

CONTENTS

VISITORS	1973
Rosebery Middle School.....	1973
SPEAKER'S STATEMENT	1973
Australian Red Cross Publication	1973
MOTION.....	1973
Membership of Privileges Committee	1973
ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION BILL.....	1973
(Serial 25)	1973
VISITORS	1978
Rosebery Middle School.....	1978
MOTION.....	1992
Whole of Parliament Approach to Growing the Population of the Northern Territory	1992
MOTION.....	2013
Government Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry	2013
MOTION.....	2023
NT Horticulture and Hospitality Industries	2023
PAPERS TABLED.....	2030
Travel Report – Member for Araluen	2030
ADJOURNMENT	2030

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Rosebery Middle School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 7 students from Rosebery Middle School, accompanied by their teachers. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Australian Red Cross Publication

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I was delighted to co-host a function with the Minister for Health last night for the Australian Red Cross to launch in the Northern Territory the handbook *Promoting respect for international humanitarian law*.

As members were not able to attend the function due to the Legislative Assembly sittings, I have asked that a copy of the publication be placed on members' desks. In today's complex international landscape it is important that parliamentarians consider international humanitarian law principles in order to protect civilians and maintain a semblance of humanity in the midst of armed conflict.

MOTION
Membership of Privileges Committee

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, we outlined yesterday the need for this to occur. It was quite a simple reason. With the referral to Privileges Committee by the PAC Chair, the Member for Wanguri, as the minister responsible for that portfolio, felt it would be best that she be discharged from that committee to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

I move that pursuant to Standing Order 179 the Assembly discharge the Member for Wanguri from the Committee of Privileges and appoint the Member for Drysdale to the Committee of Privileges.

It is fairly straightforward and I am happy to respond to any questions in my closing statements if any other members speak and raise questions.

Motion agreed to.

ALCOHOL HARM REDUCTION BILL
(Serial 25)

Continued from 15 August 2017.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, we have been looking forward to the Banned Drinker Register Mark II since the Labor Party came to government almost 12 months ago.

I am one of the few people in this room who was around during the Banned Drinker Register Mark I. My memory of how that version functioned is very clear. It is interesting how the government is portraying this revised, reintroduced alcohol management strategy. In lieu of the fact we have a review in place looking at various other strategies that might work in the Northern Territory, this decision was made to reintroduce the Banned Drinker Register whilst they were in opposition, as was the decision to scrap alcohol mandatory treatment. Why have a review when, for the most part, these decisions have been made?

There is the decision to 'ban the Dan', Dan Murphy's, from coming to the Northern Territory by introducing legislation to restrict the floor area allowed for any takeaway liquor outlet. Many decisions have been made by this government without any evidence, consultation or the need for a review. So, why even have a review?

I draw the attention of the House to this document. Does anyone recognise this document? The Speaker is saying yes, but I cannot see too many nods from government, which does not surprise me at all.

This is a document called *Evaluation of the Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Program*, which was made public in January this year. I doubt anyone from the government ranks has read this document. Because this

government made the decision to scrap alcohol mandatory treatment—they have not even bothered to read it. Does anyone know how many recommendations are in this report? No. How many pages are in this document? I do not hear any responses from government members because they simply do not know; they have not read it.

Yesterday I listened to people who were not around during the time of the alcohol mandatory treatment program when it was functioning and they seemed to speak as an authority on alcohol mandatory treatment when, in fact, they are not. I heard the Member for Katherine, who likes to remain vocal throughout anyone's speech in parliament, talk with some authority about alcohol mandatory treatment. I am very surprised that she even recognises the front cover of this document, as did the Member for Braintree.

People seem to think they know what is inside this document. The rhetoric and narrative of the government regarding the assessment of alcohol mandatory treatment is a fabrication, because what they say about what is in this document is simply not true. This is an evaluation, like any evaluation; it is a review and critique of a government project, initiative and strategy to try to address alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. Like any review or critique, you will find there are a lot of criticisms and recommendations as to how to improve this initiative.

What you will not find in this review of alcohol mandatory treatment is anywhere stating that it should be scrapped or abolished, that it was a waste of time, that it did not help anyone or that it was a complete waste of resources. That is not what is inside this document. If you care to read it, government members, or anyone in the Chamber for that matter, you will find that it looks closely at the pros and cons of what worked and what did not work. There are 28 recommendations in this report and they all give a pathway forward as to how alcohol mandatory treatment in the Northern Territory could have been improved and worked on.

This government did not use evidence and did not look at this document. It decided, just as the CLP government did when I was involved in that party—we decided to scrap the BDR just as you have decided to scrap alcohol mandatory treatment. You criticised us for doing exactly what you have done with alcohol mandatory treatment. You criticised us for not looking at the evidence, for making a political decision about something that had not been tried and tested—which was true; we did that.

I have said many times in this House that I think we might have had it wrong. We certainly had it wrong in the respect that we did not have anything to replace it with. We scrapped the Banned Drinker Register and less than 12 months later we introduced alcohol mandatory treatment. This government has scrapped alcohol mandatory treatment without consideration, without reading the evaluation and without understanding what happened and who it benefited. Government members still maintain their high moral ground, saying they use evidence and consult, and all the rest of it, which is rubbish.

We are all here, to some extent, to play out the politics of being in government—to rewrite history to suit yourselves, and you have done that. I am surprised, I thought better of you. I, for one, will not pretend that what you have fed to the community of the Northern Territory is anywhere near accurate.

Hypocritically, and ironically, there is no evidence to support the reintroduction of the Banned Drinker Register. I gave the Minister for Health a number of written questions approximately six weeks ago. One of them was, 'What evidence do you have that the Banned Drinker Register will be more effective than other strategies that have been used in the Northern Territory to reduce the supply and demand for alcohol?' Her response to my question was:

The previous Government removed the Banned Drinker Register before a formal evaluation could be conducted. Based on the anecdotal evidence from Police, health practitioners, takeaway outlets and members of the community, the Banned Drinker Register is considered to be an effective supply reduction measure.

There is no evidence to support the reintroduction of the Banned Drinker Register. This document is on the Legislative Assembly's website. If you go to Parliamentary Business then Written Questions, you can read for yourself this poor attempt at trying to legitimise the reintroduction of the Banned Drinker Register. The government did not review or evaluate the Banned Drinker Register.

Let us look at the history. The government introduced the Banned Drinker Register 12 months before the 2012 election. It had 11 years to get its act together to bring in the BDR Mark I. Labor brought it in 12 months before it was kicked out. Everyone knew Labor's time was up. The political cycle was such that Labor had done its job and it was time for a change of government.

Labor brought in its key alcohol management strategy 12 months before the inevitable happened. It then was voted out—and they wonder why it was not well received or evaluated by the next government.

Look at yourself for a moment; you are contradicting yourself in regard to an evidence-based approach to alcohol strategies. You are contradicting yourself in regard to consultation and allowing people to be a part of it. Another question I asked was, 'What community consultation have you done in preparation for the implementation of the BDR in 2017?' All I got back was one sentence saying:

Key stakeholders have been consulted and provided input into the development of the Banned Drinker Register.

No detail and no list of who these key stakeholders might be. Put your hands up if you have been consulted. I certainly was not aware of any consultation process.

The government has come back with this revised Mark II of the Banned Drinker Register, but it does not appear to be much different from the original Banned Drinker Register. I had a briefing last week with several Health department officials, who were very helpful. I learned a number of things which were of interest to me.

Can I preface these comments by saying I am not necessarily against the Banned Drinker Register. I am having trouble with the insincerity of this government in the way it is portraying this reintroduction of the BDR. You cannot rewrite history when there are people like me, the Member for Nelson and others, who have been around a bit longer than most of you and can remember exactly what happened and have nothing to lose by being fairly frank and honest about it.

I know you are in government, and it is important to get your message right and to try to get people on board. There were a hell of a lot of people throughout the Northern Territory who were extremely critical of the Banned Drinker Register. You are trying to win the hearts and minds of Territorians. You are trying to get them feeling okay about this impost that will be placed on them; that is, the fact they will have to produce identification every time they would like to buy a bottle of whatever they choose from alcohol takeaway outlets.

I had to laugh last week at the Minister for Territory Families—giving identification for free. What a humble gesture, providing free identification to people who do not have it because of the upcoming BDR and their otherwise inability to access alcohol. I thought it was very humble, very generous of the minister, and conducive to making sure the BDR is as effective as possible.

But do not make out you are doing them a favour. You are putting an impost on them. You are saying, 'You have to get ID to get your grog—we will give you the ID for free, but do not thank me. It is ok; I am just a great person.'

The insincerity continues. I will go back to the alcohol mandatory treatment program. One thing that was not mentioned by any of the speakers I listened to intently yesterday with great interest—their misinformed and rather delusional comments on certain things. Page three of the executive summary of the alcohol mandatory treatment evaluation says:

The comprehensive assessment for people who enter AMT was valuable, and for some people, AMT did have health and social well-being benefits—at least in the short-term. This included receiving treatment for immediate health concerns such as dental care, and the management of existing conditions such as diabetes and asthma, as well as an opportunity to be supported to reconnect with their family and community. However, there was no statistically significant difference between people who had had a Mandatory Residential Treatment Order and no treatment in terms of Emergency Department presentations and hospital admissions.

The alcohol mandatory treatment program was not a resounding success on all measures, but it helped the most disadvantaged people in the Northern Territory, who were the most effected by alcohol in our community—homeless people and the sickest people in our community. My question to the Minister for Health, who wants to interject and have her say again—she had her say before and I am sure she will have her say in the future—is, what will you do to do to help all those homeless, disadvantaged, alcohol-affected people in our community, who were assisted over the last three years by alcohol mandatory treatment?

You are a Labor government; you say you are for the people, the most disenfranchised and disadvantaged in society. What will you do for them? In my briefing no one told me what you will do. In fact, in my briefing by the departmental officials I was told there is no extra funding available for alcohol treatment services

throughout the Northern Territory, including for the non-government sector. I wrote it down. I can see you looking at your advisers, saying, 'Is that what I said?' That is what I was told.

There is no additional funding for alcohol and other drug services throughout the Territory. That is what I was informed by the three officials who briefed me last Thursday.

Ms Fyles: Friday, after I called you.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs LAMBLEY: Last week—let us not split straws.

My point is that alcohol mandatory treatment costs a lot of money. It was a huge investment, so what are you doing with all the savings you are making from alcohol mandatory treatment?

Ms Fyles: Three times more than the NGO sector.

Mrs LAMBLEY: How much is this costing health, minister? You seem to want to scream across the Chamber now, but where is this information? How much are you saving by scrapping alcohol mandatory treatment? How much is it costing to establish the Banned Drinker Register? How much will it cost to operate the Banned Drinker Register? Where has all the money gone?

On top of that you have the enormous investment made by the former government into the infrastructure of providing alcohol mandatory treatment. Where has all that gone? What will happen to all that?

The former gave over a \$1m worth of funding to establish the infrastructure to provide alcohol rehabilitation at CAAAPU. What is happening to all those dongas and demountables and the infrastructure that was built? A beautiful precinct was created and now all those beds—half of CAAAPU—is now defunct. It is obsolete, superfluous and has no use whatsoever. It will now be mothballed or repurposed by the government. What does that mean? What will you do with it all?

We have lost about 40 alcohol rehabilitation beds in Alice Springs. Do the people of Alice Springs know that? No, they do not. You have reduced alcohol rehabilitation by about 60% in Alice Springs, if not more. Is that good news for the town? The fact these poor, disadvantaged, totally afflicted people have nowhere to go. They will be put out on the street like they were before AMT was introduced. What will happen to them and what will you do with all these wonderful facilities that were set up to help them?

There are many questions that need to be answered, and I am not satisfied that this government has provided anywhere near the amount of explanation that is required. I listened to the Health minister on the radio yesterday morning and she could not answer some of the basic questions the presenter was asking her.

Even if you are on the Banned Drinker Register you can still go to a pub and have a beer over the counter. Does that mean that the publican providing alcohol to the person on the BDR—is that secondary sale? Will they get fined or penalised for serving the person across the bar because they are providing them with alcohol?

Let us get some answers to these basic questions. How will this work? You have been in government for 12 months and you cannot get your act together to reformulate the committee structure of parliament. It seems to be such an onerous and difficult task that you have to refer it here, there and everywhere. Now we have the BDR and there are more questions than answers.

I have a list of questions that I sat down and wrote at five o'clock this morning. I thought, 'For God's sake. I am Joe Bloggs sitting in Alice Springs. I do not know the answer to these questions.'

Mr Paech: You are a member of parliament. You should ask. Go straight to the minister and ask on behalf of your constituents.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am a member of parliament, so I should know the answers to the questions. The issue is, Member for Namatjira—and you have already had your turn, so you can be quiet and respectful—if I do not know the answers to these questions, then people sitting in suburbia across the Territory, or in remote communities, have no hope of understanding how the Banned Drinker Register works.

The other thing I found out, Member for Namatjira, is that there will be people on the BDR from 1 September who will not even know they are on it. They will not know. I was told that in the briefing I had last week. It was confirmed that people will not know they are on the BDR because they may not receive a letter; they may not get the information that may or may not be sent to them. It is all very airy fairy and unclear. I was told there will be people on the BDR who do not know they are on it. Is that good practice? Is it good government? No, it is not. It is shoddy and tardy. After 12 months in government, you should be doing a lot better job. But here we go. The Banned Drinker Register Mark II.

I would like to say I will be supporting it, but I will not, because I have one condition. I am not sure my condition will be met, having listened to the Chief Minister in Question Time yesterday. I asked him to guarantee that he will not reduce or scrap the POSIs, TBLs, police outside of bottle shops, and he was unable to reassure me and the people of Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek of that. He was able to say that the BDR would be permanent, but he was not able to say the temporary beat locations would be permanent too.

He said police might have to go to training or have other things on, and he cannot assure or guarantee that the TBLs will remain. That is not good enough, because the people of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine—you can shake your head, Member for Katherine, but you will not be here in three years' time if the TBLs get scrapped.

Ms Nelson: How many times do we have to say it? It is an operational decision by police, not the Chief Minister.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You had your turn, too, so you can be respectful and quiet and listen to me now.

I will not vote in favour of the BDR unless there is an ironclad guarantee that the Chief Minister, the so-called minister for Police—he is in charge of the police force but cannot seem to get his head around the fact that he can direct the police to do certain things if he wants. He seems to think the police can decide for themselves regarding these political policy issues. It is strange; I have never come across that before.

Until the people of Alice Springs have an ironclad guarantee that the TBLs will remain, at least the people in my electorate of Araluen, I suggest they will not be in favour of the BDR either.

This has been a fascinating process, listening to the government sell what is a rehashed, pretty much failed strategy from four or five years ago. Why will it work this time? I am not convinced. Did it stop anyone from drinking in 2011 and 2012? Not from my perspective. It had big, gaping holes in it. It was well intended. It had potential to make a difference, and it made a difference temporarily, particularly in places like Darwin where there are not many other alcohol reduction strategies in place. But in places like Alice Springs, where people are used to the imposition of alcohol restrictions and strategies, drinkers are very savvy and they quickly found a way around the BDR in 2011–12.

I heard people yesterday trying to minimise the secondary sale of alcohol. 'Oh, no, it will not be such a problem,' said the Chief Minister, 'We will get onto that. We will try to address that. It will not be such a big problem this time.' Why will it not be a big problem this time?

In my briefing last week, I was told that the police were addressing it. The burden of proof was on the police to possibly see people passing alcohol to someone on the BDR in order to prove that this secondary supply of alcohol is happening. This process of proving secondary supply is quite subjective and very difficult to do.

I do not remember too many people in 2011–12 being done for secondary supply of alcohol, apart from grog runners. The typical scenario we are all aware of is where you have family groups in which someone is on the BDR and they go home or down to the creek, or wherever alcohol is being passed around. It is very difficult for someone to say, 'I am sorry, Robyn, but you are on the BDR, so we will not allow you to have a can of beer', or whatever it is. It is very difficult in certain social situations. I am alluding to Aboriginal families where it is perfectly acceptable to share whatever you have in food and beverages.

The onus, once again, goes back onto family members not to supply alcohol to their friends and relatives on the BDR. That is a big responsibility to put on people. They could be fined \$3000. My husband could be fined \$3000 for giving me alcohol if I am on the BDR. That is a big impost. It is a lot of money for people on low incomes. They could possibly go to gaol, I assume, if they do not pay the fine. There are punitive aspects to the Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill.

I was given this Banned Drinker Register model, which shows the pathways people who come to the attention of the authorities or the Banned Drinker Register can follow. What intrigued me more than anything is that,

at a point in this pathway, if you do not accept therapeutic support then there is a punitive measure, which is that it could be determined that you remain on the Banned Drinker Register.

For all the criticism saying the alcohol mandatory treatment was punitive and that people did not have a choice, there are aspects of what you are proposing which put an impost or punishment on people for not doing as you prescribe. I find that hypocritical.

My conclusion is that the BDR Mark II is pretty much the same as the BDR Mark I. I am very disappointed that government members have not conducted themselves the way they said they would when in opposition. They have not used an evidence base to inform their decisions and they made decisions about alcohol strategies before the review.

The only reason I can imagine them wanting this review is to collect the submissions from all the people across the country, which I heard the Minister for Health say we have, and then compile an argument for a floor price in the Northern Territory. That is where we are going; I can see very clearly that we will have an introduction of a floor price in the Northern Territory. The only people that serves are the alcohol outlets because they will get more money for their product if the government decides to move from a volumetric tax, which it said it was interested in during the prelude to the election, and move on to a floor price. I would be surprised if it does not.

That leads me to the article in the *NT News* yesterday. Was that not a fascinating revelation! It was a spotlight into the internal dynamics of the new, one-year-old, Labor government. Apart from the dysfunctional dynamics, according to the article, I was intrigued to read that a minister has also lashed out at the Gunner government's move to legislate the takeaway alcohol floor size restrictions that banned Dan Murphy's from the Northern Territory, calling it:

... a political stunt to protect Labor's pre-election backroom deal with the Australian Hotels Association.

That has been discussed in this Chamber before. The allegation that the decision to ban was precipitated by a deal done with this government and the AHA, which is, I think you could say, corruption. I am not sure. But that allegation, if it is true and if there is any substance to it, would be called corruption.

I am also interested to hear that the Chief Minister has decided that anyone who leaks to the media from his team will be thrown out on their ear. I cannot see anyone missing this morning, so does the Chief Minister not know who the leaker is? I think everyone else does.

Chief Minister, if you are sincere in your comments, and I assume you are, then grow some courage and do what you say you will do. Come clean about the backroom deal that was done with the Australian Hotels Association, because that is a game changer. This alone is casting an aspersion across the government in regard to the authenticity and genuineness behind any of your alcohol strategies.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The minister has run out of time.

Madam SPEAKER: I was watching the other clock. My apologies. Yes, the time has expired. We will have to check that clock later.

VISITORS
Rosebery Middle School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of some students from Rosebery Middle School, accompanied by their teachers. Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also advise of the presence in the gallery of the parents of the Member for Arnhem, Didamain and Mick Uiibo. Keep an eye on your daughter.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, I support the Attorney-General and Health minister in the passage of the Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill.

I acknowledge the minister yesterday morning, in a brief to Caucus, thanking the hard-working departmental officials and the staff of the ministerial office, who have worked tirelessly in supporting the most vulnerable Territorians by ensuring this legislation gets back to the House.

I am very proud to say we are debating the passage of this very important law, which once again is being twisted by the conservatives. I have a bit of history in this place as well. I was a Caucus member and minister in the Henderson Labor government, which designed the Enough is Enough alcohol policy.

What the conservatives in the House—who were part of that plan and election strategy, and then the government that did the damage—managed to twist is that they only wanted to talk about a Banned Drinker Register when, essentially, the alcohol policy incorporates a suite of initiatives to address alcohol misuse in our community.

You speak about therapeutic rehabilitation in the Enough is Enough policy, and we talk about it in the Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill. You talk about a Banned Drinker Register that will address the majority of alcohol misuse, which represents 70% of alcohol sold as takeaway alcohol in the Northern Territory. Then you take the next level, which will occur when problem drinkers who do not address their offending behaviour will incur 70% income quarantining. This suite of initiatives regarding a register addressing secondary supply, therapeutic rehabilitation and the very drastic measure of income quarantining for problem drinkers who refuse to address their offending behaviour, becomes the composite policy that is being debated today.

Once again, the Member for Araluen has led a conservative twist to try to tell Territorians that this is the only measure in the bill and that it is full of holes. It is wrong and misleading to continue that style of debate in the House and with Territorians.

Member for Araluen, I can give you a bit of a history lesson if you want to talk about evidence. Let us look at mandatory alcohol treatment under the CLP. Let us first of all look at the chronology. The Enough is Enough suite of alcohol reforms acknowledged internationally, and which was introduced by a Labor government, was scrapped on the Sunday after the election. There was a lot of evidence in that decision.

When an email from the Leader of the Opposition at that time circulated to takeaway alcohol outlets telling them that they will not be prosecuted if they sell alcohol—70% of alcohol sales across the Northern Territory if ID is not shown. I have a couple of anecdotes that are on the public record about a function I attended on that Sunday which was part of the Desert Harmony Festival. I had extremely intoxicated people coming to me and thanking me for the decision that was made whereby they no longer need to conform to the protocols of showing ID and the suite of legislation that accompanied it. It is on the public record if anyone wants to look at that story.

Let us go to the chronology that relates to evidence base. It was scrapped on the Sunday and then we went into a record year of assaults against persons, alcohol crime, abuse and family dysfunction, 12 months where crime statistics went through the roof, and those conservatives sat on this side of the House and continued to crow about what they had done, which essentially was a very powerful political election strategy to convince the people of the greater Darwin and Palmerston area that you do not need to show ID. 'You are not criminals and therefore we will scrap this.'

What happened in that chronology was the problem drinkers of the Northern Territory moved to the greater Darwin area and we saw a continuation of that dysfunction, crime and abuse right through the four years of the CLP government. I am on the public record in opposition speaking about that many times, providing the government with warnings, looking at those disastrous media headlines where Tennant Creek people were involved in major crimes in the greater Darwin area that related to alcohol abuse—as a local member, pleading with a government that was completely blind and deaf because it was a punitive outfit focused on self-interest. It had no policy or evidence and it was a disgrace.

In that four years they managed to appropriate over \$100m of Territory taxpayer money over four years, managing a chaotic policy that was not working.

If we want to talk about evidence-based—let us hone that into the Tennant Creek example. Under this policy they did nothing for Tennant Creek, but finally, with the lobbying from the community and local member they had to address the Tennant Creek situation. They came to town and they took over our sobering-up shelter. They took it off us. It was one of the early initiatives with night patrol in Tennant Creek, going back to the

early 1980s, to address problem drinkers to keep them out of the justice system, address their issues and try to get them back on track.

The CLP members rode into Tennant Creek on their big white stallion and took over our sobering-up shelter. We woke up the next day with no sobering-up shelter, no story, no plan—nothing. The minister at the time then appropriated over \$1m on security and built the biggest fence around our sobering up shelter. If you will lock up people for alcoholism, if you criminalise alcoholism, what do you do next? You build a big fence around the sobering-up shelter so people cannot get out. They spent over \$1m doing that.

There was another resonating effect which was most unfortunate. In conjunction with the Barkly Work Camp, a major initiative in addressing unacceptable Aboriginal incarceration rates, we created a transitional house and accommodation unit which supported people leaving the correctional services system. They were continuing their employment, continuing their rehabilitation and integration, and remaining in our community where they had been for about two years, in their sentencing, and then making those important decisions about returning to country or community, or staying in Tennant Creek, which one gentleman did. He continued to work at the Bridgestone tyre service. He fitted many tyres on the electorate vehicle for me. I always had great conversations with that gentleman, who came from Central Australia but decided to stay in Tennant Creek for a couple of years before he felt ready to return to his own country and community.

This transitional house became a victim of the mandatory alcohol treatment policy because it had to be taken over to provide a sobering-up shelter. It was taken off Corrections. It became a victim of this chaotic policy under the CLP government, and we lost another initiative in Tennant Creek. We lost our sobering-up shelter and we lost our transitional accommodation to reintegrate prisoners into the community. We then had a sobering-up shelter, but it could not cater for women. It could only cater for men, and the numbers were reduced. Our purpose-built sobering-up shelter had 16 beds. We had doubled the capacity of it because it had been an integral part of managing alcohol abuse in our town community.

This chaos kept reverberating down the line for the people of Tennant Creek and the Barkly. It gets better, because after 18 months and appropriating over \$3m—and I was advised at the time that there were five people in a program—the alcohol mandatory treatment centre in Tennant Creek was closed by the CLP government.

We are talking about an appropriation of about \$5m, 18 months in operation, delivered to a handful of people, and then was closed. There was no explanation given. The word from the minister was to send our people to Alice Springs. As the Member for Araluen just said, they put a lot of money towards developing CAAAPU in Alice Springs. We then had nothing. We lost our transitional accommodation for prisoners; our sobering-up shelter had been taken over; they had appropriated an enormous amount of money into this chaotic policy with no results and no evidence; we lost a nurse position at the hospital and a doctor who was there to provide medical intervention at early stages.

We lost jobs, infrastructure and momentum. That is just one case study across the Northern Territory. I will not go anywhere near the other examples that were continually relayed throughout the Northern Territory about a policy which was appropriating enormous amounts of money and was not delivering.

Naturally, in opposition we did a lot of work to put up a clear alternative, which is now passing through the House. The alternative is finally back.

