussed and negotiated through a process based on mutual respect that recognises the sovereignty of Aboriginal people; recognising Aboriginal peoples as proudly Australian and Territorian. We have a cultural identity that is central to our being. Perhaps it could be a form of local sovereignty recognised with the broader national identity, governance and legal system, reflecting the diversity of Aboriginal people, culture and history across the Australian landscape.

We are proud to be part of a great nation, a nation of opportunity. But, left unchecked, the poor wellbeing of many Aboriginal Australians still remains a national shame. It is not enough to celebrate the high achievers

or tell others to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. It is more about pride, self-esteem and access to reasonable housing and opportunity.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: Listening to Aboriginal people is by itself insufficient to bring about real change. Change must be built through partnerships between our First Nations people, organisations and governments that can arise through the making of a treaty. Aboriginal people need to be heard and listened to, and to have the power to make decisions that affect them. They must have the opportunity to be responsible for the programs designed to meet their needs and must be accountable for the successes and failures that follow.

This neatly fits with our Chief Minister's strong focus on more local decision-making and involvement in setting priorities, and the design of government programs involving housing, health, education, community safety and families.

Positive change in Australia depends on Aboriginal people having more control over their lives. Improvements in education, employment and quality of life must be achieved by policies and programs owned and developed by the people affected. Success cannot be imposed on people; it requires partnerships, capacity building, and above all, hard work by everyone.

We cannot wait for the Australian Liberal government to catch up with contemporary Australia's views and change laws and institutions necessary for Aboriginal people to make such decisions. A Territory Labor government will act. Our government has begun by establishing a subcommittee of Cabinet for Aboriginal affairs in which I am very proud to play a leading role as co-chair. We will deliver on Labor's plan to guarantee local decision-making, ensuring that land and sea ownership delivers on economic and social aspirations of Indigenous Territorians.

Progressing public discussion about a treaty with Indigenous Territorians, we will investigate, review and advise government around treaty discussions on the best way forward. All bush and Indigenous MLAs sit on this committee and include senior Indigenous leaders from across the Territory. This will ensure that Indigenous Territorians have a permanent voice in Labor's Cabinet and ensure that the views and cultural perspectives of Aboriginal people are heard.

As a proud Aboriginal person and a member of the Territory Labor team, I want what is best not only for Aboriginal people, but for every Territorian. I see treaty as an important mark in our history and political and constitutional systems that will make many ignored decades significant in the way we progress with Aboriginal people and reinforce their feelings.

A treaty will give rise to much stronger and more capable institutions of Aboriginal governance and we will, for once, pave the way to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, unlike the shameful federal government.

I spoke in the Chamber on the importance of the future of the Northern Territory only one week ago in response to the budget. I stand by my commitments; the bush holds many answers to the future of the Northern Territory, and this government will work with people to ensure we invest in our people so that in the years to come we have many more Aboriginal people taking up leadership roles in the public service, private sectors and in the commercial spaces of economic and regional development.

In our regions we are aware that the Aboriginal population is increasing, and I am extremely proud of that and that my government, in its first term, will ensure it delivers for people living in the bush. As a part of this commitment, we have invested \$1.1bn over 10 years—which has not been matched by the federal government, unfortunately—to look at overcoming the chronic conditions of overcrowding in the bush and providing local Indigenous business enterprises the opportunity to participate in economic development.

We have worked with the Indigenous ranger groups to make sure we invest in our rangers, the people who look after country. Through their work they not only care for land and sea and their ancestral estates, but it is the path to strengthening and maintaining culture, law and language and passing that knowledge on to future generations. I am very proud to be a part of a government that recognises that and works with those groups to make sure we can support culture as best we can.

I am very proud to be part of a government that works with the four land councils of the Northern Territory and understands their important roles in representing and having a bottom-up, grassroots approach to decision-making. We only have to look at organisations like the land councils, Purple House or Central Australian Aboriginal Congress—great organisations that are supported well.

Outcomes will be forward-looking to our new approaches to the design and delivery of government services; our remote infrastructure housing investments; repairs and maintenance; our continuing support for the local government jobs package that supports the rates of Indigenous employment in the bush; and development opportunities for commercial projects which result in a local and strong economy.

Young people must be supported and provided opportunities at every instance. Our young people are the up-and-coming leaders of tomorrow and we need to support them. They will be the next members of this Chamber, the mayors of our councils, doctors of our clinics, and great teachers of our schools.

We must seize the chance to bring young people on the journey, but we must always remind them of the past, and the activism and rights that many of their ancestors fought for. Whilst there may be many good times to celebrate and teach our young, we must never forget the challenges of our past, such as assimilation policies; slow recognition of citizenship in the 1940s; jurisdictions that may have given them the right to vote; the land rights movement; native title; the tent embassy; stolen wages; the Northern Territory Emergency Response; and Stolen Generations.

My people, our people, First Nations people, are resilient, vibrant and diverse, and will continue to be strong in our quest for equality. The road to achieving this is long and, to some extent, unknown, but we must remain united to make those dreams a reality for equality in our future.

I urge all members in this Chamber to get behind upcoming events in your local communities which recognise and celebrate the rich diversity of the Territory's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Across saltwater and desert countries, we need to get behind and support events like NAIDOC. The theme for NAIDOC this year is Our Languages Matter, and this is to celebrate the essential role language plays in cultural identity and linking people to their land, seas and culture, as well as the transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, spirituality and rights through song and story. Get behind your local events in your electorates and please support this.

Fifty years on from the referendum, we look back on the journey, the struggle of Aboriginal people for recognition of rights, fairness, equality and respect. It is a journey that has come a long way, but as we have seen reflected in all these speeches today, it has a long way to go not only through debate in the House, but through the national conversation. We must recognise there is still much to do.

The journey will take place across our sunburnt lands, our grass field plains and our strong communities. Sometimes you take the wrong direction, but by working together you will find the path back. Together, united as a nation, we will find the path to true reconciliation and recognition.

Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of this motion. As somebody who was born in Tennant Creek and spent most of their life in the Northern Territory, I feel the incredible privilege every day to live on Larakia country, and I want to place on the record the importance of the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum.

Almost 50 years ago, on 27 May 1967, a federal referendum was held to consider two questions. The first question centred on altering the balance of numbers in the Senate and the House of Representatives. The second question sought to determine whether two references in the Australian Constitution which discriminated against Aboriginal people should be removed.

Those are the dry facts about what is commonly called the 1967 referendum. Those facts do not describe the general mood of wellbeing and happiness expressed across Australia when more than 90% of Australians voted in favour of amending the Constitution to favour Aboriginal Australians.

Using the power of their vote, Australians removed discriminatory clauses that prevented the Commonwealth Government from passing laws about Aboriginal Australians, and ensured that Aboriginal Australians would be counted in the census.

The success of the vote was a tribute to the determined campaigning across the country of many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians who worked tirelessly to publicise the case for the 'yes' vote.

It is worth noting that only a handful of referendums, eight out of 44, have been successful. It is my sincere hope that the referendum currently being considered will be as successful as the 1967 referendum, because the 1967 referendum and the current proposed referendum on constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are centred on mutual respect.

Ultimately, it was that overall sense of respect that led church groups, unions, the media and many prominent Australians to collectively express a positive view about the proposed constitutional changes in 1967. In the television footage from 1967 there seemed to be a genuine sense of unity around the country.

By examining what happened in 1967 we can and should use those experiences to give guidance to what is needed now. There was then, as there is in this government now, a real desire to address the issues of poor housing and poor health outcomes. The Northern Territory provided much of the focus during the lead-up to the 1967 referendum campaign. Two of the most important claims for Indigenous recognition prior to the referendum were the tabling of the 1963 Yirrkala bark petition in the federal parliament, which protested against the loss of Yolngu land and proposed mining development; followed by the Wave Hill walk-off in 1966, when the Gurrindji people campaigned for better paying conditions for station workers and return of some of their land.

Whilst both these events provided some of the most powerful images of the time, they were only part of the story that built the momentum towards the referendum. I sense it was an exhilarating time. As we look forward, I see similarities in the latest calls for action to help improve the lives of Indigenous Territorians. It is wonderful to have such strong representation within our Caucus and the Northern Territory parliament of some fantastic Indigenous leaders, who are ensuring we advance outcomes in the lives of Indigenous Territorians. It is great to have them championing that cause. They have a very supportive parliament around them.

In the current context, the Prime Minister has agreed to meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, together with the Referendum Council at Yulara, in the shadow of the mighty Uluru, later this month. The Chief Minister is looking forward to the meeting.

The Member for Namatjira, in his fantastic contribution to this motion, told us what he is hoping to see achieved in these meetings, and what the concerns are.

We are positive about the consultation needed in forming questions for the upcoming referendum, and this Assembly will carefully consider the outcomes.

I thank the Chief Minister because, since coming to government, he has shown that this is a government that consults with Indigenous Territorians and works towards ensuring we see the return of more local decision-making, making sure people decide their own future in the Northern Territory.

I want to speak about the government's agenda when it comes to children. I am a great believer that it is important for us to progress discussions on constitutional recognition and treaty, but it is also important that we make sure we continue to advance these discussions, actions and outcomes when it comes to creating a better future for Indigenous in the Northern Territory.

It is critical that we get this right. We want our children to have the very best start to life. I have said this many times in the Chamber that it is not just the smart thing to do; it is the right thing to do. The first thousand days is critical. That is what the research tells us, and that is why we have such a firm commitment to working with children across the Northern Territory, to help us give them a better future, especially Indigenous children.

This is a great tragedy in today's world, in 2017. The long-term outcomes and rates of achieving Year 12, hitting literacy and numeracy benchmarks and having good health outcomes and lower incarceration rates are so much better for non-Indigenous than Indigenous children. We have to do everything we can while we have the time and privilege of standing in this parliament to give those kids a better future. That is why I am so proud of this government's commitment to working hand in hand with Indigenous Territorians to make sure they are part of the decision-making. They know firsthand how we can help to deliver a better future for those kids.

That is why we are expanding programs like Families as First Teachers, where people on their own country, with their own educators from the community, are working to start the education journey from the moment the child is born. They are working in the community with the schools. It is a wonderful program and we are so proud to be expanding it. I am so proud of the investment we are making, putting more

money towards remote education at the schools in communities to ensure our kids have access to staff resources and the facilities they need to help advance their education.

I feel so passionately about this. The \$1.1bn investment into remote Indigenous housing—it is incredible to be part of the biggest Northern Territory Government investment ever into the critical area of housing. We have to make a difference. NPARIH was a good start and there has been momentum; however, we knew the deficits were so big that it was not the be-all and end-all solution. We knew there would need to be continued investment in remote Indigenous housing. I am proud that, as a government, we are determined to make that happen; we are committed to that investment.

We will respond to the Royal Commission when the outcomes of that come forward, and we have already made significant investments in the area of youth justice. It is about diversion and prevention. We will do what we can to use an evidence-based approach to ensure we are working more carefully to tackle those issues and give those kids the support they need to stop them from getting into trouble in the first place. It will put them on a better path in life rather than ending up incarcerated in an adult prison. We have to get that right.

One of the key planks of our policy development work and what we will deliver in this government is our commitment to return local decision-making to local communities. In its own way, removing discriminatory parts of the Constitution is related to this policy work. We know that true local decision-making empowers people in the same way that constitutional recognition will empower them. It will enable people to believe they are being treated with the respect they so deserve.

The 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum gives us an opportunity to look back and reflect on what happened, but also to shine a bright light on our path forward. We know many challenges remain, but we have good intentions. We have a Caucus and parliament inspired by the events of history, like the 1967 referendum. We hold a genuine commitment to make the change for the better that we all want to see.

As a government, we will do all we can to improve the lives of Indigenous Territorians.

I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this important motion before the House, and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr GUNNER (Aboriginal Affairs): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank all the members who have contributed to this debate with very worthy contributions.

We have come a long way since 1967, but we still have a lot to do. Many of the speeches touched upon the work that has been done, but also the aspirations, the things we can achieve if we work together to ensure we reach the full vision of recognition and respect. The feedback from people living remote and in our cities involves treaty, local decision-making—real and practical things to people who are living their lives right now.

Constitutional recognition is on the agenda. I will be at Uluru with the Prime Minister, listening to the feedback about that national convention. I support the pathway to constitutional recognition. I think we can have a parallel conversation about treaty.

When we go remote, people want to talk to us most about things like the Room to Breathe program—so they can see the veranda that is added to the house, the bathroom, the practical outcome that they are in control of. It is a meaningful control of their lives and they see a direct impact on them. The transfer of school control in Gunbalanya, for example, where we had elections through the Australian Electoral Commission, was a very serious and proper process that saw community control. We have also seen it with the health clinics. There are things we can do that are meaningful and give people control over their lives. That is what we are working on as a government.

I thank everyone who has made a contribution. What has been said in the Chamber today is very worthy, and I will make sure our comments are forwarded to the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, as well as our federal members of parliament and others who would appreciate, benefit from and enjoy the debate we had today.

We have celebrated many things while also recognising there is much work to do. I thank everyone for contributing.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**PAROLE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 21)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Parole Amendment Bill 2017. This bill amends the *Parole Act* and will contribute to our government's commitment to reduce incarceration and recidivism rates in the Northern Territory.

Incarceration rates in the Northern Territory are the highest in Australia. The most recent Report on Government Services published the Northern Territory's recorded rate of 921.7 prisoners per 100 000 in the adult population. This was more than four-and-a-half times the national rate of 201.

Furthermore, the Northern Territory Indigenous imprisonment rate was 2955 per 100 000 of the adult Indigenous population. This is more than 21% higher than the national rate of 2330 per 100 000.

The NT Indigenous imprisonment rate was ranked the second highest among Australian jurisdictions, behind that of Western Australia.

The recidivism rate of prisoners who offended within two years of release from prison during 2013–14 was 58.3%. Our government is committed to implementing measures to reduce the NT incarceration and recidivism rates.

Given that the majority of people imprisoned for a criminal act return to the general community, it is imperative that we look at new measures and initiatives to ensure people are supported when they reintegrate into the community.

We need to reduce the number of people being incarcerated in the Northern Territory and to also reduce the rate of reoffending when people are released from prison. In the light of this, it is important for our government to look at options that will assist people who have been released from prison on parole to live responsibly and abide by our laws.

The purpose of this bill is to authorise the Chairperson of the NT Parole Board to, without revoking a parole order, impose a period of the person's sentence of imprisonment as a sanction for non-compliance with a parole condition. The sanctions matrix is to be fixed through an instrument published in the *Gazette*. The sanctions are intended to be short and proportionate to the level of personal responsibility taken for the act of non-compliance.

