

CONTENTS

Budget 2017–18 – Long-Term Plans.....	307
Budget 2017–18 – Jobs.....	307
Budget 2017–18 – Jobs.....	308
Budget 2017–18 – Jobs.....	309
Budget 2017–18 – Public Sector Numbers	310
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION.....	311
Budget 2017–18 – Public Sector Numbers	311
Budget 2017–18 – Population Growth.....	311
Budget 2017–18 – Alice Springs CBD.....	312
Budget 2017–18 – Palmerston Regional Hospital.....	313
Legislative Assembly Entitlements	313
Budget 2017–18 – Youth Services	314
Budget 2017–18 – Aboriginal Economic Development in Homelands	315
Budget 2017–18 - Investment in Country	316
Budget 2017–18 - Zuccoli Primary School	316
Budget 2017–18 – Aboriginal Interpreter Service.....	317
Budget 2017–18 – Economic Drivers in the Territory.....	318
Budget 2017–18 – Tennant Creek	319

Budget 2017–18 – Long-Term Plans

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Yesterday you said you would prefer to serve Territorians medicine with honey. That is borne out by the 2017–18 budget. The budget is essentially a poison lolly, full of sugar, superficially appealing but ultimately fatal. Racking up debt that generations will have to pay off without providing for sustainable jobs, such as those that would be generated by onshore gas or vital infrastructure, is not optimistic; it is toxic.

How will you artificially prop up the Territory economy if your optimistic forecasts are unfounded and you are unable to beg, borrow or scrounge another dollar due to your current irresponsible fiscal policies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question because I can talk about our long-term plan that we put in place in this budget. This budget is an investment in today and in growing, diversifying and broadening the Territory economy. We have done it all in full consultation with Territorians up and down the track and across sectors.

We thought it was really important to understand how we can responsibly unlock private sector investment. After four years of chaos and thought bubble budgets, in which they staggered from budget to budget, we want to have a long-term plan that clearly unlocks the potential of the Northern Territory.

You will see in this budget an investment in agribusiness. We are very excited about what is happening right now with agriculture. We want to make sure we are investing in it and unlocking an even greater investment in agribusiness. This is a plan that was not properly put in place by the CLP—a proper resourcing of Katherine and having an agribusiness hub in Katherine, with the two highways that go there, the railway line, the access to a deep water port. How can we better invest in them?

You can see our international engagement strategy coming in with our local domestic investments. I had conversations directly with ministers in Japan about trialling soya beans, asparagus and protein, which they are very interested in. We are tying that potential with reality and the understanding of the commercial and competitive advantages that Katherine has. We have a very strong investment in agribusiness.

You will see in this budget how we are investing in a vibrant Darwin CBD and a vibrant Alice Springs CBD, not just this year but in years to come. How can we pull all those plans together and make it a functional thing, a proper vision, not thoughts in isolation from each other but actual integrated, connected plans? We want a vibrant Darwin. We want Darwin to be the capital of Northern Australia in reality, not just potential.

The federal government has the developing the north strategy. It covers the top of WA, the top of Queensland and has the whole Territory in it. We are buying into that strategy, the federal government is buying into that strategy and our northern neighbours are buying into that strategy. We are showing, in this budget, our plan to invest in Darwin as the capital of northern Australia, our natural right. That is what we are grasping with this budget—a plan for the long-term future to create and grow jobs in the Territory across sectors so all Territorians benefit from our prosperity.

What do we hear from the CLP? We hear from them, in their budget reply speech, a plan to cut jobs in the Territory. We have a plan, not just for this budget but for future budgets, for Territorians. It is a properly resourced plan that we have discussed in full consultation with Territorians so they know where we stand. We stand with them, but the CLP stands against them. I do not know why. Why bother being elected if you are going to stand against Territorians?

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Budget 2017–18 – Jobs

Mrs WORDEN to TREASURER

Can you tell us what the response has been to this government's job-creating budget?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this has been a very busy time in government, but this has been a particularly busy week for me, going out and talking to as many people as I can about the budget and letting them know what is in Budget 2017–18 for them.

We have made it very clear that this is a budget that invests in the future, jobs, children and communities. We have spent time at the Chamber of Commerce. We have been out with property councils. We spoke with the MBA this morning. It was lovely to see the Master Builders Association. We are off to Alice Springs tomorrow and Katherine on Monday. We will be in Palmerston on Tuesday. It will be fantastic.

We have had positive responses. People are delighted that this government listens to Territorians. The single biggest issue people are talking about is jobs. They need a government that acts decisively and quickly to respond to the current economic conditions we are faced with.

If I was to look at some of the feedback, for example, from the Master Builders Association I spoke to this morning:

Budget 2017, full throttle support for the NT economy.

They will go flat strap to turn the economy around!