I thank the minister and all those incredible public officials who have done the work to get it back. This is a suite of initiatives. Do not get caught up in that conservative jive about the BDR. The BDR is but one critical part of that.

As a minister in the previous Henderson Labor government, I had a lot to say at the Cabinet table because I was a 10-year veteran of Thirsty Thursday. I have to fess up. I was not living in Tennant Creek. In that decade I was in the bush, as I was over many decades. I had Wangli on the front line. He was my frontier researcher of alcohol policy in Tennant Creek. He used to regale me with the stories of what was the most creative exploitation of a local alcohol management policy you have ever heard of or seen.

It was completely innovative how problem drinkers exploited every level of the Thirsty Thursday program. They pushed it and pushed it. Tennant Creek had to live with this complete dysfunction over 10 years. You can read books about it, debate it and talk about it, but we lived with it. I took that knowledge to the Cabinet table and supplied it to the CLP.

You put your policy into action, scrapped the BDR in the urban centres of Palmerston and Darwin, where there are alcohol takeaway outlets on street corners and local shops, and you put police officers on bottle shops in Tennant Creek, and then our problem drinkers started to move north. Many went to gaol and many lives were ruined. I argued that for four years and the previous government refused to listen and accept.

We have lived in the chaos of problem drinkers in the greater Darwin area, who now will be seriously confronted with a new policy about regulation and management—a suite of initiatives, a register that will prevent anyone without photo ID from purchasing alcohol at a takeaway outlet. The register will then introduce a management plan for people who are placed on it through offending behaviour. It is an opportunity for therapeutic rehabilitation. But most importantly, for a Territorian who refuses to accept that they have offending behaviour with alcohol and refuses to do anything about it, there is income quarantining up to 70%.

As I said in the days of Enough is Enough and I say today, I know the constituent who will come roaring into the electorate office and abuse me—if they do not address their offending behaviour, do not seek help and do not follow the government's supportive therapeutic interventions—when they go the ATM and it only spits out \$60. 'Where is the rest of my money?' they will ask. I already have the reply, 'Oh, we had better look. Are you on the Banned Drinker Register? Have you entered the passage of this therapeutic intervention? Have you replied? Have you fronted up? Have you started to address your offending behaviour? Well, it looks like you may have this problem because these steps have been ignored.' Then we can revisit that vulnerable person's pathway and start to get them on track to address their issues.

If the Member for Araluen wants to talk about history—mate, I was a teacher for over 30 years—I will give history lessons that hurt, because we were hurting. We are now back at the table with the policy that has been redesigned, improved and has a lot of evidence around it. We will do our best to make sure the policy supports the most vulnerable Territorians.

When we delve into different elements of debate here, there has been much talk about secondary supply. When you live in a regional town and you start to experience grog running of significant quantities from Mount Isa into Tennant Creek, then you have a real problem.

We have cross-border issues no matter what legislation we implement into this House and the Territory. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill has a focus on secondary supply. It will deal with secondary supply. Most importantly, as a legislator who participates in briefings, who works hard on the front line to make sure we are delivering good laws for Northern Territory, you get to work with the experts.

I am very pleased to say that the police have said that with the reintroduction of the Banned Drinker Register and the suite of initiatives around the Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill, they will target secondary supply. That will be firmly in their sights. We know how successful Northern Territory Police are. There are crimes committed, but a lot of crimes are solved.

The police have assured Territorians that they will go after secondary supply. They are the two elements: good policy and good legislation supported by our police on the front line, doing the community policing that they are trained for and love to do. We will have a direct bead on secondary supply.

When the Enough is Enough policy was being rolled out I took it on the road. I conducted my own workshops across the Barkly, across 488 000 square kilometres. It was fantastic to sit with people to explain it. It is really important when you have that connection with your constituents, where you get that response of, 'Ah, yeah, now I get it. Now I understand.'

One of the best workshops was at Neutral Junction, at the Tara Community, with the senior women. The senior women were vocal in terms of the protection of their photo ID. What we saw with Enough is Enough was a rush on drivers' licences. I commend the minister for offering Territory government services for free for a period to make sure we encourage people to get photo ID. That was a great result.

I continue to tell the constituents of Barkly not to settle for a proof of age card. Get your driver's licence. We saw a rush on this. MVR was under the pump in 2011–12 because of the number of Territorians who said 'No, I need a driver's licence'.

Those senior women knew that it was their link to normal living. They like to have a beer and they choose when and where they will do it. They knew that if they lost the right to do that it was an imposition on them. It was a negative in their life.

The conversation started to resonate amongst family. I have this right and I will preserve it. My conversation was, 'That person there has some problems, and if that person is supplied with alcohol then those problems will bubble to the surface and trouble will follow them'.

You have two choices. You have to deal with that person. That person can be referred or self-refer. Unfortunately, the person who makes the wrong choice and offends will be put onto the register. But there is help. You do not want that trouble following you. You now have an opportunity to have a real conversation with the problem drinker about your rights, your life and not being humbugged or conflicted by this person's offending behaviour under the influence of alcohol. That story was starting to resonate.

Unfortunately, there were also huge numbers growing on the Banned Drinker Register. Before it was scrapped by the CLP there were more than 2500 registered on it. But it got the legs cut out from under it. It was chopped overnight. The new story then emerged—game on. You do not need any ID to go into a bottle shop and get any alcohol that you like. That was a disappointing part of the work that I had been undertaking with a new alcohol policy. But I have been back on the road again, writing and communicating with constituents in the Barkly, the vast majority of whom said to bring back the BDR, including Aboriginal Territorians and the mainstream constituency.

That was the critical politics that you played in the development of an election strategy to tell the good people of the greater Darwin area, 'You are not criminals; you do not need this humbug; you do not need a seven-second disadvantage in your life to have to look in your pocket or your purse and pull out your licence. You do not need that.'

It was interesting because Darwin and Palmerston did not change much. The election of 2012 was won in the bush by the CLP. We then saw this chaotic attempt to try to address alcohol misuse across the community.

I do not know how this happened, but it is part of the history lesson, Member for Araluen. When the point of sale alcohol restrictions were first imposed on Tennant Creek—we had used that strategy before under Labor—it was always managed by the police. It always targeted big events in town where the hotspots had emerged. It was part of our community life and we accepted the restrictions; we understood.

When the CLP introduced those point of sale restrictions, putting police in the sun to stand outside bottle shops during opening hours, somebody developed this sandwich board, this poster, which advertised that. It was a dot painting with a crow. It was amazing to see this image emerge to represent this chaotic policy. Anybody who has lived, worked and shared with Aboriginal people over the years would understand their sense of humour is superb. They have the best sense of humour and can make anything funny. The hardest parts of life that you can ever experience can always be turned into sharing a joke and a humorous look at what is tough and how to get through it.

The people of Tennant Creek created some wild humour around this poster that had a dot painting background and a crow in the image. The posters disappeared about half way through the CLP's term. I am not sure what happened to them, where they came from or why they emerged, but they disappeared because there was so much negativity. A couple of government members have already spoken about that as a very negative policy position of racial profiling. It was an interesting story for the good folk of Tennant Creek.

I will say what I have always said; we are Territorians and we should all be part of the solution. I have chosen to live in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory for more than half my life. The people there are my people. I am asking Darwin and Palmerston, what I like to call the big end of town, to be part of the solution. This bill, as it passes through this Legislative Assembly, will start a new movement towards addressing alcohol misuse and abuse by our most vulnerable Territorians.

We will all be part of the solution. The CLP got a lot of things wrong. It created a division in the community regarding this in a strategy to take to the election and then in a chaotic policy after that.

The good people of the Northern Territory are all in this together. I am getting the good vibrations from the Barkly as well. Mainstream conservative people are telling us to get back to that suite of initiatives that was designed before, because we have seen the negatives of what can happen. We are all in this together and we will all be part of the solution.

It has become very obvious to me, as a new minister for Housing, when we are talking about public housing right across the Northern Territory, one of the biggest challenges is visitor management.

We have some great tenants, some challenging tenants and some very vulnerable tenants, but we are all in this together. One of the things all our tenancies share is the challenge of visitor management, and some do better than others. With this Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill and the suite of initiatives to address alcohol misuse and abuse, we have a Banned Drinker Register. We have a tool that the police have acknowledged was a good tool in addressing the scourge of this very destructive and dysfunctional behaviour that Territorians are dealing with.

It is another element that will support our Public Housing Safety Officers, our police and our tenants—another step in the right direction. The most important part will be the conversation that can be had with the visitors. If you have a problem there is a way of getting help.

It will not be locking up people and criminalising your alcoholism. It will be a therapeutic, supportive process. Some will win and some will lose, but we want to create a critical mass because when we have more people moving in the right direction we are able to address these issues. This is another good move that will support public housing tenants and police. I give my admiration to the Public Housing Safety Officers. I remember the patrols I went on, and the Member for Karama took the opportunity to travel with these frontline officers who are dealing with some of the toughest situations and providing important community safety.

This will help that sector. I am now working closely with that sector and am very passionate about delivering better outcomes.

There is a bit of a history lesson—and there is a direct, clear alternative to what the Member for Araluen has put forward in this House, and any of the other conservative agendas that twist this back into something that it is more than. They want to argue all these other anecdotes around it.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill is about a suite of initiatives; it is about a process. It will be an important time for this legislature. I hope that in the future it will be a story for our grandchildren. We were the people who took the bit between the teeth, stood up and took this forward with all Territorians—no division, as we are all in this together.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I have listened with interest to the last two members with two slightly different interpretations of history, but perhaps what has been missed by the Member for Barkly is that the Member for Araluen has made it plain that there will be support for the BDR. I will also provide support for the BDR, but it is our obligation to talk about aspects of this response to a serious social problem that need to be considered.

I understand that often our lenses can be quite political in nature and cause us to discern certain activities and policy frameworks through a political prism and we make judgements accordingly. Let us endeavour to reduce that and identify the actual problem. Is alcohol, the substance itself, the primary problem? I do not think so. I think the primary question is, what is causing alcoholism? What is driving people to drink in a destructive manner, changing their lives on a downward trajectory? I am not hearing enough of that language.

There are substances in our community that are illegal but we cannot control or manage them. It is illegal to have methamphetamines, yet they are readily available. Do we need stronger laws to deal with methamphetamine and then stronger laws again? I suspect not, until we stop and look straight into the face of addiction and what is causing it. Why is it that we go to societies where alcohol is freely available and there is no noticeable problem? What in society is causing this problem?

The litmus test is in fact very close to us—I have heard so many speeches in here, and then I walk outside and it has no measurable effect on those who concern us, the walking wounded in plain view of us all. The mechanism that you describe has merit; it always had merit, but the problem was that we were not facing up to the core problem.

Honestly, I expected more from Labor with its deeper understanding of social drivers to crime and social problems. It is remarkable that, from the conservative side, we came up with the recognition that we needed to deal with alcoholism, the addiction, and that is why we moved in the direction of mandatory treatment. We need to get to the core of the problem.

That is what is missing here. That is what led me yesterday to go across to Raintree Park—after all speeches from both sides in the Chamber. I do the same in Palmerston; I know those people; I know their names. They share their pain and tell me their stories; they are not fazed by what is to come. Because of their addiction they will find a way; there was no doubting that. Because of illegal substances that are incredibly harmful and

destructive to families, we have seen families fall apart before our very eyes, but there is no mechanism here that responds to the core problem.

I will mention their names because they were delighted that I spoke to them; we had a good conversation. Two of them are from Central Australia and three of them are from East Arnhem: Cliff; Lola; Mary; Trevor; and Priscilla. When I came back after having a really lovely conversation with them—and they were very frank and honest—it was in good spirits, but they were honest. They are the people we really need to understand. They are the walking wounded.

I have heard speeches using words like ‘wellbeing officers’, and ‘encouraged to seek help’. Because of the problem they will not seek help; they will continue drinking for whatever reason. I think you know some of the deeper reasons for their drinking.

I will stay here to advocate for this; make no mistake. We did something significant to be able to get—and you have interpreted it through a political lens and characterised it in a political manner to create false division. We are all talking about what is behind this. How do we respond to that?

There are existing laws that are respected, hopefully, by the rest of the community regarding behaviour. If they are breached one, two or three times and it is discovered that there is an underlying deeper problem, called addiction, then that needs to be responded to. You cannot just keep strengthening the law and having more and more police, hoping the problem will somewhere go away. It will not. We have a serious problem in the heart of our community.

How does it work? ‘The Banned Drinker Register will assist in reducing alcohol-related harm to individuals’—it will to a modest degree—‘and families in our community by encouraging and supporting people to access help.’ That is about as good as someone who is 16, 17 or 18 and is hooked on ice saying, ‘Is help available?’ They are not thinking about getting help. They are thinking about what they can hock, what they can sell at their mother’s to get some more of this stuff. We are talking about addiction, and I expected more.

One of the problems we had, which is a reflection on the current situation that has emerged, according to the report in the paper which reflects some internal problems—I will not make a political judgment on that; believe me. I am concerned that what happened to the CLP will not happen to the ALP in government. I will support you to strengthen your focus and look a bit deeper and be more courageous to go further. Forget the political stuff. You will win the next election if you do that. But if you do not, you will find some numbers will drop away because people will be underwhelmed. They are looking for some courage to go further and be more honest.

How about doing something courageous by providing the Independents with actual support so we can help in the development of quality policy and contribute. We are unable to do so. All we can do is draw upon our own experience and feed off the concerns of our community and bring them here. There is a gaping hole in this. Do not worry; we will not be constantly criticising and pulling it apart, saying it is rubbish. It has some merit, as it did before. But it ignored the core problem, as it does now.

If I go across and tell Cliff, Lola, Mary, Trevor and Priscilla that they are encouraged to go and seek help from the wellbeing officer, they will ask me for a couple of dollars. They will not be the slightest bit interested in those wellbeing officers, no matter what kind of encouragement I give them. Those who have a problem, the walking wounded in plain view—some people do not even see them—have names. It is hard to even ask them if they want help. Asking alcoholics if they want help—mostly they deny they are alcoholics. It is offensive to ask if they need help.

How will that work? What difference will it make? It will make a modest difference, but it does not go anywhere near the problem, sadly.

I will keep my conversation going with these fellow Territorians, and others like them, to hear their point of view. That is the work we need from a government. I will do my part, but we are limited in our capacity to do so. It appears that the pressure is starting to mount on government and some egos are starting to rise up and speak with others on the fringes. It would be a disaster if that happened, because the community is expecting more. They are expecting you to approach the core problems more courageously and be truthful about the serious situation facing the Northern Territory.

We have social and economic problems of a significant nature. I do not know of any other parliament within the Commonwealth or the region which is facing the very serious problems our community is, both socially and culturally. We are faced with very serious problems.

We do not just pull the wings off this situation so it does not fly. We want more than cosmetics for a very serious problem.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, before I begin I acknowledge in the gallery my parents, Mick and Didamain Uiobo, and our family friends, John and Gay Barclay, who have travelled from the south to watch sittings this week. I thank them very much for attending and welcome them back to the Territory. They were teachers for a long time in the past at Snake Bay and Haasts Bluff. They have done the very Top End and the central desert, so they know about the wonderful Territory we are talking about today and the importance of keeping our Territory and community safe. Welcome to Parliament House and welcome back, mum and dad.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill and thank the Minister for Health for taking action on this issue which affects so many people, families, agencies, organisations and businesses across the Northern Territory.

I am proud to be part of a team that cares for the wellbeing and safety of our Territorians. The Alcohol Harm Reduction Bill will bring back the Banned Drinker Register, also referred to as the BDR, in order to reduce the extreme levels of alcohol-related harm we experience in the Northern Territory.

We know there are people in the Territory who can drink responsibly. However, as government and as members in each of our respective Territory communities, we know that not everyone drinks responsibly. The misuse and abuse of alcohol can negatively impact on the lives of Territorians and the communities in which we live. The high levels of alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory has resulted in increased levels of violence, crime and health issues for Territorians. Alcohol impacts the NT dramatically and, as elected members of parliament, we need to address this issue with haste.

This bill, plain and simple, is about making our communities safer. This bill is about reduction, protection and prevention.

I remember growing up in the Territory and hearing the very odd statement that the Northern Territory has the highest rate of beer drinkers per capita not just in Australia, but in the world. I do not have the statistics to back up this so-called folklore, but it is something I remember quite vividly. It was presented almost as a proud truth. I now think about that statement in my adulthood, and if it was correct, what a disappointment to the Northern Territory to have such a title, considering our small and sparsely populated part of the world.

I applaud the Minister for Health for bringing this bill before the House and agree wholeheartedly with her statement that:

Alcohol misuse impacts on school attendance, domestic violence, child protection issues, incarceration rates and the road toll.

One of the key messages our government has committed to is that the BDR covers everyone equally—all adults, all ages, from all backgrounds, locations, incomes and jobs. This Territory-wide measure will seek to remove issues of racial profiling when it comes to the purchase of takeaway alcohol, which has raised many concerns across various parts of the Territory. All Territorians and visitors to the Territory purchasing alcohol will have the same standard checks no matter where they are in the NT. I am very supportive of this, as this initiative will be applied to everyone.

I believe that government, opposition and Independents alike cannot and should not stand aside and let alcohol harm affect our communities. As elected members from across our diverse Territory, we are privileged to serve and represent our communities. As members of parliament the issue of alcohol-related harm affects each of our electorates.

It is not a political issue; it should not be bogged down in any political debate. This is a human issue. We, as government, opposition and Independents, must collectively use our time in this House to make decisions that will positively impact, support and promote safety in our cities, towns and rural, regional and remote communities.

This bill covers issues to do with secondary supply to people who are known to be on the BDR. These tough measures have been put in place so the responsibility of alcohol harm reduction becomes everybody's business. If someone is found guilty of the offence of secondary supply, a fine of up to approximately \$3000 and a BDR ban of 12 months would start from the day of the person being found guilty of providing secondary supply alcohol. This is a deterrent, but it is also a way of keeping people safe and looking out for each other.

I want to touch briefly on an element in the bill, which is the banned drinker order, or BDO, which prohibits a person from purchasing, possessing or consuming alcohol for the period the order is in force. This is an important part of the bill as it identifies that a person may need the time of a BDO to self-regulate and seek assistance. This is about making our community safer. The bill is about reduction, protection and prevention.

Territorians and those who call the NT home are extremely concerned about alcohol-related harm. The Northern Territory Government's Department of Health website holds information regarding the alcohol policies and legislation review. Well over 100 submissions have already been received by the department, which can be accessed and read on the website: alcoholreview.nt.gov.au/submissions-and-articles-of-interest.

As per the review's terms of reference, one of the key matters that will be reported on is alcohol service provision and management in remote communities. I want to take a moment to talk about two specific examples in my electorate of Arnhem, and these two communities are already, at the grassroots level, discussing the possibility of having social clubs in place to try to curb alcohol, as their communities are dry communities.

These two communities are Barunga, which is located approximately 80 kilometres south of Katherine, on the Central Arnhem Road; and Ngukurr, which is about a three-hour drive from Katherine, on the Roper Highway. These two communities have been vocal about their thoughts and feelings and what they would like to do at a community level to address the issue of problem drinkers, but also the issues that affect the communities in regard to drink-driving. Their communities are dry, and for people to access alcohol they have to go out of the community. If there are no measures in place with a sober Bob, then sometimes we see the devastating effects on our roads of drink-driving accidents.

I am looking forward to working closely with these two communities. It is important that these discussions are at the grassroots level and driven by community members. I was not always open to it, but coming to this role I have done a lot of reading and have listened to the arguments from both communities and the members who live there and see the negative effects of alcohol coming into their community illegally or the people going out of the community to access alcohol.

I am very happy, as the local member, to engage in these discussions and talk closely with these communities if it is a community driven, grassroots initiative. I feel this is a very important step toward community decision-making. If it is done properly we could see some positive changes to things like our unfortunate road tolls.

The Minister for Health has clearly outlined that a transition plan has been put in place for people subject to an alcohol mandatory treatment order. People with problem drinking will not be enforced to attend secure alcohol treatment; rather, those people with identified alcohol misuse will be encouraged and supported to voluntarily seek therapeutic support to help them address their issues. This approach is not a punitive approach; it is a health based approach. Alcohol abuse is a health issue, a social issue and a community issue.

I have an example of a situation which occurred last night. I was in the Darwin CBD finishing dinner with the Members for Katherine and Namatjira, and on our way up Mitchell Street to our vehicles we came across a lady who was sitting on the edge of the street, slumped forward in a very awkward position. People were walking by her and nobody had stopped to check her safety and health. The three of us stopped and spoke to the lady and rang the Larrakia Nation night patrol, which I have put and saved in my phone. I have used that number on numerous occasions and have always had an excellent response from them.

We were talking with this lady and said we had somebody coming to check on her and look after her, and following further discussion I realised she was one of my relations from Numbulwar and Groote. I have not seen her in such a long time; I did not even recognise her. We stayed with her and talked with her for about 15 minutes.

I commend Carly and her driving partner from Larrakia Nation night patrol for taking this lady to a safe place, back to her family, as she had been abandoned in the city and no one was looking after her, which was very sad, especially since it was a relation of mine.

With these type of support mechanisms here in the Territory I do not think we can thank people who do night patrol services enough, whether they are here in an urban setting or remote context. They have a hard job, especially when they are dealing with their own relatives, countrymen and kinship ties. It is a pretty hard job and, again, I thank those people from Larrakia Nation night patrol; I also acknowledge the other night patrols

that work in the Territory. It is very important work, and they work very closely alongside the police and emergency services to look after people when they are not in their own home.

Alcohol abuse does not only hurt the person who is the problem drinker. It can hurt their family and friends and can even effect the wider community around them. The most disturbing effect of alcohol abuse is the effect on children. As a former teacher, I have learned about the devastating effects that trauma can have on children and young people. I have learned about how trauma can have detrimental effects on physical and mental development and the learning process.

The unseen scars of alcohol-related harm can be dangerous, as there are cases which affect our Territory children and youth in ways that cannot be detected. The Minister for Education, Eva Lawler, spoke yesterday about the importance of alcohol and drug education programs as part of school curriculum and as a form of prevention. Young minds and bodies can be drastically harmed when exposed to alcohol and drugs at a young age. The body and mind continues to grow long past the adolescent period; in fact, I read in some material that the brain is still developing until a person is in their mid-twenties. It is very important to protect the growth and development of our youth.

Yesterday, the Minister for Territory Families, Dale Wakefield, spoke about the devastating effects of alcohol-related harm on families in the form of family and domestic violence. We cannot continue to ignore these high levels of statistics and the links they have to alcohol.

This highlights the importance to have preventative methods to ensure the impact of alcohol damage to a person's health is reduced to the lowest possible point. Trauma on developing minds can have devastating effects on learning development, and later in life in regard to mental health.

I have a large electorate, where many Arnhem communities are dry communities, meaning alcohol is prohibited by law. Like the Member for Nhulunbuy, I also have people from my electorate who travel long distances from remote communities to access alcohol and leave their families behind, who worry for their safety on the roads and waterways when they go into town for drinking.

I have had to worry when a family member or family members have not returned to a community after a known drinking spree hundreds of kilometres away at the closest alcohol outlet. This is where the BDR provides people with expectations; they must be responsible drinkers or they will lose the right to buy takeaway alcohol.

The BDR is part of a wider measure to curb and reduce alcohol-related harm and alcohol-fuelled violence in the Northern Territory. As the Minister for Health previously stated, the implementation of the new BDR under our government has allocated an additional \$15.5m to the Department of Health in Budget 2017–18.

I emphasise the point that this is a health-based approach from our government, not a punitive approach. The Health minister has explicitly stated that this funding will be used for specialist assessment and withdrawal services, integrated pathways to treatment and follow-up services, expanded capacity for rehabilitation services, and to establish the BDR function and employ specialist clinicians.

There are many people in the Arnhem electorate who are affected by the misuse of alcohol, which leads to harm and trauma. I want to be part of the solution. That is why I thank the Minister for Health, her staff and her department for their very hard work on bringing this bill forward, rather than waiting and allowing harm to further effect our Territory communities.

This bill is about making our communities safer. It is about reduction, protection and prevention in our Northern Territory communities.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, like many others, I have been impacted by misuse of alcohol. I feel it is a topic that requires great deliberation and consideration, and I am pleased to provide my contribution today.

My electorate covers all of Malak and Karama in the northern suburbs of Darwin. My suburbs comprise six schools, hundreds of families and four outlets where alcohol can be consumed or purchased. I am concerned about the level of alcohol misuse that occurs every day in my electorate, and I am pleased to learn about measures that could help curb this behaviour for those living in my electorate and beyond.

The Banned Drinker Register, or BDR, was implemented for 14 months prior to being scrapped by the previous government. After 14 months of operation, the 2500 people who were banned from purchasing takeaway alcohol in the NT were once again able to. The screening process that was put in place to restrict takeaway alcohol sales to these problem drinkers was removed.

The BDR was working. It was a tool that helped restrict alcohol consumption by problem drinkers to reduce the amount of alcohol-related harm associated with that consumption. I have spoken to a few members of the NT Police Force about the BDR and was told they found the BDR to be helpful in their line of work. This is not surprising when our records show that more than 16 400 sales to problem drinkers were declined in the first year of operation. That is a staggering amount.

Our election commitment to bring back the Banned Drinker Register was popular in my electorate of Karama. This topic was raised repeatedly during my doorknocks and other engagements with community members. In fact, I did not come across one person who did not support our election commitment and was not looking forward to its return; it was the exact opposite. Community members told me that whilst they were frustrated at having to produce their ID and have it scanned each time they purchased takeaway alcohol, they understand that the scheme helped minimise alcohol misuse. I was told there were lower levels of public drunkenness and community members felt there was a direct link to the BDR being introduced.

