

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER
Water Safety

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, Northern Territory politicians come together for water safety with a yellow duck on their desk as a reminder that water safety is important for all Territorians. This year the Royal Life Saving Society celebrates 50 years of service in the Northern Territory. We are very proud that most MLAs are Royal Life Saving Keep Watch Ambassadors, who actively promote water safety messages to the families and communities in their electorates.

The *National Drowning Report* was released in Canberra on 15 September this year. Unfortunately, the Northern Territory has one of the highest drowning rates per capita in Australia. This highlights the importance of water safety for families, communities and government, and the need for everyone to work together to prevent drownings.

With this in mind, Water Safety Week is running from 20 to 26 September for all Territorians. Think water safety this week and all year round and join Boof the Barra – wish he was the \$1m barra – for the opening event, Splashfest, at the Waterfront on Sunday 20 September from 9 am to 1 pm. Members may wish to join the Royal Life Saving people on the front steps for a photograph at 11.50 am.

MISUSE OF DRUGS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 136)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, before I move that the bill be read a second time I will, for the sake of honourable members, outline what I intend to do.

The bill will be read the second time. I presume somebody from the opposition will seek to adjourn debate. Immediately thereafter, I will move the urgency motion so we can debate that straight after the bill is on the floor of the House, otherwise we would be debating an urgency motion for a bill that is not on the record.

To that end, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Our nation is in the throes of systemic and widespread methamphetamine and amphetamine manufacture, supply and addiction. Dependency on these highly addictive, dangerous drugs grips people from all walks of life and affects their parents, children, extended families, friends and

their own physical and mental health. Prolonged use of these drugs can lead to exposure to our criminal justice system or acute mental health problems, often both. As a result, methamphetamine is scheduled in the highest category of prohibited dangerous drugs in every Australian jurisdiction.

Since the middle of 2013, seizures of methamphetamine, amphetamine and other amphetamine-type substances by the Northern Territory Police have risen by approximately 170% for powdered forms of the substances and over 480% for liquid forms of the substances. Despite significant efforts by the Northern Territory Police and other law enforcement agencies in this area, methamphetamine and other amphetamine-type substances continue to flood our streets and plague our community.

It is estimated that over 80% of methamphetamine and other amphetamine-type substances seized in the Northern Territory are brought in from interstate. The supply methods most commonly used by criminal networks for the transportation of methamphetamine and other dangerous drugs include private vehicle traffic between jurisdictions, trucking companies and commercial traffic, freight and drug mules on commercial flights.

As law enforcement agencies at national, state and Territory levels increase their presence and detection capabilities, criminal networks are also increasing their ability to develop new and innovative methods to transport illicit drugs in an attempt to avoid detection.

Recent seizures in the Northern Territory and police intelligence from around Australia has highlighted that major drug suppliers are attempting to evade detection by packaging drugs and secreting them in fuel tanks, vacuum sealed devices, and by otherwise masking the smell of the drugs through various and increasingly elaborate means.

The *Police Administration Act* contains wide-ranging powers for the police to search for and seize dangerous drugs as well as their precursors. However, the use of powers is dependent on police reasonably suspecting an offence has been, or is likely to be, committed and is, therefore, reactionary and reliant upon either a tip-off from interstate law enforcement agencies or the use of other forms of criminal intelligence.

Legislative amendments over the last several years have not included new innovative proactive tools which allow police to specifically target the importation of methamphetamines and other dangerous drugs into the Northern Territory and,

as a result, criminals have found ways to circumvent the powers that police have.

Section 95(2) of the *Liquor Act* contains broad at-random stop, search and seizure powers relating to alcohol; however, such powers do not extend to the searching for dangerous drugs. The *Traffic Act*, at section 29AAB, contains powers for a police officer to stop a vehicle, without reasonable suspicion that the driver has committed an offence, for the purposes of conducting a breath or saliva test for dangerous drugs in the case of drivers of prescribed vehicles.

This power only extends to alcohol and drug testing, and does not include any search and seize powers. Random or without reasonable suspicion stop, search and seizure powers have been incorporated into drug legislation in other jurisdictions.

Section 52B of the *Controlled Substances Act 1984*, South Australia, contains additional powers that can be utilised by police officers in declaring drug transit routes.

The South Australian act allows a police officer at the rank of inspector or above to declare an area to be a drug transit route. Such a declaration can last for up to 14 days and it allows officers to exercise additional powers of search and seizure on the drug transit route during the period of declaration. The additional powers relate to the random stopping of vehicles and the use of drug detector dogs and electronic drug detection devices on the vehicles and occupants.

In their submission to the Ice Select Committee, the Northern Territory Police noted that the risks posed by methamphetamine and other amphetamine-type substances can be mitigated through a coordinated, whole-of-government approach that focuses on the reduction of harm, demand and supply.

That submission, and the submissions of a number of other stakeholders to the committee, is on the Legislative Assembly website and I encourage people to read them.

The Northern Territory Police submission noted the establishment of the Commonwealth and Territory multiagency task force comprising the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Crime Commission, Customs and Border Protection and state or territory police. This will provide support to any Territory-specific strategy through the provision of additional support that will focus on the identification and targeting of suppliers, and their supply routes, at a national and international level.

The submission recommended that legislative amendments to assist in the disruption and dismantling of drug supply routes be introduced as a matter of urgency. It is noted that supply reduction strategies form one of the main components of the harm minimisation principles that underpin the National Drug Strategy.

This bill allows for the drug detection areas to be authorised by a senior police officer, and allows Northern Territory police officers to exercise prescribed powers over vehicles and occupants within the authorised area.

The key features of the bill are as follows.

Clause 6 inserts the provisions regarding the authorisation of drug detection areas and the powers conferred on police within the declared areas. The clause contains the following matters:

- A new section 19V contains specific matters relating to an authorisation. These matters include:
 - a senior police officer may authorise an area to be declared a drug detection area if the officer reasonably suspects that the area is being used, or is likely to be used, for the transport of dangerous drugs or precursors
 - the officer must have the rank of commander or above
 - the authorisation must comply with guidelines issued by the Police Commissioner
 - the authorisation is subject to any conditions specified and can be in effect for a period not exceeding 14 days. The authorisation can be varied or revoked at any time.
- The new section 19W places restrictions on the size and location of the drug detection area and notes the area must be at least 30 km from the Darwin General Post Office. The total size of the area must not exceed 3 km². If the area contains any roads, the authorised part of the roadway must not exceed 3 km in length.
- New section 19X notes that the authorisation allows a police officer to exercise the powers in new section 19Y without warrant or without reasonable suspicion an offence against the act has been committed, for the detection of an offence against the *Misuse of Drugs Act*. This section also states the commissioner must establish written procedures for the use of powers conferred by this part, and notes that

no more than three authorisations can be in force at any given time.

- The new section 19Y contains powers that the police may exercise in drug detection areas. The powers are:
 - to require the driver of a vehicle to stop within the declared area
 - to detain the vehicle and carry out general drug detection in or on the vehicle and any person or property in or on the vehicle. General drug detection is defined as the use of a detection dog or electronic drug detection system
 - for a police officer to physically enter the vehicle and search the vehicle or a person who is in the vehicle or who they reasonably believe has recently left the vehicle
 - to seize any items or things the officer reasonably believes are connected with an offence against the act
 - to give directions to a person to open any part of the vehicle.
- New section 19Z allows police to create a drug detection point within an area and requires facilities to be provided and for appropriate warnings to be given for drivers.
- New section 19ZA requires the Commissioner of Police to report to the minister, namely the Attorney-General, within three months of the end of the financial year regarding the use of the powers under this new part. The report must contain prescribed information, for example, the number of authorisations, the areas that were authorised, the periods for which the authorisation had effect, and the number of occasions a dangerous drug or precursor was seized. The minister must table a copy of the report in the Legislative Assembly within seven sitting days of receipt of the report.

Clause 11 of the bill inserts two regulations into the Misuse of Drugs Regulations. The definition of 'general drug detection' in the new section 19U notes that general drug detection includes using an electronic drug detection system in relation to a person or property in a manner prescribed by the regulation. Regulation 14 notes how the electronic drug detection devices must be used on people and Regulation 15 notes how they are to be used on property. The provisions are similar to those contained in the South Australian Controlled Substances Regulations.

Clause 15 amends the *Police Administration Act* and complements section 116F of that act. Currently, section 116F of the *Police Administration Act* contains a provision relating to reasonable grounds for search without warrant on indication of a drug detection dog. The *Police Administration Act* does not contain similar provisions relating to an electronic drug detection system and this oversight is being rectified.

The bill also contains amendments to section 40 of the *Misuse of Drugs Act*. Section 40(c) contains evidentiary matters that need to be satisfied to prove a person was in possession of a dangerous drug. The current wording of section 40(c) requires prosecuting authorities to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the person knew or suspected that drugs or precursors found in or on a place to which the person was the occupier, or was concerned in the management or control, were in their possession.

In the absence of admissions or surveillance evidence, this matter is difficult to prove and it is being successfully utilised to an offender's advantage where they are intercepted either entering or preparing to enter the Northern Territory or Indigenous communities with drugs in their luggage or their vehicles. The Northern Territory Police have noted that the use of the defence is being actively promoted and, while the intent of the provision was to capture genuine non-intent to possess situations, it is presently being utilised to usurp the effect and intent of the *Misuse of Drugs Act*. The amendment to clause 8 of the bill ensures the evidentiary provision in the *Misuse of Drugs Act* cannot be used as a blanket defence when possession is alleged. It does so by incorporating a reverse onus provision where an accused person must prove the lack of knowledge of possession where it is proven a drug or precursor was located in or at a place to which that person was the occupier, or was concerned in the management or control.

The amendment is consistent with other evidentiary clauses in drug legislation throughout Australia, for example, section 5 of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* of Victoria and section 7 of the *Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985* of New South Wales.

Clause 8 also amends section 40 to allow for a certificate signed by the Commissioner of Police to act as *prima facie* evidence for two matters, namely the rank of the senior police officer and the fact that an area on a specified day was an authorised drug detection area. The amendment allows evidence that is not in dispute to be admitted by way of certificate without need to call witnesses. If the matters are in dispute, of course evidence will need to be called to prove the matters.

Dangerous drugs, methamphetamine in particular, are a scourge in our community, and this government is committed to ensuring that law enforcement has the necessary tools to disrupt in a significant and real way the drug supply to the Northern Territory. Drug manufacture and supply is a very profitable business that preys on human misery and we, as a government and a community, must meet the challenge of dismantling these enterprises. The additional powers contained in this bill are game changers in the fight against drug supply within and into the Northern Territory.

The government's message is this: if you do not transport dangerous drugs, you will have nothing to worry about; you will be stopped for a short time in the authorised area and then you can continue your journey. If you do transport drugs, you can run the gauntlet but you can be stopped at random by police within an authorised area; police can search you and your vehicle, and there is a high probability you will be caught.

I commend this bill to honourable members and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS
Pass Bill through all Stages – Misuse of Drugs
Amendment Bill

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill, Serial 136, passing through all stages during these sittings.

I do not walk into this House and seek to suspend standing orders lightly. It is not something I want to necessarily do on every occasion, but the information coming to government, which has been substantially shared with the members opposite through briefings from the Northern Territory Police Force, justifies the urgency government seeks in this House today. It is not automatic, as it may have been in times past, that urgency will be provided to government simply because we are no longer in a position of majority government. Nevertheless, there are times when we should play politics in this House and there are times when we should concern ourselves with the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory. I submit to the honourable members in this Chamber that today is one of those times when we should be casting our minds towards the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory.

The amendments we are seeking to make to the *Misuse of Drugs Act* are a policy of disruption that we need to roll out as quickly as possible. Like

the members opposite, I have received briefings from police which have caused me some concern. Of particular concern is one element that drives the urgency today. That element is that whilst methamphetamine has only just started making an appearance in places like Galiwinku and some remote Aboriginal communities, many of the people being picked up today are from remote communities residing out of Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Darwin. That is of concern because when those people are bailed or returned to their remote communities, they will continue, unless they undergo a road to Damascus conversion, to seek access to ice and ice-related methamphetamine products.

The time to act is now and the time to prevaricate has passed. For that reason we seek urgency in this House to support the Territory's fight against drugs in our community.

These people coming out of the arrest system at the moment are returning to those remote communities. The knowledge that the price of ice is coming down and demand will drive supply means that as the demand increases in remote communities, we need to have a position on this issue. The question in the bill is not a hard one to ask. This is a threshold decision. This is not a complex piece of legislation; it was not difficult to draft and does not require lengthy consideration. The simple question before members today is: do we support the police with stop and seizure powers as described in the amendments to the *Misuse of Drugs Act*? I urge that we do because we need to give those powers to police today.

The threshold question I urge members to ask themselves is: do I support the legislation? If the answer is yes, then why wait? From our perspective a simple legislative instrument like this – which introduces some pretty straightforward stop, search and seizure powers – those are the questions we should be asking ourselves. 'If I support the thrust of the legislation, why would I not allow the urgency?'

This comes to the point of whether or not we support politics. If we support the politics of what we do in this House about exerting powers over the government, fine, do that, but do it on an issue that is not as urgent or important as this. If you find yourself in a position where you think you understand what the police want here – they want the stop and search power – do you agree with that? That is a question for community leadership.

I understand some members will say, 'I have to talk to people before I make up my mind', but we as community leaders – when we are elected we must from time to time ask ourselves, 'Do I lead or do I wait?' My argument in this instance is that we

must, as community leaders, lead and press on when we know it is the right thing to do. It will be galling in the extreme if we let this bill sit on the Notice Paper for 30 days and then pass it in this House unanimously. It will mean that any resistance to an urgency motion will have all been about the politics of resisting government rather than necessarily the threshold issue of whether or not we should do this.

I have heard no indication from the members opposite where they stand on this, but I am not sensing a deep resistance from them about the necessity for this power. If you agree this power should exist, it should follow that we pass a reasonably sensible piece of legislation to enable our police to deal with this issue as soon as possible. Even if this suspension of standing orders is agreed to, the bill will not pass today. But we hope and intend for it to pass tomorrow to protect Territorians.

Another area of this gives me concern and worry, and that is the nature of the culture surrounding methamphetamines and ice in our community. During my briefings I was shown a photograph by police in relation to what this culture looks like. I table a copy of that photograph showing the culture that surrounds drugs. I urge it to be circulated widely because it is clear another culture is undermining our community today.

Two of the photographs have been pixelated for reasons of intelligence. These are people who, I am assured, come from not only urban but remote areas in our communities. The culture you see being portrayed in those photographs is the culture of East Los Angeles. It is not the culture of Galiwinku. It should not be the culture of Hermannsburg, and it should not be the culture of Darwin. Nevertheless, everything in the photos is indicative of gang mentality and we, as a government, must stridently fight against the development of that.

Gangs in places like East Los Angeles are armed to the teeth and a number of people in those photographs are armed. These are photographs of people in the Northern Territory and they have guns. They have guns and knives because they want to demonstrate their capacity to be outside the law. The methamphetamine market is designed to create power for those sorts of criminal organisations. Those criminal organisations do not wait for the pleasantries and niceties of a parliamentary system to go about their business. They use thuggery, brutality and whatever they have to so their demands are met. We do not elect our local drug dealer; they do what they want to do.

We as a parliament and a community must, I urge, be prepared to respond as quickly as those gang

leaders to take the fight to them. To prevaricate, to hold back, and say we have to go through the parliamentary process because we need to talk to this person or that person, in pursuit of the rational approach we would normally take in this place is, in my opinion, unfortunate. We have to say we are prepared as leaders of the community to act now.

I will talk about the nature of suspending standing orders briefly because, as I said at the outset, it is not something I do lightly. However, since coming to minority government, this House has suspended standing orders on a number of occasions so matters could be dealt with urgently and forthwith. We have suspended standing orders around a planning issue. It was considered by the majority of members in this House to be so urgent as to need an immediate response from this House, so a planning issue could be held in abeyance going forward.

We have suspended standing orders in this House to change the standing orders in a minor way, relating to the circulation of ministerial statements. I say to the Labor Party and the Independent member who pursued those urgency motions, good on you; you had the numbers and that is politics. If you are prepared to suspend the standing orders of this House, the normal processes by which this House governs itself, to pursue minor amendments to changes in systems such as planning policies and the standing orders, then surely as community leaders we are prepared to suspend the standing orders of this House to protect Territorians.

It would be seen as anomalous in the extreme for those men and women who telephone our offices daily to tell us about the damage ice is doing to them and their families and for us to say to them, 'Yes, well, hurry up and wait. We are going to go through a particular process', when we are prepared to suspend standing orders so we can make minor amendments to how we govern ourselves. Surely, that is not the message we want to send to Territorians as a parliament?

Yes, these are important powers, but these powers stem from a simple question: do we permit the police to stop and search people going into whatever area that is prescribed by a Commander of the police force to protect the people who live in that area? The evidence is starting to mount very quickly that we are seeing more and more of this product in the Northern Territory. I refer to the speech I just made in relation to the precursors, and remind honourable members of a paragraph out of that speech:

Since the middle of 2013 ...

We are talking two years ago:

... seizures of methamphetamine, amphetamine and other amphetamine-type substances by the Northern Territory Police have risen by approximately 170% for powdered forms of the substances and over 480% for liquid forms of the substances.

This is not a small rise – 480% – and this has happened in a very short time. In truth, it would be my personal preference to see those communities which are already being identified as places where ice is starting to make an appearance quarantined through an effective search and seizure power. Why do we have to wait for the misery to arrive in a remote community, particularly when these drugs are coming into the community now? If we can stop this before it starts, we have an opportunity to save lives.

It is always hard with crime prevention. It is like a road traffic policy. You say, 'We are going to create a road traffic policy', but the hard part with a road traffic policy is pointing to its success because you can never point at the accident that never occurred. It is never possible to say at 4.30 on the corner of Smith and Daly streets in Darwin an accident did not occur between a red car and a blue car, because it did not happen. You cannot measure success in that fashion.

What you can do, however, is look at statistics. At the moment those statistics are trending in very much the wrong way – a 480% increase in the liquid forms of these methamphetamines. Yet look at our policies and procedures. Imagine if we were able to get to a community and get the first ice shipment before it arrives, because those shipments are coming across the border now. This stuff is rarely produced locally. It is imported.

The ice committee, as I understand it, has heard the prevalence of these drugs is not particularly high in remote communities – and I am pleased to hear that – but the opportunity for it to become prevalent in those communities is pressing, real and current. These organisations are planning to move into those areas as soon as they possibly can. Moreover, it will be cheap. It will be cheaper than it is currently, and it is not that expensive now.

Let us bite the bullet here today. Let us show some political will and courage and say we are prepared to answer a simple question immediately. Within these sittings, by the end of tomorrow, we want to give our police the powers to protect the people who live in these remote communities and give them that opportunity as soon as possible.

We are not introducing a massive or expansive bill which has a number of potential anomalous

outcomes. The bill is straight forward. It is a stop and search power. It is a power that will enable police to prevent, perhaps even for the first time, ice finding its way into these remote communities. That is why I urge, and ask for the support of, honourable members in this place to support the urgency motion I bring into this House today.

It would be a tragedy of the highest order if we, in the next month, see ice finding its way into remote communities and we did not intervene when we could have done so. I would be distraught if I read in the newspaper, or one of the many reports that come across my desk, how somebody had suffered as the result of ice in a remote community somewhere in the Northern Territory and we had not yet passed this legislation.

I remind honourable members of the advertising campaign, Meth Not Even Once, which is being screened in the United States and indicates the nature of this drug. The first use of it is often the addictive one.

It is not like we are dealing with alcoholism, which insinuates its way into a person's life over a number of years. We are dealing with a drug which often addicts the person with the first use of it. That is why the American authorities have been trying to send the message so hard, Ice Not Even Once, since the decay is a matter of months. With alcohol and other addictive drugs the decay takes generally a number of years before a person finds themselves in a park or garden clutching the long neck of a beer bottle, but with ice that same transition can happen in a matter of months.

If we wait for a month, that is a month longer for the ice epidemic to continue to crystallize here in the Northern Territory. If a person finds themselves in a gutter, selling themselves to fund their ice habit after six months has passed since their first use, then that demands that we act in an immediate fashion.

It demands from us a response, and from the community, the government and the parliament of the Northern Territory, a sense of urgency. The suspension of standing orders is justified when there is a sufficient community reason or threat to do so or a demonstrable reason to suspend standing orders with a purpose to remediate genuine hardship in the community.

This government is attempting to do that. We are attempting to remediate and prevent genuine hardship in our community. We can do it today, or more to the point we can do it by tomorrow night. This could be signed off by the Administrator and passed into law so it could be operational next week.

Why wait until November? Why allow the potential for people to become addicted to this dreadful drug to grow in that time? I urge members in the strongest possible terms that this is an effective, reasonable response. It is not rushing something through. It is not being reckless or stupid. It is not a case of having to talk to everybody else in the process. There are times we are called upon to act and I submit to honourable members that time is now.

We must respond! Let us have the debate here today about the urgency, but for goodness' sake let us have the debate about the legislation tomorrow. I do not mind if it takes us ten hours to pass the legislation tomorrow. We can deal with whatever issues arise in that process tomorrow, otherwise it sits on the paper for 30 days at least. We come back in November and perhaps pass this legislation, and this is the frustrating part. I suspect we will pass this legislation, though we may not, and I suspect we do not necessarily disagree on what the legislation is trying to do, so the question before the House today is simply a procedural one.

If you feel in your heart of hearts and your bones that you support this legislation, then in light of overwhelming evidence that time matters – and it matters very much – support it tomorrow. Support the urgency today and support passage of the legislation tomorrow.

I would hate to open the newspaper and read about drugs killing people in remote communities, particularly methamphetamines, or somebody dying as a result of a methamphetamine-related crime in a remote community and we had not passed this legislation by next month. It would be painful, distressing and, in my opinion, unnecessary.

We must act now. If we are prepared to use urgency on minor procedural changes in this House and planning policy then we must use urgency when it comes to protecting Territorians and their children. How many members have said parents have rung them about their son's or daughter's ice addiction? You must do something.

The Police minister and I attended a meeting some months ago with parents of addicted children, and their message to us was unambiguous and unequivocal: act now, government, and do something. That message has been heard, and to those parents I say we are prepared to act now.

I look forward to the ice committee reporting to this House in November, but that does not mean we should not take these steps at the forefront. This is part of the whole package. The ice

committee will doubtlessly talk about more general concepts in relation to education. They are valuable things to talk about, but that does not prevent us as the elected members of this community from responding forthwith.

I urge honourable members not to think about the political advantage offered by minority government. Think about the social advantages offered by a police force able to respond and protect the men, women and children of the Northern Territory.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, there is a golden rule that runs through all Westminster parliaments that we do not rush legislation. Legislation is the basis of our society and communities. It forms the laws that govern us every day. The most important thing we do in this House is pass or reject legislation. It is so important it requires our system, the executive, to provide time for proposed laws to be considered, tested and discussed.

The Attorney-General is very good at hysteria and we saw that for about half-an-hour. However, we must allow this legislation to sit, as we are waiting for the legislation from the previous parliament to sit for 30 days. We must allow Territorians to review this legislation, and provide their input and feedback; give the community time to express its views, the opportunity to think about the legislation and express concerns. There are very few occasions where the need for urgency overrides this consideration. This is not one of those occasions.

The need for urgency must demonstrate some overwhelming issue of injustice or an error that must be corrected straightaway. The minister has not proven in this case there is a need for urgency. Of course, this proposal is important. Anything that protects Territorians is, but it is not urgent and we must clarify that.

A parliamentary committee has been sitting for some time doing a lot of work and if we wait until the next sittings when the committee will present its report, we will not rush things or make errors. That parliamentary committee has taken a lot of time and effort to do its job. It has had one extension and we are looking forward to their detailed report.

The Road Transport Association, the AANT and other representatives of road and rail transport users have not had their chance to examine this legislation. This legislation will impact them as they go about their everyday lives, but we have not left it to sit and allowed time for Territorians to provide their views. Those on this side of the House respect Territorians. We want to hear their views and for them to understand legislation which

will affect them. We want the opportunity to get that feedback. We care and we want to listen.

There are lawyers who will represent either side of the outcome of this legislation who have not seen it sufficiently to discuss their views. We need to allow time. In this parliament we are making legislation. We need to make sure it has been thoroughly tested.

There are members in this House, most of whom are not in government, who must ultimately make decisions on the rights and wrongs of these policies. We have not had time to thoroughly consider this. Good government is based on consultation, which we have not seen from the CLP Giles government members. They have continually ignored Territorians and have not consulted. We have seen them ram through piece after piece of legislation.

Last year we saw the sale of the TIO rammed through without listening to Territorians. We are elected by our communities to represent them. We are not here to do what we want. We need to take this legislation back to expert stakeholders and those who will be affected by the legislation to hear their views. We acknowledge the ice issue, but we also acknowledge the fantastic job the police are doing. We have a select committee spending much time and effort thoroughly researching this. We need to wait and have that research made available.

There is no evidence that we should ram this legislation through this week. Bad government makes policy on the run without consultation, and we have seen that from this government. We think this legislation needs time to be properly considered. We need the select committee to report back. We are talking about a month; we are not talking about six months. We are not talking about a huge break. We will be back in this House within a matter of weeks, which will allow 30 days for it to sit, and for all Territorians to provide feedback, whether it is through their elected representatives or community and stakeholder groups. The opposition does not support urgency on this occasion.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in what the Attorney-General had to say about this bill. I will not speak motivated by the government being in a minority. I will speak as an individual who has looked at this debate and made up his mind, regardless of whether there is a minority government or not.

It is unbecoming of a minister to say I would lower myself to debate an issue against the government purely because I have the opportunity since you are in minority. That treats me as if I am a dill or a political puppet. This is a serious issue. If I

debate this and oppose this urgency bill and say I have only done it because the government is now in minority – that is absolute rubbish. This bill is too important to be treated that way. I stand here as if you were the majority, as an Independent member of parliament who will give you an independent perspective on this matter. I reject outright that I would do otherwise. It is a premise the government should put to one side.

The other issue I heard the minister talk about was the matter of urgency. We are allowed matters of urgency. We can ask for a suspension of standing orders – it is in the standing orders – and if people in this House vote against the suspension of standing orders, it does not happen. It is part of the system.

The suspension of standing orders I moved the other day, I would have brought to this parliament regardless of whether there was a majority or minority government. They were issues which needed to be debated urgently. One was a planning issue. It was a motion, not a bill. This is a bill we are talking about; we are talking about serious legislation here. The other was a motion that the government could either forget, ignore, amend, do what it liked with. Last night was purely a procedural matter, adding words to a motion that would be better with those words added. It did not change anything else but some procedures. It did not change the meaning of what the Public Accounts Committee was doing. I put those two things aside; we are debating something that is allowed. The government can bring forth matters on urgency; it is normal practice. Do not rubbish it because others have used it; the government has used it many times. I refer to Foundation 51. It decided to knock that on the head. There was not a lot of thought there; after lunch – bingo! – it was gone.

We need to put that out of the way for a moment and look at the processes we normally have in parliament. We go through a process where the government introduces a bill, it sits for a period of time until the next sittings, and in that period we are able to get briefings, find out what other people think about it and talk to the community. This has not happened in this case. This was brought to us very recently and we are now being asked to approve a bill in a short space of time.

I will get back to my written speech. Last night our Attorney-General told me to 'get stuff right'. How loud those words ring in my ears, courtesy of the Attorney-General, who was using an opportunity to stick it up me over a minor error to the terms of the PAC inquiry. As I said before, it was not legislation and nothing changed the essence of the PAC inquiry.

I have been here long enough to know there have been bills that have come into this parliament that had to be amended because there was something not right with them when they had been first presented. It is not an uncommon thing and it can be done. But regardless, I was admonished and told that I should 'get stuff right'. Fair enough, I rushed it and I will try to do better next time.

Now the Attorney-General expects me to pass legislation on urgency – very important legislation that does two things: it gives the police power to pull over vehicles and search them for drugs or alcohol, but it also interferes with people's rights. There is a very good reason for doing this. The legislation aims to stop drugs and grog – which it also includes – getting into the Territory or communities.

This legislation looks good. If it can make a difference, then I will support it. But I am a member of parliament, not a clone of the CLP. I want to make sure this legislation will work, will not be challenged in court, and will give the police the powers they need to do their job. I have a responsibility to this parliament and the community to make sure this legislation is right, or, as the Attorney-General said, 'to get stuff right'.

So how can the Attorney-General expect me to get it right if he rams through legislation – not a few words in a PAC motion but serious legislation we hope will work and catch the crooks who prey on the misery of others by selling drugs and grog?

This is also legislation that enables the police to stop and search you and your vehicle without a warrant or reasonable suspicion that an offence against the act has been committed. The police will have the right to pull your vehicle apart – and, by the way, they might have very good reason to do so – but that is one of a number of reasons why we should thoroughly scrutinise the bill. How can we make sure this legislation is watertight? After all, this bill is not a made-for-purpose bill but a cut-and-paste bill. It is a mixture of the South Australian *Controlled Substances Act*, the *Police Administration Act*, the *Kava Act*, the *Liquor Act* and the *Firearms Act*. It is consistent with the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*, Victoria and the *Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985*, New South Wales.

As far as I understand the regulations have not been completed and they will be based on the Controlled Substances Regulations in South Australia. All of this will amend an existing act, the *Misuse of Drugs Act*.

How embarrassing would it be if the first time someone goes to court under this new bill it gets thrown out?

This bill was first e-mailed to me last week while I was away – I think Wednesday afternoon – so I did not get a chance to look at it until the weekend. I sent a copy to the Police Association and Amity. I presume people like NAAJA and the Law Society would have looked at it. One day out from parliament, the member for Goyder and I received a briefing – and I thank the department for the briefing. But lo and behold, we found the government had not asked NAAJA and the Law Society what they thought. Why did they not ask them? It seems because those groups always oppose things the government brings forward. The minister said yesterday you have to be strong enough to do things which are not popular, but he was not strong enough to ask NAAJA and the Law Society for their opinion.

Yesterday I received a briefing from the Commissioner of Police and I appreciate him giving me the time. I could ask why the government brought the Police Commissioner into this debate at the eleventh hour. Was it because I said I would not support this urgency motion the night before? The Police Commissioner and I had frank discussions. My – and I emphasise the word my – analysis from what was said is that this legislation can wait until the next sittings. There are still many practical things that have to be put in place before these new powers can operate.

But there is another thing which is sad about this. We have an ice committee set up by this government which has two government members, one opposition and one Independent, and all approved by the Assembly. When it voted, it said:

... a Select Committee on the prevalence, impacts and government responses to illicit use of the drug colloquially known as 'ice' in the Northern Territory, be appointed.

Why did the Attorney-General not give this draft bill to the ice committee? The government set up a committee to look at a draft bill about the enforcement of petrol prices. Why did the government not send this bill to the ice committee? It could have brought out an interim report before its final one. It could have asked NAAJA, the Law Society, the police, the Department of Justice, ministers, the press and the public to come to a public hearing and put in submissions. We could have invited comments. Members of parliament could have attended and it could have been done in a short space of time.

But no, the committee was snubbed and the chair, I believe, was snubbed, as well. You did not have the courtesy to even tell the chair or the ice committee that you had legislation up your sleeve. The committee could have helped, but they were ignored. There was a chance to get stuff right, but you were in a hurry.

I am cranky about the politics of this debate you are shoving down my throat. It is like I have my back to the wall, or am cornered, and if I do not do as you want you will threaten me with scare tactics. If I do not support your bill, you will say to the community, to the *Northern Territory News*, that Gerry Wood is soft on crime. 'Gerry Wood wants kids to die from ice. Gerry Wood does not have the guts to support the bill that will save lives and put drug pushers in gaol.'

Even though that is not true, I will live with it because I am sick of that populist style of politics. It is like the tactics I saw in parliament at 10 am yesterday. I understand what this is all about.

I have to look at legislation and see if it is good. If that means I do not look good in the newspaper the next day because the Attorney-General says I do not care about kids getting ice, I will have to wear it. But I have faith that people in my electorate will know I do not want ice spreading throughout my community or any community in the Territory. They will also know I have a job to do, and that is to make sure our laws are written properly so laws can do the job for which they are intended. What the Attorney-General said yesterday was right when he reprimanded me. 'Get stuff right.'

You see, minister, on the surface I support the bill. But is there anything below the surface that needs checking? I want a second or third opinion, or even more, so I can make a proper assessment of the bill so we can be confident we have done the right thing.

When you accuse me of allowing drug runners to run free, I will say, 'No, I am making sure the laws are properly written so that when they are used the drug runners do not run free, that after they go to court, they go to gaol'. When you say, 'By not supporting the urgency of this bill, you are putting lives at risk because the government does not have the power to stop drugs', I will say, 'That is rubbish because if that was the case, we would not have drug seizures now. We have laws now.'

I want to make sure that this new law, which gives police more power, will work and help stop the importation of ice into our community.

This urgency motion is a farce. It should not be rushed. It has ignored the ice committee. It adds to the poorly run and badly-timed Assembly sittings that we are working through today. These sittings are so close to the previous ones we cannot pass legislation from the last sittings. Who organised the government business to approve these dates? It sounds like a bad case of not getting stuff right.

This legislation need not be rushed. That is the feeling I get from all the people I have spoken to. This has more to do with a government agenda designed for the media than good governance. I expect ...

Mr Westra van Holthe: You have to be kidding.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WOOD: The member for Katherine butts in. I have listened to the debate today. I also have transcripts from the ice committee. Have you read them? They are worth reading. I understand what is happening on the ground because I am a member of the ice committee. If I believed there was urgency required, it certainly was not indicated to me by the Police Commissioner or by any ice committee responses. I am not that silly to make a statement that is not based on evidence I have heard.

The Attorney-General said, 'If you believe in this legislation, pass it now'. I believe we should have changes to the licensing and agencies legislation that will allow people over 65 to be on the board. However, even minor changes to an act go through a process. They go through a second reading, and people and members have a chance to look at them. Then we debate them at the next sittings.

If you take the Attorney-General's argument, we should pass it. I agree with it. We should not pass it today because we have a process designed to make sure we do not stuff up, and that is the basis behind me not supporting urgency. Why have we not spoken to the Police Association? I did. I gather they received a letter today about it. Why did we not speak to NAAJA or the Law Society? You might find they do not agree all the time, but as a member of this parliament I would like to hear other opinions. I might not agree with them, but this is serious legislation.

The minister might say it is straightforward. There are some issues here that we should be very careful about. You are taking away the right of a person to not only drive down the road – and you are picked up by RBTs occasionally – but in this case you can be stopped without a warrant, without any suspicion of you doing anything wrong, and technically they can search your car from top to bottom. I am not saying they are bad powers in the sense that if we are to stop people bringing drugs in we need some serious powers, but we have a balance in our society about people's rights. How much right do I have to drive down the road without being pulled up when I have not done anything wrong? I have not had a drink, the car is licensed, I have my licence, etcetera, but sometimes we lose those rights for

the benefit of the whole community. I accept that, but this bill deals with big issues. Before I put my tick on this legislation, I would like to hear some proper debate, not only from this parliament, but from other people who may have a better idea.

I am not a lawyer. We received a briefing from lawyers, but lawyers, as we know, have different opinions on single issues. We do it with other acts and this is an important bill. I want this bill to work. I would be a fool to say I support this without having adequate time, as a member, to get other opinions, check on other acts, and think about what is being put forward to make sure that when I say yes, I believe this legislation will do the job it is intended to do. That is why we will be bringing something, hopefully in the next sittings, that we can all support and which will make the job of our police and law and order people a lot more effective, as well as work for the welfare of the people of the Northern Territory.

They expect me to do my job – to help stop drugs – and at the same time make sure we have the right legislation to do that.

Mr CHANDLER (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Madam Speaker, drugs are certainly a serious concern in our community. There may be some in this Chamber who think my family's personal issue with the drug ice means I cannot be objective in this debate. I put it on the record there may be some people who have that view. I do not share it though because, since I had to describe what had happened with my son, the number of people who have come forward and spoken to me almost every day, whether it is through text messages, e-mails or coming into my office, astounds me. It shows the impact this drug is having on the community.

There are probably some politics being played in this. Today in this Chamber is the first time I have felt over it. I am over the politics because this is something we can, as a collective, make a difference to. We can do that in the next couple of days.

The member for Nelson is absolutely right; we do not have to. We could let this sit on the Notice Paper for the next month or so, and perhaps it will get up at the next sittings. Perhaps it will not. The truth is we have the opportunity to give the police a tool that could stop, or prevent, the next son getting involved in drugs, the next daughter facing a life of prostitution to feed a drug habit or ending up on the streets. We have a tool here that could stop ...

Ms Lawrie: How long have you had it for?

Mr CHANDLER: Had what?

Ms Lawrie: The draft legislation, the submission from government.

Mr CHANDLER: You said loud enough for me to hear that rehab is the only way. Rehab is not the only way.

Ms Lawrie: I did not say that. I asked how long you have had it for. Answer that.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, member for Karama!

Mr CHANDLER: It is not the only way. You can lead a horse to water until somebody wants to do something about a problem. Look at alcohol and all those other drugs. Look at all the things that affect our society. We have an opportunity, as a mature group of people, to give an additional tool to police which could have a huge impact.

Some of the statistics around this drug are astounding. One which people may not know about is 80% of ice is coming into the Northern Territory across our borders.

The tool we are asking to debate on urgency is something police will be able to use very effectively, and it could prevent more of this drug coming into the Territory. We have a responsibility. Heck, we have debated things on urgency which I think have far less relevance in the community than what this substance has the potential to do.

Member for Nelson, you are right; we do not have to do this at all. You can sit and debate it in another month or two, but we have an opportunity and a tool at the moment to bring forward this legislation to give the police special powers. This angers me. People think politics are being played here.

This is not a piece of legislation dreamt up by Pete Chandler, John Elferink or anybody else on this side of the Chamber. This legislation has been driven by police because they know it is a tool they can use to help them do their job better. The only difference we are making is that we are reacting to what the community is asking of us.

We are reacting to the community asking us what we can do to help it with a problem. Yes, there will be questions around the process of using urgency, but this is one time we should. We are justified to do so given the damage this drug is doing to our community and the future damage it could cause to our very remote communities. At the moment there are young people coming in from communities who are getting onto ice in the bigger towns, like Darwin and Alice Springs. If they are caught, they go to gaol and then back to the community, but they have not rid themselves of their problem. The issue I have is that we could

be faced with more and more ice getting into our remote communities, particularly as the price drops.

I am also concerned the member for Nelson appears to be very angry today about comments made by the Attorney-General. I hope he is not using that anger as a reason for not supporting this urgency motion.

To the member for Nightcliff, I am sure you have had people come into your office, young families, mums and dads, who have problems with their siblings, uncles and aunties who are on this stuff. I want you to sit down in front of them and tell them why you did not take the opportunity to move on something that will provide police with a tool to stop the next wave of this stuff coming into the Northern Territory.

Member for Nightcliff, you said you want the community to give feedback on this legislation. The community has spoken loudly and clearly. They speak to me loudly and clearly. I could give you literally hundreds of texts and e-mails, and information about people who come into my office every day who want to talk about this issue. The member for Port Darwin was quite right; when we went to Malak to a community meeting, the community spoke loudly and clearly: 'You need to do whatever you can to solve this issue in the community.' This is just one tool.

We are asking this parliament to pass this motion today to allow us to move through the process of debating this rightly in the House. You can have your say and put forward your concerns. If the legislation is not perfect at this early stage – and that was one of the things the member for Nelson raised – it will not be the first time this parliament has passed legislation that has had to be fixed some time down the track, and it will not be the last. But in this case, all we are asking for is to talk more about ice, and apply legislation which we can pass in the next couple of days to give police a tool that could give them the right opportunities to stop this stuff coming into the Territory.

As I said before, politicians are not driving this – in fact, they are at the moment because they are driving it away – this is driven by police. I also say to the member for Nelson, who thinks the whole thing is being rushed through, this legislation has been worked on for quite a while. There has been a lot of time and effort put into many strategies the government will use to respond to this emerging issue. There has been a lot of thought, with many people working on this. It is not something that was just a thought bubble yesterday and we came in here today to rush it through. No.

Along with having the ice committee and waiting for its recommendations, which this government will respond to, we have an immediate concern. It would be irresponsible for a government to sit on a tool that could be used by police today rather than wait for recommendations down the track, or wait another day, month, couple of months or year when they could be using this tool today to stop this drug coming into the Northern Territory.

I ask that this motion today on urgency be supported – even if it is just by one person on the other side. Look within your hearts to see why we should be debating it. As I said, it will not be passed today. It will be brought forward tomorrow and hopefully pass tomorrow, going through all stages of the debate, including a committee stage if required where you could bring forward other thoughts, suggestions and ways we could strengthen the legislation. But by not passing this motion today, you deny this collective the opportunity to introduce legislation that would give an invaluable tool to our police force to help deal with a growing problem in the community. We will have the chance to debate it. We will have the chance to listen to what you think we could do to improve the legislation, but do not take away the opportunity to do that.

The member for Nelson raised this. He thinks there will be politics played in all this but I do not want, as a member of this parliament, to sit in my office on Saturday morning knowing the next mum and dad will walk in and tell me their story and demand of me as the local member, 'Why are you not doing anything about this?' We have sought high and low for ways that could help deal with this issue. We are working on it.

We have the ice committee. The trip that I took overseas, going to places like Arizona and Vancouver, taught me there is much we can learn. My experiences in those two locations have spawned many discussions with my colleagues, the Commissioner of Police and other police officers to think about ways we can deal with this drug and others in the Northern Territory. As the Police minister I know 80% of ice is coming in through our borders. We have a tool here that will help barricade those borders. If we could cut even half of the amount of ice coming into the Territory, how many of our children or the children of our friends will be protected in the future? We have a responsibility as a collective to do something about this. This is one simple tool and yet it appears we will let politics or procedures get in the way of doing something.

There is not a member in this parliament who would be brave or even honest enough to say they are against our intent. Everyone wants to do the right thing. We have introduced things into this parliament on urgency before. There are not

many things more important than this subject. I ask everyone to look into their hearts and minds and think we should be doing something proactive rather than reactive months later. You do not want to be a member sitting in your office and have parents come in and describe the pain they are going through when you have a tool that could stop that from happening.