Over the last 12 months the Parole Board has noticed a growing trend of offenders declining parole when they become eligible. Offenders decline parole for a range of reasons. However, for the period of January 2016 to February 2017, approximately 47% of the prisoners who declined parole stated that the reason was due to not wanting conditions upon release or that parole was 'too hard'. Under the current parole scheme, during the application process, it is made clear to prisoners eligible for parole that non-compliance with conditions is likely to result in their return to prison as there are currently limited options to address non-compliance.

Although the chairperson is able to make a decision regarding non-compliance with the parole order within a short period of time, the options available to the chairperson when non-compliance occurs are very limited. Currently, where a parolee is non-compliant with his or her parole order, the only option is to revoke, or not revoke, the order. In practice, this translates to the following options, to:

- (a) take no action
- (b) issue a warning letter
- (c) issue a further 'stern' warning letter

- (d) vary the conditions of the order
- (e) revoke the parole order.

In essence, it is an all or nothing system. When a parole order is revoked for non-compliance, the parolee is returned to prison to serve the entire period of imprisonment that was outstanding when the parole was granted, not just the time outstanding at the time of non-compliance. The application process for parole essentially can start again, if so desired by the prisoner. This is seen as a disincentive for many prisoners, particularly those with longer parole periods.

The overall approach means that it is difficult for prisoners to know in advance what the consequence of non-compliance with a parole condition will be and, until the parole order is revoked, no sanction is imposed for non-compliance. It is all or nothing and unpredictable. This effectively extends an offender's full-time discharge date and keeps them in the prison system for longer.

The ramification of the 'all or nothing' system is that, presently, the chairperson does not often revoke parole for minor non-compliance with conditions, as the period offenders are mandated to serve does not correlate with the seriousness of the non-compliance, that is, the entire parole period. If parole is revoked and the entire sentence is served, offenders are released into the community unsupervised, without any coordinated support and without any assistance.

The bill before the House will create a new, certain and fair system for dealing with non-compliance of parole orders. The ability for the chairperson to apply swift, certain and proportionate sanctions, without revoking the parole order will reinforce the gravity and seriousness of each incident of non-compliance with a parole order and demonstrate to other offenders that the chairperson will take swift, consistent and proportionate action for non-compliance with orders, without revoking the order.

It is anticipated that, over time, the policy will result in a decrease in the number of episodes of non-compliance considered by the Parole Board, a decrease in the number of parole orders revoked and will consequently improve completion rates and, importantly, encourage prisoners to apply for parole.

The proposed amendments will allow for a fair and immediate sanction for breaching a condition of the order and will allow supervision to continue once the short sanction is served as the existing parole order will recommence.

The acts of non-compliance that will be targeted include failure to attend scheduled supervision appointments, drug and alcohol use and curfew violations. The Probation and Parole Officer will sit down with the offender to ensure that the offender understands the sanctions regime and understands the consequences for poor choices.

This new model will make people accountable for their own actions with real, yet proportionate, consequences. The sanctions envisaged by this model are to be short and proportionate to the act of non-compliance and the level of accountability the offender takes for his or her decision-making. The way the person responds to their poor decision-making is as important as the non-compliance itself. In line with other 'swift, certain and fair' justice models, it is expected that the maximum sanction under the regime will be 30 days. Where a person makes a poor choice on parole, is non-compliant but takes responsibility for their actions, the sanction would be expected to be within the ballpark of two to seven days.

The revocation and cancellation of the parole order will still be an option available when serious or consistent non-compliance occurs. That is, where a person has demonstrated no intention or willingness to engage with their reintegration into society, the chairperson will still have the power to revoke the person's licence to be free in the community. Parole is a privilege, at the discretion of the Parole Board, not an entitlement.

The following scenario provides an example of the legislative model. An offender is sentenced to two years imprisonment with a non-parole period of 12 months. The offender is then granted parole by the Parole Board and released from custody, at the earliest possible point in time, that is, after serving 12 months.

The offender now has 12 months to serve on parole. The parole order includes a condition that the offender is subject to the sanctions regime and this is carefully explained by his or her Probation and Parole Officer.

After serving six months on parole, the offender is non-compliant and the chairperson considers the non-compliance is minor. Under the proposed regime the following will occur:

- (a) the chairperson can impose a sanction, in accordance with the gazetted sanctions matrix, by written order of the chairperson. In this example, seven days
- (b) the offender is then apprehended by police and brought before the Local Court, or directed to attend by the Probation and Parole Officer
- (c) the offender appears before the Local Court and a warrant of commitment is issued for the period of imprisonment stated in the order. The Local Court will have the power to backdate the warrant of commitment to accommodate any time in police custody. This aligns with the certain and fair aspects of the model
- (d) the offender is taken into the custody of the Commissioner of Correctional Services under the warrant and serves the seven days imprisonment for the act of non-compliance
- (e) the offender is released back into the community on the existing parole order and the conditions continue as they were, unless otherwise varied
- (f) the offender meets with the Probation and Parole Officer before or immediately after release and is re-warned about the importance of good decision-making and the consequences for poor choices.

The expiration date on the order remains unaltered and the sanctions, together with any time on the parole order, count towards time served. The offender has now served 12 months and seven days imprisonment under the sentencing order. The term of imprisonment served under the sanctioning regime does not extend the original parole order. The parolee now has five months and three weeks remaining on the parole order.

If the parole order is later revoked by the chairperson or cancelled by the court, any term of imprisonment served under any previous sanction regime is counted towards time served. The prisoner is returned to prison and can reapply for parole. The bill will not allow the credit for time served in the community under the parole order when parole is revoked. The status quo will be maintained in this aspect, as this is the current practice under the *Parole Act*.

To ensure consistent application of the model, when police arrest a parolee for non-compliance with a parole order, but not under the authority of a sanction order by a chairperson, that is, where the police detect non-compliance with a parole order in the course of their normal duties, they will still bring the person before the Local Court, and the court, in its absolute discretion, will be able to adjourn a matter to refer it to the chairperson for determination in line with the sanctions regime.

The purposes of a parole period are to supervise an offender in the community post release from custody monitor compliance with the parole order, to assist in and support the offender's rehabilitation in the community and affect positive behaviour change whilst under supervision. It is important the parole period is used effectively to assist a person to successfully reintegrate into society. The introduction of the sanction measures, together with the case management and rehabilitation services, is a significant shift and will allow people on parole to make mistakes but be held accountable in a proportionate manner for their choices.

It is our government's view that the current regime in the *Parole Act* relating to non-compliance with conditions of parole does not provide the options necessary to ensure the rehabilitative and behavioural change aims of parole are met.

The proposed amendments will provide the chairperson with greater flexibility when deciding what course of action to take when non-compliance with a parole order occurs and will allow a response to be tailored according to the severity of the non-compliance.

The prisoner will be provided a copy of the sanctions matrix and an explanation of the sanctions to ensure they understand the consequences of their actions and the importance of personal accountability. While the chairperson retains the power to revoke the parole order, the policy intention is that this option will be reserved for more serious and continued non-compliance where an offender has demonstrated an unwillingness to work with his or her Probation and Parole Officer or has reoffended.

I will now turn to the details of the bill.

Part 2 amends the *Parole Act*.

Clauses 4 and 5 set out definitions relevant to the sanctions regime.

Clause 6 contains the bulk of the amendments. It inserts new section 4C and new sections 5 to 5G. These provisions do two things. They establish the sanctions regime and they replace the various subsections of current section 5, to comply with current drafting practice.

New section 4C empowers the chairperson, on behalf of the Parole Board, to determine a schedule of sanctions, called the 'sanctions matrix' for non-compliance with the conditions of the parole order. The sanctions matrix is to be published in the Northern Territory *Gazette*.

New sections 5, 5C, 5D and 5G simply replace the subsections of the current section 5 so they comply with current drafting practice. New sections 5A and 5B have a similar function but, in addition, they allow for the sanctions regime to apply as a condition of a parole order. Section 5A(3)(c) allows the Parole Board to include the sanctions regime as a condition of a new parole order and section 5B(1)(a)(ii) allows the chairperson to amend an existing parole order to include the application of the sanctions regime as a condition.

New section 5E sets out the obligations of a Probation and Parole Officer to ensure that the offender understands the sanctions regime. For the sanctions regime to operate effectively, it is imperative the offender understands the 'swift, fair and certain' consequences of non-compliance.

New section 5F is the heart of the new provisions. It sets out the application of the sanctions regime, detailing the options that the chairperson has in instances of non-compliance. While the intention of the sanctions regime is that the appropriate sanction from the sanctions matrix will be imposed for non-compliance, it is important that the chairperson retains the flexibility to revoke, amend or take no action, so that the appropriate response can be taken in each individual situation.

If a sanction is imposed, section 5F(6) provides that the chairperson must, by writing order, state that a sanction is being imposed and specify the nature of the non-compliance and the length of the sanction imposed. The order is an authority for the arrest of the offender. In keeping with encouragement of good behaviour, to take responsibility for one's behaviour, the offender does not have to wait to be arrested but may appear in the Local Court of their own volition. Either way, the Local Court must issue a warrant of commitment in accordance with the order of the chairperson.

Clauses 7 and 9 make minor amendments to sections 6 and 8 respectively, to update cross-references and comply with current drafting practice.

Clause 8 repeals and replaces section 7 to comply with the current drafting practice and to ensure that a person can appear before the Local Court at their own volition. Section 7 is the section that requires a Local Court to issue a warrant of commitment when a parole order has been revoked.

Clause 10 repeals and replaces section 11 of the *Parole Act* to comply with current drafting practice and to insert new section 11(1)(b), (3) and (4) to ensure that time spent in custody, whether police custody or custody of the Commissioner of Correctional Services, is to count toward the time served for the sanction ordered by the chairperson.

Clause 11 inserts new sections 13A and 13B. New section 13A provides that, once a person has served a period of imprisonment imposed under the sanctions regime, upon release they continue on parole on the same conditions, unless the chairperson modifies the conditions, which can be done under new section 14A, which clause 13 inserts.

New section 13B sets out the effect of serving a sanction on the term of imprisonment. The expiration on the parole order is not affected by the imposition of a sanction or multiple sections. In other words, if the parole order is not subsequently revoked or cancelled, the person receives 'credit' for time spent in custody as a sanction and time spent in the community. New section 13B(3) ensures, however, that if a parole order is revoked or cancelled only the time spent in custody under the sanctions regime is taken to be time served under the term of imprisonment imposed by the sentencing court. To avoid doubt, where the parole order is revoked or cancelled, time spent on the parole order in the community does not count toward time served under the relevant sentence of the imprisonment. This retains the status quo under the *Parole Act* regarding 'street time'.

The purpose of the amendments, in line with the 'swift, certain and fair' justice strategies, is ultimately to reduce the rate of recidivism in the Northern Territory, reduce the incarceration rate of Indigenous people in

the Northern Territory, enhance the management of parolees in the community and increase the prospects of their successful reintegration into community, thereby enhancing community safety.

The amendments will expand the 'swift, certain and fair' justice platform in the Northern Territory. Under the National Ice Action Strategy the Northern Territory was put forward as the jurisdiction to pilot the 'swift, certain and fair' initiative.

The pilot, known as the COMMIT program, has the support of the judiciary, Correctional Services and the Northern Territory Police as well as the legal aid agencies here in the NT. The COMMIT program is available to offenders who are sentenced to a suspended sentence of imprisonment and follows a 'good parenting model'.

The program aims to achieve behavioural change by sending a consistent message to probationers about personal responsibility and accountability and includes a consistently applied and timely mechanism for dealing with non-compliance.

Probationers understand there will be an immediate consequence and their lives will be interrupted each time they make a poor decision, and how much time they spend in prison is in their hands. The sanctions are intended to be short, reflect the severity and the level of responsibility demonstrated for the breach, while not negatively impacting on the offender's ability and motivation to participate in behavioural change processes. They are supported by their Probation and Parole Officers throughout the term of their supervision and undertake therapeutic programs to maintain good decision-making.

The bill before the House will provide a similar swift, certain and proportionate sanction structure for persons in our communities subject to a parole order.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this bill. I wish to acknowledge the efforts of the staff at the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, namely Correctional Services and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

I commend the bill to the House and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND FAIR TRADING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 17)

Continued from 10 May 2017.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of the fuel price reporting scheme and the amendments to the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act*.

Fuel prices in the Northern Territory have been a fluctuating issue for some time. Some of the costs for a litre of fuel did not seem warranted or have any correlation to the price of a barrel of oil.

Many people in my electorate travel from Palmerston to Darwin or Casuarina on a daily basis, a trip I have also made on many occasions over many years. A return trip is approximately 40 kilometres per day, or over 200 kilometres per week.

Doing this amount of travel per day is a considerable cost to local people and families, and every cent counts when you have a family. Territorians bear this fuel cost, and it is not pleasing to fill up your vehicle and see the price on the fuel pump as, litre by litre, dollar by dollar rolls into your weekly fuel bill. It is always a reality check when you have to fill up your tank.

Territorians are not always aware when the prices go down. When the prices finally rescind it is usually for a short period, but a huge relief and a welcome saving for our hard-working families.

Alternatively, many Territorians notice the gradual cent-by-cent increase that then occurs over the following weeks. Every time they return to the bowsers the price seems to have gone up again. The gradual increase usually continues until it returns to the same price, or more in some cases. Unfortunately, this then seems to last an eternity, or until Territorians have had a gutful and they speak out.

I note that some fuel providers advise a higher cost in relation to our remoteness and transportation costs, and I accept this is a feasible justification in some cases where it is very remote or difficult to get to; however, I also note that people in my electorate and people travelling from southern states query the high fuel prices on these long trips, as the prices fluctuate so much on the Stuart Highway. Many ask why this is so when it is the same truck delivering the fuel as it travels north.

I have also heard that fuel storage in Darwin was a problem some years ago, and this has had relevance to fuel costs; however I understand there have been major developments in fuel storage facilities in Darwin over recent years, including storage for low aromatic fuels, which, I am informed, attracted better competition and provided better access, with Darwin working towards being a direct delivery point by ship through the port.

My constituents are travelling further to and from work daily, and they are affected by the cost of living in the Territory. It is also clear that the cohort of people from Palmerston who are travelling back and forth to work daily is a fast increasing population, as many Territorians choose to invest in local properties in our great city of Palmerston.

Further, it is well documented that in 2014 fuel prices in the NT had reached almost 30c per litre more than average fuel prices—shocking indeed. If we put that into a family's yearly budget it is an enormous cost, with thousands of extra dollars needed to run the family car.