An incredible amount of alcohol is consumed every day in the Northern Territory. We have a culture where getting sloshed, or horrors, or blind drunk is almost a rite of passage; where teenagers count down to their 18th birthday so they can finally drink legally; and where, unfortunately, a number of Territorians are unable to control their consumption and become a completely different person when they drink in excess. Some of these people become a nuisance, troublesome and violent.

I am sure it would be safe to say that each of my parliamentary colleagues has witnessed this behaviour firsthand. I go further to say that most, if not all, have had to intervene to ensure that this unacceptable and concerning behaviour was addressed, just as my colleague, the Member for Arnhem, mentioned. They may have exchanged a few words with someone behaving badly while intoxicated, have had to call the police to help ensure the safety of that person or those around them, or have physically restrained someone who was at risk of endangering themselves or another person. I have done that a number of times. For me, it is all three, numerous times—for family, friends or complete strangers—and I am really over it.

I recently visited my home town and birthplace of Katherine, the place I had my first drink. It was a vodka and orange and I drank it on my 15th birthday. I was a naughty girl. I remember feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness as I began planning my first-ever unsupervised birthday party with my girlfriends. But this year was different. We were no longer focusing on which videos we would hire from the video shop or what type of pizzas we would order for dinner. Now we had shifted our conversation to what type of alcohol we would be buying, who was chucking in and who we would ask to buy it for us.

It still blows my mind today, as a 36-year-old, that I was having these conversations with my friends as a 14-year-old, more than 20 years ago. And to think that my 14-year-old nieces and nephews may be having the exact same conversation now makes me very angry and frustrated, and it really blows my mind. When I was 14 I thought I was a big woman and grown up. There are many 14-year-olds who I worry about today.

Despite my first experience not being as bad as I thought it might be, I made a conscious decision that drinking was not for me. I had grown up with alcohol. As a young child I watched people drink at barbecues, weddings, funerals, birthday parties and other celebrations. Most people drank responsibly around me while a small portion did not. I remember being fascinated that some people became nicer, funnier and easier to be around when they loosened up after a few drinks. I also remember feeling quite scared when people drank in excess and became scary, loud and violent.

It was my upbringing and the education afforded to me in my home by my parents and extended family members where I learned to be wary of and respect alcohol at the same time. I experienced the impact that alcohol had on me—how I changed when I was drunk that first time and I realised I was not 100% in control. I did not like it.

When an individual consumes more alcohol than they can handle, trouble can ensue. I will share a recent example of this behaviour with the House. In June this year I joined thousands of other Territorians who attended the I Love the 90s concert at the Darwin Amphitheatre. It was a fantastic event, which I describe as being the best outdoor blue light disco for adults ever. The atmosphere was amazing, and as I stood with my group on the hill I scanned the crowd to see everyone enjoying themselves. It was fantastic because I was not the oldest person at that event.

There was one person who caught my attention, though. It was a lady who looked to be aged in her forties; she was standing to the left of me a few metres over, and she seemed to be quite intoxicated. She swayed from side to side, and she had her eyes closed as she tried to mumble the lyrics to the song being performed—Salt-N-Pepa can be difficult for anybody, I am sure. I remember pointing her out to my group, stating how intoxicated she appeared to be, querying whether or not she would be kicked out by security for being too drunk. It was 8.30 pm on a Saturday night.

Around 30 minutes later I heard a loud bang and the rattle of empty beer bottles hitting one another. I looked over to my left, where the intoxicated woman had been swaying with her eyes closed, but she was not standing there anymore. I saw that her friends were laughing and they were pointing down the hill. When I followed their gaze I spotted her; she was laying on her side, trying to push herself off the ground with her left hand so she could sit up.

It took me a few seconds to realise this woman had become a human bowling ball. She was so intoxicated at 8.30 pm on a Saturday night that she lost her balance while standing on the hill, and she had rolled down the hill until the wheelie bins at the bar had stopped her fall. I was pleased to see that a few seconds later, after she stopped rolling, security was helping her to her feet and ushering her through the crowd. None of her friends did, mind you, and I was appalled at that.

I never saw this woman again that night, but I am sure she was looked after by security, and hopefully by the St John Ambulance, and was kept safe, which is exactly what she needed because she was obviously in a state where she was no longer able to look after herself.

This story is an example of someone who was drinking alcohol in excess and was supported to recover safely until she was able to take care of herself. As far as I could tell, this woman's alcohol-related behaviour did not harm others at that time, but she did bring harm to herself.

Unfortunately not all alcohol-related stories read like this. Sometimes people become so drunk that they become reckless or dangerous, and their alcohol-related behaviour puts them and others in danger. This behaviour scares me and it should scare us all. I have lost count of the number of people I know who have lost their driver's licence because they were caught drink-driving. What is even scarier is that some people have admitted that they had driven drunk for many years before they were caught.

I spoke with three people about their experiences and was shocked to hear the information they shared. The first person I spoke with told me they lost their licence for 12 months and had to catch a taxi to and from work for an entire year. They told me half their pay was spent each fortnight to pay the taxi company to get them to and from work, and that losing their licence was an expensive but helpful experience and a wake-up call, especially because he could have left his two young children without a father. I am pleased to say this person has never driven drunk again. They also refuse to drive before late afternoon the next day if they have been drinking the night before.

The second person I spoke with lost their licence for 12 months as well, at a random breath testing station on the way home from a night out on Mitchell Street. This person continued to drive for the entire year they had their licence suspended. I even heard a rumour from a friend that they continued to drive drunk. I was mortified, to say the least, that this person would continue to put themselves and others in danger because they did not want to pay for other means of transport when they had done the wrong thing in the first place.

The third person I spoke with lost their licence for 12 months as well—these are all high-level drink-driving convictions—and I am pleased to say they did the right thing and refrained from driving while unlicensed for the entire 12 months. This person has a good glass-half-full approach to life. They accepted responsibility for their actions and made the best of the situation by entrusting their vehicle for someone else to use for the 12 months of their suspended licence.

The agreement they had with this other person served two purposes. It provided the first person with a means of transport for the 12 months, and the person who borrowed the car actually helped to pay for the repayments on the car and its upkeep. It also helped to minimise the temptation for my friend to want to drive that vehicle, because it was not sitting in their front yard and they did not have the keys in order to access it. Out of sight; out of mind.

Each person who is caught drink-driving has the opportunity to learn a lesson, modify their behaviour and move on with their life. I am glad to hear that two of the three people I spoke with did just that.

In 17 days' time the BDR will be reinstated in the Northern Territory, but this time around the BDR has been revamped to provide more benefit to Territorians, such as the self-referral mechanism. I have had numerous conversations with community members, business owners and assorted stakeholders about the return of the BDR. I was pleased to hear from one community member who told me they are considering self-referral. I was fascinated to say the least.

This person told me they may add themselves to the register because they do not drink and they felt it would be easier if they tell their family and friends that they cannot buy alcohol for them because they are listed on the Banned Drinker Register. I am pleased to see that this legislation will allow for an easier process for this to occur this time around. I guess this could also provide another avenue of support for those amazing Territorians who participate in raising alcohol awareness or fundraising programs like Hello Sunday Morning or Ocober, where an individual foregoes consumption of alcohol for a set period of time.

In order to reinstate the BDR, scanning equipment is being rolled out and installed in outlets that sell takeaway alcohol. It was great to see the recycling of old scanning equipment being used where possible as part of the roll-out. This equipment will be used to scan the buyer's photographic identification and cross-reference their ID with the BDR.

I am pleased to learn that the BDR scanners will accept a variety of forms of identification; acceptable IDs are an Australian driver's licence and most international drivers' licences, the evidence of age card, an Australian passport and most international passports, a Northern Territory Ochre Card and an Australia Post Keypass card.

I must admit I had never heard about the Australia Post Keypass card until it was mentioned in this legislation. I visited the Australia Post website recently and I was pleased to see that Australia Post is currently offering all Northern Territory residents a new Keypass card at a discounted cost of \$25 instead of the standard price of \$55. The website also makes reference to the Keypass being an accepted ID for the BDR and provides a code that can be used by the customer at the time of purchase in order to apply the 54% discount. I think this is a great step to help inform Territorians about the pending commencement of the BDR.

I am also heartened that our government has chosen to waive the fee for birth certificates and evidence of age cards for six months to help Territorians prepare for the need to have their ID scanned each time they purchase takeaway alcohol, reiterating the sentiments of my colleague, the Member for Barkly. I encourage all those Territorians who require this documentation to take up this offer while it is available.

A number of Territorians consume alcohol in excess due to alcohol addiction. We, as a society, can have a tendency to become complacent in our compassion and understanding that alcoholism is a disease and requires a therapeutic response. I am so pleased that a range of therapeutic interventions have been considered and included in the reinstatement of the BDR, including access to diversion and treatment services.

I agree with my colleagues who have contributed to the debate in stating that mandatory treatment of alcoholism does not work. Forcing an individual to do something they do not want to do is not only disempowering but often a waste of time, money and energy. If we truly want to support those with an alcohol addiction to curb their behaviour then we must support them to address and then overcome the underlying factors that cause them to consume alcohol, which was also mentioned by the Member for Blain.

An important component of reinstating the BDR is opening a residential rehabilitation and sobering-up shelter in Darwin, and I congratulate Mission Australia, which has been successful in its tender to provide this important service. The facility is located in Berrimah and will offer 40 beds for the sobering-up shelter and 40 beds for the residential rehabilitation service, both of which will be operated by Mission Australia, as well as 12 beds for specialist alcohol assessments and withdrawal services, which will be operated by Top End Health Service. I look forward to hearing of the important work that will take place at this facility to support some of our most vulnerable Territorians to achieve a better quality of life than the one they are currently living.

The former Country Liberal government scrapped the BDR in late August 2012 and introduced the alcohol mandatory treatment program on 1 July 2013. The decision to scrap the BDR and not replace it immediately with an alternative alcohol management mechanism to support problem drinkers was absolutely appalling. I find it hard to imagine what the previous government thought would be achieved through this decision, and I cannot help but shake my head.

The AMT was independently reviewed in 2015 by PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting and Menzies School of Health Research over a 12-month period. I thank the Member for Araluen for her lesson on this review.

The review found that:

The AMT was implemented quickly, against the backdrop of a highly charged political and ethical debate. It was an attempt to address a complex challenge in limited time, without the benefit of a comparison model and with insufficient time to develop a sound program logic.

This finding resonated with me because I felt sorry for those people who, in a matter of days, went from being on the BDR to being able to purchase alcohol. These people had the tap turned on for a long period of time prior to the previous government's introduction of AMT, which is a real shame. That is why I am so glad to be part of a government that considers the needs of Territorians during a transition to a new alcohol policy and understands a need for a smooth transition from the AMT to the BDR.

I am so pleased to see that the review of the AMT has been discussed by many of my parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House, as it should be. I assume that they, too, have read the report, because it is an important document with 28 very important recommendations.

The AMT review highlighted that the program delivered a few notable benefits to Territorians, as mentioned by the Member for Araluen, including the short-term health and social benefits. However, I was concerned about the cycling in and out of AMT and the fact it was delivered differently in different regions. I am sure we all have stories from around the Territory.

Many community members, organisations and community groups described the AMT as being highly controversial. I am pleased to see that many have made their thoughts and concerns public after the introduction of the AMT, which is great because we are all here to serve the interest of Territorians and not ourselves.

The Law Society Northern Territory provided feedback as part of the six-month review on the AMT, which contained the following issues to be considered by government: inadequate or non-existent safeguards to protect the rights of individuals who are the subject of the AMT scheme; lack of transparency; disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples; and the lack of evaluative data or evidence of efficacy.

The Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, or APONT, also provided a submission on the AMT. APONT's submission highlighted the peak bodies' concerns that the AMT legislation had been rushed without consideration of the evidence base underpinning the scheme. The submission also highlighted a number of concerns including:

- *The need to recognise health aspects of alcohol dependence;*
- *The need to recognise the role of trauma in alcohol misuse;*
- ...
- *The need for appropriate aftercare post release when people return to their community; and*
- *The desirability of promoting voluntary access to alcohol rehabilitation.*

I have not spoken to any person who was positively impacted by the AMT, but I have read some news articles. One such article explained how a 50-year-old man from a remote Aboriginal community benefited from the AMT. His story was one of successful alcohol rehabilitation, a story of service provision meeting the needs of an individual who is in need, a story of an individual being supported to reconnect with their family. It was a great story of hope. I was so happy to read this article and I hope that gentleman is doing well.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the wonderful work of the Peppimenarti community to ensure the responsible service and sale of alcohol to community members. I am glad he mentioned this model as I believe it is a model of best practice that is driven by strong community members who work hard each day to ensure they have a fantastic and functioning community.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to facilitate a two day strong women's forum in Peppimenarti with amazing women from Peppimenarti, Wadeye and Nauiyu. We spoke about current and previous community-led initiatives and the positive and lasting impact these have had on community members. It was during this session that I learned of the model being implemented by the club in Peppimenarti.

The strong women who were involved in the club's successful operations told me their success arose because they did not sell full-strength beer. They checked the car registrations of those who were at the club and took the keys away from those who were drinking. They would discourage expectant fathers from drinking at the club and encourage them to spend time with their pregnant partner in preparation for their baby's arrival. I love that one.

I was blown away after hearing this because this model clearly reflects a passion and willingness of a community to look after one another to ensure the current and future generations have a vibrant, functional and supportive community to live in and be part of. I commend these strong ladies and the other community leaders who work tirelessly to look after one another and keep each other safe.

Our government is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Northern Territory's alcohol policies and legislation to develop an evidence-based, overarching alcohol harm reduction framework. I encourage all Territorians to have their say included in this review because, after all, we have all been impacted by alcohol use and misuse.

I thank the four expert advisory panel members—Chief Justice Trevor Riley, Denys Stedman, Richard Matthews and Patricia Angus—for participating in this important task.

The majority of people who consume alcohol do so in a responsible manner, and I thank them for this. I thank them for not having a detrimental impact on others when they consume alcohol. I thank them for controlling their consumption and behaviour. I hope they continue to consume alcohol responsibly in the future if they choose to.

For those who have a problem with drinking, I encourage you to contact the service providers available to you so you can be supported through a therapeutic response to properly deal with your underlying issues and, in turn, be able to have a better quality of life.

For those of you who are impacted negatively by the behaviour of someone who has a drinking problem, I ask you to reach out and continue to try to help this individual or seek support from a service provider for them. If we all help to look after one another, like the people in Peppimenarti, then I honestly believe we will all benefit as a united community.

Finally, I thank my colleague, the Attorney-General, for bringing this important legislation before the House. I acknowledge all the work that has been undertaken by her office and department in preparation to do this.

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to commend this bill to the House today.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

MOTION

Whole of Parliament Approach to Growing the Population of the Northern Territory

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

1. recognises that growth in the population of the Northern Territory is essential for a strong economy and prosperous community
2. calls on the government to work with the parliament as a whole to develop strategies and initiatives to grow the population of the Northern Territory.

The opposition moves to establish a whole-of-parliament approach to growing the Northern Territory population, because we are gravely concerned. Population growth, for the first time in 14 years in the Northern Territory is going backwards—a predicted fall of 0.3% for the financial year 2017–18.

Population growth is key to the long-term health of the Northern Territory economy. Population growth is critical when it comes to the Territory's share of GST revenue. Future distributions from the GST pool will depend on how our population stacks up as a percentage of the national population. Economic growth is the goal of any good government because, in short, it means jobs and opportunities. Having more people consuming goods and services by way of growing the population is the low-hanging fruit, or the easy way of growing the Territory's economy.

What we need from the Labor government is a clear and credible plan to grow the population. We have yet to see anything from the government to arrest the population decline. The future we face today is not only an INPEX construction cliff in the coming months, but the tragedy of a tumbling population. This tumbling population will critically undermine our ability to provide the level of service delivery Territorians have become accustomed to.

The Department of the Chief Minister makes reference to a population plan in its strategic plan; however, I have been unable to ascertain in any detail what this means in reality. I have requested information on the plan and have requested a briefing from the Chief Minister, but have yet to receive anything.

Given that this issue is arguably the single most important factor in the health of the Territory economy and society, why is the Chief Minister so tardy in coming forward with the detail? What does he and his department have to hide? We hear in this House from members opposite, when they have nothing new to say, accusations that the previous government had thought bubbles, hastily put-together ideas, and policy development on the run.

Lo and behold; what do we get from the Chief Minister at SEAAOC today? His policy on the run; his thought bubble to stop fly-in fly-out workers in the mining sector. He has done this after 12 months in the job, and he has suddenly woken up to the fact the population is predicted to fall. The Country Liberals have long supported encouraging workers to be based in the Northern Territory and for the companies to base their head offices here. Companies will do that when it is cost effective and when there is an environment that provides certainty and provides future private investment.

Companies do not need to be threatened by government to be sensible. It is unclear what the Chief Minister is implying. Is he saying mines will not be approved if they fly in workers? The best thing the Chief Minister can do for the mining sector to achieve more direct and indirect jobs in the Northern Territory is to streamline the approvals process and red tape around mines, not introduce more requirements and government approval processes. It is not even clear how he intends to achieve this hastily thought-out policy on the run.

Territorians want a government that is capable, confident and credible. They want a government that is acting in the best interests of Territorians today and into the future. The government talks about certainty and jobs; the government talks and talks. We need optimists who are also realists. We need a plan.

Today I am calling for a whole-of-parliament approach to identify and agree upon real actions that we can take as a parliament to deliver real results. We need immediate action. This is a time to work together for the future of the Northern Territory and not allow this serious deterioration of our population to occur.

The issue is the deficit and debt mountain; the clear and present danger it presents to the Northern Territory's ability to provide services and representation to Territorians over the next generation is worrying in the extreme. An excuse is not a plan to deal with it; the only plan the Labor Party has to deal with the debt is a media plan—no target, vision or population plan.

Based on current numbers and recent trajectories, if they continue on the same path we will see a -0.3% fall in population. By 2020 we will have seen a decade of growth in population numbers wiped away. Those additional people who have made their homes here in the Territory for the last decade—a number equal to them will be washed off the bottom line. There is no pleasure in saying that the place you love has problems, but what is wrong with the Territory can so easily be fixed by what is right with the Territory through proper thought and abundant natural resources.

Where is Weddell? Some would ask why we would build Weddell when the population is declining. Have a plan to grow the population and a plan to build Weddell. There is no mention in the budget of planning for population growth and strategies to achieve this. This is the problem; there is no vision. People do not come here for the small thinking, steady-as-you-go lifestyle; they come here for the big ideas and projects, the vibrant and exciting lifestyle and the crazy dreams. We need to get back to big thinking and position the Northern Territory as a place to live and work, achieving sustainable population growth.

It is clear the old mantra of populate or perish is true in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory and cities like Darwin and Palmerston are exciting places to be as change happens right before our eyes. Every Territorian has a chance to be a part of this big building project. We need to tell the story of building and growing an exciting, dynamic and vibrant place by positioning the Territory as the place to live, work and enjoy our fantastic lifestyle.

That other big story, onshore gas, will help us immediately in attracting those brilliant, ambitious people to the Northern Territory. Modelling by Deloitte Access Economics puts the number of jobs associated with onshore gas in the Beetaloo Basin at over 6000. These are highly skilled, high-wage, sustainable jobs. These are the kinds of jobs one does not get with a museum-led recovery. There has never been an economy that painted or papier-maché its way to prosperity. You cannot dance off debt.

When realism returns to government—Budget 2017–18 does nothing for population. It is not a budget for realists. When the Country Liberal opposition looked through Budget 2017–18 we saw unfolded, optimistic assumptions for GST revenue over the forward estimates. We saw the collapse of capital grants and government recklessly spending the rainy day fund, the contingency reserve. We see naive assumptions about revenue and activity returning naturally to historical levels of growth. Growth and living standards, like respect, need to be earned every day.

The budget breaks the balanced budget, legislation that Labor introduced in 2001. The *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act*, FITA, requires a physical strategy statement and must be based on principles of sound fiscal management. How does the slashing of real wages across the public sector encourage people to come here to work? After all, we must compete against all other states and territories.

How does putting up rego fees incentivise people to come here? How does buckling to pressure from big donors assure businesspeople from elsewhere that they will have a level playing field and are welcome to come to the Northern Territory and create long-term, sustainable jobs, as was proposed by Dan Murphy's?

The government's cultural institution-led Arafura Games base recovery is a plan to keep people here for 10 days. Our plan is to invest in wealth-generating industries, diversifying the economy to build the critical infrastructure required for today and into the future. What the Labor Party is proposing is not wealth-creating infrastructure that will help unlock private investment and industry. This is spending for spending's sake without business cases determining the project's viability or a plan. It is a *Field of Dreams* approach to infrastructure spending: build it and they will come.

Our plan is to attract and retain people here for the future, to keep people here. We talk years; you talk days. The Country Liberals are about big thinking, not wasteful spending. Territorians are sick of the big wasteful spending. For example, the economic summits at \$1.2m were \$700 000 over budget, and Deloitte did not even take a fee.

We have a comprehensive plan to grow and diversify the economy, which was released in 2015. It was a direct and straightforward plan to diversify our economy into seven key pillars: energy; minerals; tourism; agribusiness; international education and training; Defence; supply and services. On our side of the Chamber we want to pursue priorities which help and do not hinder Territory businesses to grow, and do not burden Territory taxpayers.

We want to see strategic infrastructure to support Defence and civilian service capabilities. We want to see a safe and regulated onshore gas industry. For tourism we want to see increased marketing and upgraded infrastructure. We want to see the government get back to the Northern Territory's strengths on trade with Asia. Let us see the plan implemented.

The Labor government talks about falling house prices as if it was a good thing. Let me be clear; a property market freefalling is in no one's interests. Territorians in negative equity will be impacted by a poverty effect—the inverse of the observed wealth effect of rising prices. This will affect small local businesses, consumer demand et cetera. Given the sectorial makeup of the Territory economy, one in four jobs are supported directly or indirectly by construction or property in the broad sense. We can clearly see that property prices in freefall is not a good thing.

One of the fundamentals that we Country Liberals keep coming back to is the simple idea that safe streets are good streets, attract investment and are desirable, attracting women and families. The Labor government is failing to deliver safe streets all the way up and down the Stuart Highway in our cities and major towns.

Since August 2016 we have seen an immature, frightened government suffer terribly from analysis paralysis. By following the Labor government five-point media plan hundreds of jobs have been blocked in onshore gas, hotels, retail, Dan Murphy's as anchor tenant for 12 other new businesses, and significant private sector investment.

The Labor government simply does not know how to govern in the best interests of Territorians. Jobs bring people to the Northern Territory. This Labor government is travelling around the Territory, sprinkling museums, art galleries, art trails and cultural centres across the landscape. But this is not wealth-creating infrastructure that will help unlock private investment and industry. This is spending for spending's sake without a business case or a plan.

An example of missing the point with spending is tourism. Cutting funding to tourism will cause a decrease in the number of visitors to the Northern Territory. Cutting the infrastructure grants and funding to regional tourist associations is not the way to grow tourism. Improving our tourism infrastructure and adding products is needed.

Nowhere in the budget have we seen any interest in investing in wealth-generating activities. In fact, the areas that will lead us out of the economic hole—primary industry and resources and tourism and culture—have been cut.

Primary Industry and Resources has seen its budget slashed from \$101m in 2016–17 to \$93m in 2017–18. How does cutting the budget of a wealth-generating sector support or create jobs? Similarly, the budget for Tourism NT was cut from \$48m to \$43m, a \$5m reduction which will directly cost jobs. Marketing campaigns work. They reap rewards and create long-term sustainable jobs. Successful marketing keeps more of our people in work.

Darwin should be the capital city of northern Australia and should spearhead everything Australia has to offer on the northern flank. This should be the case in military and Defence issues, and business activity and connectivity in Southeast Asia. To have a population of 250 000 to 300 000 is not an unreasonable expectation for the Northern Territory by the middle of the century.

For centuries there has been trade between Aboriginal Territorians and Indonesia, whether there is the barter trade or otherwise. This has created a culture that has continued over time to the point where the Northern Territory has a good relationship with Indonesia. The Territory has always been able to get on with business in a trade perspective as well as a social one. We consider ourselves different in that sense. The portfolio of Asian Trade and Engagement was active with successive Territory governments.

In the 1990s we had offices in several locations around Asia, but the offices were gradually closed down under the previous Labor government. I note that the current Chief Minister was a senior adviser in that government. As a result we took a major backward step, and the Country Liberal government tried to rebuild those relationships. We opened a new trade office in Jakarta, Indonesia. This office remains closed and, as the Chamber of Commerce says, there appears to be no urgency at all to anything this government does.

From an economic point of view, Japan is now our biggest trading partner with gas developments, and it will continue to be important into the future, but the Japanese relationship is a trade relationship not a social one, whereas Indonesia is both trade and social.

When you look at it from a trade point of view we talk about live cattle and our relationship with Indonesians coming and going. Indonesians come to the Territory and buy pastoral properties to obtain a reliable supply of cattle. In regard to the social dynamics with people of Indonesian or Indonesian-Australian background, these people are part of the Territory culture and society. They are embraced as Territorians, not just Indonesians living in the Northern Territory.

Timor is social; we have a good opportunity to work with Timor, which has a different dynamic to the rest of the country because we consider ourselves neighbours and good friends. We have the ability to open doors and conduct trade. Vietnam is trade orientated, while the Philippines is social as well. Filipinos now represent the largest Asian population in the Northern Territory. If we are to be a powerhouse for the country and develop many of our mineral and agricultural opportunities, we will need people to be able to do that. We need people to fill the jobs being created. It is not just about jobs for Territorians, but jobs for all Australians.