In the end, Budgets are just documents, but in this one there is no doubt that the Gunner Government has signalled how hard it intends to push the economy along.

We are not sure that the Government could have gone any harder than this to underpin the economy and our industry, and for that they deserves Top Marks from us and acknowledgment for those decisions.

Looking at the property council in the paper:

The Government's \$120-million CBD package is more than just about revitalising Darwin and Alice Springs CBDs, it's a down payment on future job creation and population growth.

It is important about the services sector as well. We had from the NT Council of Social Services, NTCOSS:

When times have been tight [other governments] have actually targeted those who can least afford to lose resources the most, so we really commend the Treasurer on not taking that step ...

Investment in things such as youth justice, out-of-home-care ... [and] family support, this is the stuff that will keep our community together, make our community safer and have a brighter future for young people and families.

The Real Estate Institute of Northern Territory said, 'It is a big spending budget and it has to be done in these times of dire need. For the housing sector it is not a bad budget at all'.

We will continue to listen to and work with Territorians as we shape and frame future budgets. Right now we have responded exactly how Territorians wanted us to, which was to invest in jobs.

Budget 2017–18 – Jobs

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

Territorians will pay \$289m in interest this year. By 2021 borrowings will be around \$7.5bn and interest payments more than \$1m a day. How many years will it be before the budget is in surplus, and why should our children and grandchildren have to pay in the future for your reckless spending now? What is your plan to get the Territory out of your government's black hole?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Deputy Leader of the Opposition repeating that the CLP's plan is to cut jobs in the NT. Question after question, speech after speech, the CLP has a plan to cut jobs in the Territory and cut investment to Territorians. The CLP's plan, when times get tough, is to turn off the lights, duck out

for a couple of years and maybe come back when another INPEX comes on by accident. 'Maybe then we will come back. Maybe then we will reopen the school. Maybe then we will reopen the hospital.' That is the CLP plan.

We are here for Territorians ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance.

Madam SPEAKER: No, it is not a point of order; the Chief Minister has three minutes to reply.

Mr GUNNER: Our plan is to invest in and create jobs for Territorians. That is what we are doing. That is our response to the current tough economic circumstances facing Territorians. As tough as we are doing it budget-wise, there are many Territorians doing it tougher—not just in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek, but remote Territorians have done it tougher for longer. This budget is designed around them and their needs and proper recognition of the difficult circumstances which we confront. We face a tough time in the Territory.

As you see in the budget—I do not think the opposition have read it entirely because they keep asking questions when the answers are present in the budget—the deficit comes down over the forward estimates. We are trending out of that deficit position over the forward estimates.

We have a clear plan done in full consultation with the private sector, through the summits, to have a 10-year infrastructure plan and the economic development framework to make sure we are unlocking private sector investment. This plan underpins projects like operation Sea Dragon and the prawn farm. It shows how we are investing in and supporting the agriculture sector in and around Katherine and Douglas Daly, the mining sector in and around Tennant Creek, the tourism sector and private sector investment. If we do not do that we will keep going backwards; that is what the CLP does not seem to understand.

Their plan is a recipe to lose jobs in the Territory which will see further and deeper GST cuts and fewer jobs in the Territory. That is their plan for Territorians. They want to turn the lights off and duck out for a couple of years. It is not good enough for Territorians. That is why they got booted out after four years, because they do not put Territorians first; they keep putting themselves first and that is not what Territorians deserve.

With a Labor government and Manison budget you are getting a government that puts Territorians first. We have a plan for jobs in the Territory. The CLP has a plan to cut jobs in the Territory, which is simply not good enough for Territorians.

Budget 2017–18 – Jobs

Mr COLLINS to TREASURER

Budget 2017–18 is all about creating jobs. Is the Treasurer aware of any other approaches or views in this area?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have been very clear that this is a budget that takes these economic headwinds head on and faces the conditions of a slowing economy, issues with population growth and a GST cut of \$2bn. I listened very carefully yesterday to the Leader of the Opposition's response to the budget to hear the opposition's plans and vision about how they feel the Territory should go forward, given these very tough times, and where their priorities are.

We were very clear about our priorities; our priorities are about creating, investing in and supporting Territory jobs. We have our \$1.75bn record infrastructure investment all centred around job-creating infrastructure. I heard some very positive messages from the Leader of the Opposition about the fact that they support job-creating infrastructure and understand the importance of investing in infrastructure and, at times, in stimulus. I remind them that we have comprehensive stimulus going into the Territory economy to support jobs, tradies, small businesses and people at a time when it is most needed.

For example, the \$297m record R and M budget—knowing we were going to get great short-term investment in supporting jobs but also long-term quality infrastructure to improve and enhance services to Territorians. Another example is the \$733m for roads and transport infrastructure across the Northern

Territory, which will improve transport services and open up fantastic opportunities for the pastoral, mining, agriculture and tourism sectors across the Northern Territory, as well as create better access for Territorians.

