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Parliamentary Procedure on Wednesdays

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your election platform says:

Open Government and the trust that it builds is the bedrock for the partnerships and collaboration we need as a community to improve the lives of all Territorians.

They are fine words, but yesterday you shamelessly ridiculed members who asked questions about your government.

This House passed changes to parliamentary processes which will see government ministers have half a day holiday on Wednesdays. You also arrogantly slashed budget estimates from 60 to 30 hours. How does giving ministers a holiday and slashing estimates represent open government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. It provides an opportunity to talk about how we are providing twice the scrutiny on our side this year at the estimates stage, when estimates are considered, and the annual report stage, where there is no scrutiny at the moment.

Over time this will emerge as the most important area of scrutiny: not what you say you will do but what you actually did as ministers. Our CEOs and public servants will know there will be direct scrutiny on what you have done and how you have performed and delivered for Territorians. There will be direct scrutiny in November against the annual reports.

It is an important and significant change to scrutiny in the Northern Territory that improves how we do business. It provides more openness and transparency, not just at the estimates or budget stage, about how the money is intended to be spent or how you came to that estimate. The stage in November will look at what you actually did.

It is important to change how we scrutinise. Ministers will front up twice a year instead of once; first, at estimates where they will talk about how they will spend the money, and then at the annual reports and estimates period where they will talk about how money was spent. This is an important change to scrutiny in this House and to how we do business.

I disagree with the Leader of the Opposition about what he is calling a holiday on Wednesday mornings. It is important for opening up the parliament and trying something different. We will be reviewing it after 12 months to see if it worked or not. It provides an opportunity for Wednesday to be a scrutiny day with the committee meeting in the morning, Question Time with no Dixers, then the GBD, which we have brought forward earlier and let go longer.

Wednesdays will now have Question Time with no questions from government backbenchers or members. That is twice as many questions for the opposition and Independents. There will be a longer General Business day. It will start earlier and have committee work in the mornings. It is important work that is getting priority and focus away from government on Wednesdays, scrutinising us and allowing the opposition and Independents more time to shine.

The ability for that to succeed is the role of the opposition and Independents. We will see how it goes over 12 months. This is an important reform to how we do business in this Chamber. I disagree with the political assertions that the Leader of the Opposition is making about Wednesday morning. It goes to his work ethic, how he intends to approach Wednesdays and whether he considers he has a holiday on Wednesday morning or not. This is important for how we behave and how we are scrutinised. I welcome the changes from this side.

I look forward to being prepared to be scrutinised twice, doing that work and being prepared with my departments in November to talk about the things we have done for Territorians.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Budget 2017–18– Supporting Jobs

Mrs WORDEN to CHIEF MINISTER

How is Budget 2017–18 supporting jobs and why is it so important that all levels of government invest in the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the budget the Treasurer delivered last week continues our investment in creating and supporting jobs across the Territory. We are investing in jobs not just in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek or Katherine, but for all Territorians. It is an investment in our cities, our towns and the bush. This budget was designed to create jobs for Territorians. It continues our plan to invest in the primary industry sector, mining, housing, tourism, construction and small business sectors across the Territory, recognising the importance of business to grow and create jobs.

We have listened and acted. This budget is a show of faith in Territorians and it puts the Territory first. It is based on significant conversations and the most extensive consultation you can have with Territorians outside an election. I thank the members of parliament who participated in those summits, which many on our side did. I thank them. The Member for Nelson, from the cross benches, also participated. I apologise if others did and I did not see them; I thank everyone who participated in those summits. There was extensive consultation to make sure we are delivering for Territory businesses and families, who are doing it tough at the moment.

That is why it was so disappointing to hear last week that the CLP and the Leader of the Opposition did not support the investments we are making to create jobs. The CLP planned to slash over \$150m worth of job-creating infrastructure, which would have a devastating effect on our economy and our ability to create and support jobs in the Territory, at precisely the time we need more investment, not less.

This is on the back of the CLP's failure to plan for the Ichthys construction phase wind down. It is a failure of the CLP's time in government. We are talking about needing more in the Territory, not less. We were looking for more in the Australian budget on Tuesday and we did not get it. It shows the importance of the Territory budget we delivered on Tuesday, the effort we have put in and the heavy load we are shouldering. We are the ones who are in the trenches for Territory businesses and families, helping them out, putting them first and creating those jobs.