While the relationships with Asia progress, so does the rest of the nation. That is what our geographical position offers to the country. Darwin is Asia's gateway to Australia, not just the capital city of the north. We must rapidly develop our infrastructure. We have the goods and services to be able to trade, so while we are

setting up the trade routes we are also setting up the infrastructure in the Territory to be able to foster development opportunities.

The Country Liberal opposition understands that we must look north for population growth and south for business influx. We want to sell the message of what the NT is and what it has to offer, and we want investment from Australia. Past schemes aimed at encouraging Australians to relocate were undersubscribed and the NT should instead boost its attractiveness as an educational hub for Asian students.

Four hours to the south of Darwin there are six major cities and 23 million people. Four hours north there are eight capital cities of nations, 36 trading ports, 69 international airports, and half a billion people.

The Territory continues to be a place of opportunity, and we continue to gain the benefits of migration and boost a strong, vibrant and tolerant multicultural society. The key to population growth in the Territory is to continue our welcoming and proactive approach to immigration and retaining many of those immigrants for the long run.

First, the Territory should aim to substantially increase the number of overseas students. This is not a new idea, but it is worth reiterating. According to the federal Department of Education and Training, there were 307 000 international enrolments in higher education in 2016 across Australia. In the Northern Territory there were 1400, just under 0.5% of the national total. There are many more undertaking VET and English language courses.

There should be considerable potential to increase international students and other cross-cultural exchanges from Indonesia and other neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. Darwin offers a welcoming, multicultural environment; we share a similar climate with many of our neighbouring Asian countries and can offer families a shorter flight home for their loved ones upon studying abroad.

While many return home on completion of their studies, some overseas students transfer to other visas and contribute valuable skills to the Australian workforce. We would love to see many of these students putting down deep, long-term roots in the Territory. Instead of having a belated population share of Australia's overseas students, the Territory should aim for a greater share. The boost to the Territory economy would also be considerable.

The booming economies of Southeast Asia and southern China are within three to five hours' flying time from Darwin. The tropics account for 40% of the world's population today, rising to 50% by 2050. By 2030 Asia will represent approximately two-thirds of the global middle class population and middle class consumption. The north operates in similar time zones to the most dynamic economies in Asia, a particular advantage for service industries.

The region is integrating quickly. Australia has recently concluded free trade agreements with Japan, South Korea and China and is in ongoing negotiations with India, Indonesia and on regional free trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations Plus. Aspirational targets with high hopes are required if we are to achieve the goal of a population of four to five million in northern Australia by 2060. This is what we see in the *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia*.

By 2030 the Asian middle class will grow from 600 million to almost three billion; it is this growth that offers the Northern Territory unparalleled opportunity. Let us remind all Australians and all our investor friends overseas that the Territory is open for business. There are two important messages that must be emphasised. One, what is required more than anything in Alice Springs now is realism; the latest census data shows clearly a dramatically ageing population. Two, looking north instead of south; migrants from the north are stickier than those from the south.

As we say this, we must not overlook our seniors; they are an underutilised and undervalued resource. The moves by this Labor government to impose swinging cuts and changes to the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme are misguided and myopic. The Northern Territory needs population numbers, especially when it comes to the current GST distribution methodology. If we cannot keep our grey gold then we lose out when it comes to the next generation of GST distribution.

We all know the old mantra of, 'One for mum, one for dad and one for the country', and perhaps this is what the Chief Minister was getting at when he insisted on ploughing on with two part-day public holidays. Remember, his justification for this half-baked idea was to grow the population. Ask how many new Territorians we have as a result of this ill-conceived decision.

Encouraging couples to have more children is a good thing, and I support any measure that helps to this end. It is important that when these new babies become adults they stay in the Territory, and this means jobs. We need lots of new jobs. How bad is the situation? A graph from previous Labor Treasurer Delia Lawrie in Budget 2012–13 shows a 33-year range of population growth in the Northern Territory and never does it go into negative territory.

What went wrong? One of the big questions is, how do we attract more women to come to the Northern Territory and to make it their home? We know the number of males in the Territory is 112 to every 100 women. Some of the consideration might have to do with issues of health, childcare and education. The Country Liberals believe a new idea of Australia is required to recognise that tropical economies represent one of our biggest opportunities and greatest risks.

Tropical regions have 40% of the world's population, 50% of the world's children and 80% of the world's environmental diversity. In this economic zone Australia is the developed country with the largest tropical land mass and advanced expertise in tropical research, infrastructure development, health needs and the various other nuances of developing such regions. We believe in the potential of the Territory.

The previous Country Liberal government had an innovative agenda and planned to make the Northern Territory a world leader in smart technology in the knowledge economy. We should commit to a greater techno Territory. Where is our population policy? We need one. We need to position the Territory as a place to live and work, and give people a reason to come here and make the Territory their home.

What we got from the Chief Minister is a number of generalities about employment growth, business growth, developing opportunities and so on. But today we have not seen a definitive plan as to how this will be done and in what time frame. If we do not address this fundamental problem we will continue to see a decline in the capital growth of housing and continued rise in vacancies in the rental market.

There are unbelievable mineral resources in the Northern Territory. This is an immense opportunity, with the \$29.9bn Defence paper with an expected \$20bn investment from the White Paper coming to the Northern Territory. We need to have this opportunity in our population plan.

A total of 2696 Territorians moved south last year. We need to find out why and what we need to do to keep them in the Territory. It is interesting, after all the focus we have had in recent times on economic summits and developments and the role that industry can play in leading our fiscal recovery, that this budget is heavily focused on social infrastructure and policy, not based on creating the climate for private investment, jobs and population growth.

Mining is an industry to lead the Territory back to prosperity, but there does not appear to be much by way of support pertaining to the mineral sector—no facilitation spend, no direct benefit spend, no review spend other than previously committed funds, and no promotional spend. What we see is a budget for social issues important for a community, but we need to support the projects that provide development opportunities, create rural and regional economic returns, have long-term positions within the community and strong royalty streams.

There is hope. The Designated Area Migration Agreement negotiated with the federal government and secured by the previous Country Liberal government provides the Northern Territory with a clear, competitive advantage when it comes to securing international skilled labour. This important agreement between the NT Government and the Commonwealth gives small and medium NT business concessions around the 457 or temporary skilled sponsorship criteria. Over 95% of all businesses in the NT are small businesses. The NT DAMA is a huge advantage for those businesses when one recognises that similar small businesses in northern Western Australia and Queensland have no access to special agreements as they do not have a DAMA.

My office recently arranged meetings for Minister Vowles and me with Fiona Nash, Peter Dutton and Karen Andrews. Last week I led this bipartisan effort to Canberra. I thank the minister for coming. I think he will agree it was a very successful trip. The key messages coming from these meetings was that the NT DAMA provided our best pathway forward to address genuine skilled labour shortages across the Northern Territory. Security of labour and skilled labour are essential ingredients in the business and job growth equation. It also follows that if businesses are not growing and creating more jobs, there are likely serious negative flow-on effects for consumer confidence. This is what we see in the Territory.

We have seen several quarters of a downward trending consumer confidence number. There is a real danger of a vicious cycle developing where private capital investment leaves the Territory low in confidence with

business unwilling to invest because consumer confidence is low. It is incumbent on this government to show some leadership to break this cycle before it becomes an irreparable downward spiral—a vicious cycle.

On Monday 8 May the ABS released data on total dwelling units approved and the numbers were again downward trending. The trend figure for March 2017 was just 49. This is down from 104 at the time of the election in August 2016. This is a near 70% collapse in only eight months. Construction contributes 20% to the gross state product of the Northern Territory, meaning that any falling in dwelling approval numbers will have a tangible impact on the numbers required to build those houses. Homebuilders will be required to reduce their workforce given that up to one in four people in the Northern Territory is employed in or supported by construction related activity directly or indirectly.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr HIGGINS: These negatives trends will obviously have a very big impact down the track. However, we have heard nothing from the government. The most important factor in keeping people in the Northern Territory, either in the short or long term, is those people staying in a job.

Jobs are the key to attracting people to come to the Northern Territory. Jobs grow the economic pie and will make the Northern Territory a bigger, better, more sustainable and desirable place to live. Forward-looking measures such as dwelling unit approvals, housing finance figures or new car sales are indicators of consumer confidence. From ABS data on the 10 March, housing finance commitments are approximately 25% down since the election in August 2016.

When we speak of housing finance commitments, essentially we are talking about mortgages. However, it is much more than simply a mortgage; it is a dream. Buying a house is a vote of confidence in the Northern Territory. If we are not building houses at the same rate then home builders will reduce workforce; it means job losses. Higher unemployment in any sector or industry will have flow-on effects throughout the economy. We do not want to allow a vicious downward cycle to develop.

The CLP had a plan to use strategic infrastructure as a platform to grow our economy and build key community assets. Yet this strategic jobs and future focus plan was lost at the election when the Labor government came to power, and referring back to an earlier point, budget 2016 sought to leverage public money with private investment. Budget 2016 strategically invested \$200m from the proceeds of the TIO sale and \$100m from the lease of the Port of Darwin to establish the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund.

The Territory's contribution was to be the cornerstone in attracting a further \$1.2bn from external investors, creating a \$1.5bn investment pool, which was expected to generate up to \$4.5bn in infrastructure investment. This fund was to invest in infrastructure assets that would achieve positive economic outcomes for Territorians while producing a commercial rate of return to the fund's investors. In addition, budget 2016 enhanced the Territory lifestyle by investing in sporting, cultural and recreational facilities, for example, a \$20m investment to build skywalk adventure experiences in Territory parks to create world-class visitor attractions and increase employment for Indigenous people.

What did the Labor government do as a matter of urgent priority? It cut this investment. The Country Liberal government had a plan to create a \$2.2bn visitor economy by 2020. Investing in the tourist product offering by creating new experiences is the way we will grow the value of the tourism sector. This Labor government simply does not understand tourism or private business. Country Liberals are pragmatic in government and govern by fact, not ideology.

That is why we invest record amounts in productivity-enhancing road infrastructure. The investment supports jobs and growth in the Territory. Private investors are looking at the Territory and asking themselves why. Why should they take the risk? Why risk having the government come in at the last minute and change the rules of the game? That is exactly what we have seen with the Dan Murphy's case.

The opposition is in favour of certainty, stability, clarity, transparency, openness and accountability. I remember a time when the Labor Party used to be in favour of openness and accountability. With the Dan Murphy's debacle we see a new government dying in a ditch to block jobs and keep private investment out of the Territory. The Dan Murphy's decision made no sense and on the list, a case for mismanagement, goes the recklessness of spending the entire contingency fund.

The hopelessness of putting more wages on the public credit card, such as unnecessary massive increases and recurrent expenditure, fails to realise the simple fact that government cannot deliver what it cannot pay for. Eventually debts have to be paid back.

Let us remind all Australians and our investor friends overseas, the Territory is open for business—for a clear, coherent economic narrative, coupled with the compelling actionable population plan. The surest way to grow the population is to grow the economy.

Let us get a realistic population economic plan. A whole-of-parliament approach to growing the population is a good start. It is an action. All Territorians are waiting; let us start.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this motion to the House. It is good to hear him come to the House with a big vision rather than what we saw in Question Time, which was a focus on small processes.

Population is important. We are in agreement there. One of the things he said is that this impacts on our GST income. I hope those on the other side of the Chamber will support our government in the fight to make sure we are retaining this.

Part of what we need to do is grow our population; that will help with this issue. Our government is committed to working with the population strategy and it supports our present population—a policy that supports our present population to stay here and will attract and retain new Territorians to encourage sustainable growth in the Territory.

I have spoken at length in this House about the importance of keeping our senior Territorians here. I was disappointed to hear the Leader of the Opposition scaremonger and say we would cut the scheme when no less than half an hour ago I reassured the House that our reform of the scheme is to make it bigger and better to make sure senior Territorians have more access to the scheme, that it is fairer in terms of who accesses it. We have 30 000 senior Territorians who are eligible for the scheme and only 20 000 are accessing it. We want to make sure we grow that scheme. I am very disappointed to see the Leader of the Opposition show such a lack of leadership in this area.

I thank my colleague, the Member for Barkly, for his work as Minister for Public Employment on making sure we keep senior Territorians in the workforce for as long as possible, because we value the experience they bring to our public service and their depth of knowledge about the Territory. We are talking about people who have been involved in growing the Territory over a long period of time. I also note that last week the Member for Barkly released a paper, the managing the aged workforce in the Northern Territory public service policy framework. This is about the value we put in senior Territorians not only with regard to concessions, but keeping people active and involved.

We are consulting with the senior Territorians on the concession scheme. This is part of the incentive to keep our seniors here, because we want people to retire in the Northern Territory. There are many benefits of that and it will be an important way of maintaining our population as well as growing it.

We all spend a lot of time in our communities at different organisations, and we understand that seniors are the backbone of so many things that happen in our community. They are the volunteers who turn up to events, the people who drive other associations. If you look on the board of any of our associations, from historical associations to sporting clubs, through to other types of associations, it is often people in their retirement driving those.

I also acknowledge the role that grandparents play. When you are a mother with a young child, the support grandparents provide you is really important. People often stay where the grandparents are. Whenever things get tough for me, I call my mother for support. We want to keep the whole family here.

I have also spoken before about the importance of harnessing the skills of young Territorians. We need to make sure we have a whole-of-government policy when we talk about population. We need to ensure that appropriate activities are taking place across the Northern Territory to keep our young people here so they have opportunities. As a government, we have committed to a youth employment strategy moving forward, and I look forward to developing that work further.

I want to talk about my role as the minister responsible for multicultural affairs. It is one of my great pleasures to represent the multicultural communities of the Northern Territory. Earlier this year I chaired the first meeting of the Minister's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs under this government. The council raised issues

about attracting migrants, settlement and employment pathways in order to facilitate a more attractive environment for a multicultural Territory.

I have asked the council to test options of a welcome and orientation package, and to make sure we have adequate transition to work programs for new migrants. We will also look at career pathways once people are in employment to ensure that our newest Territorians have opportunities to develop whilst they are in the Territory. They will report back to me this year, so I look forward to the meeting in October.

We are also working toward a migration NT strategy this year. There is \$1.8m committed to attract workers from interstate and overseas. Council members have also assisted me in consulting with regional multicultural communities. We need to be clear that we have vibrant and engaged multicultural communities across the Northern Territory.

It was great being on the show circuit last month. I held multicultural forums in Katherine and Tennant Creek. They were a great opportunity to catch up with the specific needs of our multicultural community in remote locations.

Our multicultural community has grown significantly, and now many more people from a multicultural background live remote and are taking jobs where employers are struggling to gain staff. We cannot underestimate their value in the bush, where they help to deliver health outcomes and other tourism businesses.

One of the great discussions I had with the minister's advisory council at the meeting was about the importance of maintaining cultural identity. Government funds a wide range of multicultural activities that are focused on making sure people have opportunities to celebrate their culture. One of the great things I do as minister is attend those events. All of us in this House are proud to attend events that celebrate people's strength and pride in their culture.

One thing that has become clear is that multicultural communities are also very—there was a strong debate on how we work intra-culturally in the Northern Territory and make sure it includes our many Aboriginal nations. The Northern Territory is made up of many nations over many generations with our Aboriginal and First Nations people. One of the strengths of having a multicultural community is that by celebrating cultural identity we are also supporting progress toward reconciliation and the importance of culture as a part of our life.

Too often the immigration debate can be hijacked by fears, especially regarding loss of jobs and other important issues. The benefits of population growth were outlined by the Opposition Leader, as well as the strength we have as a community when we embrace diversity and difference. As a government, we welcome these benefits, but in no way does that reduce our commitment to growing jobs for Territorians. We can do both at once.

One of the biggest changes really struck me when I was campaigning in Alice Springs, that is, the depth of the multicultural community that has changed significantly in the last 10 years. In Alice Springs we now have more than 3000 people of Indian descent living in our town.

I was very excited to be the first minister to ever inaugurate their multicultural cricket match this year. I went to the finals as well and I congratulate all teams who showed great cricket skills. It was a really great competition between Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, so well done to them. That shows just some of the vibrancy in the community that having a diverse range of migrants brings us.

Across the Territory we have a diverse range of migrants. Some moved here for great employment options. The Territory often provides what is not on offer down south for families as skilled migrants on humanitarian visas or as international students. Studies show the economic and social benefits cultural diversity brings to Australia. We see that in the Territory; we live it every day. Our industries of tourism, education and trade increase; our towns are more vibrant; and people demonstrate increased adaptability and resistance.

We have a very strong multicultural community in the NT who are vocal in their concerns regarding potential federal government changes to citizenship and visas, and the impact it will have on the Territory's population. These peak organisations and community members will also lobby the federal government and I will be backing them 100% of the way, particularly in regard to the English test, which is unfair. I read with interest in the newspaper the other day the story of an Irish vet with two degrees who failed that English test, so we really need to look at that.

That is a woman who was raised with English as her first language, with two university degrees, and she still failed the test. This is a big concern. Whilst we laugh here, there are families in the Northern Territory who are really worried about this. This is an issue that can split families. The partner who is working in the community after coming here as the skilled migrant may pass the test, but the partner who stays at home looking after the children may not be able to. We will have circumstances where families' citizenship status will be split, and that is a major concern for our communities.

I was very proud of our multicultural community earlier this year when they fought changes to 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act*. They fought, but they were not successful in getting through the senate. While we are speaking about the importance of tolerance of diversity, I thank the multicultural society of the Northern Territory for their hard work in making submissions on behalf of our community. They presented clear arguments about how this could negatively impact our first people and it was a great example of how diversity makes us stronger.

The other thing that has been very clear to me is that our young multicultural community is growing. The second generation of migrants, who see themselves as Territorians, are growing stronger and see their place here. Multicultural Youth NT, or MyNT, is a very strong organisation. I was proud to be at the 10th anniversary not long ago. It was a great event to show how people see themselves as Territorians in a unique way with a strong cultural identity.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition on fostering international students to remain in the Territory post-study, which is very important. I had a great meeting on Monday with Mr Sattar, who is the President of the Bangladeshi society of Darwin. He said they work very closely with any Bangladeshi students here to help them look for work and understand the system of work in Australia. That is a great example of where the existing community is fostering those issues.

The top five international students in the Territory originate from Nepal, India, Philippines, China and Bangladesh. This year \$1m has been committed to StudyNT to attract international students to the Territory.

International students, as the Leader of the Opposition said, grow economic social value to the fabric of the Territory. The economic summits, which were very important and helpful, gave a roadmap on where we go—and also growing our trade relationships with Asia.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the need to attract more women to the Northern Territory. I wholeheartedly agree with him. The best way to do that is to focus on gender equality and ensure women have opportunities to develop their career that they may not have elsewhere. I am very pleased to be the minister for women's policy. Women in leadership positions went backwards under the past government. We are very keen to improve that, particularly with our fifty-fifty board commitment. I am very proud to have met that commitment with the first two boards I have appointed.

We continue to work on developing skills. When I was in Katherine we had a fantastic women's forum, which was about encouraging young women to stay in the Territory in places like Katherine, as well as encouraging young women to innovate within smaller communities. That was a fantastic discussion. I look forward to working with the Member for Katherine on how to support women in rural circumstances.

Today I have highlighted that I am committed to fostering a supportive environment for growing our population, maintaining the population we already have, and making sure we have a bright future for the Territory. I am pleased to support the Leader of the Opposition. It is good to see him focusing on the big picture rather than minutiae. We look forward to working with him to grow the population of the great Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, this has been an interesting debate. The government should bring forward a statement, because when we talk about GST later on—population is a key factor in whether we have an increase in our GST or not.

My notes are based on other people's research. This is an issue that demographers love; that is, where our population is going, what it was, how many people are in different age groups in the Territory, the gender balance et cetera. I am using some research done by Dr Andrew Taylor and Dr Tom Wilson, who both come from Charles Darwin University, Northern Institute.

They have looked at this in recent times. In fact, they released Research Brief Issue RB06, 2016, A Snapshot of Current Population Issues in the Northern Territory, informing the Territory economic summits. We have some recent data in relation to our population.

I will give a summary of what Andrew Taylor says online, under the heading 'The Northern Territory's Population in 2016':

Territory population growth during 2011 to 2016 averaged 1.6% per annum, down on the five years prior (2%) and slightly lower than for Australia (1.8% per annum).

...

There was strong growth in early career age groups but a decline in children, teenagers and those in their early 20s (consistent with recent interstate migration figures). However, Territory level growth hides diverse outcomes for towns and regions within the Territory. Very high growth (26%) was recorded for Litchfield and Palmerston (22%) during 2011 to 2016 (around 5% per annum). Most of the growth in Litchfield was in males and a result of the move of Berrimah prison to Holtze as well as some workers living at the accommodation village near Howard Springs ...

Which hosts up to 3500 personnel:

... declaring themselves as NT residents (living in the NT for six months or more). At the other extreme, some regions recorded negative growth including Barkly (-3%) and the East Arnhem region at -7%, - due mostly to the loss of workers after the curtailment of the Alumina refinery in Nhulunbuy. But keep in mind these growth figures will be adjusted for Census net undercount and other factors, with adjusted regional growth figures to come in September this year.

I quoted that because if you said the Territory was not doing well in my area, I would wonder if you had driven past Coolalinga of late. It is booming. Go past Palmerston with Gateway, which is a big construction. That construction keeps workers in the Territory.

That is not to say we will not face issues when INPEX starts to reduce its work. I expect the village at Howard Springs to slowly reduce its population at the end of this year. We will be seeing a difference in the amount of work available simply because there will be people leaving the Territory and obviously less workers in the INPEX village.

Dr Wilson also released some key findings in relation to population and why we have a low rate of population growth. It is important to recognise that there are a range of reasons. I expect government to start looking at how to approach those issues and turn those matters around so we have growth. Without growth we will continue to see a decrease in the GST and other states will pick up.

I know this will be debated later, but there is a lot of pressure from other states to have a bigger share of the GST. If that argument is won in the federal parliament we will be the ones who suffer.

The findings that Dr Tom Wilson released was:

- *The Territory is currently in a period of relatively low population growth which is diminishing our share of the national population.*
- *A persisting deficit of women is evident across all age groups above 15 years, and particularly amongst those aged 60 years and over.*

I will come to that reasoning a bit later:

- *Low growth is being driven by sustained net negative interstate migration which is a result of the following factors:*
 - *The 'non-arrivals' of women and young families with children;*
 - *declines in the arrivals of those aged 20-39 years;*
 - *smaller increases to departures in many age groups, especially 40-59 years; and*
 - *migration losses are most evident from the Darwin Suburbs, Alice Springs and East Arnhem regions.*

I was just thinking as I read that, it is amazing how much our population depends on Defence. Many of the families in the Territory have come here not because they wanted to, but because one or both of the parents have been stationed here. Defence policies can change. I have seen one of the battalions from Robertson Barracks shifted to South Australia. When that happens, part of the population goes to South Australia. That is an area we need to keep our eyes on.

Going on:

- *We are no longer competing well enough to attract the same proportions of out-migrants from most States and Territories, with South Australia and Victoria standing out in terms of the loss of 'market share'.*
- *Our population is ageing through large growth in the 65 years and over population, however, the proportion of the population aged 65 plus remains below Australia;*
- *Indigenous population growth continues at a steady pace, while non-Indigenous growth rates are far more volatile.*
- *Population immobility is relatively low in the Territory, and lowest in Darwin City and Darwin's northern suburbs.*
- *Opportunities exist to address current population issues through reducing the gender imbalance and understanding how we can be more competitive in the interstate migration 'market' through research.*

I recently went to the ABARES conference in Darwin, which is a body that is run by the federal department of Agriculture, which looks at a range of issues, one of which is climate change. One of the speakers is from the department of meteorology, and they spoke about the effects on increasing temperatures in relation to agricultural production. He said that in Darwin, for instance, you might get five days in a year where the temperature will get up to 35 degrees. We all know that where the temperatures here are taken is relatively close to the sea, so the temperature is fairly even across the board. I learned about that 40 or 50 years ago in geography. It is fairly rare for Darwin to get up to 35 degrees. He said that would double, so instead of having five days a year over 35 degrees we will get 10 days a year over 35 degrees.

I also remember a debate on the ABC breakfast TV program. Someone said that public servants do not like to come to the Northern Territory. One of the reasons was the heat. We do not take that into as much consideration as we ought to. Why would you come to a hot, very humid climate when you could go somewhere on the Queensland coast or Western Australia, where it is more Mediterranean in climate? I am not advocating for people to do that, by the way, but it is a reality of life that people find Darwin very hot.

Why do we only have tourism in the Dry Season? Because once it reaches September in this part of the world the humidity picks up, there might be a big thunderstorm, but people find it a difficult climate to live in. That is reflected now in the housing, which are not built as tropical houses. They are all eskies. They are designed to keep in the cool that you produce from the air conditioning and keep out the heat.

I believe that is an issue, and I do not have the answer for it unless someone can produce a cloud mass over the Northern Territory on a regular basis. It is a real issue for people wanting to come here. They find it very hard.

I came from Melbourne to Sydney by rail, and Sydney to Darwin on the *Oronsay*. I was still wearing my suit on the ship. I walked onto the Darwin port in a suit on 3 March. I nearly died. I wondered how people can live in this sauna. But I am still here. For better or worse, I love the place. I love the heat and humidity, but it is not everyone's cup of tea.

We have to take that into consideration. It is an issue when bringing people here. I notice that is not mentioned in any of the documents I read.