We have put our plans on the table, but what we did not hear in the response from the opposition was a great deal about their plans. We copped a bit of stick there about our investments. It appeared that their plan was to slash and burn jobs and put up the prices of things that would hurt Territorians, to go down the path that they have already been down before.

We have outlined our priorities in this budget. This is a budget to ensure we support and invest in jobs. It has a focus on sound and sensible job-creating infrastructure, and that is all about doing the right amount of investment now to ensure we have a brighter future for the Territory in the long term.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Budget 2017–18 – Public Sector Numbers

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

You misled the public service and Territorians yesterday when you said in this House that the Country Liberals had cut the number of public servants during its last term. In 2012 the FTE count was 20 039. In August 2017 the number had increased to 20 574. That is an increase, not a decrease, on your own figures.

Your government budget states that you will cut expenditure by \$217m, a 10-fold increase over last year's budget. Will you now come clean and advise how many public service jobs you have budgeted for in the coming years? How many jobs will cut?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will repeat what I said yesterday. I was very specific. I said the CLP broke its promise on the extra police. I said the CLP saw 500 fewer staff in education.

I stand by everything I said yesterday. I was very specific about what you did because we saw the impact it had in our classrooms and on students. That is why we went to the election with a very strong promise to invest in kids, especially in the early years. We saw what the CLP did, and we learned from the lessons of the CLP government on many things. The CLP was a bad government, and it made decisions that did not make sense and hurt service delivery for Territorians.

As I said yesterday, we are not sacking any public servants—nada, nil, zilch. We have constrained government spending, something the Leader of the Opposition has just admitted they did not do. They could not manage their recurrent spending. We have said we will constrain the recurrent side of government to historic levels of constraint at 0.1%.

We have invested our effort in creating jobs through the plan developed with the private sector across the Territory—what infrastructure projects we can invest in for the long term benefit of the Territory, while at the same time recognising the budgetary circumstances we have. Everyone has seen the GST cut. We know the trouble we are in when it comes to that. We have constrained ourselves on the recurrent side. We have given flexibility to the CEOs to manage that through natural attrition so no one loses their job. Despite the scare campaign of the CLP, we are not running around sacking people.

That CLP scare campaign is what they did when they were in government, but we are not the CLP so we are not doing that. We are showing constraint on the recurrent side. We have found savings in wages, in efficiency dividends, in inflation ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. With 40 seconds to go, how many public service jobs have you budgeted for in the coming year?

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. The Chief Minister is answering the question.

Mr GUNNER: We have explained to the opposition many times that we have constrained the recurrent side and put in a tight budget. We have to operate within our means, and there are many ways to manage that. There is natural attrition, which is exactly what we said before the last election. This is our principle way to

apply savings measures. There is flexibility around that. We have done that. We have shown that constraint.

We are not doing it the CLP way, which was to see, at one stage 500 fewer people in education. We are not doing that. We value and work with the public service and we need them to deliver our priorities for Territorians. The CLP cannot understand this because it is not how they do government.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time is up.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
Budget 2017–18 – Public Sector Numbers**

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Again, you have answered zero, zilch, nada, none. Yesterday your Treasurer said in an answer:

In part of it there was about \$11m identified through natural attrition. That would equate to a few—\$100 000 per position would equate to about 110 public service jobs.

Who is right, you or your Treasurer? Let us be honest with public servants. Give us the truth. Do not be a Tollner.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, I think you should withdraw that comment.

Mr HIGGINS: I withdraw. I am sorry.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it may be a first time this term that the Leader of the Opposition has caught me for words. I can make this promise very confidently to Territorians: I will not be Dave Tollner. I promise that to Territorians.

We have been speaking to CEOs and the public service and explaining to them how we are applying our savings measures and how we are applying constraint—the flexibility that has been given to CEOs to manage their budgets, which we take responsibility for and continue to work with them on. The Treasurer gave an example of how that may work.

The CLP is looking for a scare campaign that simply is not there. We have explained how we are managing the budget and the services we deliver, as well as how to make sure Territorians are looked after to keep them here. But we are not running the government like the CLP was. The scare campaign is not there because we are not you.

Budget 2017–18 – Population Growth

Mr KIRBY to CHIEF MINISTER

How does Budget 2017–18 boost the Territory's population? There are a number of us in the Chamber who are trying, but why is this so important for our future?

ANSWER

I thank the Member for Port Darwin and the Treasurer for doing their bit to increase the population in the NT. It is critical to do everything we can to grow the population. It is very clear through the budget papers that we have a dedicated plan for how we can grow the population of the Northern Territory.