We desperately needed the Commonwealth to live up to its commitment to develop the north and close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. We have seen a lack of that investment. Given this failure I would expect every single member of this Chamber, regardless of electorate or political persuasion, to be as one on this, fighting Canberra, and demanding investment and attention from Canberra. We need it here in the Territory. We need more from Canberra, not less.

It was disappointing to see the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Araluen and others support a budget that does not deliver for Territorians. We need money, investment and action from Canberra. What we asked for was nothing more or less than a commitment against their own priorities. Developing the north and closing the gap is good for the Territory and Australia, and it is their plan. We need to see them investing against their own plan.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Electronic Monitoring Bracelets

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES referred to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Yesterday I asked the Chief Minister a clear question: how many people have been fitted with electronic monitoring bracelets by police? The Chief Minister did not know the answer. Is it true that to date precisely zero bracelets have been issued to alleged offenders by police?

ANSWER

I thank the member for her question. The government is putting the victims of crime first. We want Territorians to be safe. We passed the Bail Amendment Bill on urgency in April in response to community

concerns about youth crime, in particular young people committing offences while on bail, but our approach goes beyond young people allegedly committing offences. All the evidence indicates electronic monitoring is a powerful early intervention tool to help prevent young offenders from falling into a life of crime.

As part of the roll-out process police are in training with Community Corrections, which has used the devices before, and the security company G4S, which will manage, monitor and report back to police on the movements of people fitted with the devices to ensure they comply with their bail conditions. We have given police the powers and resources, and we are now training police how to use them.

Police advise they expect to be in a position to start fitting the bracelets within the next few weeks, beginning with a phased approach in Palmerston and Alice Springs. This is part of our efforts to overhaul the youth justice system, including employing 52 new youth diversion workers. We also have an additional 18 police focused specifically on youth crime. We are honouring the broken promise of the 120 extra police to address the problems we have in the Northern Territory. It is a very important initiative, providing police with the resources they need to do their job.

Allowing police to fit electronic monitoring devices is a Territory first; previously only corrections staff could do this. We provided the power to police. The correct training for police is vital. They have not done it in the past; it has been done by corrections. We want to do this properly to protect Territorians and we will be getting this right. As a government, it is our job to give police the legislative basis for the use of these bracelets.

We have given them the powers and resources and now we are giving them the training; it will be phased out over the next two weeks in Alice Springs and Palmerston. As I said yesterday, in Alice Springs the phasing will include repeat domestic violence offenders.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. Can the Chief Minister confirm that zero electronic monitoring bracelets have been issued by police?

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. The Chief Minister has plenty of time to answer the question.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, we will be targeting the repeat domestic violence offenders in Alice Springs as well as alleged youth offenders in Palmerston. Police have the powers and resources, and now they are doing the training that will be phased in over the next few weeks.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Electronic Monitoring Bracelets

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

In March you committed to an immediate roll-out of victim conferencing. Your release stated that the immediate roll-out would be in Palmerston to specifically target young people who are engaging in serious and repeat offending. As of today, how many victim conferences have been completed in Palmerston?

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a supplementary question because the material for a supplementary arises out of the answer the Chief Minister gave, and he did not reference anything to do with what you just asked.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Speaker, if I may, I was talking about victims and targeting repeat offending.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not a point of order.

Commonwealth Budget and Jobs

Mr SIEVERS to TREASURER

Budget 2017–18 is about investing in jobs, while the opposition's plan is to cut jobs. Could you tell the House which approach the Commonwealth government has taken in its budget?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Budget 2017–18 is all about responding to the current economic conditions and the opportunities ahead. It is a budget that is focused on supporting and creating jobs across the Northern Territory. The record \$1.75bn infrastructure investment is all about jobs, supporting local business, economic growth, future industry development and private investment in the Northern Territory. All this is being done while we have the unprecedented \$2bn GST cut.

We were at the table speaking to Canberra about the consequences of the cut but also the opportunities that the Northern Territory presents to the rest of the nation for further job creation and economic growth, and for us to have more capacity to generate own-source revenue so we are less reliant on the GST.

On Tuesday I was left very disappointed by how Canberra failed to step up, respond and see new commitments come into the Northern Territory. We have lobbied hard and will continue to do so. I heard from Senator Scullion yesterday for the first time on ABC Alice Springs, which was successful in getting him to front the media—well done.

We also heard from the federal Treasurer this morning on the ABC, and it was pretty clear from both those interviews that there was nothing new. What was in the budget had been announced previously and, in my view, there was a complete failure from Canberra to step up at a time when we need to work together for the future opportunities of the Northern Territory.