Many working families need two cars these days, in a busy modern world, so they can conduct their daily work and family duties. The cost is many more thousands in fuel per year. Families do not have expendable money and every cent counts. The 30c increase per litre on fuel put an enormous burden on local families, as they had to dig deeper and miss out on something to find the extra money for the family's fuel bill.

I recall the time when fuel costs were out of control, and I remember the work done by the great man Pete Davies, along with Katie Woolfe on the radio, Channel Nine news and the *NT News* to campaign hard for Territorians. Finally, after many weeks of campaigning, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission advised that it would launch an investigation into Darwin petrol pricing, and I was so pleased the people's voices were heard. The investigation discovered that our fuel prices were due to the fact the NT had little competition in fuel outlets, hence why the NT had such outrageously high fuel prices.

It is very reassuring to know that this government will be doing more for our families by putting forward this legislation and implementing a reliable and transparent fuel price monitoring system and application, which will provide consumers with timely fuel price information and the details of changes at the pump on the day in a reliable and efficient way, a system that will help Territorians with the cost of living and aim to reduce their fuel bills, whether they own a reliable Nissan 720 ute, an XU-1 Tarana, a four-wheel drive or a thumping V8.

Therefore it is most important that we amend this bill to provide legislation that will establish a mandatory fuel price reporting scheme to Territorians; a fuel pricing scheme that will require all retailers in the Territory to report their prices and the type of fuel for sale on a regular basis; a system that improves competition in fuel pricing across the NT.

The proposed legislation will provide consumers with a MyFuel NT app, which allows Territorians to shop around for the lowest fuel price in their region before they buy fuel and encourages fuel outlets to become more competitive to attract consumer business.

Competition drives down prices, especially in the fuel market and if people are better informed on where the good fuel deals are we expect those locations to see a better trade. In turn this will strongly encourage other stations to bring down their prices to remain competitive.

As a father of five, I remember how busy it gets, working and raising a family, so I know the MyFuel NT app will give families the ability to schedule filling up the car when it best suits their busy work and family commitments at the fuel outlet that offers a better price.

I am very pleased this Labor government is introducing this legislation and it is important that every Territorian gets behind it. The more MyFuel NT app is used the better the result for Territorians and the better the competition in fuel pricing across the NT.

I am confident that having local competition in fuel outlets will drive down fuel costs to the consumer and give more to Territorians—more money in their back pocket to do other things, like spending more family time together, going to local events, spending more on local businesses or investing in a recreational activity or hobby, such as fishing, local footy, motor sports and the many other great things you can do in the Territory.

I commend the bill to the House. I thank the Treasurer and this Labor government for looking after Territorians first and implementing a system that will make fuel prices more competitive in the NT.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also rise to provide comment on the proposed amendments to the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act* to establish a mandatory fuel price reporting scheme.

This legislative change will require fuel retailers for the first time in the Territory to report on the price of each fuel type offered for sale in their fuel station to the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs. It will also allow for regulations to put in place standards for the information that is collected to be displayed on fuel price boards, and that data will form the basis of MyFuel NT scheme. This is probably the part of this legislation that will appeal to most Territorians and our electorates.

It is no doubt that fuel is a big factor in the cost of living and the use of fuel is almost unavoidable unless you stay local where you can ride from place to place on a pushbike. The use of fuel is the real cost of doing business.

The price of fuel always seems to have been higher in the Territory. You would go down the track years ago and it was cheaper in Katherine than in Darwin. You could not get your mind around it; it has been a long-term problem as long as I have been coming to the Territory, since the mid-1980s.

It should not have taken an investigation by the ACCC to know what we all knew, that there is no competition and therefore you get higher prices. As a Territorian I feel strongly that we have been taken advantage of due to our remoteness and lack of access to information. This has the potential to change all that.

The legislation simply provides a statutory basis for a scheme to commence that allows consumers to have real-time information and therefore real-time choice. It creates a retail price reporting scheme, what this government has called MyFuel NT, which includes offences for non-compliance. If you do not have any incentive for the market you have no incentive to comply; it is that simple.

We know all too well in the Territory that market forces play a big part in the behaviour of the players in that market. Just look at our airlines; now that we have more operators in that space, and advertising across a range of platforms, prices over time have reduced.

When I first came to the Territory the cost of flying anywhere was inhibitive, so you often just got in your car and drove as an alternative. The interplay between our large retailers and their price advertising drives competition behaviours. We, the consumers, really benefit from that. Increased competition and transparency go a long way to improving the market. This legislation provides a gentle encouragement for more competitive pricing where the market has not done so. It is fair to say the fuel market in the Territory has repeatedly failed to provide transparency of pricing to us, the consumers, and Territorians have a right to that.

We want the ability to shop around. If you can pay less most people will, but I also think if people have a relationship with a local provider that provides a good service, they may continue to use that supplier, but at the same time, access to MyFuel NT may empower them to question why those prices are higher in that place.

Look at the line-up at the fuel station in Parap for evidence of that. It is not about novelty; it is about access to everyday necessary products at a price that provides some relief from the high cost of living in the Territory.

I wait until I come to town to access cheaper fuel. Other states have been doing this for years. In SA it used to be called 'cheap arse Tuesday', where prices would change, usually aligned with pension day, and shoppers would flock to cheaper advertised retailers.

I have never been a shop-a-docket kind of girl. Dockets usually end up scrunched up in the bottom of my handbag. But I can appreciate the confusion current advertising practices may cause when a person driving past sees a cheaper price. They drive in and find they cannot access the cheaper price because they do not subscribe to a scheme or do not have a voucher. I support that those prices cannot be displayed on external fuel prices.

It will allow a straightforward comparison of fuel prices for the shopper when comparing and considering their purchase. Why would we not do it for fuel? We do it for most other things.

Let us face it; most people like to shop around unless, like my husband or many other blokes in this place, they decide they want something and simply go out and get it. I am not like that; it is not in my DNA. But I love a good bargain, so I will sign up to MyFuel NT.

I also hope there is a flow-on effect to the price of diesel and gas. I received several complaints last year that gas is no longer the cheaper option. It should be, because when I made those inquiries I was told there is no competition in that market. I asked a local fuel operator why it is so expensive and they said, 'Just because we can'. I hope to see some changes in the future.

One of the major benefits of this legislation is that it will stop the fluctuations in the market. A few years back, in the Casuarina by-election, we heard all sorts of promises to drive down the price of fuel, and thanks to enormous media pressure it has been talked about here. There was a quick thought bubble and—voila!—a fuel summit. That achieved a drop in fuel prices. But let us face it; since then we have seen some of that creep back, some of it back up to previous high levels.

MyFuel NT will offer consumers the opportunity for the market to be moderated over the long term. It will empower consumers, and, as we know, information is a powerful thing.

Having been in the Territory for over 30 years, it is a great surprise to me that it has taken this long. Most of us are sick of being ripped off at the bowser. The control of fuel prices in the Northern Territory is almost mythical, something we have all come to complain about as a standard dinner party topic of conversation.

I say this repeatedly; 20 to 30 years ago many of us did not travel much. We would see the price of airfares and opt to drive due to the cost, particularly if we had a car full of kids. With airfares being much cheaper now we often head to other places. We are repeatedly disappointed with the price of fuel being charged in the Northern Territory upon returning home, so this change is very overdue.

There has been much discussion about how this can work, particularly in remote areas. I am grateful to my colleagues representing remote electorates for putting those questions forward about the bush. They are major advocates. Well done to them.

MyFuel NT is a practical way forward that has the capacity to overcome most, if not all, of those issues. Let us face it; when there is one retailer hundreds of kilometres from other retailers it can set its own price. It is more important to achieve transparency in those areas, as those affected consumers are in more need of a car to get from A to B than most of us. We have buses and taxis, and we can often jump on a bicycle.

It is not a luxury. Many Territorians in remote areas rely on their vehicles. They need them to connect to essential services. Even if there is no immediate competition allowing local customers to understand what other Territorians are paying, in others areas it may allow them to put some pressure on local retailers to do better.

I am looking forward, as are many of my constituents, to the launch of MyFuel NT in the second half of this year, with our retailers needing to be compliant by November 2017. We will be looking out for that.

Well done to the Treasurer on her consultation and the development of MyFuel NT. Territorians, especially my constituents, appreciate your work in this area.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am proud to support the Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Legislation Amendment Bill, introduced by the Treasurer, as a proud regional member of this Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

I support the amendments to the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act*, and I thank the Treasurer for bringing this legislation to the House. This government governs for all Territorians. We know that a low level of competition is the reason for higher fuel prices in the Northern Territory. Government is acting to address this situation by introducing this bill, a bill for all Territorians.

This bill enables a Territory-wide, mandatory retail fuel price reporting scheme, named MyFuel NT, to be managed by Northern Territory Consumer Affairs. This scheme will give consumers more information to make more informed decisions regarding the purchase of fuel. This is a significant part of many Territory families' yearly budget, and any savings that can be made on fuel will be a big help, especially in the regional areas of the Northern Territory.

Under this scheme, Territorians will have free access to live price information from fuel retailers in the Territory and can easily make decisions on where and when to buy. When you are travelling downtown in Tennant Creek, for instance, you will be able to make the decision about purchasing your fuel, just like purchasing your groceries or other important items for your family.

Whether urban or remote, Territorians will have access to information from fuel outlets. The introduction of this bill will bring the Territory in line with retail fuel market transparency legislation in other jurisdictions, particularly the New South Wales FuelCheck scheme.

I am surprised by members of the opposition, who once again seem to forget the history of this issue and where it comes from in relation to fuel prices, but the Michael Gunner Labor government is delivering for all Territorians.

I am proud to support the bill.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak in support of the Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Legislation Amendment Bill. I want to echo the comments of the Chief Minister from earlier today in regard to being disappointed at the position the Leader of the Opposition has taken by not supporting this legislation.

We all remember the media campaign that succeeded in bringing down fuel prices. The journalist won an award for it, and the late Pete Davies was acknowledged. It demonstrated the positive power the media can have by campaigning on an issue and drawing it to people's attention.

Whilst the bill has been introduced by the Treasurer, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, specifically Consumer Affairs, will have the day-to-day responsibility for regulation and oversight of the MyFuel NT scheme.

The legislative amendment enhancing the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act* and the regulations to follow will enable the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs to ensure fuel retailers are clearly informing consumers of their fuel prices in real time.

We have heard from the Members for Brennan and Sanderson about the importance of making sure people are given accurate information when they are making a decision about where to purchase their fuel.

All staff within Consumer Affairs will undertake compliance actions when doing outreach and trader visitation activities, and as such, effectively all Consumer Affairs staff will have MyFuel NT compliance activities as part of their roles throughout the Territory.

An additional full-time compliance staff member will commence in Consumer Affairs from July this year, and the Consumer Affairs call centre will also provide assistance and guidance to consumers when contacting the office.

The MyFuel NT mandatory fuel price reporting scheme will provide real benefits for Territorians by improving the accountability of competition between fuel retailers and driving down fuel prices. I do not need to go into detail, as a number of my colleagues in the House have already explained the background to this—the ACCC report and key recommendations.

This will have real benefit. I live in Nightcliff, so if I need to fuel up I can assess in the next couple of days where I am heading in Darwin, check the prices on an app and decide whether to fill up locally or look for a cheaper price further afield. The app gives consumers that ability.

If you are driving back from Katherine, you will need fuel at some point, but you can look ahead and see where that price was.

When I was growing up—this was mentioned by the Member for Sanderson—flights were quite expensive, so we would always drive to Sydney and back each Christmas. My father would remember where the cheap fuel was on the way down, hoping it would be the same price on the way back. He now has an iPhone, so we will have to get him this app so he can use it.

This is about giving consumers the ability and control over their purchasing power to find the best price, and helping to drive down the price.

The Department of Justice, through Consumer Affairs, is looking forward to hosting this program to provide that opportunity for Territorians. The website and associated web app will be user friendly, providing information to consumers, visitors and tourists in the Territory, to know where the cheapest fuel will be when they are planning to fuel up their vehicles.

The legislative amendment includes strong penalties for fuel retailers who do not meet the requirements of the act. For example, a fuel retailer can be fined up to \$15 400 as an individual or \$77 000 for a body corporate if they fail to update their prices in accordance with the scheme, for publication of service station fuel prices. Infringement notice penalties can also apply.

Territory consumers will be able to report a fuel retailer if the prices at the service station do not match the MyFuel NT website. Reporting a mismatch will be a simple process through either the website, the web app or calling in. This ensures compliance action can be undertaken in a timely manner.

NT Consumer Affairs and the commissioner will undertake a range of educational activities to ensure consumers and fuel retailers are well informed of the scheme and its benefits as it is rolled out. Once the system is fully implemented, proactive and reactive compliance activities will be undertaken to ensure our fuel retailers are meeting the requirements of the legislation and consumers are receiving the full benefit of the fuel pricing information.

The role of the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs is to promote and regulate responsible business conduct, ensuring a fair and competitive market for all Territorians. MyFuel NT will provide comprehensive fuel price data for the whole of the Northern Territory.

The MyFuel NT scheme will be fully operational by 1 November 2017. It fits well under the commissioner's responsibilities and will ensure all Territory consumers are informed of the cheapest fuel prices in their area in real time.

I thank the Treasurer for bringing this important piece of legislation to the House, and I look forward to its carriage as the minister responsible for Consumer Affairs.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the members who have contributed to the debate on MyFuel NT.

I will remind people of how we got to the point of introducing this bill to the parliament. There was significant public concern, angst and frustration about the price of fuel in the Northern Territory. There was a significant media campaign driven by our local paper as well as the late Pete Davies and Channel Nine.

It was fantastic that there was a thorough ACCC investigation into the fuel market in Darwin. That report was released in November 2015. It confirmed what everybody knew; Territorians were paying more. We were seeing much higher profit margins in Territory fuel retailers, particularly in Darwin, and it was unacceptable.

The ACCC put forward a raft of recommendations, and we accepted those recommendations. One that was raised with Treasury was whether we would like to progress the recommendations, particularly those to increase transparency and the promotion of effective competition in the fuel markets in the Northern Territory. One aspect of that was providing current retail prices to motorists.

A similar scheme had been introduced in New South Wales. Other jurisdictions are looking at it, and Western Australian has had fuel price disclosure schemes in place for some time.

We believed this was the right thing to do because if we keep the pressure on the fuel companies to save motorists just 1c per litre, that will save Territorians millions of dollars at the bowzers every year. Most importantly, it will hold fuel companies to account. It will ensure they are keeping a close eye on their prices to make sure they are right.

The Member for Sanderson used a fantastic example of when a new petrol station opened on the Stuart Highway, near Ross Smith Avenue in Parap. In its first week of operation it had a highly discounted fuel price. Every time I drove past it every bowser was being used. And it was not just one car; there were two or three cars lined up. It goes to show that when the price is right Territorians will go to that petrol station. Driving from the northern suburbs into the city I see, at times, the competitive difference between the northern suburbs and Bagot Road.