Will this be perfect legislation? Will it stop everything? No, absolutely not. May we have to come back into this Chamber at some stage and amend this legislation? Perhaps, but do not let that stop us making a decision today to allow this parliament to debate this legislation fully tomorrow and hopefully pass it. I do not think it is a big ask. I hate to think that politics will get in the way.

Arizona has a huge problem with drugs coming across the border from Mexico. The resources they throw at that problem in that state probably surpass our Australian Defence budget. It is massive but they are working hard to stop drugs, methamphetamines and their derivatives coming into Arizona. In the city of Vancouver the price of ice has dropped so dramatically they are cutting the drug with other substances. One of the horrific cuts being used is fentanyl. People might realise fentanyl is a drug used by anaesthetists, and surgeons will not operate on people unless there is an anaesthetist in the room monitoring the drug and the patient to keep the balance right. However, in the United States and Canada at the moment fentanyl is being cut into ice. In the two weeks prior to me going to Vancouver, 16 people had died on the streets from using ice cut with fentanyl.

There is no way the user knows how much is in it, and, unfortunately, in those cases they have all passed away. It was not through the drug ice – you could say it was through ice because they used ice – but it was through the drug fentanyl that was cut into it. Battery acid is another. I have even heard of banana skins being cut into drugs. I do not know what that would do, but when the price drops there is a big push on the drug lords, if you want to call them that, to cut other substances into the product.

In the Territory if the prices drop dramatically like they have in the United States and Canada, we will see the same thing happen. The drugs become impure. That is when the real danger starts to affect our society, when drugs such as fentanyl are cut into substances and we have deaths. As I said, 16 people died in two weeks in Vancouver through fentanyl-cut ice.

I am asking this parliament to show a little compassion, put politics aside and allow the legislation to be debated fully in the Chamber tomorrow. Have your say, put forward all the

arguments you want, but do not let this urgency motion prevent us from doing what we should in this House, which is debate legislation that could have a hugely positive impact in the Territory. It will provide the police with the tool they need to reduce the amount of ice coming into the Northern Territory.

The member for Nelson rightly pointed out that we need to scrutinise legislation to ensure we get it right, but that does not guarantee the legislation will be perfect. There is no reason not to support this today and allow us to debate it tomorrow. Let us see if we can pass legislation that could make a huge impact and perhaps save a few lives.

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 9 students from Sanderson Middle School, accompanied by Glenn Gonzalez. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr STYLES (Business): Madam Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the member for Nelson said about committees, some of which was really important. It behoves us as a parliament to deal with matters on urgency. Governments need to respond to an impending crisis. An impending ice crisis could end up in Darwin, my suburb or school.

I also welcome all the Sanderson people. It is great to see you here and for you to see your parliament in action.

Drug dealers have some very clever marketing strategies. One being how they give free drugs and get people hooked on them. Then when their customers go back for more free drugs, the dealers ask many questions and say someone has to pay for it. Generally, kids starting off on the destructive drug path will find some dollars somewhere. However, the next day you are hooked on it; ice is one of those drugs that if you use it once, you want to use it again. That is the sad thing about the destructive pathways of these horribly addictive drugs.

Smoking is very similar. Nicotine is also a very addictive drug, and if you talk to people who smoke cigarettes, they will tell you they are the hardest things to give up. It is about the same as heroin.

Drug dealers will do many things to get young people hooked. They generally target young,

naive, innocent people who do not have much of a drug education, but I will come to that point shortly.

Government needs to respond to impending crises. Can you imagine governments around the world when we had the avian flu thinking, 'We have to do something because this disease will spread, our population will suffer, and some people might die. Let us send our plan to a committee and debate whether or not we should set up temperature control stations at airports for incoming passengers?'

We all remember SARS, which was the first major international scare where countries, at their air and seaports, were looking at how to stop people from coming in who had the disease. How will we test them? People were subjected to a range of tests to enter a country. Why did they do that? It was not to peeve everybody off and make it hard for them, but to protect their population.

This matter of urgency is about protecting our population, not so much the older people in our community nor those who are working, but, more importantly, the people who are sitting in the gallery here today and their friends, brothers and sisters, cousins, and people in remote communities and rural areas of the Northern Territory. We do this for flu and measles. There is a debate going on about why we should have flu shots. Why should we have immunisation? It protects people. Governments are about doing things, sometimes, which are not popular. It is about protecting people in our community. We do it every day.

We put a speed limit on and say, 'You cannot speed down McMillans Road'. Sadly, some people do and the consequences are disastrous. We make rules in this Chamber to protect the people of the Northern Territory.

In my former life as a school-based police officer, I always told young people that rules are made to keep us safe. We need to change rules to keep us safe. It is important we debate things when they need to be done. If these issues did not have any immediate consequences and it was about whether to paint the road black, grey or pink, you could send those things to a committee. But the need is now. The government's and parliament's role is to respond to those needs when they arise because it is important.

It would be nice to ask those people sitting in the gallery what they think about ice. What do you think about your friends destroying their lives? What do you think about some of your friends resorting to theft and breaking into peoples' homes to get money to sustain their drug addiction? What do you think about some of your

friends turning to prostitution to sustain their drug addiction? Do those people in the gallery think about why we should have to do that?

As someone who used to teach drug education, it is much easier to stop a drug from getting into a place than it is to take it away from someone. Stopping people from getting into drugs in the first place is much easier and costs less. Plus there is less social and family damage if you can stop people from getting into drugs in the first place.

That is why governments have strategies and plans to do that. For instance, some of the things we are doing to help these people sitting in the gallery, and those wonderful people from my favourite school, Sanderson Middle School, include building things like the neighbourhood activity centre. That is an initiative I have been pushing for many years. I took it to the former Labor government, but they did not want to know about it. These young people are already starting to see the benefits of it and will be involved in a major way at the beginning of 2016.

Having senior school-based police officers in schools teaching about drugs is my next mission. I am already negotiating with my colleagues to reintroduce that into schools in a major way, along with greater drug education. It is about trying to keep people safe. It is about engaging with non-government organisations, assisting where they can to get the intelligence back to the police to make sure the police can stop this thing at its source before these young people, their friends, relatives, siblings or others in the community they know, get hooked and then go down that slippery path to self-destruction.

We are looking at supporting support services that can get the message out there. Anyone who is involved with youth and others in our community can get that message across that these drugs are dangerous. We have just heard the member for Brennan talk about people mixing substances with methamphetamines, more commonly known as ice. When they start mixing these drugs you do not know the quality. When you go to the chemist and buy Panadol, you know that it has 500 mg of paracetamol in it. Why do you know that? Because there are enormous fines for the company if they get that wrong.

Drug dealers do not work by the same system. They will cut this stuff with things the member for Brennan spoke about, but also with washing powder, baking powder, all sorts of other rubbish they want people to put inside their bodies. They even used rat poison at one stage. These are the things I found out when I was a police officer. I was appalled to think some not very nice person might be trying to get my kids, my friends' kids or

my neighbours' kids hooked on drugs. I find that disgraceful and disgusting.

Anything I can do as a member of parliament, as the member for Sanderson, to prevent that, I will support fully. We have these debates, member for Nelson, so we can get these messages across because most people – at least, I hope most people – in this Chamber are reasonable people. Member for Nelson, hopefully, if you listen to the debates, some of the things I and some of my colleagues say might change your attitude towards putting this through on urgency. I sincerely hope the things I have to say, as someone who has been involved in this at the coalface as a police officer working in schools with young people, might influence your decision to support it.

I listened very carefully to some of the things he said and I do not disagree. There may be some people who feel aggrieved because they are stopped and searched. When we go to the airport these days, what do we have to do? We have to go through a scanning process. You have to take all your metal off – belt, shoes, glasses, sunglasses – and then go through a scanner. There was a lot of objection to that when we first started it. People said, 'But I am innocent'. We do that because it truly saves lives.

Then when you go through, you get all your gear back on and you put everything back in your pockets. You pick up your bag, coat and jacket, then you walk another metre or two and there is someone else there saying, 'Good day, sir, this is a random test for bombs and materials used to make bombs'. They run that little scanner over you and then put it in the machine, which analyses it. If you have been playing with any sort of explosives or bombs and you should not have been, the scanner will go off and someone will want to have a little chat with you. I go through and 'random' is about 90% of the time, hardly what you call random. But I do not object. Why? Because people have made these decisions in parliaments to make sure that I am safe, along with my family, friends, relatives and other people using air transport.

In some places in the world, when you get on bullet trains, you have to go through the same thing because they want to keep people safe. When there is a risk and the chance of an impending maximum increase in risk, then governments should do something. This is what has happened. The police have come to us and said, 'Politicians, we have a problem. We have 80% of the drug ice coming in from interstate.'

The police can work on finding laboratories in the Northern Territory. They can work hard through local intelligence, find the way gangs operate and

shut them down. But 80% of ice is brought in on our roads from interstate.

As we have heard from other members in this House, there is a range of ways they try to disguise the drug. They try to scent it so drug dogs do not pick it up. They hide it in fuel tanks and sealed areas in the doors of cars. There is a multitude of ways they do that.

When police get intelligence, they need to be able to function very quickly. As a former police officer, I know you cannot have a committee meeting while you have people bringing in drugs. Let us have a debate on that. When are we going to do that? 'Oh, we better get a few people together tomorrow or the next day.' Sadly, tomorrow or the next day is too late. That drug has gone into our community and people are using it and getting addicted.

I used to explain addiction. We are all addicted. From the moment you get that first slap on your rear end at birth, you take a big deep breath and you say, 'Wow, this is really cool. I think I will have a few more of those.' That is what ice is like. The first time you use it is like breathing; you want to take it again. Every time we exhale, what do we want to do? We want to take another breath. How would you feel if that is the way your body and brain gets addicted to a drug? It is not a very good feeling.

I would hate to be addicted to something like ice. It would cost me a fortune. I would have to break in, steal, beg, borrow, turn to prostitution, turn to all sorts of things to get my drug of choice. There are rehabilitation programs but people have to want to be in them. It is easier to educate people and to try to reduce the supply so fewer people get hooked on these drugs.

I say that for the benefit of those sitting in the gallery. Getting addicted to ice is like being addicted to fresh air. Every breath you take, you want some ice. That is its equivalent.

So how do we do that? We work on things like urgency motions. What we have today is an impending crisis in regional, rural and remote Northern Territory. People who are dealing in these drugs, the drug lords, do not care about you. They do not care about your mum, dad, brother, sister, your dog or cat but they do care about cash. They love cash and sadly there are people in this world who love cash far more than they love their community or society. They just want to have cash and do whatever they want to do without any consideration of anyone else in our community. That is a really sad thing.

The rest of us in our community elect politicians to make decisions for us, especially decisions that

will cut misery and save lives. What about people on communities at the moment? We heard from the member for Brennan, and I also have information through police contacts that there are people from communities in rural areas – Adelaide River, Daly River, Daly Waters, right across the Territory – who come to town and somebody says to them, 'This is going to make you feel really cool'. That is how they do it. 'Oh man, this is great. Have some of this. Here, try some.'

The drug dealers who are pushing it know that once you try it, you will want to come back. They might give you a few more free samples and then suddenly you have to pay for it. You run into problems trying to pay for it. Then you run into problems to get off the drug you are on. In this case, we are talking about ice.

These young people come to town and get hooked. They might get caught or end up in gaol. When they get out, if they have not been through successful rehabilitation they will want the drug. If they are in town, and not caught, they will go back to their communities because things are hotting up or they have to get back. Once back, they will want ice.

So, what are the marketing people doing in the drug cartels? They are creating a market in the communities where they believe it is easier to get their product in. There are not as many police officers and there are more roads to use. It is easier for them to get their product into their marketplace on these communities. If you are doing a marketing strategy for drug dealing, you would say, 'Fantastic. Get all these kids hooked', and then they go into the communities.

What do the police have to do? They have to spread their resources further. There is a problem in our community when people talk about taxes, not that I think those opposite worry too much about taxes or borrowing money, but everything costs. If you create an environment where drug dealers can flourish across the Northern Territory, you need to have the resources to deal with it.

When the drug dealers have networks larger than the policing capabilities of each community, we are in serious trouble. That is when it overwhelms the resources a community can use to fight drug dealers.

When the drug dealers start getting all your money and becoming more powerful, then you end up with situations like you have in South America and Mexico. We should work hard to make sure that does not happen. We should do everything we can to make sure those drugs do not get into our rural, regional and remote communities. It is bad enough that they come in here, but this bill will help prevent people from

getting drugs to Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek, which are our major centres.

It is about prevention as opposed to cure. We all know prevention is better than cure, but in relation to tax dollars – for the benefit of those young people in the gallery – some people may not know or understand what tax is. I explained it to people in classrooms and young people by saying, 'Tax is like getting a bucket of chips'. Whenever my family and I went somewhere my kids would always ask, 'Dad, can you get us a bucket of chips?' I had three kids so I would get three buckets of chips. Then I would take a few chips out of each and they would say, 'Dad, that's mine'. I would say, 'Hang on, I'm taking a couple of chips off the top'. I would go to each one and take a couple of chips and they would say, 'Dad, they're my chips'. I would say, 'Kids, this is tax, get used to it. Someone's going to take a few chips from the top of your chip bucket for the rest of your life.' It takes a few more than a couple of chips.

When you get your bucket of chips, young people, do you want the government to take two-thirds of the chips to look after all those people ...

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I request that the member for Sanderson be granted an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr STYLES: I will raise an issue in relation to some people who came to see me this week. A constituent sat in my office, and I am glad I had a couple of boxes of tissues as she immediately fell apart and said, 'My son is hooked on ice, what do I do?'

I worked through some strategies and plans she can put in place. Having been a former school-based police officer, I have dealt with this on many occasions, and given lots of young people and their parent's advice on how they can handle it.

It saddens me. This is one of a number of people. In the northern suburbs it is well known that I was a police officer who worked in schools with young people and had quite a number of successes. Sadly, it was not a 100% success rate. I get many people coming to see me who know me. Some are parents of the 40 000 people I taught in my time in school-based policing, and we work through that. The biggest surprise I had was when a couple of women whose mothers were part of the Stolen Generation sat down with me.

I know one of the women well. I will not identify them, but they were part of that whole movement.

They said, 'Peter, you need to be taking some of these kids off these families'. I was stunned.

We had a conversation about what is going on with ice and these two mothers said, 'We are losing our grandkids'. They were grandmothers with young grandkids. I recall one of the women from about 25 years ago when I went into school-based policing. I did a lot of work with one of her kids and she has never forgotten that. She struggled a lot as a single mum; dad did not want to play anymore and he ran away, and she was left to raise these kids on her own. We worked and we got them all through. On a positive note, they all survived. They are all great kids. She is seeing her grandchildren now being subjected to this ice stuff, which is really sad. She is saying these young people are not handling their kids very well.

That brings in another dimension to this argument. When I hear the member for Nelson, albeit I respect some of his comments, I say to him, 'We need to move fast. We do not have the luxury of sitting around and having a committee meeting in relation to what is going on.' When the police see politicians and government and say, 'You have a problem', we need to decide what we will do about that. Do we sit around and wait or do we act? As a former police officer, I understand what the police are doing. I have been part of that. At various times I asked senior officers why the government would not act on this. They would say, 'We have been there, we have done this', and explain what they had done.

Being on the other side of the fence, I am attuned to any requests from police in relation to impending crisis. I am also attuned when the Minister for Health says, 'We have a crisis in this area and we need to act fast'. Should we wait until budget Cabinet next year and debate whether we have some money for it? What should we do? Sometimes you need to look at everything, consider what is being said and what the problem is, and make a decision. Sometimes you cannot defer decisions, nor can you get other people to make those decisions for you. When we talk about situations where you have to make hard decisions, it is hard. But we have to make tough decisions about the right things at the right time.

I hear stories coming from police not only officially, but also unofficially about what is going on. Some of them I can repeat in this Chamber, some of them I cannot for reasons of confidentiality, where people share things about what is happening and what their plans are. I am encouraged by the fact the police have plans, but what they need – and they need it fast – is the authority to target these drug dealers.

This is not about sitting outside Woolworths on Cavenagh Street, tipping everyone out of their cars and searching them. It is about targeting people. It has to be authorised by a commander or above, who will have intelligence. That is intelligence the commander may not want to share, even with police officers. When you are in that area working in the Criminal Investigation Branch, the drug branch and Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, there are things which are discussed on a need-to-know basis. The more people know about things, the more slip ups can be made.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

PETITIONS

Petition No 52 – Secondary Wastewater Treatment System at the Livingstone Beef Processing Abattoir

Ms PURICK (Goyder)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 121 petitioners relating to the secondary wastewater treatment system at the Livingstone beef processing abattoir. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

We the undersigned respectfully showeth this petition against the continued adverse impact on the wellbeing, health and lives of the people who reside within proximity of the AACo Livingstone beef processing facility (abattoir) as a result of unacceptable odours, noise and light pollution directly attributable to the day to day operations of the facility.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the environmental protection licence for AACo's abattoir at Livingstone be revoked if the secondary wastewater treatment system is not commissioned and operational by the end of December 2015. AACo have consistently failed to meet the requirements specified in the Environmental Protection Licence, including wastewater management, noise and odour pollution mitigation and open community engagement obligations.

This request should set a precedent for companies wanting to work with the Northern Territory Government and community in developing Northern Australia and best practice standards need to be implemented from conception and not as an afterthought.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Petition No 49 – McArthur River Mine

Mr HIGGINS (Daly)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 27 398 petitioners relating to McArthur River Mine. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

Glencore's open pit lead and zinc mine in the bed of the McArthur River is 50km south of the town of Borrooloola. The river, controversially diverted around the expanding mine pit, is the lifeblood of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Residents, tourists and recreational fishers eat the river's abundant fish, and local pastoral stations and communities rely on its freshwater.

Last year the mine's waste rock dump caught fire due to reactive chemistry. The mine's independent monitor warned, if not fixed, major acid metalliferous drainage problems would leach sulphuric acid into surrounding waterways.

The mine's leaking tailings dam was found to be at risk of collapse, and in 2014, high levels of lead were found in local fish stocks and 400 cattle had to be destroyed after drinking from a poisoned creek near the mine site.

Glencore is in breach of its operating conditions, continuing to discharge contaminated water in the McArthur River at double allowable limits. In response to revelations of major risks posed by its unlawful mining activities, Glencore has refused to pay an increased rehabilitation bond to ensure site clean up.

Freedom of Information requests by the McArthur River's Aboriginal traditional owners have revealed internal NT Government memos contained warnings that Glencore's actions would have 'catastrophic consequences' for downstream environment and communities. These warnings have been ignored by the NT Government.

McArthur River traditional owners are calling on the NT Government to act immediately to protect the river and local communities from Glencore's reckless actions:

- *Prosecute operational breaches.*

- *Stop production at McArthur River mine until contamination problems are solved and insist on mine rehabilitation and environmental clean up.*
- *Cancel open pit expansion plans and backfill reactive waste rock.*

Petition No 53 – Better Planning for the Future of Darwin

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 1184 petitioners pertaining to better planning for the future of Darwin. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

We the undersigned oppose the conversion of land preserved for community purposes to land to be used by developers for high density residential purposes, particularly land adjacent to the botanical gardens.

We are particularly concerned that community purpose land adjacent to the botanic gardens is being considered for high rise development and that an area of the botanical gardens may be lost to assist that development.

RESPONSE TO PETITION Petition No 46 – Mobile Phone Service Coverage

The CLERK: Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 100A, I inform members that a response to petition No 46 has been received and circulated to honourable members. The text of the response will be included in the *Hansard* record and placed on the Legislative Assembly website. A copy of the response will be provided to the member who tabled the petition for distribution to the petitioners.

*Petition No 46
Mobile Phone Service coverage
Date presented: 28 April 2015
Presented by: Ms Anderson
Referred to: Minister for Corporate and Information Services
Date response due: 17 November 2014
Date response received: 1 September 2015
Date response presented: 15 September 2015*

The petition states that 'No mobile phone coverage compromises the safety of all travellers and limits the growth of the small business sector on a major Australian

Highway. It restricts communication between travellers and local residents and emergency services during emergency events.'

The Australian Government has responsibility for telecommunication services across the nation, including all Northern Territory locations.

The Northern Territory Government considers telecommunications services to be a key economic development driver and has repeatedly lobbied the Australian Government to improve and expand telecommunications services in the Territory, particularly for remote communities.

There is mobile phone coverage for approximately one third of the major national highways in the Northern Territory. While complete coverage of major highways and transport corridors is a desirable goal, the total cost is prohibitive and must be considered within the context of competing priorities and resource capacity.

In June 2015, the Australian Government announced five communities in the Northern Territory would be provided with mobile phone services under the Mobile Black Spots Programme. These communities are Minjilang, Finke, Imanpa, Wallace Rockhole and Mount Liebig. The selection of the communities followed an exhaustive assessment process conducted by the Australian Government and telecommunications carriers.

The Northern Territory Government has invested and will continue to invest within our capacity in the infrastructure necessary to expand telecommunications services into remote areas. The government's recent history in partnering with Telstra to deliver remote telecommunication services has seen a further 13 remote communities with mobile and broadband services connected over 2013 and 2014 through Project 13 and Project Sandover.

To continue this focus, the Northern Territory Government is entering into a joint agreement with Telstra to further extend broadband and mobile phone coverage to remote areas in the Northern Territory.

Locations will be selected based on a range of determinative factors, including population, existing infrastructure, development opportunities, terrain,

technology solution, Telstra's service and commercial requirements, community views, government services, costs, proximity to transport corridors and tourist sites and safety issues.

This joint program will soon be announced with works expected to begin later in 2015-16 following detailed geo-technical appraisals by Telstra.

The government also supports any innovative technology that will improve the coverage of telecommunications services into remote locations. We have funded the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) to install 22 mobile hot spots in the Central Australia region. The hot spots clever technology is designed and built by CAT in Alice Springs; it requires no power or electronics, and will extend the reach of existing mobile phone services, providing a valuable service to nearby communities and travellers.

The expansion of mobile phone coverage to reduce the significant areas of the Northern Territory that do not have adequate telecommunications services, including transport corridors, is one of the priorities of this government.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of some electorate officers who are in town this week for their twice-yearly seminar. Welcome to the electorate officers, both from the Country Liberals government and also from the Independents.

Members: Hear, hear!

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR Jodeen Carney

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a former Leader of the Opposition, Jodeen Carney. Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here and observe Question Time.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION Member for Brennan

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have been approached by the member for Brennan who would like to make a personal explanation in regard to Standing Order 57.

... a member may explain matters of a personal nature, although there be no

question before the Assembly, but such matters may not be debated.

I ask that you hear the member quietly, as is the normal procedure.

Mr CHANDLER (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Madam Speaker, this soft-on-crime Labor opposition is hard on rumour, innuendo and slander. By way of explanation, I am of the firm opinion that Labor, through Question Time, effectively attempted to connect my name, office and travel to a letter from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory to the Information Commissioner dated 14 September 2015. This is the letter that has been tabled.

This is the extract from the letter:

The views of police will also need to be sought as we understand that further charges may be pending.

I absolutely and unreservedly reject any suggestion or insinuation that I have done anything wrong. I absolutely and unreservedly reject any suggestion or insinuation that I, or anyone in my office, have criminal charges pending against them.

I also note the letter is an interim letter and the writer, Mrs Elizabeth Farquhar, says the views of police will need to be sought.

Section 49 of the *Information Act*, referred to in the letter, deals with material being exempt from the release under FOI where it may become part of a court proceeding or investigation. I have checked with police, something I know the opposition never did, and the reference in this letter relates to ongoing court proceedings and further investigations into the travel provider and her dealings with government. It is obvious that the PenCon scheme is part of that process, a disaster that was ignored by the Labor opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition needs to get his team under control. He lets the member for Wanguri throw wild allegations around. He lets the member for Nightcliff make things worse with hysterical claims, and talks about integrity, honesty, trust and winning Territorians over. Well, you are off to a good start. To avoid any doubt, there are no charges pending in relation to anyone in my office or in this government, as we all know. There is a travel prosecution before court in relation to Latitude Travel, and I suspect this is on the basis of the letter.

An opposition whose former leader and current member for Karama is the subject of criminal investigations would be wise to be much more careful and considered from now on. I am the

Police minister, and we have a committed, dedicated and hard-working force. Stop politicising the justice system. You are a disgrace.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS Pass Bill through all Stages – Misuse of Dangerous Drugs Amendment Bill

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr STYLES (Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to quote from the Territory Labor website. I have an A3 size print from the Territory Labor website. It has crystal methamphetamine spread all over a table or wherever, and on the front it says, 'Labor will take action to address the ice epidemic'. That is a bit of a joke. It says, 'If elected Territory Labor will address the Territory's ice epidemic by immediately installing an ice room at the Royal Darwin Hospital and establishing an interagency task force of Police, Health, and Children and Families'.

This motion is about stopping people from getting onto ice by removing the source. There is a little economic thing about supply and demand. If you take away supply – we are trying to reduce that so our kids do not end up having to go to, and I quote Labor, 'An ice room at RDH'. I accept we need an ice room but this is their plan. What I do not see in their plan is something that says, 'Let's catch the drug dealers and those people who are messing up our kids' lives and the Territory by taking what is supposed to be the right of these children to have a good life'. They say all sorts of things, they sell it to kids, they give it away, they turn kids into prostitutes, thieves and things like that.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 62. The comments about turning people into prostitutes, etcetera, are quite offensive.

Mr ELFERINK: Mr Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 62 is about offensive remarks amongst members. This is a house of debate where a member's opinion is recorded for the public to note. If people find the member's comments offensive, it is a matter for them to determine when they read the *Hansard*, not for the leader of opposition business to edit according to her emotional feeling at the time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: As offensive as they may be, and as uncomfortable as they may be to hear, member for Nightcliff, I will allow the minister to continue his remarks. I believe it is relevant to the debate.

Mr STYLES: I am stunned and amazed the member for Nightcliff finds that offensive, because that is what is happening in the real world. Sadly,

those opposite do not seem to understand. I would have thought they would be on side with this motion to get it fixed ASAP, because it is about protecting our young people and children in the Territory.

I am absolutely flabbergasted that the member for Nightcliff does not understand what is going on in the real world. For those reading this, look at what those opposite say in this motion.

This is what is going on in the real world and what you do not understand. The members opposite have never been out there and talked to real people. Go and talk to community welfare workers, and Children and Families. Talk to those who have to deal with this on a daily basis, young women and men selling themselves to sustain their drug habits. This is the reality. In this Chamber you have to deal with reality. I am sorry that the member for Nightcliff finds it offensive.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member for Blain has been sitting in his chair making threatening gestures towards me. He has now walked around to the Attorney-General with a piece of paper. I have no idea what it is about, but he is mouthing and making aggressive gestures towards me. I wanted to bring that to your attention.

Mr ELFERINK: Speaking to the point of order, if I may assist the House. What he held up was the letter used in such a scurrilous fashion during Question Time. What he said to the member opposite is, 'That is the lowest thing I have ever seen in my life'. I agree. I think he is right.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I wanted to bring it to your attention. I have no problems if they want to articulate that, but it was the threatening manner of his motions that I found offensive.

Mr ELFERINK: There was no threat. He simply showed her the letter and pointed at it, saying, 'That is the lowest thing I have ever seen in my life'. He is right; it is scurrilous.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, please pause. I draw your attention to Standing Order 66; quarrels in this Chamber are not permitted. This is a house of debate. We are debating at the moment. Member for Blain, please be cautious of your behaviour in the Chamber. It can cause offence whether or not offence is intended.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, this afternoon I

am very pleased to support the Attorney-General's suspension of standing orders to debate the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill on urgency.

Drugs in the community of the Northern Territory are a very serious issue. They are a blight and they do not discriminate. Every day that this House fails to pass the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill is another day we are negligent and not living up to what Territorians expect of us.

Time is of the essence. It is vital we do everything we can to get dangerous and illegal drugs off our streets, not at the leisure of those opposite, but as soon as possible. I am appalled those opposite are trying to block the suspension of standing orders. Hearing some of the comments coming from across the Chamber, clearly they do not support the urgency of this motion because they do not get it. They do not understand the seriousness of the matters we are dealing with.

Where is their compassion? Where is their sense of responsibility to Territorians? We are trying to give police all the powers they need to assist them in stopping and dismantling known drug supply routes across the Northern Territory, particularly those into the Northern Territory. This is a necessary and proactive step if we are to successfully tackle the drug problem we have here. Drug supply is a huge issue, with over 80% of methamphetamine in the Northern Territory being imported. We need to cut dealers off at the knees.

I know that does not sit well with the opposition because of its soft-on-crime approach, but you have to deal with the offenders. We do not have any choice because if the offenders are bringing ice into the Territory. It is not appearing here by osmosis. You have to take a stance against drug dealers, but you are clearly unwilling to do that, except perhaps in your own time frame without the urgency attached to this bill.

Our borders are substantial and it is important that they are not infiltrated by drug smugglers. As a former police officer, I must say I am baffled by the response from the members opposite. Surely they realise that the police need all the tools possible at their disposal to win the war against drugs? Every minute this bill is blocked is another minute drugs are making their way onto our streets and into our homes.

Recently, I came across a poem on Facebook. It is said to have been written by a gaol drug addict in India. It is hard reading and filled with despair. I would like to read an excerpt to the House today so those members opposite might fully understand because they live in a protected world, one where only rose-coloured glasses exist. That has become quite clear to me today

listening to the comments earlier from the member for Nightcliff. This poem is entitled *I am Meth* and it goes:

*I destroy homes, I tear families apart,
take your children, and that's just a start.*

*I'm costly more than diamonds, more
precious than gold,
The sorrow I bring is a sight to behold.*

*If you need me, remember I'm easily found.
I live all around you – in schools and in
town.*

*I live with the rich; I live with the poor,
I live down the street, and maybe next
door.*

*I'm made in a lab, but not like you think,
I can be made under the kitchen sink.
In your child's closet, and even in the
woods,
If this scares you to death, well it certainly
should.*

*I have many names but there's one you
know best,
I'm sure you've heard of me, my name is
crystal meth.*

*My power is awesome, try me, you'll see,
But if you do, you may never break free.*

...

*When I possess you, you'll steal and you'll
lie.
You do what you have to – just to get high.*

*The crimes you'll commit for my narcotic
charms
Will be worth the pleasure you'll feel in your
arms....*

*You'll lie to your mother; you'll steal from
your dad,
When you see their tears, you should feel
sad.*

...

*I'll take everything from you, your looks and
your pride,*

...

*You'll give up everything – your family, your
home,
Your friends, your money, then you'll be
alone.*

...

*The voices you'll hear, from inside your
head.*

...

*I'll be your master, you will be my slave,
I'll even go with you, when you go to your
grave.*

Those are words of a drug addict who recognised how drugs had destroyed her life. But do you think the opposition will care or those words will resonate with those members? No, they will not. They are prepared to simply let the passage of this bill lie on the Notice Paper in the Northern Territory parliament until the time frame suits them. We know under ordinary circumstances it is 30 days, but the reality is if we do not pass this on urgency tomorrow, then it is going to sit on the Notice Paper until the end of November before the next sittings.

What is going to happen in the meantime? Tell me. More drugs are going to come across the borders of the Northern Territory. I already said that 80% of the meth in the Territory comes from across our borders. Yet the opposition and the Independents are probably willing to let that roll on. That is a disgrace. The Northern Territory Police recommended to the 'Ice' Select Committee that legislative amendments to assist in the disruption and dismantling of drug supply routes be introduced as a matter of urgency. This did not come on a whim. It did not come as some sort of an epiphany on this side of the House. It came from the police. They asked their government to give them an additional tool to help them control ice coming into the Territory.

Do those opposite really believe they are better informed about this issue than the men and women who are on the front line dealing with this issue every day? How arrogant of you. During my time as a police officer, I saw some of the worst human behaviour imaginable, people behaving violently without a conscience or fear of repercussions. A huge number of them were in a drug-induced state. Many did not know what they were doing, or cared for that matter. What saddens me is this could be someone's mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter. Somewhere a family is mourning the loss of a loved one to drugs. When drugs take hold, that person who once existed is no longer. Their sense of self is lost entirely.

I challenge those members opposite today to really think about that. Think about the person on the other end of the drug run whose life would be changed if these drugs were seized by police. Do you not honestly think the opportunity, as it exists now, to prevent further ice coming into the Territory as a matter of urgency presents us with a

real opportunity to make a difference? A difference to those people who might well be caught up in this ice scourge over the course of the next six or seven weeks until the members opposite decide they are happy to sit and debate and hopefully pass that legislation.

This is not an issue to score cheap political points. This is a serious issue that needs to be dealt with. It is not a day to test the balance of power as the member for Nelson did on Tuesday of the last sittings. I know the member for Nelson takes umbrage with me calling him a hypocrite. But he stood there on that day, first thing on Tuesday morning last sittings, prepared to push through on urgency a change to the Planning Scheme. Yet he is not prepared to support on urgency a change to legislation that will give the police the powers to intervene more quickly and easily, and give them the tools to deal with drug importers in the Northern Territory.

That is the context, is it not? Apparently to some of those opposite some local issues are far more important than dealing with the scourge of a drug like ice. Some of those members opposite really need to sit down and have a good hard think about themselves, their motives for being here and what they want to achieve using their time in office. That is what they should be thinking.

I should not belabour this any longer. The only people who will suffer adversely from the delay of this bill are those who are at the far end of the drug run, those who become entangled in the scourge of ice. The people who will benefit are the drug runners; they will be left for the next seven or eight additional weeks to ply their trade across the borders of the Northern Territory.

I cannot in all good conscience stand here and not put my full support behind urgency to pass this legislation. I am clear about this. Those opposite need to take a good hard look at their priorities.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, this afternoon I speak on the motion of urgency to get through this Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill 2015 (Serial 136).

There are three general reasons why I object to this motion being debated on urgency. The first is that by trying to put it through on urgency, we are not respecting the due process required of this parliament. It is tardy and not respectful of a process that has proved to bring about good decisions in parliament.

I question the fact the minister has decided to bring this motion on urgency. Why is it suddenly plucked out of the blue and made to be an urgent problem? Why the histrionics? Why the theatre of a motion on notice? I have been around this

parliament long enough to see through the machinations of this urgency motion.

No one in this Chamber disputes the fact that ice is a serious problem in our community. We have just started to unpack exactly what is happening with this drug throughout the Northern Territory. We do not know exactly what the landscape is or what the picture is. It has not been presented to this parliament. We have not received the report from the select committee of parliament that engaged in consultations across the Northern Territory. We do not know what their findings or recommendations will be. Most of us simply do not know what the landscape is, apart from the stories we have heard today and the briefings we have availed ourselves of over the last 12 to 18 months since it was identified as a serious problem.

We are starting to learn about the impact of ice on our community. Indeed, there are several within this Chamber who have firsthand experiences of ice affecting them, their families and friends. We know it is a serious problem and we have all undertaken to address it in some way.

However, the real reason there is an attempt to put this through on urgency is the bad planning of government. I was a part of the government when we made two decisions. One was to separate most of the sittings into one-week blocks as opposed to two-week blocks. Most of the sittings now are stand-alone one-week blocks. I remember when we made that decision, when I was part of the CLP government, we were cautioned: if you do this, you run the risk of not having any legislation sitting for 30 days on the Notice Paper. There will be no legislation to be debated, and that is where we sit today. There is no legislation to be debated this week, so the Attorney-General has plucked this out of his pocket and is trying to get it through on urgency with all of the emotional arguments we have heard today about it having to be put through.

In reality, they and I knew this would happen. They have failed to plan sufficiently to allow bills to be put on the Notice Paper for 30 days to be debated in this one-week block of sittings.

The other bad decision made leading up to this year was a reduction of sitting weeks from 12 in 2015 to 11 weeks. We are in a position where there is no legislation on the Notice Paper, or nothing significant, and we are facing a two-month break from parliament. If it is so urgent that we get this legislation through, I suggest the Attorney-General goes all out and recalls parliament in 30 days.

Mr Elferink: I cannot do that. The Speaker can.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I take up the comment just made by the Attorney-General. Why do you not show some real courage here and put a motion to this parliament to have it recalled in 30 days so you can get this very urgent motion through as quickly as possible, because I do not think you will get it through during this sittings period of parliament?

Mr Elferink: Why do you not just support this?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I will not take up any more comments from the Attorney-General because he has had his say for the time being. I think those two very bad decisions of the CLP government have led us to this situation, where we have to thrash out this motion being put on urgency when, in fact, it is a logistical error.

The second reason I do not support this motion being put through on urgency is there is nothing before me to say this is the best approach. There was nothing put to me showing the range of approaches, an integrated model of intervention and support, or proactive solutions and strategies to address the problem of ice in the Northern Territory. One strategy has been plucked out of a hat and thrown on the table on urgency. We are now supposed to believe this will be the panacea, the solution to the problem of ice in the Northern Territory. That is not how I operate.

I operate from a holistic model. My training is in social work. You gather all the evidence and facts, analyse them and come up with a range of solutions that address the problem. This is tardy. There is no other word for it. It is not how good practitioners operate when addressing a problem and narrowing it down to ensure the solution is the best fit.

The third reason I do not support this motion being put through on urgency is that we have a new parliament in the Northern Territory. We have a minority government and an opposition still significant in size, but we have the largest group of Independents in the history of the Northern Territory parliament. Never before in the history of this parliament have there been so many Independents. That is a fact. I checked it a few days ago. Five out of 25 people in this Chamber are Independent; therefore, the balance of power in this parliament is precarious and delicate. I do not think the government quite gets that yet.

The government is funded to prepare for parliament, as is the opposition. Everyone in this Chamber, apart from four of us, is funded to some extent to prepare for parliament. The member for Nelson is given assistance to prepare for parliament, but the four female former CLP members who are now Independents do not get any assistance whatsoever. When you bring a motion like this before parliament and you expect

the four female Independent members of parliament to respond quickly, without resources ...

Mr Elferink: Then answer your phone when I ring you.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You have had your say, Attorney-General.

Mr Elferink: Then start telling the truth.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The truth is we do not get any assistance. Twenty-one people in this Chamber have people assisting them to write speeches, research, write press releases, gather information and consult with people. They have advisers and all sorts of help, but four of us have nothing. As much as the Attorney-General will sit in this Chamber and start yelling at me, that is the truth. When you expect us to consider anything on urgency, keep that in mind, Attorney-General.

I made contact with the Chief Minister. I have sent him two letters; one as a group letter when there were four Independents, and one from myself. I wrote asking him that we receive the same level of assistance as the member for Nelson. The first letter, the group letter, was replied to with a big fat, 'No, you are not getting it'. The second letter received the same response. Is that fair? No, it is not. Does it make our life difficult? Yes, it does. Without labouring the point, that is my third reason for not supporting this urgency motion. Without help and assistance it is very difficult for the four female Independents to function on urgency in this parliament.

They are my three reasons for not supporting the government's attempt to put this motion through on urgency. I am very concerned about ice in the community. I am the mother of two teenage children. My husband and I sit down regularly and talk about the fear we have that our children will experiment and use ice at some point. I do not accept the government's premise that if I do not support their motion on urgency, then I do not care about the impact of ice on our community.

Given the semantics underlying this motion, I will not be co-opted or coerced into supporting it. This motion can sit on the Notice Paper for 30 days so we can research it and consult with relevant people. I understand very little consultation has been done with the legal fraternity in the Northern Territory. I want to be sure and confident this is a good motion which fits into a broader package of how we, as a Northern Territory parliament, address ice in the community.

Mrs PRICE (Local Government and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Attorney-General's suspension of standing orders

for the Misuse of Drugs Bill 2015. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the amendments to this bill being passed. Drugs and alcohol are silently killing our people, breaking down families and ruining people's lives.

The Northern Territory is a vast place and because of this the trafficking of substances often goes undetected. Aboriginal people are asking for help to stop dangerous substances reaching their communities, and the urban areas are also crying out with a sense of urgency.

The amendments of this bill give police the power to stop a vehicle and search it without a warrant. The urgency is now. This is not a complex amendment. We need to give those powers to the police today. Thirty days is a long time for my nephews and nieces who are suffering from the influx of amphetamines into our communities. This bill was provided a week ago for consideration. Urgency is the key word here. If the matter was a priority for those who received the proposed amendments, they would have done their homework within that period as a matter of urgency, not asked for more time.

People should put aside their political differences and take action right now to support the amendment to this bill. Otherwise we will have, over the next 30 days, more victims and more hospitalisations, with potentially worse outcomes. Those who do not want to recognise this as being a major issue for our remote communities are out of touch. We need to stop this now before it grows. Prevention is better than a cure.

Let us not let this get any further down the track where we will be reactive and calling it a crisis. This government is in touch, and not soft on crime like the opposition ...

Ms Walker: And off track.

Mrs PRICE: I am talking about something serious in my family. This affects me ...

Ms Walker: It affects my community, as well.

Mrs PRICE: Yes, but they are related to me, they are not related to you ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mrs PRICE: Let me talk. You had your chance. We are proactive and listening to the cries of urgency to get tough on this issue. I lose sleep over this. Last week when I was in the mall in Alice Springs I overheard young teen girls saying, 'Let's go home, those people are on ice'. It is scary and this is what is happening on the streets of Alice Springs as we speak.

My nephew came to my house and he was on it. He looked dangerous. On a community in Central Australia there was an instance where a young man was violent towards a roomful of women in front of their children. Those women and children want to be safe and, more importantly, they want that young man to be safe. For a seven-year-old child to say to me, 'He had that rainbow', is not acceptable. We must stop this now.

A young mother came to me and said, 'I need help. I need to keep my child. I need it to stop and I am only but one of many young mothers who are in that situation.' This is a mere procedural piece of work for us sitting in privileged positions, elected by members of the public to protect our communities and make safe living environments. The opposition says the Attorney-General has not demonstrated that this is urgent. Come live my life for a day, member for Nightcliff.

On this side of the House respect and care are integral to who we are. Time equals lives. We respect that our community is crying out for urgent reaction. As usual, Labor is oppressing my people. They are not listening but drawing out the time. I am here as a witness. There are voices I hear at the table and I am telling you this is urgent. We must act now. We must act now to protect Territorians and their families. We must act now to protect future generations and make the Northern Territory a safe place to live. You do not have to hope this will work. This will work. More powers for the police results in less substances reaching our communities. And like I said, this is close to me. This affects my immediate family.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I was not going to participate in this debate, but I have heard so much today that I will respond briefly.