That leaves me feeling that Canberra's view on job creation is that they are not willing to back us up. It has missed some fantastic opportunities, especially Senator Scullion, who sits at the Cabinet table with a portfolio of Indigenous Affairs and who has a policy on closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

We keep being asked, 'Where are your shovel-ready projects?' I will give you some: roads; servicing land; and remote Indigenous housing. There is no shortage of shovel-ready projects in the Northern Territory. It was very disappointing to see what came out of Canberra on Tuesday night, but we will continue to do everything we can to represent and move the Territory forward.

Youth Offending – Victim Conferencing

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

In March the Chief Minister committed to the immediate roll-out of victim conferencing. The release stated that the immediate roll-out would be in Palmerston to specifically target young people who were engaged in serious or repeat offending. As of today, how many victim conferences have been completed in Palmerston?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this has been a great story as part of our reforms. The manager of Jesuit Social Services testified this week to the Royal Commission about some of the success stories through victim conferencing.

I met with him about a month ago. They have had some conferencing in Palmerston. It is a very important process. The feedback we have received from those conferences is extremely positive. The victims involved have found it to be a positive experience. One of the victims offered the young person a job after going through the process. This is exactly the type of outcome we need to see.

We have also worked very hard on making sure we set up support systems to ensure good outcomes for young people. This is about using an evidence base for things that actually work. We know this works because the evidence base says it does and we are already seeing positive outcomes. We are seeing young people turn their life around after being involved in these processes.

Jesuit Social Services has a strong history in evaluation and research in this area. We are very fortunate to have the practitioner Mr Sharp in that position. We are committed to this process and know it will have positive outcomes for people. Unlike the other side, we are interested in fixing this system, not just posturing about it, tossing around the old rhetoric or looking at how many election promises we can roll-out regarding how tough we will be on young people. We are going for an evidence base for what works.

We are rebuilding a system from the ground up. There was no youth justice system that worked in existence in the Northern Territory. We have seen that again and again through the Royal Commission ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. How many victim conferences have been completed in Palmerston?

Madam SPEAKER: No, the minister has a minute and 40 seconds to answer.

Ms WAKEFIELD: When I met with Jared Sharp about a month ago they had done six conferences. I have not had an update this month. I am more than happy to get you an update.

The important thing is the outcomes. This is not just about outputs. We have gone so wrong in social services in the past by being focused on the outputs and numbers. We are about results. The results are telling us that this is helping young people get back on the right track while also supporting victims of crime to understand what has happened to them ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Budget 2017–18 –Territory Families

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

I really enjoyed listening to your last answer so I was wondering if you could enlighten the House on this next one. Can you please outline to the House how the Territory Families budget invests in stronger and safer communities, and how it compares to alternative approaches that have been put in place?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I know this is an area she is passionate about.

As someone who grew up in the Territory I have seen the outcome of a lack of investment in social infrastructure. This side of the parliament differs from the other side in this area. That side looks at social services as costs you cut rather than investment in the future of the Northern Territory. That is why we are in the position we are in now, in which we have to rebuild a system from the ground up.

I was so proud at lunchtime to stand with two of our new youth outreach workers and do some press. They are two incredibly impressive people. We have had a lot of scrutiny of our youth justice system. To put your hand up and be part of the solution and the future is incredibly brave.

They are going into a position that will have a lot of scrutiny, and people are looking for the sensationalist line around this work. These are very skilled people and I want to thank them. I am looking forward to going to their graduation. On Monday and Tuesday we will have 39 youth outreach workers commencing work in the Northern Territory. This is within three months of announcing that program.

These are experienced people doing the work of sorting out the mess and chaos of the last four years. As we go through this rebuilding process I have had the complete support of my Cabinet and Caucus colleagues.

This has been an important part of our vision for the Northern Territory. If young people are not part of our future, not skilled to be on the right track or they have a one way path that funnels them straight into the adult correction system—that is basically what we have now. There are lots of ways to get into the system but very few ways to get out.

We have this enormous funnel where we write off our young people. This is about giving them a positive future and the support they need to become a contributing part of our future. I am proud to be part of a team that backs me and invests in this problem. I look forward to future outcomes in this area.

Crime Levels Rising

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

The number one concern for people in Alice Springs is not nasty comments made on Facebook by various ministers about members of parliament; it is crime. People are concerned about crime in Alice Springs. In Darwin there is a 100% increase in commercial break-ins under your watch. Palmerston is falling apart.