I want to mention the deficit of women. The Minister for Territory Families raised that. Studies show that many young females, more so than males, study interstate and do not come back. The Minister for Territory Families said we have to find some way to attract them back here if they do that.

That was an interesting point. It says here that there were 13 fewer women per 100 men in the NT in 2015. That is compared to the rest of Australia. Gender imbalance is evident at all age groups after 14 years of age. It goes on to say that:

... as teenage girls are far more likely to go away to finish school or start university. Boys are more likely to stay and work while girls are more likely to plan their education and careers and pursue them elsewhere.

Professor Taylor also brought up some interesting summaries and conclusions. He said, and I think this has been said before, that a current period of low population growth is diminishing our national share of the population. He said:

Opportunities to reverse the current trends of low growth, gender imbalance and net interstate migration losses exist in the areas of:

1. Addressing our female deficit and obtaining population balance and maturity by:

a. Pursuing lifestyle, amenity and population balance (versus large growth);

b. Doing everything we can to keep seniors (grandparents) ...

The Minister for Territory Families mentioned that:

c. Delivering quality education, housing, retail and transport facilities.

I raise the matter of transport facilities while I have the minister here, because we definitely need a bus service from Palmerston to Coolalinga. We have one of the biggest shopping centres now in the Northern Territory, yet we do not have regular buses to it. The petrol app is a relatively minor thing when it comes to importance, but a bus service from Palmerston to the rural area does a few things.

Many workers in Palmerston come to Coolalinga to work, so it would give the rural area a chance to have a regular bus service from the park-and-ride at Coolalinga in to town and Palmerston, regularly, on an hourly basis. At the moment we have two express busses in the morning. If you come to Howard Springs you get three busses from Howard Springs in the morning that only go one way to Palmerston; they do not come back, unless you wait until 3 pm.

There is room for improvement of the way we deal with our transport facilities ...

Ms Manison: I will ask the question, thank you.

Mr WOOD: I have to keep trying.

Diversifying the economy by stimulating the cultural, creative and innovative sectors—I do not entirely agree with my friend, the Leader of the Opposition. I think you need a range of things to stimulate the economy. Art can be part of that. I am not sure that I understand the government's policy on art trails because I am not sure how that works or will work in practice, especially as we have a very seasonal tourist industry which is sometimes limited by the physical nature of the Northern Territory from the point of view of roads, heavy rain and the heat.

The research brief also talks about moving away from chasing big projects which entrench volatility, gender imbalance and population turnover. I could not agree more. There is nothing wrong with the odd big project, but that means our economy goes up and down, and we need things that will keep the economy relatively steady. The brief also talks about negotiating an increased international migration intake to offset interstate losses.

I picked up a document which looked at some of those issues in a bit more detail. We are talking about overseas migration again—more overseas students. Tom Wilson said the key to population growth in the Territory is immigration and retaining many of those immigrants in the long run. He suggested three key ways in which the Northern Territory could boost its population through immigration. He said:

First, the Territory should aim to substantially increase its number of overseas students. This is not a new idea, but it is worth reiterating. According to the Department of Education and Training, there were 307,000 international enrolments in higher education in 2016 across Australia. In the Northern

Territory there were 1,400 – just under 0.5% of the national total. There are many more undertaking VET and English language courses.

There should be considerable potential to increase students from Indonesia and other neighbouring South East Asian countries. Darwin offers a welcoming multicultural environment, climate similarities ...

Which I think is very important:

... with many Asian countries, and a shorter flight home. While many return home on completion of their studies, some overseas students transfer to other visas and contribute valuable skills to the Australian workforce. Instead of having a below-population share of Australia's overseas students, the Territory could aim for a greater share, say 2%. The boost to the Territory's economy would also be considerable.

They are very intelligent comments. Going way back, the Berrimah Farm, once upon a time, was the site for a proposed international school. It got as far as a mound of dirt which had a stack of chairs on it and some shade, and that was the announcement that we would have an international school. That mound of dirt stayed there for a long time until someone needed to fill the hole or build a road. The only people who went to that school were Brahman cattle.

We have looked at this. I do wonder if we have to try to be more innovative and look at things the Northern Territory can do which relate to the climate we live in, and issues that relate to this sphere of the world, in a global sense, between the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn, or Tropic of Cancer if you want to look the other way.

They are ways in which we could become a centre for excellence in research and development, which we could use to attract people here. James Cook University attracts people ...

Mr VOWLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request an extension of time for my learned colleague, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WOOD: Thank you for the learned bit.

I think it is important that we try to look at things like that. James Cook University is a centre for cyclone research in housing and from a weather perspective. We need to brainstorm whether we can attract more research on development in this area.

Increased humanitarian intake is another way to up our population. In regard to this, Dr Tom Wilson says:

Second, the Territory could accept a greater share of the nation's humanitarian migration intake. ABS statistics show that over the most recent five years of data there were about 10,000 immigrants per year in the 'Special eligibility and humanitarian' category nationally, but an average of only about 60 for the Territory. If the Territory were to aim for an above-population share of Australia's humanitarian intake, such as 2%, the absolute numbers would still be quite small but not insignificant relative to the Territory's recent population growth.

The issue is to try to keep people here, and that is why if you try to get people from a similar climate—when the federal government said it would take refugees from Syria, Australia would take a percentage of those, and a percentage of that would come to the Northern Territory. I do not know if that has happened. Someone might be able to give me a bit more information on that.

Also, people will or will not agree with me, but I believe that Manus and Nauru are no place for refugees. I think there are ways we could bring those people onshore, even if it is a requirement they must stay in a certain area for the next 10 years or something.

Economically it seems to be an awful waste of money. Morally, regardless of our present policies of stopping the boat people, we are still talking about human beings who, for better or worse, whether they should come or not—do we just let people rot simply because a government policy says that if we change our mind on this more people will come? I am not sure that will happen. I think there may be opportunities in the Territory to welcome those people. There may have to be requirements to say, 'You must stay here. You cannot go

wandering off somewhere else. Part of the agreement is that we will bring you here, but you will work and raise your families here.'

People will still have to come under some scrutiny; I think that is a far more humanitarian way to help those people.

Dr Tom Wilson also says to offer a new home to Pacific islanders facing inundation, and I agree totally with this. It may come up in debate a little later about the trouble we have running our horticulture industry and getting people to pick fruit. There are already agreements with people living on Pacific islands to work in the horticulture industry in Queensland.

We have the issue of climate change, meaning some of these islands will be subject to inundation. These are our neighbours and they are not very rich countries. I have stayed on the Cook Islands, and I would call them second world, not first or third world. They have, unfortunately, diminishing populations to some extent. You only have to see the number of Cook Islanders who live in New Zealand. Quite a few live in Australia and some live here.

Places like Kiribati are struggling with the issue of inundation. We should at least have our hand out. Our country is rather big compared to the Cook Islands. It is 32 kilometres around the island, and many of the other islands are much smaller than that. Their land mass compared to ours is minute.

We are a multicultural country. As much as I might feel I have Irish and English ancestry, I do not have to go far to see all the Filipinos who go to my local church. Blimey! If they left the church there would not be many people left. The migration of Filipinos is fantastic. Who does not love their singing? There are a few cafes I go to that are run by Filipinos. Look at the Vietnamese who came, more by accident than design, and the contribution they have made. That was forced migration.

Darwin is the ideal place to look at increasing migration by offering a hand to people in the Pacific and places like East Timor, one of the poorest countries in the world. If we can do that we will increase our population. Those families, I can guarantee, will have lots of babies. That is an issue the Leader of the Opposition raised. One way to increase your population is to have lots of children. Sometimes people get into a bit of trouble saying that, but that is how you achieve a higher population. It is just a fact of life.

In summary, Dr Wilson and Dr Taylor have done a fair bit of work in this area. I have not touched on many of the issues the Leader of the Opposition raised. He has gone to more specific ideas about what could happen. I totally agree with him on Weddell and I hope the government has not forgotten Weddell after all the fights we had previously. Even from the point of view of planning, making a sustainable development would be really good.

I thank Dr Taylor and Dr Wilson for what they have put together. I sometimes think we forget to look in our own back yard when we are doing research. Treasury has this large document on population projections. Those staff have been doing work on it as well. I have not had time to read it all. It was an update from 2014, so I do not know if that document has been updated since.

When I see all this before us—this issue of population growth and how we can increase the population is a subject the government needs to address in a major statement to this parliament. In the end, we will discuss the loss of GST. If we do not work on increasing our population we will find it very hard to argue against the other states. When you look at some of the graphs I have looked at—which place is getting the highest number of people going to it at the moment? It is Victoria by a long way. They say Melbourne will overtake Sydney's population in a few years' time.

People we want to come to the Territory are going the other way. How do we attract those people? That is an issue we have to address as a parliament and government. I do not think our standard of living will increase—that is for sure—if we start to go backwards and lose more of the GST.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, population is an important issue in the Northern Territory. It always has been and it always will be, but it is important now because we need to tackle it head on as members of this parliament. It is clear that around this Chamber all members understand the importance of making sure we have strong policies designed to attract and retain people in the Northern Territory. There is no better policy than having jobs. It is the most important component of maintaining and attracting people to the Northern Territory.

Before I speak about our efforts and our work around population growth, it is worth talking about the trends in population and some of the emerging issues we are seeing in the Northern Territory. The population growth has not been at the rates we need to see. Over the last few years we have seen it come to a standstill. Our population grew by 0.5% in 2015 and 0.3% in 2016. Now, for the first time in 14 years, population growth is expected to be negative in 2017. We expect to see it decline by 0.3%.

Interstate migration is particularly negative. Unfortunately more people are leaving to go interstate than we are attracting. In 2015–16 we saw 2696 more people leave the Territory for other states than had come here.

It is also important to understand the trends by gender and age group. Interstate migration to the Northern Territory by women and children has been low. There has been a trend increase in the number of seniors leaving the Northern Territory as well.

The trend goes beyond gender and age. Last year, 2016, was a census year. We saw the results. The trend is emerging, which shows that our share of the national Indigenous population is also declining in regard to the percentage in the Northern Territory. We are finding that more and more people are identifying as Indigenous in other jurisdictions.

In opposition we raised the issue of population, and what a critical issue it is for the future of the Northern Territory. Since coming to government we have taken proactive steps to ensure we are thinking about population and taking action on the issue of population growth in the Northern Territory.

One of the biggest challenges we are facing is coming off peak construction at the INPEX project and moving through to the operational phase. We are all acutely aware of this and some of the challenges that will present in this Chamber.

We have targeted our budget, delivered in May, towards that issue. The best way we can maintain and grow our population is by maintaining and growing jobs.

Addressing our population issue is about two things. It is about ensuring we have the right policies and taking the right actions to attract people to the Northern Territory, to retain people and grow our economy. That is what will drive job creation. It is important to ensure that our population is properly counted. We need to make sure we have as many people here enrolled and with Medicare cards as possible. We need to make sure every person is recognised by the system. Every time we have a census we must have as many people as possible involved in that process so we can understand where they are, who they are and where their challenges lie.

It is critical that every person is counted to make sure we understand that data so that people are being recognised. That way we can have the Territory's very distinct attributes acknowledged, particularly when it comes to looking at program funding, services and so forth.

In coming to government we held our economic summits. We felt this was an important process to go from the top to the bottom of the Northern Territory, consulting with key industry, businesses, organisations, and most importantly, Territorians on the ground about where they see the opportunities and challenges in our economic development, what ideas they have to overcome those challenges, how they want to work with government, what role they see government playing, and to have them working side by side, hand in hand with government to fully recognise our economic potential going forward.

It is not just about the urban centres; it is about the bush as well. It is about our remote communities, towns, our capital—a big urban centre like Darwin. It is about us working together to maximise the opportunities for the Northern Territory.

It was an extensive process because we consulted on a deep level. From that document, we were able to put together an economic development framework that will shape and drive the decisions of this government.

We have put out our 10-year infrastructure plan, which will give business and investors certainty in the direction this government will take. Where our infrastructure priorities are and where we see that infrastructure investment will unlock more opportunities for investment, jobs, growth and business development, and that is why that was such an important process.

Ultimately, we want to see more business activity in the Northern Territory. We are determined to maintain and further grow our status as being the capital of northern Australia. We are determined that Darwin is on the map—and we heard the contributions from the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Braintree and

the Member for Nelson about the opportunities to the north of Australia and how we must capitalise on those opportunities.

We are, naturally, the most logical to capitalise on those opportunities and we are the capital of northern Australia. We will continue to make sure we maintain and grow that status. We want to see more big businesses setting up shop here in the Territory. If they want to do business overseas, up north to Asia, this is the place to be. It is not Sydney, Melbourne, Perth or Brisbane. You want to be here in Darwin and these are the opportunities we must make the most of.

We see opportunity for more Defence investment. The Commonwealth Government is deeply committed to that, but it is making sure we get that investment in the Northern Territory as a priority—a potential \$20bn over two decades, which is an incredible investment opportunity. We have the business that is capable; we have the people who are capable.

We must make sure that when that investment comes it flows through to benefit local business, and that will maintain and grow jobs here. We know about our natural assets, landscapes, scenery, parks and culture here with the Indigenous Territorians, and people want to come here and experience and share and learn about that deep, rich culture. The beautiful artwork by Indigenous Territorians is the best in this country.

We have opportunities through tourism to grow more jobs and get more people to the Northern Territory. The postural sector through resources—agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture. We have great opportunities here. This is what the economic summits, developing our economic development framework and the work we have delivered through our budget to maximise job creation will target, retaining and growing our population.

I congratulate the Resources minister and the Opposition Leader on their recent trip to Canberra. They talked with our colleagues there about issues regarding 457 visas and the concerns of people in the Northern Territory, including the impacts those federal changes could have.

We have a very active government here, which is going on international trade missions. We have seen the work of the Primary Industry and Resources minister, and the Minister for Tourism and Culture. The Chief Minister has been on very important trade missions up north to our Asian neighbours to market the opportunities for the Northern Territory, but most importantly, to rebuild the trade ties and grow them to ensure they know the Territory is open for business and we want to work with them. It is very important when it comes down to what we must do as a government going forward to grow our population and tackle this issue head on. That is what they have been doing.

We see wonderful opportunities working with Charles Darwin University in international education to market the world-class education opportunities to international students so they can get a slice of that activity. We have seen what some of the big cities down south have done with international education through high schools, universities and the vocational education sector. This is a big industry.

I love it when you hear wonderful stories of people who have come here to study and get their degree, and they love it so much that they stay and buy a home to stay for the long run. They are Territorians. They are raising their families here. We want to see more of that.

Population growth is a critical issue when it comes to the distribution of the GST. We are impacted in our distribution of the GST by what our population looks like. We have been hit in those numbers because our population growth is not at the rate of other jurisdictions, so they are getting a bigger slice of the GST than we are, and it is important that we do what we can to deal with that issue. That is why we are so committed to investing in jobs and in the areas that will ultimately grow jobs.

We have made a submission to the Productivity Commission regarding the distribution of the GST. I have met with the Commonwealth Grants Commission to discuss our issues with the distribution of the GST and the methodology. We have some real challenges, especially with this Productivity Commission inquiry into HFE and the GST, and we will fight for every cent we can get. It is critical that we get every cent that we can.

The \$2bn GST cut over the next four years has deeply affected the Territory's finances, so we must do everything we can to protect our share of the GST because there are other jurisdictions coming after it. Western Australia and New South Wales will try to take from us what they can in regard to that distribution of the GST. This will be a very big, important body of work, but we have a fight on our hands. There is no doubt about that.

When we delivered the budget it was focused on taking on, head on, the challenges with the slowing economy, which we are facing right now, but investing in the future of the Northern Territory. We are looking at retaining people and growing the jobs of the future and the economy. That was a critical consideration. As part of that we outlined the actions we are taking when it comes to tackling the issue of population growth and keeping people here in the Northern Territory.

It was about getting people into jobs, and our \$1.7bn record investment in job-creating infrastructure was a centrepiece to this. We had to make some very hard decisions in order to get there and were told by businesses that now is the time they need to see business, industry and jobs supported in the NT. That is why we made that decision.

We have included in the budget a record \$297m repairs and maintenance allocation to support jobs and keep people in the Northern Territory. We can see \$733m going into roads and transport infrastructure, which is critical to open opportunities for business and economic development in the Northern Territory. This is exactly what we were looking at. It was a critical investment to make sure we got people to stay in jobs and to create jobs in the future.

Another area we have been very focused on since being in government has been supporting more Territorians with home ownership. We have retained the First Home Owner Grant for people who wish to build a new home, but we also made changes to the first home owner stamp duty concession for those wanting to purchase an established home to give more Territorians an opportunity to buy in the Northern Territory.

If a person buys their home here they are more likely to build their future here and stay in the Northern Territory. We knew that diversifying the housing options was critical to making sure people had more options to get a foot into the housing market. For some people it is only an old, run down, one-bedroom unit that needs some tender love and care, but that is the starting point in the market for some people. It builds a bit of equity over time and helps them get their foot in the door so that, eventually, they can move into a bigger home as their circumstances change, which is an important opportunity.

We are still pursuing more opportunities for those on lower incomes to keep them here—opportunities for affordable housing options in the Northern Territory. We are targeting housing in the bush, and putting in a record effort in that space from a Northern Territory Government perspective with a \$1.1bn investment over 10 years.

There is also land release and ensuring we have a constant supply and the right level of supply. There is a focus on that. We are ensuring that body of work continues and that Territorians understand those priorities for land releases and that they are comfortable. We will have further discussions with the community about that as this year goes on with public consultation documents that we will release regarding land release and the issues around that.

It is important that we support Territory families. We need to make sure we have great schools, and that is an important reason why we have been investing in education and our schools, to reverse the cuts to teacher numbers and support staff in classrooms that occurred under the previous government. We have made a very large investment in that space because it is vital that we have great schools for the education of our kids. We need great, liveable communities. We invest in things such as the back-to-school vouchers and have continued the investment for the sports vouchers. We support our community groups to keep people here and make sure they feel well supported.

Childcare is a very important issue which governments have continued to look at for a long time and have made sure there is support for.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request an extension of time for the minister, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Ms MANISON: The focus is on ensuring we have good health services—and this government is focused on investing in children and their early years in the Northern Territory from pre-conception through to starting school, to make sure we have the right investment so families are confident that children have the best form of support in those early years. If we give those children the best support, particularly if they have developmental vulnerabilities, they are more likely to succeed through school and into their adult lives.

Cost of living is a factor in population. One area that has had an impact on people's cost of living has been the price of power, water and sewerage. We made a commitment in the last election to give people certainty around those prices, and we have kept those prices in line with CPI. It hurt people deeply when there were huge price hikes under the former government.

Supporting seniors is another factor. We do not want to see seniors leaving the Northern Territory. We do not want to see the days in which everyone works here, contributes to the Northern Territory and then hits retirement age and leaves. It is very important that we listen to seniors about the elements that impact their decision on whether they stay or leave the Territory in their retirement. We are getting that feedback, loud and clear, on the areas in which government can assist them through the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme. We are receiving strong feedback about what areas are critical to them, what are the important areas of support the government can give them to help with the cost of living to keep them in the Northern Territory. That is a very important body of work. I have heard loud and clear from my electorate about the impact that scheme has on their lives.

We need to have more housing options for seniors. In the budget we invested in some feasibility studies to look at more senior accommodation options in Alice Springs and the rural area. Housing is an important part in determining where someone lives.

It is important that we make sure we continue to invest in areas of health services. That has always been something I have received strong feedback on. Seniors want to make sure they have access to the health services they need. The reality is that the older you get, you might find yourself having a few more interactions and contact with health services. That is the nature of life, as we all know. It is important that we stay focused on that because we want to keep as many seniors in the NT as we can.

The Northern Territory should be a society for all people. Traditionally the NT has been a place where young people go, but from my personal experience I know the benefit of having my parents here, the grandparents of my children. It is a great support to my family network. When I speak to people who are not so fortunate to be in a situation with a family network of support, it makes their life more challenging. Most of all, it is nice to have your family connections together.

Seniors bring an immense amount of wisdom to our society. They bring life experience. It is wonderful to have families who are together. It enhances the social fabric of a place. It is really important that we create those opportunities to keep seniors here in the Northern Territory. They are an important part of our population. We are focused on working with them to give them the support they need to make the decision to stay in the Northern Territory. When they reach the years of retirement we do not want to lose them. We want them to stay. They are a wonderful part of the Territory and we will do what we can to keep more people here and make the Territory a realistic option for their retirement.

The issue of population is critical. The best way to keep people here, first and foremost, is to have an economy that is growing, to invest in jobs in the future and create opportunities for the future, ensuring that it is a liveable place with opportunities for all. As a government we need to ensure we are focused on investing in the right support, opportunities and programs to grow our population.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for introducing this motion; it is important to debate this in the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this important debate to the House. We have already heard a very comprehensive suite of ideas from government members and ministers that address the Leader of the Opposition's motion in regard to maintaining and building on the Northern Territory population.

It is about our seniors and multiculturalism. I happen to think that Darwin is the best example of multiculturalism in the country. We have a lot to teach the rest of the nation. Humanitarian migration was a very interesting point raised by the Member for Nelson. We have also just heard from the Treasurer, who gave a comprehensive synopsis of government's work on service delivery and encouraging population stabilisation and growth underpinned by jobs. We also heard about the very difficult but very important work the Treasurer has done on Budget 2017–18 in the area of infrastructure building and economic stimulus to keep people in the Northern Territory.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight some of the traps and pitfalls in this debate.

Like the sooty shearwaters, who travel 40 000 miles on their circular route from breeding colonies in the Falkland Islands in the spring to Arctic waters to feed throughout the summer, the urge for people to leave

the Territory was strong under the CLP. That brings a very important point to this debate, brought forward by the CLP Leader of the Opposition—if we are to seriously talk about population. We have learned a very hard lesson in the last four years about unstable government. That comes as a challenge to all of us in the House, because over the last four years we saw a population decline of around 9000 Territorians.

When we talk about the challenges regarding GST—we have a very real challenge as members of parliament, as elected community representatives, to bring stable government, trust and accountability to make sure Territorians are with us and not against us.

It is important to reflect on a few aspects of population demographics. That is a challenge in the Northern Territory, and it relates to our population being miniscule, currently around 230 000 people. This is just 1% of the population of Australia, but we cover over 17% of the Australian land mass. The population of Dili, the capital of our nearest neighbour, Timor-Leste, is 220 000. The popular holiday destination Bali, which through an Australian perspective is a small island, has a population of 4.2 million.

In the Northern Territory we have boundless plains to share. The question the Leader of the Opposition brought to the House is, how do we encourage people to come here, and most importantly, stay here? It was important for the Treasurer to reinforce the aspect of the national census, because that is one thing government can do. For many years the Territory government has argued for strategies to improve the national census, particularly to count for the highly mobile remote area population.

Whilst there has been some investment by the Australian Bureau of Statistics over the last decade, there is a question about how the current survey methodology, with a questionnaire seeking input from all residents on a single day in a single location, can accurately reflect the actual Territory population. Whilst this information is interesting, it is a distraction from the population figures, which will determine the overall funding to the Northern Territory Government provided through the Commonwealth Grants Commission and the distributions to the Territory's local government councils.

After the 2006 census the ABS conducted a post-enumeration study where they returned to the same locations to check the accuracy of their first count. In the Territory the undercount was 19%. Although an estimate for remote parts of the Territory was never released we know it is likely to have been far higher.

The conduct of the census in the Dry Season, when people are most mobile, has always been problematic for the Territory with many people moving between homelands and communities and between communities and regional towns. It is also a time that communities hold dear to celebrate their football carnivals, sporting carnivals and festivals, which equates to great wellbeing; however, that increased mobility leads to deficits in the critical data used by the Commonwealth Grants Commission to base our funding on.

It is important in this debate to reinforce bipartisanship in addressing this critical issue regarding the national census and the significant undercount for the Northern Territory, particularly relating to our remote areas.

When administrative data through taxation records, school attendance, enrolment records and medical client records in remote health centres and hospitals are all freely available, it is difficult to understand why we continue with methodology more appropriate to the more stationary population of the eastern states. When we think of growing the population, a lot of us cast our minds back to the infamous refrain from the former federal Treasurer, Peter Costello, which was reiterated by the Leader of the Opposition: 'One for mum, one for dad and one for the country.'

As the Leader of the Opposition brought to the debate, it is a simple proposition to have more kids. However, it does not follow the trend in the developed world and, unfortunately, birth rates will stay more or less static; although, we are seeing growth in the bush. That relates to natural population growth in regional and remote areas from the Indigenous population. That is a link to Michael Gunner's Labor government policy about investing in children.

What I want to bring to this debate is about growing population, but it is also about a focus on the bush and growing population opportunities to link with sound economic policy to create jobs, engagement and empowerment within a naturally growing population across regional and remote areas. That has another important link in relation to this government's investment in the bush.

We have a great opportunity to grow our population in the Northern Territory, and one of those examples has been mentioned in this debate, that is, the Labor government's \$1.1bn investment in remote housing. That is an important lever to bring the Commonwealth on board to commit to another 10-year national partnership agreement, which is coming to a critical time in decision-making—30 June 2018.

It is so important for our Commonwealth representatives, including our critical representative in this equation, Minister Scullion, to bring significant investment to the Northern Territory. It would combine with our targeted strategic investment to grow jobs in the bush, empower people in the bush, support families and provide opportunities, making sure the policy of local decision-making, local engagement and place-based solutions continues to underpin this opportunity.