We have to make sure we have a population plan. A population plan is present in our budget. The Treasurer spoke to it this week. The CLP failed to plan. I remember, as shadow Treasurer, having a conversation with the then Treasurer, Dave Tollner. We had concerns two years ago about the population figures that were expressed and the impact they would have on the GST. It was almost like it was news to the CLP; they did not consider population as an issue. It was very concerning that they had no plan for population.

We are investing in Territorians and a plan to make sure we keep moving people up here. The number one thing is jobs, jobs, jobs. The best thing for population is jobs to draw people here, keep them here and keep them in work. We have a plan for jobs. That is what we are doing to keep Territorians here and in work.

There is a record \$1.75bn infrastructure investment, done in full consultation and co-designed with the private sector, to make sure we are doing what we can over this term of government—this budget is a down payment—to unlock the private sector investment. To do as much as possible to stay local where we had that strong buy local plan—the independent industry advocate that will be coming on board to make sure we are keeping as much of that local spend here in the Territory.

The other thing that we need to do, and this came through very clearly from our consultation through the economic summits process, is to restore the reputation of the Northern Territory across Australia. Our brand received significant damage over the last four years under the CLP. We were presented with business requests up and down the track saying we need to have a concerted effort to repair the reputation of the Northern Territory, and we want a consistent brand to do that.

That is the request we have taken on board. We agree with them and we think there should be a consistent brand that we use when promoting the Northern Territory in all our endeavours. You can look at New Zealand and its success with its 100% pure brand. The Northern Territory has to have its own brand—a proud brand, a strong brand—that we work with to help repair our reputation overseas.

We will continue to put downward pressure on costs of living. You have seen our plans for that in the budget. We are having a 0% power price rise this year. That is a 0% increase, unlike the CLP ...

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Budget 2017–18 – Alice Springs CBD

Mrs LAMBLEY to TREASURER

Treasurer, your budget allocated \$20m to revitalising the Alice Springs CBD, starting in 2018–19. You mentioned you have allocated \$10m to both the Darwin and Alice Springs revitalization program to get them kick-started. How will that be allocated? Will it be 50/50—fingers crossed—and will that amount be taken off that \$20m? People in Alice Springs want to know exactly what the plan is, particularly with this funding allocation.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I had a conversation with the ABC the other day in which they expressed those concerns from people. The \$20m will be a great investment in the revitalisation of the Alice Springs CBD.

Critically, it is important to make sure it is a wise investment and the consultation happens with the Alice Springs community; it should include people such as you, Member for Araluen, and key business and industry leaders to make sure we get the best bang for buck and ensure it is a wise and sensible investment that will reinvigorate the CBD, create more job opportunities and draw people in to do business and visit.

It takes planning and consultation. The \$10m is in the budget—looking at design work, consultation and getting things moving. We have the Government Architect involved in the Alice Springs process. It will happen over the coming financial year. I cannot give you an exact break-up of how that will go in terms of the \$10m, but it will happen.

I cannot stress how important it is that people of Alice Springs are involved in this process, and that they have a genuine voice in the progress of these plans and how they are formulated. It is vital that the people of Alice Springs and Central Australia are part of that. This is for them and their future. You do not want someone coming in from outside who has not consulted. The people should have a genuine say. Nobody knows better about what needs to happen in that CBD than the people of Alice Springs. They are the ones who must have the strongest voice.

Throughout this financial year we will be working with them. I cannot give you the exact split, but I am sure you will be fighting to champion as much of that \$10m as you can so you have the best possible body of work done. We will make sure you are across the bodies of work going out there.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I would like you to answer the final part of my question. Will that amount, that allocation within the \$10m, be taken off the total of \$20m or will it be in addition to it?

Ms MANISON: There is \$20m for Alice as a whole; \$20m, as a whole, will go into the revitalisation of the Alice Springs CBD. As with all good projects, planning, consultation and infrastructure investment is part of major project development and management. We will try to get as much money through the door as we can for the infrastructure works.

Budget 2017–18 – Palmerston Regional Hospital

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for HEALTH

Under this Gunner Labor government Budget 2017–18 is delivering for our future with jobs and investing in our children and communities. How will the Palmerston Regional Hospital deliver stronger health services for the region?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Brennan for his question. He is a passionate member of the Palmerston community. You only need to have a quick peek at his Facebook page to see that he is out there in his community door knocking and attending school assemblies.

We have a strong representation in our government from the people of Palmerston with the Members for Drysdale and Brennan. I was pleased to visit the Palmerston hospital site with them recently. We are actually building a hospital. We are not simply digging a hole and filling it back in with some special type of concrete.

This government is committed to health services for Territorians. We believe all Territorians are entitled to access high-quality healthcare. We are delivering on that commitment. The people of Palmerston were continually let down by the CLP government, especially when it came to the Palmerston hospital.