Crime levels are escalating through the roof under your watch. In Alice Springs it is the same story: commercial break-ins are up by 35%.

Chief Minister, crime like this has never been seen before in the Northern Territory. What have you done to address this problem? What have you done to stop things like what we saw in Alice Springs last weekend with the crime spree of kids ram-raiding properties, stealing cars, causing havoc right throughout the town? What have you done to try to curb this very serious problem for Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Territorians have a right to be safe, whether at home or work, which this government takes very seriously. We have taken huge steps to fix the broken youth justice system. We have just heard from the Minister for Territory Families about some of the significant steps we have made in this space. There are different areas that we need to have action in for the short, medium and long term.

If we kept going down the path we had been, things would have gotten worse. We have seen that over a number of years. We are having a Royal Commission on that basis. We have to start doing things differently. We have done that by making a huge investment in youth justice to fix that broken system, with the training of 52 youth justice officers and the 18 experienced police who will be working with them, making early interventions and preventing crime before it occurs. It is very significant, important work, and I thank the Minister for Territory Families for what she is doing.

Police allocated 18 police officers to the youth justice task force based on the knowledge they have of their recruitment over the next four years. They know exactly how many police are going through their college, and they can now make advanced intelligence-led decisions about their policing because they know those police are coming on board. We have given police the resources and certainty they need.

We are also putting money into the PROMIS system, something that should have happened several years ago. That system has made it difficult for police to do their job and has led, I have on authority from police, to moments of computer rage when the computer system simply will not work. We have been trialling SceneDoc and Winscribe, which has had a significant impact on the ability of police to do their job on the beat, saving two to five hours a shift, keeping them on patrol and not bringing them back to the station. We are getting more out of the police we have by providing extra resources. This is what we need to do to support our police.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I am not interested in what you will do. I am interested to know what you have done over the last eight months to try to curb this serious crime problem in the Northern Territory.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you have the call. Please get to the point.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Speaker, I am talking about things we have done and will do. We gave certainty to police for their rostering in December. It is in the budget as well, but we gave that certainty to police in December. We allocated 18 police towards the youth justice task force in February. These are the things we are doing. The victim conferencing is helping people, as we just heard from the Minister for Territory Families.

Importantly, I say to Territorians that we will do more. Even one crime is one crime too many. There is more we will do in this space. We have taken action and will continue to take action.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for HEALTH

The National Disability Insurance Scheme will seek to maximise the social and economic participation of people living with a disability. Can you please advise the House how this government is delivering on its election commitment to support the successful transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme for eligible Territorians living with a disability?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as outlined by the member, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, more commonly known as NDIS, will increase funding for disability and mental health support in the Territory and provide greater choice and support for individuals.

The NDIS is a critical part of the National Disability Strategy, of which the Northern Territory is a signatory, and brings community, government and industry together to increase the social, economic and cultural participation of people with a disability in our community, education system and workforce. The NDIS is continuing to roll out across the Territory, and I am pleased to update the House on it today. The roll-out is continuing through the Barkly region. In January this year it commenced rolling out in the East Arnhem region and provided supported accommodation in Darwin.

From 1 July Top End remote and supported accommodation services in Katherine and Alice Springs will commence rolling out, and from July 2018 the remainder of the Darwin region and Central Australia will commence their transition.

At full, the Northern Territory and Australian Governments will make contributions in excess of \$200m, which will be available for NDIS support in the Northern Territory, which is more than double the funding currently available.

It is not just about the NDIS; it is about providing support and facilities to those people who are affected by a disability. The failures of the previous government around Palmerton hospital—that would have already been opened and operating under our government. If we still had the CLP in government who knows where we would be with that hospital.

Not only did the CLP government fail to build the hospital, they failed to plan to make it a complete service. They ignored key information from disability stakeholders about what would be required at the hospital. We have listened and will be delivering a hydrotherapy pool in 2018–19 to ensure there is a comprehensive rehabilitation service on site to help patients strengthen themselves and get their lives back on track.

I am pleased to update the House on the NDIS. To ensure the success of the roll out and prepare for growth our government has secured \$13.5m in Commonwealth funding, including \$9.25m for sector development and the implementation of the NDIS across the Northern Territory.

The NDIS is not only about providing those with a disability with access to services; it also provides employment opportunities. Detailed community plans are being developed to better understand and meet participant needs, and to identify and respond to the opportunities in the NDIS for social and economic participation for individuals and communities.