If remote residents are engaged in every layer of the housing sector—for instance, in managing the tenancies, cyclical repairs and maintenance, middle-level construction like the government's Room to Breathe program and the new builds—then it will go a long way to underpinning the development of economies in the bush.

These will be real jobs with real wages that will support families. It will not only support their wellbeing and circumstances in raising their family, but their empowerment, taking the Territory in a new direction that is designed and implemented by local people—using innovation of culture and community to make sure the investment is delivering improved results.

This is a great opportunity, Opposition Leader. That is why I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate you have introduced. Our remote communities will continue to grow, and this government is preparing a better future for residents of those communities for all Territorians. To enable our massive \$1.1bn investment in housing we are also investing in utilities headworks to ensure we have serviced lots ready for use. Over the next two years we will see a significant investment of \$44.5m put onto the table to start to develop serviced land and prepare it for new housing across the Northern Territory. We look for bipartisan support from our Commonwealth colleagues to bring their investment to the table in the land service area.

Our policies for the bush are all about creating, nurturing and growing our remote economies. There are a vast number of untapped economic and social opportunities across the Northern Territory, and our housing program will create jobs for locals in remote communities. It will provide employment and training opportunities and improve housing so children get a better start in life.

We will see better health and education outcomes, and we will create long-term economic growth across parts of the Territory where the population is growing. It makes a lot of sense. It is fabulous to be part of Michael Gunner's Labor government, which has embraced this opportunity and delivered targeted investment.

In the urban context it is important, if we wish for a growing population, to accommodate everyone. We not only need housing, but all the associated infrastructure that supports housing, such as the commercial districts, schools, clinics, electricity, water and sewerage. We also have to look at encouraging people to come to the Territory, and to do that we need to create the right environment for businesses and families to thrive.

Our plan to grow the population means we have to grow jobs. If you are talking about the Katherine agricultural hub, it is the opportunity of growing jobs in that sector. If you are talking about a mining services hub in Tennant Creek and the Barkly, it is about growing jobs that will enhance those opportunities for the sector.

It makes a lot of sense to invest in the bush. It makes sense in regard to equality and opportunity, but it also makes sense in growing the population in all those aspects of fulfilling your full life potential across the bush. It will not just be housing and community development that underpins this sector; it is about really preparing the people. It is about developing the population. As we move on that continuum we will see other elements emerge.

There are a vast number of jobs in the bush across all sectors of community life and community development. Those sectors offer opportunities that directly relate to the Housing and Community Development sector.

As we start to grow jobs in these remote towns it will become commonplace when you ring for service delivery and that delivery comes from a local business, as opposed to the current fly-in fly-out model that we use. That is very expensive and challenges the outcomes in regard to the limited economic funds that are available. It also has an impact on the wellbeing of people living in those remote areas.

It is a very simple but good model. It will be an exciting time in government to deliver that. It will impact on the population of the big, wide world of the Northern Territory. I congratulate the Chief Minister for leading this.

Once again I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to try to reinforce the concept of this new, locally-driven policy, this empowerment of local decision-making, creativity, innovation and developing the economy.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank everyone for contributing to this debate. I am glad to see the government agrees that we need a plan for population in the Northern Territory.

I submitted this motion and then yesterday, on 104.9, I heard Dick Smith commenting that there is no government in Australia that has a population plan; they refer to it in a stack of other documents, but not in its entirety or on its own.

I did not agree with his philosophy about immigration. He was looking at cutting immigration, but the point he made about no government having a population plan struck me as unusual. At least we are speaking about it in this place, which I appreciate.

That is all I would like to say. I thank those who spoke on this. I put the motion to the House.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Government Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly refers to the Public Accounts Committee for inquiry and report the process by which the government made its submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into horizontal fiscal equalisation and, in particular, why the submission was not made by the due date; who determined when the submission was made; who composed the draft and final submissions; who authorised the draft submission made public on 13 July 2017; and whether a draft was submitted prior to the final.

The committee will hold its hearings for this inquiry in public unless the committee agrees to a request from the witnesses to go into private session to deal with the matter of a confidential nature. The Assembly requires any ministers whom the committee asks to appear before it to answer questions to do so.

Over recent days the *NT News* has confirmed what we have long known, that behind the endless media releases about restoring trust, this government is the very model of chaos and dysfunction. This government is so inwardly focused and gazing at its naval with such intensity that it is consistently dropping the ball when it comes to carrying out its core function. The reports about disunity may explain some of the failures of the Treasurer. Whatever the internal power games distracting the government, stewardship of the economy is one of the key roles of any government, especially one such as ours in the Northern Territory where the government plays such a large part in our economy.

For this reason I move that we refer this litany of errors to the Public Accounts Committee to give the government the opportunity to live up to the transparency and accountability which it talks about so much. There are so many unanswered questions here and Territorians deserve to know what the government is or is not doing in their name.

The general economic situation is made worse by the very large deficit this government has managed to ring up in one short year in office. We have the government running around like Henny Penny saying the sky is falling, blaming the federal government for cuts to our share from the GST revenue, implying that GST redistributions were some kind of politically partisan decision hacked out around the Cabinet table. Then we have the Productivity Commission conducting an inquiry on this very matter, the redistribution of the proceeds raised by the GST, the issue upon which the government has staked its entire economic reputation.

What happens? The government does not even put in a submission. When the opposition put in a submission—and it is only after a deadline which all the other states managed to meet. The government says it got a secret extension to the deadline and it made a secret draft submission. When asked for the draft submission it released just two pages; I suppose the Chief Minister thinks that is heaps—so they released heaps of pages.

To add insult to injury, paragraphs from these pages were plagiarised from previous Treasury reports. What happened? Did the dog eat your homework? Why did the Treasury release just two pages? Do not tell us that is heaps. What does the Treasurer have to hide?

Luckily they managed to cobble together a submission by the second deadline. We will also look at some of the problems with that submission.

This litany of failures is the reason for this motion. I imagine the government will be keen to live up to its rhetoric around transparency and accountability and will encourage the Public Accounts Committee to look into these matters and take this opportunity to reassure Territorians that it does not plagiarise from old submissions, but that it did, in fact, submit a draft submission and took these issues and accusations seriously and not arrogantly, dismissing them out of hand.

Finally, if the Labor government is plagiarising its economic policies, then we have much better sources that it should look at, such as past Country Liberal budgets and policies on growing the private sector, properly regulating the setting-up of an onshore gas industry and growing our population.

Let us recap the situation which has led us here; the budget delivered by the Treasurer was one of the worst budgets ever seen in the Northern Territory, with the highest deficit ever. This was after promising at the last election to run a balanced budget.

The opposition called on the government to deliver a minibudget to react more quickly to the ongoing changes, but the government's attitude was, 'No worries, she'll be right'. Yet here we are, the largest per capita deficit in the nation with no plan whatsoever as to how to pay it back.

As I said in my budget reply speech, it took the last Labor government 11 years to be in a position to be forecasting a deficit of \$5.5bn. This time it has taken just eight months. With all that spending, was there a plan? There was, kind of. There was a museum-led recovery; we get announcements on museums, art galleries, art trails and cultural centres. The opposition sees no problems with museums, art galleries or cultural centres, but we know we cannot go around building these centres on a whim, because there is a limited market and they are extremely expensive to maintain.

Our budget deficit is the highest deficit since self-government. As I have said before, it is a clear and present danger to the Northern Territory Government's ability to provide services and representation to Territorians over the next generation and beyond. The only plan the Labor government has to deal with the deficit is a media plan, and the only part of that plan is to blame the federal government. However, blame shifting is not a plan on how to deal with it; passing the buck does not raise revenue.

The Territory economy is facing two key challenges. One is an imminent drop in major project investment from when the Ichthys construction period ends to when the defence infrastructure spending, as outlined in the *2016 Defence White Paper*, starts to increase.

The second is an incredibly high and unsustainable deficit, which will make it harder to provide Territorians with the services they need because of the debt repayments. As I called for in my budget reply, we need an increase in targeted government spending to sustain the economy until the Defence spend comes online, and then we need to wind down the stimulus spending as efficiently and harmlessly as possible.

When seen from this perspective, we know what needs to be done. We need targeted, expansionary spending on economic projects over the next two years, which generate ongoing and sustainable employment, and then the government needs to return to living within its means and aim for a surplus as soon as possible after that. Unfortunately, the budget just announced is the worst possible budget for this time. Labor spending is targeted on building uneconomic infrastructure, which is likely to be a drag on the budget after construction, not spending that grows the economy.

We need the money out the door now and for the spending to be winding down in two years to tackle the debt situation. It seems that for the next two years Labor will merely be making announcements, continuing its reviews and moratoriums, conducting feasibility studies and consulting. When we need to wind down the spending to tackle the dangerous levels of debt, the Labor Party budget does the opposite of what is needed. Labor's budget is exactly the opposite of what people want and what the Territory needs.

What made the budget and the deficit even worse was the rhetoric around it. Let us start on 24 March, when the Treasurer announced that the Northern Territory had been hit with a \$2bn revenue cut following the release of GST updates in Canberra.

It was specified over the next four years and the statement concluded with this:

This is a tough test for the Territory, but one this Government will meet head on, in partnership with business, industry and all Territorians.

The Chief Minister followed up a few days later:

GST revenue represents around 50 per cent of our budget and we simply do not have the population or own source revenue streams to absorb cuts of this magnitude. This hurts.

...

These cuts severely undermine the fiscal sustainability of the Territory and its capacity to deliver services and infrastructure to locals, including people who are amongst the most disadvantaged in Australia.

But Territorians can trust that the NT Government will do everything it can to source alternative revenue from Canberra

The same, the Treasurer said on radio:

We are absolutely throwing everything we can at it to work with the Commonwealth here to see what we can pull back into the Northern Territory going forward.

A month later on 30 April, the Treasurer foreshadowed the size of the deficit to be \$1.3bn per person, an unheard of figure, which is more than five times larger than any other state or territory.

She said:

The Territory already faces a \$1.3 billion dollar deficit in next Tuesday budget, largely due to the Canberra cuts; we can't be expected to accommodate further reductions to revenue.

Horizontal Fiscal Equalisation, which is used to determine the distribution of GST revenues, was designed to ensure all members of the Federation end up with a comparable level of government services—that principle must be protected at all costs.

In the same breath she criticises the Canberra cuts and defends the systems which made these so-called cuts.

In the budget speech the Treasurer went on:

Slowing population growth and the slower growth of the national GST pool were already cause for alarm for the Territory. But nothing could prepare us for the devastating change to the Territory's GST revenue announced just over a month ago.

The \$2bn GST cut over four years is the single biggest blow to our budget and is unprecedented in the Territory's history. This will have a deep impact on the Territory's fiscal position over the forward estimates. In fact, it increases our deficit for this budget to \$1.3bn and our debt to \$3.6bn in 2017–18.

Frustratingly, had it not been for the GST cuts, given the decisions and discipline that we have delivered in government and in this budget, we would still have been on track to achieving a surplus in 2019–20.

The GST cuts have had a huge impact for the Territory, and we will continue to fight for our fair share of funding from Canberra.

Despite the numerous hysterical media releases, media interviews and speeches in this place from the Chief Minister and the Treasurer on the issue of this year's declining GST revenue, and despite the claims that this is the biggest threat to the Territory's economy, the government failed to make a submission to the Productivity Commission by the original deadline.

The government had months to draft a submission when all other states managed to make a submission by that date. People are entitled to ask why. Why, after over-egging the pudding—so much that all that is wrong with the Territory is the fault of the federal government—did our government not make a submission?

I do not believe it was malicious or intentional. It was just that the government is lazy and slapdash. Everything which is not on the media plan slips off the agenda, and in this case, a submission to the Productivity Commission into horizontal fiscal equalisation may sound a little boring, probably not much of a media hook, but it is vital to the sustainability of our local economy.

First, we have the government not putting in a submission. Western Australia managed a submission; in fact, groups there managed several. But then we have the panic denials, the breathless media release declaring the newspaper is wrong, saying:

Treasurer Nicole Manison said the Northern Territory Government has provided a draft submission to the Productivity Commission's GST enquiry as per the agreed upon process with all States and Territories.

Today's NT News story is wrong. No deadline has been missed.

...

Ms Manison said the Tasmanian Treasurer, on behalf of all State and Territory Treasurers, wrote to the Federal Treasurer on 1st June requesting an extension for States and Territories.

A response was received from the Acting Chair of the Productivity Commission, outlining a process enabling States and Territories to provide draft submissions by 30 June and final submissions by 1 August was received on 5 June. A copy of this letter is attached.

The letter also makes clear the Commissions intention to publish on its website only final submissions.

The issue of Horizontal Fiscal Equalization is extremely important to Territorians. It is vital that our submission is strong with compelling arguments for the future of the Territory.

Northern Territory Treasurer Nicole Manison raised the \$2 billion GST cuts over four years—again—directly with the Federal Treasurer Scott Morrison on his recent visit to the Territory.

I have read so much of this media release into the record because of the number of extraordinary claims and defensiveness shown by the Treasurer on this issue.

First, the Treasurer declares the newspaper is wrong.

Second, she claims the government has already provided a secret draft submission to the inquiry.

Third, she says the Tasmanian Government obtained an extension to the deadline and only now the NT Government has decided to make this public.

Fourth, she claims the reason for the lateness is because it is vital that our submission is strong, with compelling arguments for the future of the Territory.

Fifth, the Treasurer repeats the ongoing exaggerated claims regarding \$2bn cuts to revenue just to complete the circle.

Maybe the Public Accounts Committee should look into the calculation of the \$2bn cuts. Why is the Treasurer so defensive about this? Is it because she was caught out?

Let us look at what happened next. A journalist asked for a copy of the supposed draft submission. The journalist was provided with an extract, and according to the newspaper even that extract had paragraphs that were plagiarised and lifted from previous Treasury submissions. Why was only an extract provided? Why only two pages? I understand this was a draft submission and not intended for publication, but now there are so many question marks over whether or not there was even a draft submission.

I called on the government to table the draft submission or refer it to the Public Accounts Committee and provide it. This is the Treasurer's opportunity to come clean and move on. I have heard speculation that there was no draft submission and that the two pages were cobbled together in a hurried response to media inquiries. That would explain the plagiarism and general haphazardness of this entire affair. But if true, it would mean that the Treasurer's office is now not just spinning facts, but employing alternate facts.

Was there a draft submission? Why did the government only provide an extract? Were more portions of it plagiarised? The basic question is, why did the government, after talking up the GST revenue challenge so much, not do anything about it?

The government had months to make a submission to the Productivity Commission inquiry, but failed to do so until after the deadline. Why?

GST revenue accounts for over 50% of our annual income. It is singularly the most important item in the budget. Increases or decreases in GST will determine whether the NT has the financial capacity to build infrastructure, deliver services and effectively manage rising debt levels. The government has used words such as 'catastrophic' to describe the reduction in GST distribution relativities from 5.22 to 4.66, but what is on the table is a per capita model, meaning a relative distribution closer to one.

The government talks about this all the time, yet when it had the opportunity to do something about it, it did not. It is not like it was busy doing other things. Maybe they were all on holidays.

Let us turn our attention back to the issue of plagiarism. According to Charles Darwin University's website, if the Treasurer submitted the extract as an assessment to CDU, she would have been subject to CDU's breach of academic integrity procedures, or the Academic and Scientific Misconduct Policy. Plagiarism is important. The Treasurer's report might have failed or faced disciplinary action.

Charles Darwin University encourages all students to use academic resources in an ethical manner and to demonstrate academic integrity in all aspects of its writing and scholarships. Academic integrity is the absence of plagiarism and cheating.

I encourage all our ministers to take the issue of plagiarism seriously. The standards we set for university students are standards we should hold ourselves to. The Chief Minister always said his government would be one that was open, transparent and accountable. If he means what he says, why did he not release the draft submission in full? What does the government have to hide?

This is the single most important issue facing the Territory's finances today, and the Treasurer simply copies and pastes from the last time a Labor Treasurer had to make a submission. The Chief Minister talks a big game about accountability. We cannot read a media release without hearing about restoring trust. This is the Chief Minister's opportunity to live up to his rhetoric. There is so much doubt and ambiguity about this at every step of the way, and the only logical reason the government would not want the Public Accounts Committee to look at this issue would be because the government fears what the committee will find.

I wonder what the committee would find. Would it find that there was no draft submission, or that it was plagiarised? Would it find that the Treasurer knew of these matters? Would it find that the Treasurer's officers knew the extract was plagiarised?

Once the government finally got a submission in, it was a slap-dash submission. A cursory glance through the pages revealed typos, obvious errors and a lack of convincing argument. Nothing in the submission seems so persuasive or contains new information that could explain the delay in getting it done. What we have seen over the past few months is a dog's breakfast that the Labor government has made of our economy, especially the issue of the GST.

The opposition is hereby giving the government the opportunity to live up to the transparency and accountability which it talks about so much, and to explain to Territorians why it has acted in such a furtive and underhanded manner.

The Labor government claims the sky is falling because of the bad, miserable federal government making political decisions with the GST relativities; but then the Labor government claims that it supports the current system. When push comes to shove, when the rubber hits the road, it forgets to put in a submission and needs an official inquiry into whether we change the system.

This is a long list of failures from go to woe. The length number and substance of the failures is the reason for this motion, and I hope the government will be keen to live up to its rhetoric around transparency and accountability and allow the Public Accounts Committee to look into these matters.

I hope the government will take this opportunity to reassure Territorians that it did not plagiarise from old submissions, that it did submit a draft submission and that it has taken these issues and accusations seriously and not dismissed them out of hand.

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

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, first and foremost, for the timeliness of this parliament and for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, I table this folder of documents to inform him of some facts, and to point out that he is in la-la land. I cannot believe we are here discussing a matter as serious as this, which we have debated and discussed.

I table this for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition. You will see a heap of information in there and I would have happily provided it before now, so there you go; it is done. I am glad you will see the reality of the situation. You will see that we have a very hard-working Department of Treasury and Finance. We have some very professional people in the department, who are dedicated to their role as public servants to the benefit of the Northern Territory, and they have worked tirelessly year-in and year-out.

A huge amount of work has gone into this very serious issue. Never before has the Northern Territory faced this issue and the challenge that it faces right now, with the distribution of the GST. We have one of the biggest threats to the distribution of the GST in our face with this Productivity Commission report.

I keep saying this time and time again; states like Western Australia and New South Wales are trying to take more GST from us. The last calculation of the relativity of the GST distribution deeply hurt us. A \$2bn cut going over the next four years has had a deep impact on the finances of the Northern Territory—a huge impact.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition exactly what we pointed out with regard to the impact of the distribution of the GST, and some of the decisions we had to have in framing the budget. We have never seen a relativity drop of that magnitude, and what really hurt us was the fact we saw money in areas that the Northern Territory has severe disadvantage in. We are talking about areas such as health, education, roads and housing. Because the bigger jurisdictions are either spending less or it is costing less to be able to deliver that, we find that it has had a big impact on the Northern Territory's distribution of the GST.

We have pointed that out to the Commonwealth Grants Commission, and we will keep working on that as it puts together the 2020 calculation of how it will distribute the GST going forward.

I put to the Leader of the Opposition that in the face of a \$2bn cut over four years, which would be of the magnitude of \$500m a year, we had to make some tough decisions in this budget. We have constrained government expenditure to the lowest that it has been.

We are having to tell our departments to make hard decisions to ensure they spend funds wisely, knowing they will have very limited growth in funding coming in to those departments in their recurrent expenditure. I wanted a budget that focused on creating jobs, growing our population and growing our economy. That is why we made sure we could invest as much as possible into record infrastructure investment. It creates jobs and opportunity and grows the economy.

What we have seen with this GST distribution and this threat on our doorstep from the Productivity Commission review is that we must do everything we can to grow our opportunities to generate more own-source revenue to grow our economy and the Northern Territory. We have seen the devastating impact of other jurisdictions getting a greater slice of the GST, and this has happened this year. This is very real.

What we need is an opposition that will stand side by side with us, doing its job to lobby its counterparts in Canberra to make sure we do not lose more of the GST. We need the opposition's help. We need it to work with us in the best interests of the Northern Territory, not having this type of debate about a bizarre issue—a draft submission, not even a final submission.

We do not support the PAC referral for this. It is a serious issue. I have just given the documents to the opposition and Independent members in parliament. Those documents support the reasons that I believe the PAC does not need to do this. I have provided the information. If people want more information we will provide it. It is important that we do not tie up the parliamentary committee's time.

We heard the Leader of the Opposition yesterday, saying this government has been too quick to send things out to committee. I am saving him some time now. I am giving him the information. It is there. As strange as it is to provide a draft document of this type when the document that counts is the actual submission, we have provided it.

I want also to go to the questions raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I want to answer them here in the parliament so you have all the information. Do we need to waste the PAC's time here?

I think this is a bizarre debate that misses the focus of what the opposition needs to work on, that is, to make sure we get the federal government and the Productivity Commission to listen to us on this very serious issue about HFE and the distribution of the GST.

What you will see in the folder is that the Northern Territory made its submission to the Productivity Commission inquiry into horizontal fiscal equalisation. To go over the history, on 30 April federal Treasurer Scott Morrison announced that the Productivity Commission would undertake an inquiry into HFE to report to government by 31 January 2018.

On 19 May 2017, the Productivity Commission issued guidance notes to assist all interested parties in making their submissions, seeking submissions by 30 June 2017.

Given the importance of the inquiry and the extent of the work required to prepare submissions, on 26 May 2017 a request was made by the Tasmanian Under Treasurer on behalf of all states and territories, excluding Western Australia, seeking a revised time frame for state and territory submissions. A response was sent from the Productivity Commission on 5 June 2017 to the Tasmanian Under Treasurer, copying in all state and territory Treasuries, advising that draft submissions should be submitted by 30 June and final submissions by 1 August 2017.

Consistent with the process and time line set out by the Productivity Commission, the Northern Territory Government submitted a draft submission on 30 June and the final on 26 July 2017. I have tabled the draft and final submissions as well as the letters I have just spoken about.

The Department of Treasury and Finance was the lead agency in preparation of the Northern Territory Government's draft and final submissions, and following a request from the *NT News*, where the story arose that we had missed our deadline and that I, as Treasurer, was being questioned on getting some information—it is very unusual to provide those types of drafts, but we provided the executive summary to the *NT News*. That draft was submitted, as required, on 30 June by the Department of Treasury and Finance to the Productivity Commission. The final report was submitted on 26 July 2017 and is available on the Productivity Commission's website for all to see.

Now that the questions post the motion have been answered, if you have more questions I am happy to take them on board. We have another four days of Question Time—plenty of time to debate them—but I have tried to include as much information as I can so you can see a clear time frame of the letters, the correspondence, the draft and the final submission.

It is really important that everybody acknowledges that this is a real and serious report. I need to ensure members of this parliament are doing their part in moving forward, doing everything they can to protect the Northern Territory's share of the GST. This is a very important inquiry by the Productivity Commission. So far there have been many alarm bells of where this may land.

You will see in that submission that we say we are staunch supporters of HFE and the distribution of the GST, but we acknowledge there were issues with the latest relativity calculation. We have raised those with the Commonwealth Grants Commission. But if another jurisdiction like WA got its way, and in the past they have wanted a floor on the GST—we have seen other jurisdictions that think the GST should be distributed on a per capita basis—that would have a devastating effect on the Northern Territory.

Just remember, any slight modification on the relativity has a far more adverse effect on a per capita basis in a small jurisdiction like the Northern Territory than anywhere else. NSW and Victoria do not feel the hurt that we do per capita if the relativity drops. It only takes 0.2% or 0.3% to be devastating for us here. Those other jurisdictions do not feel that impact.

We need to get our fair share through this Productivity Commission report. It is critical that we see the best possible outcomes going forward, and we need to make sure we are all standing here, as members of parliament, doing our bit to put the Territory's case forward. We know 50% of the Territory's revenue comes in through the GST. That is a huge amount. We also know 20% of the Territory's revenue comes in through Commonwealth agreements and that 30% is own-source revenue.

We have a smaller population. We do not have the population, like the bigger jurisdictions, that gives government more ability to pull different levers. It also must be recognised that we have the highest level of

disadvantage in the Northern Territory. We all see that when it comes to housing. Too many Territorians do not get the level of education we need them to. In regard to health there are many areas in which we experience vast disadvantage. Losing more money through the GST is devastating and makes it harder for us to tackle those issues.

We do not support the referral to the Public Accounts Committee, because we have given you the documentation. You have it to read, scrutinise and ask more questions. I appreciate that the Public Accounts Committee has self-referring powers, but I think we have provided sufficient information. As more questions come through we will be more than happy to answer them.

Again, this is still a bizarre argument. You are sitting here, arguing a draft report, and here is the full and final submission. That is where I need your focus, Leader of the Opposition. As we said in Question Time today, I need you to do your bit to advocate for the Territory getting its fair share of the GST.

I thank the incredibly hard-working staff in the Department of Treasury and Finance, who put a big effort into their job and are very passionate. A great deal of work went into this submission. Remember, this is not the first time we have had to make a submission like this; this has happened before. There have been reviews of HFE and the distribution of GST because the bigger jurisdictions want more out of it. They do not fully appreciate why the Northern Territory has a higher relatively than they do. They are looking into their own back yard and their own interests, whilst we are saying that if you truly believe in the principle of this federation and that all Australians should have good access to services, we need to get our fair share of the GST. That is what this is about.

I have provided the information. The government does not support the referral to the Public Accounts Committee because I think I have saved you a lot of time by providing you with that information and answering your questions on the record.

By all means, feel most welcome to ask me more questions as the week goes on, and next week. If you require further briefings or if you would like to put in any written questions, you are most welcome. I think you have thorough documentation.