This will empower consumers with real-time, live information about the fuel prices so they can make an informed choice about where they fuel up and save some money. Most importantly, it will make sure we have accurate real-time data and that as government we can continue to put the pressure on the fuel companies to drive the very best deal for Territorians so that we do not return to the days of seeing price gouging by fuel companies in the Northern Territory.

Fuel is one of the biggest cost-of-living pressures that everybody faces. Fuel, rent, power and water are the real pressures everybody faces each day—having to fuel up to keep their vehicles going.

This is about making sure we keep the pressure on fuel companies and never return to those days, particularly from 2000 to 2015 when fuel prices were unacceptably high for Territorians. This is about enhancing competition, but it is not just about Darwin or Palmerston; this is about all our towns. This is also about our bush communities. Why should people in the bush not have a greater level of understanding of fuel pricing?

I have had the debate brought to me that there is only one retailer there, so why bother? I think people in the bush should have a better understanding of why their fuel prices are the way they are. Why should we not see real data and examples from different locations to get a real understanding of the contributing factors to the price of fuel in that community? Is it that having a sealed road makes a bigger difference? To have a better understanding of the price pressures they face—how much difference does the distance make? It is important that all Territorians have a right to access fuel and make informed choices, but also that we have the data so we can better understand those costs and pressures on people out in the bush. They deserve the same rights to access data.

This data will be shared with other companies. Other companies that request this data—because we want to have a very open data policy—will be able to access this data and information. We are making sure fuel retailers and companies understand that it is an easy process for them. When they go to change their boards, when they go to update their registers it will be a simple process, not a tough process. We ensure that getting about their business is as easy as possible.

We are also ensuring better transparency of fuel pricing on the board, similar to what we see in South Australia and Victoria, because we want to ensure that when consumers go into fill up they see the right price and understand, and so they do not get to the checkout only to be let down when they realise it is not 4c or 6c per litre cheaper. They need to know what price they are paying. It is about better transparency for them.

This is ultimately about Territorians: getting them a better deal; trying to save them millions of dollars; most importantly, continuing to always keep the pressure on fuel companies to do the right thing by Territorians; and reducing the high cost of living to Territorians each and every day, no matter where they live.

I thank the media, which was instrumental in this drive to get the ACCC investigation happening, to see the public pressure put on fuel companies and to help see the improvements that have come through. But, as government, we must not become complacent. We must keep the pressure on. That is why we are tending to those recommendations of the ACCC, to give Territorians a greater say to the price they pay for petrol going forward, to continue to put the pressure on fuel companies and to give Territorians the help they need every day.

I thank Treasury for all the work it has done on the preparation and delivery of this bill. MyFuel NT will be in place on 1 November 2017 if this bill is passed today. There will be a good level of communication going out to all the affected retailers to let Territorians know what is happening, to better inform them and ensure they maximise use of this new system.

I also thank the Department of Justice for the work it is doing, particularly through Consumer Affairs, which will play a role in the monitoring, enforcement, education, awareness and compliance of this new system. This is all about putting Territorians first and ensuring they will never be gouged again at the bowzers. It is about ensuring a better price for Territorians when they fuel up and keeping the hefty cost-of-living pressures down as much as we can moving forward.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 16

Noes 3

Ms Ah Kit
Mr Collins
Mr Costa
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mr Kirby
Ms Lawler
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Ms Nelson
Mr Paech
Mr Sievers
Ms Uibo
Ms Wakefield
Mrs Worden

Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Higgins
Mr Wood

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Consideration in Detail

Mr WOOD: Treasurer, in relation to section 187, scheme for publication of service station fuel prices, this scheme has been set up to be run by the government, by Consumer Affairs. Did the government look at the option of putting it out for tender to private companies?

Ms MANISON: I was satisfied with the costings we had internally. I am willing to have further discussion with the department about where they feel public tendering may go on this. But the advice I have had is that it will be best kept in-house. We will have control of the data, and we had confidence of the capacity within government to be able to develop this system. For example, one external provider contacted many members of this parliament and tried to say this would cost in the vicinity of \$6.5m. In the next breath they also asked me for \$4.2m to develop it over three years.

The costs we have come across in government are a one-off cost of \$240 000 to establish the system and an ongoing cost of about \$250 000 per year, which will be for the permanent position—travel, compliance, education, promotion of the system and so forth. I take it back to the context that if we are to save Territorians money and keep the pressure on. Just a cent a litre will save Territorians millions of dollars each year.

Mr WOOD: Following on from that—and it is good there is still a possibility this could be ...

Ms MANISON: I am more than willing to ask the question.

Mr WOOD: I do not know how many companies deal in this sort of information, but be that as it may, the government is willing to spend \$250 000 to set it up and \$240 000 a year to run it. We are setting this up to try to reduce petrol prices. At the moment the petrol price in Darwin is an average of 131.6c per litre, which is cheaper than Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne, as it about on par with the national metropolitan average. It is also cheaper than Hobart.

If we are to spend a quarter of a million dollars a year to operate this system, what methodology will you use to see if the scheme has made a difference, considering at this moment there is nothing wrong with our prices? Our gate price is higher than some other cities, yet our retail price is lower than those cities. We are achieving something pretty good in regard to pricing. How will we show that spending a quarter of a million dollars a year is not a waste of money?

Ms MANISON: I listened carefully to the debate yesterday, Member for Nelson, and I come back to the point where I believe that if government does not continue to keep the pressure on the fuel companies and if we do not empower Territorians with the information they need to make really informed, up-to-date, live choices about where they purchase their fuel, we will see a slip and prices will go up again. Remember, we are talking about fuel companies that do not have the greatest track record in the Northern Territory, and the ACCC report confirmed that.

We will have comprehensive and accurate information, day to day, on fuel pricing in the Northern Territory. Going forward with that point would give us a fantastic base level of data, which will be able to show comparisons of where we are going, how it is going against the terminal gate price and so forth, and to make sure we are getting results.

It is about keeping the pressure on, having a quality set of data—often the fault with some of these other websites, as well-intentioned as they are, is that they rely on crowdsourced data as opposed to mandatory, accurate data coming straight from fuel companies in real time. It will empower us with more information so we can keep the downward pressure on fuel prices. Over time we will see a return for that money, and I think we will see it clearly.

Mr WOOD: Treasurer, my other concern is from reading the private company's submission; they are of the view that not many people use the website. I am not sure how you will put out this information, but they did not give me the impression that a lot of people bother to look up those sites. They know it because it is in their local district and they know what the local service stations are, but have you done any surveys or said, 'We will give this information out'?

How do you know that information will get to the people if you take, for example, what those people are saying? Many people do not bother. Do you have some way of saying, 'We will spend this money; it is a good idea for everyone to know how much the fuel is'? Who, in actual fact, will look up that price?

Ms MANISON: I have faith that this will become a part of normal day-to-day life in the Northern Territory. We will make sure there is an appropriate communications strategy, and not only in the urban centres, to let Territorians across the board know about the opportunity to get pricing so they will be empowered with that knowledge about getting fuel prices. It will become part of consumer behaviour.

Looking at the interests that were expressed by that particular company—on one hand they were trying to say this will cost about \$6m and on the other hand they were saying, 'We can do it for you for \$4.4m over three years'. I have some concerns about where that interest is coming from.

I spent a period of my life in Western Australia when fuel was a hot topic and when these schemes were introduced—the culture of people knowing where to get fuel pricing, seeing a regular participation of media to promote fuel pricing websites.

This app will be the single source of truth for that data. We will share it with other data companies that want to get hold of it. It is about empowering people with more information to make better consumer choices to drive competition. I believe this will become part of the culture for people who like to shop around to get the best price, and a point of conversation for people.

I use the example of the new petrol station opening in Parap. It was around the time when we had this massive fuel campaign—I do not know if you can recall. I think there was a fuel station around your neck of the woods which had \$1 per litre for diesel or petrol one weekend, and everybody was lined up for a mile. People talk about the price of fuel.

My goodness, when there was a world oil crisis you asked me in Question Time about fuel. It is topical; it affects people each and every day. I am adamant that this will be communicated well to Territorians so they know how to easily access this information to empower them on their consumer choices.

Mr WOOD: I understand that, and I think you have raised a good point. It is something I am concerned about; we will spend a lot of money. When fuel prices were cheap in Virginia a long time ago, people knew about it. They did not have Facebook or apps; they did not have anything. Word got around on the radio.

I knew fuel was cheap at the new United in Parap. I could see it was cheap. They probably did not need an app, because it is such a small community, it does not take long. I did not even need Facebook; I just saw it.

My point is that word gets around quickly. I am concerned though. I know what you are trying to do. It is a fair bit of money in a tight budget. I am reluctant to believe it will achieve anything more than what we know now. When there is a good cheap price I bet someone rings up and tells the radio stations, 'Fuel in Parap is 20c a litre cheaper'. Bingo! Before you know it, it is on Facebook.

Through the private part of our economy, these prices get around quickly. Also, service stations know that if they bump their prices up too high it will be on the radio and they will be given the raspberry.

How will you get this information disseminated? What is the process?

Ms MANISON: Thank you, but with all due respect, we have a generation of people today who like being able to quickly access things through apps, online information and media. The more people who have access the more empowered they will be and the greater ...

Mr WOOD: I do own a phone, by the way.

Ms MANISON: Yes, I know you do. With the highest respect, I think in today's world, where people are reliant on real-time information—people become impatient when they cannot access it—demand will be there more and more.

I am adamant that this will be communicated well in the community. It will be a very easy process for companies and people to access. It will ensure there is integrity with the data—real-time, accurate, up-to-date data, which we do not have at the moment.

We will also have the assurance that government will keep pressure on fuel companies. That is an important factor in ensuring we keep prices down and we do not see a return to those days of fuel prices being through the roof just because you live in Darwin.

Mr WOOD: Will you at least release something that will give local companies the opportunity to do what you are doing? For instance, there might be companies in the NT that could do this. I presume you will put this on an app. You will pass legislation which requires fuel companies to have exact prices every hour or every day. Would it be worth putting it out to local companies to see if they can do the job?

My concern is that even though it is nice to have these prices, when I look at the reality—and we are spending a fair bit of money regularly—I would like to see it put out to private industry to see if they can do it cheaper or not do it at all, unless there is a need for it.

Will you give some consideration to see if it can be done privately?

Ms MANISON: Yes, and I will get back to you, the opposition and the Independents.

Mr HIGGINS: In regard to the technologies around this, we talk about having everything online, and the price in communities—as I indicated before, a lot of communities and spots up and down the Stuart Highway do not have any mobile coverage or satisfactory internet connections.

That starts at our place, in Acacia Hills. I do not have NBN and I cannot get it. How will we overcome that? The legislation talks about penalising someone if what is on the website does not match what they are charging at the pump. What time frame do we have for that because of this technology problem? I could not find anything in the legislation.

Ms MANISON: That is a valid question from the Leader of the Opposition. It was a question that the bush members of this Caucus have raised with me. Yes, we have some remote and isolated places that do not have the joys of quick and reliable Internet, which we have in the urban centres.

There is an ability for them to ring a number to update those prices. We have also spoken about ensuring there is flexibility, for example if the phone lines or Internet were down, to ensure that is taken into account given the remote and isolated location in the Northern Territory. That will be factored in.

As we move towards the roll-out here on 1 November, that will be communicated to all fuel retailers in those communities and remote locations. I agree that there has to be flexibility to account for some of the isolation issues, and to ensure that when technology lets people down—and we all know technology does let us down from time to time—it has been considered in formulating this bill and the regulations that will go with it.

Mr HIGGINS: To give you an idea on some of the down times—at Berry Springs over the last month we have had three or four weeks with no Internet or telephone connection. That is not remote.

Ms MANISON: As I said, when a company points out these very real problems they are facing, those issues will be looked at. It is not good to hear that it happens at Berry Springs, so close to Darwin. I can only imagine some of the issues people contend with in our remote areas. We have given it consideration as part of this. If a company through no fault of its own is unable to report the price on the day because communication is down, it needs to be acknowledged and recognised.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Following on with that theme, I have concerns about enforcement and compliance. Section 188 of the bill deals with the penalties to service stations, and I imagine this is where your government believes the stick is. If there is no stick why would there be this level of compliance?

What I am getting at follows on from what the Leader of the Opposition said. What is the time frame for a fuel outlet to change its fuel prices and notify the person who will be employed to look after this area? We are talking about penalties, and if they are not strictly enforced there can be an erosion of the whole system. You would want your stick to be strong and enforceable. How can you do that with one staff member, and will the flexibility in the lag time between updating fuel prices and notifying Consumer Affairs be enshrined in the regulations? Where will we find that level of detail?

Ms MANISON: Once we get passage of this legislation the regulations will be finalised. The time frames will be finalised in consultation with the retailers. We want people to comply and do the right thing. We will have a full-time staff member in Consumer Affairs who will be tasked with that, but we will need a period of time to settle the system in. Once we are comfortable that people and companies fully understand their obligations about reporting, if we see companies are not complying then they have to be dealt with. If you do not do that, what is the point?

It is important to have up-to-date, real-time and accurate data to empower Territorians about the fuel choices and purchases they make.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Why did the government miss the opportunity to seek the profit margin from the retailer when that was the ACCC's recommendations? It drives changes in motorists' behaviour. Why did the government choose not to use that in this bill?

Ms MANISON: The ACCC was not going after the profit margins. It said this is about better retail fuel pricing disclosures, and that is what we are focused on with this bill.

Mr WOOD: Clause 1 of section 189 says the regulations may prescribe requirements. Do you have any idea what those regulations will be in regard to price boards?

Ms MANISON: We are working and will continue to work through those upon passage of this legislation.

Mr WOOD: I imagine they will come back through deemed papers, the regulations, so we can see them before they are enforced?

Ms MANISON: I would be more than happy to share them with you or the opposition through that process.

Mr WOOD: We heard it will cost about \$5000 to change the price boards. Not all service stations are Puma and those other companies. Can a retailer decide to scrap a price board, or is a price board required under our legislation?

Ms MANISON: They are not required to have a price board. Those that advertise the heavily discounted prices, ensuring there is better transparency about the real price of that fuel, can advertise the fact discounts are available, but it is not advertising the lowest discounted price. It is the actual price of the fuel to ensure the consumer has more information about the real price of the fuel.