As the shadow Attorney-General I take legislation that comes before this House extremely seriously. As the Attorney-General would know, any time a bill comes before this House, whether it has been me or the members for Fannie Bay or Nightcliff, who have held the portfolio at various stages, we always seek out a briefing. In addition to seeking out a briefing, we always consult with stakeholders. They can be NAAJA, the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory, CAALAS, the NT Law Society or NT Legal Aid, depending on the legislation. We target particular stakeholders to ask, 'What is your view on this bill?' I do not support urgency when the issue here is about a flawed process. Putting the bill aside, which has many merits to it, I do not support the notion of urgency for all of the reasons that members on this side have set out.

As the member for Araluen just outlined, the reason the government finds itself in this place today, is that they are too clever by half. They thought they would split up the sitting schedule for the year so that there are single weeks of sittings, with the exception of February and the estimates period. Against the advice they were given that between August and September sittings you do not have 30 days, they said, 'No, it is alright, we will be right'. They never imagined they would find themselves in a minority government.

That is the degree of arrogance of this government. They never imagined at the time they set the sittings calendar that they would lose two members from their side and be down to 14 seats on the floor of this House.

I understand how serious the ice issue is and the significant impact it has on criminal activity in the Northern Territory. I understand the impact it has on a national level and on families and lives, and the incredibly destructive force it is in this country. I am also the parent of children aged 22, 20 and 15 and, like the member for Araluen, I worry about them and what they might want to experiment with. There was no ice around when I was a young person, but what we are talking about here is process.

As for urgency, it was not urgent to that side of the House in February when, on a General Business Day, the opposition moved a motion to establish a task force to investigate it.

It was voted down. Back in February, only a number of months ago, it was not urgent and not an issue in the Northern Territory. The CLP government said, 'No, we're not voting for that', because it was not important and was not on their agenda. It was not until the former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, saw the need to create a task force on a national level that suddenly the Chief Minister had to rally and get on board.

Given the ice committee, a bipartisan committee of this House has been working hard, and has extended its period of time to undertake its public hearings and to collate its findings, why has the ice committee not been consulted on this bill, let alone the urgency? They have had submissions from the police. Why is that?

For the member for Sanderson to come into this House and defend urgency saying, 'We come in to parliament to make decisions' – we do. I come in to parliament to make decisions based on evidence, thorough consultation and the research people provide me with. I have not had a chance to do that.

I received an e-mail forwarded on by the opposition Whip, the member for Nightcliff, on

Thursday afternoon with a covering letter, the draft bill, the explanatory statement and the second reading speech. I was a little surprised to see that a bill of this nature was coming in on urgency, so the first thing I did on Thursday afternoon was send it through to some of those members of the legal fraternity, who I asked for comment.

By that afternoon, the member for Casuarina was in the Attorney-General's office seeking a briefing. We take this stuff seriously. I was on my way back to Nhulunbuy but organised a briefing, and when I returned to Darwin on Monday I had an hour-long briefing for which I was very grateful. I asked a lot of questions. I believe the person providing me with the briefing had done it many times. He knew what questions were coming and what concerns people had.

What really concerns me is that I was the one who alerted, in this case, the Criminal Lawyers Association of the Northern Territory that the bill had been drafted. Why were the President of the Criminal Lawyers Association and the association's members not advised by the Attorney-General about this proposed legislation? It is not my job to communicate that. This is what a government does. This highlights how the government does not consult. Why do they not consult? Because they think they have all the answers; they think they know best.

No one on either side of the House disputes that ice is a really serious issue for our community. However, I struggle to support urgency. In a desperate bid we had the Police Commissioner provide us with a briefing this morning – me, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Casuarina – and we were very grateful to meet with the commissioner this morning. To be honest, and whilst I have a better understanding of what police are dealing with, I still do not see the need for urgency.

When you rush through legislation you are at risk of making mistakes and discovering unintended consequences of legislation that has not been properly consulted about, planned and thoroughly rolled out in a way people can get on board with.

I heard the member for Araluen talk about this approach, and it was something I asked the Police Commissioner about this morning. I understand this legislation is about tackling transportation of ice and other drugs into the Northern Territory, and that it deals with how you can implement police powers on the roads in the Northern Territory, targeting the three main roads into the Northern Territory – east, west, and south. I get that; I understand these measures, but this is a stand-alone approach.

At the briefing I had this morning I asked if the use of Australia Post and aircraft is an issue and how we are dealing with that. At this stage we are not, we are just dealing with this. When I hear about the increase of ice into Galiwinku on Elcho Island, in my electorate – a community of about 3000 people – I want to know if it is coming in on the roads. What are we doing to stop it getting out to Elcho Island?

Mr Elferink: This! This is what we are trying to do!

Ms WALKER: I do not accept that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Attorney-General, please.

Ms WALKER: You have a right of reply. You are an extremely rude and arrogant man and I will not be bullied by you thumping your fist on the desk, Attorney-General. You may consider that if your bullying behaviour continues, you will be asked to leave the Chamber. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am offended by his language and his approach.

In Galiwinku police already have powers to physically inspect people and their belongings, and they do so with good results from time to time. I was given the example that this already occurs under the *Liquor Act*, which is fine. I want people in my communities to be kept safe and for police to have the ability to do this, but I will go back to this bill. People have not been consulted about it. The government has not sought legal expert advice from people who have decades of experience, but sought it from some ex-policeman who has a law degree.

This parliament must follow process. If it is urgent I support it, but this bill is not urgent.

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not get into the political charades. I will talk about a bit of history, reflecting on some of the comments the member for Nhulunbuy just made. She spoke back in February on the importance of her motion.

On 18 February this year the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Karama, put out a statement asking for immediate action on ice. She called it an epidemic. She was talking about an ice room at the hospital. I have and read some of the information about this.

She made a few points about immediate focused action being needed to combat this growing crisis. She went on to say:

Our police and nurses are doing a great job in tough circumstances. Let's give them the tools and support they deserve. Let's

help the families who are suffering the consequences of this scourge.

That was what the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Karama, said, calling for immediate action.

On 25 March this year there was a motion in this Chamber put forward by the member for Karama, who was the Leader of the Opposition. The motion within *Hansard* is titled, Establishment of Task Force to Tackle Ice Epidemic. She moved a motion wanting to set up an interagency task force comprising Police, Health, and Children and Families to report in six weeks on actions that could be taken to tackle the ice epidemic.

She then went on to call on the Legislative Assembly to incorporate an ice room in the existing emergency department construction at Royal Darwin Hospital. Nearly all of that is word for word.

Throughout that debate there was conjecture about whether we needed an ice room at the hospital. I have gone through the *Hansard* to refresh my memory. The member for Nelson stated in his reply, without reading word for word, that on the advice he had received he did not think there was an epidemic. Of course, it was a serious matter, a serious issue, a problem in our community and society. The term 'epidemic' was not generally supported, although we all use terms such as that in flexible ways. He also went on to say that he did not believe there needed to be an ice room in the hospital because of feedback he received that many other measures were in place.

About that time we also moved to establish the ice committee, which is chaired by the member for Blain. There was been some reference made today, particularly by the member for Nhulunbuy, about that ice committee. The ice committee sought to set up a consultative environment to get best-practice evidence, advice and guidance on how to treat and work with ice in the future. But during that debate on 25 March this year, there were a number of very important statements made, which has brought us to the point where we are today.

The member for Karama, then Opposition Leader, said it was about being bipartisan on this ice issue. She spoke about it in her statement on 18 February:

On 18 February this year I called on the CLP government to respond to growing community concern over the epidemic of methamphetamine – ice – abuse in the Territory.

She also spoke in that debate and said:

I also sought the establishment of this interagency task force of Police, Health and the Department of Children and Families and urgent action to tackle this scourge.

She went on to say:

...it is great if we can have a truly bipartisan day today.

Let the experts across these ... agencies be brought together ...

She questioned whether or not action could be taken immediately. She then went on to say:

In the meantime, we could identify real action that can be taken between now and September that can meaningfully help people in the Territory deal with the ice scourge.

She questioned, 'Why not let that happen? Why would you say things ought to remain on hold?' She asked us to get something done by September. Yes, we have set up the parliamentary committee. Yes, we are working on a range of other measures with ice. Yes, it has been discussed at the COAG level. Yes, we formed a partnership with the Australian government and the new border protection force about how we can work together to stop the trafficking and supply of ice into the Northern Territory.

I have spoken about it publically many a time. I have spoken about legislative reform to stop the supply into the Territory because 80% of the ice comes to the Territory by road from interstate, particularly through the Stuart Highway, but also Barkly and Victoria Highways. We saw the \$320m haul of ice in Perth the other day. One must question how much of that ice would have made its way into the Northern Territory.

Between February and now, this motion in March, the ice committee and everything that has been going on, we have been working to get this legislation ready. Those who have worked in government previously know it takes time to build legislation. It must go through the Cabinet process – former Cabinet ministers would know – drafting instructions, circulation, consequential issues that may occur by putting that legislation through, what it means for different agencies, whether or not you get a dirty blue or a clean blue and whether you have to fix the legislation.

The minute it came out of Cabinet, I said to the Attorney-General, 'Get this on urgency'. It is not about whether it sits on the table for 30 days because there are two months until the next sittings, so roughly speaking there is 60 days. It

has nothing to do with 30 days. It is about whether we want to have the opportunity to block ice being supplied to the Territory over the next two months. It would be easy for me to politicise this and say, 'Anyone in the next two months who becomes a victim of ice – or their family or community – can blame those who are not supporting this urgent motion'. I could play that kind of politics, but I will not. I am talking about the path this Chamber has taken this year between February and now to try to get action on ice.

The drugs come on the road into the Territory 80% of the time. Most of it comes from New South Wales via Adelaide, without slighting those two states. That is a fact. The Police Commissioner will tell you that. I will go on to quote a few more things to reinforce the point of this debate. The former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Karama, also said – and I presume the member for Greatorex was in the Chair:

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is an opportunity for the CLP government to show some maturity and bipartisan support for a motion which is put forward in goodwill and good faith. I look forward to the response.

This is part of the response. This is part of trying to stop ice in the Northern Territory. At the time Labor were seemingly parading the politicization of ice in the Territory. They were putting up great big advertisements. 'Labor will take action to address the ice epidemic.' These were no doubt paid for out of the Opposition Leader's budget, which is against the *Information Act* rules. There are statements on here like, 'Let us stop this crisis'. I wonder how committed they are. This is not about politics. This is about people. You asked us to do something by September. This is 16 September.

This issue, which Labor first raised, has gone to COAG. It is a partnership now with a national agency to stop ice coming into the Territory. The second it went through our process, it was made public. What we are trying to do has been spoken about for months. You are stopping it. It will be about politics, and families will suffer, but let me respond to more comments.

Here is a comment by the member for Nelson during that debate:

The member for Blain said he has been pushing this for a while, but this motion might have caused the government to do something, otherwise it may have sat for longer. I appreciate that the Opposition Leader has proposed this.

His comments relate to the motion they were trying to pass. We have done a lot since that time, but more can be done. I also reflect on this comment by the member for Nelson, where he said:

Mr Deputy Speaker, I plead with the government to support this in general because we want to support the gist of what the opposition is asking for: that we need to do something quickly.

That was on 25 March. Today is 16 September. It may look like it is not that quick, but we have been working hard.

I note the new member for Casuarina over there laughing during this debate. I will quote you on some of the comments you have provided in this debate. You said:

There are things we can do now and there is evidence and expertise available now.

We can do this now. We can come in tomorrow and debate the legislation. This is only the urgency.

This is your comment:

It is clear from the debate that occurred in the House today that through discussions members have been part of across the Northern Territory, there is a consensus in our community that action on this issue is timely.

That was on 25 March when you called for us to do something by September. This is September. We have not been quiet. We have spoken about this. I have a couple more of your comments here, member for Casuarina. You said:

The community has been crying out for action on this issue for some time and we have heard the pleas.

So have we. That is why we are here. You said:

I tweeted earlier some of our discussion about parliamentary inquiry establishment and somebody tweeted back to me saying, 'That is great, we actually need to move quickly and we need some immediate action'.

That is what you said in parliament. This is immediate. You are prepared to wait two months on the chance that more supply can come into the Northern Territory.

You went on to say:

The implications of taking immediate action are positive in providing support to those who work on the front line.

No doubt you are talking about police who want to stop and search these vehicles to stop supply. You said:

This is about supporting those in our community who are dealing with these issues now and will be dealing with them for the next six months while we continue to look at best approaches over the long term.

You even mentioned the time frame, member for Casuarina. We are here now almost six months to the day, and you mentioned six months. You said:

They are working with people who are often in desperate places and are providing the support needed to our families and communities who are calling out for it.

I do not want to politicize this. My comments in this debate are not about politics; they are about people. If anyone uses methamphetamines, known as ice, over the two months before the next sittings, Labor needs to ask the serious question as to whether or not that supply would have made its way into the Territory if we had passed this legislation.

You called for immediate action, but you are not alone. The member for Johnston also has form in this area because he joined the debate. He said:

While we appreciate the establishment of the select committee with a report required in September, we still call for the establishment of an interagency task force of Police, Health, and Children and Families to report in six weeks on the actions taken to tackle the ice epidemic ...

He goes onto say:

We have called for that because there is a need for immediate action, as well as deeper consideration of the issues and long-term actions by the select committee. We have called for that action because that is what people in our community are calling for – action.

The member for Johnston said people want action. I quote:

People in our community have to deal with this very real problem right now, every day. They want to know that government is focused on this problem and taking action right now.

I can assure the member for Johnston that government is focused on this problem and is taking action right now. The only thing in our way is the block by 13 members opposite who will not support passage on urgency to stop ice coming into the Territory. Labor called for us to do something by September. We have urgent legislation today that can stop the supply of ice into the Territory.

The member for Johnston spoke about a range of things, but he particularly spoke of the vulnerability of rural and remote areas. The member for Nhulunbuy spoke about Galiwinku in her electorate on Elcho Island and ice in that community. She spoke about planes. Of course, it is an island and there are different ways it is getting onto the island. However, it gets to the Territory 80% of the time through road access on one of the three main roads into the Territory: the Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways. It is finding its way to Galiwinku. I have recent reports that it is in Hermannsburg, although they are not confirmed. They tell me it is starting to sprinkle into Yuendumu in the electorate of Stuart. It is a problem.

People from communities are coming into urban areas and accessing ice at cheaper prices from over-abundant supplies. This will find its way into communities. This is the time to act.

The member for Johnston further said:

We on this side have heard the call from ordinary Territorians. We need to head off this ice epidemic. We need an interagency task force to provide a focus and target a plan. We need urgent action ...

He went on to say:

We have called for immediate action.

Labor has called for reform in this area. We have worked hard to drive that reform and we bring it back here after being open, transparent and speaking about it at community, Territory, national and COAG levels. We get partnerships to drive this reform then we bring it back and people want to sit on their hands because they say it is not fair on urgency.

It is not like we walked in yesterday and gave notice on something no one knew anything about. We let you know last week, as soon as it came out of Cabinet. We have offered you briefings, provided advice and spoken about this legislation for months. It is not technical and we are happy to debate the legislation tomorrow and go into further detail.

In summation of the motion in March, the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Karama, said:

The experts know and they could get on with some of the quick, easier, more obvious actions to take on the ice scourge whilst the select committee is getting on with its job.

The comments that came from the other side, which said to wait for the ice committee to do its job – the Leader of the Opposition was calling for us to take action while that was going on. To me there is no justification, apart from playing petty politics, to say, ‘Oh, you are in minority. You cannot get it through now. You are just trying to do this because you are in a minority and are playing politics. The seats have shifted.’

Ice is still in the Territory.

Mr STYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I seek an extension for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Mr GILES: I sat listening to this debate. It would have been very easy to come here and beat up Labor about being soft on crime, or the Independents. I appreciate urgency is not the norm. We have had urgency on planning or having statements earlier in the day. If that is urgent, then what is the scourge of drugs? I fail to see equality here. I am not playing politics with this.

Over the next two months when people in the community are affected by ice, there will be a question in the backs of minds of Territorians about whether giving police additional tools to stop ice supply in the Northern Territory would have been a good thing. It is a fair point to make.

I congratulate the Attorney-General and the Country Liberals team for bringing this on. I thank the legislative draftspeople who worked tirelessly over the short period of time since March to try to get this in order. I thank the Attorney-General for driving this. To those who made a contribution, thank you. I think you stood for what is right in the eyes of Territorians. Thank you for putting up the fight.

To those individuals who may find themselves succumbing to ice over the next two months I say this could have been avoided. If this Chamber, through the opposition and Independents, chooses not to support urgency nor the legislation, I will say, ‘Sorry, we cannot put that through. The opposition and the Independents are not supporting it.’

To the families dealing with victims of ice use and abuse, my heart goes out to you, as do the hearts of everyone on this side of the Chamber. To those communities that are affected, the people whose houses will be broken into while people try to get goods to sell to pay for the ice, I am sorry. We have tried to drive change in this Chamber. We have tried to drive reform, but it has not been supported by Labor or the Independents. There is always call for openness, transparency and integrity. This has been nothing but openness and transparency, with a significant element of commitment to Territorians and the community.

Minority government did not have a negative effect on me until this debate today. There will be drugs on our street that we could have taken off. That is one of the negative effects of a minority government.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I have one word to describe my state of mind at the moment, and that is exasperation. We came into this House with a plea to the leaders of this community to lead. What did we hear? 'We cannot make a decision until we talk to other people.' That is not leadership. The call for leadership was made by the Labor Party, which was so well articulated by the Chief Minister when he quoted back to them the need for urgency that was described in the past in recent debates. 'Do something by September', they said, and by September we have done something. Now, all of a sudden, 'We have to talk to other people'.

The simple measure in the standing orders in relation to urgency in this House comes down to a single word: hardship. To have a successful motion in this House, one must convince the House that there will be hardship caused if we do not suspend standing orders to enable us to step forward. What was the hardship in the planning matter the member for Nelson thought was so important that we would change or suspend the rules of this House to enable him to deal with an issue 24 hours before it could have been debated? What was that hardship other than the convenience of the members opposite in relation to changing the sessional orders and suspending the rules of debate in this House so they could get ministerial statements? What was the hardship that was so special on those two occasions that enabled members opposite to think, 'We must suspend rules of this House to do something in a hurry'.

Compare that to the hardship that we have pleaded on this side of the House is being caused by the scourge of ice. This has been agreed to by every member of this Chamber at one point or another. No, we have to follow process; process is the issue. Yes, we understand process, but

part of the process enables us to take leadership when the hardship is sufficiently profound.

So the hardship of the convenience of a planning matter or a sessional order amendment far outweighs the needs of the people of the Northern Territory. How often do I quote the last line of the prayer we say when we sit as a parliament, 'For the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory'? Well, we are lodging a plea before the members of this House to enable us to try better, give police better powers to deal with the hardship in our community for the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory. And they accuse us of playing politics!

The problem in this House is from time to time we become so absorbed with ourselves we forget there is a Territory beyond the front doors of this building. It is about how we can manoeuvre this or that, how we can tell this fib or do this action to achieve a result which will outmanoeuvre the other side. That is not what this is about. I am not asking or pleading in this place because I am trying to outmanoeuvre the Labor Party. I would have congratulated the Labor Party for supporting the urgency motion in this place simply because this bill will do a simple thing. Yes, I heard the argument that we cannot rush things through because there might be a mistake. The difference is, of course, that we have substantial legislative experts doing an enormous amount of work in the background to make sure there are no mistakes. Even if there are, we will come back and fix them because it is sufficiently urgent to justify that.

The police need these powers. The member for Nhulunbuy was asking what we will do in Galiwinku. This bill is what I will do in Galiwinku. I plead with you and you are exasperated. I am so exasperated I can barely speak. Then she said I was bullying her. I am not bullying you. I am saying, listen to yourself. If the people of Galiwinku matter, for God's sake support the urgency motion so we can give the police the powers they need to stop the ice coming into Galiwinku. That is what I am frustrated about and why I am angry. I get so exasperated that you think it is about winning a point in this House and nothing more. Goodness gracious me, the lot of you.

If Territorians could witness the games being played in this place by the people who say the next election will be about trust and integrity, then you would lose the next election on the performance you have put in here today.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 12

Noes 13

Mr Barrett

Ms Anderson

Mr Conlan	Ms Fyles
Mr Chandler	Mr Gunner
Mr Elferink	Mrs Lambley
Mrs Finocchiaro	Ms Lawrie
Mr Giles	Ms Lee
Mr Higgins	Mr McCarthy
Mr Kurrupuwu	Ms Manison
Mrs Price	Ms Moss
Mr Styles	Ms Purick
Mr Tollner	Mr Vowles
Mr Westra van Holthe	Ms Walker
	Mr Wood

Motion negatived.

INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO 2)
(Serial 137)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):
Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the *Information Act* to transfer jurisdiction for the hearing of complaints from the Information Commissioner to the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal, or NTCAT, and reform the complaint process to facilitate the hearing of complaints by the tribunal and to improve the pathway of complaints.

The *Information Act* provides for public access to government information and personal information held by government, and the responsible collection and handling of personal information by public sector organisations. Also, it promotes appropriate records and archives management in the public sector.

One of the primary functions of the Information Commissioner under the *Information Act* is to carry out investigations and hearings in relation to complaints about breaches of privacy and freedom of information decisions by public sector organisations.

The procedures for making complaints to the Information Commissioner and their resolution are currently set out in Part 7 of the *Information Act*.

In order for a complaint to be determined, it must pass through three, possibly four, stages: acceptance; investigation; mediation; and hearing. A hearing of the Information Commissioner in relation to a complaint against a decision by a public sector organisation is essentially a merits review of that decision.

You will be aware that NTCAT was established to provide a centralised system for the review of the merits of decisions by government agencies.

Part 2 of the bill therefore inserts a new Part 7A into the *Information Act* under which NTCAT is vested with jurisdiction to hear and determine information complaints referred to it by the Information Commissioner under new section 112A of the *Information Act*.

The current process under the *Information Act* is that a complaint is made to the Information Commissioner under either section 103, about a freedom of information decision by the public sector organisation, or under section 104, about a breach of privacy by a public sector organisation.

The Information Commissioner must accept or reject the complaint. If she accepts the complaint, she must investigate the complaint under section 110. Following an investigation, the Information Commissioner must determine whether there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence to substantiate the complaint. If there is not, she must dismiss the complaint. If there is, she must refer the complaint to mediation.

If mediation is successful, the complaint may be finalised under section 112 of the *Information Act*. If mediation fails, the Information Commissioner must hold a hearing in relation to the complaint.

The new process provided by the bill is substantially the same except, where mediation fails, the complainant under the new section 112A(1), or the respondent under the new section 112A(2), may apply to the Information Commissioner to refer the complaint to NTCAT, which must conduct a hearing – now referred to as a proceeding – in relation to it.

Under the new section 112A(1)(b), a complainant may also apply to the Information Commissioner to refer to the NTCAT a decision by the Information Commissioner under section 110(5) to dismiss a complaint on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to substantiate the complaint.

So long as the requirements under new section 112A are satisfied, the Commissioner cannot refuse to refer an application under that section.

New section 112B provides that, within 60 days of referring the complaint under the new section 112A to the NTCAT, the Information Commissioner must prepare a written report in relation to the complaint and her investigation of the complaint under section 110 of the *Information Act*.

A copy of the report, and any other documents or materials the Information Commissioner considers relevant, must be provided to the NTCAT and the parties. Importantly, new section 112B(2) enables the Information Commissioner to redact the report and any other accompanying documents or

materials provided to the complainant and respondent. This is necessary to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed to a party, and that any information sought by the complainant party is not prematurely disclosed. That is unless and until the NTCAT determines that the information should be disclosed.

Providing the NTCAT with this information early on will also assist in ensuring the NTCAT is able to conduct proceedings in an efficient and timely manner.

Once a complaint has been referred to the NTCAT, new sections 113A and 113B together provide that it must conduct a proceeding in relation to the complaint in accordance with the *Information Act* and its review jurisdiction under the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act*. Where the matter being considered is a decision by the Information Commissioner under section 110(5), dismissing a complaint for want of evidence, and the NTCAT confirms the Information Commissioner's decision, the NTCAT may make any orders it considers necessary or incidental to give effect to that decision.

If the NTCAT decides the complaint should not have been dismissed, the NTCAT may, further to any other powers it has under the *Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act*, refer the complaint to the Information Commissioner for mediation under section 111 of the *Information Act*. The NTCAT may do this regardless of whether or not the mediation occurred prior to the complaint being dismissed.

Alternatively, the NTCAT may conduct a proceeding in relation to the matter complained of, as if it had been referred to the Information Commissioner under either new section 112A(1)(a) or (2).

New section 113D(6) provides that where a matter is referred back to the Information Commissioner for mediation and the mediation fails, the complainant or the respondent may apply to the Information Commissioner under new section 112A to refer the matter to NTCAT.

Currently, under the *Information Act*, a person aggrieved by a decision of the Information Commissioner, including a decision in relation to a hearing, may appeal to the Supreme Court on a question of law.

Consistent with this policy, clause 43 amends section 129 to provide that a person aggrieved by the outcome of a proceeding by the NTCAT may appeal to the Supreme Court on a question of law. The time frame for the appeal to the Supreme Court is 60 days from the date of the decision. This section also continues to apply to decisions

of the Information Commissioner, including complaints determined or dismissed under the new section 110(2C) and (2D).

To facilitate this referral of jurisdiction to the NTCAT, and to improve the pathway for complaints, the bill also makes a number of consequential and procedural amendments to the complaint process under the *Information Act*. Most of these amendments have been developed in consultation with the Office of the Information Commissioner.

The following are the main such amendments:

- Clause 24, in new section 110(2E) provides that the Information Commissioner may, at any time after accepting the complaint, refer it to mediation under section 111 of the *Information Act*. Currently, the Information Commissioner may also refer a matter to mediation once she has made a final determination that there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence to support the complaint. However, it is the Information Commissioner's view that many of the complaints she receives would potentially be resolved by mediation, thus negating the expenditure of the time and resources required to conduct an investigation.
- In the event that an early mediation fails, and the Commissioner subsequently finds there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence to substantiate the complaint, the complainant or respondent can still apply to have the matter referred to NTCAT in accordance with new section 112A of the *Information Act*.
- Clause 24, in new section 110(2A), provides that the Commissioner may require a public sector organisation to seek the views of a third party in relation to disclosure of information during an investigation. New section 113C of the *Information Act* provides NTCAT with the same power. This is necessary as complaints often involve multiple third parties who are not all identified until the Information Commissioner has commenced her investigation of a complaint. Unfortunately, the *Information Act* does not currently specify who is required to consult with third parties once a complaint has been made to the Information Commissioner. As the Information Commissioner does not have the resources to conduct the administrative work required to locate and consult with third parties, it is necessary that this work is conducted by the respondent public sector organisation.
- The processing of freedom of information applications is generally resource intensive and requires specialised training. Coupled with the small size of many public sector

organisations and the smaller number of trained information officers within these organisations, it is often difficult to process these applications in an efficient and timely manner. Accordingly, clause 10 of the bill inserts new section 39A, which provides that a public sector organisation may refer an application for review under section 38 to the Information Commissioner to be dealt with as a complaint under section 103 of the *Information Act*.

- Clause 19 of the bill makes necessary consequential amendments to section 103. The new section 103(2) also enables the Information Commissioner to refer a complaint back to the public sector organisation to conduct a further review of the decision under Part 3, Division 4, regardless of whether it was referred to the Information Commissioner as a complaint under new section 39A.
- Clause 24 in new sections 102(2B) and (2C) provides that, if a complaint is made by a third party in relation to the decision by the public sector organisation to provide another person with access to information about the third party, the Commissioner can determine the complaint by deciding not to provide the original applicant with access to the information if they are satisfied they no longer wish to be provided with access to the information about the third party. The Commissioner cannot make such a determination without the consent of the respondent public sector organisation.
- Clause 49 inserts new Part 13 into the *Information Act*, which provides for transitional matters following the commencement of the amendments made by this bill to the *Information Act*.
- Part 3 of the bill, in clause 51, consequently amends the *Alcohol Mandatory Treatment Act* by amending the definition of 'information' in section 140(5) of that act to reflect the new definition of 'personal information' in new section 4A of the *Information Act* inserted by clause 5 of this bill.
- Finally, the bill also amends the offences in the *Information Act* to apply the principles of criminal responsibility as set out in Part IIAA of the Criminal Code. The amendments proposed in this bill give effect to recent administrative law reforms and will also significantly improve the complaints process under the *Information Act*.

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

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT **Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy**

Mr STYLES (Asian Engagement and Trade):

Mr Deputy Speaker, more good news from the Giles government. I am proud to speak on the launch of this government's Northern Territory Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategic Plan 2015-20.

The history of the Northern Territory is entwined with those of our nearby Asian neighbour countries. It is a history that shows we have a long-standing connection and engagement with China, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, to mention a few.

In fact, it was the early Chinese settlers who helped lay the foundation more than 140 years ago that modern Darwin was built on. They were the people who built Darwin in its early days, and provided the food – the fruit and the vegetables – that kept the population here alive and well.

In those early days, the number of Chinese who came to live in the Territory far exceeded those of European origin by as much as six to one. It is little surprise that Darwin was known as the Orient in the Outback. I quote Confucius:

*If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed.
If in terms of 10 years, plant trees.*

Today we plant a new seed which, with the support of Territorians, will grow to become a tree that will strengthen and bear fruit in the form of deepening our Asian engagement and establishing new channels for foreign trade and investment.

Those opposite planted a tree, so they say. Sadly, it was not nourished or watered under Labor. It has been recultivated. We had to replant the tree. It is incumbent on me as the Minister for Asian Engagement and Trade to not only to set the direction but also provide the impetus to ensure the Northern Territory will achieve maximum future benefit from the era of Asia. The British dominated the 19th century, the Americans the 20th century and now it is Asia's turn.

What is different is that this era of Asia is not about a single Asian country but an amalgam of numerous individually successful countries that together make Asia the world's largest trading region. This era of the rise of Asia will be recorded in history for a number of reasons that have contributed to and justify why we in the Territory need to focus our efforts there.

The first reason is population growth. The population of Asia is expected to grow faster than any other region in the world, leading to ongoing strong growth in its middle class and a better standard of living for people who in the future will be demanding products and services that we produce.

The second reason is economic growth. Forecast economic growth in Asia indicates that in the next 10 to 15 years Asia will achieve a combined gross domestic product value in excess of \$65 trillion, potentially making it larger than the GDP of Europe and the Americas combined.

The third reason is resource security. Asia's expected levels of growth will place extreme pressure on its own mineral, energy, food and water resources. Guaranteeing security of these resources is becoming an increasingly important issue. Northern Australia could be poised to take a lead role in this. The development of northern Australia is a blank canvas upon which we in the Territory and our partners, both in Australia and internationally, can paint the picture we want.

Against this backdrop, the Giles government is setting a new direction for Asian engagement, trade and investment, a direction that will be shared by Territorians. It is a direction that, when achieved, will guarantee a prosperous future, economic development and better lifestyles for our children and our children's children. Now is the time to make a difference and build on opportunities.

We had a great saying in the Territory in previous years that the difference in the Territory is opportunity. We have reinvigorated that opportunity. We have created opportunities and will continue to expand on them for our kids and grandkids. That is for all of us in this community. Albeit that Labor may not support some of the things we do, it is for their benefit and their children's benefit that we work so hard in this Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy portfolio.

It is the plan for 2015-20. It is a draft document emphasizing the importance of relationships that underpin and support the future development of international trade and investment linkages. This is especially the case in Asia. The strategic plan today goes before the public for their consideration and input.

This morning over 400 Territorians, keen to hear about what the CLP government has been doing and what we intend to do in the future, gave up their time to be part of the journey forward. They wanted to hear what our five-year blueprint for delivering economic opportunity and prosperity will mean for them. The strategic plan compliments

the Giles government's recently released Economic Development Strategy, setting out a vision and goals we need for a stronger and connected effort by government, industry and business to reach higher in our future international engagements.

Over the next five years the Northern Territory and Darwin will increase their reputations as the gateways between Asia and Australia with a high level of connection, making us natural hubs for the region. Four strategic goals have been identified, which we have put before stakeholders to consider and build on.

The first goal is for the Northern Territory to achieve increased economic returns from a diversified range of exports. Export of goods and services from the Northern Territory is an extremely important contributor to our economy. Last financial year our exports generated \$6.1bn, or about 30%, of our gross domestic product. Our key exports of goods include LNG, minerals, petroleum and live cattle to name a few. Our top five trading partners in 2014-15 were Japan at AUD\$2.7bn, China at AUD\$1.3bn, Thailand at AUD\$636m, Indonesia at AUD\$409m and Vietnam at AUD\$158m. Combined, these top five trading partners accounted for over 85% of the goods exported from the Northern Territory, clearly indicating just how important Asia is in the Northern Territory. By consolidating our engagement with our core trading partners and strengthening links with emerging export partners, we will continue to increase our exports. At the same time we will seek to diversify our export base to include new goods and services such as those found in the information, communications and technology sectors. We will have new companies doing amazing things.

Another important contributor to our export earnings is international education. Let us not forget that this sector, in 2013-14, generated AUD\$61m in services earnings for the Northern Territory. I further note in Victoria it is their number-one dollar earner. In the Territory, given our location and proximity to Asia with a similar climate and a multicultural community, we too can make a massive difference in this sector and substantially increase the numbers attending Charles Darwin University to gain international qualifications.

Goal one will be achieved by assisting our businesses to become more export-focused by government undertaking activities such as engagement of a new Territory representative to Indonesia. I hope to be in a position later today or tomorrow to advise the Northern Territory who that person will be. We will also establish a series of business workshops and seminars across the Territory to increase awareness and

understanding among companies on how they can get involved in international business.

A lot of what we do in October Business Month is about trying to get these companies export-ready. We will also bring an Asian focus into the October Business Month calendar of events and give our businesses the opportunity to attend a number of complementary events to hear directly from international marketing experts about the current opportunities in Asian markets. Further, we will capture better market intelligence under our Trade Support Scheme so we can ensure our assistance is making a difference and earning greater export returns for the Northern Territory economy.

The second goal is about the Northern Territory being an excellent partner for capacity-building assistance with our near neighbours. As Territorians, we pride ourselves on being a good neighbour in both fair and foul weather. We have established a good reputation in the provision of assistance when called upon. We all know of the particularly devastating events surrounding Timor-Leste's rise to independence, the Bali bombings, the tsunami that swept through Southeast Asia and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. I could not have been more proud of how we responded and provided assistance in those times of need.

We will continue to identify where we can increase our capabilities and capacity to share our skills and experiences, and to make a positive and long-term difference in our near neighbourhood that will benefit all of us. In engaging with our Asian neighbours, we also appreciate that culture, art and sport provide opportunities for us in this region to better understand each other. A legacy of the strategic plan will be that the Northern Territory becomes known as a true friend to our near neighbours in the region, the first point of contact for them in Australia.

The third goal is that long-term international investment in the Northern Territory will increase across the natural resources infrastructure and tourism sectors. There is a proven link that foreign investment stems from establishing prior relationships. The Northern Territory's best relationships are in Asia, and therefore Asia is more likely to be an expected source of future overseas investment. We have received investment from other parts of the world, and of course our door will always remain open to foreign investors from any country wanting to contribute to growing our economy.

Our current investment propositions mainly relate to greenfield opportunities in the natural resources sector. These tend to be more attractive to our Asian investors, who need resources more than developed western countries and investors from those countries. We will continue to identify and

assist in the development of investment proposals for presentation to relevant overseas investors. We will not stop there. We will work directly with potential investors providing them all the necessary information and assistance to best support their interests in investing in the Territory.

I am delighted that I have been able to secure the next meeting of the Australian Trade ministers in Darwin on 5 and 6 November this year. This gathering of state and federal Trade ministers precedes one of the most significant business investment events Australia has had. The federal Minister for Trade and Investment has chosen Darwin as the host city for an international Northern Australia Investment Forum, which will be held from 8 to 10 November this year. This forum will bring together a number of major international investors to promote and secure investment in northern Australia.

The Giles government is working closely with proponents of significant projects in the Territory to maximise this opportunity for the Northern Territory and a prosperous economy. We will continue to attract international foreign investment by undertaking a range of activities, for example, examining the potential of engagement of northern Australia representatives to Beijing and Singapore, specifically focused on promoting Northern Territory investment opportunities to multinational foreign investment organisations. We will also identify potentially new sources of foreign investment, and relaunch the InvestNT website to ensure the most up-to-date and continuous pipeline of investment opportunities is available to foreign investors, with translations into Indonesian, Japanese and Chinese. Significantly, we are establishing a program of outbound and inbound investment promotional missions. We will target, identify and invite high-level organisations and individuals to undertake specifically tailored programs in the Northern Territory to see, firsthand, our investment opportunities, and work hand-in-glove with companies seeking support from government to grow their businesses through investment. We are ready to partner with any company to help develop strong business cases and investment prospectuses, and articulate value propositions and sales pitches that will grab attention.

The fourth goal is for the Northern Territory to position itself as a pre-eminent supply and service hub in our region. We will work with our local businesses to build on our strengths to respond to the growing opportunities to provide for supply and service work to the current and future international oil, gas, minerals and defence sectors. Our success will see the Northern Territory positioned as a preferred location across northern Australia for businesses seeking to

increase their operations and exports in these sectors.

The goals of the strategy will be achieved through four critical enablers. The first will see the Northern Territory have strong relationships with a greater number of Asian partners; second, Territory businesses will be more internationally competitive; third, Northern Territory businesses will have sustainable international transportation links with our major trading partners; and fourth, the Northern Territory's profile will be better recognised and what we have to offer will be better understood by our Asian partners.

We cannot do this alone. We cannot be successful without the assistance of the Australian government. The recently released *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* is a transformational promise that will focus efforts on the future development of northern Australia. We must seize the opportunity of the significant resources available that encourages corporates from around Australia, and the world, with the message that now is the time to invest in the Northern Territory. We look forward to more Australian government resources and staff being deployed to Darwin to coordinate the development efforts of the Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australian and Australian governments.

The recently signed free trade agreement between Australia and China will build on recent agreements concluded with Japan and South Korea in unlocking and providing increased market access opportunities. The agreements will generate increased interest and stimulus for companies from these three major Asian economies to seek out opportunities in Australia. We will have what they are looking for.

The stars are aligning with China, our second-largest trade and investment partner, embarking on its new one belt, one road strategy. Under the new Maritime Silk Road there is an opportunity for the Northern Territory to position itself as a gateway for new trade corridors between Australia and southern China. We should pursue this vigorously.

On 17 June 2015, the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement was signed. The agreement secures better market access for NT products and services to our second-largest trading partner after Japan, and a primary market for our exports and minerals. The historic agreement promotes increased two-way investment and reduces import costs. The free trade agreement will increase the opportunities for exports of goods and services from the Northern Territory, as well as for Chinese investment in the Territory.

A key benefit of the free trade agreement is the head-turning effect, the high-level signalling from governments that another country is a preferred economic partner, especially in some developing countries where industry still looks to government for the lead on international engagement. Free trade agreements also lift the level of local capability to engage with a market through the range of awareness-raising and upskilling activities they generate.

As China's economy continues to shift away from investment-led growth towards private consumption, we can expect increased Chinese demand for premium and high-quality Australian food products, including meats and fruits. The free trade agreement will see a gradual reduction on tariffs leading to the opening up of new market opportunities, with further benefits being achieved over time.

We can expect increased Chinese interest in direct investment opportunities in Australia in sectors such as agriculture, real estate, resources and infrastructure. An additional component of the agreement is the provision for the conclusion of investment facilitation arrangements. Chinese companies making significant investments in Australia – that is more than \$150m in specific types of infrastructure development projects – will be able to bring in skilled overseas workers where suitable local workers cannot be found. I will repeat that. Chinese companies making significant investments in Australia – that is more than \$150m in specific types of infrastructure development projects – will be able to bring in skilled overseas workers where suitable local workers cannot be found. This is in the interests of Chinese corporations that have long been keen to use Chinese workers for projects in Australia where local workers cannot be found. IFAs, as they are known, will not allow unskilled or underpaid Chinese workers to be brought in to staff major projects. Australian workers will continue to be given first opportunity.

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement contains some visa initiatives, including investment facilitation arrangements, IFAs, intra-corporation transfers, contractual service providers and provisions for up to 5000 work and holiday visas for young Chinese. Investment facilitation arrangements, known as IFAs, are only for Chinese-owned companies registered in Australia, undertaking infrastructure development projects valued above \$AUD150m. IFAs will operate within the existing subclass 457 visa program framework to negotiate with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection the number of overseas workers they require in specified skilled and semi-skilled occupations, and any concessions to standard subclass 457 English language and salary levels.

IFAs will operate similarly to Enterprise Migration Agreements and designated area migration agreements, consistent with criteria that all overseas workers must be employed in accordance with Australian employment laws, wages and conditions, and the clear evidence of a genuine labour market need is demonstrated.

I go to the movement of natural persons. Like other free trade agreements, the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement provides for the movement of natural persons, in this case specifically business people, Chinese contractual service providers, independent executives and intra-corporate transfers, executive managers, senior managers and advanced trade, technical and professional specialists are covered by the intra-corporate transfers. To qualify, specialists must have been employed by their nominating employer for at least two years immediately before they apply for their visa and have their skills and qualifications accepted as meeting the Australian standard for that occupation. Temporary entry granted under the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement does not appear to negate Northern Territory occupational licence requirements, meaning at least three of the occupations identified in the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement side letter, that is, electrical general, electrical special class, and joiner, will require licences before they can work in the Northern Territory.

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement also provides for 5000 Chinese nationals aged 18 to 31 to be granted 12-month work and holiday visas every year. This year provides the right to work full time. To be eligible, Chinese nationals will need to have functional English, funds for personal support, an onward ticket and hold tertiary qualifications or have successfully completed at least two years of undergraduate university study, consistent with existing criteria for work and holiday visas. Applicants for these visas will require a letter of support from the Chinese government.

I now speak about my recent visit to Singapore, China, Hong Kong and Malaysia, undertaken in June 2015. The purpose was to strengthen the Northern Territory's ties with these important Asian countries. Joining me was a delegation of eight business representatives. In the four countries we visited, I championed the Northern Territory's investment propositions and projects, and identified and strengthened engagement with relevant international investors all with a view of attracting the investment we need to underpin our ongoing economic growth, including the development of strategic infrastructure.