I am frustrated that you are missing the important point: we need you to fight for the Territory's fair share of the GST. We need you to do your bit.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I initially intended to give full support to this motion, but given that the motion has resulted in the tabling of some documents and the provision of some explanations, I adopt the position of holding it in reserve—because this is a referral to the PAC—until I have had, as a member of the PAC, an opportunity to assess the information that has been provided.

This may well be a storm in a teacup, or it may be worse. It is important to resolve that because there is much more at stake than the Treasurer recognises. Or perhaps she does recognise it but is choosing not to address it.

The biggest charter that is often spoken about by this government is to restore trust and confidence. These questions are good questions. There may be a fulsome explanation that satisfies any concern whatsoever; to go to the PAC and have that as an outcome is really good. It may only take 20 minutes, but it would be a boost to government and would help them with their charter to boost confidence in the government.

You can assert things, but after 12 months you cannot simply keep asserting things. You have to be able to demonstrate through actions that those things are true. The other part of it relates to assisting government in its other project, which relates to building of confidence, to develop a coherent narrative. It is hard to pick up the narrative that is driving the government. I would not mind doing a metadata search—if I had an assistant—of the most frequently mentioned words in the *Hansard* from government. That would give an indication of where the focus is.

I will not make any comments on that, but I am starting to form a view of the words being spoken regarding where the focus of government is. That aside, it is very important that confidence is built. There are some very good questions.

It may be a storm in a teacup, but it may not be. It may help us to understand, with respect to honourable members, the situation we face economically. It is serious.

This is not a simple task of the other states wanting to take from us; the whole pie has been reduced. The Australian economy is in trouble and many are predicting—if you listen to the senior economists—that we are headed for some very troubled times and the pie is likely to shrink even further. It may have us all fighting amongst each other and we will all be losers.

I honestly believe there is sympathy for the Northern Territory; we live in a small jurisdiction, a large land area of great disadvantage, and that is why for every \$1 we earn we get a return of \$4.66, which is pretty good. Western Australia is the largest state and, granted, there is a fair bit of economic activity, or at least there has been with the resources boom, but that has gone in the other direction and it has affected Western Australia significantly.

I am not defending Western Australia, but to put this in context, for every \$1 it put into the national pie it expected 38c back. The Northern Territory puts \$1 in and gets \$4.66 back, less than what was expected but still a pretty strong return. We are actually taking from the others because they compensate us for the challenges we face.

Western Australia was expecting 38c and had a 10% drop on that to 34c. My daughter worked in the east Kimberley as a physiotherapist in the public health area. There are some really serious problems in delivering services in northern Western Australia as well.

We are all fighting together. The fight from northern Australia—we need to fight together on this rather than pick off Western Australia or Queensland, which does better than WA, but we do better by far.

Across the north of this country we face common challenges. We should be talking about that rather than, 'we need', 'they took', 'we are mendicants', 'it is unfair', 'let's go to war'. It has to be a bit more sophisticated than that because many Territorians understand how this works and are looking for a bit more in this discussion.

I support this going to the PAC. I hold fire now—as a member of the PAC I have an opportunity. It comes at a wonderful time because the PAC is now considering its new work program because we have been focused on taxis recently and we are coming to the end of that now. We are working out what we will do next. I think this would be a really good project.

Let us just have a look at what has been tabled and maybe there is a chance to serve the interests of government and its agenda to build confidence, and to help develop a stronger and more coherent narrative. We would be doing you a favour, so do not be threatened by this, because if there is nothing to be concerned about you will be affirmed; but if there is something to be concerned about you will be helped. You have shown yourselves to be consultative, humble and willing to learn, and we are all growing together to lead the Territory really well.

As a member of the PAC, I will hold fire until I have had a look at these documents that have been produced. As a former school teacher—and I still occasionally study at the university—I find it a bit odd that it was granted an extension and then the extension became the new deadline, so it is not late. That is a bit tricky. If there is an extension and you meet that extension—you were late originally and by the goodwill of those who have asked for that submission, that has been allowed to occur. You are still late, but by their grace you have met the new deadline, which was a late one.

It is a big opportunity. It is a win-win for the Territory and for the government if this goes to the PAC, but I will hold fire until I have a good look at the homework that has been submitted, which is probably pretty good. Maybe it is not, but nonetheless, I do not believe anyone needs to be concerned; we will all be winners in this.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, in the short time I have had to compare these two documents, I do not support this motion. I am happy for the PAC to look at it if it wishes to. If the PAC was looking at it, it ought to look at the final document, which would be more productive.

Sometimes the government kicks itself in the head a bit. The draft document is very similar to the final. I have been looking at the clauses, the diagrams and the graphs, which are all very similar. One was printed on my photocopier in black and white, and this one is in colour and easier to read. I have been looking at the clauses all the way through and the two documents are not dissimilar.

There is a discussion about plagiarism and, I admit, I agree with the Chief Minister. Treasury is a department which continues no matter which government is in power, because it has to run the place. It has to pay the

bills and make sure we have money in the bank and are paying our loans. Using Treasury's previous reports on an issue which is as dry as a bone—horizontal fiscal equalisation is not the greatest subject in the world, and over the years many arguments have been put forward by the Territory and are repeated. The same matters come up: Aboriginality; remoteness et cetera. They are standard clauses that are required to be looked at not only for the Territory government, but for local government, which goes through the same issues.

These issues are more relevant if we deal with the issues that the government has put forward to the federal government to see how this will stand up under our scrutiny. I have only read parts of this, but I need a quiet place with no distractions to read this document; it is fairly solid. The debate we have had today is more about whether the draft was plagiarised, who wrote it and why it was not on time.

I am not sure it is a big deal, because if they got this in on time, which I presume they did, and I then compare it to the one that was on time for an extension, the two do not seem much different. Therefore, I am not sure we are debating something that will change the world if we take this to the PAC.

I have put some ideas to the PAC, and it is up to the PAC to look at those things. I see them as down-to-earth issues that the PAC should look at. It is the PAC's job to look at where the government is spending its money, amongst other things. The PAC has similar powers to those the Council of Territory Co-operation had, because it can self-refer any issue it would like to look at.

I see the PAC, the Parliamentary Accounts Committee, looking at matters regarding government spending in the NT as having a higher priority than this issue. It gives us a chance to talk about the GST, but the government should bring this forward because it is obvious there are pressures on the federal government to change the GST system. That is why it is important to have a good submission. In some ways you could say we have two submissions, so the government has a double dose from us.

If the PAC wants to look at it, that is fine; it is up to the committee. I do not think there is any real issue that the PAC should be worried about.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank everyone for their contributions. I am disappointed that some people do not support the referral to the PAC. The issue is not the fact there was no tabling of the report; the issue is the hysteria raised about the GST, and then the casual approach that seemed to be taken by government, and then issuing just two pages of a draft report and not being willing to release it. That raised a lot of questions and brought the government's mantra of being open and accountable under attack. It pointed to the government having something to hide.

I think the PAC should inquire into the GST and the submission that was made. It is a very important report which was not given the priority it deserved when it was being prepared. This whole parliament, through the PAC, needs to review some of the detail held in that final submission.

I have read that report. There are some typos and a few questions in there. It was interesting that one of the claims regarding the GST when the report first came out was that we would get a cut of over \$300m this year. In the report it refers to the actual, which Scott Morrison was talking about, which was roughly \$200m. It is good to see the government at least admitted those errors.

We talk about the people on this side working with our Coalition colleagues in Canberra, and this is an issue I have raised on multiple occasions. I raised it with the federal Treasurer a long time before it was on the radar of those opposite, especially in the public area. That is something I will continue to do. I will always work with the government for Territorians when we battle those people in the federal arena. That has been evidenced by the fact I offered to help in the area and wrote to the federal people in regard to the 457 visa changes.

I am glad Minister Vowles came down south with us. It was a positive outcome. Many people in Canberra were surprised to see opposing political parties sitting opposite—it sent them a clear message that the Territory comes first and our policy allegiances come second.

We recently had the Treasurer say that we need to pressure Senator Nigel Scullion. We also need to put pressure on the Treasurer in regard to consumption tax. I have had those discussions since February or March this year, but I find it somewhat hypocritical that I get asked to do that, yet their Labor mates in the states want to get their grubby hands on our income in regard to the activities of Sportsbet and CrownBet.

The government here also needs to be open and up front in criticising governments that want to bring an industry that employs 350 people in the Territory and send it offshore. It is not good enough to say I need to work with the senator, the government and the Treasurer to overcome that problem. I will do it, but I expect in return that the government here will openly put the view that the states want to grab the money and initiatives that were started 20 years ago. They also need to be told, 'Get your hands off it'. We would lose 350 jobs in the Territory.

I think the government will vote on its lines, which is disappointing. I just hope the PAC may self-refer the report so it can hold a close examination.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 4

Mr Guyula
Mr Higgins
Mrs Lambley
Mr Mills

Noes 17

Ms Ah Kit
Mr Collins
Mr Costa
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mr Kirby
Ms Lawler
Ms Manison
Mr McCarthy
Mr McConnell
Ms Moss
Ms Nelson
Mr Paech
Mr Sievers
Mr Vowles
Ms Wakefield
Mrs Worden

Motion not agreed to.

MOTION

NT Horticulture and Hospitality Industries

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly calls upon the Northern Territory Government to recognise the importance of the Northern Territory horticulture and hospitality industries and their contribution as important economic growth drivers in the north, and to work with the local horticulture and hospitality sector and other stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Government, to develop new models to address a labour shortfall at these critical times by developing improved models to access the labour markets of ASEAN.

I present this motion, which has been on the paper for some time, acknowledging that there has recently been a visit to Canberra. Nonetheless, this is a matter of significant importance. I hope that honourable members recognise the need for the development of a very smart model that we can present to the Commonwealth to help them substantiate the aspirations about northern development and Asian engagement.

There is space for us to operate. I have some experience in the region and have considered this carefully, whilst living overseas and since coming back, and continued those considerations and tested them with the hospitality and the horticultural sectors here—then noting the change in the national landscape with regard to visas and the way the country has changed in its approach to 457 visas and so on.

The need for northern development and for the economic growth in the Northern Territory—we have a real opportunity here. I am happy to make a contribution to drive this. This is an area of strategic importance, and it will be a real win for the Northern Territory and a feather in the cap of the Northern Territory Government if we were to pursue this. It is perhaps surprising to members that when we consider the economic activity for the Territory and recognise that we then begin to generate income and wealth—we consider certain industries.

The cattle and tourism industries earn export dollars. I will focus on horticulture. It is undervalued and it could do with greater support in this policy area. That would result in a real lift to the Territory economy. That is because the Territory government has some involvement but less involvement than other sectors.

The federal government has even less involvement in the horticultural sector. They are the quiet achievers. Mentioned previously in parliament is the east Kimberley. How many times have we heard about the Ord, its great potential and how much money has been spent on it?

It may surprise honourable members that our horticultural sector in the Northern Territory is worth \$77m more than the Ord. On an annual basis we generate in the Northern Territory, without much fanfare—the horticulture sector does the heavy lifting by itself and is making significant gains. A recent study stated that \$244m was generated by the horticulture sector. What I would like to propose is that if we proceed with a careful and well-considered policy approach regarding the labour supply for this industry, we could grow that significantly.

Unlike the Ord, we have access to northern markets and we have not had the same level of investment. Same as the Ord, we have had the same rhetoric about northern development. We often need to present solutions to problems rather than ask, 'What will you do?' I think there is something we can do.

I need to talk about the perception problems regarding visa changes. That is modern day slavery, but I will talk more about that in a moment. For those who note that I have acknowledged the hospitality sector—I would assume the same applies, but I believe the horticulture sector needs a stronger focus.

As a former farmer, I know how difficult it is—the risks. The stakes are so high when you commit your capital to the ground, plant more trees and increase your capacity to convert waste products into other products, like canning or juicing. The heartbreak—the knowledge that the market is strong, the trees can produce the fruit, you have put your money into the equipment and you cannot get enough hands to pick the fruit. You have all sorts of variations in the market, but you cannot do a lot about it. I have met with many growers who face the heartbreak of not having enough people to pick the fruit.

To be able to bank on it and not stress about that would lift an enormous burden off the horticulture sector. If they could plan this in a reliable and efficient manner then their energies would be focused on expanding the industry and growing it, increasing the economic growth of the Northern Territory. For too long we have looked at the big projects, such as INPEX, and wondered what comes after INPEX. We are looking around for a big project, and there is one right under our nose that we could make significant improvements with, and it is in relation to the supply of labour.

Because there is such demand, if you have created debt on the belief you will be able to sell your fruit, and for some reason or other the backpackers decide not to turn up and you cannot get local people to pick your fruit—you can imagine how difficult that is. That creates a situation—and I am not speaking specifically of the Northern Territory but of the primary industries and horticulture sectors across the country. When a farmer is in that situation, with such demand for labour, there will be a supply.

I argue for improved systems because there is an actual problem. The nature of this demand is so significant that it draws in workers who are on visas that do not permit them to work. It compromises them and the farmer into situations where workers can be exploited. *Australian Story* recently reported on an English backpacker in Queensland; the mother lost her daughter and came to Australia to investigate what she was doing and was horrified to discover the practices around labour hire in the agriculture sector. There are some pretty dark practices there, which is a shame on our nation.

We look at this modern day slavery, and believe it or not, a senate inquiry recently acknowledged there are more slaves today internationally than there were at the time the slave trade was banned. It is of a slightly different form, but it does exist in Australia, as is claimed by the senate inquiry. They say an estimated 4300 people are now enslaved in Australia. A parliamentary inquiry has been told that Australian companies are also linked to slave-like supply chains overseas, and I want to focus on this issue.

Because we have a focus on workers who are desperate to stay in the country, farmers who are desperate to have people work on their properties will come to an arrangement, and it is very hard to crack. The problem is we know it exists, because we see it time and again. It even affects 7-Elevens—all levels of industry. Because they recognise this as a problem it causes people to speak about the problem and then heavily scrutinise those who are in the labour hire business and make their business quite difficult. It is not them. They are scrutinised and audited constantly. It is those behind it who are not doing it legitimately and who are very hard to uncover.

I have discovered that because of this stigma over labour hire, there is a lack of enthusiasm for solid and progressive policy areas regarding this. There are people employing good practice, but they are being compromised by those who are employing unethical practices. I think the opportunity for us is to support the horticulture sector by developing a new system, a new visa arrangement, that is tailor made for the needs of the industry but is also audited and accredited. I will go further into the model in a moment.

The senate committee found that there were 64 600 visa overstays in our country. They found that 2000 of those were working illegally. Because of that problem, the concern is that we then move away from it. I have spoken to people who work in this area, and they think there is a problem and that we do not want any workers from overseas because of the corruption that is occurring and the misuse of people and their aspirations to work in Australia.

I will just step back to my time in Indonesia and tell you what it looks like from outside. There is such a desire to have an opportunity to work in Australia that people can easily be exploited. People move from all over Indonesia to come to Bali, and most workers in Bali are from other places, such as the eastern provinces and the poorer areas of Bali. If they have some English and some drive then they arrive there. They are looking for that next step. How do they get further?

If the door were open they would flood in. But they fall prey to those on the Indonesian side who want to take money from them with the hope and expectation they might be able to get there, and they get indebted on the Indonesian side. It is not just Indonesia; that occurs in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and other places. Because their desire is so strong they will hook themselves up with someone on the other side who says, 'If you get there, for every dollar you earn you have to give me 20c'. They are already half enslaved before they arrive.

Then they find out it does not work out the way they expected, and they end up in some arrangement somewhere, where their passport is taken from them, they do not have a proper visa to work and they are housed down the back of some orchard somewhere in the country. Then they do not get their passport back and they get paid a very low rate. Whatever they are paid they have to use on accommodation, transport, food and the like. They also have to send the extra bit back home. It is a tragic situation.

On the other hand, there are those doing it legitimately, who have to pay the award rates because it is done in full view, and people say, 'What is the point? I might as well work in the black market where I will earn more.' This is happening in Australia and in the Northern Territory.

I think there is a way forward, and I offer this to the honourable minister if he wants to talk further about it—that is, to acknowledge that we have existing strategic alliances within the region. Through our university we have links with other universities in our region. They already exist.

We have sporting and cultural links. We have ethnic links. We have Thai, Vietnamese, East Indonesian and Cambodian communities. We already had those linkages. They are a valuable asset. Bring them together and work with those existing networks to provide preservice training in those countries for work in Australia, whether it is hospitality or horticulture.

This includes targeted English. Consider the Australian aid commitments recognising that this is also providing capacity building economically and real outcomes at the regional level. Australia spends a lot of money on aid. This is a way in which we could provide meaningful employment in the areas we have a connection to.

We then develop a new visa that is streamlined and tailored to the specific needs of the north. It relates to the needs of the industry. We establish a code and a system of accreditation. If you take a worker from this established network, which the industry has already invested in because it provides training offshore, you also commit to a fully audited and accredited system. You can receive workers with this visa into your system in an efficient and direct manner as you require them—an agriculture visa or a hospitality visa. It is specifically tailored to the needs of the north and northern development.

NT Farmers have written a policy paper which basically echoes this. This is the type of edge we could provide. I am happy to do more work on this, if I had additional support. I am happy to work with the minister on this. I have seen this model in its application in the region. I have spoken to those who come from other places, such as Vietnam, Thailand and others. They can see this model working.

The key here is, in the face of corruption and unethical practice, we need to recognise there is an actual and serious demand for labour. We need to develop a system that acknowledges the problem and cuts through that, providing for the needs of industry. We can do it.

It appears to me that Canberra is happy to talk about northern development but does not have the hard ideas and the cut-through policy ideas that would make the difference. I am happy to advocate for this directly. DFAT and Austrade look for innovative solutions. If we had a parliament that was unified around this we could make a big difference to the economic growth of the Northern Territory in the horticulture sector, and provide stability and reliable labour supply for the hospitality sector, which includes tourism.

Rather than bemoan that INPEX is on its way out and we are vainly looking on the horizon for the next big project—there are a couple of big ones right under our nose. Just an hour's flight from here in West Timor there are thousands of willing workers. All we need to do is construct the model that is completely ethical, fully accredited and totally audited. Only those who will be a part of this system can buy into it, but they need a visa arrangement that meets the needs of the industry. It can be done. We have a wonderful opportunity. There are some wonderful workers who are keen to be involved.

The beauty of this is that you can construct it in such a way that whenever they are required they can come easily. Then you have those in the horticulture sector who will not have to worry. They can have the same people from the same village come year after year, and they could develop really solid relationships.

In terms of our development, growth and contribution to the region it would be recognised and appreciated if there was stable employment and respect for workers, who will send money back and build strong relationships with no expectation that they will live in Australia, but they have an opportunity to work where Australians do not want to work.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, further down the track I will move an amendment to this motion, but I want to speak directly to the Member for Blain's comments regarding visas, specifically horticulture visas, the *Modern Slavery Act* and the implications and opportunities we have in the Northern Territory. This government, previous governments and all governments recognise the importance of the horticultural industry and what it contributes.

Over the last couple of years we have seen a more than 23% increase in production and growth in that industry because we have a fantastic industry for mangoes and melons for distribution overseas and throughout Australia. I have visited as many farmers as I can, which leads me to an interesting conversation. I have just gotten back from Canberra with the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Higgins, where there was a meeting about the 457 visa changes the federal government has introduced and is continually re-evaluating.

It has impacted the Northern Territory already in regard to some of the sub-classifications under the 457 visas. A particular issue for us is the medium- to long-term skill shortage list, down to the short-term list. You do not have the opportunity for permanent residence if you are on the short term list. We have also seen some occupations on the skill shortage list drop off completely, which is a serious issue.

It has been mentioned a few times in the media, but some businesses will be severely impacted by these changes, especially cooks coming off the medium- and long-term list and going on the short-term list. We have a business with 12 people on 457 visas working under that category who were working towards a permanent residency and have been kicked onto the short-term list, which means two years on a visa that you can extend for a maximum of an additional two years. A lot needs to be done in this regard.

We have a serious skill shortage that we need to fill in many areas of the Northern Territory. I always stress that we must do everything we can to train locals because we put Territory jobs first—jobs for Australians—and only when we need to do we get these skilled people to do these jobs.

In the discussions between the Leader of the Opposition, the relevant ministers in Canberra and me—some of the meetings were quite interesting and the responses were positive. One of the very good things the previous government did was enter into a Designated Area Migration Agreement, or DAMA, which was Territory specific. That relates to the skill shortage we have identified over the last three years in the Territory. It addresses one of the concerns the Member for Blain raised regarding a designated agreement for the Northern Territory, and that is what this DAMA does to a point. It reflects the needs of local employers—the occupations that we have a labour market shortage in. We need to be flexible.

In all the meetings we had in Canberra with the Opposition Leader, what really came out of that was a strategy on the way forward for the Northern Territory in regard to our skills shortage and how we can work with the

federal government to make sure we do not have serious employment areas not being filled because we cannot get the people here. It was to look at expanding the DAMA, and that would be a real opportunity for us to grow.

I came into the role as shadow minister for Primary Industry and Resources a couple of years in. Now, being the minister for nearly a year, I have been to Indonesia once so far and I am planning to go back again.

I found there the real importance of relationship building and maintaining that relationship. I feel like I am asking the Member for Blain to suck eggs, because he is fully aware of the relationship we need with our Asian neighbours and that region. It is about going there and shaking hands, sitting down and meeting with them, going to dinner and having more discussions.

As politicians we mostly get negative press about travelling. 'Why didn't you Skype? Why didn't you do this? You could have had a video conference or telepresence.' But you have to physically get over there and build those relationships. I am doing that and the Member for Blain has done that; he knows the importance of that. I think we missed a trick when he was relieved of his duties over there. All the reports coming back from when I went over there this year said he was doing very good things for the Territory.

The issue of modern slavery is really concerning. I will admit, he caught me on the hop with that, so I was busily tapping away and searching. God love the Internet when you need it, but I seriously hate the Internet. It is really interesting, though. That gave me a couple of minutes to look it up, and the figures are ridiculous—the numbers in this modern day, in Australia.

The more you travel across the world you realise we are the lucky country. To think that we have 43 000 people in Australia—the figures show that 2000 are working illegally. I hope there are none in the Northern Territory. We encourage everybody to do the right thing, and I always support and respect our industry. I am sure that in the Northern Territory, under NT Farmers, that that would not be the case, but I am not blind to the fact there may well be.

I support the idea, and I encourage the Member for Blain to catch up and talk more about this because I truly believe—and people know this, but they are sick of me saying it—that the name changes but the title stays the same. What the industries want in my portfolios, specifically in primary industries and horticulture, is continuity in policy. They want to know you are planning for the long-term future and not just for election cycles.

That is something governments can do. 'What looks good here? When can we launch this, in our final year of government to get re-elected?' The primary industries of fish, cattle, plants, mines and energy have been the staple of the Territory economy for many years. When I have finished here and others have taken this job and I have retired, they will still be the backbone of our economy. If we can improve that in any way by sitting down and talking, asking how we can form better relationships with our Asian neighbours and ASEAN—I will make sure we do that.

We will have an opportunity to have those conversations with you. We have seen a bipartisan approach that was well received. Canberra is such a big, cold place, and going to that building for every meeting—people were quite taken aback that we were there together as a Labor government member and a CLP Opposition Leader.

I thank the Chief Minister for assigning me that task. The Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Blain and this parliament want to see the best outcomes for our industries.

My Deputy Speaker, I move the following amendment.

Remove all words after 'that' and replace with: 'this Assembly calls upon the Northern Territory Government to recognise the importance of NT horticulture and hospitality industries and their contribution as important economic growth drivers in the north; and to, as a continuing priority, work with the local horticulture and hospitality sectors and other stakeholders, including the Commonwealth Government, to address labour shortfalls in the first instance, developing strategies to employ Territorians in jobs that are available in these industries, and the second instance, developing strategies to attract staff from outside the Territory where Territorians are not able to fill available jobs.'

The DAMA is an important document for the Territory and the changes are impacting us. We have such a great story. The Member for Blain rolled out the figure of \$244m in the horticulture industry this year. That is about right. We have seen in 2014–15 and 2015–16 a more than 23% increase in productivity, which is

showing that the world needs more produce. Populations are growing, and we have an abundance of land and water that we need to manage properly. We must invest and make sure we are looking to the long term.

We estimate that we have 3900 positions required annually by NT Farmers or in the farming and horticultural industries in the Northern Territory. That is nearly 4000 people in the horticultural industry. These are big numbers and demonstrate an industry of strategic importance to the Northern Territory.

As the Member for Blain said, the hospitality industry is equally important as a major service sector and a strong contributor to the economy. The hospitality sector underpins our \$1.76bn gross value-added tourism industry, with accommodation contributing \$150m; cafes, restaurants, takeaway food services, \$104m; clubs, pubs, taverns and bars, a further \$52m.

In the NT around 15 500 people are employed either directly or indirectly through the hospitality industry's reliance on tourism, amounting to 11.5% of the NT's workforce, with about 1900 employees in cafes, restaurants and takeaway food services.

The Member for Blain would be interested that our labour shortages have been identified by a previous government and continued with our government. We should make our best efforts to have Territorians in our jobs first, then Australians, and then we need to look elsewhere. Let us make no mistake; we are talking about visa changes for our doctors, nurses, oncologists and specialists that the NT Government sponsors through the employment program.

The NT Farmers Association has stated publicly, in the media and in meetings with me that the labour supply for the picking, harvesting and packing of horticultural product is the number one issue. That is why I will throw politics out the door, Member for Blain, and I want to sit down and talk about your experiences and ideas on how we can fill these shortages.