Mr WOOD: The Member for Goyder mentioned this, but do you have any proof that this makes a difference? I know what a discounted price is, and I know the real price. I just read it. We are making fuel companies change it at a cost of \$5000. I am not sticking up for fuel companies here, by the way; they make plenty of money, but that is not really the issue. The issue is we are making a law which will cost money to change something. Is there any proof the existing price boards are tricking people into entering a service station and buying fuel?

Ms FYLES: I have been tricked.

Mr WOOD: You are changing a law based on the premise that people are buying fuel at a price they saw and when they get there it is not the actual price. Was there anything done to show that is the problem?

Ms MANISON: This is about transparency and a better level of accountability.

Mr WOOD: I can read.

Ms MANISON: I have experienced it and I know other people have. You go into a fuel station—and sometimes those signs can be deceptive. This is about giving transparency about the real price people are paying for fuel.

Information from Consumer Affairs Australia and New Zealand from December 2012 states:

One area of concern relates to how discounted prices (including shopper docket fuel discounts) are displayed on fuel price boards, often more prominently than their relevant terms and conditions and the undiscounted price.

...

Many of the concerns about fuel price boards appear to arise due to a form of information failure in that some consumers may be confused about what prices are available or face greater difficulty than necessary in making price comparisons due to the manner in which information is provided or the lack of consistency in the information provided.

We are going down the pathways that Victoria and South Australia have. This is about empowering people with real information about what the prices are. This gives people the real price and it holds fuel companies to account with regard to those prices. The ACCC has raised it as an issue as well.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to clarify and correct something for the record in relation to my previous question. Page 33 of the ACCC's report at 6.2, which is titled 'Increase transparency of GIRDs and retail prices':

Firms may have less incentive to increase and maintain high prices if there is close scrutiny of their pricing behaviour. Ongoing monitoring and publication of margins and profits can shine a light on what is happening in the market. This may dissuade some uncompetitive market behaviour. It may also provide information—such as retail profits in Darwin are high by national standards—that may encourage new entrants into the market.

What we need in the Territory is something that drives competitive prices. Having something that encourages more independent retailers will help drive down that price.

Why did you miss the opportunity as recommended at 6.2? Do you think this will drive down price, drive up competition and increase those independent retailers?

How will success of the website be measured? Is there a review in 12 months? If we map fuel prices today over the course of the next 12 months and nothing has changed, is this merely just a website so that people can go online if they so choose and say, 'Okay, it is cheaper here today', or will this actually make long-term change to fuel prices in the Territory?

Ms MANISON: Treasury has regular publications in that area. You can go online to Treasury to get access to that data. We are stepping this up to a whole new level. This is ensuring that consumers, the people who make the decisions that drive the competition in the fuel market, are empowered with the right information to make up-to-date decisions about where they purchase their fuel and at what price. We have a raft of information on the Treasury website, which the Member for Nelson had a good look at.

Ms NELSON: You will have places like Gove, which has only one service station but not a lot of competition, places like Bulman, where I have bought fuel before, and places like the cattle station on the Plenty Highway, where fuel is extremely high. The problem I have is that the ACCC states that profit margin is the thing we need to know.

Fuel to Gove comes by barge; fuel to Bulman comes a long way on a truck; and fuel to the cattle station on the Plenty Highway also travels a long distance by truck. Whilst I understand what you are doing, you could disadvantage some of these retailers who cannot sell fuel at a cheaper price. People looking on the website will say it is a rip off. Some of these independent retailers could be disadvantaged by putting their prices on the website without any indication to the person looking at the site as to why it is a lot dearer than, say, Nightcliff?

Ms MANISON: I think this will help us in the context of the big picture across the Northern Territory, understanding the pricing pressures each location faces and the contributing factors to why the fuel is priced the way it is.

It will give us a greater set of data regarding fuel prices, how they move, when they move. Do they move in different seasons, for example? Do we see a contrast between the Wet and the Dry? What is their road network like? What is the transport access? How does that impact the final price at the end of the day to the end user?

We will be more empowered with information and, ultimately, we can look at the impacts of fuel prices across the Northern Territory, including on people in the bush.

This will be a helpful process to give us a far better understanding of the information and pressures on pricing for people living remote.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: How will this measure encourage independent retailers, which we obviously need to bring down prices longer term? Will there be a review in 12 months, and how will the government measure the success of the program?

Ms MANISON: It is not just looking at the fuel prices here. As a government, we get fuel contracts that will look at that as well. We know that government vehicles are also big consumers of fuel in the Northern Territory. I think this will make things far more competitive. As you look from one station to the other, knowing the prices will be reported on, it will encourage a greater level of competition.

In recent years we have seen a few independent operators pop up, and that shows some signs of promise and will help keep the price of fuel at a better level for Territorians.

With any change to or new government policy, it is important to review it. I have not put a formal review period in place as yet, but I expect that within the first 12 to 24 months we will look at it. We need a couple of years to have a good look and make sure it is getting the results we want.

Within the first two years I will ask Treasury and Consumer Affairs to look at how it is working and whether it is achieving what we want, that is, keeping the pressure down on fuel prices for Territorians.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Treasury's website publishes information ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Opposition Leader, are you asking a question or making a statement?

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION (2017–2018) BILL (Serial 20)

Continued from 4 May 2017.

Mr COSTA (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker I welcome the opportunity to talk about the 2017 budget, the first of this Labor government in its new term.

I congratulate the Member for Wanguri, the Treasurer, on delivering her first budget.

We all know, and the Treasurer has been very clear, that this would be a tough budget. The state of the Territory's finances left to us by the CLP was not in good shape nor was the economy. It is up to this

government to try to turn this around, and that is why there is an emphasis on infrastructure and job creation.

The Territory has been dealt a massive blow with the news from the federal government at the end of March with a significant reduction in GST. A loss of GST revenue to the tune of \$2bn over four years is hitting the Territory and Territorians very hard. I have faith in this government and our Treasurer to continue to stand up for the people across the Territory, including the people of the Arafura electorate, and to deliver a budget which is fair and, importantly, delivers on our election commitments.

Many Budget 2017–18 announcements are very welcome. I was really pleased to hear in the Treasurer's budget speech about a couple of big items which will be delivered in my electorate of Arafura. The \$6m for Bathurst Island airstrip reconstruction and extension upgrade is a welcome investment. People in the vicinity of Gunbalanya community, especially its traditional owners, will be equally pleased to hear that the budget is delivering funds to seal three kilometres of road near Red Lily Lagoon in order to better protect the cultural heritage sites.

During the Dry Season, when Cahills Crossing is open, this is a very popular spot as tourists make their way between Jabiru and Gunbalanya. I note, in Budget Paper No 4, the infrastructure program, and that around 48% of the 2017–18 capital works program is allocated to upgrading infrastructure in remote communities.

I want to highlight this point, noting that this is a budget for all Territorians whether they be regional, remote or in urban centres. I also note that about a third of the 2017–18 infrastructure budget, \$625.6m, goes to roads and transport, and around 25% to housing and related works.

This government was very clear in the lead-up to the last election about its commitments to Territorians: to put children at the front and centre of government; to create jobs; to provide stronger support and increased empowerment for those of us who live out bush; and to restore trust and accountability to government.

Let me start with our children. As a father and a grandfather I know that kids are at the heart of our lives and our future. Not one person in this house would disagree with me on that. We have to invest in our kids. It is the right thing to do. Without investing in their education, health, housing and supporting their parents to find work, we will struggle to address the high levels of disadvantage which exist in the Northern Territory and in communities I represent.

The annual Closing the Gap report released in February showed we are only meeting one of seven targets. One area of enormous need, which was highlighted, is overcrowding in communities. This government heard that loud and clear from Territorians, which is why we took to the election a promise to spend \$1.1bn on remote housing over the next 10 years to not only build new houses, but to invest in existing houses to provide extra rooms and upgrades, like granny flats, through the Room to Breathe program.

How can we expect kids to get to school every day and be ready to learn if they cannot sleep in a house that might be home to as many as 20 people? How could that be good for their health? How can we stand by and let that happen without trying to work towards a solution for decades of overcrowding?

Housing was probably the number one issue raised with me during the election campaign. I was pleased when last year the Minister for Housing and Community Development announced the Room to Breathe program was to be fast-tracked.

The people at Milikapiti were delighted to have the Chief Minister visit them to announce that Milikapiti would be among the first of 24 communities to see early works. During that visit people said to me they were happy to have a government that is listening to their needs and wants them to be involved in deciding what is best for their homes.

Some families have told me they do not want to be separated from their families, so they like the idea of building a granny flat because it keeps families together on the one lot and in the same premises.

People in those communities are pretty happy with the news. As part of local decision-making, residents will be involved in the planning and design of additional living spaces. The program will also create jobs for local people. These jobs will be ongoing over the 10-year period of this program and beyond. It is high time we saw local people in communities supported to take on these jobs, not fly-in fly-out contractors.

I am also pleased to see Minister McCarthy's announcement of the \$1m boost into the Aboriginal Interpreter Services to support local decision-making and allow the voices of Aboriginal people to be heard when engaging with government programs during projects like Room to Breathe.

Make no mistake, there remains lingering resentment out bush over former Prime Minister John Howard's intervention in the Northern Territory, where Indigenous people had no say over the special measures imposed on them. We can only have productive two-way communication if we recognise local language and allow local voices to be listened to and understood. Interpreters are the key to this process.

We know the former government cut spending in education. It cut resources and drastically cut teacher numbers and other staff positions. Those cuts were simply wrong. You cannot expect to improve student education outcomes while cutting vital resources. That is why this government is reinvesting \$124m into schools over the next four years, including allowing schools to decide how they want to invest \$20m a year into their school.

These funds are to target resources for preschools, secondary schools, homeland education and schools like those in my electorate, where there are high concentrations of Indigenous students. Maningrida School intends to utilise the additional funds to support homeland education.

It is great to see, eight months into government, another election commitment being delivered with the first 54 schools receiving their share of the \$300 000 allocated under the Building Better Schools minor new works program. Every government and independent school will benefit from the scheme during this government's first term.

In the Arafura electorate, Maningrida School community has identified it wants to spend its funds on preschool ablutions and ratification works to address acoustics in some of the classrooms.

Pularumpi School on the Tiwi Islands has identified upgrades to the preschool, which I attended as a student over 40 years ago. As the local member I have visited these schools and spoken with people to understand their needs, and I agree that these projects are overdue. Like Room to Breathe, not only will Building Better Schools improve the level of amenity, it will also generate work and stimulate the economy Territory-wide with purchases of materials and services. It will provide work for local people.

Over four years, the Territory's 300 or so schools will have benefited from the investment into our schools, kids and local communities. With a strong focus on early years, I am pleased to see the growth of Families as First Teachers in schools. It is a good model which engages mums and dads with their little ones, from birth, to participate in activities which nurture parenting skills and instil learning habits early in the child's life to help them to be school-ready on day one, year one, term one.

Within my electorate there are established programs already running at Gunbalanya, Nguui and Maningrida. Earlier this year a program was established to meet the needs of Pularumpi and Milikapiti. Waruwi will see its first FaFT service established in the second half of this year. The parents are very pleased and excited about this.

As someone who worked in the health sector for almost five years I know too well the impact on families and communities in seeking treatment of kidney disease. Whilst it is not only in my electorate, the reality is most of my constituents will benefit from the \$9.4m investment in the new Darwin renal centre to replace the Nightcliff centre, which is well past its use-by date.

It saddens me that over the years too many people have had to leave their country and their families to receive renal dialysis in Darwin. It is good to see this changing over the last decade, with a cooperative agreement with the federal government and the innovative work undertaken by organisations like the Purple House in Alice Springs to establish more renal services on country so that those who need to can remain connected with family and country, which sustains them.

There is an additional \$1.4m to go towards renal rooms in two remote communities, which is welcome news. At this stage we do not know the outcome of which communities will receive this, but I hope Pirlangimpi on Melville Island will be one of them. The Health minister knows I have represented my constituents and lobbied for Pirlangimpi to provide a dialysis. Fingers crossed.

The need for renal care continues to increase in Aboriginal communities. As assistant minister for remote health delivery, it is a matter I am gravely concerned about, and I am ready to roll up my sleeves to work with the Health minister to see what we can do to reduce this situation.

As a proud Tiwi man, I acknowledge the Health minister's commitment to put culture at the centre of Indigenous health services by developing the Aboriginal cultural security framework. As she said in her media release, cultural security means building a system where Aboriginal people feel safe and confident, and are able to participate in things fully.

If we are serious about closing the gap on Aboriginal disadvantage, we must work towards providing a consistent approach to action, healthcare design and delivery for Aboriginal Territorians.

I also welcome the investment to addressing domestic and family violence. Budget 2017 delivers \$33m to support frontline services, infrastructure and strategies for the prevention of domestic and family violence. I have great confidence in Minister Wakefield to lead and navigate policy and spending in this area. She is well qualified to do so, following her years in Central Australia, working at NPY Women's Council and as a former Director of the Alice Springs Women's Shelter.

Urban or remote, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, no community is immune from this, and it is incumbent upon all of us to say 'no more' to family violence, while at the same time educating our young ones about respectful relationships and that violence is never okay. I know, through my time employed in the Department of Health as an employment development engagement officer, that working with community at the grassroots is the best approach in dealing with social issues like domestic and family violence and substance abuse.

We know that alcohol is the heart of so many problems in the Territory, including domestic and family violence. I welcome the reintroduction of the Banned Drinker Register by 1 September 2017. We are already gearing up for this reintroduction with a \$17.2m commitment, which will include having funding available for evidence-based and health-based alcohol harm reduction initiatives.

We know that alcohol mandatory treatment did not work and was incredibly costly. We cannot afford to have a system which does not deliver results. Alcohol-related harm costs Territory taxpayers more than \$600m per year on police, the Department of Health, courts and corrections, which are there to turn this around.

I am pleased to see the commitment of this government, through the budget, to supporting youth who are at risk of interfacing with the youth justice system. It is why we have placed such an emphasis on the early years to invest in these kids and support their families, and to grow them to realise their potential as smart, educated, healthy young people leading productive and independent lives. Investment at the front end of their lives, before they find themselves dealing with the criminal justice and correctional systems, is a much smarter way to go and make sure we save money in the long run.

I think our government already knows much of what is needed to be done to address this issue, which is why we have invested in young Territorians. A total of \$18.2m for youth justice per year is devoted to addressing their issues.

I am fully supportive of the investment of the \$6.1m in the ranger program, which has about 45 established programs operating around the Territory. They play an important role in the community of Arafura, caring for land, sea and country. They are one of the biggest employers of Aboriginal people in the Arafura electorate through what they teach, maintaining unique cultural knowledge and the song line, and they protect the significant and sacred sites of their traditional clan estates.