The construction of the Palmerston hospital is back on track and will be delivered in the first half of next year. Budget 2017–18 provides \$36m over two years to support the commissioning of the hospital and purchasing furniture, fixtures, equipment and information and communication technology. This is something that would never have happened under the CLP government because they were too busy digging their holes and filling them back in.

This budget provides \$8.8m to complete the construction of the hospital in addition to the \$40.3m revote. I am very proud that this \$170m is on track. We will finish the construction in the first half of next year and there will be a staged approach to opening this hospital. We are working now through very detailed planning with clinicians so we can prepare and test the models of service delivery and care at that hospital. We will deliver a hospital that will be a support to the people of Palmerston and the rural area. It will also provide extra capacity inpatient beds and surgery to help with the bed block we face at Royal Darwin Hospital.

The CLP government over the last four years spent so much time focusing on themselves with their chaotic infighting that they forgot Territorians, and that is evident within our health system. We do not have long-term plans, but this government is committed to that. I was pleased to see in Budget 2017–18 that we will be providing a rehabilitation pool at the Palmerston hospital. The local disability peak body, Integrated Disability Action, which I met with earlier this year, has spoken about the importance of having direct access to a hydrotherapy pool for rehabilitation.

This is an example of the chaos and dysfunction of the last four years having a direct impact on the healthcare of Territorians and those in the Palmerston region, but our government has listened. We have listened to the community and the concerns of disability advocates. That is why there is an additional \$2.5m to build that hydrotherapy pool in 2018-19.

My time has expired, but I am looking forward to updating the House into the future and showing you around the fabulous Palmerston hospital, which is actually a hospital under this Labor government.

Legislative Assembly Entitlements

Mr WOOD to Madam SPEAKER

The *NT News* has raised questions about the previous Chief Minister in relation to his travel allowance and his Darwin accommodation. According to the *NT News*, Halikos hospitality paid rent for a unit in which the Chief Minister lived and they claimed it was paid by the NT Government. This has been denied by the previous Chief Minister. I have since written to the Auditor-General asking for an opinion, and in her reply she said the registering of entitlement interests should be directed to you.

Madam Speaker, could you say whether the Legislative Assembly has investigated this issue and, if so, what is the response?

ANSWER

Thank you, Member for Nelson. Under the Remuneration Tribunal I have a responsibility to make procedural rules to implement entitlements. If a member is provided an entitlement the determination itself provides the guidance as to how it is used.

Your question particularly relates to payment of travelling allowance to a member pursuant to Schedule 3 of the RTD. The established procedure, pursuant to Clause 8 of the RTD, is for a member, or their staff on their behalf, to email the Travel Officer in the Department of the Legislative Assembly to request the entitlement be paid pursuant to Clause 5 and for the member to advise if there is any variation.

The MET system, Members' Electronic Travel system, includes an acquittal process. Members who stay in non-commercial accommodation, in other words private accommodation, are paid a travelling allowance as determined by the tribunal at Schedule 3; commercial accommodation is a different rate.

I would advise that all receipts associated with travel and accommodation relating to members' travel entitlements be saved to the travel record in the MET system.

You asked whether the Legislative Assembly has investigated a matter relating to the former Member for Braitling and Chief Minister, as reported in the *NT News*. It is important to distinguish ministerial travel from member travel entitlements. The Department of the Legislative Assembly has reported to me that the Clerk has been advised by his office that the MET system discloses that the former Member for Braitling did not receive any travel allowance as available under Schedule 3 for calendar years 2013, 2014, 2015 or 2016.

It is understood the Department of the Chief Minister pays travel allowances to ministers pursuant to Clause 5.2 of the RTD, so you may wish to ask the Chief Minister for details of how that is administered.

Budget 2017–18 – Youth Services

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Minister, how is this government investing in services to support young people throughout the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

As someone who grew up in Central Australia, the Member for Namatjira understands the importance of making sure we have great youth services in our regions. It is very important that we have a range of activities that engage and are meaningful to young people growing up in a small town.

I would first like to say that I am proud of this budget because Central Australia has definitely not been forgotten. Our government, unlike our predecessors, understands the importance of making sure we are using evidence-based policy and decision-making.

I also think it shows that we have a very realistic eye on where some of our issues are and where we need to invest in our future to make sure we are keeping children at the centre of our decision-making. I feel strongly that we have stuck to our Labor values in this budget, and that includes an investment of an additional \$1.75m into after-hour youth services in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. This is on top of an already increased \$1.1m invested in young people's programs across the whole Territory.