I met with around 150 potential investors in six Asian cities over six days via various activities

including hosting round table discussions, a forum, attending the Guangzhou International Finance Expo, and holding one-on-one meetings. Their investment interests were wide-ranging from oil and gas, to tourism, agribusiness and infrastructure projects. The business and opinion leaders I met were very receptive to the messages presented. Already we have seen a delegation from Beijing visiting Darwin as a result of my trip, the first of several inbound visits from contacts made.

Follow-ups on the investment leads generated are being undertaken through the Department of Business's Office of Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment. One of the successes to flow from this trip is the opportunity to work with the owner of one of the world's largest eco-themed parks to showcase our Northern Territory wildlife in one of the company's existing or new safari parks in southern China. During my visit to China, the message I received quite clearly was that we could do better with a local presence to help drive increased investment and trade for the Northern Territory in this increasingly important market.

This is now under active consideration by our government as part of a wider expansion of our overseas footprint. To help secure more investment into the Territory and to make a significant contribution to economic growth, job creation and high living standards for Territorians, I will be returning to the region with business delegations on a regular basis to emphasise our commitment to stable, long-term and mutually beneficial relationships. This is a fundamental principle of successfully doing business with Asia. I encourage all government and industry representatives of the Northern Territory, during their visits overseas, to continue to strengthen the trade and investment value propositions for the Northern Territory at every opportunity. I will be leading further trade missions to Asia this year in support of these goals.

Next month the focus will be on north Asia where I plan to visit Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia with a delegation of local business representatives. In November I intend to make a similar visit to our nearest neighbour, Indonesia.

At this morning's business and industry briefing on the Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment five-year strategic plan, I called for public comments and encouraged businesses and individuals to join with me and the Giles government to make a difference for the future of the Northern Territory.

I welcome all constructive input from members of this parliament. I move that the Assembly takes note of the statement.

Mr VOWLES (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome this statement from the minister. Labor believes in strong economic growth, jobs, a growing population, international trade and good relations. In our time in government we made these goals our aim.

I will not quibble too much with what the minister has said. I welcome it but, frankly, I am not very excited by it. The minister has said nothing particularly contentious. He has not provided this House with a poor document but with a bland one. In fact, after going missing on this front for a few years, I was expecting more from the minister and this government. Many statements here are best described as motherhood statements. There are things it is impossible to disagree with, but the population of Asia is expected to grow faster than any other part of the world. Yes, Asia is making great strides in economic growth. Yes, Asian governments are looking to guarantee the security of their resources and resource needs. All of this is known by many people.

It is from these statements that the government outlines its four strategic goals. The first one is to increase economic returns from a diversified range of exports. The second one is that the Northern Territory will be an excellent partner for capacity building. The third one is that long-term investments will increase across natural resources, infrastructure and the tourism sectors, and the fourth and final one is that the Northern Territory will be positioned as a pre-eminent supply and service hub.

There is nothing wrong with these four strategic goals, but once again they are not shedding new light on our role in Asia. The minister says he will replace the former representative in Indonesia with a new one. Since February they have been talking about replacing the sacked former elected Chief Minister, Terry Mills. This is such an important position for this government, but no one has been in this position since February this year. It is not a great look. Getting rid of Terry Mills, the former elected Chief Minister, so swiftly because of the political spite of the Chief Minister may not have been a good idea. He did not do the Territory any favours for our relationship with Indonesia or, for that matter Japan, when he knifed Terry while he was there.

I remind people of an ABC news article by Jane Bardon on Saturday 21 February 2015. The headline was, 'Sacked NT Trade Commissioner, Terry Mills, did magic in role, says Indonesian Consul to Darwin':

The Indonesian Consul to Darwin has expressed disappointment at the Northern Territory government's axing of its Indonesian Commissioner Terry Mills.

Mr Mills was recently sacked from the role after retweeting a photo of himself laughing during the recent failed leadership challenge to Adam Giles. After the sacking, Mr Mills said the Territory appeared to have no plans for a new arrangement in Jakarta, which would work against the Territory's interests. 'I am deeply concerned about the reputation of the Territory', Mr Mills said last week. 'To be effectively politically assassinated whilst I was in Tokyo and now, in my view, politically assassinated whilst in Jakarta looks like overkill to me, but it certainly plays out quite badly. The optics of this aren't so good.'

Mr Mills was deposed in a leadership coup by Mr Giles as Chief Minister in March 2013. In April 2014, after Mr Mills had resigned from parliament, and provided some candid commentary on his former Country Liberals colleagues in the media, he was appointed Commissioner to Indonesia on a special contract. Mr Mills' appointment to Indonesia was approved by the Chief Minister. The Indonesian Consul, Andre Omer Siregar, said he was impressed by Mr Mills.

'The fact that he was a former chief minister made his abilities to mingle and to network very effective', he said.

'I personally felt very proud to be serving as our representative in Darwin because the Territory sent their best, their former chief minister.'

'So having him as Commissioner was a real emphasis that your Government is very serious about strengthening relations with Indonesia.'

It goes on to say:

Mr Mills had argued with the Giles Government, questioning its commitment to his role. The Consul thinks Mr Mills will be a hard act to follow in terms of smoothing relations and opening more doors to restricted live cattle exports.

It does not look great for the Territory when you sack a former Chief Minister from his role, when other people think he is doing a great job. I note the member for Katherine has been working very hard in Asia and has almost taken on the role as the NT's ambassador for Indonesia and Asia.

I commend the member for Katherine for his work as the minister for Primary Industry, repairing and continuing to have a great relationship with our Asian neighbours after the sacking of Terry Mills.

I am not excited by this effort today because I have a truly exciting plan here, our last international trade plan from 2009-13, a plan produced by the government which is a real plan. It includes strategic goals and actions designed to achieve those goals, and these measures are designed for the short-term and the medium-term. This is a real plan.

What we have here today has all been predicted. Labor's achievement in government – I just want to remind people – in consultation with business, industry, government agencies, NGOs and other multicultural communities, developed a five-year international trade strategy which positioned the Territory for a bright future. Our trade strategy was based on the Territory's core strengths, proximity to key markets in the Asia-Pacific region and the ongoing development of the Australasia trade route.

The strategy focused on three key international markets and five emerging markets. Japan, China and Indonesia are the Territory's key targets. Five emerging markets of strategic interest identified were Vietnam, India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste. We delivered the \$20bn Ichthys project and launched the China Minerals Investment Strategy. We supported live beef trade to Indonesia and Vietnam. We made substantial investment in infrastructure, such as the East Arm Port and Darwin Business Park. We established the Timor-Leste Northern Territory ministerial council. We developed Tourism NT's Asian gateway strategy and we promoted Indigenous art, education, and sporting and cultural links to our Asia-Pacific neighbours.

We have future directions that a Labor government would develop and maintain a substantial and strategically focused international trade strategy. We will build and consolidate even stronger government-to-government and people-to-people relationships with our Asia-Pacific neighbours. We will undertake continuous engagement with our strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific region based on strong ties of family, friendship, business, industry, culture, education and sport.

Labor will identify new and emerging trading partners, such as the Republic of Korea, which will provide concrete opportunities for trade and investment in beef, tourism, and oil and gas. Labor will ensure we grow our relationships with Asia not just through economic ties, but in people-to-people relationships. We will ensure our multicultural Territory plays a strong role in uniting us with our people to the north.

I cannot talk about Asian relations without mentioning this government's scrapping of the iconic and successful Arafura Games, which

brought over 3000 athletes, officials and representatives from over 39 countries to the Northern Territory. It had over 1000 local volunteers proudly giving up their time to showcase the Territory. I take this opportunity once again to thank them for volunteering and for their support of the Arafura Games

When this government came to power the elected Chief Minister, Mr Terry Mills, said the games would be deferred but not cancelled. Then the unelected Chief Minister told Territorians that the games would be back bigger and better, only to cancel them.

I will read a report by Clare Rawlinson from the ABC which had the headline, 'Public shock at Arafura Games axing':

The City of Darwin and local tourism operators are in shock after the Government's decision to axe the 2013 Arafura Games.

The Government yesterday announced it would cancel the 2013 games to save money, saying the games were not meeting their objectives anymore.

The bi-annual Arafura Games see participants from 39 countries travel to Darwin to compete in 23 sports.

Minister for Sport Matt Conlan said the countries most heavily involved – Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia – were 'hardly our trading partners'.

The City of Darwin had agreed on a \$90 000 contribution to the games.

Acting Lord Mayor Bob Elix said the event was very popular within the community, and the Government's decision to axe it came as a complete surprise.

'For the business in Darwin it was always a good period for us trading,' he told 105.7 Breakfast.

He said he expects there are 'pretty dismal chances' of the games returning.

Cathryn Doney from Darwin Holiday Apartments said the decision was shameful.

'They (the Government) should be sacked now, before they do any more damage,' she wrote on the 105.7 ABC Darwin Facebook page.

Another contributor, Brian Manning, said the games would be bad for tourism operators.

'My word, Darwin retailers and service providers will be pleased with reduced sales and empty accommodation,' he said.

Some of the games have also expressed outrage at the axing, saying the Government should work at improving the games rather than cancelling them.

'If there is an issue about management they should show they can do it better,' Penny Whinney-Houghton said.

Athletes, including Indigenous marathon runner Korey Summers who hoped to compete in the games, are disappointed about the decision.

'As someone who has competed in the games for the last six years and is in the process of training up for next year, I find this decision to be bloody stupid and foolish,' athlete Michael Christopher Bond said.

'Yes they could and should run it better. That doesn't mean you stop it.'

The Government says cancelling the 2013 Games will save \$3.5m.

Let me tell Territorians and this Chamber again, if we are elected at the next Territory election we will bring the Arafura Games back. Let me say that again. We will bring the Arafura Games back to the Northern Territory.

I will finish and touch on a few points about the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, or ChAFTA. The CLP has spent time in this House making direct and somewhat offensive racist accusations that we are against Chinese people. We also believe that both sides of federal politics need to take a deep breath and sort out their differences, as was done between Mark Latham and John Howard during the US free trade deal.

I request that the Northern Territory government takes a deep breath and ceases the racist hysteria with the accusations in this Chamber that Labor does not like China or Chinese people. The Chief Minister said in yesterday's Question Time:

... Territory Labor has refused to support the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. They stand there with their union mates, campaigning in xenophobic fashion against anything Asian in this nation. If you are Chinese, Labor does not support you

This is simply not true. Labor supports ChAFTA. The Leader of the Opposition has made this very clear in a statement. I remind members in this House what it says:

Labor leader Michael Gunner says that Territory Labor has a strong history of supporting trade and good relationships with China. We support creating economic opportunities, we support creating jobs. We can do it together and we can do it without costing Australians jobs or undermining Australian conditions. Frankly, I think everyone needs to take a deep breath. This agreement can be sorted out through sensible negotiation by our political leaders. Instead of shouting at each other and I expect that the Liberal Party and the Labor Party at a national level should be asking each other, what could be done to overcome community concerns.

Take note of this on that side of Chamber:

I support it because I believe in developing the north. Building a relationship with China is an important part of that. It was Claire Martin and Paul Henderson that drove a very strong push into China during their time in government. I completely 100% support developing and growing those relationships. I also believe that we will have a responsibility to ensure that Territorians reap the benefits of development by getting jobs from it. Jobs should always go to Territorians first. The government must train and skill people to ensure they have a fair chance at getting jobs. We must always protect the conditions and skill levels of workers and the standards of work provided to Territorians. We can clarify the detail on these Labor conditions just like John Howard did after the Labor Liberal conversation about parliament before parliament signed off on the US trade agreement. Surely, it is not too difficult for our political leaders in Canberra to sort that out.

That is the end of the press release.

The government has raised many times the member for Karama's attendance at the ETU rally against the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. You seem to believe it is a bad thing she was there supporting and standing up for Territory jobs. We should always support and stand up for Territory jobs. What has not been mentioned about that rally is that the union speech included the comments, 'If the workers come to Australia, the unions must protect them and

protect their workers' rights, as well'. I know because I was there. This is not who we want to be in here. We do not want to peddle racism here. We represent all Territorians regardless of their background, where they were born or where they live.

To say I do not like Chinese people is deeply offensive to me, my family and the many other Territorians who have mix-raced families here and in Australia. I have Chinese heritage. I believe the member for Karama, the Opposition Leader and all of us on this side of the Chamber believe in protecting workers rights. We believe in getting Territorians into jobs first and protecting the rights of Australian workers. All this is achievable within the context of free trade and this free trade agreement.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I support the statement made by my colleague minister Styles, on the Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy 2015-2020.

Our relationship with our Asian neighbours is already strong, but more needs to be done. The potential for growth is absolutely enormous. It is therefore imperative that we have a clear strategy to drive our engagement with our Asian neighbours. The Northern Territory Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy 2015-2020 has the vision and goals we need for a more collaborative approach between government and industry. The next five years will be critical. Relationships will be a key to ensure the Northern Territory can tap into its full growth potential. The Northern Territory is a gateway between Asia and Australia. Our unique position cannot be underestimated, and that is why the strategy sets out four strategic goals to make the best use of our position.

The Northern Territory will achieve increased economic returns from a diversified range of exports. Next, the Northern Territory will be an excellent partner for capacity-building assistance with our nearby neighbours. Then, long-term international investment in the Northern Territory will increase across the natural resources, infrastructure and tourism sectors, and the Northern Territory will be positioned as the pre-eminent supply and service hub in our region.

Our aim is to achieve these goals through four critical enablers: the Northern Territory will have strong relationships with a greater number of Asian partners; Northern Territory businesses will be more internationally competitive; Northern Territory businesses will have sustainable international transportation links with our major trading partners; and the Northern Territory's profile will be better recognised and what we have

to offer better understood by our Asian partners. Work is currently being undertaken by this government to really put the Northern Territory on the radar of our Asian partners.

This strategy formalises much of what the Country Liberals government has been doing. Since we came to power in 2012 the economy has gone from strength to strength. We are in a far better position today than we could have imagined back under the dark days of Labor rule. We have secured the Territory's economic future, created opportunities to deliver more jobs and better services, and improved our unique way of life.

The Northern Territory now has a strong, resilient and growing economy. Our positive relationships with our Asian neighbours have a lot to do with that position outlook. Because of the hard work done by industry and government, the Northern Territory cattle industry, for example, has gone from strength to strength. We have expanded existing markets, secured new markets and rebuilt confidence throughout the supply chain. A record number of cattle were exported through the Port of Darwin in 2015, and this was no accident. Last year's total of 494 000 head, of which 66% were Northern Territory cattle, far exceeded the previous record of 365 000. That is an outstanding achievement.

The Country Liberals government continues to strengthen economic links into eastern Indonesia and is exploring opportunities for collaboration in East Kalimantan. Indonesia is our largest live export partner but there is still more room for expansion. That is why I recently led a bipartisan trade mission to Indonesia to strengthen ties and continue relationship building.

The Northern Territory's reputation for clean, wholesome produce is enviable. Indonesia remains our largest and strongest standing export market, with around 251 000 head of Northern Territory cattle exported there in 2014. Over the past 12 months there has been a significant increase in market access activity in the Southeast Asia region, which is consistent with a forecast for strong growth in the global demand for agricultural product, particularly high-quality protein.

The government recently provided an additional \$300 000 per year to the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries in order to establish a live animal export market development unit to increase the focus on emerging markets. The most exciting development in the live trade market has been with Vietnam. Earlier this year I led a trade mission to represent NT industries in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, and the outlook is overwhelmingly positive. The visit was extremely fruitful, helping us to grow new and

existing markets through targeted relationship building.

While talking about relationship building, I will mention how important it is not to use megaphones to establish relationships with our Southeast Asian trading partners. It is critical that whoever the minister, whichever the government, the Primary Industry minister spends a lot of time on the ground talking to those important people within our trading markets to ensure a person-to-person relationship is built. Without people-to-people relationships, there are no relationships; it is as simple as that.

This partnership between my department and Meat and Livestock Australia to promote the live export trade and help importers implement the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System, or ESCAS, has certainly paid off. The recent increases overall in live export of cattle and buffalo can be attributed to the development of this new Vietnamese market. Vietnam has been growing rapidly as a new market for live cattle over the past two or three years, and is now the Northern Territory's second-largest market behind Indonesia, taking 41 391 head of Northern Territory cattle in 2014, increasing from 32 806 head in 2013. That is up from zero in 2012, when this government took office.

My Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries became aware of Vietnamese interest in buffalo in May 2013 and, subsequently, wrote to the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development outlining the process for establishing a protocol with the Australian government. The Chief Minister also followed up on the process during his inaugural visit to Vietnam in October 2013.

In January 2014 the Vietnamese and Australian governments finalised the animal health protocol for feeder and slaughter buffalo importation into Vietnam. The first shipment of buffalo, of approximately 220 head, left for Vietnam from the Port of Darwin on 11 February 2014. In 2014 Vietnam imported a total of 4567 head of Northern Territory buffalo and it is now the NT's largest export market for buffalo, and this is set to increase. Vietnam represents an increasing development in the live export industry to diversify its customer base. The success of the buffalo going to this new market is also good news for a number of Indigenous communities across the Top End and Arnhem Land, as many wild harvest buffalos are located on Indigenous lands.

The Departments of Primary Industry and Fisheries and Land Resource Management are currently in discussion with the Northern Land Council on the development of a buffalo strategy. We are hoping for a similar success story with the

Thailand and Cambodian markets, following the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce's announcement of the opening of this market for Australian feeder and slaughter cattle in 2014.

While the live export industry has improved remarkably – the biggest worry now for export is filling quotas, a good problem to have – my government is also doing all it can to assist our pastoralists to diversify their business. This will ensure the industry is not brought to its knees again should something catastrophic cause live exports to halt in the future. Over the past two years, the Northern Territory cattle industry has pulled itself up from an incredibly low point to secure new markets and rebuild confidence. Our cattle industry has recovered from arguably the worse market scenario, where live export did not and could not take place, to today's situation of what many predict is the beginning of the rise of our industry.

The feast now following the tough years of market famine was not simply a matter of good automatically following bad – credit where credit is due. Producers, agents, exporters, extension officers and the NTCA executive all contributed to the good times the industry is now enjoying.

Only the Country Liberals government has developed a collaborative strategy in conjunction with industry partners to grow our live export industry. The past 12 months has seen a significant increase in market access activity in the Southeast Asia region, which is consistent with a forecast for strong growth in global demand for agricultural product. To ensure we can meet demand, the Country Liberals government is working to increase the areas of land suitable for grazing cattle in the Territory. I would like to see our cattle industry grow by up to 50% within the next 10 years. That is an achievable target. I believe it is possible to double the cattle herd numbers in the Northern Territory over the course of the next 15 years. This is a target we will work towards.

Debate suspended.

MOTION **Residential Retirement Facilities**

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I move that the Minister for Senior Territorians investigate the need for residential retirement facilities in the broader Darwin rural area and reports back to parliament by the first quarter of 2016.

The investigation would involve but not be limited to:

1. the future and existing needs of residents in the rural area in relation to seniors accommodation, retirement and aged care facilities
2. land, existing facilities and infrastructure that exists presently or would be needed to facilitate 1
3. the views of government or private companies in relation to 1 and 2
4. the financial sustainability of any proposals.

I have heard from both sides that they may like to amend this because I have focused on the rural area. I will explain why, but I am happy if members wish this debate to have wider spread than that.

At the outset, there are a couple of documents that have been released in times gone by. One from Charles Darwin University was a small paper called *Retirement Intentions and the Northern Territory*. It had a number of key findings. Also there was a fairly major document issued by the Department of Health. I am not sure when it started, but the date here where the copyright is says 'Copyright 2013 by Department of Health'. That document is called *The Health and Wellbeing of Older Territorians*.

I will quote a couple of things from that document to put things in perspective. Under the Executive Summary it talks about population characteristics:

In 2006 ...

I have to use the figures used here as I do not have any later figures:

... there were 9749 Territorians aged 65 years and over. Of this group of, 1859 (19%) were Indigenous people and 53% were males. At this stage the NT had the smallest proportion of people aged 65 years and over: 4.6% compared with 13.3% nationally. By 2009, this proportion had risen to 5.3%, compared with 13.3% nationally. By 2036, the proportion of Territorians aged 65 years and over is projected to rise to 10.3%.

In the introduction of this paper, when talking about ageing in the Northern Territory, it also said:

The NT has two distinct features impacting on ageing that distinguish it from other states and territories:

- *Approximately 30% of the population are Indigenous, with a much younger age structure. This is a reflection of*

higher fertility rates and relatively low life expectancy.

- *Many older non-Indigenous Territorians leave the NT and move interstate.*

As a result, the projected proportion of Territorians aged 65 years and over in the NT will remain the smallest of all states and territories. By 2036, the proportion of people aged 65 years and over will have increased from 4.6% to 10.3% in the NT and from 13.0% to 20.8% nationally. However, many Indigenous people in their 40s and 50s have disability or morbidity characteristics similar to older Australians, and the observation of the younger age structure of the NT population should not overlook the significant burden of disease within younger age groups.

Although the NT is expected to have only a modest proportion of the aged, the proportional change (the change relative to the current age structure) will be high. Projected population changes for the NT based on fertility and mortality rates indicate the proportional change of the aged population will be larger than that of Australia as a whole. Between 2006 and 2036, the proportion of Territorians aged 65 years and over will be more than triple (3.4 times) while nationally it will double (2.3 times).

It is important to put some things into perspective.

Finally, under the Executive Summary Future Directions:

Many social and economic issues are of concern to older Territorians including reduced income, access to appropriate housing, ongoing education, transport accessibility and general safety ... Demand for services will grow considerably in coming years, but as noted in other chapters of this report, pressure points and gaps in service delivery already exist in the NT.

Although we might have a relatively small proportion of our population over 65, it will grow and continue to do so. As I said, although I am concentrating on the rural area, it does not mean we should not discuss other parts of the Northern Territory in relation to the facilities we have in remote communities or other main centres for seniors. Sometimes the meaning of senior for non-Indigenous people is not the same as senior for Indigenous people. This document from the Health department alerts us to this. I raise it as an issue that could come into this debate.

In the case of the rural area and its surroundings, the population is roughly 23 000 people. It is nearly the same as the population of Alice Springs. The rural area of Darwin was first developed in 1960. Older maps show the date on which development occurred. The first development was in 1960 in the Howard Springs area, with similar subdivisions springing up around the same time in Bees Creek and Humpty Doo. There are people who have lived there for many years, long before Palmerston existed, and are now at the age where they would like to retire but at the same time, stay in the rural area. Unfortunately, the government – and I do not blame this on any government; I am talking about governments in general – has landed Humpty Doo and Freds Pass as sites for facilities for seniors. The development of that land has not been forthcoming. I have asked a number of times in this parliament why governments have not released land – their own land – in district centres in the rural area.

The main centres in the Darwin and Palmerston area are well-serviced with retirement villages or senior accommodation. There are Pearl and Tiwi Gardens retirement villages, as well as Leanyer, Kurringal, Tambling and Bellamack seniors' accommodation. A new retirement village is being developed in Durack. In Alice Springs there is Larapinta Seniors Village and there is also aged care at Kalano, Katherine, Maningrida, Nguju, Angurugu, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Palmerston, Wadeye, Docker River and Darwin. If I have missed anything there – I know the Minister for Housing is on the ball; I am sure she will correct me. Of course, none of these facilities exist in the rural area.

Recently some good friends of mine, Shirl and Denzil McManus, who have lived in the rural area since Cyclone Tracy, sold their rural block and moved to Pearl. It is a nice place to retire, but unfortunately it is not where their friends are. Every morning I would see the couple walking their dog, not always fast, because they are getting on, up to the shops to get the paper and maybe some groceries, and walk back home. They were part of the rural furniture. There is no place for those people to go.

Rural areas need retirement villages, either on their own or as part of more intensive aged care facilities. That should be part of the discussion. It is possible to have retirement villages, but should they be part of a dependent, independent or semi-dependent facility? I hope this will be part of our debate.

There will be those in the government who will use this debate to say, 'If the member for Nelson would support smaller blocks, all would be well'. That is part of the normal, nonsensical theatrics

which comes with this debate. The reality is that the government already has land set aside for this purpose, either residential or community purpose land. That is what we are talking about. Smaller blocks will not be retirement villages or aged care facilities. Retirement villages are places where there are facilities to support that community. People who go to retirement villages are not looking for a large parcel of land. It is not about small blocks but about the availability of government to provide or make available to government or privately-owned bodies, areas to develop these services.

There is land at Humpty Doo and the Freds Pass District Centre, and I would like to table a number of documents to show what I mean. Before I table them I will quickly hold them up. These are the zone maps for Freds Pass District Centre, which has a large amount of community purpose land. It also has some rural land adjacent, and it is possible that a retirement village could go there. Land is available at Freds Pass now for that kind of development. I know it is a long way off to see but I will also table this document, which is a photograph of the land available. That land is serviced by electricity, has a bitumen road, is right next to Sattler Christian School and it belongs to the government.

There is another portion of land, and I will table that document in a second, which is the Humpty Doo District Centre. There is the map of the Humpty Doo District Centre. The pink area is residential land and hardly any of it has been developed. In fact, none of that pink area has been developed. It is all residential land. There are sewage ponds, water and electricity, yet we are not developing it. Here is a picture of the land with a bitumen road, facilities and infrastructure all ready now. Why not call for expressions of interest from people who might want to build a retirement village?

I seek leave to table those documents, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr WOOD: Berry Springs is another district centre. The government owns land at Berry Springs. Government planned three major district centres in the rural area and set aside land that could be used for this purpose. I am saying here is a good chance to do it.

Of course, the motion before parliament today is to ask government to conduct a survey to check out the facilities. If I am giving something to parliament which may be inaccurate it will come up in the survey to say, 'You said this, but that is not quite the case'.

There are retirement villages reasonably close. When I asked the department where people should go if they want to retire, they would often say Bellamack. Bellamack might be nice. I have not been to the Bellamack retirement centre, but it is pretty modern. I am not saying people cannot go there, but if they do they will lose their community. They go to a foreign place. We need a place where people can stay with their friends, enjoy the rural area and live their life there.

I ask the government, why has no government acted? Again, minister, I am not just picking on this government. I struggled with the previous government as well. They looked at it and nothing happened. What I am trying to get from this survey is why nothing has happened. There may be opportunities around the new hospital; the Palmerston and rural hospital could have aged care facilities nearby and perhaps that could lead to a retirement village next to it. Again, that is a possibility. It is rural but it is further away from the main centres of Humpty Doo and Freds Pass.

As I said, the population of older people in the rural area is increasing and, if the rural area was a town of 23 000 people, it would have had the facilities years ago. But governments have ignored the rural population in Litchfield.

Seniors' facilities need to be designed not as an appendage to a subdivision proposal, but as a proper stand-alone facility close to services. If it is stand-alone, it needs to have services built within it or public transport systems that can put people easily in touch with those services. The government has land available for retirement facilities in the rural area. An independent assessment of the needs of people in the rural area, and possible areas of development, will be something this motion asks for.

Besides people having to move to Palmerston or Darwin for retirement, there is a fair chance that if nothing is done, people will leave the Territory. That will not be good. That is where the Charles Darwin University study comes in. It talks about all the possibilities of retirement in the Northern Territory. It is not an in-depth paper, but it speaks about different case studies. People leave the Territory for a while and then come back because they miss it. For instance, there is a quote here:

Edward retired from his government job in 1994 and he and his wife have a property in the rural area outside Darwin. They are supported by Edward's superannuation and his wife's government benefit. Edward is currently subdividing his property in order to buy into a retirement village.

Edward says:

'Oh, yeah, there's long waiting lists (for the retirement villages). We are on a waiting list because we don't have to take it when it comes. We have our name down because otherwise you never know, I could have a stroke or my wife could have a stroke. We just couldn't stay here (in the rural area).

There are quite a few people who cannot stay in the rural area simply because there are no facilities for them.

We must remember seniors are a valuable part of our community. We should make sure they are looked after in their old age. There were some statements made recently which caused a great deal of conversation amongst older people in my area. People are not particularly happy about them. We need to value older people in the area. You will find them in schools, the local library, the garden club, the Fibrecraft Guild, the CWA, the embroidery guild, the mahjong club, etcetera. We have seniors on the volunteer fire brigade, and at the bowling and other sporting clubs. Many of them still run their businesses in the rural area, some are even developers.

They love the rural area and they would like to stay there in their retirement. The government will have to put in some infrastructure, and land is available. It would be good to hear from other members, especially living in remote communities, what they think about facilities for older people in remote communities. Nguui has a very nice aged care facility. It is a very modern facility, which is good.

There are other places; Angurugu and Maningrida have one. It would be good to hear from local members about what they see as the needs in this area. I am focusing on the rural area because, in this case, we do not have anything. With an election coming up, it is a good time to say to the government, 'Oi, if you want to start splashing out money' – and I can guarantee they will splash out money – 'a bit in the rural area to help rural people would be appreciated'. This could be in the form of a retirement village and/or aged care facilities, but I think it is needed.

I bring you back to my original motion. You have my view; to make sure that is not bias simply because I live out in the rural area, we need an independent investigation into all these matters. That way we can make sure if you spend the dollars, you spend them wisely and in the right place. You will have people who will use these facilities.

I have given a biased plug for the need for these facilities, but at the same time I am telling government to hold an independent inquiry. Look at what is needed in the rural area. If you want to

broaden it in other places, I would be happy for that to happen, but do not take too much of the emphasis away from the rural area because it needs facilities.

I want rural people to stay there. I do not want them to go south or into town; not because I do not like town, but I want to ensure we keep our rural community because those older rural people are the fabric of what keeps our community together. Grandmas and grandpas are very important, especially when you have populations that are moving backwards and forwards all the time. I hope we can make a place for them in their later years so they can stay in that area.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to the motion.

I move that we delete the words 'the broader Darwin rural area' and substitute the words 'the Northern Territory'.

I will speak to the amendment and the original motion put forward by the member for Nelson. I appreciate the member for Nelson bringing this motion to the House today so we can have a discussion in parliament about the future housing needs of our senior Territorians.

I have the pleasure of being the shadow minister for Senior Territorians and Public and Affordable Housing. It is a role that allows me to talk in a range of settings at different times to senior Territorians about the issues that impact on them. Without a doubt, housing is the number one issue raised.

In my own electorate I have a retirement village. Tiwi Village provides a wonderful social setting and a great place for senior Territorians to live. There is also an aged care facility in Tiwi. I am very familiar with those facilities and the enormous service they provide to the community.

The issue of housing is raised repeatedly. A few weekends ago I was at Cazalys in Palmerston at the National Seniors Forum attended by local members from Palmerston. A range of issues was discussed, but one raised repeatedly by the National Seniors and their policy advisory group was housing, age-friendly cities and how we are planning for our ageing population.

We have asked for this motion amendment to encompass the whole Northern Territory, but I recognise and acknowledge the rural area should be an important consideration in any review of the future needs for senior Territorians. It remains a concern for all Territorians, but we should remain focused on the different needs in both our rural and remote areas.

Nationally, we have an ageing population. The member for Nelson has spoken at length about the changing cohort we have in the Territory. We have an ageing population. In the Territory we have the youngest population of any state or territory in the country. However, we are facing an ageing population and the dynamics and demographics of our community are going to change over the coming years.

It is vital that in any government's plans – whether they be about employment, the economy, or as we are here debating today, housing needs – senior Territorians are an important part of those conversations and are focused on.

The World Health Organisation in 2007 set out areas that attribute to age-friendly communities, and housing is unsurprisingly one of those topical points. In any kind of age-friendly community, whether you are talking about a friendly community for children and young people or an age-friendly community for seniors, housing is a very important point.

The CLP government has told the House that there is a review under way of housing programs within the Northern Territory. I hope the accommodation and housing needs of our senior Territorians are included in that.

In government Labor delivered housing for senior Territorians, including in Bellamack and Larapinta and some of the senior villages that have been talked about in parliament today. However, we do recognise there is still an enormous amount of work ahead of any government to ensure the Territorians have a roof over their head and senior Territorians have appropriate accommodation, whether that is independent living, access to public housing for those who need it, social housing ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker! I understand an amendment has hit the table but I do not have it in front of me. Can you just confirm the thing has been circulated?

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you please table the amendment?

Mr ELFERINK: It has to be signed and circulated. It is very hard to speak to something we have not seen yet.

Ms MOSS: We recognise the vital role that housing and accommodation has in a range of other social areas, including health. We also recognise the hard work and contributions senior Territorians have not only made to the Northern Territory but continue to make. They are carers for grandchildren, family members, community

members, and they are still employees and employers. I am told by seniors in my community all the time that they want to keep working and ensure they have flexible arrangements to do so.

They are major volunteers in our community and fill many more roles. When we are looking at housing options, it is important we pay special attention to their accommodation needs. Of course, there is a range of factors that impact on suitability. These include proximity to local amenities such as health and community services, ease of access to public spaces and activities. There are other considerations the member for Nelson raised today around connection to the community where you have lived and worked or raised family for a long time. Those things should be considered as part of this review.

When we look at housing, we look at some of the research produced. In May research from the Northern Institute at Charles Darwin University in conjunction with the Council on the Ageing Northern Territory was released to the public. The report, called *Now You See Us*, surveyed senior Territorians about challenges and opportunities with a view to inform policy. I acknowledge the Member for Daly was also at that launch.

That report tells us 72% of respondents to their survey were concerned about expenses and 60% of those were most concerned about housing expenses. Some of them were concerned about becoming homeless, which was quite alarming to me. Senior Territorians have expressed concerns to me about their housing options in the future here. We all want senior Territorians to have the option to stay here and continue to contribute to our community and for us to be able to continue to learn from them.

The same research report predicts increases of this cohort in public housing, aged care and retirement facilities. It should be noted that based on the last publically available figures – which have not been updated since March this year on the website – the waiting time for a one-bedroom pensioner dwelling is 93 months in the Darwin/Casuarina area, which is up about 30% on 2012. That is how long pensioners are waiting for a one-bedroom pensioner dwelling. That is in an urban area.

Housing is a challenging area for any government. However, it is clear that in some areas we are going backwards. I hope seniors are clearly considered in this review and we move forward with the review put forward by the member for Nelson.

There are many areas within housing that require attention. Not the least of which is ensuring we meet the needs of our senior Territorians.

On that basis I support the motion put forward by the member for Nelson. I support the Minister for Senior Territorians, and one would assume the Minister for Housing and the minister for Planning will look into the projected needs of our senior Territorians in the Northern Territory. I support the report to parliament in the first quarter of 2016 on the future needs for senior Territorians when it comes to housing and accommodation. I suggest that in addition to government and private companies being consulted, the minister speaks to the Council on the Ageing and National Seniors Australia NT, whose policy branch has very clear views in this regard in Alice Springs. The Northern Institute would be a valuable stakeholder to consult with and has already undertaken a body of work and research about what is keeping seniors here and what is contributing to them leaving.

Another important thing I wanted to include in this debate – because ultimately we are talking about future housing for senior Territorians – is the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot that was released early this year. That snapshot takes a weekend – this was 11 and 12 April this year – and looks at all the private rental properties available on that weekend and assesses them for how accessible they are to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Over that particular weekend it ascertained that only four out of 1367 private rental properties listed were affordable and appropriate for those who receive an aged pension. That equated to 0.03% of listed private rentals on that particular weekend as being deemed affordable and appropriate for a couple on an aged care pension with no children at home. This, of course, does not take into account those on the age pension who care for their grandchildren. I am sure I am not the only person who speaks regularly to seniors on a pension who are primary carers for their grandchildren. They do it really tough. I am in complete awe of what they manage to do on a very small amount of money with very little assistance. They do an amazing job and it is an ongoing problem.

Hopefully with some focus, innovative solutions and ideas can come to the fore. Community housing models, amongst others, are growing in popularity, particularly in the social sector, which also has capacity to provide other wraparound services. A number of notable organisations across the country are looking at different ways to approach housing needs.

Importantly, the member for Nelson has also requested that as part of this review, the minister reports back on the financial sustainability of any proposals put forward to this parliament as part of a thorough and informed debate. It is hoped that

by doing this – and in the review we are told is under way by the Minister for Housing – we can have a solid plan for meeting the housing needs of senior Territorians.

I commend the amended motion to the House.

Mrs PRICE (Housing): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I support the motion regarding senior housing complexes in Darwin and the rural area. The Giles Country Liberal government is dedicated to providing housing options for all Territorians.

The Chief Minister and I recently noticed rents were coming down. We delivered 500 affordable houses across the Territory and wanted to ensure we did not distort the market. This provided an opportunity to launch an intensive review into housing options across the Northern Territory. The review will be looking at all aspects of housing in the Northern Territory to assist all people, including seniors. We will look at housing as operating on a continuum from homelessness to home ownership, encompassing homelessness, supported accommodation, social housing, affordable rentals, private rentals and home ownership.

Before I talk about the important work of our housing review, I will talk about what we do for our seniors and how we house our seniors and aged pensioners. We provide a range of housing options for Territorians no matter what their age; however, when they reach 65 ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker! I am a little confused by the circulated motion. You have moved an amendment and it talks about home ownership. I am a little confused because that does not match the words articulated by the member for Casuarina. Of course, this has nothing to do with elders in the Northern Territory so I am not quite sure what is going on. This would be, of course, a substantial departure from what the member for Nelson was intending to talk about in this House. I wonder if the member for Casuarina can sort out what has happened. I do not get it.

Ms Moss: I am doing that right now. We have switched the GBD motions around.

Mr ELFERINK: You have switched GBD motions? If you switch GBD motions, you should get the leave of the House to change the Notice Paper. I am a little confused.

Ms Moss: It is a mistake that is being fixed. It was supposed to be on the second motion coming up, which is what you have. I am fixing it now.

Mr ELFERINK: If I understand this correctly, you are saying this is an amendment you intend to make to the next motion. In that case, could we ensure, and I think you have already indicated, that the amendment you wanted to move is coming around?

Ms Moss: It is coming.

Mr Acting DEPUTY SPEAKER: I believe it is being handed to the Table Office.

Mr ELFERINK: That now is as clear as mud. I think we can press on. I apologise to the minister.

Ms Moss: I apologise, it is my fault.

Mrs PRICE: We provide a range of housing options for Territorians, no matter what their age. However, when they reach the age of 55 they are eligible to be housed in senior accommodation, which is designed to cater for seniors, providing a quieter environment for our more mature tenants. We are proud of our senior dwellings and they have modifications to allow people to live in their own home either independently or with a carer. The most common modification required for seniors is grab rails. Other modifications include flick mixer taps, large light fixtures, ramps and lowered bench tops in kitchens. More extensive modifications require an occupational therapist's recommendation prior to installation, to ensure medical requirements are met for some seniors.

It should be noted that senior and aged pensioner housing is designed for those who are able to live independently or with a carer. There are no additional services provided by the department, with the exception of referrals to other service providers. We have over 50 designated senior and aged pensioner dwellings in the greater Darwin region. Alice Springs has a total of five senior and aged pensioner-designated dwellings. Katherine has nine senior and aged pensioner homes. This is an example of responsive government, which is typical of the Giles Country Liberal government.

When we build new dwellings designated for senior, aged and disabled tenants, we ensure they are built to adaptable housing and universal design principles. These are the principles we are using in building new seniors' accommodation in Katherine. This is the first new public housing that has been built in Katherine in over two decades. The housing will provide modern, contemporary homes for seniors and people with physical or mobility issues. It is the Country Liberal government that is doing this.

Labor abandoned our seniors and housing, selling over 1100 houses in its 11 long years of government. It is clear Labor had no investment

in housing in Katherine. We are building two new senior complexes there. Both of these will be built according to adaptable housing and universal design principles. I was told seniors in Katherine had been worried about living in public housing in flood prone areas. The new homes will be in secure zones. This will help our older residents, but it will also reduce the wait list, freeing up existing public housing for new tenants.

At 90 Acacia Drive we are building six homes suitable for seniors who can live independently. At Martin Terrace we are building six two-bedroom homes for seniors with carers or people with mobility issues. As the member for Katherine said, this is a fantastic development for Katherine, providing much needed public housing for senior Territorians.

The Country Liberal government looks after many senior Territorians in our senior accommodation. The Department of Housing has recently developed a scope of works to install ceiling insulation throughout Len Tuit seniors' complex located at 40 Head Street in Alice Springs. This came after the Chief Minister identified a need for insulation in seniors' complexes in Alice Springs, yet another example of the Chief Minister's leadership and how he listens to the community. On 4 September 2015 the tenants were advised of the scheduled insulation works. Departmental staff also met with the tenants and explained how the work would be conducted. I am pleased to advise the House that works commenced last Friday and are ongoing.

We have many aged or senior tenants in public housing. In the greater Darwin region we currently have over 2500 senior or aged pensioner tenants. In Alice Springs, we have over 950 senior or aged pensioner tenants. In Katherine, we house over 500 senior or aged pensioner tenants, and we house over 80 aged pensioner or senior tenants located in the Barkly.

We are helping over 4000 senior Territorians with housing across the Territory. I am aware that seniors provide a significant proportion of tenants in urban areas. In fact, as of 31 August 2015, almost half of our tenants in greater Darwin, Central Australia and the Big Rivers Region were seniors. Furthermore, over half the tenants in Arnhem region urban areas are seniors. I recognise our seniors are a key constituent in public housing in the Northern Territory, and it is important we get it right when it comes to looking out for them.

Tenants in public housing pay rent just like tenants in private housing. Tenants whose income meets the eligibility criteria for public housing pay 23% of their assessable income in rent. Tenants who do not meet the eligibility

criteria for public housing pay 30% of their assessable income in rent. Aged tenants who are tenants of aged pension age or are in receipt of an aged pension pay a discounted rate of rent. They pay only 18% of their assessable income in rent. We recognise those on Age Pensions struggle and we want to help them to make that pension go further.

The member for Nelson raised concerns about meeting the future demand of seniors in the rural area. On 17 June 2015, the Chief Minister announced a review of housing supply and assistance program initiatives to ensure they are meeting the needs of Territorians, including our senior Territorians. This review came about because when we came into government Labor had sold 1100 houses. They did not release land.

The review of housing programs will encompass what level and type of residential dwelling demand exists in the market; the impact of the government's affordable housing initiatives in assisting Territorians on limited incomes into home ownership; the flow of new residential land on to the market as a result of the government's land release program; what concessions for first homebuyers might be most appropriate in the market; social housing demands, including public assisted and homelessness services; and how we can better work in partnership with community housing providers.