For me, one of the most significant outcomes of the NDIS is that Aboriginal people from remote communities will have increased options to receive support in their own community from their own people.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Independent Members – Support

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

You are on the record a number of times as saying you would resource the Independent members elected to the Northern Territory parliament. We did not expect it to come in the form of you employing the former Labor Member for Nhulunbuy to support you in the Nhulunbuy electorate. Do you have plans to place your representatives in other electorates not represented by ALP members? In the interests of openness and honesty, can you now reveal the value of the salary package paid to former members? Does this include a ministerial suite on the fifth floor?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I asked the Remuneration Tribunal for advice on how to support the Independents. I understand people have now been employed to provide the Independents that support. They are in the gallery.

I can advise that government was not involved in that process; I thought that was important. It was done through the Clerk, who employed the two staff to provide assistance to the Independents for the work they do in parliament. That was the support given.

My former deputy, Lynne Walker, is a person of eminent experience and ability. Going into the election she knew our policies better than anyone outside of this Chamber and there was no one who could better help and advise me on how to implement those policies. She has exceptional corporate knowledge.

She is working for me as Chief Minister. She has not been employed in the seat of Nhulunbuy. That might be where she resides but that is not her role. That is an unfortunate misconception by the Member for Blain. I can confirm for the Member for Nhulunbuy that that is not the intention of her role. Her role is to assist me. She has been employed to help me.

I am not in the position of revealing people's personal salaries or conditions. I will not answer that part of the question. I can confirm there are resources for the Independents. We did that separate to government. I asked the Remuneration Tribunal for its advice and have done it through the Clerk. Their tasking, their operation and how they are managed is not for me; it is more for you. However you use them is in your hands, not mine. It is done through the Clerk and not managed by me.

I did it on advice from the Remuneration Tribunal and provided those resources in parliament to assist you, just as Madam Speaker's staff work at Parliament House, as do my staff and the Opposition Leader's staff. They are here to help you perform your duties in parliament.

Arts and Cultural Infrastructure

Mr KIRBY to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

How is this government supporting and creating jobs through arts and cultural infrastructure, and are you aware of any alternative policies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand up as a proud member of this government. The Member for Port Darwin is proud that we are a government that is unapologetic about our investment in arts and culture in the Northern Territory. We know how important it is to enriching our communities because we are home to the oldest living culture.

We are proud of our cultural heritage because we understand the value of the arts and culture sector to our economy; it is an economic contributors. Our arts and culture sector employs hundreds of Territorians not only in our urban centres but outside of them, which is really important. It is an incredibly vital part of what brings people here—the world-class products produced by our artists and people working in the creative sector in the Northern Territory.

The former government has been spoken about and we know they left a legacy of chaos; we are dealing with that. I thank the Treasurer and this team for having faith in the arts sector and seeing its connection to tourism in the Territory.

We are investing in the Territory with a significant record spend on infrastructure. This will include new arts and cultural infrastructure. We believe these will become some of the most eminent and visited institutions in the country. We are not afraid to be ambitious about that because we believe these institutions will tell our story to the world. They will create jobs through construction but will also lure more visitors to the Northern Territory. We should focus on that because it pumps money into our economy and supports the more than 2000 small and medium-sized businesses that contribute to our tourism sector on an everyday basis.

We are proud to be investing \$50m into the new museum at Myilly Point as part of the broader museums master plan. I thank the Member for Port Darwin for the work he does as part of that.

We will build the fine arts gallery in State Square as part of revitalising the Darwin CBD. We have \$100m invested in an arts trail throughout the Northern Territory. It includes the national Indigenous art gallery and the cultural centre in Alice Springs, as well as gallery upgrades in Tennant Creek, Katherine and East Arnhem Land. There is also \$6m this year for remote and regional galleries and keeping places.

We were shocked to hear the Leader of the Opposition in his staunch opposition to this, which is in stark contrast with the policy the CLP released less than a year ago ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Howard Springs Water Tanker

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

The Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade recently held its 30th anniversary, marking many years of voluntary service to the local community, fighting fires, attending accidents and many other matters such as signing burning permits.

To help make their firefighting more effective and efficient in responding to the many fires that occur in the rural area over the Dry Season, they used to have a water tanker to provide water to their firefighting units, which is especially important when there are no nearby filling points. I am informed that the NT Fire Service has removed that water tanker from the local fire brigade just as the fire season is about to start.