These were services that were defunded—I think the word was 'reallocated' or 'repurposed' in the papers. Bottom line, it meant that NGO funding was cut in the mini-budget of 2012. What we have seen from that is

the strategy of a 'tough on crime'—even though last week there seemed to be a fair bit of denial that there was a 'tough on crime' approach to youth justice—is just not working. Not investing in youth service is not working.

We are getting more and more kids through detention centres with a straight pathway to adult detention. We need to stop that. We need to use the evidence, which tells us that if we invest in young people and services that specialise in their needs, if we keep kids busy after hours with meaningful activities that they are a part of and are run by NGO services who have relationships with these kids, then we will have better outcomes.

This is the evidence. We know this. We need to invest. I like that you used the word 'invest'. Too often Territory Families is seen as a drain on the budget, but we are about investing in our future. If we do not invest in young people and believe in young people then we will not have a future in the Territory.

I would like to echo what NTCOSS said. The temptation is always to cut funds for the most vulnerable because they do not have a voice in that place. With this government they have a voice. Young people have a voice. We have a future in the Territory.

Budget 2017–18 – Aboriginal Economic Development in Homelands

Mr GUYULA to TREASURER referred to MINISTER for TRADE, BUSINESS and INNOVATION

The 2017–18 budget includes \$2m for the Remote Aboriginal Economic Development Fund. Many Indigenous people in the homelands in North East Arnhem Land want to start small businesses, but they are in need of support to get their initiatives off the ground. So often funds have been allocated in budgets for remote Aboriginal economic development but programs never connect to people at the homelands level. So often people at the homelands know nothing about these programs.

What plans are in place to ensure people at the homelands level are able to benefit from these economic development funds?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Member of Nhulunbuy because it goes to a body of work that we want to do. As you say, there are grants available for remote Indigenous economic development. Not everybody is aware of them or how to access support to take advantage of those grants.

I am doing a body of work—probably more within the Department of the Chief Minister than DPTI, but between the two—on how we can better coordinate what we do across the Territory remotely. There has been some good work done on this in parts of the Northern Territory already. The model through DCM that is in place at the moment in Wadeye, for example, and has been quite good at coordinating and informing locals in Wadeye and in the homelands about access to services.

We are looking at how we can work with the Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the regional economic directors to form a better connection with remote Territorians about what is available to them. It is not just, 'Here is a regional Indigenous economic development grant', for example. There is the capacity to build other things that can go with it. NDIS provides a very good example of how we can do this in practice and help shape some of our investment.

We recognise that social need provides economic opportunity. It is a positive thing. We are looking at it through our housing program as well. NDIS provides an economic opportunity and delivers on a social need. As a government, we want to work with locals to be able to deliver on that.

It provides a good example of how we can provide some capacity building to then build into the development of a business that might receive grant support to get up and going. Then it has a sustainable base through the social money that is provided against that social need—in that instance NDIS.

If you go to the housing example—how can we work with Indigenous business enterprises to build, grow, have greater capacity and involve the homelands in those opportunities. These are things we can do if we work better as a government. It is not, in this instance, necessarily about the grant pools or the size of them. It is about how we better work with, and communicate with, remote Territorians. It forms part of our local decision-making frame work and how we can transfer this over.

It is about greater capacity and recognition that people in remote communities are capable of this economic and entrepreneurial opportunity. We just need to ensure we work to support them better, pull in that capacity of capability when it is necessary and provide access to grants. At the very heart of your question, we need to communicate with them so they know those opportunities are there.

This is something we are taking on as a government. I am working with my department on how we can better arrange ourselves to deliver on that.

Budget 2017–18 - Investment in Country

Ms UIBO to MINISTER for TOURISM and CULTURE

How is this government protecting country and creating jobs across the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Arnhem is passionate about growing and supporting jobs in the bush. Thank you for that passion.

This budget is about jobs, which has been outlined by the Treasurer and my colleagues over the last couple of days. We recognise the role our Indigenous ranger groups play in the frontline management of our natural resources through conservation and protection of sea and land environments in the Northern Territory. Those assets are important to our future.

Many of the groups are under-resourced to do the tasks ahead of them. I have been fortunate to meet a number of different groups with some of my colleagues. I was recently in Nitmiluk National Park and spent time with the rangers there. They are incredible and I enjoyed learning from them. The passion they have is infectious. We are proud to be supporting our Indigenous rangers in this budget and in years going forward.

We are providing new funding from 2017–18 to support these ranger groups. We recognise the importance of stimulating employment and other social outcomes, as well as the development of partnerships such as fire management in Nitmiluk National Park with the Jawoyn Association rangers and Parks and Wildlife. They are building economic self-sufficiency.

There is significant potential to continue to deliver and grow jobs for the bush. There has been a discussion paper released. The department is talking to ranger groups about the guidelines and principles that will underpin this grants program. They are talking to those ranger groups about how those grants project will work best for them and deliver the outcomes they want to see.