I am pleased to announce that my department has engaged consultants KPMG to undertake the review of housing program initiatives. The review is now well under way, with consultation meetings scheduled with a range of key stakeholders in late September. The review will be finalised in early 2016 with the delivery of a five-year housing strategy and annual implementation plans. The review requires extensive consultation of stakeholders across the housing continuum, comprising homelessness services, supported accommodation, social housing, affordable rentals, private rentals and home ownership.

I will be at five consultations later this month in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Katherine. This will provide an opportunity for me and the consultants to hear the views of those who understand the issues facing the Northern Territory.

As part of the review, the consultants will be visiting five remote communities to gain an understanding of the issues facing housing in remote Northern Territory communities. The review will give primary direction to the most effective investment by government, supporting those most in need of our housing programs.

The first report will be provided to me in late October following an extensive consultation process. This will form the basis of a discussion paper that will be released for further consultations. The review will have a particular focus on homelessness and the most vulnerable Territorians.

One of the aspects of the review is to look at how we can work better in partnerships with community housing providers. Our government is committed to developing and working with the vibrant not-for-profit sector that exists in the Northern Territory. The Giles government is working closely with the community housing providers and the vibrant not-for-profit sector in relation to seniors housing.

Recently, I announced we had awarded the management of the Walker flats to the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company as part of the transformation of the Walker flats into a managed senior complex. The Central Australian Affordable Housing Company has been awarded the management rights of the Walker flats on Dixon Road. The Walker flats consist of 17 seniors housing units and we are moving quickly ahead with an Alice Springs housing provider to manage the complex.

Management includes rent and revenue collection, repairs, maintenance and tenancy management. One of the advantages of using a community housing provider such as the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company is that they may be able to access additional rent revenue through Commonwealth rent assistance. Furthermore, they may be able to take advantage of being not-for-profit and connect tenants to additional services. The Country Liberals government funded the ongoing transformation of the Walker flats. We had improvement works taking place, including improved fencing, signage, security lighting and footpath upgrades.

Walker flats was once a hot spot for antisocial behaviour but since the upgrades we have seen a dramatic improvement. We are ensuring the complex meets the needs for all seniors, including those with disabilities. One of the reasons we started to partner with the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company is because of an experience I had.

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker! Again I apologise to the minister. I still have not seen this amendment.

A member interjecting.

Mr ELFERINK: Here we are

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Port Darwin. Member for Stuart, you have the call.

Mrs PRICE: Earlier this year the Central Australian Affordable Housing Company took up management of 10 units at 10 Elliott Street as a community housing project targeting Indigenous seniors.

The managed complexes provide an alternative to public housing for our seniors. It is a popular option for many. At the Village@Parap development by Venture Housing, there are 10 units used as seniors accommodation. In January 2013 the department worked with Venture Housing to allocate 10 units managed at the old Wirrana site now known as Village@Parap. The department reviewed senior applicants on a priority wait list that had suitable tenancy references and, in consultation with the applicants, Venture Housing arranged for applications to be completed for the new units.

Applicants had an opportunity to view the new complex and a similar style unit before relocating. The department also reviewed current tenants who were over their eligible entitlements, for example, two people living in a three-bedroom house and offered them an opportunity to relocate to the Village@Parap complex. This enabled the waitlist to be reduced and houses to be targeted for the most appropriate tenants.

The Department of Housing successfully housed tenants and applicants in five one-bedroom units and five two-bedroom units in the Village@Parap. This enabled people to access this development and provided seniors with an alternative to public housing whilst maintaining affordable rent. The Country Liberals government believes in cutting-edge ideas to improve social housing for seniors and in creating a fairer sustainable service system whilst also improving the social housing asset base. It is clear we have used cutting-edge ideas in relation to partnering with the community housing sector to develop housing in Alice Springs.

Our party, the Country Liberals, is growing partnerships with the community housing sector. We are furthering development of cutting-edge ideas and creating a fairer and stronger housing system with the housing review currently under way. I look forward to hearing all the feedback and ideas the not-for-profit sector and the public will have about our housing system. The review is also looking at the wraparound services we are providing in public housing and the systems we are putting in place.

Let me turn to housing in the remote context in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory

Indigenous population is also ageing. There has been a considerable investment in aged care centres in urban areas as the support available through national programs has changed over recent times.

Among Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory 66% live in remote areas, and these people should not have their aged care needs ignored. Treasury estimates that over the next 25 years the number of Aboriginal people over the age of 65 will quadruple. To date the funding available to urban centres has not been available to our remote residents, and it has been left to local government's informal support of health services to maintain any service at all.

Under the Aged Care Charter 1997 all people from non-English speaking backgrounds are identified as a special needs group. Whilst some communities across the Northern Territory have had different combinations of aged care support, often run by regional councils supported by local health services with contributions from other community organisations, such as women's centres and school councils through their nutrition programs, there is no comprehensive or strategic approach to this growing cohort of ageing Territorians. This is a fragile model of service delivery and does not meet community needs or expectations.

We want to explore more sustainable models of aged care and supported accommodation for the remote Northern Territory. By supported accommodation I mean the provision of personal care support and supervision to enable people to carry out essential activities of daily living. We need an assessment of the current models of aged care delivery in remote areas and how government can be best placed to support the needs of communities. Given the relatively small and dispersed population in remote areas in that aged cohort, an assessment of demographics would be required to help inform ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I seek an extension of time for the member for Stuart.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs PRICE: ... a model for the remote context and the best location of support services. As I have noted, consideration should also be given to the number of Aboriginal people who have chronic disease conditions, usually associated with old age, which are now featuring in their 30s and 40s. These considerations lend themselves to a transitional residential care process that allows for family support for people who are relatively independent but also provides safe care for those

people who may be at risk but not deemed to be requiring permanent residential support. It also provides for respite care for families and carers, which is important.

This transitional model would better enable people in this age group to maintain their cultural obligations and associated cultural, spiritual and mental health within their environment. These people are significant keepers of the culture and contribute to a whole-of-community and ongoing maintenance of culture within communities. A supported accommodation model allows point of care at community level and an opportunity for these people to remain part of their family unit.

Experience in the health arena shows that people are reluctant to leave their country and do not want to die away from their traditional lands and, if removed, often deteriorate quickly, physically and mentally. While a permanent residential care model that operates in urban areas has a strong commercial focus, this is not seen as an appropriate or viable model in remote communities as people have much lower incomes and no accumulated wealth compared to the non-Indigenous perspective. A supported accommodation model could allow for a comprehensive place-based approach for aged care, with pathways into a more supported environment as health deteriorates.

I could go on forever, but it is clear that we are taking the safety of our seniors and aged tenants in public housing seriously. Aboriginal Hostels Limited at Apmere Mwerre has been funded until 30 June 2016. This arrangement has been made by the Northern Territory government to ensure affordable, safe and secure accommodation is available to remote community visitors to Alice Springs. The continued operation of Apmere Mwerre will help reduce short-term homelessness for visitors and limit the impact of overcrowding in town camps and social housing. Further, Apmere Mwerre provides seniors a safe place to stay when they are in Alice Springs.

Alcohol is not allowed; it has security and does not allow intoxicated people. This can be a safe alternative for the elderly in the Todd or town camps where people are drinking. They have the option to camp or stay in the cabin at lower rates, starting from \$7 a night. The consideration of long-term options for Apmere Mwerre is a priority for my department.

The Country Liberal government is working hard to ensure seniors are given appropriate housing options. We have commenced our review that will look at the housing options we are providing Territorians across the housing continuum, from homelessness to home ownership. I look forward

to continuing consultation as we develop a new housing strategy for the Northern Territory.

Mr STYLES (Business): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I also want to reiterate, as others have on both sides of the Chamber, my support for senior Territorians.

One of the things I have noticed from living in the Territory for many years, and you learn this through the passage of time, is how seniors are a very important part of our community, as articulated by other members in this House during this debate. They built the Territory. I was fortunate enough to speak at the war widows' lunch upstairs earlier today, hosted by Madam Speaker. I spent some time with wonderful older ladies, some of whom have been here since the end of the war. They are in their nineties, and are fantastic people.

I agree with everyone else; we should look after them and make sure people are not only suitably housed, but provided with facilities and services that can assist them in their golden years to have what they might call an enjoyable retirement. There were a number of ladies there who fortunately have seniors accommodation. Most in that room were okay, but there were others who were not.

The Giles government is working on resolving some of those issues. There are many aged persons living in public housing within the Northern Territory. In the greater Darwin region we currently have over 2500 aged pensioner tenants, in Alice Springs there are 950, in the Katherine region over 500, and in the Barkly, about 80.

Senior pensioners are very important when we consider the needs they have for public housing. The review of public housing was outlined by minister Price. I strongly support the Chief Minister's announcement on 17 June about a review of housing supply and assistance program initiatives to ensure housing meets the needs of senior Territorians. As the minister for Seniors, it is very important to me, along with many policy issues that relate to senior Territorians.

This review of the housing program being undertaken by the government will encompass things like what levels and types of residential dwelling demand exists, and the impact of government's affordable housing initiatives assisting Territorians on limited incomes into home ownership. A better place to be is getting young people into housing. When they become seniors, or even middle-aged, and decide they want to retire they will either own their own home or be on the way. They will have owned their home for some years, where house repayments

are not exorbitant. For those who choose not to own a home in their golden years and find it difficult to rent, perhaps as a compassionate community we can support them. Some people are in a situation where they have decided to rent all their lives, or have not been able to afford to buy their home. This is why, when you look at the cost-of-living pressures in the Northern Territory, those costs have been reduced.

We heard today from a number of speakers in relation to cost-of-living reductions. Pressures have come off. We are hoping some people in private enterprise will be enterprising enough to look at issues in relation to seniors housing, or just housing for low-income people. Venture Housing has completed a block of units in Palmerston for low-income people. The government is pursuing a range of activities in relation to making seniors and low-income earners' accommodation more affordable.

That was not helped by the previous government selling so many homes and not turning that money into replacement housing. I cannot remember the year, but I know it was in relation to the waterfront development. The former Labor government was \$46m short. This is an interesting scenario because I believe it is linked. I believe over that weekend when they needed to find \$46m, there were a number of houses put on the market which totalled about \$47.2m. I am not exactly sure of those figures. Housing was sold to raise cash to do other things apart from providing housing.

I am not opposed to selling some of the old public housing stock to tenants to help them get ahead, or selling older places to pensioners who may want to move out of a bigger home and buy a smaller one. If you sell something, you should use the cash to get back into the housing markets, or at least make arrangements to help private enterprise build these units and take out head leases. I know the Housing minister and the Housing department, which is not one of my portfolio areas, have a large number of options available to them to create housing opportunities for seniors and other low-income earners in our community.

This government has funded the feasibility study on the care facilities at the Nightcliff Greek school. They have been to see me, the Housing minister and the Lands and Planning minister, about building residential units for older people. It will be sponsored by the Greek community but not exclusively for Greeks. It will be for a range of people who can apply to go into this supported accommodation.

Of course, aged care facilities are the responsibility of the federal government. In meetings the Chief Minister has attended with first

ministers, this issue has been raised in relation to aged care. It is ongoing. But I wonder how the federal government felt when it took over government and had that \$667bn debt around its neck. It inherited a massive national debt. It is not a very pleasant place to be, and having room to move is difficult when you have that type of debt level.

It is not an enviable position for anyone to be in, to take over from a government that spent six years racking up a massive debt of \$667bn and a huge deficit, when you have to struggle to try to get things back in order. I know how the federal government feels. When we came into government in 2012, we were looking at a projected debt of \$5.6bn, a deficit of \$1.2bn and no plan to reduce it.

How do you find money to do a range of things? I wish we had a large chequebook and could have done anything we wished. I believe it is called a magic wand. I have been trying to find one for many years. The reality is that there is no magic wand. There is just hard work and a battle with federal government about the resources they have available for seniors housing and aged care homes. I do not disagree with what the member for Nelson said. These are people who built the Northern Territory and we need to look after them.

My mother taught me that you should look after the older people because they once looked after you. We owe it to our senior Territorians to do whatever we can to accommodate them in a manner that is respectful and at a price that is affordable. We are working on introducing a range of measures that will bring the cost of building down. Looking at some of the initiatives this government has taken to reduce the cost of living, one of them is housing.

The cost and the pressure have come off the building industry. We have seen a reduction in the cost of building homes across the board, including the cost of building seniors accommodation, residential homes and commercial properties. When that happens, the cost to government of providing senior accommodation is also reduced.

I missed some of what the Housing minister had to say in relation to the program. One thing may have been the flow of new residential land on to the market as a result of this government's land release program. What we see is the pressure coming off the prices of blocks. Three different sizes of blocks have been introduced. When we came into government only one block size could be bought in Palmerston. Now it is possible to buy three different sizes of blocks. It can be for first home owners. It might be for seniors who want to sell their family home and build a smaller

home on a smaller block, or buy a unit. I have seen an incredible number of seniors in the northern suburbs, people I have known for many years, selling their family homes and moving into units close to the city and facilities where they can walk and enjoy parks. Those who had good homes and equity moved to the Esplanade. They love walking along the Esplanade every morning. They can walk anywhere in the city, if and when they get out. There are other people who have bought blocks of land and built houses in Palmerston with smaller blocks and homes, and less maintenance.

I have had representations from people who wish to build residential facilities in the rural area. I have discussed with the member for Nelson some of those proposals for the rural area. I understand from the member for Nelson there are some issues in relation to the size of those developments. I wonder if we could look at some proposals and come up with some ideas about how we can create quality environments in new developments that are affordable for seniors.

If we keep the pressure on land release and keep the price of development down, we can create an environment where competition is greater, prices are cheaper and we see smaller developments. I am happy to discuss this in relation to bringing the size of these things down, but giving rural people the opportunity to still live rurally. They can still go to the Noonamah, Humpty Doo or Howard Springs stores, and still have their friends there, without having to mow their 20 acre block every weekend in the Wet Season. People who love tractors have a great time in the Wet Season keeping their blocks mowed.

Member for Nelson, we discussed that some people have been out there for 40 or 45 years, when Howard Springs was just opening. I think you said about 40 or 50 years ago.

Mr Wood: Since 1960.

Mr STYLES: That is 55 years ago. If you went out there as a young person at 25, you are probably not wanting to sit on a ride-on mower all afternoon now.

Mr Wood: An air conditioned one.

Mr STYLES: I have not seen one of those yet, but I look forward to seeing an air conditioned ride-on mower. I wonder how many people will have one to do the quarter-acre blocks in the northern suburbs.

The initiatives some people are taking in the private sector are of great assistance to governments, especially governments that have inherited a huge debt. I encourage anyone in this

Chamber to talk to these people and look at what we can do to build retirement villages. I have seen some projects, and I am sure the Lands minister has seen some as well, where they are on a smaller block of land and you almost rent the land. It is a bit like a caravan park but bigger, and they have houses that you can put on the back of a truck and slide on or off. I do not know if that is what you mean when you talk about providing suitable accommodation in the rural area.

I have spoken to a number of people who live rurally; I probably have not spoken to as many people as the member for Nelson has, but I asked them what they want to do when they retire. There is a number of proposals down that way in relation to building smaller houses in clusters, not quite what you see in cabins in caravan parks, but about three or four times the size of cabins that are suitable for a single person, or a couple who have retired and still want to live rurally.

We can look at how we get the private sector involved. Some of them have philanthropic intentions to help people get into that type of accommodation. How do we get people like the person who cannot ride or chooses not to ride the lawnmower but still wants to go to the Berry Springs Tavern or get their mail at Berry Springs and pick up their iced coffee every morning from the Berry Springs service station to move? An old friend of mine wants to do that; he still drinks Pauls Iced Coffee every morning for breakfast. He still wants to do that but is telling me, 'I am getting on a bit and don't particularly want to move into town. I don't like those townies and would like to live here.'

I am all for looking at places where we can get these things built. I am assuming, member for Nelson, you would be happy to talk about those particular developments. There is one at the back of Elizabeth Valley Road at the back of Noonamah Tavern, the Noonamah service station and the rodeo court.

Mr Wood: Caravan park.

Mr STYLES: I will pick up on the interjection. Is that the one where 950 were going, or some huge figure?

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, it is not Question Time so continue.

Mr STYLES: I was looking for an interjection to pick up on.

Madam SPEAKER: You did not get it.

Mr STYLES: I have seen plans for that area and I know a number of people – some of them in this Chamber – would object to such a large

development. I wonder if consideration can be given to a smaller version over a longer period of time where that can be developed. As seniors look for accommodation of that type or they move into that area, we could look at stages. If it is 950, can we build it over the next 30 years? I do not know what level of interest there is from private developers. Governments can go there and do things.

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I have been alerted to the tragic possibility of not hearing more from the member for Sanderson. As a consequence, pursuant to Standing Order 77, I seek an extension for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Mr STYLES: I sincerely thank the member for Port Darwin for his opportunity to listen to my dulcet tones about seniors housing. My understanding, from research, is there are people who want to move off 20-acre blocks.

I have a relative who wants to cut their block in half; maybe that is an option. They want to sell the other half and put it into their superannuation. When my own in-laws got older, they moved into a smaller place. When my father got to the stage where, in our family home, he said, 'This is just too big, I am getting tired of looking after it and watering the garden', he moved into a smaller place. We sold his home and got a fairly reasonable price for it. That allowed him to not only purchase this smaller place, but to have some money left over which he could add to his superannuation. He lived a reasonable lifestyle whilst enjoying his smaller block and home. There was plenty of space with a spare room where I could stay when I visited him, as I did on a regular basis.

People with a home in the northern suburbs, who moved there 30 or 35 years ago when those suburbs were built, and who now want to move do not want to buy a unit in a complex, but a smaller home and then use the leftover to supplement their superannuation or savings.

That is a very good idea, but how do we make sure they can afford to do it? We need to keep things like the concession for first home owners so we have the turnover. I am led to believe that has been successful in relation to creating new homes. It has taken the heat out of the housing market. We acknowledge there are social housing demands, including the public demands, and the demand for assisted and homeless services.

How can we better work in partnership with community housing providers? Companies like

Venture Housing, which, through their philanthropic activities, are very happy to build units to be used by pensioners, seniors and those who need to move out of larger homes due to mobility issues. I like the Venture complex. It is right next to the shops so people can walk from their unit, get their gopher or, if they are in a wheelchair, wheel across to the shops and have a bit of independence.

We do a lot of that. We work with industry to maximise opportunities for our seniors to get alternative housing or units. At the end of the day, we need to look at aged care.

Places like Pearl and Tiwi can be expensive, and if people do not have sufficient capital to get into them, it can prove difficult. I agree there is a need to look at seniors housing in the rural area. We also need to not restrict this type of housing to the rural area. In relation to the amendments which have been put, I think we should cover the entire Territory.

It is sad when you have an anchor around your neck of massive debt. You have to get that in order. I, like many other people – I am sure members opposite, the Independents and everyone on this side – would love to get a chequebook out and continually build all sorts of housing for a range of people, not just pensioners and seniors but others such as homeless people. It is about building hostels so you can accommodate people who need medical assistance. Those things need to be built around hospitals. We have done research and we are putting pressure on the federal government to ensure they also look at this.

When I first came into the ministry of Seniors, I wrote to the federal ministers at the time seeking more injection of capital into places here. We were successful in getting some extra places. I do not believe we have enough. I agree with you that we should look at this and ensure pressure is put on the federal government to lift its game and contribute more places in the Northern Territory. More assistance means that governments, state, federal and territory, can do deals with people to build these units and continue the supply. That is necessary as we are encouraging seniors to stay in the Territory.

We had to cut airfares but, generally, we left the seniors alone when we had to conduct a belt-tightening exercise. People put up all sorts of ideas about cutting seniors' support. When you talk to seniors who have moved interstate – and I know a couple who are a fair bit older than me who have been friends over the years. One of those good friends is now living in Adelaide. The advice I gave him was, 'When you move, do not

sell your house, rent it out. Go to Adelaide and rent.'

He admits to me, 'Sadly, Pete, I did not take your advice. I sold the house, moved to Adelaide and now I live this miserable existence.' He has been general manager of a number of businesses. He has looked at the benefits you get in the Territory from the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme, and what he gets in South Australia. He said, 'Well, I was far better off in Darwin'.

There is a classic example. I often hear about people selling up, going south and realising the grass is not necessarily greener on the other side. A very dear friend of ours, who was a pensioner here for quite some years – I think she is about 93 years old now – left Darwin and went down to Perth to greener pastures. The greener pastures were the fact that her children were there saying, 'Mum, you need to come home'. Well, one has moved interstate, one now lives in Singapore and the other one lives in the bush. No one goes to visit her. She also complains bitterly that it is too cold. She had a great deal up here as a senior in seniors accommodation assisted by the government. We have a good track record here.

I am not opposing the motion to look at what is going on. It is probably not a bad idea that we look at things. There are already reviews afoot by this government. We identified the problem quite some time ago and there are reviews on foot. We heard today during Question Time from the member for Stuart that there are reviews being undertaken, with costing and negotiations about a range of things in relation to increasing available housing.

To do that, of course you have to have the land releases, the social policies and a range of things in place before you can make that happen. That is what the Giles government has been doing. We have been working hard with private enterprise, philanthropic groups, church organisations, the Greek community, the Masonic Lodge and CatholicCare, to come up with solutions focused on seniors and pensioner accommodation, and aged care facilities.

I would like to have a magic wand, and a magic answer. I can assure the member for Nelson we will continue to work hard in that area. As the minister for Seniors, I will continue to advocate for seniors. I have been a strong advocate for them. If you get the chance to talk to my colleagues out of the Chamber, they will tell you I am on that case on a regular basis. I made a commitment to our seniors in the Northern Territory that I would continue to advocate through my Minister's Advisory Council for Senior Territorians, National Seniors, COTA and any other seniors organisation

to look after their accommodation, housing and aged care needs. Thank you.

Mr TOLLNER (Lands and Planning): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, what an interesting motion this is. To think it is from the member for Nelson of all people.

Firstly, I was intrigued to listen to the Minister for Senior Territorians and his key take-home message, which was that elderly people are generally looking for smaller places. I have to say that equates with my thinking.

I know very few seniors who are looking to upsize the size of their block, who want to move to five acres and mow that, and have horses, pigs, sheep, goats and all of the other accoutrements the member for Nelson tells us are the everyday things for people in the rural area. The Minister for Senior Territorians tells us that elderly people want to live on smaller blocks. This makes me wonder. I could almost understand any member of this place saying they want to see more residential retirement facilities in their electorate, but not the members for Nelson and Goyder. They are anti-development and anti-small blocks.

I remember two weeks ago we were here and saw the barking mad motion put forward by the member for Nelson to take Litchfield out of the greater Darwin plan because he was scared there would be development. They do not want planning in the rural area, from what I am led to believe. They want to tear up the Planning Commission. They do not want spot rezonings, either.

I note the member for Nelson is now opposing East Weddell and trying to stop that development. So where would you put a retirement village in the rural area when the minimum size block you can have, according to a couple of members in this place, is five acres? In fact, I know several people living in the rural area who have come to see me about subdividing their blocks because they want to remain there and retire. Unfortunately, I have to say, 'No, you cannot do that, because the members for Nelson and Goyder do not want you living in the rural area on a small block. They want you to pack up and leave.' Do not say it is wrong ...

Mr Wood: Lie ...

Mr TOLLNER: You said it is a lie. I ask you to withdraw that ...

Mr Wood: I will withdraw the word lie, and I will ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, please be seated. Member for Fong Lim, if you can

address your comments to the Chair. The member for Nelson did not call you a liar; he is calling your statements a lie.

Mr TOLLNER: He said the statement was a lie and I found that offensive, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Well, if you find it offensive, quote your standing order. Member for Fong Lim, you have the call. If you could address your comments to the Chair.

Mr TOLLNER: I am sorry. It is only numbers that seem to equate in some people's minds ...

Madam SPEAKER: Excuse me, member for Fong Lim, please pause. If you are going to disrespect the Chair, I will put you on a warning. Standing orders are what all members of this parliament abide by; that includes you.

Mr TOLLNER: We are back to the member for Nelson, and I was directing my comments to the member for Nelson through the Chair.

Madam SPEAKER: No, member for Fong Lim, address your comments through the Chair. That is the protocol.

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, let me address my comments through you.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you

Mr TOLLNER: The member for Nelson, like the member for Goyder, is anti-development. They do not want small residential blocks in the rural area.

Mr Wood: Not true!

Mr TOLLNER: The member for Nelson interjects and says it is not true. I sat here less than two weeks ago listening to the member for Nelson asking for Litchfield to be taken out of the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan.

Mr Wood: You are making it up.

Mr TOLLNER: You talk about people making things up. Member for Nelson, you are – through the Chair, Madam Speaker – barking mad. First, he says he does not want the Planning Commission in the rural area talking to residents at shopping centres, then he does not want them doing pub and town hall meetings, or doorknocking rural residents. Next he does not want telephone polling, focus groups or any consultation to occur unless it happens on his terms. That is all the member for Nelson is interested in and now, somewhat capriciously, he suggests we need a retirement village in the rural area. I suggest to the member for Nelson that might require a rezoning somewhere.

Mr Wood: Yes.

Mr TOLLNER: Now he is in favour of rezoning. Let us just get something straight, what does the member for Nelson want? How do you appease this gentleman?

The first thing I see when I read this motion is that it is a planning matter – residential retirement facilities in the broader Darwin rural area. We have no zonings for residential retirement facilities in the broader Darwin rural area. It will require rezoning or something to do with the Planning Commission.

Mr Wood: Are you off your tree? You do not know what you are talking about. You know the zones for Humpty ...

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 62: offensive language. I would ask that you ask the member for Nelson to withdraw that statement.

Madam SPEAKER: Which one was that, member for Fong Lim?

Mr WOOD: I withdraw the horticultural reference I made, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Nelson.

Member for Fong Lim, you have the call.

Mr TOLLNER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is such a relief to know I am not being bagged and interjected constantly by the member for Nelson and there is some decorum in this House. Fantastic!

Mr Wood: Talk about the pot calling the kettle black.

Mr TOLLNER: Have you finished?

Some years ago when I was in the federal parliament I was involved with the aged care sector. My colleague at the time, Senator Nigel Scullion, and I did the largest market research amongst senior Territorians in the history of the Northern Territory. We contacted everybody on the electoral roll older than 55 and sent them a large and detailed questionnaire trying to understand attitudes and what people wanted in retirement. It was done hand in hand with COTA. Graeme Suckling was running COTA and the research results we got back were quite interesting reading.

It was very much in line with similar research that had occurred across Australia, and showed seniors were looking to be more independent.

They did not want to be dependent on others but wanted to maintain their own houses. They wanted smaller houses and places they could maintain, to be close to relatives and were demanding services like public transport, access to shops and other facilities where they could meet with other seniors. They are quite a demanding group these days, senior people. We often categorise senior people as being poor. That is far from the truth. Many people are independent, reasonably well-off and can afford to live in very nice places. They want to be independent and close to their relatives. They are demanding services. All these points have been argued against by the members for Nelson and Goyder. Both have said, constantly, they do not want activity centres in the rural area. They do not want more services, buses, shops and the like there. They are not into small blocks.

A very good friend of mine lives in the member for Nelson's electorate. He has lived there since 1967. He is on a five-acre block in Howard Springs and wants to remain there. He has made numerous representations to the member for Nelson and others, trying to cut his property in half because five acres is too big for him and his wife to maintain. His knees are gone, his wife has difficulty getting around, and their children have grown up and left. He is alone with his wife and wants to remain there. He has pleaded with me on a number of occasions, 'Can you not just ignore the member for Nelson and the member for Goyder?' I say, 'Well, they will bring the parliament down, if we ignore them'.

Ms Fyles: That is you inventing that, Dave.

Mr TOLLNER: It is not me inventing that. I am giving a real-life example of a senior Territorian living in the rural area who wants to remain there and not leave the home he has lived in since 1967. He wants to chop his block in half, but he is being fought actively.

Mr Wood: We know who you are talking about.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, you know who I am talking about. Call me a liar again.

Mr Wood: I did not call you a liar.

Mr TOLLNER: No, you said I tell lies. To me there is not much difference. In any case, the point I am making is there is a gentleman who wants to chop his block in half, but the member for Nelson has fought him tooth and nail opposing that.

Mr Wood: The Development Consent Authority knocked him back. Tell the truth.

Mr TOLLNER: Did the member for Nelson write him a letter of support? No. Did the member for Nelson try to support his efforts to cut his block in half in any way? No. It is easy for the member for Nelson to sit on the sidelines and throw rocks, but when it comes to standing up and taking responsibility for any decision, it is always someone else's decision. That is the way the member for Nelson likes to operate. It is all very easy.

Mr Wood: Stop misleading this House.

Mr TOLLNER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Can I refer you to Standing Order 62?

Madam SPEAKER: No, you do not have to. Member for Nelson, can you withdraw that please?

Mr WOOD: I withdraw that.

Mr TOLLNER: He has done a bit of withdrawing tonight. The member for Nelson likes to dish it out, but he does not like being reminded of some of the positions he has taken in the past. I read this motion, and I like it. It makes sense to me. It is difficult to understand that it has come from the member for Nelson because he is opposed to almost everything in the motion. He does not want people living on smaller blocks in the rural area. He does not want planning in the rural area, or the DCA doing spot rezoning. He seems to be opposed to the construction of Weddell.

Let me explain that statement. When the Country Liberal government went to the last election, we put out a plan called Planning for Greater Darwin. In that plan, we had Weddell, which was part of CLP policy for a long time and still is. We put the Planning for Greater Darwin document out. The member for Nelson, along with many others, did not like the idea that we would dam the Elizabeth River and create Lake Elizabeth. Lake Elizabeth was where Weddell was to be situated. It was to be a city surrounding a lake. That lake would have provided great recreational activities and allowed for a city to be constructed, but there was an enormous outcry. It came to a crescendo when the member for Blain's by-election was held. We listened to Territorians. We said, 'All right, we will not dam the Elizabeth River. We will not create Lake Elizabeth.' That effectively meant the location of Weddell had to be changed because you cannot have people living in a sandfly and mosquito zone, which is exactly what you have along the banks of the Elizabeth River. Where does Weddell go? It has to go a bit to the south and east, right up to Fraser Henry's development – I forget what it is called now – Noonamah Ridge development ...

Mr Wood: You really know your planning well. You really know it well, minister for Planning! Wrong place, wrong name!

Mr TOLLNER: In any case, Mr Henry came and saw me and said, 'Everybody wants Weddell. We are ready to start on it. Should I put in an application to start developing Weddell?' I said, 'Well, give it a go. We will test community sentiment to see how much they want Weddell.'

The first cabs off the rank to oppose it, of course, were the members for Nelson and Goyder because they do not want Weddell to go ahead there. It is very difficult to understand how a man who calls for the construction of the city of Weddell seems to oppose it every time it is put forward. First he opposed it being based around Lake Elizabeth, now he opposes it being put further into the rural area because it will destroy, as far as the member for Nelson is concerned, the amenity of the rural area.

Quixotically, capriciously – whatever you like to call it – he now comes into this place saying he wants residential retirement villages in the Darwin rural area investigated. Well, good on him. Would it not be good if he would stand up with a map and point to a picture and say, 'This is where I want it'? We will agree to it, member for Nelson! It is like the offer I made to both you and the member for Goyder to vet decisions made by both the Planning Commission and the Development Consent Authority. They are quite happy to sit on the sidelines, throw rocks and cause grief for government, but when it comes to putting pen to paper, putting your views down and taking a position on something, you run a mile. I notice you are holding up pretty pictures there. I will be happy to have a look at them and run them by the Planning Commission for you.

But, that is right, you want to scrap the Planning Commission. You do not like the Planning Commission consulting in your electorate. That is what it is about.

We have this bizarre motion in front of us from the member for Nelson saying he wants smaller blocks, fundamentally, in the rural area for retirement facilities. Everybody knows retirees want to be close to services, have public transport availability, be able to get to shops, and live independently. That should be commended, but it has been fought tooth and nail by the members for Goyder and Nelson.

What has driven this motion is beyond me. The member for Nelson has oddly proposed this motion. I will be happy to listen to the member for Nelson in response to this motion. I agree with the motion. I would like to see residential retirement villages in the broader Darwin rural

area. But, now would not be the time to be going to the rural area asking the question. Before the member for Nelson starts castigating me and throwing slurs, I will highlight for him that I have lived more of my life in the rural area of Darwin than I have lived in Darwin.

I have a good understanding of what people in the rural area think. I do not believe they are all head in the sand types, playing banjos and trying to disappear from the rest of the world. I think most of the people in the rural area want development. They want better access to services and better roads. They understand some development is required to get there.

I do not believe the vast majority of people in the rural area want to scrap the planning process or take Litchfield out of the future of the Northern Territory. They do not want to be left in a 1976 time warp which seems to be so appealing to the members for Nelson and Goyder. It is rather bizarre the positions they take.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I seek an extension of time for the member to complete his remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TOLLNER: I have had some dealings in retirement and residential retirement facilities in the Northern Territory. I spent 10 years as a board member of the Masonic Retirement Village in Parap. These days those sort of services have to be provided by professional organisations. The idea that a volunteer body can manage these things is very difficult. These days of public liability mean if things go wrong, it is beyond the grasp of many small volunteer groups. It has turned into a professional business.

To have that sort of operation in the rural area would be fantastic. I cannot wait to see the day when we have people who represent rural Territorians coming in to this place saying, 'Yes, we want sensible development. We want to be part of the planning process, to be contacted and talked to. We understand some places will have to be subdivided, and there will be villages in the rural area or activity centres. We want to be part of the future growth of the Northern Territory.'

The other day I was talking to the Greater Western Sydney Chamber of Commerce, which was brought here by the Parramatta rugby league club. I made the point at the start of my presentation that Parramatta is one of the oldest cities in Australia. It was proclaimed in 1788. Shortly after Sydney was proclaimed as a city, Parramatta was proclaimed one but, fundamentally, it was a farming community for the

city of Sydney. Parramatta had the richest soils, the best water, and opportunities for farming. I made the point to the business collective that I would not have minded being a fly on the wall watching the development of Parramatta. To watch 200 years of fighting against, 'Oh no, we are not part of Sydney, we are rural. No we do not want planners out here. No, we do not want development, not a bar of that!'

Look at Sydney now. A lot of people would not live there. I would not live there either, but it is one of the great cities of the world. It would not have been a city, though, if people like the member for Nelson had been in their parliaments because it would still be a little hayseed area with people playing banjos.

The member for Nelson has a thin skin when people criticise him or his policy positions. It does not worry the member for Nelson. He voted today to see a continued flow of ice into the Northern Territory. It is pretty sad, but he is not the only one. He has 12 other people who all voted to support the flow of ice into the Northern Territory. If you think that is good politics, or that upsetting the apple cart is a great thing to do, sooner or later you will have to answer to Territorians and be held to account for these decisions.

Ms Fyles: They can't wait for polling day.

Mr TOLLNER: No, they cannot wait for polling day. I know there are many Territorians who cannot wait for polling day. I am not suggesting you are under threat at all, member for Nightcliff, but there are members who are. I know there is a growing band of discontent in the rural area. Some people are frustrated to the gills that nothing is happening in the rural area and everything is being canned.

I was trying to find a way through by setting up the rural development review committee or the Litchfield development review committee that would allow things to occur, providing they were vetted by the members for Nelson and Goyder. We would not want to do anything to upset them, would we? No, for that pair it is far easier to sit on the sideline, throw rocks, be silly and belittle people but do nothing. That is the great strength of both those members. They do nothing and do not promote anything. It is quite sad.

Ms Fyles: They love their lifestyle and are protecting it.

Mr TOLLNER: I beg your pardon?

Madam SPEAKER: Continue, member for Fong Lim.

Mr TOLLNER: To protect something you generally have to maintain it, and maintaining it requires effort. Whilst we have the members for Goyder and Nelson in this House we will not be seeing too much effort in maintaining anything. Their position is not to waste effort; it is to throw rocks and ridicule. Every time the member for Goyder puts something on Facebook, it is ridicule. Nothing nice ever comes up on that Facebook page in relation to government, and similarly the member for Nelson. It is sad but true.

I would like to see a residential retirement facility in the broader Darwin rural area, but whilst we have the members for Goyder and Nelson I cannot see it happening under any government's watch.

Mr HIGGINS (Sport and Recreation): Madam Speaker, I tend to agree that we need to do something for the senior people in our rural area, and I was happy the motion was amended to cover the whole of the Northern Territory, because I see a very distinct difference between the greater rural, suburban and bush areas.

One thing I have seen in the rural and bush area is support for ageing Territorians is not just in buildings, land zonings or land use. It involves a lot of support around the services provided. I can highlight a couple of things. Some of the more remote areas have problems with food – Meals on Wheels and those kinds of services offered to people in the bush.

The ageing population of our Indigenous people wants to be involved in many cultural activities. This is not about buildings; this is about them accessing areas where they undertake cultural activities. Quite often these people are old and cannot drive cars. If you drive down to the Daly, nine out of 10 times when you drive along the Daly River Road you will come across one of the aged care vehicles, with many of the senior people there getting involved in some of the activities. They have done for years, collecting turtles and so forth. That is one of the key things we need to address.

The other thing is transport. For example, in my electorate in the township of Batchelor there is a clinic, so from that point of view it is well-serviced. One of the problems is there are many senior people living in the town. These people are on pensions and living in housing commission homes so they do not have access to much spare cash.

They will often get referrals to specialists in Darwin. They have to then get to Darwin but do not have access to public transport. There is a cost to the Territory in that some of these people think, 'I have not been able to get a lift into town today so I will not go'. They do not want to make

a phone call to Darwin to cancel their appointment because that costs money as well. But the cost to the Territory is that these doctors have no patients to see. We need to balance some of this. The money we are losing by not having these people go to doctors – if we redirected it into transport, we would probably end up with a healthier society.

Batchelor also highlights some problems with land title issues. There is a stack of land in the township of Batchelor which has been identified for X amount of years. It was there for a retirement home or an old people's home, but that has not been able to progress because of native title, which does not seem to be anywhere near being settled in the near future. In that township there are some unusual problems.

If the Territory government wants to do stuff on Indigenous land, we hit the same problems. I am not raising the issue of land title to say we have to change it; I am just saying these are problems we hear about.

Dundee is another remote area in my electorate. It has many retired people and others who go there on weekends. There is no health clinic there, but the local people banded together and set up their own first aid station. When there is an emergency, they have a stack of volunteers who help people and offer a fantastic service. I have been more than willing to support them in everything they have tried to do there. I was successful in getting some money for ongoing funding for the first aid station, and, from memory, it is somewhere between \$120 000 and \$140 000 a year.

Recently those people have come to speak to me. All this is done with volunteers. People who have done a great deal of volunteering would know they get very tired. The volunteers are retired, and they are pushing that they need other services. They need some full-time paid staff to run the first aid clinic.

These are all issues that revolve around senior Territorians in remote areas, and they have to be taken into account.

When I first came to the Territory 30 years ago, the population here was very young and the older people would tend to leave. Over the years, people have stayed longer and you end up with multiple generations. Three generations of my family are here currently and in the next 10 years – my granddaughter is probably listening – I will probably end up with four generations, if I am still alive. I hope I am.

That is happening more and more, which means we will get an older population. I have lived in the rural area for most of that 30 years and that is

where I want to stay. You have to think about these services offered.

Eventually, people will end up in nursing homes or confined to their beds. One of my constituents has been on to me a lot about the service provided in the area for nursing and home care. We also need to put a lot of pressure on the federal government about how it issues these contracts for services to senior people. That does not fall in our area and is not really covered by this motion, but there are many issues that are greater than just having retirement villages – infrastructure around it, car and bus transport, doctors and medical clinics. It is access to all those things that we need to take into account.

I am glad the member for Nelson raised this. I am glad he is older than me so I can say I am not the oldest person in the Assembly at this stage.

Mr Wood: The member for Sanderson is.

Mr HIGGINS: The member for Sanderson is older, so I am sure he would support anything for us much older people. People are staying here longer. There are more generations who are more inclined to stay here. It is becoming a bigger issue and we need to address it. Now is the time we need to address it as I suppose the three of us are getting close to retirement age.

Madam Speaker, I will be supporting the amended motion.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Sorry, Madam Speaker, I ...

Madam SPEAKER: Playing on your phone

Mr ELFERINK: I was on my feet in any instance, Madam Speaker. I want to speak and I will not be on my feet for too long. I understand the Chief Minister wants to say a few words but he is currently engaged upstairs. There are a couple of things I would like to say.

The first has nothing to do with the motion. I would like to inform the House that Peter Kamm, the person who was reported on the news bulletins as having breached his parole and scarpered, has been recaptured by the efforts of the ...

Ms Fyles: Yes, we all know that, we are all on Facebook.

Mr ELFERINK: Sorry, I beg your pardon?

Ms Fyles: Yes, we are aware of that.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. I was not – well, I was but I thought I would inform the House.

Mr Styles: I was not, so thank you very much.

Mr ELFERINK: I am glad to see that ...

Ms Fyles: We have Channel 9 over here informing us of the news.

Mr ELFERINK: Sorry?

Mr Styles: I was concentrating on what is happening in the Chamber.

Mr ELFERINK: Okay. Anyway, in any instance, I just thought I would inform the House. I am sorry for trying; I will not inform the House of important breaking news in the future. Sorry?

Ms Fyles: I said leave the news networks to their job.

Mr ELFERINK: Well, no ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, you have the call.

Mr ELFERINK: I am really tempted to give her a slap right now – figuratively speaking of course – because ...

Madam SPEAKER: You should focus on what you are doing, minister.

Mr ELFERINK: You may well be right, Madam Speaker. But, for goodness' sake, if a minister stands in to inform the House of something, he is genuinely trying to impart information. If you do not want it, we will not give it to you, but then you will complain. So we are damned if we do and damned if we do not. That is the standard approach of the Labor Party.

Having said that, there is one issue I want to focus on, and that is in relation to Ward 7C at Royal Darwin Hospital, something which you will understand, Madam Speaker, has been a concern to me for some time as the Health minister. As you are aware, I have taken possession, in my various guises as the minister for both Corrections and Health, the block on Bees Creek Road, which was formerly used as a drug rehab. Whilst I will not revisit the circumstances surrounding the pre-release or post-release centre we wanted to create on that site, we have found other digs for that centre and are pressing on with that.