My electorate has no fewer than eight ranger groups, which collectively protect massive areas of land, sea and country that are thousands of years old. Across the Arafura electorate there is Garngi Community Rangers of Croker Island, Mukwul Rangers, Njanjma Ranger Group Oenpelli, (inaudible) Rangers Red Lily, (inaudible) Rangers and Tiwi Land Rangers. These groups have a crucial role in conservation, land management and protecting and preserving natural assets. That is why this budget will see \$4.1m to purchase capital items, like vehicles and boats, to help them do their job, along with \$2m through a conservation and land management fund to continue to develop best practice on caring for country.

This has been a tough budget for our Treasurer and government to put together, but it will centre on creating jobs through stimulus spending to boost infrastructure, investment in the lives of children and support for our bush communities. I thank the Treasurer for her hard work and commend the 2017 budget to the House.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the members of this Chamber who have contributed to the debate around the Appropriation Bill and Budget 2017–18. Tuesday last week feels like

years ago already. It has been a pretty intense week and a half, to say the least. I have been from the top to the bottom of the Northern Territory. I thank everybody who has taken the time to hear about what the budget has in it for them, what it is about for the Territory and where this government intends to take the future of the Northern Territory.

Budget 2017–18 is about investing in the future of the Northern Territory, jobs, children and our communities. It is a budget that takes strong and decisive action for people across the Territory at a time when it is needed the most. We are facing a slowing economy. We have seen the unprecedented \$2bn GST cut and the deep and devastating impact that will have on our budget bottom line. Again, I stress that had it not been for that GST cut, the tough, measured decisions we made would have set our budget to return to surplus in 2019–20. It was confirmed in Tuesday night's budget just how deep that cut was.

The number one issue people are talking to us about is jobs. They want to see people supported in jobs right now when it is most-needed because Territorians are doing it tough. It is about creating jobs into the future, growing our economy, growing opportunities for the Northern Territory and maximising every opportunity that we have, because the future is bright. We have some fantastic projects on the horizon and opportunities to further grow some of our key sectors, drive more innovation and further private investment growth in mining.

There is a very bright future ahead for the Northern Territory, but there will be challenges in the next 12 to 18 months, particularly as we see the biggest project in the Northern Territory, the INPEX project, move from its construction to operation phase. We are responding to the economic climate conditions and making sure we give Territorians the support they need here and now. That is exactly what Budget 2017–18 does.

Unfortunately, on Tuesday night the federal government failed the Northern Territory dismally. It did not show any genuine commitment towards its own policy agendas of developing the north or closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, which is an absolute shame. But we will continue to do everything we can to make sure the federal government has a case to invest in the Northern Territory. We will put that case to them again and again because we have so much to contribute to this great nation.

For the federal government to walk away, particularly when we have a Cabinet minister, our Senator of the Northern Territory, Senator Scullion. He failed in his area of Indigenous affairs, particularly for closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and seeing further investment in the critical areas of housing, health and education. It is a shame. We will persist. We will be at the door in Canberra to put the Territory's case forward.

We have a difficult challenge ahead. Over this term of government when the opportunity comes to improve the deficit position, we will. When the opportunity comes to pay down debt, we will. We have had to make some tough decisions in this budget. We have been clear about that. We will have to continue making tough decisions.

We have constrained current expenditure growth of the Northern Territory public sector to 0.1% over the forward years, an historic low compared to a 7% average over the last 10 years. This will be a challenge for our public service, but it is what we need to do to show the right discipline when we have challenges ahead.

We have done that so we can free up as much money as possible to invest in job-creating infrastructure. The priority is a record \$1.75bn infrastructure investment across the Northern Territory to support jobs, to create jobs and grow our economy. That is where our priorities are. We will be chasing down more private investment into the Northern Territory. We will be doing everything we can to grow business confidence and the economy. Most importantly, we will honour our commitments to Territorians at the last election and give people certainty about what our priorities are.

We have an ambitious major projects agenda that will grow the Northern Territory from top to bottom and boost opportunities for Territorians. We are here for Territorians at the time they most need us. To achieve a surplus at all costs despite the massive GST cut would have meant cutting thousands of jobs and reducing critical services to Territorians. It would have sent business confidence and our economy backwards. That is not what Territorians need—far from it. We have a bright future, and Budget 2017–18 is investing in that future.

We look forward to the estimates process. It is an important process where we will sit down and be scrutinised by the opposition and the Independents about the expenditure within the budget papers. It is a

wonderful process for Territorians. It ensures that the hard questions are asked, and the information that Territorians want to hear is given. We have the books open and we are being open and transparent about the expenditure of Northern Territory funds.

It is an important process and we look forward to being back in parliament in June to go through the estimates process and, ultimately, give passage to the Appropriation Bill. We will all be there. We look forward to it and we look forward to the scrutiny of that process.

I thank the Northern Territory Treasury staff. They have worked very long, hard hours. Each year people in Treasury, particularly under the leadership of Craig Graham and David Braines-Mead and their teams, work extraordinarily hard. The teams are there all weekend, finalising those budget papers. They do an incredible job in preparation for the budget cabinets, working with all the agencies across government. It is a long process, but a critical one, each year. I thank them for their dedication and hard work to put together the budget.

We look forward to coming back in June to further discuss the Appropriation Bill. We look forward to the scrutiny of expenditure that will come with the estimates process. It is an incredibly important process.

I thank all the members who contributed to this very important debate about the future of the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the consideration in detail be taken later.

Motion agreed to.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE Member for Stuart

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the Member for Stuart today on account of electorate business.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS TABLED Schedule of Government Responses to Committee Reports

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the report on the status of government responses to committee reports.

Travel Report – Member for Blain

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members I also table a travel report for the Member for Blain.

Report of Committee of Members' Interests

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table a report of the Committee of Members' Interests relating to the content of the register tabled in the Assembly during the March meetings.

The document contains the home address of a member, who subsequently wrote to the Committee of Members' Interests asking that it be redacted from the tabled report.

Tabled papers are the property of the Assembly so the Committee of Members' Interests has recommended in the report tabled today that the content be redacted from the tabled paper with the notion the Assembly has agreed to the blacking out of the information so it is clear what has occurred to any person examining the tabled papers.

The committee report is short and self-explanatory. This was an inadvertent error in filling in the paperwork. The member contacted us immediately. The committee has met and we are in agreement of this.

MOTION

Adopt Report – Report of Committee of Members' Interests

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to; report adopted.

PAPER TABLED

Report of Standing Orders Committee

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table a report of the Standing Orders Committee relating to the matter of General Business reordering.

The matter of reordering General Business has become a weekly occurrence; however, some ambiguity was detected in the existing standing order. The Standing Orders Committee has decided to recommend formalising the process with a new sessional order pending the more complete standing orders review, which remains ongoing.

The committee report is short and self-explanatory. This is just providing process around the reordering of General Business to accommodate opposition and Independent members so they can rearrange General Business day as they see fit. The government welcomes this day, an opportunity to contribute to debate.

MOTION

Adopt Report – Report of Standing Orders Committee

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to; report adopted.

PAPER TABLED

Subordinate Legislation and Publications Report

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee, Report of Ministerial Correspondence on Subordinate Legislation and Publications, October 2016 to May 2017, and associated minutes of proceedings.

Rules, regulations and bylaws affect people in their day to day lives. It is therefore important that the Assembly maintains this efficient level of public scrutiny to ensure those rules, regulations and bylaws keep within the purpose and intent of the laws under which they are made and do not unduly affect peoples' rights.

This report places on the public record concerns raised by the committee's independent legal counsel, Professor Ned Aughterson, and allows interested members of the public to see the clarifications regarding the intended operation of the regulations or undertakings to correct any errors as provided by ministers.

In addition to the scrutiny of subordinate legislation, the committee is responsible for monitoring the statutory reporting requirements of some 90 government entities. It is pleasing to note that during the reporting period all agencies, independent offices, statutory authorities and government owned corporations met their relevant reporting requirements.

On behalf of the committee I thank ministers for their responses to the committee's queries. The committee also acknowledges the significant contributions made by Professor Aughterson and thanks him for his diligence in advising the committee. I also take this opportunity on behalf of the committee to acknowledge and thank the staff of the committee's section, each of whom does a wonderful job of making our work as pain free as possible: Julia Knight; Elise Dyer; Annie McCall; Kim Cowcher; and Russell Keith.

MOTION

Note Paper – Subordinate Legislation and Publications Report

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

MOTION

Note Paper – Auditor-General of the Northern Territory's March 2017 Report to the Legislative Assembly

Continued from 16 March 2017.

Ms FYLES (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Auditor-General's report of March 2017 refers to an audit of the performance management system of two contracts managed by the Department of Health. The objective of the audit was to assess the capability of the performance management systems in the Department of Health to effectively manage contracts and agreements.

The two contracts examined were the Top End medical retrieval services contract operated by CareFlight and the St John Ambulance contract. The CareFlight contract covers fixed-wing aeromedical and rotary helicopter retrieval services in the Top End. This audit builds on the previous audit of 2013 by the former Auditor-General, which identified deficiencies in contract management and data to support contractual payments on the 2013 audit.

The St John Ambulance contract covers the whole of the Territory with a new contract that came into effect from 1 February 2016. Multiple areas of each contract were considered with an emphasis on contract agreement management, performance reporting, government oversight, document management and record keeping. I welcome the audit findings that will lead to better accountability and contract management.

The Auditor-General acknowledged that the department has developed systems and processes to support the management of the contracts for CareFlight and St John Ambulance. These established processes support contract management activities including a contract management framework, contract management plans and governance committees either established or followed for within the contracts.

The Auditor-General identified areas for opportunities for improvement with recommendations being made in a broad sense as well as specific to each contract. Broader recommendations included improved document management systems to ensure contractual documents are readily accessible and current, so accurate information is available at all times. This recommendation has already been actioned as part of implementing the electronic document records management system, which is scheduled to be implemented in full by the Department of Health and Corporate Services Bureau by the end of June this year.

Specific recommendations regarding the CareFlight contract include closer monitoring of financial expenditure as well as management of expectations and interests of stakeholders relevant to the contract. These recommendations have been actioned by establishing processes to identify the variances between budget and actual contract expenditure, and having terms of reference for the contract government's structure endorsed by all relevant stakeholders.

The CareFlight contract continues to be monitored on a regular basis by monthly management meetings, quarterly governance meetings and supporting committees to review inter-jurisdictional operation and clinical operations.

Findings relating to the order of the St John Ambulance contract were similar in nature to the CareFlight audit, with a greater focus on establishing contract management practices, stakeholder engagement and service audit requirements. These findings, along with a detailed review of contract compliance processes, are from the scope of a root and branch review of the St John Ambulance services contract being undertaken. The review will focus on overall contract function, including contract governance gaps in reporting accuracy as identified throughout the audit, along with establishing processes to monitor ongoing contract function and compliance.

Throughout the review various internal and external stakeholders will be engaged, including jurisdictions that contract for services in a similar manner to the Northern Territory Government, to identify any learnings that could be applied for effective ongoing management of the service.

Work has commenced on the contract governance review with an anticipated completion by June 2017 to close out recommendations made by the Auditor-General in the March 2017 report.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

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, I rise to recognise a strong leader in our community. On Thursday 27 April 2017 Senior Aboriginal Community Police Officer, ACPO, Betty Herbert of Alyangula Police Station was awarded the 2016 Aboriginal Community Police Officer Administrator's Medal for her 14 years of service at the Alyangula township, as well as the Angurugu and Umbakumba communities.

She started her journey as a strong and vigilant leader in the community in 2003. Since then she has been a member of several boards in the Groote Eylandt region where she has dealt with many community issues. She is a police representative for community safety action plans at Umbakumba and Angurugu and is heavily involved with stakeholder meetings, being the representative for the police and community concerns.

Senior ACPO Herbert is also heavily involved with the Groote Eylandt and Milyakburra Youth Division Unit where she devotes her time to providing advice, guidance and counselling for the community's youth. She is involved in holiday programs and giving young people cultural awareness by taking them to outstations, providing informal intervention for at risk youth. She will always put others before herself. For example, she scheduled her recreation leave to attend and support cultural youth camps during the bush holidays.

Senior ACPO Herbert has been involved in several high risk incidents at Angurugu and Umbakumba, and at all times has been a calming and strong influence for her colleagues. During a riot in the community in May 2015 she demonstrated courage and honesty and highlighted herself as an invaluable first responder. Senior ACPO Herbert's main aim every day is to make her community a safe and welcoming place for all. One of her personal priorities is to support victims of family violence and work in the community to send a clear message that we all agree on: family violence will not be tolerated.

Senior ACPO Herbert's dedication to her role is recognised by all community members and her leadership and strength is a positive example to young people, particularly young women. She is an exemplary recipient of the 2016 Aboriginal Community Police Officer Administrator's Medal, demonstrating strong leadership, meaningful community relationships and contribution to community boards and youth programs. Congratulations, Senior Aboriginal Community Police Officer Betty Herbert.

I also rise tonight to speak about a very special pilgrimage trail in our own backyard. Europe has many great ancient pilgrimage routes, especially in Spain, France, Italy and England. The most famous is probably the Camino de Santiago, Way of Saint James, in northern Spain, which hosts hundreds of thousands of walkers and mountain bikers every year.

England has the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury Cathedral, first made famous by Geoffrey Chaucer in the late 14th century in his classic *Canterbury Tales*. Japan and Peru have significant pilgrimage trails which track thousands of walkers, international and domestic, to the scenic wonder of those beautiful countries.

However, in Australia pilgrimage trails are a comparatively recent development. One such development winds from Subiaco in Perth, 180 kilometres, along the Camino Salvado trail to New Norcia. The trail follows the journey of a Spanish Benedictine monk, Dom Rosendo Salvado, who founded the famous New Norcia monastery north of Perth in the mid-19th century.

The Territory has a pilgrimage trail that allows visitors to walk in the footsteps of the great Vincent Lingiari, the father of land rights and the leader of the famous Wave Hill Walk-Off.

In 2006 the Martin Labor government declared heritage status for the route of the walk-off. It has subsequently been given national heritage recognition by the Australian Government. With a view to developing national and international awareness for the route and increase visitor numbers and expenditure in the community, the forward thinking Gurindji Corporation developed the track. It partnered with the highly acclaimed Bower architectural design studio of Melbourne University to build and install three bough shelter rest area pavilions and interpretative signage along the track.

The vision was that of community leaders like Roz Frith, Ronnie Wave Hill, Jimmy and Biddy Wave Hill, Violet Madrill, Topsy Dodd, Paddy Doolak, Robert Roy, Justin Paddy and Michael and Gus George. The creation of the track was the work of community workers including Billy Joshua, Peterson Alec, Nathaniel Jimmy and Ethan and Darren Morris.