We recognise Territorians have put their trust in us to protect the environment and create jobs. This capital grants program will roll out from 1 July 2017. It is \$4.1m over two years for capital items and \$2m per year for the land management and conservation fund to improve and develop conservation practices on Aboriginal land.

This will lead to jobs and economic development. It is at the top of our development of the strategic Indigenous reserves policy. We are putting together an Indigenous land management advisory group that will provide crucial advice on the delivery of these commitments. We are returning that decision-making back to local people. We have our Indigenous carbon unit being established to facilitate and deliver on carbon abatement.

It is an exciting time and we value the work they do.

Budget 2017–18 - Zuccoli Primary School

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

On Tuesday \$9m was allocated in the budget to the Zuccoli school stage one, including headworks, services and shared community recreation, but you said the government primary school in Zuccoli is still a few years away. Palmerston's south is part of the electorate of Spillett and is the fastest-growing area in the

Northern Territory at 26% growth last year. The nearest government primary schools to Zuccoli also showed huge growth in enrolment with Bakewell Primary enrolments rising over 26% since 2013 and Rosebery Primary enrolments rising nearly 20%.

The population is expected to further expand in Zuccoli, and just this week 50 new lots were approved to be released in Zuccoli. In light of the clear need for the people of Palmerston east and south to have their own school, why has the government primary school, which the Country Liberals committed to, been delayed by your government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Yes, we are committed in this budget to putting \$9m into the joint areas of the development at the Zuccoli site. As we know the previous government committed \$22m to Catholic education to build a Catholic primary school at that site. The \$9m will be for those joint areas, such as the amphitheatre, assembly area and libraries. We also need to allow Catholic education the opportunity to get their school up and running and see how many students attend that school before we build a government school, because we need to make sure we are using our resources in the best way possible.

Yes, we will build a school in Zuccoli, but we also need to look at the timing of that school, build joint facilities, have a good look at the Catholic education set up, see how many kids are going to Catholic education and then look into our plans about how we will build the school that needs to go there. There is no need to rush into this and use government money unwisely. We need to give Catholics a good go to get their school up and running, see how many students attend that school and then look at where we are going from there.

The other thing is we are having constant conversations with Rosebery Primary School and Bakewell Primary School about their student numbers; we are monitoring those situations, but it is about planning those things.

The CLP had not put those things in place; forward works had not committed to that. We will look very carefully into those things. It needs to be done carefully and sensibly. When we commit to these things we need to look at the population growth in those areas. First and foremost, we will build the \$9m joint facilities. That will be a new concept for education. Then we will give the Catholics a really good go to make sure their school can get off the ground and be successful.

We know lots of parents in the Territory choose public and private schools and move between those two things because most of the Catholic schools in the Territory do not charge exorbitant fees. We have a great relationship with Catholic education so we will work closely with them to make sure that between us all we can provide a great education for all children in Palmerston.

Budget 2017–18 – Aboriginal Interpreter Service

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for HOUSING and COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We are fortunate to live in this great Territory where so many diverse Aboriginal languages are spoken. How is this government supporting communities across the Territory to be fully involved in making decisions on the issues that impact on them?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is a proud announcement, as part of Budget 2017–18, that there is an additional \$1m into the support of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. This will bring the total funding of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to \$4.5m. Members should be aware that there are over 35 000 Northern Territorians who communicate in Indigenous languages—making sure they are active participants in local decision-making, and this government recognises that. We know the value of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and how it has been planned strategically into our improvements on making sure local decision-making underpins the new policies of the Michael Gunner Labor government.

It is serious and it is imperative that Indigenous Territorians and government work together to make sure we get the best outcomes.

In terms of Budget 2017–18 and the jobs focus, an additional \$1m will provide around nine full-time jobs. That is a good outcome in terms of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. Members should be aware that the majority of the jobs in the AIS are casual jobs across the Territory. As I have travelled and met with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and worked with them in community, I have heard that Aboriginal people like that type of employment. Across the Territory there are over 300 casual employees engaged in Aboriginal interpreter services.

When you factor that into Aboriginal interpreters working with government officials, with community and within the local government sector to enhance local decision-making, then you are on track to get things right.

The Department of Housing and Community Development, and particularly that division of local government, have been using Aboriginal interpreters extremely well. Now we are communicating to all the government departments, in terms of our interactions with the Indigenous communities and the regional and remote towns across the Territory, to use Aboriginal interpreters.

I am proud to be able to work with the Chief Minister, who is also leading this important policy initiative about getting it right, consulting properly and consulting with Indigenous Territorians in their first language to make sure that everybody gets the message clearly and the message comes back clearly to government.

Thank you, member, for that question. It is a proud moment. For anybody who is interested you should come and see the Aboriginal Interpreter Service, meet some of the interpreters and understand that important element of good cross-cultural communication.