Nevertheless, the one thing I want to raise is that Ward 7C, in my opinion, is appalling with the patients it holds. For those members unaware of the ward, it is full of beds with people who have geriatric or dementia-type problems. They have no place to go. At last count – but I could stand corrected on this because this figure is now a month or so old – we had some 27 patients in that ward tying up hospital beds. As members full well

know, these hospital beds cost about \$1m a year to run. Yet we have them being tied up and causing bed block, as happens periodically at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

This is not a new phenomenon. The former health minister, Kon Vatskalis, has stood here on a number of occasions to talk about the issue of aged patients occupying beds in the Royal Darwin Hospital. This is not satisfactory. Subsequent Health ministers in the Northern Territory government have also struggled with this issue. I may have secured a solution. The block in Bees Creek Road, with some work, may well be able to replace Ward 7C in the hospital.

It would, if we were to establish ourselves there, continue to be a hospital ward but would be managed in a different fashion. I thank you, member for Goyder, for your assistance with meeting local residents. There has been cautious approval for me to continue to explore the notion of using that block for aged care patients in the Royal Darwin Hospital. We have visited with some nurses. There have been a few concerns about how it could possibly run but we continue to explore the option. I would be very pleased if we could finally get rid of the beds in Ward 7C.

If we could, two things could happen. First, a number of hospital beds would be freed for the use of acute and sub-acute patients in the hospital. Some of our bed block, in fact all of it, would disappear. Without presuming on the work done in the Health department, it could mean we would sacrifice a number of hospital beds in Ward 7C but retain most of them. They could then be used for other patients. That would free up sufficient funds to open the block on Bees Creek Road as a quasi-hospital ward looking after these people and giving them a much more appropriate environment in which to live. Those people who have dementia would live in an environment where they were surrounded by a secure compound, which would give them freedoms that they currently do not enjoy at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Secondly, and importantly, those people who were simply aged care patients with nowhere else to go would be living in a rural environment, something suggested by the rural residents some months ago. I understand you, member for Goyder, and the member for Nelson have some sympathy with that approach. It is yet to be determined whether it can be done, but I would be pleased to get rid of the bed block caused by the warehousing – for a want of a better term – of aged and dementia-affected patients.

The process is open and honest. We are speaking to the local community and, as more information and suggestions come to hand, I

promise I will keep the members for Goyder and Nelson fully informed of progress.

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nelson for bringing this motion forward and the member for Casuarina for bringing the amendment forward. The member for Nelson has raised a very important issue. He originally focused on the Darwin rural area in relation to residential retirement facilities to ensure there is suitable consideration and planning for future requirements for senior Territorians. It is important we quickly look at the demographic profile of senior Territorians in the Northern Territory. I will not talk for long, but I have a few statistics.

For the whole of the Northern Territory, people aged 55 and over make up 15.4% of the population, compared with 25.6% for the rest of Australia, indicating a much younger population in the NT. People aged 65 years and over make up 5.6% of the population compared to 14% for the rest of Australia. That is quite a comparison indeed, 5.6% to 14%. It reflects the age of our population in the Northern Territory, having a very young demographic data set.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the 2011 Census data, there were 3575 persons aged 55 years and over in the Litchfield government area. That numerical level makes up approximately 18.8% of the population, with 1253 people aged 65 years and older making up 6.6% of that population. A further 3320 people in the 45 to 54 age group made up approximately 17% of that population.

In the greater Darwin area there are currently 2558 senior or age pensioner tenants. There are currently 991, according to ABS 2011 statistics, senior or age pensioner tenants located in Alice Springs.

My good colleague, the member for Katherine, would be aware there are slightly over 500 senior or age pensioner tenants in Katherine and 87 in the Barkly. Even though the senior population in the Northern Territory is much smaller on a percentage basis than the rest of the country, projections show the Territory will start to catch up with an increasingly ageing population. We are, though, a long way behind and have a long way to catch up.

The proportion of the population aged over 65 is projected to increase from 6.6% in 2011 to 14.3% in 2041. When I was going through these notes I thought 2041 was a fairly lengthy time frame to be forecasting population data. But the ageing Australian population and changing demographics of the Northern Territory means 2041 is only 30

years from the ABS stats of 2011. This is important.

It would be different to have a debate if we did some modelling on the Indigenous population in the Territory. Knowing the life expectancy of Aboriginal Territorians is much lower than non-Aboriginal Territorians, I thought it was good to put something in here about that.

The proportion of the Indigenous population in the older age groups is projected to nearly triple by 2041, increasing from 3% to 8.7%, against what we already spoke about in regard to the non-Indigenous population.

Many types of accommodation are available for older people in the Northern Territory: independent living at home or with family; public and community housing, which we have been expanding a lot recently, particularly provided by church groups; retirement villages; and self-funded assisted living in residential care and aged cared or nursing homes. We need to be careful when we talk about different types of tenancy or ownership arrangements. It is not all just retirement villages. There is a range of services offered to seniors or pensioners in the Northern Territory.

Currently, in the Northern Territory there are three retirement villages: Pearl; Tiwi Gardens in Darwin; and the Old Timers Village in Alice Springs. A total of 58 senior and aged pensioner-designated complexes are in the greater Darwin area.

I did not hear all of the debate before, but I understand my colleague, the Minister for Housing, provided further detail regarding the public and private complexes in the Northern Territory. She also provided a comprehensive overview of the support provided for seniors who are under the banner of Northern Territory housing.

I want to reinforce that the aim of the Northern Territory government is to ensure we continue to assist seniors in the Northern Territory, especially for them to remain in the Territory. It was flagged by Country Liberal governments years ago that we were losing seniors to interstate. There were a range of issues in place to attract and retain seniors in the Northern Territory. It is our goal to continue to have people wanting to retire here. At the end of the day, we value the input of seniors in planning to meet their future accommodation needs, and we welcome their input into the housing review coming up.

I just had a quick chat with the member for Nelson, who has put this motion forward. The housing review is specifically designed to look at a

number of things. The Housing minister spoke today about the paradigm of housing in the Northern Territory, from homelessness to short-stay accommodation; public housing; private rental; private home ownership; home ownership options, whether that is First Home Owner Grant or stamp duty concessions; and a range of other elements. But seniors accommodation falls within the purview of the housing framework. It is often put in the framework of seniors, but in regard to seniors accommodation it comes under the Housing minister's role.

I had a chat with the Housing minister and suggested this issue is not so much about senior Territorians but about senior Territorians' accommodation. The Minister for Senior Territorians does not have a department for seniors. That is administered more through the Chief Minister's department. Limiting this motion to the Minister for Senior Territorians to investigate may not be right, so I will push forward an amendment to get this into the purview of the Northern Territory government.

The Minister for Senior Territorians considers these issues as part of his Minister's Advisory Council for Senior Territorians through their housing working group, but it is an issue across government.

When I first heard the notice given about this motion coming forward, I thought it was limited in scope by only talking about the Darwin rural area. I have been working on accommodation options for seniors and retirees in Alice Springs for many a long year. In recent times we have looked at land options, particularly a few blocks of land on Stephens Road near the casino in Alice Springs. That is not to say it is limited to that. We have looked at the retirement or aged care facilities we could provide to assist and facilitate the private sector to provide additional services.

The original motion spoke about the broader Darwin rural area. The member for Nightcliff has proposed this include the whole of the Northern Territory, which I think is right. I had a chat with the member for Nelson and asked him if he wished there to be a specific mention of the Litchfield shire and I quickly pencilled out something. I have also thought about the option around Nhulunbuy because many people from there contact me about economic opportunities, there and in the greater Darwin region.

I am talking to the amended motion put forward. I also seek to put forward another amendment to the motion.

I move that the words 'that the Minister for Senior Territorians investigates the need for residential facilities in the Northern Territory and reports back

to parliament by the first quarter of 2016' be amended to read, 'that the Northern Territory government investigates the need for residential retirement facilities in the Northern Territory, including, but not limited to, Alice Springs, Litchfield shire, Nhulunbuy and the greater Darwin area, and reports back to parliament in April 2016'.

The investigation would involve but not be limited to:

1. the future and existing needs of all Northern Territory residents in relation to seniors accommodation, retirement and aged care facilities
2. land, existing facilities and infrastructure that exist presently or would we need it to facilitate 1 above
3. the views of government or private companies in relation to 1 and 2 above
4. the financial sustainability of any proposals.

That is the amendment I am proposing. In the original motion it suggested the first quarter of 2016. I was going to suggest the second quarter. I had a chat to the member for Nelson and suggested we choose April, given that the housing review comes down around February or March. That, as part of the broader housing review, would work suitably.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is the amendment moved by the member for Casuarina be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION **First Home Owners Grant**

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, tonight I talk to the motion that the government reverses the changes it made to the guidelines for the First Home Owner Grant from 1 January 2015 pertaining to Alice Springs, and includes both existing and new homes as eligible to receive the First Home Owner Grant.

On 1 January 2015, changes were made to the guidelines for the First Home Owner Grants affecting areas outside Darwin. These changes

exclude existing homes from being eligible for the First Home Owner Grant. The guidelines for the First Home Owner Grants across the Northern Territory now include only new homes. For the purposes of the guidelines, a new home is one that has never been previously lived in or sold as a place of residence.

When the CLP first came to government in August 2012, three years ago, the fiscal strategy was to pull back the escalating debt and deficit left by the former big-spending Labor government. As Treasurer at that time, for the first seven months of the new CLP government, I led an exhaustive process of trying to identify savings. The First Home Owner Grant was reviewed and scrutinised, as was all government spending.

At that time three years ago, Treasury officials highlighted the very generous Northern Territory First Home Owner Grant and how it was the most generous of its kind in Australia. The recommendation of Treasury officials working alongside the new CLP government was that the First Home Owner Grant should be more sharply focused on new housing. The recommendation was that across the Northern Territory the First Home Owner Grant should be trimmed back to only include new homes. This would theoretically stimulate the building industry and the broader economy by encouraging first homeowners to buy newly-built homes.

As an Alice Springs member of parliament, this immediately raised alarm bells. In towns outside of Darwin and Palmerston, where the building of new homes was minimal, this was not going to work. As the Northern Territory Treasurer, I pushed back on bringing in this limitation to the First Home Owner Grant being just for new homes to areas outside of Darwin and Palmerston. I agreed at the time that given Darwin was booming economically – the population growing, demand for housing high and rental accommodation the most expensive in the country – for the Darwin area, limiting the First Home Owner Grant to new homes would work well to stimulate the economy and not disadvantage people trying to get into the housing market. With plenty of new housing on the market, targeting the First Home Owner Grant to new homes was considered by me and my parliamentary colleagues as a responsible and strategic refocusing of this government grant.

This proved a good move for the short to medium term as the housing market continued to boom and new housing was being built in the greater Darwin area. I believe three years later the landscape has changed somewhat, but three years ago this was a good fiscal decision. Economies change and a good government will continue to tweak government expenditure to best suit the changing needs and demands of

communities. In contrast, the decision made to change the guidelines for the First Home Owner Grant on 1 January 2015 for areas outside of Darwin has not been a good policy decision by government and has led to towns like Alice Springs being put under considerable economic pressure.

In the August 2015 sittings of parliament just three weeks ago, I asked the Treasurer to provide the housing figures of the take-up of the First Home Owner Grant in Alice Springs, comparing the first seven months of 2014 to the first seven months this year, 2015. The figures are staggering and the implications are profound.

In the first seven months of 2014 there were 117 homeowner grants paid in Alice Springs. In the first seven months of 2015 there were just five First Home Owner Grants paid under the new guidelines. That is a drop of 112 homes not bought or sold in Alice Springs using the First Home Owner Grants this year. This is equivalent to a drop of 95% in the uptake of the First Home Owner Grant in Alice Springs.

These are staggering figures. This means that people are not buying homes in Alice Springs. There has been a dramatic drop in the purchase of houses at the lower end of the market in Alice Springs. In preparation for this motion, I met with approximately 20 real estate agents in Alice Springs who all told me the same story. New houses cost around \$2500 to \$3000 per square metre in Alice Springs to build. This makes buying new homes for first home owners almost impossible in Alice Springs. The real estate agents told me that sales of low-cost units and houses have plummeted. People find it almost impossible to get the deposit and stamp duty together to enter the housing market.

Most real estate agents I spoke to suggested that some assistance for first home owners was better than nothing. Reverting back to the \$25 000 First Home Owner Grant for existing homes was generous and enabled people to buy homes. Some real estate agents suggested that going back to the \$7000 stamp duty rebate would also be a good option. Others suggested that having first home owners' stamp duty exempted was also a positive option. This motion supports the return to the full \$25 000 First Home Owner Grant for new and existing homes in Alice Springs. The grant for new homes under the First Home Owner Grant is \$26 000, so reverting to the way it was prior to 1 January 2015 would mean returning to \$25 000 for existing homes.

I welcome members extending this motion to include other parts of the Northern Territory if the scrapping of the First Home Owner Grant pertaining to existing homes is having a similar

impact on the local economy as it has had in Alice Springs. Several weeks ago I spoke to a real estate agent in Katherine who described the same situation as what Alice Springs is experiencing: problems like plummeting sales of affordable houses in Katherine; people not entering the housing market; a lack of confidence in the real estate market; and adverse impacts on the local economy.

I urge the member for Katherine to participate in this debate on behalf of his town, and amend this motion to include Katherine. Katherine is a slow-growing economy like Alice Springs. It needs the economic stimulation that was provided by a broad-base First Home Owner Grant scheme including new and existing homes.

I look forward to hearing from the member for Barkly. Similarly, my guess is the changes to the First Home Owner Grant introduced on 1 January this year excluding existing homes will be having an adverse effect on the small economy of Tennant Creek.

I suspect the decision to restrict the First Home Owner Grant to Darwin may continue to have merit. Darwin is still apparently a booming town. The population is growing and new homes are being built. Stimulating the growth of new housing by tailoring the First Home Owner Grant to new homes in the greater Darwin area may still be relevant, but I am in no position to judge that.

As an Independent member of parliament for Alice Springs I can only represent the needs and views of my constituents in Alice Springs. However, I welcome the participation and contribution of all members to this debate to ensure Territorians can get into the housing market, commit to our magnificent culture and lifestyle, and contribute to the fabric of our society.

Expanding the First Home Owner Grant to include new and existing homes will be an important stimulation for our regional economies. It will help to stabilise our workforce, which is exceedingly important. It will again instil confidence in our small regional economies that have suffered over the past nine-and-a-half months since the First Home Owner Grant was changed to exclude existing homes in areas outside the greater Darwin area.

To leave the First Home Owner Grant as it is will mean a continuing decline in the local regional economies, fewer people committing to living in our towns, fewer homeowners, continuing population shrinkage in places like Alice Springs and a continuing slide in the overall quality of life. It is vital that this motion be supported by the House.

I welcome debate on this very important issue and recommend this motion to the House.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Araluen for bringing this motion to the House. I would like to move an amendment to the motion to omit all words after 'that' and insert in their place, 'this Assembly supports the principle that assistance should be provided to people who do not own a home seeking to purchase a place to live'. This House believes that the Northern Territory will be a better, more stable place if we support more people into home ownership either by the building of a new home or the purchase of an existing house or unit. This House instructs Treasury to draft for discussion a paper with options for action by government supporting the above principles, and with the objective that these options do not inflate the cost of housing. This paper is to be brought back to the House by the Treasurer on the first day of the November sittings in 2015.

Labor supports the concept that assistance be provided to people seeking to get into their principal place of residence if they do not currently have a home. We support the concept that assistance should be provided to apply to new and existing homes. The issue the member for Araluen is raising today is the change in assistance between newly-built homes and those that are already established.

This amendment has been put forward because the Northern Territory Labor opposition considers the focus of such a motion should be Territory-wide, and be broadened to allow this parliament to consider what might be the best way forward to support those not currently in home ownership to achieve that goal. It takes it out of the realm of simply being for first homeowners, and acknowledges that providing assistance to those who may not be in a position to purchase their own home is beneficial to those Territorians and the Territory as a whole.

We acknowledge home ownership for many, whether it is their first home or otherwise, can become a distant dream. It is for many of us the biggest financial commitment we will ever make in our lifetime, and a process we will remember forever. I remember as a child I lived in a council house in a small town called Crewe. For some of those years my mum was working at the local co-op, raising two children and undertaking her teaching degree. It was by no means easy. That is the reality for many Territorians. We spent years in that house. While there was a right-to-buy provision that allowed some to move towards home ownership, it was simply not an option for others.

In Australia I recall vividly the time my parents worked towards the first home they owned when we still lived in Nakara. We had what our family called austerity fortnights. Food was cooked in bulk and frozen to last, and spaghetti bolognese was a firm favourite. That was a lucky thing. We were, as a family, very careful with money, especially during those fortnights, so we could see the felt tip mercury move up our homemade homeownership goal thermometer.

Years later my partner and I were in the same position, weighing up the price difference between renting and buying, with the goal of independent living and keeping our life here in the Territory. It was a time of being faced with the reality of what we could afford and what assistance there was to help us as first home buyers to get into our own home. This is a journey I have seen over and over with my peers, particularly those who have chosen to stay here in the Territory. As we know, many move from the Territory in pursuit of the dream of home ownership.

Territory Labor wants to see Territory families have the experience of working towards and achieving homeownership as a real option. We want to ensure those who do not yet own their own home have the opportunity to enter the market, and we want to see others, who for various reasons may not be in a position of owning a home, able to move towards that. That could be for a number of factors, like family breakdown, which is a fact of life for many.

We should consider in our policies how we can assist Territorians from a range of backgrounds and situations to achieve stable, secure and sustainable housing options. The Labor government worked hard in partnership to establish Venture Housing, an important initiative to create affordable rental housing options here in the Territory. Labor did the legwork on a number of land releases we now see around Zuccoli, Johnston and Mitchell. Kilgariff in Alice Springs was well under construction under the Labor government, and there were new lots in Katherine and Tennant Creek for private sale.

When the CLP government came into office many changes were made to the First Home Owner Grant and other home build initiatives. That changed over on 1 January this year to only include new homes. As the member for Araluen has outlined, that move has been criticised by a number of organisations and real estate agents, especially in relation to homeownership in Alice Springs and Katherine. When established homes in some of our regions are cheaper than other options, this change is one that essentially helps few in those areas.

It was not helpful that when the member for Araluen asked in Question Time for some reasonable information about the scheme, the information was not provided by the Treasurer in a timely manner.

In the interests of respectful and fulsome debate, and to ensure members of the House are able to focus on the most pertinent challenges facing our community, we hope the government is more forthcoming and clear about current schemes and initiatives.

By supporting this amendment, the House would instruct Treasury to draft a paper for discussion, containing options the government could undertake, with the objective of ensuring Territorians are supported in the purchase of a home, as well as ensuring the costs of housing are not inflated.

On 17 June 2015, almost three years into its term, the CLP government announced a review into housing programs in the Northern Territory. I think both motions before the House tonight are exceptionally timely. I hope we can get a stronger sense that the CLP government and the Minister for Housing are moving in the same direction. Members of this House and the government have expressed repeatedly a commitment to home ownership for Territorians.

This motion, and a paper for discussion from Treasury, would aid the government in considering a full range of views and options going forward. It will provide us all with a base to make informed decisions as to the best initiatives and schemes to keep the costs of housing down, and opportunities for homeownership up.

If Territory Labor is given the privilege again next term to govern the Territory, we will have a plan that reflects not only the housing needs of Territorians, but provides a solid starting point for first home buyers and others who find themselves without a home and looking to buy here in the Territory.

Mr HIGGINS (Sport and Recreation): Madam Speaker, I was not going to talk on this motion, but if I can talk on the amendment being proposed – I cannot support the changes. I will give my reasons why. It is mainly the last two paragraphs and that this House instructs Treasury.

My understanding of the role of this House is that the parliament sets legislation, which is then used by the government ministers to run the Territory. To have this House issue instructions to Treasury to draft a discussion paper is inappropriate. The strongest wording should be 'supporting', or 'I would support', asking the Treasurer to ask Treasury to do it. I do not feel it is the role of this

House to instruct departments what to do. For us to go down that path is very dangerous. It is not a political view. It is my view on the role of parliament. Many people in this House need to sit down and think about the role of parliament and what we do.

Parliament is here primarily to approve legislation. That legislation is the legislation by which ministers and government administer the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, can I speak on two at once?

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, speak on the amendment and motion together.

Mr WOOD: All right. I understand where the opposition is coming from. I am not that comfortable with this amendment. It gets away a little from what the original motion was about. I understand the sentiment, but in both cases – and I have spoken to the member for Araluen and she may wish to change this a little. Even though this is a minority government, we have to be very careful. We cannot, I believe, pass motions that may have a budgetary implication. We can ask the government to consider something. I am not trying to be pedantic here but I am fairly sure it is written somewhere we cannot pass something with budgetary implications.

I have just come back from Canada. It has minority governments full-time in two territories and uses the Westminster system. They cannot pass motions that have budgetary implications. They can ask questions about the budget. You can also get the government to consider these matters, and that is good.

I have difficulty. I feel the amendment is getting too far away from what I saw as a reasonably simple amendment. I will leave this up to the member for Araluen, but maybe it needs a slight change, because the First Home Owner Grant should be available for people buying what I call a second-hand house.

Young people do not buy a Mercedes Coupe with bright red paint and white tyres. Like most young people, I had a Holden panel van which was all I could afford. It was not until a few years later until I could buy a new car. We need to be using the same principle that there are second-hand houses on the market. Some of them are housing commission houses and some need doing up. We need to give people an opportunity to buy second-hand houses – if I can call them that – or existing houses. We need to do that. If we can convince the government to consider it, that would be good. The government might be willing to

support this motion or at least consider it, because it is good.

I had some people come to me recently who wanted to buy a house in Woodroffe. I think it was a housing commission house, but it was rundown. They had an opportunity, if they could have raised some money, to buy that second-hand house which would have suited them. But they could not get the deposit. If they had been able to get some of the money from the First Home Owner Grant, it would have possibly gotten them over the line.

It makes good common sense. Why are we asking everyone to buy a new house? Is the building industry the only thing we are concerned about or are we concerned about the ability of young people to be able to buy a home? Or are we putting them in the too hard basket? We say to them, 'You have to live in a unit or rent'.

Surely there are a fair number of homes in the Darwin or Palmerston areas that are quite a number of years old. They are not going to be getting the same price as some of the new houses in the new suburbs of Palmerston or northern Darwin. If this motion was to be slightly changed, I would support it. The government should give the member for Araluen some comfort by showing they think this is worth considering. They may come back with some positive response to this proposal. It is a good move for young people not only in Alice Springs, but the whole of the Northern Territory. That would make sense. I support what the member for Araluen is trying to do. I will just see whether we can make amendments to that in the meantime.

Mr BARRETT (Blain): Madam Speaker, I am keen to talk about this today because looking at this amendment there are some glaring issues. More generally, it means real life distortions to the market. It is important for the House to understand the economics behind what these things are for, how they work, how they have evolved over time to become a part of economics, by what sort of organisation these things come about, what the intended purposes are and what the consequences are.

Subsidies and grants in economics are ways to distort the market. They can either distort demand or supply because there is a perceived market failure. In order for us to look at this issue of whether or not to subsidise something, let us move away from housing and talk about fuel. If we were to subsidise fuel, imagine if somebody was to turn up at a petrol station and for their \$1.30 the government was going to give them 20c for every litre of fuel they bought. It does not take a Rhodes scholar to work out what will happen to the price of fuel.

What tends to happen is the price immediately goes up by almost all of the percentage points of whatever the grant or subsidy. We would see the fuel price move from \$1.30 to say \$1.49 taking the vast majority of that subsidy. These things relate to how Lenin and Trosky set up their economy under the regime of communism. Logically, economics 101 always dictates, never – unless there is a market failure – give people money. It distorts markets in a way that is very hard to undo afterwards.

If we look at how the federal Labor Party handled the GFC, they had a number of options available to them. They could have cut company tax rates, payroll tax rates or given people payroll tax holidays for a set amount of time. That would have improved the bottom line of business over a short time and kept people employed. Those people would have still been earning an income and spending it via the economy.

Labor instead handed out \$1000 cheques to all and sundry. There was an injection into the economy. It achieved its purpose, but by doing so, the government went into a huge amount of debt. The government could have done it in a much more measured way. At the time, estimates said it could have done it at half the cost and achieved the same result. When we look at the efficiency of government spending, we always think, from an economic point of view, is there a way to hold something back as opposed to handing something out? It is much easier to unwind those things.

The First Home Owner Grant was a very dangerous thing to do. It would have been politically very popular, but from a budgetary point of view it would have been very dangerous. The reason is that – and I think history will prove me correct – the second the First Home Owner Grant came in – I recall it being to the tune of \$14 000 at the time I was studying economics and we were looking at it. The day it came in, guess what happened to prices of houses overnight? They went up by \$14 000. It sucked the entire amount of the subsidy in. Worse than that, these assets are geared. That means you are not outlaying all the capital but outlaying some capital and borrowing the rest. The gearing ratio is effectively what we look at for the amount of capital you started with, and how much you are borrowing, as opposed to the value of that asset in a ratio form.

The gearing ratio of many of these houses – we are looking at 85% to 95% gearing ratio, sometimes even higher. When you give people up-front cash, they use that as the start-up capital and get leverage. This money teaches people they do not have to save; they can get a bunch of money and leverage that money to the nines. They can start with zero savings and get an asset

they are effectively 95% geared on with no ability or track record of them being able to save.

That undermined many vitally important principles that run an economy. First, an economy needs to save. When you look at the reason Keynes was talking about fiscal policy and fiscal measures to balance economies, he was talking about borrowing money, but not borrowing money willy-nilly. He was talking about borrowing money in bad years and that would zero out when you paid it back in good years.

Economies were not designed to run at 60% or 80% debt equity ratios. Keynes was trying to say, 'Yes, you can go into debt'. Before that economies never thought of that. They either saved money or spent everything they got. They never borrowed on top. Keynes effectively pushed the world out of the Great Depression by borrowing money and being able to pump that into the economy. That made – what we see from history – credit creation a substitute for saving.

We see in the savings patterns of young people today – because of things like the First Home Owner Grant there – no incentive to save. There is no incentive for young people to set about prioritising their life, budgeting it and getting themselves into a system of saving where they can save an amount of money that becomes their starting equity. There is also a massive sensitive entitlement around this when we start to think it is everybody's right to own their own home. The Treasurer and I were discussing this. This was the underlying problem of the toxic loans that accrued and then eventually led to the GFC.

You had a policy that said everybody who wants to have a house should be able to have a house. We could let them go into as much debt as possible. As long as they could own a house, everyone was happy. That created certain problems and NINJA loans. NINJA loans stands for no income, no job, no asset. People were buying things they could not afford.

The First Home Owner Grant effectively put young people into a situation where they did not have to save. They had an asset and debt worth a lot of money. It was a very dangerous thing to do. These things have been proven to be inflationary.

From an economic point of view, not a political one, this is one of those things I wish governments had never done. It is so hard to unwind things like this once people have an entitlement mentality. They then say, 'My friend got the First Home Owner Grant, why can't I?'

The underlying problem in the Northern Territory housing market was an undersupply. We talk about housing and questions come across the

floor to the Minister for Housing, spraying her day after day about there being a lack of housing. Fundamentally, there is a lack of housing because houses were not built. The reason they were not built is there was not any money to build unless you went into a huge amount of debt. What needs to go in line with that is land release. There needs to be places to build things.

This government has gone on a massive campaign, creating new blocks of land for people to build these things. One of the soundest economic principles which came out of this government was putting in place the First Home Owner Grant only on new properties. It needed to support the land release programs because it needed to support the building of new places. The increase in supply is effectively the answer to the problem. When you increase supply, you decrease the price.

We had a constraining of supply because the members opposite, in times past, did not release enough land. It was supply constrained price growth, which is a terrible thing. It is stuff going up without the market being able to respond with new supply. You had the same places elevating in price and investors were coming in over the top of that, because those price increases per annum were so high it was easy to make a great deal of money. Every year, the thing was appreciating at such a high level.

When I sit down and look at it from a pure economics point of view, the policy was brilliant. One, it supports the building industry. Two, it supports the increase in supply, which is the crux of the problem everybody has had. This is not an issue of First Home Owner Grants; it is an issue where the price is too high. People cannot afford to get into it on single incomes; they need multiple incomes. It costs a truckload of money to get into the market.

That is why we saw what happened – we increased the supply, which is why the prices have come down. I commend the Treasurer on the work he has done, because it has had the desired effect. It has achieved the purpose for which it was intended.

We have land release programs still in place, and it is the intention of this government to continue to support them and, at a later date, unwind it or change it in some way. The basis of this First Home Owner Grant is an intervention into a market. As an economic rationalist, I always look at the market and say it needs to sort itself out. We should not need to sort out an issue with a market. The only problem is this market was distorted at the basis of it because the Labor Party was not releasing land. If it was not releasing land, it was inadvertently distorting this market.

To correct this, they said, 'The easy fix to this is to hand money out in the form of the First Home Owner Grant'. The economic answer to this was to increase supply. It was a cheap and politically popular way out. Labor handed out money so the funds could become part of the initial capital the people would leverage. That has become an entitlement mentality, and now we are in trouble. We are in a situation where the government, forever and a day, will have to try to support people getting into houses, because people believe it is their right to take money from the government to buy a personal asset.

I believe the core business of government is to supply markets that would naturally fail. If I tried to create an army, I would not be able to afford to buy even a soldier, but, combined, the people of Australia can afford to buy planes, tanks, boats, ships and everything else. If I had to try to get protection for myself, I could not do it, which is why communities form, and buy things the market will not resolve itself. These are called public goods in economics, as opposed to private goods because the private sector is very bad at providing these goods.

Fundamentally, housing is a private good, not a public good. We enter into it because we are a backstop for homelessness. There are reasons why we enter into it. Any distortion into this market – historically speaking, if you look across any market – is notoriously hard to undo once you have done it. We are now seeing a situation where people are asking for this to be changed because they are hurting for various reasons. I understand that pain. Today I was talking to a real estate agent who is struggling with some things relating to this. Commissions are falling because people are changing their spending habits. I understand that.

I was a stockbroker when the global financial crisis happened. When you are a stockbroker in that situation, you tell everybody to move their money into cash. The safest place for you to be is with cash. So we put lots and lots of money in cash. What happens to Nathan's income? Nathan works on commission, so Nathan's income went from about \$100 000 a year to about \$40 000 a year in the space of a couple of months. Suddenly, I could not pay my mortgage. I could not then turn around and say, 'The government needs to start buying people's shares'. We would think that is nonsensical. My shares have fallen in value, or something has happened in my shares, so I want the government to start buying shares for me. That is nuts.

However, housing is an important good, since Maslow's hierarchy of needs has housing as an important need. It provides shelter. We say, 'Well, the government does have a role in some

instances in doing this'. I say the government does have a role. The role a government does not have, though, is distorting this market.

We are trying to work out the best way to undo this. What is the best way to undo this issue which is costing government money, teaching young people not to save, and teaching young people they are entitled to ask the government for money for an asset that will belong to them? It is effectively taxpayers paying for each other's houses. At its base, it is madness and there is no market failure here.

The answer to the initial problem was not handing out money; it was increasing supply. Governments could not increase supply for whatever reason – did not feel like it, it took too long, not sure how to do it. Perhaps a better way of doing it would have been to say, 'Okay, we are going to put together a land release program. In addition, for only the next two years we are going to do some kind of first home owners grant'; 100% of people would know that grant would be unwound at the end of two years and that would be it.'

However, it is now a political nightmare. If you start messing with this, you are messing with people's entitlement mentality to thousands – what is it up to, Treasurer, \$20 000 for first home owners?

Mr Tollner: \$26 000.

Mr BARRETT: I thought it was \$24 000. Crikey, \$26 000. When we look at this and say, 'To solve the underlying problem of people not being able to come up with \$26 000, instead of increasing supply and dropping the price because we do not want to upset some people in the community, we will just hand out \$26 000'. That is sheer madness.

I feel for what the member for Araluen is bringing here. The essence of it is the effect of the First Home Owner Grant distorting this market. That is effectively what she is saying in this motion. She is asking the government to reverse the changes they made to the guidelines of the First Home Owner Grant on 1 January 2015, pertaining to Alice Springs and including both existing and new homes as eligible to receive the First Home Owner Grant. That is no longer trying to distort the market in such a way that it supports the building industry and growth in new developments of housing. This is saying everybody now feels they are entitled to \$26 000 to buy a house.

We are on very dangerous ground economically and philosophically when we say to people, 'You are entitled to \$26 000 to buy a house'. We are seeing the human reaction to not being able to

access \$26 000 for free to buy a personal asset. This becomes a core part of people's assets. It is not as if they give the \$26 000 back at the sale of the property. That then becomes theirs.

Historically, whenever such grants are removed from whatever good or service they are placed on, deflation occurs immediately. That is dangerous for the housing market. Because houses are so highly geared, and the debt-to-equity ratio in these scenarios is so high, a big enough decrease in price brings trouble.

Once the housing market in the United States began to decline, the value of the asset was worth less than the debt against it. In business, that is called bankruptcy. With housing, we call it negative equity. In the US, whenever someone is in negative equity, the bank has the right to foreclose that house and take it away from them. This was happening at such an alarming rate, that banks were too scared to value a property. If they were taking possession of these houses, they could not afford the damage to their balance sheets. Either a debt or an asset sits on the asset side of the ledger of a bank.

If someone has borrowed money from a bank, it sits on their ledger as an asset. The person owes the bank that many thousand dollars. If a \$600 000 house depreciated to \$400 000, the people walk into the bank in the United States and hand the keys back. Instead of the bank having an \$600 000 asset on their ledger, the bank now has a \$400 000 asset on the ledger. This is a business. If assets fall in value and liabilities remain the same, the asset-to-liability ratio changes and the banks come into negative watches on the amount of money they can borrow.

That became a greater and greater problem until banks began to fall over and monetized groups of debts began to collapse. Banks stopped asking the question, to the point where banks were not acting against people who were not paying their mortgage. Banks would not repossess a house from people not paying their mortgage. In the United States 14% of homeowners were not paying their mortgage. What would happen in Australia if 14% of all those with a mortgage decided to stop paying it? This happened in the United States because the banks knew the value of the houses had fallen so steeply they would go under since their asset/liability ratio was out of balance.

We are on very dangerous ground demanding Treasury do something relating to this because there is more to be weighed up in this. It is important for members to understand what subsidies and intervening in the market are designed to do. Intervening in a market is

intended to be temporary. As a temporary measure, it is intended to be unwound as quickly as possible to let market forces prevail. What we have here is a motion to allow individuals to have more access to government funds to buy personal assets.

I have deep philosophical problems with this approach. The government should give people money to buy a car. It would be like me asking the government to spot me \$500 to pay for my wedding.

In a sense, we are looking at a personal asset being funded by government. Not only is it being funded by government, the amount being funded is being leveraged. This puts people in a very tenuous situation. From an economic point of view, we should be looking at ways of unwinding the scheme without causing too much damage.

Moving to the amendment ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I think the clock stopped. I request an extension of time, pursuant to Standing Order 77, for the member. I think it has stopped for a few minutes already.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, the clock has stopped. Yes, your time has passed.

Mrs PRICE (Housing): Madam Speaker, as Minister for Housing, I want Territorians to own their own home. Our housing continuum is about supporting people on a journey from homelessness to home ownership. However, the First Home Owner Grant was an ineffective means of getting people into their first home and needed to be changed, and we did that.

The member for Araluen is desperately looking for an issue to champion so she has decided to champion making housing more expensive. She has decided to champion bigger mortgages and a higher cost of living. I do not support bigger mortgages or a higher cost of living. The Country Liberals support making living more affordable for Territorians, and that is why we are releasing 6500 new lots and improving housing affordability. That is why we had a petrol price summit to lower fuel prices, and why we introduced Real Housing for Growth to kick-start development and bring rents down.

The member for Araluen has said lower rents and lower costs are bad. Let us provide some facts. From 1 January 2014 to 31 July 2014, 117 First Home Owner Grants were paid in respect of properties in Alice Springs, comprising 116 established properties and one new property. From 1 January 2015 to 31 July 2015, 60 First Home Owner Grants were paid in respect of

property in Alice Springs, comprising 55 established properties from contracts entered into prior to 1 January 2015 and five new properties.

All states and territories have now ended first home owner grants for established homes. This followed clear evidence that such grants only increase the prices of established homes and exacerbate any imbalance between demand and supply for housing. There was an extra \$12 000 or \$25 000 to buy an established dwelling. That meant the price of homes would go up at least \$12 000 or \$25 000. That means the grant does not help first buyers to get into the market; all it does is distort the market and make housing out of reach for more Territorians. It also means real estate agents receive a fatter commission. This is all subsidised by the government and makes for higher prices for first homebuyers. This is not something we will ever support. The government intended, through the removal of the First Home Owner Grant for established homes, in conjunction with land release, to decrease the demand-fuelled effect on housing prices. This strategy is working.

Reduced housing prices, along with current low interest rates, are likely to result in increased activity in the market. First homebuyers are now more likely to be able to afford entry-level established homes without the need for government assistance. In addition, the refocusing of the grant has encouraged construction in Alice Springs, with five grants for new homes paid this year compared to one in the same period last year.

The Territory's remaining \$26 000 grant for new homes is easily the most generous in this country. Tasmania's \$20 000 grant is due to be reduced to \$10 000 at the end of the year. Other jurisdictions fund grants for new homes between \$10 000 and \$15 000.

This government believes in home ownership and has done more to support it in three years than the opposition did in more than a decade because we have brought prices down with our land release program.

The Country Liberal government has introduced a comprehensive set of home ownership programs. The Home Buyer Initiative provides priority access to eligible low-income purchasers to government sponsored land allotments. Since the implementation of the Home Buyer Initiative, 59 new dwellings have been delivered in the Palmerston suburbs of Bellamack, Johnston and Zuccoli. In addition to these 59 new dwellings, a further eight refurbished dwellings have been purchased by eligible homebuyers in the John Gorey Complex, Elliott Street, Alice Springs.

Further homebuyer initiatives will be available later this year and throughout 2016 with land releases in Zuccoli, Katherine and potentially Alice Springs.

It is great to see we have been supporting home ownership in Alice Springs and right across the Northern Territory. The Country Liberals government also launched the HomeBuild Access home loan assistance product in January 2013. This has helped 86 Territorian families into home ownership. A further 14 Territorian families have accessed HomeBuild Access deposit loans to assist them buying a new home off the plan. HomeBuild Access is targeted at the purchase or construction of new dwellings. The HomeBuild Access loan products seek to increase new supply at the affordable end of the housing market by providing more home ownership opportunities for Territorians unable to access the private finance market. The Territory-wide purchase price limits for HomeBuild Access are \$475 000 for homes with one or two bedrooms, and \$550 000 for homes with three or more bedrooms.

Through these home ownership initiatives, the Northern Territory government continues to deliver on its commitment to support Territorians purchasing their own homes. Let me now turn to an innovative home ownership program. We have developed a program allowing those living in remote communities the option of buying their own home. The Country Liberals government knows people in remote communities deserve the same opportunities to participate in the economy and in society. That means they deserve a shot at home ownership.

The home ownership program is currently operating on the Tiwi Islands, and in the communities of Wurrumiyanga, Milikapiti, Groote Eylandt, Umbakumba, Angurugu and Milyakburra, where township leases are in place. It is intended to eventually make the program available to other communities where appropriate land tenures are in place, and where buyers have reasonable access to repairs and maintenance.

I have gone to Bulman and Kalkarindji, and in both communities the residents told me they wanted to access home ownership opportunities. The response to the remote home ownership program continues to be positive. The challenge for the program is to convert that interest into sales wherever possible. There are eight applicants for remote home ownership under active consideration. There is at least one active application in each of the communities where the program is available.

Selling houses on township leases presents a number of challenges in making sure the interests of the Northern Territory traditional owners, and

the purchasers, are recognised and dealt with in an appropriate manner. I am pleased to report a draft deed of agreement has been finalised between the Office of Township Leasing and the Chief Executive Officer of Housing, and is in the final stages of the approval process.

This deed of agreement sets out the steps in the sales process and recognises the interests of all parties to the sale. Once it is signed, sales in these communities will be able to proceed. This is an important step forward in providing home ownership opportunities to increasing numbers of remote Territorians. The Northern Territory government remains committed to supporting and encouraging home ownership in remote communities. This is made clear by the \$4.5m funds put in over three years to support the remote home ownership program. In addition there is the \$20 000 special assistance grant to help further improve the condition and functionality of the house after purchase to ensure they have a house that suits their needs, are able to address outstanding maintenance issues and case managers are available to help assist prospective homeowners with their applications. I have also approved a process of setting a purchase price for most homes within the affordable range of \$80 000 to \$150 000.

This program shows that we are creating home ownership opportunities for a wider range of people than anyone on the opposite side has done before. I am proud to contribute to the economic development of Indigenous people with the Chief Minister and his Country Liberals team. We have done a great deal to stimulate home ownership in the Northern Territory. The Giles Country Liberal government has a plan, *Framing the Future*. We are committed to a strong society that engages and encourages participation through well-designed services focused on outcomes, and improves the capacity of Territorians to contribute to their society and economy.

This includes supporting Territorians with diverse housing options. We released land, increased private sector developments and launched our Real Housing for Growth plan to address this shortfall and stimulate an affordable housing sector with options for key workers and loads of middle-income Territorians. We have developed affordable rentals, which means Territorians are no longer spending all their income on rent but are now increasingly able to save money for a deposit.

We have done a lot to support Territorians with a diversity of housing choices, but there is more to do. That is why the Chief Minister and I announced a review into housing on 17 June. We also wanted to make sure our government is not

distorting the market because programs like the First Home Owner Grant heavily distorted the market. The First Home Owner Grant had a perverse effect of hurting first homebuyers and it is sad to see the member for Araluen mistakenly continue this crusade.

We want to make sure we always look at ways to make things better. The housing options need to be examined and we need to come up with an updated framework on where we go from here. We are looking at the diversity of housing choices we provide Territorians, their effectiveness and what we can add to best equip Territorians to seek housing independently. The review will look at housing along the continuum from homelessness to home ownership. The review of housing programs will encompass:

- what levels and types of residential dwelling demands exist in the market
- the impact of the government's affordable housing initiatives in assisting Territorians on limited incomes into home ownership
- the flow of new residential land onto the market as a result of the government's land release program
- what concessions for first homebuyers might be most appropriate in the market
- social housing demands including public assisted and homelessness services
- how we can better work in partnership with community housing providers.