The travel begins at Old Wave Hill Station, or Jinparrak as it is known by its Gurindji traditional owners. There are no buildings there anymore, but there is an interesting cemetery with many graves, mostly unmarked. It is the final resting place for many of the Aboriginal stockmen and domestic workers who worked for generations for cattle baron Lord Vestey and his heirs on what was once one of the largest cattle stations in the country. The station at Jinparrak was established in 1914 following the destruction by flood of an earlier Wave Hill Station constructed near the Victoria River close to modern-day Kalkaringi.

By the 1960s conditions for Aboriginal workers and their families were poor. They were paid low wages, if at all. They lived in tin humpies, steaming hot in summer and freezing cold in winter. They had no running water, and women had to carry water from a bore some distance from the humpies. Their rations were only flour, tea and the bones and heads of 'killers' from the homestead's herd.

The Gurindji and their Ngarinman, Bilinara, Mudburra, Warlpiri and Jaru relatives, who were also represented in the camp, were growing increasingly frustrated with their situation.

After an accident mustering, Lingiari was taken to the old Darwin hospital where by chance he met Dexter Daniels, a Roper River, today Ngkurr, man who had been recently employed by the powerful North Australian Workers Union as an organiser, with responsibility for assisting Aboriginal stockmen in their struggle for parity in wages and conditions with non-Aboriginal stockmen in the Northern Territory pastoral industry.

Daniels, with the redoubtable Lupnagiari, aka Captain Major, had already helped the Jingili and Mudburra stockmen of Newcastle Waters Station walk off the property in May 1966 and set up a strikers' camp at what is known to this day as Union Paddock. They wanted to extend the pastoral workers' strike as much as possible by urging Aboriginal stockmen across the Territory to quit work to pressure pastoralists to pay equal wages immediately, even though the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission had given a grace period of three years to do so.

After talking to Daniels, Lingiari knew what he had to do.

As Nawunja, aka Jimmy Wave Hill, said at last year's 50th anniversary celebrations of the walk-off, 'All the struggling we had at Wave Hill, I know it was not easy, those Vestey's giving us a hard time. Vincent said we might as well get away from this. Vestey mob don't give us a fair go'.

More than 200 people left before dawn on 23 August 1966. As Deborah Rose said recently, 'They all went, the women, the kids, the oldies, everybody. Even the dogs walked off!'

Following the fence line for around 14 kilometres to the Buntine Highway, the track will show visitors the true majesty and beauty of Gurindji country. The austere and foreboding landscape of the old station opens up to a series of gently rolling hills covered by thick Mitchell grass and the odd patch of ironwood and bloodwood trees. Take water with you as the country is dry until you reach Junarni, or Gordy Creek, where the strikers stopped to dig for water in the dry riverbed. The children were complaining about being thirsty and women quickly dug seepage holes which filled with cool, clear water before their eyes.

From Junarni a few kilometres more takes the pilgrim to a marvellous lookout on top of the true Wave Hill, not far from the Libanangu, or Victoria River. The view from there is stunning, showing the winding river with its thickly forested banks and the plateau on the western bank that leads to Lingiari's homeland at Dagaragu, or Wattie Creek.

Cross the river at Kalkaringi near Policeman's Hole and the pilgrim has arrived at the old Native Welfare settlement where the strikers camped and drew rations and blankets from a sympathetic Department of Native Affairs officer, who was posted there.

The remaining six kilometres of the track pass through areas containing several Gurindji sacred sites and can be traversed only with a Gurindji guide. If that is not possible then it is recommended that the visitor drive to Dagaragu after visiting Lingiari's grave at the Kalkaringi cemetery where many more veterans of the walk-off are buried. At Dagaragu, after crossing Wattie Creek, the track ends at the site where Prime Minister Gough Whitlam gave the Gurindji leasehold title to 3236 square kilometres of their traditional lands.

A good spot to take in all that the pilgrim has seen and done would be Lawi on Wattie Creek, a beautiful spring-fed waterhole less than a kilometre back from Dagaragu towards Kalkaringi. The cool, clear water

will revive tired muscles and joints, and it truly marks the conclusion of what in time, I am sure, will become one of Australia's great pilgrimages.

When the cool weather comes after this year's Wet Season, go and walk in Vincent Lingiari's footsteps; walk the Wave Hill Walk-Off.

As the Gurindji say, 'Ngumpin kartiya karu-la jintaku-la', 'blackfella, whitefella, unite as one'.

I intend to do so, and I invite the Minister for Tourism and the local parliamentarian, the Member for Stuart to join me. I would be keen to walk the Wave Hill Walk-Off.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about Anita Newman, Palmerston Citizen of the Year.

On 26 January 2017 the Palmerston community celebrated Australia Day, and an important part of that day is the recognition of outstanding citizens in our community. This year the woman who earned this prestigious honour is none other than senior school teacher Anita Newman of Gray.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Anita for five years, and she has always struck me as an enthusiastic, passionate and committed member of our community. I took the opportunity to sit with Anita and discuss her life so it can be recorded by this parliament in *Hansard*, forever marking this most deserving achievement.

Anita was born and grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney. Anita nostalgically referred to it as:

... the heartland of convict Sydney.

She grew up nestled between the Parramatta River and Castle Hill. Anita had a lovely childhood growing up there, as you could see from the affection in her eyes as she reflected on her humble beginnings. In speaking with Anita I learned that she is a very private person, so this story of Anita's life recounts her journey of service to our community.

At just 10 years old Anita joined the Girl Guides, and as part of their service to the community her Girl Guides group would attend the local old age home and serve cups of tea and undertake other tasks for seniors. Anita distinctly remembers the blind man who adored the story of *Treasure Island*. He had a first edition of this book, which in itself is very special. Anita still remembers the musty smell of the book as she used to read it to him. This was the beginning of Anita's call to serve.

As a young person Anita also helped at her local swimming club, coaching and mentoring kids on how to swim. Anita loved doing this. It gave her great satisfaction and enjoyment, and, ultimately, was a passion she continued throughout her life.

Anita joined the Royal Australian Air Force at the tender age of 18. She joined because she wanted to serve her country and community. The strong sense of service was intrinsic in her, and she could only acquiesce to the internal call to serve. Anita's great uncle was a bomber pilot in World War II so the Air Force was a natural choice for her when looking to the Defence Forces.

Anita remembers how her and tens of other enthusiastic but nervous recruits piled into a plane in Sydney after their swearing in only to land at Adelaide Airport where they were met by no-one, all but abandoned. There was no-one there for them because they were scheduled to arrive the next day. Anita and her fellow recruits were billeted and given food, ready to commence their training the next day at RAAF Base Edinburgh.

You can see very clearly when speaking to Anita that she has a deep fondness for Adelaide as a result of her time at recruit training. Anita remembers how cold it was in the middle of winter but still made the affectionate comment that it was a really lovely place. She very much enjoyed getting out on the weekends and seeing all that Adelaide had to offer.

That 12-week training course has left an indelible mark in Anita's heart. She had lots of fun and is still friends with a number of recruits who she went through training with. Two women she remains very close to are Laura Gordon and Delia Verner. Whilst the three of them now live all over the country, Anita made the comment that when they do catch up it is like time has never been a factor.

After completing her training at RAAF Base Edinburgh, Anita went to Wagga Wagga as a clerk and ended up at 34 Squadron at RAAF Base Fairbairn. Anita had the very exciting job of aiding the squadron, which flew dignitaries like the Governor-General and the Prime Minister and Cabinet around the country. In doing so Anita had the great opportunity of being reviewed by Her Majesty the Queen as part of the Queen's House Guard in 1988 for her bicentennial tour. Anita believes she is the only female member of the military that bore arms on a parade for the Queen, which is pretty special. Anita reflected that she was slightly disappointed, though, that the Queen walked straight past her without even a flicker of the eye.

Anita spent three enjoyable years in Canberra before she moved to Darwin. The day she landed in Darwin remains crystal clear in her mind. It was November 1991. It was 14 degrees when she left Canberra and 34 degrees when she landed in Darwin. Anita will never forget the 80% humidity and big tropical storm that welcomed her to the Territory. Despite the heat Anita fell completely in love with Darwin. It was a true case of love at first sight. Anita's parents could never understand her attachment to Darwin, especially her dad, who had been here a number of times.

Anita worked for Primary Industry and Fisheries until she once again felt the call to serve. Anita joined the Police Force and spent 13 years as a police officer; five of those years were spent in Central Australia. Much like with her passion to join the Air Force, Anita's driving force was to serve her community. She would always, and continues to, ask her herself, 'What can I do to better the people around me?' This question is ever present in her mind.

As a police officer Anita worked in prosecutions for a few years. In this role she would watch young people go through a revolving door of court, Don Dale, release, offend and back to court. She felt that there had to be a better way and started asking herself, 'If I am not making a difference as a police officer, how can I make a proactive difference in these kids' lives?'

That is when she made the decision to become a school teacher. Having children makes you reassess the values in your life. Anita's family became the most important thing to her. She knew she had to remove some of the danger from her life and that leaving the police force was the right decision for all of them.

Anita then went to CDU and became a teacher. She received a fantastic education at CDU. Anita firmly believes the way a student approaches their subject areas is what changes their educational outcomes. Anita felt she was given every opportunity to succeed.

Once Anita started university, her thirst for knowledge grew so much that she kept changing her mind about what she wanted to be when she grew up. After 17 years at university, full-time, completing a Bachelor of Arts, Cultural Heritage, Management and History, and a Bachelor of Teaching and Learning, she left as a teacher.

Anita recounted her 17 years at CDU with a big smile, as she remembered that she was there for longer than most of the lecturing staff and outlasted four Vice Chancellors. Anita feels she should be content, but the reality is she is always yearning for more. She quoted her father who would always say, 'Fools and donkeys are content'.

Anita commenced her final teaching practice as a student teacher in 2011 at Palmerston Senior College, and has no plans of leaving any time soon. Anita adores the mix of kids at Palmerston Senior College. She reflected that some of the students are tough kids who come from a range of backgrounds and from all walks of life.

When standing at the front of the classroom she revels in the multiculturalism before her, and that diversity has been her experience of the Territory since she arrived here. In Anita's eyes, all the students at the school are nothing short of wonderful. Anita commented to me that although some of the students might be more difficult than others, they honour and respect honesty and respect; two attributes Anita is able to guarantee her students unconditionally.

Anita was bursting with pride and admiration for her students as she reflected on their six years together. She was excited to tell me that often her kids introduce her to their parents when they bump into one another at the supermarket, and how much she enjoys the experience of living and working locally.

Anita chooses to work at that school because she loves the students, the challenge, the location, the school environment and her ability to make a difference. She finds the kids like an extended family. She told me the story of a time when she had been at the Palmerston Shopping Centre with her then young

children, and there was an affray around the bus stop. Students from her school ushered her and her children safely away from danger.

Anita has also had the opportunity over the last three years to coach students in debating. She thoroughly enjoys coaching the kids at lunchtimes and spending Tuesday nights cheering on her students as they compete against other schools. She would not have been able to do it without Fran Davies, who is an English and SOSE teacher, who would do all the debating with Anita and the kids.

There is no greater career highlight for Anita than working with kids. She lights up every time she runs into students she used to teach who say, 'You don't remember me,' and she says, 'Yes I do!' and then they tell her what they are up to now.

Anita has spent much of her life involved in swim lifesaving programs, specifically working with migrants, refugees, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, which has been a humbling experience. In 1992, Anita received her first AUSTSWIM ticket under the instructions of Jenny Verol, who was a terrific swimming teacher in the NT.

Anita spent many hours working with the Asthma Foundation, teaching kids with severe asthma how to swim to alleviate their symptoms. As part of this program she was encouraged to move into the area of teaching children with a disability to swim. Anita worked extensively with kids with cerebral palsy and deaf children.

Anita would go to the rehabilitation pool at Royal Darwin Hospital on Saturday morning, where she would find Wayne, who taught her how to work with cerebral palsy kids to give them the freedom in the water that they do not get on land. These children had no speech, but they were all beaming smiles during the classes. It was a humbling and fulfilling experience for Anita to help these children facilitate movement.

When Anita learned to teach deaf children to swim and gain water confidence she found it opened her to a new world of communication and understanding. She would train the older kids in competitive technique.

Anita has a good friend from her RAAF days, Heather Armanasco, who was heavily involved in the Brownie Guides. Heather would recruit Anita to assist the Brownie Guides on their camps and help the Guides get their swimming badges.

I will continue my contribution on Anita's life at another time, as it is extensive and well worth listening to.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak about some of the wonderful people in my electorate. I will start with mentioning a pride of lions, who live in the electorate of Goyder; they are called the Litchfield Lions. They are in their seventeenth year and are as handsome and beautiful as they are ferocious. They are a dedicated small group, and they do wonderful things for our community.

There are only 10 of them at the moment, but they are always interested in new members and people to help with fundraising and community services. The Litchfield Lions do all sorts of things, providing food and services to many community events. It generally starts at the beginning of the year with Australia Day activities at Lakeview Hall at Freds Pass where they not only provide refreshments, but also make a massive map of Australia with strawberry and chocolate lamingtons. During the ceremony they guard the cake because lots of little fingers want to nick Tasmania and the rural areas at the Top End.

They do a wonderful job and it is much appreciated. They are the main coordinators, in association with the Litchfield Council and me, of Anzac Day at Humpty Doo Village Green. Paul Wenbourne is one of the main coordinators for the Lions and he does a wonderful job, as does Trish O'Hehir in my office, of setting the program, ordering the (inaudible) party, refreshments on the day, the person who sings the National Anthem and generally making the day the success that it is. We thank them for that.

It is a memorable occasion. It seems to get bigger and bigger, as it fills the Village Green hall, around 300 to 500 people.

The Friends of Fogg Dam have a field day every second year. They had it this year in April. The Litchfield Lions provide a sausage trailer and refreshments for the lovely people there. The minister for Environment was there. It is a really lovely day. They do such a good job, the Friends of Fogg Dam—Gerry Hemple and Heather Bolton. Well done to them, and thank you to the Litchfield Lions.

About three years ago I introduced an activity into the rural area, which is the blessing of the animals to commemorate the feast of St Francis, the patron saint of animals, amongst other things. We hold that at the Anglican church in Bees Creek. I asked the Lions if they would provide refreshments, which they were happy to do. They volunteer and do things of that nature; it is wonderful. They have helped at McMinns Lagoon Reserve, when there have been activities and field days, by providing refreshments and contributing to the activities.