Budget 2017–18 – Economic Drivers in the Territory

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

I arrived here in the 1980s and at that time Crocodile Dundee and marketing campaigns promoted the Territory which led to a decade of investment in Northern Territory tourism. In the 1990s a bold decision to locate national military resources to the north grew the population, industry and Palmerston. From 2000 we had the railway, then Conoco Phillips, then INPEX. Each one gave real cause for optimism.

Now it is 2017. We face a debt burden of more than \$20 000 per man, woman and child. To avoid optimism becoming just wishful thinking, apart from waterparks, museums and art galleries, what is the next big thing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the former Chief Minister. We have a significant investment in the future of the Northern Territory present in this budget. One thing that may have escaped the former Chief Minister's attention was a world first that we have done.

He was talking about the next big project. The Henderson and Martin governments brought Ichthys here. We have, in what I believe is a world first, brought five different joint offshore venture partners together with Conoco to explore the capacity for a second train from Darwin LNG. That is huge. We have been able to get those five competing ventures together to explore that second LNG. Only a government investment was able to broker that deal. We are the honest brokers as part of that deal to get those five offshore joint venture partners there. That is huge potential for the Northern Territory.

We have Defence spending on the horizon, very near the horizon, 2018, and there is early work being done now to prepare for that. We have made the Defence unit in Trade, Business and Innovation bigger, and we are about to appoint an advocate in Canberra to make sure we have a permanent presence in Canberra fighting for the Territory's fair share of that Defence work. It is important that this relationship with Defence is not seen as transactional but as strategic.

We are not there cap in hand, but we are there to be genuine partners for the best interests, long term, for Defence strategically being here. It is not just about the construction dollar in what they build; it is about how we can help Defence maintain their assets over the long term, whether it is a physical land-based asset or a platform, like a tank or a ship. How can we best help them keep their platforms in operation and in service in the north?

There are clear investments in this budget and big projects coming, such as offshore oil and gas, Defence and agribusiness, which is big but has the potential to be huge. We talk about the next big things. People do not talk about Sea Dragon enough. There is very real investment here to support Sea Dragon. It is a massive investment of the scale China needs for exporting to them.

We have huge projects on the horizon. There is a real reason to be confident about the future of the Northern Territory. We have 18 projects before us, with major project status, that we are working on. There are big things coming for the Territory.

I, and the Labor government, believe in the Territory. It is unfortunate the CLP has one plan, which is to cut jobs, turn the lights off and duck out for a few years. That is not good enough for Territorians. We will put them first.

Budget 2017–18 – Tennant Creek

Mr COLLINS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

How is Budget 2017–18 delivering on the government's commitment to develop Tennant Creek as the mining and mineral service centre for the Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Fong Lim, who is doing an excellent job as the assistant minister for Primary Industry and Resources.

This government has a plan for Tennant Creek. We are delivering on our election commitment to make Tennant Creek the mining services hub of the Northern Territory. We are supporting the resource industry, which does its fair share of heavy lifting for the Territory economy. Tennant Creek has a rich history in this industry. It was the site of Australia's last gold rush, during the 1930s. At that time it was the third largest gold producer in Australia.

Someone who is very familiar with this, but was not there in the 1930s, is my colleague, the Member for Barkly. He is a wonderful advocate for his constituents. He hosted me a couple weeks ago in Tennant Creek and took me to meet with some of the mining operations that can play a big part in a prosperous future for the region and the Territory.

Since those gold rush days, a lot more is now known about what lies beneath the surface of the Territory. Recent advancements in technology, both in exploration and extraction, can unlock the vast potential of Tennant Creek gold deposits of yesteryear. The challenge for the small operators in this sector is the cost of infrastructure, some of which is so great that bearing the burden alone makes the project unviable.

Removing the gold-bearing rock off the ground is just the first step. To extract the gold, mining companies use a complex process which requires expensive machinery to break down the ore into smaller pieces, then mill it into powders, which are then treated through a series of leaching tanks.

We, unlike the previous government, are listening to and consulting with Territorians. An idea raised with me first by the Member for Barkly and then put forward in our economic summits is one of a common user-centralised gold milling facility. This would allow small operations to process their stockpile without having to outline the impeding costs of this processing infrastructure.

I, like the Member for Barkly, am proud that this government is committed to a feasibility study into building a common user-centralised milling facility for Tennant Creek. This innovative approach has the potential to stimulate more exploration and open up more operations in the Barkly region. This will result in more resource jobs in the region. Those workers will then spend more money in the region, which will lead to even more jobs.

We understand that a secure and rewarding job is the best way to ensure Territorians stay here. We have a plan. This is why we are investing in jobs and job-creating projects.

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