I am pleased to announce my department has engaged consultants KPMG to undertake a review of housing program initiatives. As I said, this review is now well under way, with consultation meetings scheduled with a range of key stakeholders in late September. The review will be finalised in early 2016 with delivery of a five-year housing strategy and annual implementation plan. This plan is likely to have a new approach for delivering social housing in the Northern Territory and will include an assessment of a home ownership program.

The review requires extensive consultation with stakeholders across the housing continuum, comprising of homelessness services, supported accommodation, social housing, affordable rentals, private rentals and home ownership.

I will be at five consultations later this month in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Katherine. This will provide an opportunity for me and the consultants to hear views of those who understand the issues facing the Northern

Territory. As part of the review, the consultants will be visiting five remote communities to gain an understanding of the issues facing housing in remote Northern Territory communities.

The review will give primary direction to the most effective investment by government supporting those most in need of our housing programs.

The first report will be provided to me in late October following an extensive consultation process. This will form the basis of a discussion paper that will be released for further consultation.

The Giles Country Liberals government has continued to support home ownership in the Northern Territory. We have worked hard to ensure we continue to develop a targeted approach that helps homebuyers and does not hurt them.

The Country Liberals government has provided a range of programs to ensure people are able to own their own homes, especially our land release programs. The Department of Housing's Home Buyer Initiative and our HomeBuild Access loan programs help. We have expanded opportunities of home ownership to the bush. The Giles government has expanded home ownership to everyone.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to say a couple of words before 9 pm. A little history of this First Home Owner Grant is interesting. I was doing a bit of research earlier today, finding out what led to the axing of it. It might come as a bit of surprise to many people in this Chamber, but the decision was made to remove the First Home Owner Grant in 2012 at a COAG meeting. That decision was made following a COAG working group report that was presented to that body. Lo and behold, all states and territories agreed in 2012 to abolish the First Home Owner Grant on existing houses.

That is interesting because here we are in 2015, and look at all the comrades lined up to say bring it back. In 2012 at a COAG meeting, the Chief Minister at the time was Paul Henderson, who put his hand up and said, 'Yes, we are on board, the Northern Territory will also axe the First Home Owner Grant'. That is interesting because later that year, on 12 September 2012, they moved to abolish the First Home Owner Grant in Queensland for existing houses.

The second jurisdiction to act was Victoria. They abolished their First Home Owner Grant on existing houses on 1 July 2013. They were followed by the ACT on 1 September 2013. After that South Australia and New South Wales acted on 1 July 2014.

Tasmania and Northern Territory were the last jurisdictions. The Giles government dragged its feet on this issue. We only removed the First Home Owner Grant on existing houses from January 2015, this year. The last jurisdiction to fall into line with that decision was Western Australia, which on 1 July this year got rid of its First Home Owner Grant.

Interestingly, the Northern Territory retains the highest level of support for First Home Owner Grants at \$26 000. It amazed the member for Blain that we provide \$26 000 of support for first home owners buying a new house. This is far and away the largest support any jurisdiction provides to first home owners through the First Home Owner Grant program. Victoria and Western Australia provide \$10 000; New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia provide \$15 000; and the ACT \$12 500. The only one that comes close to the Northern Territory is Tasmania, which provides \$20 000, but that decreases to \$10 000 from 1 January 2016. We are almost double. By 1 January 2016, we will be providing almost twice the support for the First Home Owner Grant.

It is interesting also that it is the member for Araluen who proposed this motion. It was the member for Araluen, when she was Treasurer in 2012, who oversaw the removal of the first home owner stamp duty concession. That was removed from 4 December and the principal place of residence rebate was increased to \$7500 from \$3500 but was limited. It was limited to new homes only. The member for Araluen was a member of Cabinet when government made the decision to cease the First Home Owner Grant for established homes. Throughout the period of its implementation in March 2014 when budget Cabinet made the decision, the member for Araluen was there.

In May 2014 the decision was announced as part of the 2014-15 budget. In January 2015 the decision took effect. At no stage did we hear boo from the member for Araluen about issues in relation to Alice Springs. It is all rather interesting. I am getting the wind up and I would like to continue my remarks at another time.

Debate suspended.

LEAVE TO CONTINUE GENERAL BUSINESS

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave for General Business to continue until the completion of General Business Notices Nos 2, 3 and 4

Leave not granted.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS
Move to Continue General Business**

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much as standing orders be suspended as would prevent General Business from continuing until the completion of General Business Notices Nos 2, 3 and 4.

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, she has given no reason to do so. She just sat down. She is supposed to convince this House we should set aside standing orders on a case of hardship, because that is what it requires, but she has just sat down. She thinks to suspend the standing orders of this House is a good idea and sits down. That is not a convincing argument, not even close. She had half-an-hour to make that case and has not.

That is the problem with the members opposite. Now we are a minority government, they think they can do whatever they like in the House because it is all about them. What it is about ...

Ms Fyles: It is about Territorians.

Mr ELFERINK: Yes, I will pick up on that interjection. It is about Territorians. My oath, it is about Territorians, yet people in this House do not understand the simple systems this House has. When you move a motion of this nature, you then have to make the case. You do not just sit yourself down, but they have counted the numbers across there so this is another chance to roll government and demonstrate their power. She does not even bother to make out the case anymore. It does not matter anymore, she will just waltz in and do these things and she does not make out the case. She has been around long enough to know how this system works ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Could I be referred to as the member for Araluen instead of she? She is the cat's mother.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Araluen. Leader of Government Business, please direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr ELFERINK: I will, and with my apologies. I understand the sensitivities about these things and I try to treat all people of this House with respect and deference despite the fact that sometimes it is a trial. Unfortunately, the member for Araluen cannot even execute this properly and it becomes very frustrating. It is just a game to these people opposite. It is about what is happening in this room. 'I don't like the Chief Minister. I don't like the Treasurer. I don't like that person', and I get all that.

However, let us talk about those things which are necessary for the people of the Northern Territory, and let us do it within the rules of the House. If somebody walked into any domain other than this place and said, 'I'm going to have an opinion but I'm not going to tell you what it is', and sat down, you would not really give them the time of day in the real world. We do not occupy the real world anywhere near often enough in this House. We play our little games and do not occupy the real world.

What would the real world think if you approached these issues in this fashion? What would real Territorians think – if these bleachers were full – about what goes on here, particularly these little stunts? Even if you accept – and I do not for one moment – the process issue of the earlier day about the urgency motion was something you felt strongly about, okay that is cool, but once again, the requirements to suspend standing orders – generally you have to make out a case of hardship. Hardship to whom? The people in this House? No, to Territorians. There is no case of hardship here and, as far as I am concerned, you cannot support such a poorly executed motion because somebody just says, 'Here is a motion', and does not tell you why they want it.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, if government ministers had not wasted GBD talking the clock down, we would not need to do this.

I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 12
Ms Anderson	Mr Barrett
Ms Fyles	Mr Chandler
Mr Gunner	Mr Conlan
Mrs Lambley	Mr Elferink
Ms Lawrie	Mrs Finocchiaro
Ms Lee	Mr Giles
Mr McCarthy	Mr Higgins
Ms Manison	Mr Kurrupuwu
Ms Moss	Mrs Price
Ms Purick	Mr Styles
Mr Vowles	Mr Tollner
Ms Walker	Mr Westra van Holthe
Mr Wood	

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 12
Ms Anderson	Mr Barrett

Ms Fyles	Mr Chandler
Mr Gunner	Mr Conlan
Mrs Lambley	Mr Elferink
Ms Lawrie	Mrs Finocchiaro
Ms Lee	Mr Giles
Mr McCarthy	Mr Higgins
Ms Manison	Mr Kurrupuwu
Ms Moss	Mrs Price
Ms Purick	Mr Styles
Mr Vowles	Mr Tollner
Ms Walker	Mr Westra van Holthe
Mr Wood	

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
First Home Owners Grant

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to complete my remarks.

As I was saying before the unexpected shelving of standing orders, it was a COAG decision to implement the recommendations of the COAG working group, which was to abolish the First Home Owner Grant.

As I said earlier, all states and territories have now ceased to fund first home owner grants for established homes. There is no jurisdiction in the country now that provides first home owner grants for existing homes.

Maybe members opposite – the member for Araluen and some of the Independents – might want to question why in 2012 COAG unanimously agreed to those recommendations. I put to you that it goes along the lines of what the member for Blain said in his presentation about the inflationary effect the grant has on existing houses, and the fact it does nothing but put upward pressure on housing prices.

Expanding housing supply is the only effective way of helping buyers get on the property ladder. That is why all states and territories have kept the first home owner grant in place to encourage the building of new homes. The Territory's \$26 000 grant for new homes is by far and away, as I said earlier, the largest grant available in any jurisdiction in the country. Couple that with the Territory government's land release program and we have seen an increased supply that eased the cost of housing across the property and rental markets.

The latest home loan affordability indicator has shown a significant increase in affordability in the Northern Territory. As I think the Chief Minister said in an answer in Question Time today, we now

have the lowest cost of living in the Northern Territory in 17 years. In the days of the previous CLP government, before Delia and her dodgy calculator got involved, before we saw ...

Ms WALKER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The Treasurer well knows that members of parliament are to be referred to by their electorates, not by their Christian names.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Indeed, Treasurer, you do know too well.

Mr TOLLNER: Sorry, I should not have referred to her by name. The member for Karama and her dodgy calculator, the one that showed we were projected to head to \$5.5bn worth of debt. The member was a Treasurer who never had a plan to get out of debt or reduce debt. It was just, 'Spend, spend, spend, spend and somewhere along the line we will have a Country Liberals government. They will come in and fix the mess I have created.' That was the view of the member for Karama and the nature of the problems.

The member for Karama was also the Lands and Planning minister at some stage, and that is ultimately what led the Territory to have the worst housing crisis in the history of the Northern Territory. It was simply unaffordable. We had the highest cost of living in the country whilst the member for Karama was the Treasurer and Labor was in government. They did not release land or support Territorians. Housing prices skyrocketed and people found it impossible to afford a house. Parents were complaining that their children would not be able to afford a house. The result of our land release policy is that we have now have incomes rising and house prices easing. The Territory is now the most affordable jurisdiction in which to live in the country.

The Adelaide Bank affordability index rating for the Northern Territory is now 40.2, which is far better than the national rating of 33. Home loans are now more affordable in the Territory today than they have been in over a decade.

The Northern Territory government's policies are clearly tackling the problem that Labor and the member for Karama caused in their failure to plan and build new homes. Housing affordability has improved despite the removal of the First Home Owner Grant for established houses. The reform has, as intended, increased the number of first home buyers purchasing new homes. Comparing January to July 2014 to January to July 2015, the number of First Home Owner Grants paid for new homes increased from 138 to 179 for people who purchased new homes. There is still a healthy level of demand from first home buyers for both new and established homes. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows from January to June 2015,

20% of home purchases and home purchase finance in the Northern Territory was for first home buyers compared to slightly under 22% from January 2014 to June 2015. The fact is there are not fewer first home buyers than before. This decision has not impacted on first home buyers buying existing houses. This has occurred despite the surge in first home owner purchases in the last half of 2014, caused by younger people bringing forward their decision to buy based on announcements made in relation to the axing of that program on existing houses.

In regard to Alice Springs, house prices generally remain lower than Darwin. That is obvious to most people in this place. Bank executives have told the Northern Territory government, first home buyers are still entering the market in Alice Springs. There are presently 100 Alice Springs homes on the market for under \$400 000. Buyers should not put themselves under financial stress by purchasing an expensive new home simply to receive the First Home Owner Grant. We have just approved the Melaleuca development and we will see homes built in the heart of Alice Springs.

We are, however, keen to do more to encourage home ownership in the Northern Territory. A media release was put out by the Chief Minister and the Minister for Housing, the member for Stuart, dated 17 June 2015, titled 'Review into government housing program initiatives'. This review is under way and recommendations will be released by the end of this year. The motion by the member for Araluen is pre-emptive. The member for Araluen could have waited until the review into government housing programs has been completed. The member for Araluen does not wait for it to be completed. I wonder why? Someone told me the other day the member for Araluen owns several houses in Alice Springs. Someone told me that there may well be some of them on the market and the member for Araluen may well be trying to sell them. Maybe that is what is driving this motion.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Standing Order 62: offensive. Delving into my personal life for the sake of executing your debate is despicable, Treasurer.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Treasurer, you have the call.

Mr TOLLNER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am not delving into the personal life of the member for Araluen. I am simply asking what is motivating this motion. What is the member for Araluen trying to achieve?

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 62. The member for Araluen has

asked the Treasurer to withdraw the comment and he has yet to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Araluen did not request a specific withdrawal, she just quoted a standing order and the Treasurer was allowed to continue. The member for Araluen needs to request a withdrawal and then I can ask the Treasurer to do so.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 62. I would ask that the Treasurer withdraw those comments asserting that I had some personal gain by executing this motion tonight. That is despicable.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Treasurer, under Standing Order 62 I ask that you withdraw the comment.

Mr TOLLNER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am happy to withdraw whatever the member for Araluen found offensive. I simply asked what was motivating this.

Mrs Lambley: You asserted.

Mr TOLLNER: I asked a question.

Member for Araluen, read the *Hansard* of this debate and check exactly what I said. You have a number of houses. Are you trying to sell some? Is that what is motivating this? You might well find offensive me asking that question. But based on your history and the fact you supported this all the way through government – whilst you were part of it – and now, out of the blue and bearing in mind there is a review going on into the government housing program and our initiatives, you demand we set aside standing orders in order to get an outcome tonight, I need to ask: What is your motivation?

What is it? Why this sudden interest in something you supported all the way through up until at least January this year when it was announced?

Mrs Lambley: You are offensive.

Mr TOLLNER: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Araluen can call me offensive, call me all sorts of names, but until she is prepared to stand up on her hind legs and explain what her motivation for this motion is, for keeping everybody back tonight to make sure her motion is discussed and we ...

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing order 113: relevance. The Treasurer well knows the member for Araluen will wrap this debate and will remind you that she is speaking up on behalf of people in Alice.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Karama. Treasurer, you have the call.

Mr TOLLNER: Mr Deputy Speaker, they find any reason at all to try to interrupt because they do not like people asking tough questions of them. They are quite happy to hold everybody back while the member for Araluen attempts to get her motion through for another \$26 000 to buy existing houses. What is the motivation for it? You supported this the whole time you were in government. You were part of the government that put it in place. You know there is a review into government housing initiatives. You know all of that, yet you run this motion and demand everybody stays back until you get an outcome.

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member knows that he needs to refer his remarks through the Chair rather than being belligerent and badgering across the Chamber at a member of parliament.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Karama.

Treasurer, will you please direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr TOLLNER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Karama for reminding me of that. She is such a perfect person when it comes to not hurling insults across the Chamber and not speaking directly to people. She is an exemplar of good grace in this place, similar to the member for Araluen, another example of good grace and a person who is absolutely impeccable.

Mr STYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I seek an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TOLLNER: As I said, we simply want to know what the motivation is for this motion and why it is so urgent, bearing in mind the government already has a review of the housing program in progress. Why is it so urgent that we all have to stay back while you set aside standing orders to get an outcome for this? What is the motivation for Labor members, comrades?

You guys probably do not even know it, but you, the Labor government, supported the axing of this program whilst you were in government, in COAG. All of a sudden, you are prepared to set aside standing orders to allow the member for Araluen to get some sort of vote based on properties in Alice Springs, not the rest of the Territory. You own houses in Alice Springs; why are we limiting it to Alice Springs? What is the gain? Where is the issue?

Ms Lambley: You are a sick puppy, Dave.

Mr TOLLNER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing order 62; I ask the member for Araluen to withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, withdraw your remark.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I withdraw.

Mr TOLLNER: Don't we all have thin skins. They can give it, but they cannot take it. The fact is I have simply asked a couple of questions and all of a sudden they are getting very offended. It is so terrible that the member for Fong Lim asks these offensive questions, because they are all so high and mighty on that other side. They do no wrong. There is not some dodgy motivation in this. It is very important the whole parliament stays back, at \$500 000 an hour, so we can get the member for Araluen's motion up.

I will finish my remarks there and wait to see exactly what the member for Araluen has to say for herself in regard to this motion.

Mr STYLES (Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to speak on the amendment to the motion. I am struggling to comprehend what the member for Casuarina has tried to assert. I ask a rhetorical question of the member for Casuarina. In your amendment, on the third line, it says:

... this House supports the principle that assistance should be provided to people who do not own a home seeking to purchase a place to live.

You do not qualify that at all; you simply say it is what we should do for everyone who is seeking a home. What happens when this gets around the country and everybody turns up in the Territory and says, 'Fantastic. They will give everyone \$26 000', because you did not put any boundaries around this. It is open slather. I do not know if you understand budgets and things like that.

The member for Nelson raises a very important point. You cannot move motions that will have dramatic impacts on budgets. We have debated the budget, it has been passed by this House, and we would have to go back and do a different mini-budget to fix this. This is an open-ended chequebook. I do not know if you realise what you are trying to get. I am not surprised the member for Casuarina, like her colleagues, has no compunction about running the Territory into massive debt so that anyone can come and, if they want, buy a place to live here.

This is what you are proposing. There is not even the most basic protection for Territorians seeking

a place to live in the Northern Territory. You could do that. These are some of the ill-thought out statements that are put in writing, and moved as motions and amendments in this House, currently coming from Territory Labor. This House believes the Territory will be a better, more stable place to live if we support more people into home ownership. I listened to the member for Blain, who articulated an excellent presentation on why that may not be the best way to go.

I was doorknocking on Saturday, and spoke to a lady who thanked us for bringing the cost of housing down. She has two children who can now go to the bank and afford to buy a home. That is quite an achievement. She said she had been worried about what her children could do for years. In the last couple of years we have managed to bring the cost of housing down, taken the pressure off, released land and put record money into infrastructure so land can be released and developed.

I recall in opposition, just before 2012, we were talking about housing. Sadly, under the previous Labor government, housing was a little out of control. The prices were spiralling upwards and it got to the stage where they were not releasing land.

Ms Lawrie: Rubbish!

Mr STYLES: Well, in a year my understanding is that 562 blocks were released. Their own figures were claiming they needed about 2000 blocks a year. In about 2009 or 2010, they released about 1100 blocks of land and as time went by, the number went down. I will be happily corrected by members opposite if the figure was over 562 in your last 12 months of government.

That is the way Labor ran it. Every house that was sold in Darwin was virtually sold by auction in those days. People kept bidding until somebody ran out of money. The person who was the loser in the most expensive house probably bought the next one that went to auction because they are the ones who borrowed the maximum amount from the bank.

Meanwhile, all the other people in town had to rent. It was an auction on rents. People were gazumping people on rents, saying, 'This house is rented for \$560 a week; I will give you \$570.' It was an auction on rent. Eventually, people were living in tents in caravan parks. The sad story I told in this House when we were in opposition was about a lady who was living in a tent in the KOA Caravan Park with her daughter, and her daughter said after three weeks, 'Mummy, I am sick of playing this game. I do not want to play camping anymore.' Sadly, her mother was at her wit's end trying to find accommodation. She came in to my

office and told me that story and was in tears. We found her a little granny flat under a house so she and her daughter could at least live somewhere with a roof over their head that had a door they could lock, so her eight-year-old daughter could feel she was safe and was not playing camping anymore.

That is the situation we had. For those listening and watching this debate, ask them to do a little research to see what was going on when Labor had control of the government benches. It was a disgrace.

Since we introduced many things on this side, we have seen the best economic situation in the country. We have the lowest unemployment – the list goes on of the achievements of this government. I said yesterday in this House that I feel for those members opposite. When they were in government, they messed things up so much. When someone comes in and fixes them, you have to say, 'Where have they got to go? What can they do here?' They are struggling to find some points of difference because we have been so successful.

We still have a long way to go; I am not saying the job is finished. In the meantime we will get on with governing for all Territorians and make sure that everyone gets a chance.

We have introduced the First Home Owner Grant. We followed the whole argument through when it was removed in all the other states and territories. No one has it now. This government wants to bring this back in. We have seen established house prices go down since changes were put in place for the First Home Owner Grant. Home prices were increasing with the First Home Owner Grant in place. Sadly, those young people who did get in have huge mortgages to pay. The Giles Country Liberal government sought to bring housing prices down by providing more land through land release programs. That has been extremely successful. I am proud to have been a part of this. With more land available for housing, it means the economy benefits, with more jobs being created within the housing sector.

I have had a couple of people in my electorate in the last week talk to me about housing prices and their children. Both were very grateful there are jobs available and we are working on stimulating the economy. Their children can now get into the housing market. It is about the length of time in the market. It is important to get young people into the market so that they own something. It could be a unit or a caravan. They need to get into something. This government has been working very hard, firstly, to provide jobs so they have the income to support a mortgage; secondly,

to make sure jobs are ongoing; and thirdly, they can afford to buy something.

The member for Casuarina said, 'All these people need to have a house'. I could not afford to buy a house until 1995. That is not that many years ago. I was about 41. I had debts to repay in relation to medical bills. I lived in rented accommodation and had to sell property and move into a unit. I understand what people go through. I had to move out of a house and take my children to live in a unit because I could not afford a house. The member for Casuarina proposes an amendment and says all these people need to have \$26 000 given to them but does not qualify what is being proposed. I do not know how naive the member for Casuarina is.

On this side, we would put some parameters around that. If we had moved this amendment, we would have said it could only apply to people who live in the Territory, and it can only be received once. There is no time limit on the amendment. To have Treasury draft discussion papers would be an interesting proposition.

The third- and fourth-last lines of the motion say:

... the above principles, and with the objective that these options do not inflate the cost of housing.

I talked to real estate people when I was in opposition and I agree with the member for Blain. Every time the First Home Owner Grant went up, so did the cost of a property. They just absorbed it because that is the way they operate.

The member for Casuarina is trying to create a false sense of security. People should read *Hansard* for the well-articulated argument the member for Blain presented.

Amendment negatived.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing the original motion I thank all members who have contributed to this debate tonight. It is a debate that had to be had. There is a lot of concern about the First Home Owner Grant in Alice Springs, and, I suspect, more broadly throughout the Northern Territory.

I listened to the aggressive tirade from the Treasurer and am disappointed he missed the point that the changes to the First Home Owner Grant introduced from 1 January have had a damaging effect on the Alice Springs economy and, I suspect, more broadly. For the sake of the debate tonight and the specific motion before the House, I thank honourable members who have given some thought to this important issue. The Assembly divided:

Ayes 12

Noes 12

Ms Anderson
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mrs Lambley
Ms Lawrie
Ms Lee
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Ms Purick
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker

Mr Barrett
Mr Chandler
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mr Kurrupuwu
Mr Price
Mr Style
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Motion negatived.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 140)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure public money spent on government advertising is in the public interest. This bill strengthens the *Public Information Act* so it is more in line with the expectations of Territorians that public money spend on advertising is not for self-promotion and spin, but to disseminate messages and information in the real interests of the public.

This bill creates two additional grounds in section 6 of the act for the Auditor-General to determine that the act has been breached. These include the use of an image of a government minister in an advertisement and the publication of government promotional information. The bill also amends section 8 of the act to define government promotional information as 'information other than information of a general or operational nature that:

- highlights the role or achievements of the holder or occupier of the office of a minister
- emphasises the achievements of the government
- advertises or promotes a policy of the government, or
- relates to matters in contention between the government and opposition.'

Further amendments to section 8 create an exception allowing the publication of material on agreement of the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. This amendment assures there is flexibility to deal with occasions where the publication of such material may be appropriate,

while ensuring the publication serves the public interest.

The bill also creates an offence at section 8 of the act of failing to comply with an order by the Auditor-General to withdraw offending material. The penalty for this failure is set at eight penalty units and is payable by the relevant public authority or chief executive officer of an agency. Amendments to section 8 also give the Auditor-General the ability to recover the costs incurred by the giving of public information.

A new section 9A sets out the procedure for a person who receives an information notice to appeal the decision of the Auditor-General.

Territorians rightfully expect public funds to serve the public's interest, not the private interests of politicians and political parties. These amendments draw a line in the sand for the government here today, and for future governments, in regards to what is appropriate government advertising.

I commend the bill to honourable members and table the explanatory statement to accompany the bill.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Membership of the Public Accounts Committee

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move, notwithstanding anything in the standing or sessional orders, that:

- the Public Accounts Committee is to comprise six members, including two government members, two opposition members and two members who are not members of the government or the opposition
- the three government members be discharged from the Public Accounts Committee and, in their place, be appointed the member for Araluen and two members to be nominated to the Speaker in writing by the government Whip
- the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee is not to be a member of the government or the opposition.

The resolution is to have effect for the remainder of this session, whether or not the Assembly agrees to the Leader of Government Business' motion of 25 August 2015 to adopt new standing orders.

A fully independent Public Accounts Committee is an important element in the institutional arrangements designed to hold governments to account. This is even more important than ever because the Giles CLP government is the most secretive, unaccountable government in the Northern Territory's history. We have seen on numerous occasions Adam Giles and his CLP government try to cover up and hide. We have had inquiries into political donations scrapped. We have dragged them to an ICAC. They are not open and accountable with Territorians.

We have seen excessive and undisclosed expenditure on ministerial overseas travel, expenditure of taxpayer dollars on CLP advertising, and jobs for mates. They are all part of a long list of breaches of public trust in relation to government expenditure.

The PAC has strong powers under the standing orders to investigate government accounts. I quote the terms of reference of Standing Order 21A:

- 1) *A Standing Committee of Public Accounts to consist ...*

We would like it to be six members:

... shall be appointed at the commencement of each Assembly.

- 2) *The duties of the Committee shall be -*

- (a) *to examine the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Northern Territory and each statement and report tabled in the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to the Financial Management Act and the Audit Act;*

- (b) *to report to the Legislative Assembly with such comments as it thinks fit, any items or matters in or arising in connection with those accounts, statements or reports, or in connection with the receipt or disbursement of the moneys to which they relate, to which the committee is of the opinion that the attention of Parliament should be drawn;*

- (c) *to report to the Legislative Assembly any alteration which the committee thinks desirable in the form of the public accounts or in the method of keeping them or in the method of receipt, control,*

issue or payment of public moneys;

- (d) *to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any question in connection with the public accounts of the Northern Territory –
 - i. which is referred to it by a resolution of the Assembly; or
 - ii. which is referred to it by the Administrator or a Minister; and*
- (e) *to examine the reports of the Auditor-General tabled in the Legislative Assembly with the accounts of an Agency of the Northern Territory, including any documents annexed or appended to those reports, pursuant to the Audit Act.*
- (f) *to inquire into and report to the Legislative Assembly on any matters within the executive authority of Ministers of the Territory to which the committee is of the opinion that the attention of the Assembly should be drawn.*

The Public Accounts Committee has strong powers under the standing orders which I have just read. I highlighted some of them. But the missing link is the total independence, free of this government's influence. We have a government which has taken Territorians for granted. They have been arrogant and not listened to Territorians. They have done what they wanted. It is only now they are a minority government that they will start to listen to Territorians. We have not seen that yet. We have seen numerous members walk from the government benches, yet they still will not listen.

We need a Public Accounts Committee that, for this parliament, is independent and will thoroughly investigate these matters. Territorians do not have confidence in their government, but they need to have confidence the parliament will fully investigate them.

Under the existing arrangements, the Public Accounts Committee comprises three government members, two opposition members and one Independent member. The chair is a government member. The standing orders mandate is that the committee chair will be a government member.

If passed, the motion today before the Assembly will have two direct consequences. The Public Accounts Committee will be changed to comprise two government members, two opposition members and two Independent members, as I have outlined. The chair of the committee will be an Independent member of this parliament.

There are two essential principles underpinning this motion to change the structure of the Public Accounts Committee. If passed, the motion will enhance the independence and effectiveness of the Public Accounts Committee by ensuring that the committee's membership more accurately reflects recent developments in the composition of this Legislative Assembly; enhance the independence of the committee to perform the important work it undertakes in reviewing and scrutinising how the government spends taxpayers' money ...

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: I hear the laughing and interjections from across the Chamber. If you had listened, then you would not be in this position.

We have a situation for the Public Accounts Committee where we need to thoroughly investigate a \$20m spend. We have had a referral from this Assembly to do so, but we need to ensure it is done independently and accurately. We need to make sure we have a full look at that investigation so there is no opportunity for the government – purely through the numbers they hold on the Public Accounts Committee – to impact that decision.

Following the defection of four former CLP members who now serve the parliament as Independent members along with the member for Nelson, the CLP government is in a minority. We have five Independent members, which is unprecedented for the Northern Territory. The makeup of the Public Accounts Committee for this parliament needs to reflect that. This is the direct consequence of the Chief Minister's arrogance and the government's lack of accountability. The most recent defection is that of the member for Araluen, a decent and formidable parliamentarian who took a principled and courageous stand against a Chief Minister who refuses to be accountable. The member for Araluen has made it quite clear she sits with the more conservative side of politics. She did not, though, put up with the behaviour of the Chief Minister any longer. She could not be a part of that team.

If the Assembly supports this motion, we would support the member for Araluen to serve as the PAC Chair. The people of the Territory have the reasonable expectation the government will not waste hard-earned taxpayer dollars as we have

seen. We have seen hundreds and thousands of dollars wasted on political advertising. We have seen hundreds and thousands of dollars wasted on travel. There was \$50 000 spent on one trip to New York, yet we have organisations with small amounts of funding of \$29 000 which have had their funding cut. It is pure arrogance when you use a private jet to fly back to Australia to meet a Prime Minister, yet you will not fund community organisations.

The CLP government has let Territorians down. The fundamental purpose of this motion is to enhance the transparency and accountability through an independent Public Accounts Committee, the make-up of which is reflected by parliament. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr BARRETT (Blain): Madam Speaker, wow!

There are a couple of obvious things the member for Nightcliff, with her amazing mathematical ability, fails to realise. If she wants this to reflect parliament, she should take the ratio 12:8:5 and break it into divisible by six numbers, which gives 3:2:1. It does not change the composition of what is happening here. Perhaps, if they had said, 'It needs to be 3/2/1 but the chair cannot have a casting vote', that would reflect more accurately what is happening in parliament. I completely reject the notion that this better reflects parliament. That shows a lack of ability to teach numbers and the terrifying part is – I am not sure if I can say it in parliament, so I will not.

The second part of her argument goes to scrutinizing public accounts. This just makes me laugh, my God! Twice I have had to sit through estimates and listen to the most stupid bunch of questions I have ever heard in my life. I have witnessed or been a part of many stakeholder scrutiny sessions when there were shareholders of major companies asking CEOs and board executives questions about a firm's accounts. My goodness!

The members opposite have shown an inability to read a balance sheet. They cannot undertake some kind of scrutiny of governance by checking the performance and compliance of any kind of public entity in relation to what is being spent and how. They will do it anyway because they can muster up 13 people to do it, but do not pretend you will be better at scrutinizing. You cannot read a balance sheet. You do not know how to do this. You will come up with all kinds of spurious things to take to the committee so you can have your little moment in the media. 'Oh, the Public Accounts Committee is investigating this.'

I find it highly unlikely you will come up with anything based on your capacity to ask probing and insightful questions during estimates. The

estimates performance of everybody I saw asking questions of this side of the Chamber was an absolute disgrace. Giving them the chance to run the PAC will not give them any more ability. They will not suddenly get smarter overnight and suddenly understand financial management or accounting principles. These things have to be spelt out to them.

If we look at some of the motions that have come up – member for Casuarina, I am sorry to do this because I think you are a fantastic person, but the amendment to the First Home Owner Grant – just having a chat with somebody that slightly understands what this means and how this would impact means this is possibly the silliest thing I have seen presented within parliament. I am sorry, member for Casuarina, because there are many other areas where you have fantastic strengths, but this motion is really bad.

Ms Lawrie: How patronising.

Mr BARRETT: Want to talk about patronising? I take up the interjection from the fantastic member for Karama, who is the best at patronising in this House. I did not hear her ask any fantastic questions during estimates and she used to be Treasurer of the Northern Territory. It terrifies me that people across the other side of the floor can be in charge of anything when they have no ability to read a balance sheet let alone ask questions. I am disgusted that this motion has come to the House, but you have the numbers so knock yourself out and have your day in the sun. You are a joke.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! That last comment from the member for Blain was offensive and not necessary.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr BARRETT: I am so sorry it offended you. I withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Blain.

Mr BARRETT: Sweetheart.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I would like to quickly add ...

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, I heard that. Can you withdraw that, please?

Mr BARRETT: I withdraw. I am so sorry I offended her.

Mr McCARTHY: One would have to ask, with the personal attacks from the member for Blain, what does he have to hide?

I have just been involved with the CPA workshop on scrutinising government by committee in small jurisdictions. Some of these themes might resonate with the government members because some of the common themes related to resourcing committees, bipartisan approaches and the professional development of committee members in small jurisdictions.

A common theme emerged about an executive government's resistance to scrutiny. There were trends driving increased needs for scrutiny, and new demands for improved efficiency and scrutiny that have evolved over the last 10 years for addressing public perception of politicians and parliaments – that resonates with the CLP government over the last three years – and government's desire for improved policy and budgetary outcomes that should also resonate: meeting demands of challenging fiscal environments; increasing risk management; the role of the Auditor-General; the role of the media, including the 24-hour media cycle and social media; the evolving nature of public opinion; and freedom of information. All these topics were discussed at that workshop representing small jurisdictions, all striving for better accountability for improving the public perception of politicians, parliaments and the processes of this place.

When I saw this motion, I thought it was a great opportunity for the Northern Territory to show leadership and to try to regain some of the respect that has been dragged down the drain by the operations of this government in the last three years. Why not try something new? It is not exactly new in other jurisdictions. This happens in lots of places.

There are other small jurisdictions that have an opposition member as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. There are other jurisdictions that do the right thing in the right place for the right price.

Some of the new initiatives discussed at that workshop may be of interest to this debate: refocusing of risk management; extending the line of defence; initiating self-referred investigations, including ministers attending Public Accounts Committee hearings; and shifting the traditional PAC, the Public Accounts Committee, last stage of scrutiny to ongoing targeted investigations. Why not? It is something new. What do you have to hide? We are trying something different but there seems to be major resistance from executive government. That was a common theme discussed at the workshop.

What about an Independent Speaker? I am proud to say we have an Independent Speaker in the Northern Territory. This is a great marker for restoring confidence with the public. The Public Accounts Committee could be chaired by an opposition member, which was a working example described at the workshop. A Public Accounts Committee majority of non-government members, try that one for size. This motion does not go that far, but it is happening in other small jurisdictions which have achieved a better scrutiny of government.

Let us go the whole hog, an Independent parliament – the consensus government model. The member for Nelson talks about that at length and it was discussed at the CPA seminar. A Public Accounts Committee focus on financial scrutiny, as opposed to political agendas – I enjoyed that part of the workshop. It was discussed at length. I reflected about home; what is the CLP government about? Is it about scrutiny and accountability, or does it have a political agenda?

Upper House scrutiny of public sector chief executive officers and business plans – why not? Let us think and talk about that in a revamped Public Accounts Committee. A public works committee scrutinising infrastructure projects, PAC scrutiny of election promises – that was an interesting one. This was discussed in small jurisdictions across the globe in good faith, with a drive for accountability and openness. At the end of the day, it was about trying to increase the public support and trust of politicians.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity of adding to this debate. I support the motion.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that the question be put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10	Noes 13
Ms Fyles	Mr Barrett
Mr Gunner	Mr Chandler
Mrs Lambley	Mr Conlan
Ms Lawrie	Mr Elferink
Ms Lee	Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr McCarthy	Mr Giles
Ms Manison	Mr Higgins
Ms Moss	Mr Kurrupuwu
Mr Vowles	Mrs Price
Ms Walker	Mr Styles
	Mr Tollner
	Mr Westra van Holthe
	Mr Wood

Motion negatived.

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, it is a good opportunity to have a chat. I understand the motion the opposition is trying to put here around the reform of the PAC. I have always been a supporter of the governance process in this Chamber, towards better democracy in the Northern Territory or any other part of Australia. I have spoken on a number of occasions about what can be done to increase the level of democracy and transparency, but also seek to ensure we are representing the best interests of Territorians.

Many would think this motion put forward tonight is nothing but a game being played by Labor wanting to try, for some reason, to control the PAC. The PAC operates on a regular basis, coordinates meetings, holds hearings and orchestrates the estimates process run each year. It is an important and integral part of the oversight of government processes, expenditure and a range of other areas. I am in favour of more transparency, integrity and accountability.

There are some who say this motion has only been put before the House to offer an inducement to the member for Araluen – offering the chairmanship for an additional \$25 000 a year in salary. I must say the notion makes sense to many people. I am not sure if that is true, but if it is an inducement by the Labor Party to the member for Araluen for a pay rise of \$25 000, it is a notion that rings of ICAC.

If Labor truly wants to have reform of the public accounts process, I would be very willing to chat with them about what we can do to reform the processes within the Public Accounts Committee. To do that by seeking suspension of standing orders to extend GBD on a Wednesday, just so Labor can have a scurrilous win within the bubble of parliament at 10 pm, would outrage many Territorians. They would be outraged also by the contempt Labor has shown for the electoral process in the Northern Territory by individual members of parliament wanting power rather than acting in the best interest of Territorians. This debate should be lost, withdrawn or delayed until the November sittings so we can all sit down together as responsible politicians and come up with a better model for the PAC, if that is what the Labor Party wants to see happen.

Today Labor has fundamentally erred on the side of protecting Territorians, particularly with regard to the trafficking and supply of drugs. With regard to the PAC, instead of playing games and trying to score cheap political points and trying to focus on individuals in parliament rather than Territorians, it would be best if the debate was postponed, lost tonight or delayed. I am happy for the opposition to reconsider their motion but I would prefer for it not to be heard tonight and be brought back in

November. I am happy to orchestrate conversations about any potential reforms of PAC rather than reforms be undertaken on the whim of a suspension of standing orders on a GBD. This is breaking a rule that has been around for a long time in terms of GBDs. They are just trying to score some cheap political points rather than trying to create good governance for the Northern Territory.

I implore the Independent members of parliament to join with me and seek to have conversations between now and the next sittings to see sensible and reasonable ways we can make reforms without making mistakes by rushing matters, as has occurred in previous motions in this Chamber.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, is it not wonderful when the shoe is on the other foot. I sat on a PAC when Labor was in government and put a minister on the PAC. Chris Burns, the former minister, was a member of the PAC for a number of years. It had a majority so anything we were investigating or discussing went straight back into the executive arm of government. We were supposed to believe Chris Burns had a magnificent Chinese wall where he would hear stuff in the PAC and be able to take it out of his brain, leave it on his desk, walk into Cabinet, and put his Cabinet brain in. Labor had no problem with that whatsoever. Now they are lecturing us. Member for Barkly, really?

Mr McCarthy: Yeah.

Mr ELFERINK: You are running this case in this House after the findings of the Lawler inquiry into Stella Maris, seriously?

Mr McCarthy: Yeah.

Mr ELFERINK: I have to say, mate, there are people – sorry, I have to say, member for Barkly. I apologise, Madam Speaker.

There are people who have had road to Damascus conversions which would look nothing like the change of the member for Barkly. If the PAC had been aware of some of the stuff that was going on in the Stella Maris, we would have been pursuing it aggressively. But we could not have done that because we would have been voted down by the presence of an ALP minister in the PAC.

Of all the committees of the parliament in which you should not place a minister, it has to be the PAC. What sort of scrutiny is that? Yet the ALP insisted on this for years and at every meeting I would have to place my objection on the record about the presence of a government minister in the PAC. It went on and on until, I suspect, I wore them down.

I am not surprised to see this motion before the House. I will not say it is tedious because I do not think it is. I take the PAC seriously but I do object to this constant attack on government saying it is secretive. If it is secretive, how the hell do you know all this stuff? If we are hiding this stuff, how do you find out? We tell you the answers when you ask the questions in places like the Estimates Committee.

We table documents, make declarations, fill out our declarations of interests as ministers and do all sorts of things. How did people know about Mr Maley's donation to my political campaign? Because I obeyed the law and I declared it.

Mr Styles: They miss the point!

Mr ELFERINK: That is the thing. Why was I required to do that? Because the law said so. So I did it. This is the point. I went on a very valuable trip to the United States in January. I presented a 35-page report to this parliament. How did we find out about that? The rules of this parliament demanded I declare it.

If you want to know about my trips overseas, which include Timor and New Zealand, perhaps even Mandorah, it is all there to be seen, because we tell you. This is reminiscent of the old Council of Territory Co-operation the member for Nelson was very passionate about. I used to say to him all the time, 'You really do not need this. You just need an expanded PAC. It would do the same thing.' This is essentially what is being argued for here ...

Mr Wood: Not exactly the same thing.

Mr ELFERINK: It is largely the same thing. I will pick up on the interjection. It would be a house of review, a pseudo-upper house or a committee of the parliament. I always suggested expanding the Public Accounts Committee.

This motion will probably pass tonight, and if it does, the Public Accounts Committee will reform in its new fashion. As the Chief Minister correctly says, the new Chair of the Public Accounts Committee will probably be the member for Araluen, but we do not know what deal has been done there. Maybe there is time for some declarations. Maybe the first thing the Public Accounts Committee should look into is the arrangement in the placement of the member for Araluen as Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. We should call for some evidence on that. What conversations were had between the Labor Party and the new Chair of the Public Accounts Committee would be a good place to start. Open, honest and accountable parliamentary processes, and let us swear people on evidence; let us get that evidence in there.

Maybe that is one thing we look at. There are all sorts of things the Public Accounts Committee can look at.

I listened to the member for Barkly during his rather surprising contribution to this House about openness and accountability. He was talking about a government majority Public Accounts Committee. Do you know what the real effect of Public Accounts Committees in other areas is? They do not tend to find too much. There is all the noise and hysteria, but when the system gets down to the nitty-gritty they will mount the odd dissenting report but they generally find things like government is doing its business. They could spend the money a bit more wisely over here, or maybe this system or this process could be improved in an auditing process – that is generally what those reports look like.

I am not afraid of this and never have been. In all likelihood, it will pass and government will continue. If the member for Barkly is sitting on it then it is already diminished because of the findings of the Stella Maris Inquiry.

Mr McCarthy: Rubbish! I went through my inquiry, remember.