Lions Clubs around the Top End provide student awards to all the rural schools. I have seen them at Bees Creek, Humpty Doo, Howard Springs and the Lutheran school. They probably do other schools as well. Joe Postle is often at those schools, presenting the awards. Congratulations and thank you for supporting our students and letting them know what service groups are all about.

Who could go past the Lions Christmas cakes every year? We have them in our office, as I am sure other members do. It was really good when they came up with the little \$2 Christmas cakes, which are perfect for a cup of tea in the morning. They bring them in before the Christmas period and we sell out of them. Those little cakes are really popular. Surprisingly, a lot of fellas like them.

They have very nice fruit cakes and plum pudding as well—delicious. They deliver those cakes as a fundraiser and we sell them; it is really good. And you cannot forget the Lions mints; they are good to have in your car when you need a bit of a pick-me-up—a sugar hit.

I pay tribute to the pride of lions in the Litchfield and Goyder area because they do a wonderful job. It is voluntary work, and they are a small band, so congratulations to Glen and Robyn McLeod. You are legends. You are always there and we can rely upon you. Paul Wenbourne and Joe Postle, who is the president, as well as Ken Mackaloon, Judy and Trevor Smart, Jan and Doug Evans, and Chris. Thank you, Lions, for everything you do for the rural area. It is much appreciated not only by me, but everyone who lives in and visits the rural area.

I pay tribute to a young fella by the name of David Smith. David does not live in the rural area; he and his family live in Katherine. Badger and Natalie Smith are his parents. He comes up regularly to ride his bike at the Acacia Hills Motocross Association area. A few weeks ago he was presented with a fancy bike to help him improve his riding. He has some disabilities, so they gave him a new motocross bike and some riding safety gear so he can continue to enjoy what he does.

The Acacia Hills Motocross Association and NT Government helped with supporting this young fella. The outfit he has been decked out with—(inaudible) designed the plastics, Holeshot Kawasaki provided the safety gear, and Cyclone Motorcycles located an appropriate bike and set it up specifically for David.

The rider education and safety awareness that Acacia Hills Motocross promotes very strongly is a key part of training riders in motocross. Stuart Coleman, the president, is a wonderful promoter of getting young people involved in riding and doing it safely. The association does its best to support the development of riders, particularly young riders like David.

The secretary of the association, Craig Stafford, achieved another grant to buy two more bikes with safety gear for special needs riders to have a go at riding, because it is the outdoors and every young person likes riding a motorbike—girls too. It is a great club in Acacia Hills. Stuart and Maureen Coleman are wonderful promoters. They are forever trying to get community benefit grants to improve the facilities so young people, and not so young people, can have a lovely time there. Everyone enjoys the sport, and the club is getting involved with other activities.

Badger and Natalie Smith, David's parents, acknowledge the support of the Acacia Hills people and thank them for the confidence in their son. Whilst David may not reach the dizzying heights of world champion, he enjoys his training sessions with Sebastian Tortelli and has his own interpretation of where he wants to go in life. He will go places; I have met the young fella. He enjoys every race and goes to all the training sessions.

We had the bike and safety gear presented outside my office at Coolalinga shops. It was a lovely morning. This young fella had such a big smile. It is a fancy bike, along with the helmet, jacket, pants and boots.

To all the people at the Acacia Hills Motocross Association, well done. I hope you enjoy all the happiness you deserve.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, when I was looking at my list of things I have attended and people I want to acknowledge formally in the *Hansard*—what a wonderful job we have, because it is so diverse.

I went to the graduation of a biomedical engineering technician at the hospital. Malcolm Ross had finished his apprenticeship. It was great to attend his graduation.

For those who do not know, biomedical engineers repair and service medical equipment, which is essential. Medical Equipment Management, or MEM, the company Malcolm works for, covers from Alice Springs to Elliott, servicing all the equipment moving around a hospital such as drip monitors and blood pressure monitors. It is an extraordinary job.

I want to talk about Malcolm's graduation because an apprenticeship in Alice Springs is a great thing. We need firms to take on apprentices. I thank the company as well as Alice Springs Hospital, with whom MEM has a contract. It was not a straightforward process for Malcolm because of changes at CDU, but the company supported him to finish the apprenticeship. Well done, Malcolm. We are pleased to have you as part of our community and doing such an important job.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also congratulate an organisation that I know is close to your heart, the Alice Springs Turf Club, for yet another successful Cup Carnival. I was fortunate this year to attend Ladies Day as well as the Yearling Auction, which was quite an extraordinary cocktail event. I had never been to a cocktail event with horses being sold, but it was a fantastic evening. I congratulate the board, but it was also great to see Acting CEO Des Friedrich there. It has been a difficult time over the last 12 months, but it is great having Des back in charge. Congratulations to everyone. I hope people came out winners through the racing.

I also acknowledge that I attended Portrait of a Senior Territorian, and it was the first time it was held in Alice Springs. It was a fantastic art event. There were 33 works in all. The judges, Russell Goldflam, Therese Ritchie and the very lovely Marlene Rubuntja, who is a fantastic artist, must have had a hard time. Marlene was the first winner of the Vincent Lingiari art award, and that work sits in my office; I have the pleasure of looking at it every day. Those three judges really did have a tough job.

I congratulate Henry Smith, who was the winner with his portrait of Craig San Rock, who is a very distinctive figure in Alice Springs. It was a wonderful event. It was absolutely packed; there were so many people there. I thank Minister Moss and her department for having the award ceremony in Alice Springs for the first time. I also acknowledge the work of Dr Mark Kriess at Araluen, who has been doing some really great work out there.

On my travels I also managed to get to Braitling Childcare. I first went to Braitling Childcare as a candidate, and one of the issues that was raised with me prior to the election was the very sad state of its garden and play area for kids. It was not very well serviced, had ageing astro-turf and there were significant issues with the amount of knocks and bumps kids were having. I was very pleased to go out there to see the fantastic work of Ruth Wilson and her hard working team. There is a new garden through the support of community grants through the NT Government and the Alice Springs Council.

It is a fantastic experience. It has water play, a garden, sensory areas for the kids and lots of proper shade. The difference was remarkable. Well done to the team with the design. A local garden design company was responsible for the work and that needs to be acknowledged. The difference it makes to kids to have a great environment like that cannot be underestimated.

Lastly, I acknowledge that on Saturday there will be Harmony Day in Alice Springs. I am really looking forward to attending the event, and I thank the Multicultural Association of Central Australia for putting it on. I am very proud to be minister of multicultural affairs. I acknowledge my assistant minister, the Member for Sanderson, who works very hard in Darwin to make sure we have a presence at multicultural events across Darwin. This government values our multicultural communities.

I have been to some fantastic events in Alice Springs recently. I was very pleased to go to the (inaudible) community celebration for Vishu and Easter. There were some amazing dances, and people travelled from Tennant Creek to attend the event. It really was a marvellous event. I felt very spoiled and I had an amazing curry.

I also attended the Indian community cricket match. The Alice Springs Indian Community Cricket Club has been going for a while. They had 44 players last Sunday on a limited round of overs. The Eastside Daredevils, the Gillen Nightriders and the Araluen Super Lions played it out. I understand that the Gillen

Nightriders were quite dominant. They will be playing again this Sunday. I thank John-Paul Cyrus for inviting me. It was a great multicultural event. There were players from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as well as several Australian born players. It is a great event that pulls people together.

These are the sort of events that make a difference to community and are the foundations of building ties and experiences with people. Our multicultural communities are strong participants in our community as a whole, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to attend such a broad range of events. It is a fantastic job, being the Member for Braitling, and I thank you for the opportunity to talk about it.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I will put on public record some wishes for Mother's Day this Sunday 14 May. It is a fantastic day, once a year, in which we get to celebrate our wonderful mums, mother figures and carers who provide the love and support each and every child deserves, needs and wants.

I send out a happy Mother's Day wish to all mothers this Sunday: to the mums who get to spend time with their children and the mums who do not; to the mums who never got to hold their children; to the single dads pulling double duty; to the mums who are no longer with us; and to the expectant mums.

I have the best mum in the world. My mum left home at a young age in search of a better life. This is the story of many of our mums. She moved to Adelaide to further her education, where she met my father. They relocated to Katherine, and she created a beautiful home life there. Not only did she raise three children, but she worked full-time while doing that and supported my dad along the way.

I still question how she managed to do that and keep her sanity, but she has done a fantastic job. My mum is my number one supporter. She is my karaoke partner, and she is the queen of our family.

I wanted to take the time this evening to thank my mum for teaching me how to be a good woman, to encourage me to reach for the stars and for having my back through thick and thin. Happy Mother's Day, mum; love you.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is great to hear Around the Grounds from Alice Springs from the Member for Braitling. There should be more of it.

On Friday 21 April, the Group Training Northern Territory, known as GTNT, awards night was held at the Beachside Pavilion at Skycity Casino. The award night recognises the success and achievements of our Territory's fantastic apprentices, trainees, supervisors and host businesses from across the Northern Territory.

GTNT is a Territory-wide company with offices in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. GTNT's workforce development strategy is designed to recruit and enhance workforce capabilities to ensure greater staff retention and increased productivity through their workplace planning and development.

I worked in the Department of Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs for over 14 years. While I was there I was fortunate enough to host a number of great young trainees and apprentices, some full-time and some school based. These included great young Territorians like Susanne, Rae-Anne, Cylest, Glennon, Luke, Erandi, Jessica, Crystal, and the list goes on, for over 10 years.

I was proud of all of the young apprentices and trainees, as they would win awards each year for their hard work in the field of alcohol and other drugs. The apprentices even nominated me for supervisor awards over the years, which was an honourable thing to do and something that was in respect of our great working partnership.

Our training team also won Northern Territory and national awards in Sydney for the training and workforce development programs delivered to health and frontline workers.

Most importantly, this year I was extremely proud that another one of our apprentices, who I supervised and worked with over many years, won the prestigious GTNT 2017 Indigenous Apprentice of the Year Award. This person is Miss Alannah Neave, who was always a winner in the eyes of our team, and we could not be prouder of her.

Allanah commenced her school-based apprenticeship while she studied at Taminmin College, then completed her schooling and was employed in Territory Health as a full-time apprentice with the Alcohol

and Other Drugs program. Allanah continued to work very hard to complete her qualifications and always showed lots of initiative by always looking for extra work and undertaking different work placements. Allanah would even spend her own time working in services to support frontline and treatment services, including placements at the sobering up shelters.

Allanah was always supportive of others, would study and work hard and be the first to help out, including supporting and supervising our other trainees. Allanah Neave, you are an inspiration to all of us, and I know you will go far in any professional employment you wish to pursue. I am very honoured to have been part of your training and apprenticeship development. Congratulations on your award for the GTNT Indigenous Apprentice of the Year 2017, which is highly deserved.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will express some of my concerns on the changes being proposed by the federal Liberal government to the Australian citizenship laws and 457 visas.

The sweeping changes announced recently by Prime Minister Turnbull have caused some very unnecessary upset amongst our local migrant and refugee communities. A couple of weeks ago the Member for Wanguri and I attended the Easter Vishu celebrations of the local Mulayli community at the Filipino Club. Its members were so upset that they asked the Member for Wanguri to make some assurances during her welcome speech. At that time they should have been celebrating, but their focus had been drawn to this very contentious issue.

Many migrants and refugees who have been in Australia for a long period of time and are already permanent residents, looking forward to imminently becoming citizens within the near future, now have had the goal posts moved. They now have to wait up to another three years of being a permanent resident to be able to apply. In some cases it is up to four years.

The Coalition is yet to pass the changes through parliament, but anyone applying for citizenship today will be subject to the new rules. That is hardly fair. There are also great concerns about the more stringent English language tests for reading, writing and listening. There is no doubt that an understanding of and ability to speak English is a vital tool for integration into broader Australian society.

Learning to write English to a standard, as many Australians would fail, is, for some, a bridge too far. The new test is likely to ask questions about an applicant's employment history, whether their spouse is attending English lessons and whether their children are attending school.

There is a definite need for people choosing to make a life in Australia to participate in our community. There is no question about that. But there is a vast difference between being able to communicate in English, which is a clear requirement, and being able to sit an English language test.

Most of the refugee and migrant families I speak with are working hard to get ahead in a country they already consider to be their home. Most families are working long hours, often on low wages, and the very thought of having to enrol in an English language class during the very small window of their down time is a bridge too far.

For anyone to access grants and financial support, they must be an Australian citizen. People who have been saving to buy their home, or who now find themselves unemployed due to circumstances beyond their control, or those looking to put down permanent roots, have to wait. Several of them are feeling very slighted. They feel that after working hard towards being a citizen in a place they now call home the goal post has been moved, and they feel disenfranchised.

This is not what Australia and the Territory are about. There is a real risk now that there will be two tiers of migrants; those from an English speaking background can pass a new stringent test, but then there will be those who fail. Under the new proposals if you fail three times you cannot apply again. You are doomed to a future of only ever being a permanent resident.

Several people I have spoken to have said under these circumstances they may return to their country of origin and so much for wanting to increase our population locally. In terms of the extension of time, now having to be a permanent resident for some four years instead of one, this will doubly impact on those who enter on temporary work or humanitarian visas as they will no longer be able to count their time as a temporary resident towards the resident requirement for citizenship.

For refugees, many are now on temporary protection visas and they will have to wait a lot longer to attain the important sign of acceptance by Australia as their new and safe home, a place they are meant to feel welcomed.

In terms of 457 visas, it is clear that in the Northern Territory the 457 workforce is integral. We have some very specific skills. If we want to continue to grow our restaurant industry—often times chefs have specific skills we do not have locally. We will not be able to get those people here anymore, and it will have a very detrimental effect on our hospitality and tourism industries.

So much for the ongoing development of the north. We only heard last week about our population decline and the need to keep people in the Territory. We would hope that some of those who come on 457 visas will stay, and so will their families, well into the future.

I believe what is proposed is wrong. Last week I gladly co-signed a letter to the Prime Minister, with the Member for Wanguri, letting him know that the proposed changes are causing real anxiety in our local multicultural community groups.

It seems to me that the many are being punished due to the actions of a few. I truly believe that a test of a person's value is in their actions, not in what they can write or their knowledge of what it is to be Australian. I urge the federal government to think very carefully about the proposed changes and ensure that any changes that are made are properly communicated to our vast and valued multicultural community so that they can continue to come to the Territory and contribute to our rich and diverse community. They truly reflect a big part of who we are.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable members. It is always good to hear the adjournments at the end of the night and the personal stories. I also take this opportunity to remind members who will be in the Top End over the weekend that we have the Freds Pass Show, and I urge you to please look at the animal nursery because you will not be disappointed. Giddy on up to Freds Pass Show. I will not continue because I know there are a few of you who want to trot on out of here.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.