Can you please say who made the decision to remove the tanker, why the decision was made and when the local volunteers can get their much-needed water tanker back where it belongs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have looked into this. I am advised that in the past the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade has looked after a spare tanker for a short period of time each year, which has increased their water tank capacity.

They have never actually had that tanker as a permanent allocation but I believe, from my conversations and something you have said as well, they have come to rely on the provision of that tanker. I am not saying they are taking it for granted but it has been there and it felt like a permanent allocation even though, as far as Police, Fire and Emergency Services are concerned, it has been a temporary allocation each year.

Last month Chief Fire Officer Mark Spain attended the annual general meeting of the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade and explained they will be taking back the tanker full-time.

At the moment we are doing a comprehensive review of the services and requirements across the Territory, including regional and rural places like Howard Springs. The provision of this tanker, to me, seems to make sense. As part of that review I have asked them to reconsider the decision they have made. There seems to be a clear, sensible argument about the provision of the tanker and the need to have access to water to do their job as volunteers.

This decision should be revisited. There is a review happening to look at how we can reconsider the decision around that water tank, but that is the order of events that have happened.

It felt like a permanent allocation but it was not. Fire and Emergency Service have resumed it. They explained at that meeting—at that meeting much consternation would have emerged. I have asked them to revisit this and look at how we can make sure our emergency services have access to the water they need if there is a fire. It seems like a sensible approach.

I do not think that is an adequate answer for today but that is where it is at. I will follow up on it.

Local Government

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Local government plays a vital role in community development, can you please update the House on this government's policy to support local governments, and other policies you are aware of.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arafura for his question. He has a lot of experience in local government.

I am proud to stand with a privileged position as the minister responsible for local government. The Michael Gunner Labor government commitment in Budget 2017–18 we will see nearly \$100m invested into local government which impacts on every member of this Assembly.

Part of that investment is an increase in the operational subsidies and the special purpose grants of \$2m. I am particularly proud of the new Michael Gunner Labor government strategic infrastructure fund for local government of \$5m ongoing, in which local government will be able to work closely with local authorities to engage local decision-making and support infrastructure developments around local roads, stormwater, parks and gardens, and cemeteries.

This is a great announcement for local government. On my travels it has been well received from the local government sector. I encourage the local government sector to look at the shared resource methodology. We can deliver a lot of efficiencies with a \$5m new investment from the Labor government if the regional councils and shires start working together to plan better procurement and delivery methods, reduce mobilisation of equipment and so forth. There are a lot of efficiencies we can deliver. It is a smart Labor policy welcomed by local government.

It was good to be able to listen to the Deputy Opposition Leader talk about LGANT, a very important part of local government. I look forward to seeing the Deputy Leader of the Opposition at the next LGANT meeting in November, in which I will talk about the \$100m investment in local government, the \$2m increase in operational subsidies as special purpose grants and a new \$5m investment fund for infrastructure to build jobs. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will be able to tell LGANT she wants to scrap the lot because it is irresponsible Labor policy.

I look forward to that November meeting, Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I will see you there. We can make a clear definition for policy in the Northern Territory local government sector.

Youth Engagement – School-Based Constables

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

Youth engagement police officers, formerly known as school-based constables, build important relationships with school children across the Northern Territory. Under your watch, why have youth engagement police officers been taken from our schools, particularly when youth crime is such a huge concern to Territorians?

Ms Fyles: You did not have enough police to have them in schools.

Mr Higgins: Here come the excuses again. Bart Simpson, sit down.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, please withdraw that.

Mr HIGGINS: I withdraw.

ANSWER

On 1 August last year, before we were elected to government, a decision was made to restructure how police work with youth in schools. My understanding, from talking to the Police Commissioner, is the CLP did not scrap school-based constables but rebadged and reworked how the police were involved in the schools.

I am talking to the Commissioner further about how that works. We have taken a targeted approach with those 18 police working with youth justice officers. On 1 August 2016 the CLP made a decision about doing it differently with police in our schools. They do not use the term 'school-based constable'. They are not scrapping the school-based constable but changing how and which schools youth engagement officers engage with.

That happened in the last days of the CLP government. Obviously the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was not briefed by the then CLP Police minister on that decision. I am talking to the Police Commissioner about how that works. We have already made decisions this year about targeting 18 police towards preventing crime before it occurs. That is the current model.