Mr ELFERINK: Were you not criticised? Did you not tell the Stella Maris Inquiry you were in a Cabinet meeting when you were in Tennant Creek? Mate, you are the absolute pillar of integrity. He stands like a flagpole of integrity. There were adverse findings in a report which has subsequently been found to provide procedural fairness in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory – holy moly. This is dressage by the members opposite. If you want to do it, go your hardest. Quite frankly, the truth of the matter is that once again it is about making noise, now let us see some substance.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I have no concerns with the Public Accounts Committee having a non-government chair. Indeed, this is one moment when the member for Barkly has made some sense. It is true, in other jurisdictions this is the case so I have no problem with that part of the motion. However, I agree with the member for Blain when he said the proposed model does not reflect the House. That really is a matter for those moving this motion. I hope they have thought carefully about it and they have crafted it in the best way.

We have already seen, in the last two parliaments since being a minority government, that motions have not been written in the most comprehensive or thoughtful manner, to the extent that we have had to amend them on a number of occasions.

I want to clear the record in this debate. I am disappointed with how the Public Accounts Committee has been painted tonight. I have sat on the Public Accounts Committee since the very first sittings of this Assembly, both as a member and as chair for the last two years. It has done some very good work. We did the prison inquiry, which was fantastic. We did the whole-of-government inquiry into ICT projects and the unravelling of the AMS debacle. There were some excellent results. A whole-of-government policy on ICT projects came out of that. We have also done inquiries on the separation of the Power and Water Corporation, and poked and probed into a number of other areas, including grant management systems and other things.

Nothing has been knocked back, obfuscated or truncated in the PAC. This question about having three government members on the PAC, limiting the scope of the PAC's ability to run inquiries and investigate matters – I have racked my brain long and hard since first hearing of this motion yesterday and I cannot think of one issue that government members have ever stood fast on and simply truncated.

We have worked collegiately. That six-person membership has changed a number of times from all sides of the House, probably with the exception of the member for Nelson, who has a steadfast position on the PAC. We have always worked well and the only times I can think of that would even come close – and we are talking miles away – is where we have worked together as a team to try to refine the scope of what we want to do.

In my memory nothing has been knocked back, truncated or obfuscated and every member has an equal say in the committee. We have never come down to a vote, so you would never be able to say the numbers have been tested or been three versus three, with a casting vote of the government chair. Correct me if I am wrong, but that situation has never happened in this Assembly.

Obviously, it is politically advantageous for you to paint a different picture, but that shows a level of unsophistication and misunderstanding of what a PAC does. That troubles me because you want it to move in this different direction, which is fine and laudable, it happens in lots of other jurisdictions, but if you politicise something that is not political, I fear you are taking it somewhere it has not been before, certainly not in this Assembly. It looks like it is heading down that road.

As the member for Port of Darwin mentioned, the PAC has been opened up in this term of government by having full powers of self-referral. That happened while I was on my honeymoon. I came back and said, 'Wow, okay, there we go'.

Literally, since that time, we have been able to look at anything we wanted. Many ideas have been bandied about. We have poked our fingers into some, skirted around the edge of others, and made definite steps forward in other areas. Full powers of self-referral do not get broader than that.

We can look into and do whatever we want. So it is a very powerful committee and has a very broad scope. There is no benefit for the committee to limit its ability to look into government. This government has put three members on it who do not use it as a weapon. I think Labor needs to reflect on that: our government empowered the PAC, not Labor.

In closing, I ask that the PAC from this point on be held in higher esteem by the opposition. I cannot speak for Independent members because they have not contributed on this topic tonight, but it deserves a higher degree of respect than what you gave it in your contribution to debate, which is very disappointing. It is a good, strong committee and it shows a lack of understanding of what the Public Accounts Committee does when you drag it into the gutter as you did this evening.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, it has been a long and difficult day. I listened to the member for Drysdale and I appreciate everything she said. I also listened to the Chief Minister. In no way, if I agree with this motion, do I intend to denigrate the members of the PAC. I have spoken in this House a number of times on using the example of other states, especially Queensland, where Independents chair parliamentary committees. At the outset, I say to the member for Port Darwin – and I will be open and transparent – the discussion from the Labor Party was with me. They asked me whether I would be chair and I said no. It is nothing to do with money or any of that. I know it sounds sick, but I enjoy being part of the PAC where I can question government. I see that as an important role. I feel if I was the chair, it would limit my ability to do that. In many committees that can be the case, especially the PAC around estimates time. I place on the record that is the only conversation I have had.

We are 12 months from an election, so having this change gives us an opportunity to see how an alternative version of the PAC used in other places would work here. It still allows the government to have input. From my point of view, I will still try to be as independent as I can, regardless of who set up this PAC.

I welcome the contribution from the members for Blain, Arafura and Drysdale because they have done a terrific job. But even though there has been some discussion about whether this reflects

the numbers – if you want to take it down to a formula – it reflects the change of the parliament's makeup.

I heard the Chief Minister, and I have some sympathy for what he is saying. I understand where he is coming from. One of the things that is obvious to me at the moment is this side of parliament has a lot of learning to do in relation to how it organises itself with a minority government. We have had some fierce debates today. I will place on the record again that I approached the debate today based on exactly what I would have done if the CLP was not a minority government. You do not have to agree with me; that is fine, I am used to that on this side.

As a parliament, we have to work together better. This may not be the best example of working together. I accept that. I have told the opposition I would support this. I put on record now – and the member for Port Darwin will tell me as soon as I make a mistake – that I will try to do my best to be a conduit and ask whether we can work together as best we can. Forget the personalities; there is too much of that in this House. We need to be professional and have the ability to sometimes swallow our pride and work for the welfare of the people of the Northern Territory.

That does not mean we do not have good debates, or vote the same. Perhaps we have to be willing to talk to one another, even if we do not agree. Chief Minister, you and I have had some battles. You have not always said the nicest things about me in this parliament, but I move on. I have had some very big disagreements with you. But you are the Chief Minister. I say to people I do not care what they think of the person, the Chief Minister should still be respected. I tell kids you did not call Mr John Howard 'Johnny' when he was the Prime Minister. He was the Prime Minister, regardless of whether you liked him or not. It could be the Leader of the Opposition. We need to learn respect in here, that people have positions that are honourable, and regardless of the title we need to respect that position. As a member of parliament, I feel we must focus on where we are going. It is very difficult at the moment. I am coming to this parliament wanting to know where to find my crystal ball.

I did not vote tonight, and that probably upset some people. It was not meant to happen. There was some confusion tonight. I would have supported the government reviewing the First Home Owner Grant and I apologise to the member for Araluen. There was a mix-up with who was going to bring in an amendment to a motion. I would have liked the government to have reviewed that matter and come back to this parliament in December. Maybe they would do it themselves. They can say the member for

Araluen brought this here, and, unfortunately, it failed. I said I would not support the original motion unless it was slightly amended. That did not happen. We are going through difficult times. It makes it difficult for me.

Much as I have my independence here, I still guard it strongly. That is why I like being an Independent. There are times when it is a lonely spot in this building. There are times when I will upset people on that side, and people on this side. I have to make some decisions standing here today. I will support this motion. We can trial it. We need to be big enough to say if it is not working, let us adjust it. It will send a good message to the community that these committees will look less partisan.

I accept, member for Drysdale, your contribution to this debate. It was excellent but sometimes when governments dominate a committee by their numbers there is a perception they control it. That has not taken place. I am not saying that at all. There is an opportunity for the government to be brave. You will have difficult times as we have seen today. You will not win all the debates, but that is the way it is at present.

I ask the government to try to work together with this side, and ask this side to try to work together with the government. We have ideas. For example, I think we should go back to ministerial reports before Question Time. Instead of having Dorothy Dixers, each minister can speak for four minutes and then Question Time can be from this side. Ministers would have a chance to have their say before Question Time. No silly Dorothy Dixers, and each member here would be allowed to have one question each. If they did not have a question, they could share it with their neighbours. They might even have a small supplementary.

I will tell you where I got that idea from: my \$9752 trip to Canada. I tried to learn some things and bring them back to this parliament.

Consensus government is another. I know the member for Port Darwin always gives me a big smile when I raise this. I am not saying we would end up with that. I learnt things that will be beneficial to this parliament. That is what we must be open to. Tonight we are looking at something that is different. We had the Council for Territory Co-operation. It worked quite well, and the member for Port Darwin did very well out of it. I can remember Mataranka, gas explosions, domestic violence figures and a few other things. He profited from all of those, and made some political mileage out of them. It was an important committee.

To some extent, this will be more like the Council for Territory Co-operation. It will reflect the

parliament as it is today. There will be people who disagree. I understand that. I have to make a decision. I will wear it, if it does not work. I am not the only one in this parliament. Sometimes I get the blame if something goes wrong. There are other people in this House who will support this motion. I hope they will speak on this motion, too.

Chief Minister, I understand where you are coming from. We must do better in the future trying to communicate, but in this case I said to the Labor Party I would give my support to this motion. We will have to see how it goes. There are 12 months until the election. It will be a good opportunity to see whether this model works.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, it was good to hear the views from the member for Nelson. I appreciate the member for Nelson speaking on this matter, and it is good he has clarified a couple of points. It is no secret that often I butt heads with the member for Nelson. That is good in a democracy. He might not think so, but I enjoy it from time to time.

Looking at this motion, it is wonderful the member for Nelson has clarified somewhat how the Labor Party cooked up this motion and the fact he told the Labor Party early on he was not interested in chairing it. He also said he enjoys being on the PAC and that he did not want to be the chair because it would not give him the opportunity to question ministers. That is something he particularly likes to do. I do not think there is any suggestion from anybody here that the member for Nelson would not remain on the PAC. That leaves one other Independent member to be on the PAC and that one other Independent member is named in this motion.

It is not as if they are going to elect Independent members from the floor in a truly democratic way. The Labor Party is not democratic, as the Chief Minister says. No, the fact is they have nominated the member for Araluen pretty well to be the chair of the committee. There is a serious conflict of interest when it comes to making decisions about something you have personal or financial interests in.

Normally, conflicts of interest are dealt with by declaring a conflict of interest and saying, 'I have a conflict. I will excuse myself from the discussion or excuse myself from the vote.' Clearly, there is a conflict of interest because the member for Araluen knows if this passes she will get quite a significant pay rise. There is a clear conflict of interest. It will be interesting to see whether the member for Araluen chooses to participate in the vote given the fact she will get a financial reward at the end of it.

I know everybody across the other side likes to talk about corruption and suggests everybody in this place is corrupt. It will be interesting to see how the opposition deals with this fact knowing it has been caught out. I was scratching my head before in a previous debate trying to understand what was in it for the member for Araluen in relation to setting aside standing orders to allow these debates to continue. I thought it might have something to do with some properties she owns in Alice Springs. I then wondered why we had to get to item number four on the Notice Paper. We had not finished item two when the member for Araluen proposed the motion. Why did we have to get to number four? It dawned on me in this debate that tomorrow there will be a pay rise coming for the member for Araluen because the member for Nelson said he is not interested in being the chair and the member for Araluen is the only other Independent mentioned in this motion. We know you guys have cooked up a little deal to make sure the member for Araluen becomes the chair of this committee.

The sensible thing to do in this debate would be to take the Chief Minister's advice. He said to put this motion off until we come back in November and have a chat about it. We could then make some decisions about how to do this in a democratic way, a way that does not call this place into question. The other side wants to be open, accountable and transparent. They do not want corruption or any of that stuff. We have a range of conflicts we must declare as members of parliament; you need to name organisations you are a member of, and any financial gifts you receive have to be declared. Where is the declaration from the member for Araluen? We have not even heard her speak in this debate. It is a given that she will be the chair of this committee.

Ms Fyles: That is a bit rich coming from you, Dave, when you say cash opens your doors.

Mr TOLLNER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 62. I find that comment highly offensive and I ask her to withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER: Withdraw, member for Nightcliff.

Ms FYLES: I withdraw.

Mr TOLLNER: The member for Nightcliff knows I did not say that, but she prefers to peddle that nonsense in and outside of this place. This is the nature of the people we are dealing with opposite. You do not care. As the Chief Minister said today in Question Time, 'You have no integrity whilst you have the member for Karama on your team'. You cannot talk about ICACs or inquiries of any nature whilst you have the member for Karama on

your team. There is a Supreme Court judgement against her. No one else in this parliament that I am aware of has that sort of finding against them.

The hide of these people to come in here and suggest we now need the member for Araluen to set aside standing orders so we can get this debate through, at 10.45 pm, just so this inducement to get the member for Araluen onto the Public Accounts Committee – and chairing it – can be passed. This will play out in the public arena. Look at your track record today; you have already given comfort to people trafficking ice through the Northern Territory by delaying urgency on that.

You set aside standing orders the other day so you can have statements a couple of hours earlier. You are quite prepared to set aside standing orders and allow a rush to go through to get your statements in a couple of hours earlier, but you cannot keep ice off the streets in the Territory. Is that not an urgent matter? Here we are at 11 pm debating something that is supposedly urgent, which needs all of us to be here to vote for the member for Araluen to assume the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. You have the audacity to lecture us about corruption. This is outrageous.

I pray this goes to a division because I am dead keen to find out exactly which way the member for Araluen will vote on this matter.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, in putting forward this motion tonight, it recognises our parliament has changed. We now have a different makeup of this parliament and this is a genuine change reflecting that. We do not mind who is the chair, and the despicable, grubby claims of government show they will stop at nothing. There were no deals done; all we wanted was an Independent to be the chair.

The Chief Minister proposes a better model, that we should sit down and talk; that is what has happened. We proposed a better model for the remaining term of this parliament, reflecting this government has lost the confidence of the majority of the members of this parliament. We have proposed a change, an opportunity for a new makeup of this parliament to be reflected in the Public Accounts Committee. I remind members opposite that estimates was shut down a number of times earlier this year. We had numerous situations where we could not get the full, frank answers due to the numbers the government gave.

We look forward to the remainder of this parliament having a Public Accounts Committee that better reflects the makeup of this parliament. We can make this change, and like all good

policies, it will be reviewed. This is an opportunity for parliament to have a Public Accounts Committee that reflects the changes that have taken place in this House, changes from a majority CLP government to a minority one with Independents in play.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 13	Noes 12
Ms Anderson	Mr Barrett
Ms Fyles	Mr Chandler
Mr Gunner	Mr Conlan
Mrs Lambley	Mr Elferink
Ms Lawrie	Mrs Finocchiaro
Ms Lee	Mr Giles
Mr McCarthy	Mr Higgins
Ms Manison	Mr Kurrupuwu
Ms Moss	Mrs Price
Ms Purick	Mr Styles
Mr Vowles	Mr Tollner
Ms Walker	Mr Westra van Holthe
Mr Wood	

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Statement – Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, to continue, I believe this can be achieved in a responsible and sustainable manner through the development of water and paddock infrastructure, and, where appropriate, through pasture development and irrigation.

We also welcomed news earlier in the year of the major breakthrough in live cattle export trade negotiations between Australia and China. Federal Agriculture minister Barnaby Joyce signed a landmark agreement with the Chinese government. This progress is unprecedented. It could see market access for the Australian export industry to one of the largest markets in the world.

Unfortunately, the efforts we are seeing currently by the unions and the Labor Party to oppose the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement could well put that type of enterprise at risk. I am sure cattlemen of the Northern Territory will be watching and listening for what the Labor Party of the Northern Territory has to say about the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement. Bearing in mind we already know the member for Karama has stood side by side with her union mates in opposition to the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement, it should send chills down the spine of cattlemen in the Northern Territory and across

Australia. I can tell you now that type of opposition will put this trade at risk.

Once the agreement is finalised, and let us hope it is, exporters, including Northern Territory producers, will be able to start working with Chinese importers to implement SCAS and establish supply chains to meet demand. The development is a huge shot in the arm for the industry and reduces the risk of our live export industry relying on a single market.

The live export industry is worth \$230m annually to the Territory economy. Under the Country Liberals government that figure will only continue to grow. The Northern Territory Asian Engagement, Trade and Investment Strategy 2015-2020 will play a key role. Only the Country Liberals government has a plan to secure the Territory's future and ensure our economy continues to go from strength to strength.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude my remarks at a later hour.

Debate suspended.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

I express my concerns about some of the questions I heard in Question Time today, particularly the question from the member for Wanguri about the minister for Police. Whilst she merely postulated some questions – or she would suggest she merely postulated some questions – what she did was postulate some notions not contained in the letter tabled by the Leader of the Opposition today. It can only be inferred that somewhere in the mix the member for Wanguri has heard some information that led her to ask the questions she did.

If that is the case, she is in possession of some information in relation to matters which have been under criminal investigation for some time. I suggest the member for Wanguri take that information and rather than using it in this House to postulate questions, go to the police. Go to the police and tell them what you know, member for Wanguri, because if you do not, then you are doing exactly the wrong thing by Territorians.

There was nothing in that letter which suggested Mr Chandler's or any other person's name, yet the question clearly inferred there was something to be gained. I will write a letter to the Commissioner of Police asking him to review the question. If he forms the opinion the member for Wanguri is in possession of some information – which,

invariably, I suspect he will – I expect investigators will speak to the member for Wanguri so she can tell the police what she has heard. Then the police can speak to the other people who spoke to the member for Wanguri and follow that information down to the point where it either becomes a dead end, in other words, a scurrilous rumour and lie, or there is some substance to it.

I would be pleased to hear the member for Wanguri say she has already approached the police with all of the information she has but I suspect she has not. She has not because what she is relying on is some sort of rumour. If she is relying on a rumour and that is all she has, then what she did today is reprehensible and beneath her. That is the part that concerns me. I know she is better than that. I genuinely know she is better than that and I hope she does not continue to go down this path.

If she is, however, in possession of some information of substance, then pass it on. I ask the member for Wanguri to pass it on to the police; tell the police who told you what, when and in what circumstances. If you do not, then you have done nothing other than engage in the most scurrilous of scurrilous behaviour.

I would like to know whatever information the member for Wanguri has heard, but it is not for me to demand it. It is reasonable for the police to demand it because if there are ongoing matters then those matters have to be investigated thoroughly. The member for Wanguri has effectively made herself a witness in a potential matter.

I have no idea what she was referring to or where she got the information. That is not for me to question, but it is concerning she has chosen this theatre to repeat what she heard rather than reporting it to the appropriate authorities. If it turns out she has engaged in scurrilous rumourmongering and nothing else, or more importantly she refuses to cooperate with any police inquiry she receives because she is covering for somebody, that says a lot about the trust the Leader of the Opposition claims his Labor Party offers the people of the Northern Territory. I do not know, but I suspect the trust he speaks of will be eroded when we see increasing behaviour of this nature.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, tonight I acknowledge the efforts of Royal Life Saving across Australia and particularly in the Territory. It has been wonderful today to have the small yellow ducks on our desks, although a few seem to have disappeared. I have noticed them popping up in offices around the building.

On a more serious note, sadly in Australian waterways between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2015, 271 people lost their lives through drowning. Although this is a reduction of nearly 6% on the 10-year average, this is still 271 too many deaths. Sadly, four of those deaths were in the Northern Territory.

Today in parliament we have acknowledged water safety by having these ducks on our desks. We gathered at the front of Parliament House, and I thank you for allowing us to get a photo with Boof the Barra, the Territory's water safety mascot.

Locations of drowning deaths vary from back yard pools to beaches, lakes and dams, rivers and even bathtubs. Drowning statistics across all age groups are devastating, but tragically, 26 children drowned in Australia between birth and four years last year, again in a variety of locations.

Before I was a member of parliament, I had the honour to be involved with Royal Life Saving Northern Territory and help promote water safety. I was involved in a number of projects and came across a number of people who shared their stories. People who had lost family members to drowning explained how quickly and silently that could happen. People explained near drowning deaths where adults were standing in the water and children would slip to the bottom, or of very young children of less than one year of age who they did not even realise were mobile and could manage to get from inside a house to a pool and, sadly, drown. The zero to four years age group is certainly a focus.

In the Northern Territory we have the Water Safety Awareness Program, which was started under Labor, but the government has continued to support that and that is something we acknowledge in the Territory. That program encourages parents to participate in water safety. They participate in a resuscitation-type session and get lessons which encourage them to continue to teach their children water safety skills. Royal Life Saving has a number of programs in the Territory promoting active supervision, education, training, health promotion, risk management, research, advocacy and pool life-saving as a sport.

The first Australian branch of the Royal Life Saving Society started in New South Wales in 1894 and the organisation quickly expanded to other states and territories. The Northern Territory formed a stand-alone branch in 1965, and since 1965 the organisation in the Territory has aimed to reduce drowning deaths, particularly for children under five. This has been achieved through education aimed at primary healthcare because prevention is paramount.

It was wonderful earlier this year to celebrate 50 years of Royal Life Saving in the Territory with a special reception at the Administrator's residence. I know the Minister for Sport and Recreation was present. It was a fantastic evening acknowledging so many people who have been involved in water safety over so many years – people who have given up so much of their time to teach programs and train others to travel around the Territory. Royal Life Saving participates in programs in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Darwin, as well as our remote regions. They have carried out programs before in the open water, such as a river, which has been safety assessed but it aims to take water safety messages to the community. It was wonderful to have Boof here today. Next week is Water Safety Week which will be launched on Sunday at the waterfront.

It was great to see members from both sides of parliament come together. Most of us in here are Keep Watch Ambassadors, which means we have taken a pledge to ensure we will have water safety information available to our communities. We have that information in our offices; we promote it through our Facebook pages and we have information people can come and get. We also might put it in our newsletters. That is the Keep Watch Ambassador program which the Royal Life Saving Society has established for a number of years. This parliament, through the previous and current Speakers, has supported that program to help ensure water safety messages get out across the Territory.

I thought I would take this opportunity, considering we have Water Safety Week next week, to discuss some water safety-related news. The National Drowning Report was released yesterday in Canberra and, sadly, although those statistics show a reduction on a 10-year average, there are too many people drowning in our waterways. I thank everyone today who took part in our efforts to promote water safety.

I also thank the team at Royal Life Saving, led by Floss Roberts, for all their efforts; they have had a big year celebrating 50 years in the Territory, but they will continue to advocate and promote water safety here in the Northern Territory.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to compliment and commend Taminmin College. Recently, I attended their debutante ball, as did the member for Nelson, and it was a truly lovely evening. There is only one word I could use to describe the students, and that is stunning. The young women and men looked wonderful in their outfits. You could see they had taken a lot of time and trouble, and probably expense, to look as good as they did. It is hard to believe they were the same students you see at the assembly.

It was a lovely evening. I have not been to a debutante ball in years. They had all the Pride of Erin songs and things of that nature, ballroom dancing done to modern songs. They were songs I did not know, but everyone else seemed to know them, which was good.

The debutante ball coordinator was Amanda Adams, who is the Agricultural Studies teacher; she motivated the students and everyone else. I want to commend Celia Byskov for teaching all the debutantes and their partners the beautiful dances of the night, and for her wonderful support to all the students and their families. Many other people helped with this debutante ball. Jenny Unwin and Wayan Chambers did the catering, Laurel Clement and Suzie Burgess did the administration, Brad from Brad's Sound Company provided the sound system, and Monica Lang did the flowers. There were waiting staff from the college, as well as the World Challenge group students, who are fundraising to go on their world challenge. Many council staff were there with the principal, Miriam McDonald, and the council chair, Beverly Ratahi.

The stars of the show I would like to read into the *Hansard* because they were stunning.

Debutantes and their partners: Olivia Wadsley and Jacob Baird; Georgia Brockwell and Lochie Burgdorf – he is a polocrosse player, and he looked stunning, such a lovely fellow. Chantelle Holden and Kayne Moodie; Paige Russell and Darren Pemberton; Raynar Close and Ashley Rogers; Danielle Holden and Jarrod Everett; Shania Davidson and Jacob Halliwell; Merinda Johnson and Cameron Harris-Bull; Shailisse Kiers and Angus Watson; Letitia Ahnfeldt and Tim Mulvaney; Kayla Mudge and Jarrod Rogers-McIntosh; Ruby Nelson and Kadin Paul; Gemma Featherstone and Asterix Harland; Rachelle Gardner and Joseph Cameron; Tania Pearson and Rebel Cass; and Chenay Kelly and Timothy Leach.

As you heard, there were about 18 debutantes and their partners. They were presented to me, Miriam McDonald and the council chairman, Beverly Ratahi, and they were a shining and glowing example of how far they have come. They were mostly 16 or 17, possibly 18 some of them, and were supported by their families. We had a lovely evening of music, watching the debutantes and having a meal. When the noise and the music got too loud, that is when I went home. I know they stayed. That is when Mr Wood went home ...

Mr Wood: It was not music anymore.

Ms PURICK: It was not music anymore, but they had a lovely time.

Mr Wood: It was car boot noise.

Ms PURICK: Yes, car boot, doof-doof noise.

Congratulations to Amanda Adams for coordinating them. This is the second time they have done the debutante ball. Based on this success and the success last year, I am sure there will be more in the future. Well done to Taminmin College and all the debutantes and their partners.

Mr STYLES (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I talk about the Northern Territory government and its commitment to the growing and skilling of our workforce. The annual Skills, Employment and Careers Expo is an important event in the Northern Territory business calendar. The expo provides a unique opportunity for anyone interested in starting, changing, reskilling or upgrading their career to meet the needs of a diverse Northern Territory and interstate organisations. It gives attendees the opportunity to interact with leading training providers, higher education institutions, employment agencies, group training companies, employers, service providers and community organisations all on the one day and under the one roof. This is a one-stop shop for anyone seeking to explore tertiary studies, training, and job or career options.

More than 5000 people attended the 2015 Skills, Employment and Careers Expo as it travelled across the Northern Territory from Alice Springs to Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin and Nhulunbuy in August. Approximately 3600 school students and 1600 members of the general public attended the expos, looking for education, training and career information.

A record 131 exhibitors from a range of industries – training providers, government agencies, educational organisations, employers and employment service providers – from the Northern Territory and interstate showcased at the five expos across the Territory. The exhibitors provided interactive stands where attendees had the opportunity to discuss career options, with a number of exhibitors carrying out a recruitment drive where attendees were able to express their interest in working for those companies.

Close to 150 current Northern Territory-based job vacancies were displayed by employers on the jobs board at the Darwin and Alice Springs expos, and smaller versions of the job boards were available at regional expos. The job vacancies displayed on these boards covered a range of industries, including hospitality, agriculture, early childhood, trades, park rangers, administration, traineeship opportunities, bus drivers and jobs in information technology. This was an opportunity for attendees to see what was on offer with

employers and to find their dream job in the Northern Territory.

While I was at the Darwin expo, I particularly enjoyed participating in the work skills area's Try'a Skill event. This was a great initiative. Local businesses volunteered their time, equipment and expertise to provide interactive, hands-on activities allowing visitors to try their hand at various trades and skills. This encouraged participants to appreciate that skills training can offer many viable career choices for the future, and was very popular with attendees. The Try'a Skill display was entertaining, informative and offered a taste of some of the skills required in a number of jobs ranging from plumbing to electro-tech, cooking to hairdressing, electrical to events, and everything in between.

Participation in the Skills, Employment and Careers Expo can have many positive outcomes for attendees and exhibitors, with the 2014 expo demonstrating this. Darwin Office Technology has been involved with the Skills, Employment and Careers Expo for a number of years. It is a locally-owned and managed business which has been operating in the NT for over 20 years. Its goal in participating in the expo is to let students know which jobs may suit their skill sets, and to help young Territorians stay in the Territory through local employment.

In 2014 Darwin Office Technology ran a competition at the expo to see which students could rebuild a roller kit from a reverse automatic document feeder on a multifunction device. The response from students at the expo was fantastic, and one student – Aiden Parkin – stood out from the crowd, winning the competition by over 20 seconds. At the end of the school year, Darwin Office Technology approached Aiden to see if he was interested in a service technician traineeship. Aiden is now eight months into that traineeship, which includes a combination of off- and on-the-job training. Through this traineeship, Aiden has travelled throughout Top End remote communities – from Port Keats to Elcho Island – and has been part of Darwin Office Technology's locally developed on-site recycling process, the first one of its type in the industry.

Darwin Office Technology has also involved Aiden in the 2015 expo. He had been a spokesperson for the business and encouraged students to look outside the square and improve their skills to assist in their future employment. I met Aiden while I was there and found him to be a very informed and pleasant young man. He has a very bright future with a great company that is into developing local people for employment in the Northern Territory. This is just one example of what can be achieved for employers and job

seekers by participating in the Skills Employment and Careers Expo.

I was very interested to participate in some of their activities there. I drove a virtual backhoe sitting in front of a large screen and did a lot of digging. I enjoyed my experience of digging up a car park. It was great fun. The other event I participated in was MIG welding. To see the technology they have, which allows you to go through the process on a virtual screen enclosed in what appears to be a normal welding helmet, is fantastic. You can be trained to weld without having to do any welding.

The virtual screen is a fantastic piece of technology. They use it to get young people to have a go. There have been many would-be apprentices who have shown their skills without having to use any electricity or gas. They demonstrated their capacity to do the job. Some were offered apprenticeships as a result of these displays.

I would like to thank the 2015 sponsors for their valuable support to this event including Sea Swift, Defence Force Recruiting, INPEX, Kinetic IT, the Exhibitionist, YouthWorx NT, Charles Darwin University and the Department of Corporate and Information Services to name a few. I would also like to recognise and thank the staff of Training Northern Territory for coordinating the 2015 Northern Territory Training Awards, including Wendi Masters, Katie Connolly, Cathy Preddy, Dianne Fong, Sara-Jaen Royle, Kaara Tweendie, Gwenda Hayes, Nichole Hamood, Leanne Campbell and Stella Parisi. The hard work of these staff has made this event an overwhelming success and one that will be bigger and better next year.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, there have been many fires around the Darwin area of late. You only have to drive around to see the country looking black and well and truly burnt. It is unfortunate we have these fires at the moment. Most of them would have been deliberately lit or lit by people who carelessly threw cigarette butts out their window. There is no lightning around at the moment. It has not done the people with asthma or the wildlife that lives in the bush any good. The people I thank are the firefighters.

Not only are the regular firefighters working but there is also the volunteer fire brigade. They are on the ball. My local fire brigade, the Howard Springs Volunteer Fire Brigade with Maxine Way as the captain, has been working tirelessly along with the other local volunteer fire brigades and the regulars. They have been working overtime to put these fires out. They have done a fantastic job. This time of the year is hot but when you have to fight fires like they have had to fight lately, it is much hotter. When you are wearing those heavy-

duty protective clothes, it is even hotter. It is not an easy job but it is a job people should thank their fire brigades for. They are protecting property, lives and, when they can, wildlife. I thank them very much.

One of problems raised with these fires in my area is the lack of fire breaks, especially on larger blocks. We still have large privately-owned blocks and, in the case of the recent Bastin Road fire, two houses were not burnt down – one house had the veranda burnt and the other had some smouldering on the roof.

I was away but kept up with the news. When I rang our local fire brigade, they said the fire was very close and people had not kept long grass away from their houses. That is a lesson, as well. Most of the fires we have in the Top End, if you have a good green lawn, come to a dead stop. Obviously, if you leave rubbish up against the shed and have not put your fire breaks in, you will make it difficult for a fire to be put out as well as prevent access for the fire brigade.

In many cases in the rural area we do not call them fire breaks anymore; we call them fire access trails. Not everybody needs them because some parts of the rural area are well settled and the chances of getting a fire are remote. People who back on to large areas of bush are the ones who have to be the most cautious. When you get a south-easterly wind blowing late in the afternoon and the humidity is below 20%, then you know you are in for trouble. People, you would hope, who live on those blocks – it is not something new. Fires have occurred in that area a number of times, but this time it nearly burnt two houses down. We have to be vigilant. A house was burnt down. A friend of mine lost her house last year. Luckily, some people provided her with a demountable but she lost everything because, to be honest, she had rubbish around the house that did not help when it came to a fire.

The fires were meant to head down south for some fire games recently. Unfortunately, they got word from INPEX there was no money coming so last Sunday I spoke to the Chief Minister, who spoke to an old friend of mine, Mr Tim Baldwin. Tim got in touch with INPEX and I got word this morning the money has come back. The fires have received the money and they are very happy. It is good that INPEX have seen to that. I do not know what happened there, but something did not quite work out in the administration. I think they realised the fires had been working very hard in the rural and Darwin city areas lately. This relatively small amount of money they thought they were getting, which for a while looked like they were not, they now have. They will go to the games and represent the Northern Territory. I

thank INPEX. It is very appreciated and the Howards Springs fire brigade is very grateful.

I would like to read something I put out as a media release, but it could have been a letter. It was in relation to the change the government has made to open speed limits on the road. I thought I would read this so we can put the record straight because sometimes things are said in this parliament which are partly accurate and partly inaccurate. I called this, 'What is the rush?':

When Labor decided to remove the open speed limit from our roads in 2006, I was cranky. I believed they had done this with little or no consultation with the public and what evidence they had to back up this change was not released. I didn't support the change. But as the debate 'aged' the government did a trial on actual speeds on the main highways. It showed that only a small percentage of drivers travelled over 140 km/h.

I felt that the 130 km/h was a reasonable compromise ...

The government then decided that would be our speed limit. You have to remember the original speed limit they were to bring it down to was 110 km/h.

... as time moved on, I feel that most people I have spoken to were happy with that speed limit.

The move to revert to open speed limit leaves the government in a very awkward position if a fatal accident occurs on the open speed limits sections of roads. They have ignored warnings by the medical profession, they have hidden initial reports from the public (claiming Cabinet confidentiality), and they have announced that we are not a nanny state.

On top of that, they have spent over \$6.9m to make this happen

That is including the latest money that they have set aside:

How many roads in the Territory could do with the \$6.9m upgrade? When did the Minister for Transport last drive along the Gunn Point Road and check out the dangerous state of that road?

If you do not know Gunn Point Road, it is very popular. It goes to Leaders Creek, Gunn Point beach and Salt Water Arm. Many fishermen go there and many others for picnics. Whilst not many people live there, Leaders Creek has a

small fishing camp where you can leave your car and stay overnight.

Many people use that road. It can become so corrugated it becomes extremely dangerous. If someone is injured or killed while travelling on that road, and money that could have been used to upgrade it was used by the government to sweeten up a few fast drivers, there will need to be a great deal of explaining.

Recently, a nurse dropped into my office late one afternoon to plead with me to overturn the changes. She had seen what happens to families directly or indirectly affected by car accidents. The trauma can go on for a lifetime. I believe her views are important.

The messages the government is sending out about speed – I call it Lamborghini speed – conveniently disguised by the phrases ‘responsible driving’ or ‘driving to the conditions’ are not messages the government should be promoting.

It was interesting to see how the announcement to create open speed limits was made just before the burnout championships in Alice Springs. The government needs to rethink this. Yes, there are people who want to travel at that speed. I have looked at the report they gave out, but relatively few people drive at these speeds. We consider the state of our roads in the Northern Territory and do not drive at high speeds. I heard Louise Bilato from the Northern Territory Transport Association say the same thing.

Their members drive all over the Northern Territory and they know the state of many of the roads. The last thing they believe is that we should be wasting money on upgrading roads for a few people. The member for Barkly might tell me I am wrong, but last time I went through the open speed limit section I took a photo of some stock warning signs on the section of road around Ali Curung. That was a strange stretch of road to be allowing people to drive on at an open speed limit when animals could cross it. It just seemed a bit silly.

Yes, we can argue over whether we should drive as fast as possible, but when it comes to the crunch, do we need it? Most people, as we know from the figures, drive around about 130 km/h. I do not think it did any harm leaving it there. It meant we were able to spend money on roads that needed upgrading, and roads we can improve so people have better access during the Wet Season.

That money could have been spent more wisely. It is disappointing the government went down this

path just to prove a point that we are different to the rest of Australia.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I want to put a call out – a sincere request – to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, and the Minister for Young Territorians, in support of youth services in Tennant Creek and the Barkly, and for that matter, right across the Northern Territory. Once again, I refer to the press release from the Chief Minister and the Minister for Young Territorians on 4 February 2015, *Multimillion-Dollar Boost to Youth Services*. I quote from a paragraph:

The government believes that a localised approach will generate the best results for each region. Funds will be made available for Alice Springs (\$1.225m), Tennant Creek (\$525 000), Katherine (\$525 000), Nhulunbuy (\$175 000) and Darwin/Palmerston regions (\$1.4m).

Chief Minister and Minister for Young Territorians, that is good support for youth and youth services across the Territory, but it has become apparent, first of all, through my letter earlier in the year – and I acknowledge the Chief Minister’s response, telling me it will be processed through local decision-making. Then there was a series of questions in parliament which have not been answered by the Chief Minister. This appropriation still has not hit the ground in support of youth services and our youth.

I am aware that Katherine has received an allocation of \$525 000 for an infrastructure project and youth services. Well done and thank you, Chief Minister and Minister for Young Territorians.

In Tennant Creek’s case, so far there has been \$40 000 allocated and I thank the Chief Minister and the Minister for Young Territorians for that, as that will go to a repair and maintenance program in the Youth Links building in the Purkiss Reserve’s sport and recreation precinct. So thank you for that, on behalf of Barkly residents. However, there remains a balance of \$485 000 left for Tennant Creek.

I advise the Chief Minister and the Minister for Young Territorians that I have met an incredible emerging group in Tennant Creek which defines itself as a youth leadership group. It has some excellent mentors and stakeholders from the Education department, non-government organisations, Indigenous organisations in town and teachers. It has a very creative agenda and great goodwill. It is now meeting regularly and has defined a series of programs and activities it would like to implement for the youth of Tennant Creek and the Barkly. It has a great communications network with the youth in

Tennant Creek and the Barkly, and now they require some support and resources. I welcome you to come and meet with the youth, as I had the privilege of doing. They will inspire you.

They are a group of youths who have returned to school to continue their education. In this group there are youth who are working in the community, the banking sector and education. Their colleagues are being encouraged to join the youth network and to increase numbers. It is now ready to plan programs and activities. Being smart kids in the Tennant and the Barkly, they are now focusing on Term 4 of school then on the long holiday break over the Christmas/New Year/January period.

We require some action now, Chief Minister and Minister for Young Territorians. We need you to come to Tennant Creek to meet with the youth network, or send your delegates. Start an active, accountable process of releasing funds because these young people will definitely show you a great example of what they can do and what they are being lobbied to do by young people in the town of Tennant Creek and the region. Outcomes would be delivered over a very specific period.

When we communicate with our youth, we have to be honest. When they become aware that you are projecting a \$100m surplus in a budget, it will be hard to explain that money in the bank while disadvantaged youth and youth at risk in Tennant Creek and the Barkly are facing significant challenges, falling through the cracks and possibly getting into trouble. It does not make sense.

So on behalf of that youth leadership group, once again I invite you to come and meet, or send delegates to have a look at, the localised decision-making authority you have established, and how we can put those two groups together and action projects. They already have incorporated organisations supporting them, including the Barkly Regional Council, which can auspice these grants. They have great ideas, drive, enthusiasm and determination.

I could go into the projected \$100m surplus, Chief Minister and Minister for Young Territorians, and explain to the youth leadership group how that has taken place. I could deconstruct budget papers for them and talk about that in this process in parliament. But I do not see that is important at the moment if we have the goodwill from this government to start to release some of these promised funds that will directly flow into this youth leadership group's plans and programs. Chief Minister and Minister for Young Territorians, it is a big call out. I know the member for Araluen has the same call out for the youth in Alice Springs. It is good to see funds released in Katherine. I acknowledge the \$40 000 to do

repairs and maintenance to the Youth Links Building in Tennant Creek but, as you know Chief Minister and Minister for Young Territorians, we are coming into a critical cycle in the year. As the weather warms, we will see vast numbers of youth on the streets. We will also need to motivate, encourage and engage these young people so there will be positive outcomes, particularly as we move into that school break and the January holiday period.

It is another call out. This is the third time through writing as a local member in this parliament that I am asking for support. Once again, I refer the Chief Minister and the Minister for Young Territorians to a wonderful group of young people who are emerging leaders in our community. I have told them that.

I was honoured to be invited to one of their formal meetings. I was part of the stakeholder group that sat with the young people advising them. They learnt skills in dialogue, negotiating and mentoring. It would be an honour to have our members of executive government follow up and reinforce what elected members of parliament can, will and should do. There is plenty of time and other opportunities for you in Tennant Creek and the Barkly, Chief Minister, Minister for Young Territorians. I ask that you please prioritise this. I will take this discussion back and use it as an education and awareness lesson for the young people who are interested. I will deconstruct what this is about and highlight the media release again. I will talk about the projected \$100m surplus the Chief Minister so proudly boasts.

Then I will make sure the young people know the message has been delivered loud and clear, and that we can expect some significant response to support youth, and particularly this youth leadership group emerging in Tennant Creek and the Barkly region.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, the matters I raise tonight I do not raise lightly. As parliamentarians, we are used to the cut and thrust of politics. We are active and often passionate participants in parliamentary debate. Our job – for every one of us here – is to advocate for our communities and the needy, and to introduce and pass laws that protect and support Territorians and their families.

We who come into this House are not thin-skinned. We enjoy open debate and we debate robustly, but what we have seen today was unparliamentary behaviour. We witnessed too many occasions of it. I have not witnessed such behaviour in my previous workplaces in schools, mining companies or hospitals. You would not see the sort of behaviour we saw today in a boardroom or any usual workplace. The

behaviour was aggressive, intimidating and unacceptable in my view. I felt bullied. The physical aggression from the member for Port Darwin who was clearly unhappy that I had an opinion that differed from his, the way he banged his hands on the table, shouted at me and threw his spectacles down was an appalling display of behaviour, and bad behaviour at that. I was truly shocked to see him banging on the desk, to see his face and hear the way he was yelling at me.

We are fortunate on this side of the parliament to have a very good representation of women. Our male colleagues on this side, or even when I sat on that side, have never disrespected women in this House in the manner we saw today. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for the government. We know the government has lost four female members, who now sit on the crossbenches as Independents as a direct result of the government's behaviour.

That bad behaviour we heard described by the member for Araluen on the floor of this House on the day she decided to depart from the ranks of government. She described some of the appalling behaviour she had been subjected to and had witnessed. What we have seen is that bad backroom, party room behaviour now pouring into this Chamber. This is not healthy and does not set the example for other women wanting or aspiring to enter the parliament. Essentially, what we saw today was a government that has lost control of the House, its agenda, and is acting in a way which is not fitting for parliament, undignified towards other parliamentarians and entirely unacceptable.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.