I take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate Mr Greg Owens the new CEO of NT Farmers. Sadly for him, he is an old school teacher of mine. He said he has just gotten over that. More importantly, he has a mountain of experience, knowledge and respect throughout the industry. I look forward to continuing my work with NT Farmers and Greg Owens.

We have 80% of all (inaudible) agriculture in the Northern Territory picking and harvesting coming from international sources, including backpackers. The absence of reliable low-skill labour is the single limiting factor preventing our farms and farmers reaching their full potential and preventing economic increases to this industry in the Northern Territory.

Despite extensive efforts to recruit Territorians and other Australians, we are unfortunately not able to attract the type of workers or the numbers the horticulture and hospitality industries require, and that is why I am so keen to find a solution. A horticulture industry with increased volume of product due to reliable labour will directly deliver on our commitment for Territorians to get jobs. We need to support the industry, and by supporting the horticulture industry we are also talking about employment in transport, marketing, supply chain logistics, and in every step taken, to get Northern Territory horticultural products to our domestic and international markets.

I do not want to go on about the backpacker fiasco that saw a 30% decrease in people coming to the Northern Territory. Leo Skliros of the NT Mango Industry Association spoke about the uncertainty and the record low number of backpackers turning up to work last season. We had crops that needed to be harvested and without these workers they could not run their businesses; they have lost millions of dollars of rotting, wasted fruit.

The flow-on effects of these losses hit our broader economy. We are looking at a roughly \$9m loss to the NT economy. These are serious numbers and we cannot ignore them. We have an industry that has been around a long time and this issue needs to be addressed. I thank the Member for Blain for mentioning that tonight.

During this period the hospitality industry also lost access to employees, and a few cashed-up backpackers spent significantly less money in our community on food, not surprisingly alcohol, accommodation and entertainment. We need to do something in regard to seasonal labour for these industries, which leads me to a number of other things to do with the Seasonal Worker Programme.

I went to the Agriculture ministers' meeting in Melbourne a couple of weeks ago. It was an interesting meeting and site visit. We went to La Trobe University's AgriBio science labs and had a fantastic tour there. What really sparked my interest was the medicinal cannabis they are growing there for Dravet syndrome; they are

looking at the symptoms—children can have a hundred fits every minute—and it seems to work with that. It was about how they are looking at expanding their industries.

The main focus for me in the Agriculture ministers' meeting was where I was able to address the agenda item of the Seasonal Worker Programme, which I spoke to other ministers about—the lack of flexibility around that program. While it has been successful in some part, it needs to be more flexible. This is pretty much set up as a foreign aid employment program, which I think we have some scope of in some of the countries that are involved, and that is something to look at.

I spoke to the federal Agriculture ministers about the lack of flexibility. It is a three-month to 18-month approval process. You have to apply through four different departments. It is a duplication of paperwork.

Another thing that stood out was the fact sole traders are not eligible to access the Seasonal Worker Programme. In the horticulture industry there are farmers and sole traders who have reasonably big productions that rely on people coming in. We lost millions of dollars of fruit because it was lying on the ground after not being picked; it was rotting off trees.

The sole traders are not on that list as being able to apply for the Seasonal Worker Programme. It needs to be addressed. I was supported by the Western Australian minister and the NSW minister in getting it on the agenda at the next Agricultural ministers' meeting. This has come from me talking with and listening to producers. I heard their concerns regarding the lack of flexibility in the Seasonal Worker Programme.

I also met NT Farmers President Simon Smith, and Leo Skiros, as well as NT Vietnamese Horticultural Association's David Dinh to discuss labour shortage and all the other issues facing the industry. As a result, I continue to work with everybody and anybody I need to work with to make sure they are looking after our industry. We are growing and supporting that industry.

It was great to announce that I was able to get some money from the Treasurer. Thank you, Treasurer. I appreciate that in these tough times. It was an awarding of \$1.55m over the next three years to support NT Farmers and grow jobs in the industry across the Territory. We have a few commitments in Katherine, and I am working closely with the local member, who is doing a fantastic job. We have a commitment to an agribusiness and transport logistics hub in Katherine.

It was important, as part of this NT Farmers commitment when we gave them \$1.55m, that they have a workforce planning coordinator, a horticulture development officer which will be based in Katherine, and a mango industry development officer to be based in Darwin. This will further develop and expand the NT's biggest horticultural industry.

A dedicated workforce planning coordinator will better help farmers access the federal government. We want to give everything we can to the industry to grow it and support it. I want to highlight the industry development officer based in Katherine, which will support our commitment to develop Katherine as a major agribusiness and logistics hub.

(Inaudible) will assist horticulture producers to access new markets to diversify and explore alternative crops and improve farm biosecurity and labour practices. Biosecurity should be on everyone's lips in this industry. We had the melon virus and banana freckle virus, and we want to stay virus free in the Northern Territory.

The Department of Primary Industry and Resources is working on Katherine's potential. We are investigating commodities with the Asian market, demanding maps for an air freight coal chain to determine infrastructure gaps. We have ongoing facilitation and investment in research trials of new industries. I was fortunate to go to Sydney to sign a memorandum of cooperation on behalf of the Northern Territory Government with the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries regarding soya bean and asparagus trials in the Katherine region. That is progressing, and I look forward to further MOCs and further briefings and updates that I will provide the Chamber on that commitment.

We support our horticultural industry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, being 7 pm, your time has expired.

Debate suspended.

PAPERS TABLED
Travel Report – Member for Araluen

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the travel reports from the Member for Araluen.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr HIGGINS (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, the untimely death of a very close friend of mine, Mr^oWilson, has left a sizeable hole in the social and governance landscape of the west Daly region. This loss has taken from many of us a mentor, an adviser and a visionary for Aboriginal advancement, particularly in the west Daly region.

Mr Wilson's parents helped pave the way for their eldest son's contribution to his people. His parents, Harry and Regina, were prominent in and around Wadeye. Their son inherited their drive to create stronger communities and bring people together. Regina's father, Bill Parry, also has a legacy of service to the Daly, and my association with the family was forged during my time at the mango farm.

To give some people an idea of that link, the mango farm was initially a property given as a settlers grant to returned serviceman from the Boer War, James Parry, who was an English man. He married a local women and had three children; the sons were Joe and Bill Parry. Bill Parry's daughter is Regina Parry. I have had an association with this family under various names for over 20 years and it is a proud association which I will cherish.

The Wilsons helped establish Peppimenarti in 1978. This proud little community has been a haven for many families that have called it home ever since. I was happy to hear the Member for Arnhem speak proudly of Peppimenarti club, what they have been able to do, and the strong women that are there, Regina and her daughters, Annunciata and Annastacia.

I know the Member for Arafura has family members there and he is proud to know those people. My friend was born in Wadeye but raised in Peppimenarti, his traditional land. After primary school he boarded at Kormilda and also studied at St Bernard's in north Queensland. He held governance roles in Peppimenarti at the health clinic, the local school, general store and senior roles with Peppimenarti community council and the Duram Kirim Corporation.

He was elected to the Daly Shire Council and served as mayor before fighting for the establishment of West Daly Regional Council. This was subject to the first amalgamation in the Territory local government. He also became the mayor of West Daly. This was a breakthrough moment for the people in Daly and Thararrur regions, and signalled a welcome return to self-government for people in the region.

Mr Wilson had been unwell for a number of years but, despite this, he continued to serve his community. I visited him a number of times in hospital. Rhonda and I were fortunate enough to have him as our house guest when he occasionally spent a few days recuperating after one of those visits.

He never lost his humour and an example of that is when I saw him recently. He had a lot of machines monitoring him and I said, 'Mate, what did we do before we had these machines?' and he said, 'We died'. He also never lost his passion and his willingness to fight for what he believed in. He stood up for his community. It is these qualities that I will miss the most.

My thoughts go to Donna and their two children, Brianna and Chantelle, as well as his many other family and friends.

Ms LAWLER (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak today about a fantastic education event held recently, Skills 2021. This is a free annual event held in August at Parliament House. It provides students opportunities to learn about new technologies and future careers in our digital world. The event gives the technology sector opportunities to interact with schools and demonstrate their technologies and work to students.

Skills 2021 forms part of the Department of Education's overall strategy to provide students and teachers opportunities to learn about new technology. This is in line with our government's focus on increasing student participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics—STEM.

It might be hard to imagine but the main hall and the library were completely taken over by drones, robots and 3D objects last week. Around 1000 students from government and non-government schools attended Skills 2021 to get hands on experience using innovative, state of the art technology. Skills 2021 is designed to inspire students and teachers to get involved with digital technology, learn new skills and enhance their problem solving abilities.

Some of the technologies showcased at the event included virtual reality, 3D printing, drones, laser and computer numeric control, design and production, voice and facial recognition software, raspberry pi computing, Minecraft, Adobe Creative Cloud and applications, and robotics. It was wonderful to see students and their teachers thoroughly engaged in the activities. During my walk through the event I saw students working through virtual reality mazes, building digital cars, doing Tai Chi and having conversations with Nao, the humanoid robots, and exploring the endless possibilities of Minecraft.

One of our Department of Education robot whisperers programmed, what is thought to be, the very first drone somersault at Parliament House, under the close watch of security of course. I have no doubt events like Skills 2021 inspire students to take on STEM subjects by making learning interesting and opening up their minds to the almost infinite possibilities of our digital world.

As part of Skills 2021, students and teachers also spent the week participating in more in-depth technology workshops on coding, robotics, 3D design, gaming, multimedia books and video production. This year, for the first time, a Skills 2021 event was held in Alice Springs at the local library. I was told the students were so enthralled that they did not want to get on the bus when it was time to go back to school.

It is important that all of our students have the opportunity to engage with this cutting edge technology. It helps to develop creative thinking and problem solving skills to tackle challenges inside and outside the school environment. A key part of why Skills 2021 is such a success is because of the strong engagement from industry experts which included Telstra, Staples, Adobe, Microsoft, Brainary, NEC, CASA, National Drones NT Branch, Code Club, Area 9, Modern Teaching Aids, Encyclopedia Britannica, Cisco, LST Laser Group and HP.

It was wonderful to see some of our own NT schools showcasing their STEM initiatives with presentations from Darwin High School, Darwin Middle School, Nightcliff Middle School, Kormilda College, Good Shepherd and Nakara Primary School. Events like Skills 2021 are so important in preparing young people for the job pathways of the future and for igniting their passion in all things STEM.

I thank the organisers of the event from the Department of Education: Sap Daroch; Mark Christie; Margaret Littler; and the rest of the team. Thank you to all of the technology partners for agreeing to participate in the event. Mr Deputy Speaker, I also thank you and your office, and Madam Speaker and the NT Library for allowing parliament to be utilised for this event. It is truly wonderful to be able to foster the future in this special place. Most importantly, thank you to the teachers who organised for their students to attend and the students themselves who participated.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, during the June sittings I began a speech to acknowledge 10 years since the intervention. I found this difficult to deliver because this is very emotional to me. My family and I are survivors of the intervention and we are still suffering the devastating effects of the invasion, along with many Indigenous Territorians.

As I mentioned at the last sittings, most people do not know that the intervention coincided with several pieces of NT legislation that were disempowering, such as the move from community councils to 'super-shires', and the first four hours of English only for children in our remote Indigenous communities. These changes, combined with the intervention, together had a disastrous impact on our culture and our lives.

The result is that today our Madayin law and governance, which was provided to us by Djan'kawu and Barama/Lany'tjun is being pushed aside. The result is that our leaders, the law men and law women, the Djirrikaymirr, the Dalkarramirr and the Gor-ganmirr are being disempowered. We are left to become dependent and weak, forced to accept priorities from outsiders.

I am finishing this speech today because I do not think members of this Parliament understand the full extent of the destruction of culture we have experienced over the past 10 years. It is akin to cultural genocide and it happened not just at the hands of the federal government, but also at the hands of the Northern Territory Government.

Many of those changes which caused the worst damage came from previous Labor governments. I do not blame this government for the past governments' policies. I congratulate this government for embracing policies of self-determination and I want to support the government to work towards this outcome together, Yolngu and Balanda working in partnership.

What do I mean as a Yolngu man when I say 'Working in partnership'? Partnership for Yolngu is about Indigenous nations being recognised as Sovereign Nations. We are Sovereign people and our land and authority must be acknowledged and respected. Partnership for Yolngu is about nations talking together with diplomacy—Two Sovereign Nations talking together with diplomacy.

I do not mean a continuation of colonisation where this Parliament makes decisions for Indigenous nations and we are treated like objects. I am talking about a true partnership where each recognises and respects the other equally.

During estimates hearings I asked many questions about how our clan leaders will be resourced to make decisions for their communities on issues such as volatile substance abuse, protection and care for country, domestic violence, child protection and other areas. I asked these questions because a partnership is about understanding that clan leaders and elders are the authority on Yolngu country. Without consent and direction from clan leaders, this government will continue to impose foreign law upon our sovereign Yolngu nations.

I urge the government to work in partnership with us to ensure it is resourcing projects, ideas, solutions and decisions made by Indigenous communities and supported by their cultural authorities. I hear the government's commitment to self-determination and I am hopeful that that future for Indigenous communities is towards a partnership that respects their sovereign authority.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, in July this year I welcomed the announcement by Senator Nigel Scullion that the federal government has committed funding to establish headspace in Katherine. I was very pleased the federal government finally recognised the needs of our community in regard to mental health services and support for our youth.

I have been advocating for the Katherine community to receive this service for several years. I understand the NT Primary Health Network will engage next week with the Katherine community to commence consultation to develop a service model that best addresses the needs of the community. I look forward to supporting the development of this service and its commencement in, hopefully, 2018–19.

All headspace centres are funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. Administration of this funding is carried out by the headspace centre's local primary health network, which in this case is the NTPHN. Headspace is a national youth mental health foundation. It provides early intervention mental health services to young adults aged 12 to 25 years old, along with assistance in promoting young people's wellbeing. This covers four core areas: mental health; physical health; work and study support; and alcohol and other drug services.

The announcement by Senator Nigel Scullion is a positive first step towards addressing the significant gaps we have in Katherine for the mental health services. The establishment of a specialist mental health service for at-risk Katherine youths is an urgent objective that should unite stakeholders and not drive a wedge between them.

The latest census data shows that 17.4% of Katherine's population is aged between 10 and 24, yet we do not have a provider that offers specialist mental health services to this age demographic. Whilst there are a multitude of organisations in Katherine that operate in the youth services sphere, none of them have the capacity or expertise to offer what headspace can for some of the most vulnerable members of the community. Finding a solution to youth mental health services in Katherine need a bipartisan, whole-of-community approach that includes buy-in from every stakeholder.

Accessible mental health services for adults, that meet the community's needs must be a priority if Katherine is to be legitimately viewed as one of northern Australia's growth hubs. There are significant gaps in service provision for mental health. I am not saying headspace is the magical answer to address these gaps, but it is a very positive first step. I welcome the funding that has been committed by the federal government with the lobbying and advocacy work of Senator Nigel Scullion. It will ensure we have a nationally commissioned mental health program in Katherine.

I will continue to advocate on behalf of Katherine with my government and the federal government. Katherine is experiencing significant growth at the moment, and it will always be a close-knit regional community. This

means that any suicide will impact every one of us in one way or another. Part of sustaining that growth is giving Katherine permanent local access to specialist mental health services that provide early intervention and acute crisis support to every member of the community, whether they are 15 or 50. The announcement that headspace is set to have a presence in Katherine after years of lobbying, not only by me but by several members of the health sector, should be celebrated.

I will not stop advocating until each of us, irrespective of what stage of life we are at, has access to the level of mental health services that those living in urban centres across the NT and Australia take for granted. Mental health services and support, especially those that provide suicide intervention, is a very personal issue for me. I am a survivor of domestic violence; I have survived a civil war; I have also lived through the trauma of my first son's death. I am empathetic and sympathetic to those amongst us, irrespective of their age or socioeconomic background, who need clinical support to address acute mental health.

I welcome this announcement. It has been four or five years of me lobbying and advocating both NT Government and federal government for funding to be provided to establish this service for youth in Katherine. I cannot reiterate how happy I am to have received this funding I welcome it and I thank the federal government very much in light of all the federal funding cuts that we have been dealt with, in particular the mental health service. Once again, I thank Senator Nigel Scullion for his delivery of that funding.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I talk about a newly hatched club which is often running with great gusto in the rural area, and a little bit into Darwin. From humble scratchings, a small group of enthusiasts got together to form a Top End poultry club. This group did not want to count their chickens before they hatched, and they certainly did not want to put all their eggs in one basket. I know it gets better. They slowly started to get people interested and they walked very carefully as not to crush any eggs and leave egg shells.

The enthusiasts hatched a plan, organised the pecking order and, finally, did everything properly and legally so they would not end up with any egg on their faces. I better shake my tail feather and let you know who the new club is and what they do.

The Darwin and Rural Poultry Club formed mid-last year with a group of people who are very interested in poultry, and poultry showing, coming together. Since that time they have incorporated; have a newsletter; set up a Facebook site; had health and nutrition seminars, which have been well attended; provided advice to people on what poultry chooks things they should buy or what has gone wrong with them, and have a stall at the Coolalinga markets where they have a display. You can also buy chickens and chooks from them.

Last weekend they held their inaugural show with over 200 entries. There were some very fancy birds on show which had preened tail feathers, shiny beaks and not a bird flew the coop. Not only were there chooks, there was ducks, game birds, turkey, geese, and of course little chickens on display and for sale. Lots of cackling and there was ultimately, as only can be, one that ruled the roost. Oh, Member for Nelson, I see you are paying attention—a former farmer of chickens himself.

Congratulations to the following people from the inaugural Darwin and Rural Poultry Club show and what they achieved. Bird of the show, which is a modern game cock, to Ben Rienke; reserve champion large OEG hen, I am not sure what that is, also Ben Rienke; champion breeding pair, Japanese bantams, to Helen Gordon; standard heavy breed, Plymouth Rock hens, to Ros McMillan; standard light breed, white silkies, to Jeanette Yandell; hard feather, large OEG hen, to Ben Rienke; hard feather, bantam game cock, Ben Rienke; soft feather, bantam langshan hen, Ros McMillan; champion silkies—I used to have silkies until they were all given away and now I have wyandottes or something—was to Jeanette Yandell; champion OEG, large partridge hen, to Ben Rienke; champion, Belgium Millefleur cock, to Samantha Boon; champion waterfowl goose to Darian Pearce; champion turkey, bronze tom, to Ros McMillan; champion junior Japanese bantam cock to Bailley Height; champion backyard—see you do not have to have a fancy chook to get involved in with this club, you can just have a background moggy, still be a part of it and win prizes—went to Ebony Falconer, and the junior handler went to Bailley Height.

Where are the henny pennys? They are doing all the work and it is a really good group of people who really have pulled it all together. They are as follows for this club: Helen Gordon; Ros McMillan; Darian Pearce; Tony Odadbooth; Tray Trayhearn and Rebecca Litten; and I apologise if I have missed anyone out. There are lots of other people who pitch in and help with this club and they are doing a really good job.

They also participated in the Freds Pass Show and the Darwin Show and there are going to be other shows. I am sure the club will be around for a long time.

In closing, I encourage everyone to have a look at their Facebook, leave a comment and next time you attend an agricultural show in the Territory, do not be chicken, stop by and say hello to the Darwin Rural Poultry Club.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Goyder, that was egg-cellent, and I am glad you were not too chicken to make it.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, mine may not be anywhere near as pun related or entertaining, but I hope to enlighten people. I rise to speak about one of the amazing events that recently took place in the beautiful electorate of Port Darwin, more particularly in the increasingly vibrant city area.

As everyone can see, there has been a host of new activities and events through the CBD recently. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the hard work of our Minister for Tourism and Culture and our Chief Minister, and their passion and visions with the arts and events that have been going on recently and will certainly continue into the future.

The Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, or DAAF as it is affectionately known, is in its 11th year and is a recipient of grants through Arts NT and FestivalsNT. Tourism NT is involved as well. It is due to this support that the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair, and its ancillary events, continues to expand each and every year.

The DAAF showcase the work of established and emerging artists from 66 Indigenous arts centres last weekend from all across Australia. These arts centres collectively represent more than 2000 Indigenous artists and are held on Larakia country. They play a vital role in the economic, social and cultural landscape of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They are a keeping place of language and traditional practice. They provide employment and training to hundreds of Indigenous arts workers, and collectively, they foster the careers of thousands of artists across the Territory and the nation.

The DAAF provides a genuine opportunity for the arts industry, for buyers, and art and design enthusiasts to purchase art directly from Indigenous-owned and incorporated arts centres. The fair showcases the work of emerging and established artists. It provides a space for visitors to meet with them and learn from the variety of different cultural groups across Australia. There is a range of styles, mediums and products available including paintings on canvases, bark paintings, works on paper including limited edition prints, sculptures, didgeridoos and fibre art.

The DAAF was originally conceived and designed to complement the National Australian Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. It also celebrates the National Indigenous Music Awards which is held over the same week, so a very busy week through Darwin. The program highlights included the DAAF fashion show featuring Magnolia Maymuru; cultural performances by the Waringarri dancers; Parrtjima-A Festival in Light, showcasing the stunning skirts from Ngurratjuta Ittja Ntjarra, Many Hands Art Centre; and a panel discussion featuring Gail Mabo, Djon Mundine AOM and Marcia Langton AOM.

The festival has grown from 16 to 60 arts centres from across the centre. Fifty percent of the arts centres involved are from the NT, and there are over 2000 artists involved. It generated millions of dollars in sales for arts centres over the last few years. In 2016, there were over \$2m in sales. There were thousands of visitors from cross Australia into the Territory for the week. One hundred percent of the art sales go to the arts centres themselves and entry is free. Forty percent of the visitors are from interstate, so that is a good amount of investment coming into the Territory, which is a fantastic thing.

The NT Government is very proud, through FestivalsNT and Arts NT, to be able to support and sponsor through grants. I also want to acknowledge the entire team that makes the DAAF a resounding success. The artists and stall holders were sold out very early and when the final figures come in, they will certainly be up on last year's.

I congratulate Franchesca Cubillo, the chairperson of Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair and senior curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia. I also congratulate Claire Summers, the Executive Director of the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair. This year's art fair was a treat for me.

There was by chance a Chinese actor, Lily Ji, who was in town. She is a very fast-rising Chinese actress and is filming this week for Tourism NT through the Top End and the Katherine region. I had the pleasure of meeting Lily, and hosted her for the afternoon with my partner Bek, and Conan Fahey from the Australia-China Development Company. He has worked with Lily for a number of years and escorts her when she comes to Australia throughout the year.

For those that are not familiar with Lily's work, please allow me to explain a little. She is a very high-profile, luxury key opinion leader in China. She has recently modelled for Audi, Samsung, Bulgari, Hermes, Christian Dior, Prada, Ferrari, Giorgio Armani, Porsche and Chanel. Lily was the first international and first Chinese student to study at Australia's acclaimed NIDA and is an experienced producer and presenter.

Lily appeared in the fourth instalment of the Transformer movie franchise and she will very soon appear in the Hollywood blockbuster Pacific Rim 2: Maelstrom. Lily is listed in Chinese and Asian media as the No. 3 Chinese star in this Pacific Rim blockbuster that is soon to be released here and overseas. She is certainly a very up-and-coming star in the industry.

I thank Conan for introducing Bek, Layla and myself to Lily. I also thank Darren Lynch and Pina from Wharf One for hosting a beautiful Territory-themed lunch for us on Saturday afternoon at Wharf One, surely one of the best restaurants in and around Darwin. It was a lovely afternoon there.

After lunch we moved across to the DAFF and showed Lily around the Convention Centre, which was a pleasure. We met some of the finest artists and saw some of the fine art from around the country, and from the Northern Territory. Lily was grateful to be able to meet with Aaron McTaggart and the wonderful Merrepen Arts Team as well as many others.

Once we had seen as much of the art fair as we could we had the good fortune to be able to attend the Blanc de Blanc show in Darwin as part of the Darwin Festival, as the Chief Minister and many others did on the night. It was a great evening. It probably takes a bit to make a few people in that tent blush but I can guarantee that a lot of people did. It was a fantastic night.

I would also take this opportunity to thank Ian Kew and the crew that put the 2017 Darwin Festival together. They have done a fantastic job. #DFest2017 if you want to follow that on Instagram and the rest. It has been a resounding success and will continue to be over the following week from where that festival was 15 to 18 months ago, looking down the barrel of not going ahead. It is a fantastic achievement for that team and a fantastic result for the Territory.

Conan mentioned they had a stunning opportunity to do a photoshoot with Lily some months ago with some gorgeous gowns on the Great Wall of China. Once Lily had seen some of the prints and dresses on show at DAAF, it became quite easy to convince her to set something similar up for the Sunday when she had some spare time.

We will be eternally grateful to Karina from the Starwin Shopfront for helping Bek make the connection with Adriana Dent, the amazing designer from Albertini Couture. Adriana was very accommodating and brought a number of stunning gowns for Lily to model.

I must also thank Madam Speaker who was kind enough to give me permission to be in Parliament House on Sunday, and I thank the very accommodating security staff. We were able to get some fantastic shots on the lawn with the fountain.

I encourage people to look at Albertini's website. There are some stunning dresses on there with a couple Lily used and modelled that will be at a Melbourne fashion festival over the next few weeks during their spring carnival. It was a pleasure to have Lily here. Bek, Layla and I have made a friend for life and Lily is a very genuine, lovely person. There is no better ambassador for the Northern Territory than Lily Ji. It was a pleasure to meet her and I look forward to working more with her in the future.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.