My understanding is that school-based constables have not been scrapped. The CLP changed the way police were engaging in schools. Their name is now youth engagement officers. I may have the title wrong; it might be youth engagement and development officers. It was a decision made by the CLP on 1 August. We have made decisions since then about how police engage with youth.

We have 18 police officers working with 52 youth justice officers, targeting crime before it occurs, taking their experience and investigative skills and applying them towards identifying families and youth at risk to make sure we are targeting services for them. They then get the support they need so they do not embark on a life of crime.

That is the work we have done since we were elected. It is very targeted, specific work that is relevant to what is happening now on the streets. It has been done in full consultation with the Police Commissioner, the Minister for Territory Families and others, about how we pull that plan together. It is all happening while the Royal Commission is sitting too.

I can confirm the decision made by the CLP in August. I can confirm what we have done with police and how we are working with youth, targeting police to make sure we are tackling crime and doing everything we can to prevent it before it occurs.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION Youth Engagement – School-Based Constables

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

You are the Police minister. You have been the Police minister since the election last year. What are you doing? Will you reinstate youth engagement police officers in schools?

ANSWER

I answered that in the previous answer. We have made decisions to target police resources for youth justice officers working to identify crime before it has occurred.

My understanding of the CLP decision made in August was to not scrap school-based constables but to change the way police engage with schools at the school-based level. We put extra police resources, those 18 officers, into targeting youth crime before it occurs. That is a very specific, targeted focus.

My understanding is different to the Deputy Opposition Leader's about what is happening with police. I can confirm the decision by the former CLP Police minister on 1 August about how police engage with school kids. That engagement with school kids is still occurring; they are now called youth engagement officers. We also have 18 police officers who are targeting youth crime before it occurs, doing what they can to work with those families before it happens.

Budget 2017–18 – Education

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

How is this government putting children at the centre of its decisions and supporting young people to get a great education? Is the minister aware of any alternative policies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member, my colleague in Palmerston and someone who is passionate about education. Despite the dire financial position the Territory has been left in as a result of the CLP's failure to plan and the poor response from the federal government to education, the Territory has invested \$1.1bn in education through Budget 2017–18.

Investing in children is not only the right thing to do but it is the smart thing to do. The Treasurer often says for every dollar spent on a young child we receive eight dollars in return, and to me that makes good economic sense. It is disappointing to see that the federal Liberal government, the CLP and Nigel Scullion have not stood up for education in the Northern Territory.

The federal budget shows only a notional increase in funding for NT Government schools, and that notional increase is actually about increased student numbers. We have seen an extra nearly 900 students enrol in

Northern Territory Government schools, so the funding in the federal budget is all about funding the increase in student numbers. It is disappointing that the federal government's budget for education is failing to maintain, in real terms, an investment in the 33 000 children who access NT Government schools.

Over the next decade the average funding per student in a government school will grow less than \$1000, which is an increase of about \$94 a year per student. Think of the disadvantage, remoteness and other issues we face in education; it is a tiny amount of money. We are the only jurisdiction that is transitioning down to a lesser funding pool rather than an increased one.

That said, thank goodness this government is delivering and focusing on kids in the Territory. Our \$1.1bn education budget will put a record \$489m into school resourcing and budgets. There is \$46.3 for targeting improvements in Aboriginal education. We are serious about closing the gap. There is \$11.1m to continue and expand the Families as First Teachers program; \$8m to support children with additional needs, disabilities and challenging behaviours; and an extra \$141.7m for school infrastructure across the Territory.

Fifty-four schools will benefit from the \$300 000 this financial year. We have been ignored by the federal government. We are not getting a better deal from them, and the CLP also gave us a bad deal in education. Thank goodness for us.

Trade, Business and Innovation Portfolio

Mr HIGGINS to TRADE, BUSINESS and INNOVATION

According to your media releases you have made only one trip to Asia in the eight months since you appointed yourself the Minister for Trade, Business and Innovation, which includes the previous portfolio of Asian relations. Chief Minister, if you are too busy to visit Asia why not pass the portfolio on to a new minister who will have more time to visit Asia, build relationships with our neighbours, and give that portfolio the time and focus it deserves? We have some great backbenchers here who want to be heard; they keep yelling out. Give them a chance.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, last year I went to China, Japan and South Korea. It was a very good trip; the opposition attacked me for going so I am glad they are now encouraging me to take more trips. I will take their advice to heart. I am going to Singapore, Indonesia and East Timor in a matter of weeks.

Mr Higgins: Can you tell us the temperature while you are there?

Mr GUNNER: I am not sure about the temperature crack.

I am going to East Timor for their very important inauguration of the new president. I am going to Singapore and Indonesia. I was intending to visit Japan again later this year; it is now more likely to be early next year. It will be timed with that first shipment of gas. INPEX has advised of the delay by a quarter to the work they are doing.

We are looking at a possible trip to China in the second half of this year. The work we have done in Rizhao—Asian relations goes beyond visiting those countries; people visit us in the Territory and we invite them back. I have met with Chinese delegations in the Territory. We are working on a return forum. We took the largest Territory delegation ever overseas to Rizhao. It was a fantastic forum. We are looking at organising a reverse forum in Darwin.

I am talking with the South Australian Government because it has a relationship with Shandong Province and Rizhao. Shandong Province has asked if it could have a relationship with the Territory, so we are working through that diplomatically. Our relationship is currently with Rizhao. I have talked to Premier Weatherill about that because South Australia has had a relationship for decades with Shandong.

Rizhao has three million people. It is bigger than NT and SA combined. There is plenty to share when it comes to Shandong, and the South Australians have agreed with that. We are having further conversations with South Australia about that. It is on the joint Cabinet agenda when we meet soon, an historic meeting of the two Cabinets to discuss how we work together better overseas. Sometimes our interests align; sometimes we can be a bit competitive.

That is what we are working on. There are a number of trips this year: Singapore; Indonesia; East Timor; possibly China; and possibly Japan. I am also working on a trip to Hawaii. I can talk for longer about that if you like.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister your time has expired.

Darwin Airport Public Transportation

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

In Wednesday's *NT News* it quotes the Chief Executive at Darwin Airport as saying:

We're keen on having an airport that works with multiple modes of transport that suits different people's needs.

Will the government push for one of those modes, public buses, to be allowed to drop-off and pick-up at the airport?

According to the *NT News* the CEO said, 'There is the possible need to build a multistorey carpark at the airport to cater for increasing number of private cars.'

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the airport is privately owned and has recently released its latest master plan on the future development and opportunities there.

I have not had the issue of public bus transport to the airport raised with me. I have seen my share of backpackers on McMillans Road over the years, across the road from the bottle shop, waiting for the bus to arrive, not realising it is the express bus in the morning.

It has not been brought to me as a priority matter by my department, external sources or the airport. We have privately-run transport operators that transport people, generally tourists, in and out of the airport. We have access to taxis as well.

I am happy to take the question on notice and ask a few more questions about it. In the time I have been minister, since August last year, the issue has not been raised with, me but I will get back to you on this.

Jobs – Katherine Region

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

How is this government investing in the Katherine region to create jobs? Are you aware of any alternative policies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Gazza, you will love this one.

I start by quoting the Opposition Leader in his budget reply speech:

... this is when we need the government to be realistic. A budget needs to be factual and realistic.

He also said:

On this side of the Chamber we have unbounded confidence in the potential of the Northern Territory.

Guess what, Opposition Leader; so do we. We have confidence in the potential of the Northern Territory. Your plan would reduce infrastructure spending and limit that potential, which, as we know, would put jobs at risk.

Recently, Deloitte Access Economics' positioning for prosperity paper identified agribusiness as one of the fantastic five next-wave growth areas for Australia. I can assure the Opposition Leader that, unlike the CLP,

this government is being realistic and factual. Stop bowing to your latte-sipping southern mates, who sold us out in the budget.

Do you know what cuts deep? It is when one of your own turns their back on you. That is what Senator Nigel Scullion did; he turned his back on Territorians in this budget—disgraceful.

We have a plan. I am often out and about in Katherine, talking and listening to cattle people and everyone I need to consult with. This government wants to listen. This government knows how to listen. We know how to make Katherine the agribusiness hub of the Northern Territory and an inland port.

I will work with assistant minister Jeff Collins and the Member for Katherine; we will work together on this side of the Chamber to ensure Katherine becomes the agribusiness hub of the Northern Territory and the inland port. We have a plan to invest in Territorians. Our budget does that; it has a plan for the future in challenging times—investing in Territorians and our future. That means, contrary to what the other side says, we believe in Territorians by creating and investing in jobs. That is what Territorians want so they can stay in the Northern Territory.

You do not have a plan; we do. You cut jobs; we support jobs. You do not like Territorians; we love Territorians.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

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